

A Holocaust survival story

"I was living in a constant state of shock...If there is such a place as hell, it could not be worse."

By Amanda Voss
Staff Writer

The Jacksonville Holocaust Committee and The Student Government Association will host an event that marks a period of time in history that only survivors truly understand.

This Thursday at 7:30 p.m., on the 11th floor of the Houston Cole Library, Jack Bass of Adamsville, Ala., will be telling his story of surviving five Nazi Concentration Camps including Auschwitz and Dachau.

Bass grew up with Anti-Semitism affecting his entire life. "Hitler was already in power when I was young, so it was already like being in prison,"

said Bass. "The government was already integrating Nazi teachers into my school as early as I can remember and they only taught what Nazi Germans had written or developed. The teachers put Jews down. We were prepared for the worst but didn't expect it to be completely what it was," said Bass.

His youth was spent being very careful and trying to avoid encounters with Hitler's troops. Bass remembers his mother saying, "Don't talk too loud on the streets and if you see soldiers take another road as quickly as you can."

At the age of 19, Bass had been ordered to work on a railroad station. "There was no choice; it was a dictatorship." It was then that he and the men whom he was working with were suddenly told to go to another part of the station and wait. Later the men were crammed into freight cars and taken to Auschwitz.

"I never saw my mother again and I never returned to my home," said

Bass. Later he would find out that with the exception of his sister, his entire family had been killed in gas chambers.

"Auschwitz II was the worst," said Bass. "We had to build everything from ground up. The prisoners were beaten and only fed two pieces of bread and soup that was made from the rotten leaves that the officers wouldn't eat. If there is such a place as hell it could not be worse," said Bass. His experience has made him a non-believer of Hell.

When asked what kept him going to survive, Bass said that he had to change the way he existed. "I was living in a constant state of shock."

After being moved to four other concentration camps, Bass remembers a sight that words can not describe. At twenty-two years of age, he saw the nurses from the Red Cross come in to save the survivors who were left. "They were just in time; one week later and we would have died."

Mr. Bass is developing more than just awareness for the future. His advice for this generation is to go to school and learn something. "Knowledge is very important in fighting prejudice," said Bass. "Prejudice grows from ignorance."

Bass blames the

German people for the heinous annihilation of the Jews. "Hitler was just one man." The German people put him in power.

Dr. Steven Whitton, Chairperson of the JSU Holocaust Committee and English professor, has been working with the memorial commemoration on campus for twenty years. The SGA began participating four years after the first commemoration and has been involved ever since.

"All of us on the committee work on this freely because we just simply believe that we mustn't forget and if we can educate people about what happened maybe it won't happen again," said Dr. Whitton.

SGA President Elizabeth Webb is looking forward to hearing Mr. Bass speak. "If students can see the impact then it is truly accomplishing our goal," said Webb.

All JSU students and faculty are invited as well as the public.

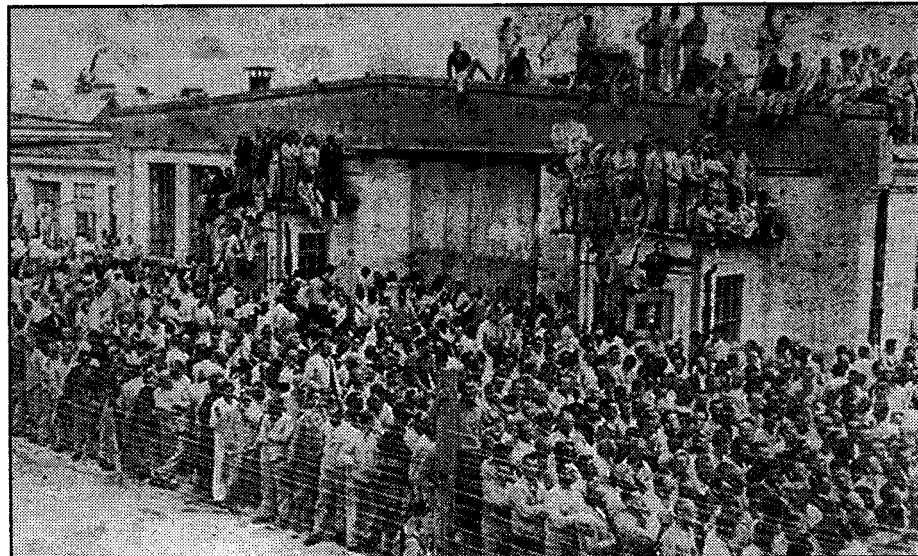
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-Jack Bass



photos and captions from www.ushmm.org

Jewish children, kept alive in the **Auschwitz II** (Birkenau) concentration camp, pose in camp uniforms between two rows of barbed wire fencing after liberation



Dachau inmates gather outside and on the roof tops of a camp building to hear a speech by Hitler