

The FLAME

A Yearly Update

Spring 2008

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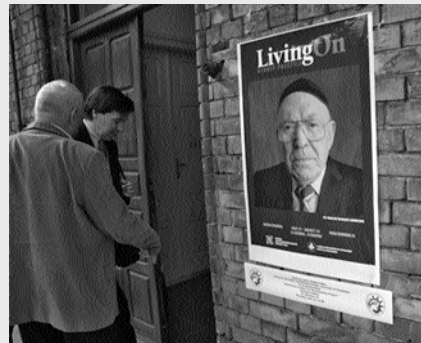
Living On Reaches Out to Poles

After Rob Heller photographed Holocaust survivors and soldiers-liberators living in Tennessee and worked to create an exhibition of the pictures, he was thrilled that it was shown throughout the state in 2004-2008.

For the exhibition, *Living On: Portraits of Tennessee Survivors and Liberators*, to have toured in Poland for much of the last year is beyond Heller's expectations.

The exhibit opened last June at Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts. It later traveled to the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, near the notorious concentration camp; Krakow's Galicia Museum; and to a public library in Wroclaw. Plans are progressing to bring *Living On* to Lodz and to Grossrosen, the latter a former Nazi labor camp. The exhibition's showings in Poland are being arranged by the American embassy in Warsaw and consulate in Krakow.

"It's amazing to me that this exhibition is traveling throughout Poland like this," said Heller, who teaches photojournalism and graphic design at the University of Tennessee. "The fact that the embassy and the consulate are taking ownership of this, in the most positive sense, is a wonderful thing.



**Posters for *Living On* exhibit
welcomed visitors at the entrance
to the Spokojna Gallery in Warsaw.**

I take pride in its being shown to so many people. It's going so far beyond what we originally thought about. We'd done a great job of getting it throughout the state of Tennessee, but I never imagined that it'd be getting the kind of play it's getting in Poland."

The Tennessee showings consisted of all 73 portraits taken by Heller, including text written by Nashville journalist Dawn Weiss Smith. Additional interviews were conducted and written by curator Susan Knowles. The Poland exhibitions consist of 36 portraits, including many of Holocaust survivors who were born in and near Poland.

To eliminate the high cost of shipping overseas, all 36 images were transmitted electronically to Poland, then printed and framed there, Heller explained. U.S. diplomats in Poland "did all the work," he said.

The Warsaw opening was attended by Heller, THC chair Felicia Anchor and Ambassador Victor Ashe, a Tennessee native. In Krakow, the American consul general, Anne Hall, and Germany's consul general, Thomas Glaser, attended the October 17 opening. Hall also attended the Wroclaw opening and pronounced it to be "very powerful," said Susan Parker-Burns, the public affairs officer at the U.S. consulate in Krakow.

The embassy and consulate took an active role in promoting the Poland tour for three primary reasons, Parker-Burns explained. *Living On*, she said, represents "a great way for us to get [exposure] into one particular state." It also is a "relevant, valuable, connection" because "so many people in the exhibition have links to Poland." Finally, she said, "we're trying to interest young people, so they're exposed to their past in a way that we hope is positive."

"Lots of Poles may not know about survivors in a state like Tennessee," Parker-Burns continued. "By giving people a look at ordinary

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Tennessee Holocaust Commission, Inc.
2417 West End Avenue
Nashville, TN 37240
(615) 343-2563, 343-1171
FAX: (615) 343-8355
tnholcom@vanderbilt.edu

Hillel Kuttler, editor
Arlene Samowich, designer

Phil Bredesen, Governor
Felicia F. Anchor,
Commission Chair
Ernest G. Freudenthal,
Secretary/Treasurer

Commissioners and Directors
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Leonid Saharovici, Memphis
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E. Thomas Wood, Nashville

Ruth K. Tanner,
Executive Director
Stacey L. Knight,
Administrative Assistant

Living On continued from page 1
people — many of the survivors [depicted] lived in Poland — it's very, very valuable. The title is perfect: how they've gone on, how they've lived on. When you talk about the Holocaust, there's nothing more important than reading first-hand accounts. The photographs themselves are so compelling."

Attendance at the Poland showings is free to the public. The American embassy and consulate provided small grants to Polish institutions with which it partnered to pay for invitations, refreshments at the openings and for shipping, Parker-Burns said.

Although Heller was familiar with the subjects of his photographs from having spent time with them, he said that his "jaw dropped" upon seeing their images displayed in their native land. The photographs' coming to Poland proved that the people "really did live on," Heller said.

"To see those large faces hanging on the wall, with the stories in English and Polish and people reading the stories, and to know that it continues to have a powerful effect on people, is just wonderful," he said.

Heller said that he appreciated the opportunity to walk the streets and earth of Poland and to see "even just a little" of the context of his subjects' earlier lives. He also photographed Jewish sites in Krakow, Warsaw and Oswiecim.

"I feel like I've produced another body of work that might be an exhibit on their own, that I feel are important photographs with stories attached to them, to take what I did with *Living On* and go forward with it."

In Nashville, Living Subjects



For Eric and Eva Rosenfeld (shown above), volunteering at the *Living On* exhibition at the United Jewish Communities' General Assembly (GA) last November was personal. Both Eric and Eva were photographed for this special, limited exhibition.

At the GA, as conference attendees milled about the photographs in the convention center, the Rosenfelds were available to answer questions.

Eric participated in the event for the same reason that he and Eva speak to groups about their experiences: because "I feel a responsibility to tell the story, especially to the young people," he said. "We always feel that anything we can do to talk about our stories — to schools, organizations and churches — makes it so much more impressive, rather than [their having to] see it in a video or movie."

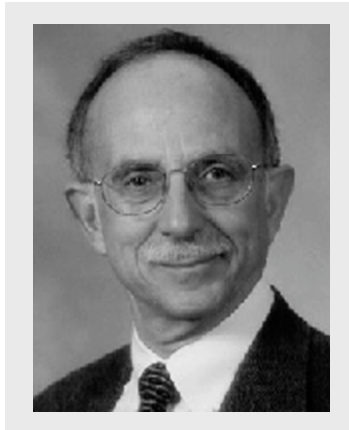
The Rosenfelds told those at the GA about their background, the development of the *Living On* project and how a documentary came to be made about it.

"One woman from New York ... recognized one woman in a picture and said, 'I'm related to her. I have to get in touch with her,'" she said. "You know how things go. You meet people you never thought you'd meet again."



Shown at *Living On* opening in Warsaw, Poland: From left to right: Israeli Ambassador to Poland David Peleg, photographer Robert Heller, Tennessee Holocaust Commission Chair Felicia Anchor, Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich and U.S. Ambassador to Poland Victor Ashe.

THC Mourns Lon Nuell



THC lost a great asset and an esteemed man with the sudden passing of Lon Nuell on March 12.

Nuell, 68, a longtime art professor at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), was a THC commissioner since its founding in 1983. He also co-founded MTSU's Holocaust studies committee.

Nuell helped push for THC's expansion into education throughout the state. Former chair Bev Asbury credited Nuell with "putting together the philosophy of the THC" that continues today.

"Lon was an extraordinary colleague and friend," said THC's executive director, Ruth Tanner. "His dedication, humor and sensitivity will be sorely missed."

Bob Levy, a fellow THC commissioner who served with Nuell for many years, said that Nuell was the driving force in helping THC secure the Sid Chafetz lithographs and Nelly Toll's watercolor paintings (see article below) — both of which, Levy explained, are important in conveying the Holocaust through visual arts.

Nuell will be remembered for his "enormous passion" for Holocaust education, but also for highlighting "other acts of tyranny and brutalization that happened and continue to happen," Levy said.

"His genius was helping people learn about the Holocaust and also what that means in the 21st century. It's what the Tennessee Holocaust Commission is charged to do, and it's the right thing," Levy stated. Nuell was bothered by those who argued "the mathematics" of whether other mass killings also constituted genocide, Levy recalled.

"For him, it was a public duty to make sure that succeeding generations understand about the Holocaust and about other things. He was passionate about [the genocides in] Rwanda, Darfur, Armenia," Levy added. "He always wanted to keep peoples' eyes on the ball."

Nuell was honored in April at the Days of Remembrance observance at the State Capitol. Rep. Mark Maddox, a fellow commissioner, remembered Lon to an audience of other legislators, survivors, liberators and the general public. In his thoughtful remarks he quoted Lon's widow, Christie, who observed: "Lon believed that 'if he saw a wrong, he'd stand up and say it eloquently and with respect, but he wouldn't back down.'"

THC Acquires Nelly Toll Prints

THC intends to make available to educators in Tennessee and in other states the newest addition to its collection: prints of more than 40 paintings by Nelly Toll. The watercolors were painted on 5"x7" and 7"x10" drawing paper when Toll and her mother Rose were in hiding from the Nazis in 1942 and 1943 in their hometown of Lvov, Poland (now Ukraine).

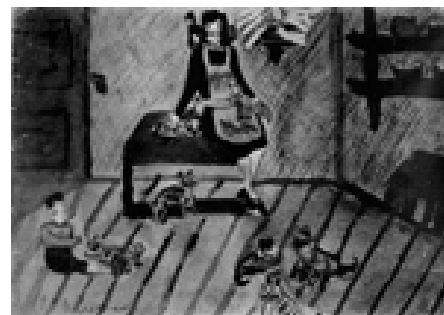
Some of the images appeared in Toll's acclaimed book about the ordeal, *Behind the Secret Window*. Toll painted ordinary scenes — a girl walking hand-in-hand with her father, a girl cradling a dog at the park — that, for a six-year-old child in hiding, idealized her reality.

The late THC commissioner, Lon Nuell, had arranged last year for the acquisition of the prints. THC arranged for the prints to be curated, matted and framed. At his death,

Nuell was working on plans to utilize them in Holocaust education classes throughout the state.

"It's ready to travel," said THC executive director Ruth Tanner. "Our next objective will be to market this as a traveling exhibition. What's appealing about [the images] is that they're very fresh, a child's drawings of her imagined life if she were able to be free. Fortunately, she survived," Tanner said. They "are the drawings of a child looking at life from the inside out," she added.

Toll, who lives in New Jersey, donated the prints because "I wanted to circulate [them] to various schools in Tennessee and out of state," she said. "It's important for kids to see what a child did."



THC Fellows Apply Lessons to Students

To social studies teacher Julie Mitchell, teaching the Holocaust to aspiring teachers comes down to stressing the two fundamentals developed by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM): defining the word “Holocaust” and using age-appropriate materials.

Athena Davis developed an English electives class, “The Holocaust in Literature and Film.”

Nancy Schwartz helps her history students understand America’s inaction in response to the Holocaust by discussing the domestic front and the racial climate then.

The three women teach different subjects at different schools, but have in common their roles as THC Teacher Fellows who are utilizing creative methods for imparting themes related to the Holocaust.

* * *



Julie Mitchell

In Mitchell’s case, “creative” means returning to the basics. Mitchell teaches sixth-grade social studies at Lake Forest Middle School, in Cleveland, but also has run programs in Lee University’s education department for teaching the Holocaust.

She emphasizes to the education students the importance of conveying material that sometimes is unfathomable in ways that can be understood.

For example, Mitchell said, she urges those in her college class — who will be teaching such diverse disciplines as math, reading, history and foreign languages — to refrain from asking students to try to experience the sufferings of Holocaust victims. Such exercises might seem like a thoughtful approach, but, Mitchell said, are untenable.

“You can’t put students through a simulation at all. Survivors are the first ones to say, ‘You can never know what we felt.’”

“If you tell a student, ‘Let’s not eat for three days to know what it’s like to starve to death’ — they’ll eat after the third day, but a person in the Holocaust didn’t know if or when they’d get the next meal.”

Instead, Mitchell encourages teachers to utilize photographs taken during the Holocaust. The photographs can provoke discussion around such a question as: What caption would describe what is being shown? Or, she will display photographs and ask participants to read several passages of text, and then discuss what passage best matches each image.

Mitchell knew early on that her approach was working. A Lee student, she said, “looked on-line for Holocaust lesson plans and analyzed [them] for whether they followed USHMM guidelines,” Mitchell said. The student then told her, “If you handed me a lesson plan without the USHMM guidelines, I might have thought it was a good lesson plan. Now, I know otherwise.”

* * *



Athena Davis

Davis, who teaches at Cleveland High School, offers the Holocaust elective for 11th and 12th graders. The class runs 90 minutes daily, every day, for the spring semester.

Half of her students already studied the three-week Holocaust unit in Davis’s sophomore English honors class.

Davis had returned from THC’s Washington seminar in November 2006 knowing that she wanted to develop an intensive Holocaust elective. “I always felt so pressured to only have three weeks for [Holocaust studies], and thought, Why not do this for the whole semester?”

Now, instead of spending 30 minutes teaching about the Nazis’ ghettos or about personal responsibility, she dedicates a week to each.

For the discussion of the ghettos, Davis organized an activity on the nightmarish dilemma confronting Chaim Rumkowski in the Lodz ghetto in 1942, when the Nazis forced him to deliver 24,000 inmates for deportation to concentration camps. Another activity centered on the famous photograph of the Jews captured following the Warsaw ghetto uprising and of Peter Fischl’s 1994 poem about it, “To the Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up.”

Each student was asked to write a poem to any other person appearing in the photograph, an example of ecphrastic poetry. Davis was surprised by how many students addressed their poems to the Nazi soldier who aimed his gun at the boy in the foreground.

The Rumkowski and Fischl discussions “were the two most emotional classes so far,” Davis said. “I knew I probably was about to get choked up about Rumkowski’s speech, and I did. So did they. It was intense.”

The class also has read *Salvaged Pages*, a compilation of excerpts from diaries kept by children during the Holocaust. One student did extra research on one diarist and prepared a slide presentation on him.



Athena Davis’s literature class

“Anytime they are so enthralled and go beyond the 90 minutes in the classroom,” Davis said, “that’s the highest compliment any teacher can get.”

Davis has just received exciting news: Cleveland High School has approved the elective she designed for Spring 2009.

* * *

Nancy Schwartz teaches American history to 11th graders at Nashville’s Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet High School. She poses one



Nancy Schwartz

question to the class, which guides their work during the three-week unit on the Holocaust.

Schwartz had refined the question until she was convinced that it would spur a student to employ

critical thinking in analyzing primary-source documents — including newspaper articles and Hitler’s letters — and then in writing an essay.

The question: Prior to the discovery of the concentration camps, what did Americans know about the Holocaust and how did America respond?

Schwartz first utilized the exercise last spring and is repeating it this semester.

After attending THC seminars, Schwartz felt the need to explore the theme herself. “I wanted to know, in the context of the time frame I’m teaching, what did the Americans really know? I was wondering: If we knew, why didn’t we do more? I came up with this DBQ [document-based question] last year. Through research and reading, I got an answer to my question, but I needed a way to get it to my students.”

Students assumed that all Americans knew a great deal about the Nazis’ extermination of the Jews. Schwartz taught about the domestic context then because “I wanted them to realize that the people of the United States did not know, and that much of the reason was because they chose to ignore it. There was so much anti-Semitism in the United States then.”

Schwartz also distributes period newspapers. She points out to students that even when news articles on the Holocaust appeared, they frequently were buried in the back. In another activity, students read a contemporary newspaper. That newspaper happened to contain an article on the Holocaust, yet only one of her 100 students in four classes spotted it.

“I felt that it was a worthwhile activity,” Schwartz said. “We focus on the America of the 1940s. We might include a family whose loved one was in the Pacific and people who didn’t know any Jews personally. We watch their reactions unfold as we go through the unit: Hitler comes to power; the persecution of Jews begins and evolves to its terrible conclusions.

“It’s an entirely different view. It’s a look from a different angle.”

Jodi Elowitz Named Executive Director of the Tennessee Holocaust Commission



Jodi Elowitz

The Tennessee Holocaust Commission (THC) is pleased to announce that Jodi Elowitz will become the organization’s new executive director, succeeding current retiring director Ruth Tanner. After a four-month national search, Ms. Elowitz won the enthusiastic endorsement of the search committee.

Ms. Elowitz, who has more than eight years of experience in the field of Holocaust education and programming, will begin her new responsibilities on August 1. “I am looking forward to bringing all the skills and knowledge I have gained over the last several years in Minnesota to Tennessee and to continuing the great work of the commission on the eve of its 25th anniversary,” said Elowitz upon accepting the position.

As director of education for Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas (JCRC) and its award-winning educational initiative Tolerance Minnesota, Elowitz designed numerous educational programs and resources, and taught seminars and classes to educate teachers and students about topics including

anti-Semitism, anti-bullying, civil rights, race as seen through popular culture and the Holocaust. Elowitz specializes in Holocaust education and recently completed a project entitled “I was Given Life Twice: The Story of Hinda Danziger Kibort,” an interactive resource that includes, lessons, artifacts, written and visual testimony and photographs to help teachers and students learn about the Holocaust from the perspective of a survivor.

Elowitz received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Humanities and her Masters degree in Holocaust Studies from the University of Minnesota.

Workshop Strengthens Teachers' Hands

Kim Murdoch-Smith has long been interested in Holocaust education, and teaches it in her history classes at Nashville's Cohn Adult High School. However, she knew little about the Nazis' military plan to conquer Europe or about their theories of social Darwinism.

Her knowledge expanded in those subject areas at a day-long workshop for Nashville educators she attended on December 14 at Vanderbilt University. The workshop, co-sponsored by THC, drew 55 teachers from 33 schools. It utilized "Echoes and Reflections," a multimedia program developed in 2005 by Yad Vashem, the Anti-Defamation League and the USC Shoah Foundation.

Learning about the underpinning of Nazi ideology was "new territory" for her and will enable her to more effectively convey the material to students, Murdoch-Smith said. "When the teacher has a deeper understanding of something ... you have a lot more certainty about it and can teach it more clearly," she said.

"Echoes and Reflections" helps to expose educators to the variety of tools available for teaching about the Holocaust. It is "a comprehensive curriculum with 10 themes," explained Shelley Rose, associate director of ADL's southeast regional office, who ran the Nashville workshop. "Echoes and Reflections" includes the filmed oral testimony of rescuers and survivors, developed by the Shoah Foundation; and photocopies of Nazi documents and artifacts, provided by Yad Vashem.

According to ADL, nearly 5,000 American educators and community leaders have participated in "Echoes and Reflections" workshops in the nearly three years since its development.

"What makes this curriculum unique is the visual history and Yad Vashem's documents," Rose explained. "It's a powerful curriculum. The first time I saw it, I was blown away by the comprehensiveness of it. It brings it all together for the teachers — including specific activities they can do in the classroom, photographs, poetry, memos from Nazi officials, photography, art — to let students look at it and learn what happened."

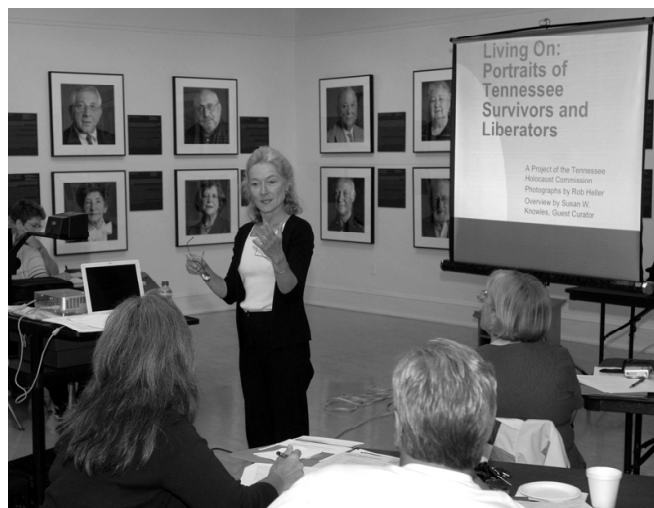
The program was developed to help teachers convey the material not as "a rote recitation of facts," but by enabling students to "make the connection" personally to the history, Rose said.

Murdoch-Smith said that the resources shared in the program are tailor-made for her needs and represent "our ammunition" to become better teachers.

Murdoch-Smith intends to utilize those resources in her American history classes on World War II. She particularly hopes to help those students who were confined to refugee camps in Africa make the connection to Jewish refugees.

"The textbooks have just two pages — it's too inadequate to cover the scope of the Holocaust. It's great to know that we have that support of the sponsoring organizations, Murdoch-Smith said, "and I'm deeply appreciative of it. This is my 26th year of teaching, and none of these resources existed before."

ETSU Living On Seminar September 2007



Susan Knowles



Paul Fleming



Survivor Sonja Dubois with teachers

Reflections on Retirement

After 13 years as THC's executive director, I will retire at the end of July. As I think about my tenure with the commission, I recall how much my role has changed in that time, how much I have grown and how much THC's mission has expanded.

When I began working for THC in July 1995 my job description was much more limited. At the urging of former chair Beverly Asbury, and with the support of the full commission, the job of executive director was created in 1996. Fulfilling that very large, encompassing expectation has been personally and professionally rewarding. I've loved it.

Two accomplishments are most important to me.

The first is THC's remarkable outreach to teachers statewide. While this goal remains to be fully realized, our ability to teach teachers how to enrich their teaching about the Holocaust will have long-lasting consequences. My relationships with teachers — since my working life began in a high school classroom — has been a source of genuine pleasure from which many friendships have blossomed.

The second, deeply satisfying, accomplishment is the realization of the *Living On* project in all its manifestations. When we began laying out the goal of interviewing and photographing all willing Holocaust survivors and liberators in Tennessee in the winter of 2004, we had no concept of all that would come to fruition in four short years. From designing and guiding the interview format, to planning for the first museum exhibition and working with museum directors and educators at all sites, to creating an itinerary for travel within Tennessee, to assisting in the production of an hour-long television documentary and development of a

dedicated Web site, to designing a teacher training seminar to complement and accompany the exhibition, to, finally, the publication of a handsome book just published by University of Tennessee Press, the outcome has been extraordinary.

In the end, I will remember most the personal relationships I have nurtured. I will always hold dear THC's commissioners and directors

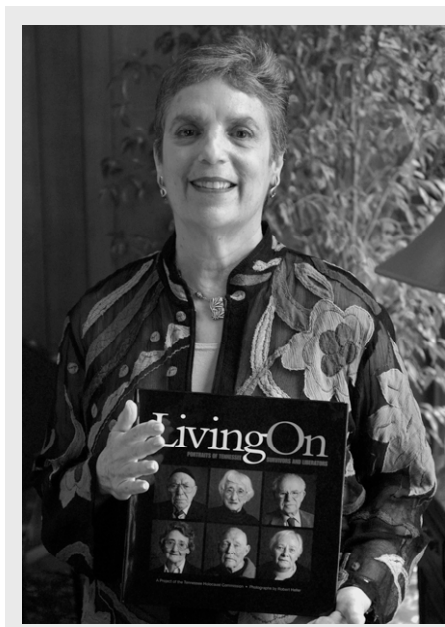
whom I count as good friends and the many consultants with whom I have been privileged to work as together we tackled an amazing array of projects that fulfill THC's mission.

I especially treasure the friendships I developed both with survivors and US Army witnesses (soldiers and liberators) as a result of *Living On*. I have been enriched because of them and know that

many of these individuals regard me with equal tenderness. I also came to know, admire and respect the work of teachers and museum educators. My relationships with all these people have been the highlight of my career. Through them I believe that I have had an impact on hundreds of other teachers and thousands of students in Tennessee.

When I look back over this time, I feel that I have made an important, creative contribution to sustaining the ethical and historical lessons of the Holocaust. I am honored by this legacy.

- Ruth Tanner



THC Welcomes New Commissioners

In the past two years, THC welcomed new appointees as commissioners: Patty Marks and Larry Leibowitz.

Marks was appointed to THC last year. She is president elect of Nashville's Congregation Ohabai Shalom, where for the past seven years she has led a women's Torah study group. She is a para-rabbinic fellow there, able to officiate at such events as funerals, the naming of babies and circumcisions.

Leibowitz, appointed in 2006, is a trial lawyer at the Knoxville law firm Leibowitz & Cohen. He has been involved in Jewish organizational life, including serving on the board of the American ORT Federation. Leibowitz also has been active politically and counts Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen among his friends. For the past two years, he has served as Chairman of the Board of Child and Family Tennessee.

Marks and Leibowitz said that they were honored to be appointed to THC and intend to advance the commission's goals.

"I appreciate the education that [THC members] support," said Marks. "As we lose the [Holocaust] survivors, it's so important to teach the future generations about the lessons learned."

Marks and Leibowitz expressed interest in expanding the touring reach of the THC-initiated photographic exhibition, *Living On: Portraits of Tennessee Survivors and Liberators* (see related article).

Leibowitz sees his role on THC as a liaison between the commission and state legislators. "I hope that I can, in some manner, help to strengthen the financial underpinnings of the commission, because most of our funding comes from state government," he said.

"I believe that it's important for the memory of what happened during the Holocaust to be kept alive by reminding younger generations of what can go wrong in a society, and that we can keep them vigilant against its happening again," he said.

Spotlight on 2007-2008

THC commissioners get their first opportunity to review the newly released book about *Living On*.



THC Executive Director Ruth Tanner and Stacey Knight, administrative assistant.



Paul Fleming, Ruth Tanner and Susan Knowles exchange ideas at the ETSU seminar.



This photograph by Rob Heller contrasts past and present on the wall of one of the few remaining Warsaw Ghetto tenements.

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