I am just overwhelmed. As I look around at all the happy and contented faces, I have a suspicion it's due mostly to the lovely dancing we've seen and the very fine meal we've had rather than to your looking forward to listening to me. At any rate, I'm sure Sydney Taylor would have loved being with you tonight because Sydney Taylor had an especially warm spot in her heart for librarians. It's not by accident that the heroine of Sydney's first book in the All of a Kind Family series was a librarian. And those of you who have read the book know that library going was something very special and a very great event in the lives of the five little girls that made up the All of a Kind family when they lived on the East Side.

Sydney Taylor was in constant demand by librarians, groups of parents and by children, naturally, and she loved to talk to them and was constantly thinking in terms of the children. Those who were fortunate enough to attend some of the sessions with her really understand what I mean when I say that Sydney emanated a remarkable kind of quality that is difficult for me to pinpoint.

This quality was a kind of combination of joy and sunshine. It was a sunshine that was not a sentimentality, although her writings were full of sentiment. She had no special ax to grind, and yet the rules and regulations by which Jewish family life exhibited itself at its best were prominent in her pages. She had no special theories and no desire to teach or to lead a cause — and yet what she put down in her books were the kinds of things that did teach and did lead and did become a cause. Through this joy and through this sunshine, hundreds of thousands of children have enjoyed the remarkable quality that Sydney Taylor had. I would just like to give you a very small anecdote illustrating what I mean.

One of the invitations Sydney had was to address children in a Catholic parochial school. After she was through speaking, as was her wont, she asked the children if they had any questions or if they had anything to say. A little boy in the back of the room got up and waved his hand. Sydney looked at him and said, "Yes?" And he said, "I wish I were a Jew." Startled, Sydney said, "Why?" And he answered, "Because they have so much fun."

And it is this joy in Judaism which is, thank God, on the printed page for future generations of children. And as long as there is a child to turn the page, there will be this wonderful recreation of childhood. And for every adult who will read the books, there will also be this same renewal of the marvelous things Sydney Taylor brought to life.

Sydney Taylor is no longer here. And so I, who happened to be extraordinarily lucky in being associated with her in marriage for over 50 years, am very proud and happy — and also astounded — at the honor being given her tonight and I gratefully thank you.