

After Hours

SKA to host a bridge meeting

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Island Beat



The Florida Department of Transportation decision last week on the north bridge project timeline was a major topic of conversation for the key.

And while Catherine Luckner, president of the Siesta Key Association, was delighted the Powers That Be at the FDOT listened to the public's pleas to keep at least one lane open at all times, she was disappointed that the department didn't announce another public meeting sooner than May 2012.

Such a meeting was one of the requests related to the project that SKA, Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, Siesta Key Village Association, Siesta Key Condominium Council and Bay Island Siesta Key Association had included in an April 21 letter to the FDOT.

On May 17, she said, "... I will be calling [Public Information Director] Cindy [Clemmons] today to see if we can have that [meeting]. She's been pretty responsive."

Just two days later, Luckner forwarded to me an e-mail from Clemmons saying the bridge project team would be happy to attend the SKA's July 7 meeting to discuss the details.

Luckner had pointed out last week that her own husband Bob and Malcolm Scott, president of the Bay Island Siesta Key Association, are both chemical engineers. They had a good discussion with the FDOT officials who came to the key in March for a public meeting on the bridge, she said; they pointed out some potentially time- and money-saving efforts that the state engineers apparently had not considered.

For example, she said, painting of new parts of the structure can be done before the pieces are placed on the bridge – an idea that could enhance safety, too.

Other potentially worthwhile ideas could come from the public, Luckner noted. That was all the more reason she felt another meeting would be fruitful before the FDOT issues its request for bids.

And the FDOT obviously listened again.

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BY
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Neil Klaber knew his dad had survived the Holocaust – hidden, with about 11 other Jews, by a Dutch farmer.

But the full impact of that knowledge didn't strike Klaber until he was 12, when his parents took him and his older brother to visit relatives in Germany and they decided to stop first in The Netherlands, where they located the widow of the Dutch farmer who had spared Herbert Klaber from Hitler's atrocities.

"... She remembered him," Klaber says.

She wrapped his tiny father in a great big hug.

That was in 1973. Klaber started thinking about what a short time had passed since the end of World War II. "It was like history hit me in the face."

Then in 2008, Klaber traveled again to Germany, this time for the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the "Night of Shattered Glass," which generally is regarded as the beginning of the Holocaust. Though Herbert Klaber was unable to make that journey, he was one of the few Jewish survivors from the town who were still alive.

"It was like a wake-up call to me," Neil Klaber says. "These people are dying out ..."

And that is all the more reason Neil says he is horrified when some modern world leaders deny the Holocaust ever took place. "It hurts me," he says simply, "that my father has to see this again in his lifetime."

Yet, Klaber confesses he's had friends ask, "When are you guys going to get over it?"

"I laugh," he says. "It's a ner-

vous laugh. No. We're never going to get over it." Then last year, his membership in the Temple Emanu-El Brotherhood in Sarasota enabled him to conceive a plan to help preserve the memory of the Holocaust and perhaps aid in preventing its repetition.

The president of the Brotherhood knew Klaber also is a member of Generations After, a group of children of Holocaust survivors, which had been organized through the Jewish Federation of Sarasota/Manatee. When the Brotherhood president asked Klaber how he felt about the Brotherhood taking on the sale of yellow candles, Klaber thought it was a good idea, but he "wanted to take it a step further."

According to the FJMC Foundation, the yellow candles have been used for decades on Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) to "enable [people] to remember victims ... with an observance in their homes." The photo on each candle holder shows young people at the gates of the Auschwitz concentration camp, where almost 1 million of the 6 million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during World War II.

Temple Emanu-El sold 360 yellow candles (above) this year, a significant number, according to Rabbi Elaine Glickman, "because 18 and 36 are very meaningful numbers in Judaism; 18 is the numerical value of 'chai,' the Hebrew word for life, and 36 is considered double-'chai.' So selling a multiple of 36 is especially life-affirming."

For another generation, awareness and remembrance



(L. to r.) Joshua Silverman, 12; Rachel Silverman, 11; Allison Kraner, 11; and Rachelle Wetsman, 11, were among the Religious School students who participated this year in the Yellow Candle Project.

Klaber expanded on the idea to create the Yellow Candle Project for students in the temple's Religious School.

After winning support from Rabbi Brenner Glickman and Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman, he began working with Sabrina Silverberg, director of the Religious School, to have her seventh-graders research Holocaust victims through the database maintained by Israel's Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem.

Each student recorded the names of 25 victims, along with the date of death and the age at death for each one, and wrote a message about the person. Then they attached to a yellow candle a handwritten label with the information. That way, the purchaser could light the candle on Holocaust Remembrance Day and say Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, for the person named on the candle.

Klaber initially had some concerns about, in effect, selling people's names, but he says the project really is about bringing those names back to life.

He also asked that each student write an essay about one of the people they researched.

This year, the Religious School expanded the program to sixth-graders. Altogether, 10 seventh-graders and 13 sixth-graders created the candles before Holocaust Remembrance Day, which fell on May 1.

The victims the students researched ranged from infants to young teens – 13 years of age. Silverberg says the students undertook the project with the idea of finding victims they could somehow relate to.

In her reading, says Rachelle Wetsman, 11, "you see they weren't any different than you are."

It was very difficult to understand, she adds, that children as young as a 1-year-old "were slaughtered just for being Jewish."

Allison Kraner, 11, says the project was especially meaningful to her because the victims she learned about "never had anybody to remember them"; their family members also had perished.

For Joshua Silverman, 12, the biggest impact was "writing the essay and [learning] how terrible it was to live that life ... so I will never forget that."

Once the survivors are all gone, Silverberg points out, the Holocaust "is just going to become a story, and we have to do all that we can to keep that story alive, to prevent [the Holocaust] from happening again – [and] not just to Jewish people."

"I would love to see a candle in every home, not just a Jewish home, but every home on Yom HaShoah," Klaber says. "That would be a great, great goal."



Neil Klaber and Sabrina Silverberg.