

## **RG-50.233.0045**

### **Summary**

Henry Greenbaum (né Gryndau) was born in a small town in Poland on April 1, 1928. He was from a very religious family who prayed three times a day and had three sets of dishes. Greenbaum had six sisters and two brothers in addition to his mother and father. Only his brothers and one sister survived the war. His father was a tailor for both Poles and Jews. He died of natural causes before the war. Most of the family helped in the tailor shop which was in their house. Greenbaum describes his life as being happy before the war. He went to public school until grade seven and attended religious school in the afternoon. The family spoke Yiddish. His father had two brothers and a sister in the United States, but only one of Greenbaum's sister was able to go over before the war. Another sister's husband, who had relatives in the United States, was also able to emigrate but by the time he tried to bring his wife the war had begun. She and her two daughters were deported.

In 1940 Jews were forced into a ghetto but, fortunately, Greenbaum's house was in the ghetto, so his mother and sisters remained in their house. His sisters wished to escape and thought they could survive as Aryans, but his mother did not believe they were in danger. One brother escaped to Lithuania and survived. The other brother was in the Polish army and survived. Greenbaum said that there were no righteous gentiles in his town. Before the war, the Poles were generally friendly but once the Germans invaded, they were virulently antisemitic. From 1940 to 1942 Greenbaum lived at home and worked as a forced laborer in one of two factories nearby. But in 1942 all the Jews were rounded up and selections took place. His mother, a sister and two nieces were deported to Treblinka. He and three other sisters were selected for work at a camp nearby the factory they worked in. There they slept in barracks. Greenbaum denied that Jews went like sheep to their slaughter as he, his sister, and many others tried to escape. Most were killed, including one of his sisters. Two others died of disease. Greenbaum survived a severe wound to his head, which he covered with a hat to hide from the guards, some of whom were Ukrainians and Lithuanians who Greenbaum considered more brutal than the Germans. Another selection took place and those fit for work were sent in cattle cars to Auschwitz. With no food or drink many of the occupants died on the journey. After being branded and showered to kill lice Greenbaum was again selected, this time to work in Buna. Although he contracted typhus and was beaten by a Kapo, Greenbaum considered himself lucky to work and live in Buna. He worked there for a year and a half. As the Russians approached, he and others were put on trains and forced marched into Germany. He was liberated by the U.S. Army in April 1945 and ended up working for them for several months.

His two brothers came to visit him and told him where his sister was living in the United States. The army helped him contact her, and she sent papers so that they could join her. They left on June 18, 1946. Greenbaum was only eighteen.