

This photo and article was published in the Lake section of the Orlando Sentinel on April 18,1998

It was saved by Manny Spaiman, a dear member of the congregation.

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Memorial to tragedy. Al Shanky, president of Congregation Beth Shalom, and Manfred Kohn, a Holocaust survivor,

recall troubling days as they look at the memorial Kohn built to honor the victims of the Holocaust.

Stones memorialize victims

Leesburg man has built a monument to honor those who died in Holocaust

By Bill Boyd

SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

LEESBURG — A permanent reminder of one of the darkest periods in the history of Judaism will be dedicated in a ceremony Sunday at the Holocaust Memorial at Hillcrest Memorial Garden.

The dedication ceremony on State Road 25A, south of Leesburg, will begin at noon, and the program will include several Lake County residents.

The memorial was designed and sculpted by Manfred Kohn, a Holocaust survivor and a member of Congregation Beth Shalom of Leesburg. The congregation has worked for several months, planning this dedication to be a longtime reminder of the slaughter of more than 6 million Jews in Germany during World War II.

The dedication program will include as guest speaker Rabbi R.J. Adler, emeritus, of Congregation Ohev Shalom, Orlando. Others on the program include Florida state Sen. Anna Cowin; Leesburg City Commissioner Bob Lovell; and the Rev.

Bill Boyer, pastor of First United Methodist Church, Eustis, and his wife, Nancy.

Al Shanky, president of Congregation Beth Shalom, and Rabbi Getzel Mularsky of Beth Shalom have issued a blanket invitation to the ceremony, which will be followed by a reception at the Leesburg Community Center, Venetian Gardens.

The memorial is the brainchild of 75-year-old Kohn, who built it and has included stones he collected in his travels to several German concentration camps.

Kohn is a native of Germany. His father was born in Hungary. The family was separated when millions of Jews were herded into concentration camps in Europe by the Nazis. He spent much of the war working as a child slave laborer.

After the war, he was taken prisoner by the Russians and was sent to a Russian concentration camp in Siberia, where he stayed for two years. Along with many other Jews, he found himself back in Germany after the war.

When he journeyed to Hungary after the war, he was able to determine that his parents were dead. He never heard again from his sister, Rosi, who had been a stu-

dent with him in a Jewish school in Munich.

Kohn married his wife, Ilona, in 1955. The two escaped from Hungary during the revolution in 1956. The Kohns had distant relatives in this country and were able to get permission to immigrate to New Jersey. His wife later died and was buried in the Jewish section of Hillcrest Cemetery near the monument.

Kohn said that he had the idea for the monument for many years and this drive prompted him to visit the concentration camps to collect the stones.

"I am hoping that people over the coming years will see the monument and ask what it means," Kohn said. "I hope that through this monument, generations of Americans will be able to recall the great injustice of the Germans toward the Jewish people."

He said it was not easy for him to visit the concentration camps because it brought back memories not only of his own incarceration, but also of friends and loved ones that he knew had died in the camps.

"I hope that this memorial will let succeeding generations of Lake County residents know the suffering and pain that the Jewish people felt during the slaughter of millions in Germany during World War II," Kohn said.