

Holocaust survivor remembers

By Laura Tutor
Star Staff Writer

JACKSONVILLE — Herbert Kohn's hand trembled slightly as he remembered. The faded square of paper in his fingers fluttered as he waved it above his head and tried to get his audience to understand.

It was the paper, folded and creased many times, that kept his father alive back in 1938. Concentration camp workers found it in his wallet when they searched him. An army award from World War I given by the Fuhrer himself, it was a ticket out of a camp and back to his family he had been taken from nearly a month before.

"That was the warped, twisted sense of honor they had, the Germans," Kohn said, his voice booming at the beginning of the sentence only to hush to a child's whisper at its end. "How?"

Herbert Kohn shared his memories with about 225 people Thursday night at the annual Holocaust commemoration at Jacksonville State University. Started in 1982, the memorial service is intended to make sure that future generations don't create people like Kohn — a survivor of the most organized genocide mission ever devised.

"Survivors are like windows allowing us to look inside the concentration camp walls," said JSU student Leah Gidley, one of a half-dozen speakers during the service.

Kohn was 12 years old when his family fled his native Frankfurt. The city's archives show that Kohns



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Holocaust survivor Herbert Kohn from Atlanta, shares his memories at JSU.

had lived in Germany for 500 years. When Adolf Hitler rose to power from the ashes of World War I, Kohn's parents and grandparents assumed he and his govern-

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ment policies would fade into the countryside.

By 1935, it became clear that Hitler wasn't going anywhere. Jews, long discriminated against in Germany, were being segregated and persecuted. It wouldn't be long before they were killed.

Kohn's family went to England and then came to the United States with the help of Mervin Sterne, a third cousin who lived in Anniston. They ended up in Demopolis, where

they learned to farm.

It's also where they began to rebuild their lives and live for those whom they had lost.

Kohn, a retired house builder from Atlanta, is a frequent speaker on the Holocaust. Most of his talks are to middle and high school children so that they will know how six million people died in killing factories and camps more than 50 years ago.

Even after telling his story so many times, the speeches don't get easier for Kohn. He still has to stop

himself and swallow hard near the end of his talk. It doesn't take much to turn the years back to a time when his family didn't know whether it would live or die.

Thursday night, when members of Temple Beth-El in Anniston ended the service by reciting the mourners' Kaddish, he repeated the words automatically.

His hands were folded, head bowed slightly.

Once again, Herbert Kohn remembered so that other people might too.