

A message of magnitude

The Basketball Hall of Fame and the Hatikvah Center are in partnership on two new, poignant exhibits.

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SPRINGFIELD - Earl Lloyd, the first black man to play in a National Basketball Association game, was at the Hatikvah Holocaust Education Center yesterday, doing what he does best, representing the sport of basketball.

Lloyd was a good-willed, good-natured man with a message - born of his own experience as a pioneer - about hate, and how to deal with it.

But on this day, in this place, there could be no star other than Herb Roth.

In 1938, Herbert L. Roth, then of a tiny village known as Roth, Germany, was one of 11 who escaped the slaughter of the five Jewish families who lived in Roth.

Yesterday, Herb Roth, now of Chicago, walked into the new, permanent exhibit at the Center,

called "A Reason to Remember: Roth, Germany 1933-1942," and saw his life in Germany played out before him.

Roth saw pictures and text about his family - his mother, father, sister and brother, who survived, and four who did not. He saw displays about the other families.

He saw what he knew, that while 11 survived, 20 were murdered; that the Nathans and Bergsteins had no survivors; that they went to the death camps, places like Buchenwald, Auschwitz and Birkenau.

He saw the reason why it is so important to Liz Rome, a volunteer who puts in 40-hour weeks, that the Hatikvah Center's exhibit, "not be considered just a memorial, but more that it is a reminder that this hate still exists."

"It was an amazing display of the pictures I have in my mind," said Roth. "There were five or six hundred people in the village and we knew all the four other families, three were related directly to my family."

It is the Roth family, though - Herb, his wife Elsa and daughters Deborah Roth-Howe of Amherst and Janet Walters - that

has been the driving force behind the exhibit, which was actually started in 1998 by a high school faculty in Germany.

It has since become enhanced by the Hatikvah Center and its Executive Director, Rabbi Robert Sternberg.

Lloyd, in Springfield for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame's Induction Weekend, was there because the Center and the Hall of Fame were announcing a partnership to promote the Center's exhibit and an exhibit coming to the Hall of Fame, "The Nazi Olympics, Berlin 1936.

Both will open Tuesday, Oct. 19. The Hall of Fame exhibit, on loan from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., will run through Jan. 17, 2005.

Tickets to each exhibit are available at both locations.

"I identify with this, I feel comfortable in the room," said Lloyd. "Because if you take down the word 'Nazi' and put in 'KKK' you'll follow my thoughts.

"I share the message of 'Never Again' that they're sending out here," he said. "I feel the same way."