



# Legacy



A publication of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center, a division of the Alabama Holocaust Commission

Spring/Summer 2011

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

**Yom HaShoah "Days of Remembrance"**

See pages 7,8

**Darkness Into Life**

Birmingham Public Library  
February 22–April 8

**Brown Bag Lunch Series**

Birmingham Public Library  
Wednesdays during March

**Emmett O'Neal Library**

Film: "Elie Wiesel Goes Home"  
May 17

**Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC)**

Quarterly Meeting  
Sunday, May 15, 2:00 pm  
Sirote Office, Birmingham

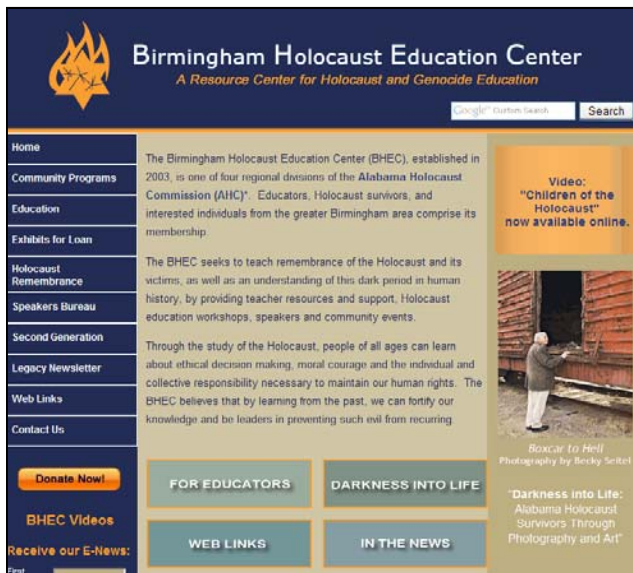
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The Alabama Holocaust Commission is recognized as a "Center of Excellence" by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous.

## A Website is Born

*Ann Mollengarden, Website Administrator*



640 days...the gestational period of elephants.

The labor was tedious, the actual birthing went rather smoothly, and after almost 640 days, the new Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) website is finally here.

Recognizing the value of our original website for teachers seeking classroom-ready materials, we set out to expand on our already successful model and further explore avenues to reach teachers with Holocaust pedagogy and resources.

Designed to educate and inform, our new website includes:

- the full exhibit of *Darkness into Life: Alabama Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art*
- the latest news bites on Holocaust research and discoveries - "In the News"
- an expanded weblinks section for students & teachers
- an archive of past issues of the BHEC's *Legacy* newsletter
- and most recently, the full video of *Children of the Holocaust* (55 min.), found under the "Education" tab

As with any new "child," there is continual growth and development, and so it is with our website. We plan to add many more video recordings of Alabama Holocaust Survivors' testimonies, provide access to our ever-expanding Holocaust library, and even begin collecting historical documentation and photographs that can be resourced on the site.

Visit our newest addition at [www.bhamholocausteducation.org](http://www.bhamholocausteducation.org) and let us know what you think.

## A Major Announcement

*Phyllis G. Weinstein, Chair*

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to announce that The Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee will undergo a name change! Beginning immediately, BHEC will adopt the name approved by our Board several months ago. The new name is **The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center**. Luckily, the acronym will remain the same, and we will always be known as BHEC.

BHEC is the hub of Holocaust education, scholarship, media and print communication and other related Holocaust programs in our city and state. The committed and dedicated members who initiate and carry forward this diverse activity welcome the name change as it better describes what we do and recognizes the growth of BHEC throughout the eight years since the first small group of members met in committee wanting to strengthen Holocaust education in our city and metropolitan area.

*Continued page 7*



Alabama Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art

## Who Would Have Thought?

Barbara Solomon, *Exhibit Coordinator*

When Becky Seitel and Mitzi Levin set about to create an exhibit to teach about the Holocaust, who would have thought that six years later it would continue to be booked solidly throughout the year, visiting cities, towns, counties, and reaching thousands of Alabamians?

How were they to imagine the impact that their seed of an idea would have on teaching about the Holocaust to so many folks in our state? How could they ever have discerned that their initial exhibit would blossom from telling the stories of nine Birmingham survivors to 20 survivors who live through out the state? How could they have surmised that so many would feel so grateful for the opportunity to show the exhibit in their communities?

***"It was a life changing experience for our students. The work must continue!"***

*Vicki Hawsey  
Wallace State Community  
College President*

Wallace State Community College in Hanceville. The reception of the exhibit was remarkable. The exhibit and oral history presentation by Riva and Aisic Hirsch drew well over 2,000 students and community members. College President Vicki Hawsey wrote about the exhibit: "It was a life changing experience for our students. The work must continue!"

From Wallace State, we sent the exhibit on to the Parnell Memorial Library in Montevallo where the exhibit was hosted by the Montevallo Arts Council. Deborah Layman, a community member, developed the idea to build on the exhibit by producing an introductory video to the exhibit. It has become a permanent addition to the exhibit and will accompany it to all future venues. Fortunately for us, Deborah agreed to

join the BHEC as well and has brought her incredible energy and many talents to help us with future projects.

## An Inspirational Teaching Tool

*Darkness into Life* is an amazing, inspirational teaching tool that continues to reach out to so many in our state, inspiring them to build on the exhibit to teach about the Holocaust. Comprised of paintings and photography, it tells the stories of 20 survivors—their unique stories of survival and their journeys that brought them to Alabama.

The exhibit has been on the move continuously this year and the feedback and involvement of the host communities have been tremendous. September, the exhibit was at

The exhibit is presently in Opelika at the Lewis Cooper Memorial Library. They had originally planned to take half the exhibit due to concerns about space constraints, but when librarians Susan Delmas and Marsha Sanson came to Birmingham to preview the exhibit, they were so impressed by it that they made accommodations to host the entire exhibit. Exhibit creator, Becky Seitel and her husband, Alan, attended one of the opening receptions recently. They were

*Continued page 7*



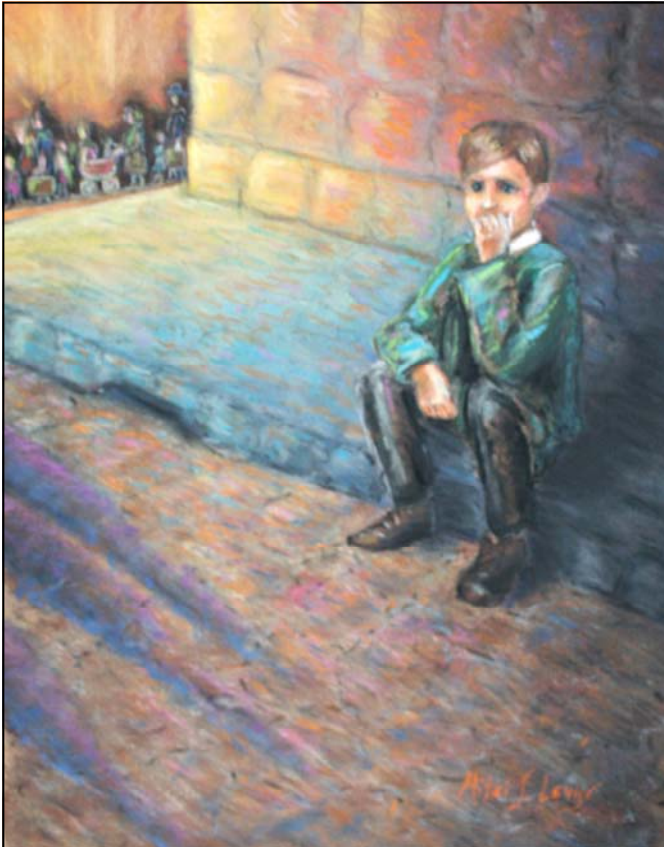
*Top left: Darkness into Life exhibited in Montevallo. Top right: artist, Mitzi J. Levin talks about the exhibit.. Bottom left to right: Holocaust survivors Ilse Nathan and Martin Aaron; Darkness into Life photographer ,Becky Seitel; Montevallo exhibit coordinator Deborah Layman; and Holocaust Survivor Ruth Siegler.*



# Darkness Life

Alabama Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art

## Darkness into Life: Survivor Stan Minkinow



*Witness* by Mitzi J. Levin

In January 1942, when Stan Minkinow was ten years old, he and his parents were forced to become residents of the Lodz Ghetto in Poland. Approximately 160,000 Jews, more than a third of the city's population, were forced into the ghetto, the second largest in the Polish-occupied territory. Barbed-wire fencing isolated the ghetto from the rest of the city. Using Jewish residents for forced labor, the Lodz Ghetto soon became a major Nazi production center. Living conditions were horrendous. Lack of running water and sewer systems, along with overcrowding, hard labor, and starvation, reduced the ghetto by more than 20 percent.

"Even before we were sent to the ghetto, I began to adapt," he shares. "Jewish children weren't allowed to attend school, so boredom and curiosity tempted me out onto the streets." Those streets became his classroom where he witnessed the unusual becoming the ordinary. From carts carrying corpses to finely dressed people pocketing rotten potatoes, he watched as the daily events of his life changed.

"I stood on the street corner near my grandparents' apartment and watched as Jews filed through the gate," he recalls. "I saw young people, old people, some pushing baby

carriages, some arriving on foot or by horse-drawn taxis, others getting out of fancy cars."

Inside the Lodz Ghetto, the living quarters for his family consisted of one room with a stove, one bed for his parents, and one couch where young Stan slept. Food was scarce; their main staple was yellow beets; even their bread was made from beets. The family considered it a feast when they were able to acquire horse meat.

"At night I often thought, 'I hope I wake up as a German tomorrow so that I will have enough to eat.' "

Stan and his parents bribed their way from the Lodz Ghetto to the Warsaw Ghetto. Less than a year later, his family made a daring escape. His father distracted a German policeman while his mother bribed a Polish officer. "If the Polish officer had been doing his job, he would have shot us," he says.

What started in the ghetto with a young boy's curiosity and thirst for adventure played out in Stan's life. In 1951, he saw a U.S. Army recruiting film in Munich. He enlisted and became a member of the elite, newly-created Special Forces, later becoming an American Cold Warrior and a Green Beret. He completed Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry. A tour of duty in Korea was followed by two tours in Vietnam. Among his numerous medals are the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, and the Air Medal. He retired as a Major in 1979.

"I am what you would call an adventurer," he says with a smile.



*The Adventurer* by Becky Seitel

## New Library: Small, but Growing

Mitzi J. Levin, *Library and Media Coordinator*



Mitzi J. Levin, *Library and Media Coordinator*, in our new library.

Our new library is small, but growing!

We have books, audio tapes, videos, and teaching material about World War II, the Holocaust, and other genocides.

We welcome donations of books, audio tapes and videos that cover genocide, World War II, and specifically the Holocaust. We are also in need of metal bookcases.

We express our appreciation to the Gadsden members of the now closed congregation Beth Israel for their donation of books and a unique candelabra which was a gift to their congregation from a B'nai Brith Lodge in memory of those who perished in the Holocaust.

We thank Phyllis Bass, too, for the additional books and other material she has donated to our library from her late husband, Jack Bass large collection.

All materials are available to the public and are housed in our offices on the first floor of the Bayer Properties building at 2222 Arlington Avenue. Visiting hours are Monday—Wednesday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our offices are closed on holidays. Please call us at: 205.795.4176, with any questions.

## Guardians of Remembrance: Preserving Personal Stories

Denise Lewis, *Speaker Coordinator*



We continue to listen to the personal stories of our courageous survivors of the Holocaust. We do not want their stories to be forgotten. The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center feels we will become a bridge to remembering these stories by getting a “guardian” to listen and tell the survivor stories. The Guardian will work with the survivor and learn details of their lives during those years of the Holocaust. It is

so important to all on this committee to be able to continue to convey the lessons and experiences that these survivors have to share.

To assist in meeting our mission, the BHEC teamed with StoryCorps, a revolutionary initiative to inspire Americans to record stories from everyday people. StoryCorps is part of National Public Radio (NPR). A 40-minute conversation about their lives was recorded and one copy of this conversation was archived at the Library of Congress for future generations to hear. Through the Birmingham Jewish Federation, the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center was contacted by StoryCorps to provide them with seven people to participate in this project while they were in Birmingham during the month of January. The following shared their stories by participating in this project: Max Herzel, Ruth Siegler, Ilse Nathan, Max Steinmetz, Riva & Aisic Hirsch, Becky Seitel and Mitzi Levin, and Denise Lewis. Each had an interviewer to help with the questions for this recorded event.

The most valuable stories are the stories that only these participants can tell.

## Teacher Scholarships Awarded for Summer 2011

Ann Mollengarden, *Education Coordinator*



The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) has awarded 10 scholarships to teachers interested in advancing their expertise in Holocaust education. Scholarships will cover registration, airfare, and accommodations.

Teachers who applied had to complete an online application that included an essay on why they wanted to go and how they were going to apply what they learned in their classrooms. We were looking for teachers committed not only to teaching about the Holocaust, but those teachers who wanted their curriculum to enrich their students in such a way that they left the classroom different people.

One teacher who attended a workshop last summer recently let us know, "I am employing several strategies that I learned at Belfer (USHMM Workshop) last summer

to teach the Holocaust in my classroom over the next few weeks. I want you all to know that I am certainly passing it forward."

This year's recipients will attend the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Belfer Conference*, *Facing History & Ourselves' Holocaust & Human Behavior*, and the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous' *Summer Institute for Teachers/Lerner Fellowship*.

### U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum

Amanda Beason, *Leeds High School*  
 Faith Burns, *Springville Middle School*  
 Wes Cable, *Hoover High School*  
 Logan Greene, *Pinson Valley High School*  
 Justin Hefner, *Montevallo Middle School*  
 Mitsi Weems, *Cleveland High School*

### Facing History & Ourselves

Keith Minisman, *Hewitt-Trussville Middle School*  
 Lecetta Wright, *Council School (Birmingham City)*

### Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

Amy McDonald, *Shades Valley High School*  
 Ken Wiggins, *Ranburne High School*

These scholarship awards are made possible through the generosity of the Fred and Brenda Friedman Family Fund. For the past four years they have made sure that teachers in the greater Birmingham area have the opportunity to expand their knowledge base on the Holocaust and its pedagogy.

## Help Us Complete Our Survivor Registry

Ann Mollengarden, *Education Coordinator*



The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) and the Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) have been very fortunate to have so many active members from the survivor community working closely with us. But there are many Holocaust survivors who made their lives in Alabama after World War II that we know relatively nothing about.

For all such Holocaust survivors, living and deceased, we are interested in:

- Survivor's name at birth, date of birth, city of origin.
- When they left Europe and arrived in Alabama.
- Any locations (ghettos, camps, cities) through which they passed during the years of the Holocaust.
- Any videos or testimonies of their experience.

The Holocaust survivors that came to Alabama became part of the fabric of our state. Help us to share their stories with future generations.

For more information, please contact Ann Mollengarden, 205-967-9581, or [agmoll@bellsouth.net](mailto:agmoll@bellsouth.net)

## Special Event to Honor our Holocaust Survivors

Save the Date: Sunday, August 28, 2011



We're planning a very special dinner event to bring together our Alabama Holocaust survivors and show them how very much we value them and the personal stories that have touched our lives. This

Beth-El and will include a delicious dinner, Klezmer music, special guests, and a few surprises. Watch for an announcement when tickets go on sale. Funds raised will be used to continue and expand the educational initiatives of the BHEC, with the goal of bringing our survivors' stories to teachers and students throughout the state. Plan to join us on August 28<sup>th</sup>!

evening of celebration and tribute will be held at Temple

## BHEC Hosts Brown Bag Lunch Series

March 2011, Birmingham Public Library



### Wednesday, March 2

- "In the Footsteps of the Holocaust"
- Speaker: Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator for the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center and the Alabama Holocaust Commission.

Ann will speak about her recent study trip to Germany and Poland with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, tracing the evolution of Nazism and its genocidal policies, as well as the privilege of meeting over 50 rescuers.

### Wednesday, March 9

- "A Reluctant Journey from Vienna to New York"
- Speaker: Dr. Robert Adler, University of North Alabama

Dr. Adler will speak about the development of the Holocaust in Austria, focusing on his father's personal experience before, during, and after his capture by the Nazis as well as his final arrival in the U.S. He will also speak about the role of the Catholic Church, and particularly the role of Pope Pius XII in the rise of the Third Reich and the spread of Nazism in Europe, contrasted with the Pope and the Vatican's aid to Jews escaping the Holocaust, one of whom was his father.

### Wednesday, March 16

- "New Themes on Antisemitism"
- Speaker: Maury Shevin, Attorney, Birmingham, member of the Alabama Holocaust Commission

Mr. Shevin will speak about antisemitism in both its historical and current forms. His presentation will discuss some of the more vile forms, including the perverse notion that Zionism is racism, and the outrageous fact that Iranian and other Holocaust deniers are welcomed into the fraternity of nations.

### Wednesday, March 23

- "Survivors Stories: Anniston, Temple Beth El and the Holocaust"
- Speaker: Sherry Blanton, Anniston, Guardian of Remembrance for the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center

The congregation of Temple Beth-El in Anniston was founded in 1888 and among the members of the congregation, probably never totaling more than fifty families, were sixteen individuals with unique pasts. They were Holocaust survivors. These sixteen are now dead. The program will chronicle their lives.

### Wednesday, March 30

- "A Holocaust Survivor Speaks"
- Speaker: Max Herzel, Holocaust survivor, member of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center and the Alabama Holocaust Commission

At the age of 10, Max Herzel, along with his family, escaped from the Germany invasion of their home city of Antwerp, Belgium and sought refuge in France. Soon after their arrival in France, the Herzel's, along with other Jews, were rounded up, facing harrowing experiences during the next five years until their ultimate rescue.

\* The Library's display windows, located on the main floor, will be arranged by Esther Levy in a Holocaust theme.

## JFHNA to Sponsor Yom HaShoah Remembrance

The Jewish Federation of Huntsville and North Alabama (JFHNA) will sponsor a Yom HaShoah remembrance, Sunday May 1, 2011, 3:00 pm–6:00 pm. The event will be hosted by Temple B'nai Sholom. The featured speaker will be Dr. Wm. Samelson who survived the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Dr. Samelson holds a PhD from the University of Texas, Austin and has taught and published extensively on the Holocaust. He has received several awards, accolades, and medals recognizing his expertise on this subject, including the *Americanism, Award by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution*.

Also featured on the program is a narrative supported by music with lyrics in Yiddish. The narrator tells the story and the music and lyrics are those sung by the victims in the various camps, ghettos, and prisons. The Yiddish is a poignant legacy from the victims of this horrific era.

## Alabama Holocaust Commission Website

Bethany Latham, *Website Coordinator*

The Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) was established in 1999 by the state Legislative. We are indebted to Bethany Latham, Electronic Resource/Documents Librarian, Houston Cole Library, Jacksonville State University, for creating and managing the new website.

“I think my favorite part of the site is the photos. It is important to put a face on the Holocaust. Every photo is a picture of a victim; clicking on it provides information about their lives, what they went through before and during World War II, and whether or not they survived. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has these photos as part of their archival collections, for anyone to view online. They were kind enough to allow us to use them.”

Log on to the AHC website at [www.alabamaholocaustcommission.org](http://www.alabamaholocaustcommission.org) to learn more about our State Commission.

## A Major Announcement (continued from pg. 1 )

Phyllis G. Weinstein, *Chair*

It will take a while until our website, stationery, print, and brochure materials catch up with this change, but we are on our way, and it will happen in due time.

We are grateful and deeply appreciative of all who have contributed to our growth; this support is essential and means a great deal to us. As we move forward, we look to the continued recognition of the important role we play in bringing the history of the Holocaust to our students, teachers and citizens.

## Who Would Have Thought? (continued from pg. 2)

Barbara Solomon, *Exhibit Coordinator*

gratified to meet many of Opelika's community, government, and business leaders at the reception and to learn of the many programs the library has planned—especially those involving school group field trips to learn about the Holocaust.

In mid-February, the exhibit will be hosted by the Birmingham Public Library and will be there through the beginning of April. Plan to attend one or more of the month long series of weekly brown bag lunch programs to be held in conjunction with the exhibit. What a wonderful opportunity to view the exhibit if you have not already done so!

### Tikun Olam – Repairing the World

One of the gratifying aspects of this exhibit is the people it touches and the work it inspires them to do in their own communities. The exhibit motivates them to teach about the atrocities of the Holocaust, of human suffering and heartbreak; and also of courage and heroism. Through this experience, we hope to inspire our participants to join with us in *tikun olam*—to repair the world and to promote a world of justice and peace. Our program seeks to challenge its participants to step forward and take responsibility for insuring that such acts of cruelty towards others cease to exist in our future.

### Borrowing the Exhibit

If you are interested in learning more about hosting *Darkness into Life* in your community, please contact Barbara Solomon, Exhibit Coordinator, through the BHEC office at 205-795- 4176 or contact her via email at [Barbsolomon@bellsouth.net](mailto:Barbsolomon@bellsouth.net). Also, please visit our website [www.bhamholocausteducation.org](http://www.bhamholocausteducation.org) to view information and segments of the exhibit. We hope to bring *Darkness into Life* to your community soon!

**Alabama Holocaust Foundation**  
**Birmingham Holocaust Education Center**  
**P.O. Box 130577**  
**Birmingham, AL 35213-0577**  
**Phone: 205.795.4176**  
**www.alabaholocaustcommission.org**  
**www.bhamholocausteducation.org**

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Max Herzel	Bobbie Siegal
Kelly Kahn	Barbara Solomon
Sharon Kahn	Lemarse Washington
Deborah Layman	Dr. Steven Whitton
Eva Wilensky	

**BHEC MISSION STATEMENT:** *The Center seeks to facilitate education and understanding of the Holocaust by providing information, materials, speakers, teachers' workshops, community events, and programming. The Holocaust, the most significant event in recent world history, revealed both the peaks of heroism and the depths of cruelty and depravity that humans can experience. The Center hopes that, by learning from the past, students will fortify their knowledge and will be leaders in preventing such evil from recurring.*

**Yom HaShoah 2011**

**AUM Holocaust Education Day**

April 6, 2011—9:30 a.m.  
 College Gym

**Birmingham Community Remembrance**

“Through our Survivors’ Eyes”  
 Wednesday, April 27, 2011—6:30 p.m.  
 Temple Emanu-El.

**Jacksonville State University Remembrance**

April 7, 2011—7:30 p.m.  
 Speaker: Survivor Herbert Kohn of Atlanta, GA  
 www.holocaust.jsu.edu

**Montgomery Interfaith Remembrance**

Sunday, May 1, 2011—2:00 p.m.  
 Agudath Israel Etz Ahayem Synagogue

**State of Alabama Commemoration**

Tuesday, May 3, 2011  
 10:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m.  
 State Capitol—Old House Chamber  
 Lunch (\$10 per Person)—State Capitol—Archives Room  
 12:45 p.m.—1:00 p.m.  
 House Chamber—State House  
 Ceremony honoring Alabama Holocaust Survivors

**Receive Legacy By Email**

**Attention!**

**In an effort to curtail cost,  
 for those who are interested,  
 we are transitioning to an email delivery  
 system for Legacy.**

**Please provide us your email address on  
 the BHEC website at:**

**www.bhamholocausteducation.org**