Boca women part of WWII event on display at FAU

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With war brewing in Europe in 1939, Anita Lowenberg and Charlotte Szereschewski each took a train ride that probably saved their lives.

Lowenberg was 6 years old and living with her divorced mother in Berlin. Szereschewski was 11 and living in Danzig with her parents and brother. The girls left their families in Germany to travel alone to Britain as part of a British rescue operation backed by Quaker, Christian and Jewish groups. It was called Kindertransport or Children's Transport.

From 1938 to 1940, Kindertransport took almost 10,000 children who were under 17 years old from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. About 75 percent of the children were Jewish and most were placed with foster families.

The experiences of Lowenberg and Szereschewski, now Boca Raton residents Anita Hoffer and Charlotte Kapp, will be remembered in the exhibit, "The Kindertransport Journey: Mem-ory Into History."

It contains pictures, documents and Jewish books and items from Florida Atlantic University's Judaica collection in the lobby of the S.E. Wimberly Library on the Boca Raton campus.

A PART OF HISTORY: Charlotte Kapp points to herself in a photo of Kindertransport children taken in London prior to the start of World War II. Photo by David Schwartz

The exhibit, which opened April 1, runs through April 30.

FAU libraries and the University's Center for the Holocaust and Human Rights Education brought "The Kindertransport Journey" to the campus. It has toured the United States for six years and was on display in Chapel Hill, N.C., before coming to FAU.

In an interview at the library, Hoffer recalled when her mother took her to the railroad station in the middle of the night and didn't tell her where she was going. "I was scared to death," Hoffer said. She lived in a London orphanage for a few months and stayed for 18 months with a woman she called Miss Scott. The two corresponded for years after World War II.

Kapp lived with a Gentile family and a Jewish family before she moved to a youth hostel for girls in London. "I was good at surviving whatever situation I found myself in," she said at the library as the exhibit was being readied.

Most of the Kindertransport children never saw their parents again.

The two Boca Raton women agreed that they were lucky.

Hoffer met her mother in London before the start of World War II and immigrated to the United States after the war. She saw her father 40 years later in Los Angeles.

Kapp reunited with her parents in the U.S. in 1948. "I always felt they were going to be OK," she said.

Hoffer and Kapp married and had children and careers in New York and New Jersey, respectively. Both are grandmothers.

Hoffer is president of the 160-member Kindertransport Association of Florida. Both women speak to students about the Holocaust.

A series of events scheduled during the month will feature a movie, lecture, presentation and discussions with other Kindertransport survivors.

Call the university at 561-297-2116 for information about the free events. S.E. Wimberly Library hours are 8 a.m. to midnight Monday to Thursday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and noon to midnight Sunday.