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ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (May 27, 2011) – Florida Studies graduate student Jason Memmer’s essay, Torah! Torah! Torah! Pearl Harbor and the Emergence of Florida’s Modern Jewish Community, won the 2011 LeRoy Collins Award as the most outstanding essay on Florida history by a graduate student in the United States. Beyond winning the award, Memmer will use the research he has done for the last five years on Florida’s Jewish history to curate an exhibit in 2012 at the St. Petersburg Museum of History in partnership with the Florida Studies program.

The museum exhibit, titled Bagels, Beaches and Bombers, will trace the region’s Jewish community from 1929 to 1945. On display from March 1 to June 30, 2012, visitors will view artifacts, photographs, and documents from personal collections and relics from museums around the country.

Memmer has conducted hundreds of interviews for the state’s Memory Project, has worked closely with the Jewish Museum of Florida, and has composed numerous articles on various facets of the Florida Jewish experience. He earned his bachelor’s degree in history from USFSP. After he receives his master’s in August, Memmer will apply to doctoral programs in history.

Memmer accepted the LeRoy Collins Award on Thursday, May 26 at the annual meeting of the Florida Historical Society. Memmer won the same award in 2010 for his essay, From Conversos to Congress: A Political History of Florida’s Jewish Community.

Memmer is the second student to win the award twice – the only other two-time recipient was Jim Schnur, USF graduate and special collections librarian at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.

The undergraduate prize has gone to six students from USF St. Petersburg. Memmer is the fifth graduate student from USFSP to win the award. The Florida Historical Society inaugurated the Collins prize in 1991 in honor of the former Florida governor. Collins met with the society’s first director, Professor Gary Mormino, in 1989 and presented Mormino with a check to endow the award.

“He explained that one of his great regrets was not having the opportunity to study history and politics as an undergraduate,” Mormino said. “He asked that the gift endow an award honoring the best undergraduate and graduate student paper in the field of Florida History.”

-USF St. Petersburg-