Shoah archives at FAU

By David A. Schwartz

Ruth Salton sat in a room at the Florida Atlantic University library in Boca Raton and watched the Holocaust testimony she videotaped with the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation more than a decade ago.

Filmmaker Stephen Spielberg started the Foundation in the early 1990s following the release of the movie “Schindler’s List” to record testimonies by Holocaust survivors and other witnesses.

The project, which was completed in 2000 after six years, has almost 52,000 testimonies, including more than 3,200 by survivors living in Florida.

Now the entire collection can be viewed at FAU’s LEAH USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive Center, one of 17 Centers at universities in the United States. The University of South Florida in Tampa is the only other educational institution in Florida with access to the archives.

The interviews can be viewed at only eight other Centers around the world, including Yad Vashem in Israel and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Funding for the FAU Archive Center came from LEAH (League for Education and Action). The collection also provides evidence to counter claims that the Holocaust didn’t occur, said Stephen Spiegel, LEAH executive director.

FAU

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The FAU Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive Center at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. Submitted photo

Robert Alrod, LEAH board chair, and Holocaust survivors Ruth and George Salton watch Ruth’s interview in the LEAH USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive Center at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

Archive users request the testimonials they want and the interviews are sent electronically to FAU’s computers from the Archive Center at the University of Southern California. Generally, testimonials are available within an hour or two but sometimes it can take up to 48 hours to receive them, William Miller, dean of the FAU libraries, said. The testimonies of Floridians are stored in FAU’s computers and available immediately, Miller added.

Testimonials can be continued on page 16

Robert Alrod, LEAH board chair, and Holocaust survivors Ruth and George Salton watch Ruth’s interview in the LEAH USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive Center at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. Submitted photo

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watched in the Center where there are two computers with large monitors or on computers around the library’s reference area, he said.

To use the computers contact Ken Frankel in the library’s Reference Department at 561-297-0079 or call the reference desk at 561-297-3785.

Alan Berger, a Holocaust scholar at FAU and director of the Center for the Study of Values and Violence after Auschwitz, called the archive a “treasure trove.” Berger said he has used the archive and recently sent students in his Holocaust class to the library to view videotapes of survivors in interviews and write about the Holocaust and its societal and personal implications.

Students have a kind of interaction with the survivors, Berger said. “The kids get it. They get the testimony much better than they get the books.”

Survivor Ruth Salton, 83, said both she and her husband George, 83, did interviews for the Shoah Project.

Salton said she survived the Warsaw Ghetto and was saved by a railroad worker who took her to his apartment where he was hiding other Jews.

Now Salton heads the 14-year-old, 500-member LEAH chapter at Ballenisles in Palm Beach Gardens.

She said she remembers people shouting “Tell the world” as they went to their deaths. “I’m a messenger,” Salton said. “You have to fight bigotry and hate.”