Summary of Interview With

Henry Greenbaum

Born in Poland. At age 16 he was working in a munitions factory, forced labor. When the Germans came the Jews were told to wear stars. Young people were picked up to clean barracks and clean streets. If you didn’t work hard enough, you were hit with rifle butts. Jews generally lived near synagogues, but some were moved into the ghetto. The ghetto was surrounded by barbed wire.

Until 1942 we were in the ghetto. Then we were told to be at the marketplace at 11 a.m. Then selections started. Those with work permits and young people who wanted to work went to one side. Old people and children went to the other side. The old and the children were taken away in a freight train. The young walked seven miles to a factory. Our belongings were mostly dropped on the walk or run to the camp. On arrival we were told to put our money and jewelry in piles, and then we were taken to barracks, wooden barracks.

After a short sleep we were told to present our work papers. Others were assigned work papers and were marched to work. This continued until 1943. We worked in three shifts. The night shift was the worst because you spent the day in the camp. Trucks would arrive and round up people who were never seen again. I lost one sister this way. Another sister came to the U.S. in 1937 and four sisters were killed in the camp.

My sister and a friend, a Jewish policeman, and some others tried to escape—very few made it. The rest were shot. I ran back to the camp. We were then told that we would all be put on a freight train. Some tried to climb the barbed wire and they were shot. We were taken in the cattle car to Auschwitz. I was 17 at the time. Many died on the trip, there was no water on the trip.

At Auschwitz there was the selection again. We never saw the people who were on the left again. We went on to another room where they took our names, not to be used again. We were given numbers, striped pants, and then went to the barracks.

Gypsies were in next barracks and they were screaming. They were shot.

We were given showers and then assigned jobs. I was assigned to build roads. Beatings were common. One young boy, during air raids, tried to reach the kitchen. He was caught and hung. The allies worldwide were on their way. They rounded us up and began the Death March. When we were liberated, the Germans ran in the opposite direction. A Sherman tank came up and an American soldier, speaking Polish, told us to follow the tank and that liberated people were up ahead. We received bread and butter. People were eating and getting sick from overeating. I had been wounded in 1943 and the Red Cross helped me in 1945.

The outside world was hostile. They asked us "Why didn’t you escape".

There was no way to escape.
Do people say the Holocaust was a hoax?
That's why I [am here??]. Ask the army who freed us.

Did you think of just giving up?
No. I wanted to be a witness. I wanted to tell what they did to us.

Did you ever see a body burned?
Yes, we [??????] it.

How many German soldiers were in the camp?
Ukrainians were as cruel as Germans.

Were you no longer hungry after not eating?
No. We were hungry all the time.

If Auschwitz was a death camp, how could anyone have escaped?
And how did they know this? Everyone was dead. The evidence; bones, bodies burned, bodies waiting to be burned.