

A&M remembers Jewish holocaust

By PAUL BARTON
Campus Reporter

"Who has inflicted this upon us? Who has made us Jews different from all other people?" — Anne Frank, "The Diary of a Young Girl"

In the Old Testament the word holocaust denoted a wholly burnt sacrifice offered up to the god Yahweh.

In modern history the term symbolizes the systematic extermination of 6 million Jews during World War II by the Nazis.

Jews and others at Texas A&M University are taking time out this week, like people around the country, to reflect on that dark moment in history during National Holocaust Remembrance Week, an observance established by Congress in 1979.

"I'm glad that they are trying to make this an annual event," said Sol Klein, supervisor of the instrument shop in the physics department.

For many years Klein represented the local Jewish community on the Bryan Ministerial Alliance. There is no rabbi in the area.

A Reformed Jew, he still performs Jewish weddings and funerals when people ask him to, even though a justice of the peace must be present to make the marriage legal. Most recently he participated in the Holocaust Remembrance Program at the All Faiths Chapel Sunday night.

"I dread it when people talk about playing it (anti-Semitism) down," Klein said. "The more you play it down, the rougher it is going to get. A lot of Jews won't raise a ruckus. If the Jews in Europe had started screaming at the first, they might have attracted more attention."

Klein moved to Bryan 31 years ago as a jeweler. He grew up in an all-Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn. For that reason, he said he was not exposed to much anti-Semitism when he was young.

He did encounter some, however. Driving to a town in upstate New York he saw a sign one time that read "No Jews or Dogs Allowed."

"Notice they put Jews first," Klein said.

He also said that he and his wife were turned away from an apartment in Pittsburgh, once their religion was made known.

When the first news of German atrocities against Jews was received before the war Klein was still a teenager.

"It was a rough experience for Jews living in the United States at the time," said Klein.

His father sent postcards to relatives in Europe only to have them come back stamped with a swastika and the German word for "unknown."

"It happened four or five times," he said. "We never knew what happened to them. We assumed that they had been killed in a concentration camp."

Why are Jews so frequently the target of persecution? Klein lists two factors: the concept of the Jews as a "chosen" people and the frequent Sunday-school teaching that Jews were the killers of Christ.

He said anti-Semitism is much less severe than it used to be, though. Michael Chapman, 26, is an entomology major who is seriously considering entering a yeshiva, or Jewish rabbinical school, when he finishes at Texas A&M.

Chapman agrees the feeling that Jews killed Christ is responsible for much anti-Jewish sentiment, but he lists other factors as well.

"Most people believe wrongly that we're all rich," he said, "that we all control the banks or that we are all either doctors or lawyers. There is a certain amount of anti-Semitism that exists in any country. It just takes the right conditions to bring it out."

Chapman said he is afraid that in many ways the world has already forgotten the horror of the death camps. For instance, he said Nazi war criminals are no longer pursued with the same zeal and that those caught receive lighter sentences than they deserve. Looking back, Chapman is angered that churches in the West failed to speak out while Hitler's program was carried through. He said diplomatic cables received in the United States before the war indicated Jews were being persecuted, but nobody said anything.

Herbert Polinard, minister at Central Christian Church in Galveston and father of Texas A&M accounting major Mary Polinard, said, however, it is not fair to judge what went on in the 1930s and 1940s from the standpoint of today.

He added that some of the most stalwart men in opposition to Hitler were Christian clergy in Germany, including Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Otto Dibelius.

"By the time the church, the Jews, the gentiles and scientists, among others, knew what was going on it was too late to stop it," he said.

During the war Polinard served with the 132nd Evacuation Hospital unit Europe. He was at Dachau during the first week it was retaken from the Nazis.

When he entered the camp he said he saw up to 1,000 bodies stacked against the wall of the crematorium.

"There wasn't enough flesh left on the bodies to make a stench," he said. "There was an odor but it was not that of putridness."

He said the malnutrition had been so bad that up to 100 people a day

died even after the army started giving oatmeal gruel, orange juice and medicine to the survivors.

The Holocaust has caused serious soul-searching among many religious thinkers, considering the traditional Hebraic concept of a God ac-

"There is an enemy within us that makes us afraid of others, and the Holocaust should not be remembered so much as Nazis persecuting Jews, but as man persecuting man in the name of state or idea." — Herbert Polinard.

tive in history who rewards the righteous.

"If we have a crisis of conscience it should be about mankind, not God," Chapman said.

"I consider the Holocaust as something man allowed to happen. Man was created with a free will. He has the ability to create a world full of evil or one full of peace and harmony. What we need to do is re-evaluate our concept of humanity."

Polinard said that as horrible as the Holocaust was, it is still possible to see some good arising from it.

"It helped in making us see the need to look at mankind as a family," he said. "The Holocaust was not just anti-Jewish; it was anti-rational, anti-moral and anti-human."

He said the same type of thinking could arise anywhere. "This can happen to all of us," he said.

"There is an enemy within us that makes us afraid of others, and the Holocaust should not be remembered so much as Nazis persecuting Jews but as man persecuting man in the name of state or idea."

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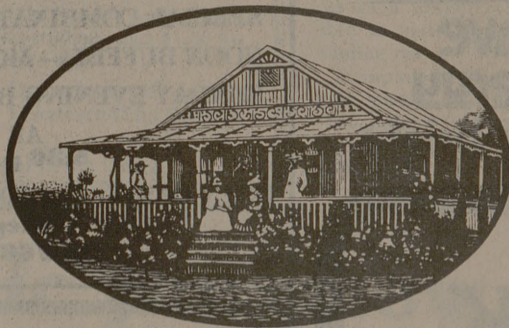
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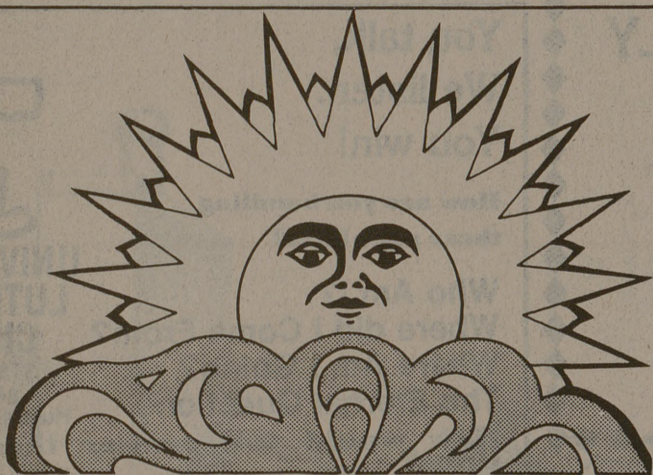
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