

Survivor Walter Israel brings different story to Holocaust Commemoration

▼ By Benjamin Cunningham

News editor

More than 150 people gathered at Houston Cole Library Monday night to recall what many believe to be the most horrible event in human history.

The SGA and the JSU Holocaust Committee presented the 10th Annual Days of Remembrance Holocaust Commemoration before a large and diverse audience.

"Basically, it's to acquaint people with the facts of the Holocaust, that it did happen," said Linda Cain, who chairs the Holocaust Committee. "It's just a matter of transferring facts to people. A lot of people don't know about it."

Cain said that the committee tries each year "to present someone who either was there, or was involved in it, or someone that studies it." The keynote speaker at this year's ceremony was Anniston resident Walter Israel, who spent years fleeing the advance of the German armies and influence.

Israel told the audience his story, beginning with how he fled his home in Hannover, Germany,

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because of oppression against him due to his Jewish ethnicity. He fled to the Netherlands in 1937, but had to run again when he received a notice in 1942 that he was being sent to a concentration camp.

He left the country hiding in a tool compartment on a France-bound train, which eventually deposited him in Paris. Later that year, at Christmas, he fled to Spain where he spent eight months before taking a boat to the British West Indies. When the war had ended, he came to the United States where he was reunited in New Orleans with his sister, the only other member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust.

Israel came to Anniston in 1950 to work in a textile mill and has lived in the area since then.

Israel's story brought the facts of the Holocaust home to many members of the audience, includ-

ing the young people.

"I don't think you really realize how bad it was until you start to listen to people that were there," said Miranda Richman, a ninth-grader a Jacksonville High School who attended the ceremony with members of her geography class. "The only thing I knew about was Anne Frank; I didn't know how bad the concentration camps were," she said.

Richman and other members of the audience saw pictures of the concentration camps of the Holocaust in a short film shown prior to Israel's speech. Students and faculty members also spoke about the meaning of the Holocaust, and why it is important to remember the atrocities committed by Hitler's armies during World War II.

It may be more difficult to remember in the near future, however.

"Everything that we said tonight ... was the fact that the actual survivors are not going to be around much longer," said Steven Whitton, a JSU English professor and a member of the Holocaust Committee. "We've got to do something to remember," he said.



Accepting applause: Walter Israel (left) told his story to a large crowd at Monday's commemoration.