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USHMM First Person Series
Conversation with Henry Greenbaum

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Warren Marcus: Good afternoon. My name is Warren Marcus. I'm today's host of the museum's public program *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. This is our 14th year of our program. Our *First Person* today is Henry Greenbaum who we will meet shortly.

This 2013 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation to whom we are grateful for again sponsoring *First Person*. I'm going the add that it's a personal honor for me to interview Henry as the first year of *First Person* many years ago was sponsored by my family in honor of my father who had passed away the previous year. So this is a very important program for me.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their first-hand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each guest, like Henry, serves here as a volunteer at the museum. Our program will continue until mid August. The museum's website at www.ushmm.org provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Henry will share with us his *First Person* account as a Holocaust survivor for about 45 minutes. As time allows towards the end of the program we'll have time for any and all questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors truly transcend the decades. What you're about to hear from Henry is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help you with his introduction, assuming I can use it.

Henry was born on April 1st, 1928. His family lived in a small one-family house that served as both the family's residence and a tailor shop. He was the youngest of nine children. Henry lived in the town of Starachowice, Poland.There's Poland and here's a map of the approximate location of his hometown.

Pictured are two of Henry's five sisters, Ita is on the left and Rozia is on the right.

In this photo we see one of Henry's sisters Faige and her daughter.

The Germans invaded Poland in 1939. By 1942, at the age of 13, Henry was sent with his family to do forced labor in a munitions factory. He was deported to Buna-Monowitz Labor Camp at Auschwitz and later to the Flossenbürg Camp in Germany. At the age of 17 he was liberated and one year later he immigrated to the United States.

Please welcome Henry Greenbaum.

(Applause).

Henry Greenbaum: Okay.

Warren Marcus: You've been sitting too long, Henry.

Henry Greenbaum: I think so, too.

Warren Marcus: All right. How are you?

Henry Greenbaum: Okay. I've got it. I've got it.

Warren Marcus: I guess I should bring my notes. Go ahead.

Henry Greenbaum: Okay. I'll sit. Okay.

Warren Marcus: Henry, how are you?

Henry Greenbaum: I'm doing fine. Thank you.

Warren Marcus: You sure are. Not bad for 85. April 1st, 85.

Henry Greenbaum: Thank you very much.

(Applause).

Thank you.

Warren Marcus: We have so much to talk about. I've known Henry, I've been lucky enough to know Henry for many years and work with him in many presentations and he could tell us all his life story for hours and hours and hours. We can't do that. So what I'm going to suggest is we're going to talk about several topics from his life and he'll share an anecdote with us or two. And I've already apologized to Henry that I may have to interrupt him just for the sake of time. So the topics will include, you know, life before the war and some background about his family. We saw some pictures of his sisters. What happened when World War II started. Life in the ghetto. And moving to the labor camp, the death train and then to Auschwitz and then the Death March and liberation. So we've got a lot to talk about and hopefully you'll have lots of questions. So thank you for your patience with me ahead of time, Henry.

Tell us about your family and what life was like before the Germans invaded in 1939, please.

>> Before the war we had a normal upbringing. We were a family of nine children. Three sons and a daughter -- three sons and six girls. And we had a normal upbringing. Very religious at home. In fact, we didn't live too far from the synagogue, about two blocks away from there. I looked like a normal Jewish little boy. Had my curls here underneath and my tassels sticking out here. Never bare headed. Always wore a hat. My main thing was to play ball, mostly soccer with other children. Non-Jewish, Jewish, we'd play around with the public school. I went to a religious school. Like a normal upbringing. We were a nice, happy family. But of course all of this ended September of '39 when the Germans invaded our town. Didn't take them too long to put on the yellow Star of David on the back and the front from the babies up to I don't care how old you are. You would be identified as the Jewish with the yellow star. Jewish everywhere. I had my curls, my tassels and they didn't have to do that, but they did it anyway. Who could tell them what to do. That was their job

to do.

Warren Marcus: How old were you when the war stated?

Henry Greenbaum: I was two months shy of 12. And then after that went back to public school the teachers would say no Jews allowed in school. I had the yellow Star of David and they wouldn't let me come to school anymore after that. So then after they did that, they stopped us from playing ball, like a curfew. Had to be in the house at such-and-such time. They would not allow us in the park. We couldn't use the train or buses. You couldn't leave your -- you had to stay put wherever you were. You were never allowed to leave, period.

Warren Marcus: Henry, can you tell us about your parents? We heard about your sisters. Your mom and dad a little bit?

Henry Greenbaum: My parents?

Warren Marcus: Right.

Henry Greenbaum: My father was a caretaker in the synagogue. My mom was busy taking care of the children at home, cooking, busy. We didn't have any washing machines like we have in America here. Everything was done by hand. When you have a big load, you have six children -- actually nine, but they didn't all live with us at the end because we had two married sisters and then one brother was in the Polish Army and then a few of them were older but my mom kept busy washing and cleaning and cooking. That's all she did.

Warren Marcus: So the war stats and what's the immediate impact on you and your family?

Henry Greenbaum: The impact on me, I was scared to death. I didn't understand what the war meant. What did I know, I was more interested playing games with other children. I didn't realize what the war -- what's it all about. But the parents were listening to a small little radio, maybe six inches by ten inches little radio and at the end they -- you were not allowed to -- the Germans came, you could not listen to any radio at all. You were not

allowed to. So you did the best, the parents remembered World War I, they said it wasn't that bad. They coming, they're not going to be so bad. They didn't realize they were going to be such a mess like what they did.

Warren Marcus: So the front comes towards you and what happens? You were outside and --

Henry Greenbaum: When the Germans entered, the father was already passed away two months before the war. My mom was very protective. What she did, she got a neighbor, we got a horse and buggy and they took us to a farm. She said let's go to the farm and avoid the taking over the city by the Germans because this way nobody will get hurt. Because we were not too far away from a railroad station. Usually they bomb that. So my mom was protective. We all piled up. Not the married sisters. They had their husbands to take care of. Myself, my three sisters, my single ones, my mom and we all took the horse and buggy and we went to the farm ten miles away. While we were there, on the second day, all of a sudden we heard a lot of bombardment because we were not that far away. We could hear all that. Myself and my brother were out in the morning pretty early to eat breakfast. Breakfast was there in the farm, we were not used to the man's house. My brother and I went outside and were still tomatoes on the vine. Took us big cluster of tomato off the vine. The farmer gave us a piece of bread and that was our breakfast what we ate. All of a sudden we saw a Polish soldier coming through with a lot of medals on him. Came through and what happened, I showed I don't know why my brother knew his first name. He called him by his first name. Maybe he was one of those guards in the guarding the city, I don't know that. He might have been one of our clients, I don't know that either. But he knew his name. Said what are you running from? He asked the soldier. He said the German Army is three kilometers coming this way and then he said he didn't want to get caught by the

German Army so he was running in the opposite direction. I could not believe my ears. My older brother said is it okay if I go along with you? He knew him somehow, he knew his name. So the soldier said be my guest. You want to come with me, it's all right. So I -- like I say, I couldn't believe it. I chased after him for two miles. I said why would he want to leave me? I just lost my father, he's my father figure, he's the oldest of the children, the second oldest, why would he leave me here? I couldn't understand that. So I followed him, tried to hide behind bush sos he wouldn't see me but I still run after him. A couple of miles finally every time I stuck my head out, go back to your mother, go back to your mother, constantly screaming go back to your mother. I did not listen to him, of course. But once the soldier with all the medals on him put his hands on the front of his face, go back to your mother. I said okay. I went back to my mom. I went back in there and told her the news, what happened. David disappeared. He was supposed to take care of the tailor shop, small little shop. Nevertheless he knew what he was doing there. With him going, who was going to take care of the tailor shop because of the brothers was in the Polish Army already. She was crying. But she calmed down. She -- he disappeared. I don't know what's left of the war. I didn't know what happened to him.

And then we packed up and went back to our town. Broken glasses of course in the house of the shop. Mom's always right, somebody could have got hurt. But nobody did. We cleaned up and went back to normal. Was scared to death of those Nazi soldiers. They have a gun on them, the helmets, with the boots. They were -- they were scary looking to me. They looked like Goliaths to me. I was a little frightened of them. They didn't bother me yet. But then it didn't take it too long they put us on the yellow Star of David. And then after that, they round us up, the people that lived near the synagogue, they thought that all the Jews lived around there in the area. So they barbed wire us around five foot fence but

they didn't make a fence, just piled up barbed wire around the three-block perimeter, small little block. Once we were in there the only way you can come out there is because we prepared ourselves. We heard rumors from out of town, if you had a job in the factories it might be better for you. So almost like a life saver, my father was still alive he approached one of the customers of ours who came in. He happened to be either a manager or owner of the munitions factory. And my father, he asked him, can you give my kids a job in there? He says how many do you have? Three of my sisters and myself. We already had IDs. That came handy later on. The only way we could come out of the ghetto area after we got rounded up was to go to work and come back. That's the only place. You're not allowed to stop nowhere else. And that's what we did for a little while.

Then they found out some more Jewish people live in this area in the city, then they barbed wired us around, they found from the city police where they lived. They went with little pickup trucks and got them out of there and I don't know how many they brought back but two married sisters who were not with us, they brought back them with their husbands and children and other Jewish people in there. I don't know how much time they gave them. They were screaming, going to knock the door down with a rifle. Not really knocking lightly, excuse me, I want to open the door. Just bang the door. Almost break the door down. Screaming raus! Raus! Raus! Chaos. You grab what you can on the pickup truck and they brought them in to the three-block perimeter where we were. All the Jewish people from that city was in this three-block perimeter. I think we were like 5,000 of us in that area.

And then we stayed in this ghetto area for two years we stayed in there. Not only my family had jobs in the factories but other people heard the same news from out of town, to get jobs and -- the government, so to speak. So some people would make bricks, tiles, munitions, I was working in munitions. My three sisters were in munitions. They taught me how to make

springs in that factory, metal. We had a lot of industry. Small town with a lot of industry.

Warren Marcus: So Henry --

Henry Greenbaum: That saved us.

Warren Marcus: Excuse me. Now you're 13, 14. Your father's foresight, not really knowing what would happen but hearing rumors he knew it would be helpful if you could have some sort of job. Tell us what life was like in the ghetto and how you felt about, you know, how many people you lived with and what you might have been worried about.

Henry Greenbaum: Well, it was hard for the ghetto after a while. The only good thing about the ghetto is the whole family was intact. We all were together still. But we lasted there for two years. We all got filthy dirty, ran out of soap, ran out of food, and we had to depend on the Nazi Germans to bring us in everyday food into the ghetto area. And it would get less and less and less. We have no way to go get other food from the other side from the people that were coming from their homes and the factory. They could have brought something with them. If they were scared, I don't know the answer to that. But they wouldn't get any help. We stayed there for almost two years. All filthy dirty, really running out of soap. Luckily we had one cold water pump in the area and we had enough water to drink at least. But wintertime, you could not wash at all. You became very dirty, full of lice all of a sudden. And then we stayed almost like two years and then the order came one day, October 27, I remember that vividly that day, October 27, 1942, two years into the ghetto, couldn't go to work three shifts, the night shift came back from work, they kept us all in the ghetto area. Nowhere else, nobody at the factories anymore and then they ordered us all out of the ghetto area to a little bigger open field and that's where the selection started.

Warren Marcus: How did the selection work?

Henry Greenbaum: They were sitting there at a table and someone was standing up with a

dog with guns. You walk up with a family. I'll give you the scenario with my family. I walked up with my mom, my five sisters, three nieces, two nephews and we walked up. Mom to one side, the two married sisters with their little kids over to the same side as Mom was, the grandmother. Then they started filling in handicap people, pregnant women, women who just gave child birth, and that was the selection. They picked out whoever cannot do any work. You busy with children. Now, if the women want to give up the children and go with grandma, they were strong women, we could go to the other side, they'll send them to the other side. But there was no mothers going to leave children, as far as I knew.

Warren Marcus: Did you have any idea what this meant? Did you have any idea why they were doing this?

Henry Greenbaum: No, not at all. The only thing I thought is they were taking all these people, they're going to take them to another area of camp and -- because they're not going to be able to work. So they're going to keep them there alive. We didn't know what they were doing to them. But after that, after the selection, they put them on trains and stuff like animals and they took them away. We no longer saw them. After the war I found out where they took them. Treblinka was the place that they took them. And that was nothing but a killing center. There was no working in that place, in Treblinka. So the trains were rolling 24 hours a day and lie to them, take a shower. You never come out of the shower alive because instead of water you come down with gas and gas kills you and that's how my mom and my two married sisters and nieces and nephews and other people that they pulled over to the other side, that's how they murdered them. That was going on from months after the war almost we found out where they took them, Treblinka. They turn around to us, they chased us six kilometers uphill. We came by the ghetto area, we thought we're going to go back in to the ghetto area. We'll have more room, maybe more food, a little cleaner, we

won't be on top of each other, but they had other ideas for us of course. They chased us past the ghetto area. And there was a big surprise six kilometers away uphill on the top they built for us a slave labor camp with six foot fences, barbed wire, towers and the dogs. And once we got up there, chasing us, like I said, huffing and puffing, for me a youngster, I could really run. I was playing soccer all the time. But some other people, they're huffing and puffing. Six kilometers to chase you. Once they got there the loudspeaker came on, attention, attention, you must empty all your pockets, all jewelry, money. You take through this gate other than your clothes or yourself, otherwise you will be killed. People didn't bribe their way to the soldiers in the ghetto, that day they had to put it in the big box, give up everything. You could only have your clothes on and yourself come through the gate and then on the other side of the gate they were directing traffic to the barracks. First time I saw a bare rack, it's a wooden shack. That's all it was. By the time I got in there, there was some people already in there and they put us three people to a bunk, 75 inches wide, three people to a bunk. You wood, no mattress, just a shelf. They gave us a small pillow -- a small blanket rolled up. We used it with a pillow.

Warren Marcus: Were you with anyone that you knew? And there were also women in this camp, right?

Henry Greenbaum: Yes, but --

Warren Marcus: Who were you with.

Henry Greenbaum: My neighbors. I was the only one with my neighbors. We were very close neighbors. We knew each other. And my brother was not in there somehow with me. Maybe to another barrack. As soon as everybody got through everybody was assembled and next morning they woke us up early, ID cards over to one side and start feeding in different people that they didn't send away with our group. And we went on the way to the

factories in the little pickup trucks we went to the factories. At the factories you came to the guardhouse and they always start, always beating you, use the long whips. We had IDs, we went back to the same place. But the new people that they saved didn't know where we were going. Why are you beating them? Why are you causing -- they're asking where they go. They're supposed to follow us going into that area. And there was a manager there, assign you to work, the one that is didn't have job. Went like this almost a year, in the munitions factory.

Warren Marcus: How much food did you have? Did they give you any food in the morning or lunch?

Henry Greenbaum: The food menu was not that big, believe me. It was one slice of bread, a little black imitation coffee and you had to work for ten hours. You came back to the barracks at night in the evening or whatever your shift was, cabbage soup. They gave us a bowl to keep the soup in with a spoon. There was nothing to spoon out of there. Why they bother even to give you a spoon, I don't understand it. We were drinking it up. It was cabbage water, that would have been the proper name for that instead of cabbage soup. That was our menu.

Warren Marcus: The people in the camp, in addition to being worked so hard were probably suffering from disease and probably starvation too.

Henry Greenbaum: Well, we did get into a lot of trouble, not being in there I would say within about six or eight months in the slave labor camp, what happened we became very dirty, filthy because we still are wearing the same clothes as when you left the home. The same clothes. The same underwear. The same socks. Socks and underway. The only way you could wash them is in the summertime with the cold water. They didn't give us any soap.

Anyway, to make a long story short, what happened is we all became very dirty and full of lice. We all got lice-infested. Especially during the winter months because we could not wash yourself. A man can undress from the waist on up and then you don't have soap. You use dirt from the ground. Put it like a mud bath all over yourself. And the next person would pump the water clean yourself off. But that doesn't kill the lice in your hair. They wouldn't cut no one's hair. The reason, I don't know. The men and the women had long hair. Very long. For three years you had bushy hair. Full of lice. And the lice infestation, typhoid epidemic broke out in that camp. It was going through very fast because of the type of sickness, it is very contagious. You sleep with such close quarters. If one catches, the other two catch it. The only difference was high fever, middle fever, low fever. If you had high fever, you had no choice. A middle fever, you could go to work maybe or not. But the low fever, you were able to go to work. You have a little slight fever. I had the low fever. My oldest sister had low fever. The two middle ones, the youngest of the girls and the middle girl, all of them died of typhoid during the night. She was there, and the other one, they had what they call Einsatzgruppen the killing unit came to the camp every day. Before you line up how many people come to the barracks, they knew how many people the barracks holds and if they saw somebody was missing, they went inside. Inside they found some men on the bunks, they couldn't get off the bunk. At the beginning they would shoot them right on the bunk. But then that caused a lot of mess because they needed a lot of clean-up. So they eventually went and sent these little pickup trucks and they waited. They waited until they count and then went inside and got those people somehow out and they put them on the little pickup trucks. They took them away to the outskirts of the town which we had to dig those trenches before we run into the ghetto. They told us the wharves still going on and that we -- they need trenches for the (inaudible) to fall in. Zigzag, six feet by or four

feet. I don't remember how deep they were. They drug those trenches. They knew what they were doing. The people that came down with the typhoid, they took them in their pickup truck, in the open field dressed naked a bullet in the back of the head, inside they went into the ditch. Everybody the same place. When it was full, they covered it up with dirt and went to the other one. There was quite a few people that got sick. My sister, the youngest, she died of typhoid. I used to check on her every morning when I had my night shift. You're allowed to go in. She was in the barracks by herself. Supposed to be a hospital. She was there by herself. On a wooden shelf. No mattress, no straw, nothing. Laying there on the top there on the blanket that they gave you rolled up. We used it as a pillow because you sleep in your clothes anyway. All you do is take your shoes off, that's all. But I checked on her one morning, she was complaining. And I bring her some rags in, some clothes from somewhere so she can put on top of the wooden shelf. So she could lay on something soft. Because she had a lot of bedsores from being this that little barracks by herself. So I -- it took me about three days or three night shifts and I came in the morning, I was taking rags that we wipe the equipment off with, I took some clean ones in and brought them in to her and spread it on her bed. She was -- stopped complaining a little bit. She said a little bit softer now. Thank you for what you did. And all of a sudden I come in third or fourth day I came in she was not there anymore. So I approached a Jewish policeman which we had in our camp and I asked him what happened to my sister? She was there yesterday. I spoke to her yesterday. She died during the night. She died during the night and we buried her in the bottom of the stone quarry. Mind-boggling today. Why didn't they take that sister and take her with all the other sick people on the pickup and bury her where they had buried the others. She is in the bottom of the stone quarry. Where are you going to find her? Where? Who knows where she is? She's buried down there. So I lost that

one.

The middle one, I came back from the night shift one day, Harriet was her name, I came back from the night shift -- we don't have a picture of her -- they let them go to work, then they let the night shift in. All of a sudden I see her in the pickup truck. She could not line up for work. She had the typhoid epidemic. She has the high fever. I yell to her, Harriet, Harriet, (inaudible) in Jewish. She answered me, we both waved at each other. That's the last I saw her. And I didn't know where they took them. I thought they took them for replacing them to another camp or maybe some treatments to get somewhere. I didn't know they shoot them. I didn't know that. I knew my sister -- I didn't see her die, but they told me she died. So that was two. I had the older one left with me, she was like my mom to me. She was treating me really nice, helping me sometimes with food. She wouldn't eat it, she would give it to me sometimes. She became a seamstress, working on the German uniforms for the high-ranking German officers.

Warren Marcus: Henry, how long were you then in the camp doing this work?

Henry Greenbaum: One year, one year. Two years in the ghetto, one year in the camp.

Warren Marcus: For the sake of time and word gets out probably through hearing officers talk that the camp is going to be liquidated.

Henry Greenbaum: Right.

Warren Marcus: So there becomes talk, you hear talk of a possible escape. Tell us about that, please.

Henry Greenbaum: What happened, my sister -- the tailors came back after they heard the officer come into the tailor shop, you have to hurry up with these uniforms, you have to have them ready for such-and-such date because all of you are going to be deported there. After me helping them with the war machinery three years, we thought -- the tailors thought that

was the end of it. They're probably going to kill all of us now. They don't need us anymore because we helped them along with the war machinery. Why would they go and leave us in that area. I don't know the answer was. But anyway, these tailors didn't like what they heard. They came back and they organized an escape. Not the whole camp, impossible. How many they could trust? I don't know how many people they were in the escape group, I don't know. But my sister was involved in that one. She told me the night before the escape, whenever you come back from the factory at 11:00, if I was working from 3:00 in the afternoon to 11:00 at night, when you come back to the -- from the factory do not go inside the barracks, wait for me outside. So I obey that, whatever she says. It's going to be dark, pitch dark. I don't know how she knew that. I don't know the answer. But she came by with a Jewish policeman holding her hand. He befriended her. She held his hand. She came by. I was waiting outside, waved my hand, all three were running. And people were already getting out before -- escaped out of there before we did. Somebody cut a hole through. It was dark, somebody got out. All of a sudden it was time for me, my sister and the policeman. We came ten feet away from the escape place, from the fence. The lights came on. All of a sudden the lights came on. The dog started to barking and growing and barking and he started shooting at the hole over there, whoever made it into the hole that they opened up was shot either wounded or killed. We were only ten feet away all of a sudden the three of us running and I said -- I was 15 years old already at that time. I was looking forward to getting out of there. I said who wouldn't, they treat so nice in here, I was looking forward to getting out of there. What happened in this? All of a sudden the lights came on and they started shooting again. Anything that moved. All of a sudden a bullet struck me in the back of the head and knocked me out. From the impact I was knocked out. I woke up a few seconds later, started screaming for my sister Faige, Faige in English, and I could not

hear her. The end of the war, this is the end, I don't have her, I don't have my whole family with me. Everybody is gone. I'm by myself, 15 years old, as far as I knew nobody is alive. It was happening at that time, I took my head up, I cannot run outside because he surely will kill me. This time I was lucky. The bullet only grazed me and knocked he down. It cuts your skin open like a knife, three-inch gash in the back of my head. As I came back I start feeling my head. Do I have any hairs in there, I didn't have any hole. I just had a cut. Bleeding, a few days later of course. I cannot get out. So I lowered my head down and as she was shooting and then I was running towards the woman's barracks. I said maybe she changed her mind. She ran back into the woman's barracks because not all of the people knew about the escape. Plenty of people in the barracks. I came there, opened the door up. The woman almost attacked me. You can't come in here, this is for women. I know it's for women, I can see it's for women. But I'm looking for my sister Faige. She's not here, get out of here. She starts pushing me out of here. In the meantime they're shooting. She can hear the shooting go on. She did not let me in. I sat in the doorway, I was 15 years old, evidently stronger than she was. I sat there in the doorway and I didn't want to move.
All of a sudden three, four bullets came in from the tower they were shooting into the bunks, into the barracks. All the women -- four shots came in and all of the women jumped off of the bunk, on the ground they want. Eye level with me. I could see everybody and I was still yelling for my sister Faige. I could not see her. The more I yelled, yelled Faige. My first cousin entered. She was not aware of the escape at all. She said what happened to you and your sister is not here. Trust me, she's not here. I said okay. I'm alone at 15 years old. She says let me help you. She took some water that they have in the barracks bucket there, with water, she took a rag and start cleaning me off a little bit. She had a dry rag after that. She put it on the back of my wound. Wear my beret. She gave me a beret. I put it around

my head and the rag was absorbing the blood. I still got to leave the place. I can't stay in the women's barracks. If they catch me there, for surely they are going to kill me because I have a wound on the head already, tried to escape.

So I waited until almost daylight and I didn't -- until the shooting subsided and were not shooting anymore. It was quiet, the lights were on, the lights were roving around, the floodlights back and forth, all around. And then I was trying which way doses the search light go away from the hole. Not from the hole, from where the men's barracks was. I was watch to go see which way the flood light was going. I tested it and see how long it takes them to get back. I said I can make it to my barracks by the time he comes around with the search light, flood light I'll be in the barracks. And I did that. I lowered my head down as the lights were Goings away from me I made it into the men's barracks. I said thank God, I'm safe now. That was not true. What happened was an hour later roll call, everybody out. The night shift was coming back from the night shift. They were not involved in the escape. They have them between the two sets of wires. And then they had us outside counting. Why they were counting still people were rolling out past the hall. Moved, someone was killed. They still were shooting from the tower down there. And the other guys were down below. And then all of a sudden while we were gathering he told us to turn in a different direction. We had our heads in different direction and then we see the policeman who my sister and I was running with, he was in the upright position on the ground still wearing his cap and moaning and groaning. A lot of wounded people next to him on the outside of the fence. But you could see it was barbed wire, not electric, so you could still see who was there. And right in the front of us, he took out his pistol and he killed all of the wounded people. The first one was the policeman. Right next to him was my sister Faige stretched out on the ground next to him. Wherever he was sitting down I couldn't see him until he shot

him, he laid out, I could see the two of them on the ground. So that time I was like all devastated. Now I have nobody, not even my sister Faige anymore. I'll be by myself, 15 years old. And then there's -- went back to normal, closed up the hole again. We went back to our work, regular shifts that you had, and all of a sudden didn't take them a couple of weeks, three weeks when the guy says we're all going to be deported by such and such date, and the date was there. And they didn't let no one go to work and they lined up the freight cars by the camp, not too far away, and they packed us in like sardines onto the trains we went.

Warren Marcus: Did they tell you where you were going or you had no clue.

Henry Greenbaum: No, we had no -- we had no idea where they were taking us or why they were taking us. No wharves given to us at all that morning. We didn't even get our ration of the bread on that morning. They lined us up and everybody was packed in like sardines on those freight cars. And then when it was finished it took off. They went for three days we traveled. We didn't know where we were going. Every station that we stopped we -- that transport was not priority transport. They let civilian drive through the passenger cars first. But these cars had to stop and let the other trains go. It took three days. We were yelling and screaming in unison every stop we made, water, water! In different languages. I know they heard us but the doors never opened up and never gave us any water at all. Finally our destination was Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the late afternoon we saw the sign work makes you free (inaudible) and then standing uniformed men outside the wagons and as you were jumping off and if you didn't go by fast enough they would get a few lashes with the whip. And then as we were coming off the train I get another selection started. Again, left, right, left, right. We couldn't understand what they were doing because you can't ask questions. We couldn't understand why they were doing that. And luckily, luck was with me, I went

over to the good side. I found that out the next morning. The ones that went over to the opposite side of us, they went straight to crematorium we found out. They had a number of how many they need to dispose of that evening or they didn't have any room for us. I don't think they would care if they didn't have any room, we would sleep on top of each other, they don't care that.

Warren Marcus: So you had the selection right away. Then what happens?

Henry Greenbaum: I end up on the good side. Luck was with me. The first stop was a number on the arm. They gave you a number A18991. That was my number.

Warren Marcus: Tattoo.

Henry Greenbaum: Tattoo number. And after that, there was a line coming through. But they doesn't take but so long to do. Very fasts and it was like experts to do that. With the numbers. After that the second stop was finally a haircut and there was some guys sitting -- standing up on the chair and they give you a haircut by head clippers. It takes a little while. The guy that gave me the haircut questioned the wound on my head, the three-inch gash on the back of my head. He said what happened? He was talking to me in Jewish -- Yiddish. I wasn't afraid of him. I said I was trying to escape with my sister and a policeman. Those two were killed and I was wounded. There was a line waiting, he couldn't conference with me too long because they were watching him. And it was more than just him. About three to five people with clippers. The final stop after the haircut, leading into a maze. You finally made it into a shower room. Mind you you didn't have a shower in four years -- excuse me, three years. Two years in the ghetto, one year in the camp. It was three years you didn't have any showers at all. We still were lice infested. The disease and we became dirty. Then we came into the shower room, they gave us soap to wash the first time. And then you were so thirsty that you couldn't think about washing yourself. All you were interested in

drinking that water until you almost drown yourself you were so thirsty. You hadn't had water for three or four days. Then after that you clean yourself up really good. Then they give us a small blanket on the way out and furnish us with a three-piece outfit, striped -- the jacket, the hat and pants, wooden shoes and canvas tops, no underwear or socks.

Warren Marcus: Did you get a bowl for food? Did they give you bowls?

Henry Greenbaum: Not yet until we got into the barracks and then they gave you that. And then after that we cleaned ourselves up, like I said, and put the clean clothes on and it felt very good. It felt like wire not itching with the lice. Your face looked clean. They give us the little blanket rolled up. Everywhere we were they gave us a blanket. Where we use the blanket for our head, to rest your head because the bunk didn't have any mattress or straw, it had just plain wood. So we slept in our clothes anyway. We took our shoes off. Wooden shoes and canvas tops, we had. No socks. Slide the shoes off. And we use it as a little blanket and we stay in there, almost like six months we stayed in there, maybe five months.

Warren Marcus: Are you still with any neighbors or anyone you know or are you with strangers at the age of 15 or 16.

Henry Greenbaum: Some lived in my city. 99% was strangers, guys I had never met before. Just meeting on the wagon because they -- big people. They were directing where you should go.

Warren Marcus: My apologies but time is short. You're in that part of Auschwitz six months and then you get moved to Buna-Monowitz.

Henry Greenbaum: No, not that.

Warren Marcus: That's part of it.

Henry Greenbaum: That's part of it. While we were in Auschwitz there was no work to do in Auschwitz other than helping them with the bodies of people that pass away from

exhaustion. You can't lift it, the men in charge, the person who was in charge of it with a little wagon used to happen put the bodies onto little wagon, they would take them for the cremation. They would pile up, bodies were waiting to get cremated. They murdered enough, too many that they couldn't cream mate fast enough. That was our job. Too long at Auschwitz-Birkenau we were told eventually wind up in the gas chamber because you don't produce any work.

Luck was with me again. What happened is a well-dressed German man came in, a very nice-looking guy, two guards on each side of him, into our barracks outside because they were still new. We just -- according to what they say, we were still in good shape. They were not skeletons yet. He came to our barracks outside and then who the man actually would point at you. If he liked you, he would point at you, say come over here. You can't ask what are you taking me more? Are you killing me or -- no questions. He's got guards with him. So you couldn't do nothing. He took about 50 of us out of the barracks and then we wound up after that in Buna-Monowitz after that. Either by little pickup truck or walk. I think it was five miles away. I'm not sure.

Warren Marcus: That's right.

Henry Greenbaum: So I think maybe we walked over there, Buna-Monowitz, a subcamp of Auschwitz. That man that chose us out of Auschwitz-Birkenau either ended up being an owner or manager of a chemical company called IG Farben. They were the producers of cycling gas, bug sprays, automobile tires, synthetic fuel, that man was involved in all these jobs. He was interested in my group to build the road in the compound of the IG factory with the cobblestones and the sidewalk. That was our job, the 50 of us, that was our job to do. By that time it was already '45. It was getting on to -- closer to the end of the war, the United States send us over the Air Force, the United States Air Force came and bombed IG factory,

the rail leading into IG. They knocked out the rail so they couldn't receive any supply, couldn't ship out any supplies and they got so bad they eventually bombed on the inside, knocked out the IG factory altogether. So what did they do? Wait for us to do? They transfer to Buna-Monowitz and we were going to another camp calls Flossenbürg, near the Czech border. Traveled days and days to get there because of the bombardment. We eventually marched into the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp, two miles we had to walk in. It was just a camp like every other camp. The same food, the same little blanket, the same bunk. Nothing different. The only thing different our job, people there before us had jobs in the BMW factory or the (inaudible) airplane. They had the jobs there before. But we came -- only our job was to bundle up clothing on people that they murdered and bundle up coats, pants and shipping them back into Germany for recycling. There must have been a heap of clothes a story high. Whether it was just from Flossenbürg, that I can't answer. Maybe they shipped all the clothes from all the camps there, I'm not sure. That was our job right there. The food situation, the same little bread, the same little black imitation coffee. The same soup at night. That's all I was fed. We stayed there in Flossenbürg, it was getting close to the end already. While they were in Flossenbürg we heard some Army was coming towards us. We heard a lot of artillery on the way, heavy artillery guns shooting, banging. We were start to go get happy, somebody's coming to get us maybe out of here. We didn't know who it was. We thought it was Russia because we were next to the Czechoslovakian border, six kilometers from the Czech border. We thought it was the Russians. But it wasn't the Russians. It was Americans that came to Flossenbürg. But by the time the Americans came into Flossenbürg, they emptied out the camp all of a sudden. They put us all on trains again. When the Americans arrived in the camp nobody was there. All -- we were on trains already. Traveling to Czechoslovakia, Austria, Bavaria, all through Bavaria riding on the

train. And this was already close to April or close to February rather of '45.
So they knocked out the rail system altogether and then at the end after that they had no alternative, how do they get us around? They took 100 people at a time with the two guards and the dog and they made marchs of groups, marching. We named it Dead March because we were dying as we were marching. With no food at all on the march. Middle of February to the 25th of April they had no food. We were eating leaves off bushes. And then you were drinking water out of the creek. The only way you got a raw potato if the two guards were hungry and the dogs were hungry, they didn't have any supplies with them either. Maybe they took with them the farm, I don't know. Went into the residence of the farmer's house and the order was he should give us only one raw potato. You could eat ten you were so hungry. Gave only one raw potato and some water to drink, that's all. Had to wait until the guys got well fed and the dog, march again. And we kept doing that until the 24th of April, 1945. 24th of April, that's the evening we marched into a farm. All of a sudden they directed us to go into the silo where they keep the hay. As we said all of a sudden they're going to give us a roof over our head? April showers, we were soaking wet like rag doll from the April showers. We were soaking wet. They're going to let us in. Some people made -- they're probably going to put the match to the hay and burn us all up. Other people no, I don't think they're going to do that. Maybe a lot of low flying planes already, we didn't know who the planes were of course. On the commercial highway we saw that towards the evening. The next day we definitely saw more. Why they gave us a raw potato to go into the silo and some water and we stayed in there. We took our clothes off naked and wringed our clothes out, laid them down in the hay so they can dry. The next morning we're so hungry that raw potato didn't do much for your hunger. We were chewing hay during the night. Spit it out. You can't swallow hay, you're going to choke. Just get some juice in your

system. The morning they woke us up, gave us another potato, never happened before. Two potatoes, one the night, one the morning, we knew something was wrong. They gave us a potato and march from the farm, we march two hours. Nearby woods, they wouldn't let us go in deep into the woods from the farm. We could see the sky out. We could see the highway from the distance. So a lot of artillery pieces, low-flying planes again and all of a sudden we were sitting in a circle. The two guards we had took off and disappeared into thin air. They took the dogs and disappeared. They told us if we tried to escape they were going to kill us. Nobody moved. We stayed still. We thought they were hiding behind the trees. We didn't know what they were doing. But they were looking out for themselves. They knew this was Army, probably Americans, that they'd end up getting caught by the Americans. They ran into another farm and changed their clothes and like a civilian. So that's what they did.

We were sitting by ourself. We said no guards, somebody's going to kill us for sure now. And as we were sitting in the edge of the woods, low-flying planes again. And the highway we saw out of nowhere a tank take off from the main column from the highway towards us. And the five feet away from us, the door, the hatch opens up off of the tank. All of the bushes and trees, I guess we were wearing the stripes, they could see them in binoculars. But if we could see the highway, they could probably see us, too. Anyway, the hatch opened up on the tank and this beautiful soldier, crew cut, very skinny, American with uniform put his hands on his face, we are Americans and all of you are free! Even now I get goosebumps from that day. All of a sudden five years locked up in such a horrible place, such horrible treatment. If someone, an angel comes and tells you you are free, I could not hear the word "free." I said thank God we are free God. On the march, save me another day, save me another day so I can see my sister in America. I told you we had one sister in

America, she came here in 1937. I knew she was safe. I said some day I will be in America. Some day. So thank God for saving my life. But why did it take you so long? Five years. It took five years for them to finally send this tank down to liberate us free. So the 25th of April we were liberated. But we were all skeletons already because we didn't eat any bread, no rations for three months. We were really skeletons.

Warren Marcus: Henry, we've got to stop here.

Henry Greenbaum: Yes.

Warren Marcus: I apologize. I'd like to hear another two hours.

Henry Greenbaum: I could --

Warren Marcus: Here's what we're going to do. I know you could. And we're going to have a brief question and answer and we're going to ask you to raise your hand. Someone will bring awe microphone so wait for the microphone. And Henry, and maybe I'll chime in but we want to hear Henry's responses and just before we're closing Henry, it's our tradition to have the *First Person* have the last word. So we're going to have a few minutes for questions. Don't be shy. Anything on your mind focusing on Henry's story and what he wants to share with you. Yes, please. Let's get a microphone there. Thank you.

Audience Member: Before the war started and you were in Poland, what did you hear people -- the Jews saying about what was going on with Hitler in Europe? Did you have any idea what was going to happen?

Warren Marcus: When you were in Poland, before the war started, had you heard anything about how the Jews were being treated in Germany? Remembering he's 12, but did the family hear anything?

Henry Greenbaum: No, nothing. I didn't hear a thing. My parents, maybe heard on the radio, but six inch radio, whatever they had. I was mostly outside playing with other children,

children's games. I was not aware what they were doing.

Warren Marcus: And adults in Poland probably heard that the Jews had gradually been mistreated in Germany over the years, but remember, Jews and non-Jews, no one had any clue what was going on. Another question, please. Go ahead. Thank you, sir.

Audience Member: Do you still carry your numbers?

Warren Marcus: Do you still have your number?

Henry Greenbaum: Yes, sir. My number is still on there. I'll take it with me to my grave. I will not take it off before. We got too many deniers here saying it didn't happen. I'm still a living witness.

Warren Marcus: Henry has his tattoo. Maybe he'll show it to you later. Just so you understand, Auschwitz is the only place anyone got a tattoo. Every camp you got a number but only Auschwitz a tattoo. Other questions? Let's go side by side. This young man, please.

Audience Member: How hard was it to escape?

Warren Marcus: How hard was it to escape? When? Anytime?

Audience Member: In the camp.

Warren Marcus: In the camp. Well, he tried to escape. How hard was it to escape.

Henry Greenbaum: Well, the escape was easy if I could make it out. Once I made it out lucky it was a wooded area that you wind up in the woods. But if that situation you wind up in the city, somebody would report you and rewarded with five pounds of sugar or five pounds of coffee if you report an escape.

Warren Marcus: Remember the condition these guys are in, these men and women are in, it's not like they're healthy. It's really tough to do anything, much less try to make an escape. Let's go side to side. You just pick somebody. Go ahead. Yes, ma'am.

Audience Member: How were I able to find out about your sisters being killed?

Warren Marcus: How did you find out about -- he lost his sisters in the camp?

Henry Greenbaum: One of them, the Jewish policeman told me she died of typhoid and the other one, we found out after the war what they did to the patients who came down with the typhoid, they took them to a -- the outskirts of the town, they shot them into the ditch over there, an open field. And the farmer would get their clothes, we found that out after the war.

Warren Marcus: For example, his family got sent to Treblinka, one of the killing centers. This -- survivors found out over the years when information has come out in different ways. So it depends. Very complicated. One over here. Yes, ma'am. Go ahead.

Audience Member: Can you tell me or us a little bit about your life, how you -- were you reunited with your sister here?

Warren Marcus: Briefly, how did you get to your sister in America?

Henry Greenbaum: It's a little long answer but I -- after the war, after you got enough food in your system, I was an American site you didn't worry about food anymore. My buddy and I said let's travel in different camps. Maybe we'll find some of our camps there. I was looking actually for my two married sisters. I said maybe they killed the children, the women were still strong, maybe they were in Bergen-Belsen. I was looking in that camp.

Warren Marcus: And your mother, you didn't know what happened to your mother.

Henry Greenbaum: I didn't know my mother either. She was 54. Maybe I thought maybe something happened to her. But these young women were still young. So I mainly was in there, that was the British side. The British invaded -- rather freed Bergen-Belsen. So I went there. I ran across a cousin who helped me with the bleeding in the other camp. She was survived. She says none of our family's here. Trust me, I know. I was looking already. She was there for about two months already. So she knew about it. But I'm going to

Poland, do you want to go with me because I'm going to look for my brother, she said. Well, I said we're first cousins, my brother in the Polish Army, I didn't know where he was. I said if you go to Poland, and you find your brother, maybe he knows where my brother. I'll do that. She went there, located her brother, located my brother in the Displaced Persons Camp in Poland and she told him I was alive and I was in a displaced person camp near Frankfurt, Germany. Took him about three weeks, he came to see me and I asked her where we could have our sister living. All I knew she was in America but I don't know where. He said best I know she's in the Washington area. And with the help of the people that run the Displaced Persons Camp, came up with an address and we send a telegram off to my sister. And within one year the two of us came to America and we wind up here in America. We came to New York. In New York, after I got off, I was waiting for my sister. I'm looking for a woman to come claim me. Claim me, the two brothers. Well, no woman came. A man came. All of a sudden a man appears. And I see he's got close, we look alike. I said are you Dave? He said yes, I'm your brother Dave.

Warren Marcus: This is the guy who ran down the street.

Henry Greenbaum: I said how did you wind up in America? When did you get -- he was escaping with that soldier, I don't know the whole way or not but he wound up in Lithuania. He was a has situated ebbing Jew, too, and there he had buses --

Warren Marcus: Famous diplomat Sugihara.

Henry Greenbaum: And he helped him along and my sister sponsored him. Between the two of us -- between him and the -- my father's kid brother, they eventually got papers for me and my brother. We came -- I says you know what? When did you get here? I came here 1941. I said well, it was very nice of you to come here in '41. But why didn't you let me go with you?

(Laughter)

I would be in America here too. But he said no, you were a little boy.

Warren Marcus: Big brothers, Henry.

Henry Greenbaum: What would I do with you? You were a little boy. Enough trouble myself. I said seems you didn't have too much trouble. You came here, you never saw a Nazi. He never saw a Nazi and he's still alive, believe it or not.

Warren Marcus: How old is he?

Henry Greenbaum: 102.

(Applause).

And the reason he's 102, because you never saw a Nazi.

(Laughter)

Because I don't think I'm going to make it to 102.

Warren Marcus: Yes, you will.

Henry Greenbaum: No.

Warren Marcus: One more question and then the last word. I'm not picky. Okay. Go ahead. By the way, once we're done, if you want to come up and chat with Henry briefly, take a picture, that's cool. Go ahead.

Audience Member: Throughout the last -- throughout the years of the second world war you see a lot of countries not -- pushing away the responsibility to intervene. If you were to go back with the experience and knowledge that you had, is there something that you would like to say or do to push countries to do more during that time?

Warren Marcus: So how do you -- let me change that a little bit.

Audience Member: Go ahead.

Warren Marcus: She said --

Henry Greenbaum: I'm glad you could hear it.

Warren Marcus: Well, maybe. There are a lot of countries over the years -- at the time who didn't do too much. There's a varying record. We have a spotted record in the United States. So how do you feel about other countries who -- even America who didn't do too much?

Henry Greenbaum: After the war we were mad at the whole world. Why did they let us do what they did -- the Germans and Nazis did to us. We felt like we were abandoned. We were marching in the countryside. Some people saw us there. We ran across a group of the Hitler equivalent to Boy Scouts. They would throw rocks at us, dirty this and dirty that in German. We already knew the curse words already, so I'm sure they went home to their parents and told the parents what they saw. Saw people skeletons walking. They didn't look normal. But yet these parents, when you approach them after the war, they said they didn't know anything about this at all. No German admit to me, I would like one of them to say you know what? I'm sorry they did that to you but I couldn't help it. I would have taken that answer good. But to tell me you didn't know about it, no, I didn't believe it. I don't think the whole world didn't know anything. They all kept quiet and we felt like they were abandoned and no one look for us until that beautiful angel soldier told me I was free. I was mad at the whole world. America, Russia, British, I mean, England, they couldn't get the three countries together and send a message to Adolph Hitler, whatever the heck his name is, burn in hell. So you can't do that to human beings. We're going to attack you. I guess he wouldn't fight four countries at one time. I don't think so. But there was a lot of politics here, too, I guess, or over there, too. But we felt like, that's why 6 million, 1 1/2 children of Jews. And other people, too. And they kept quiet. They let it happen. And they're still doing it now. Not on that scale.

Warren Marcus: Henry, before we disperse this is your chance for the last word for our guest.

Henry Greenbaum: I'm not good at the last word.

Warren Marcus: Yes, you are.

Henry Greenbaum: All I can tell you is remember the survivors, remember you saw a survivor, you spoke to him or you met him or not just me, other survivors, it's a beautiful museum here. I hope that you will remember that. Don't discriminate against anybody. Treat everybody the same as you treat -- want to be treated yourself. Feel better, at least by our lifetime I thought that people will stop killing one another, but eventually it looks like it's not happening so far. Still people killing each other. And somehow, someway maybe if I'm gone, maybe take another 10, 20 years, who knows, maybe some people will quiet down and treat one another the way they want treated themselves. But do remember the survivors and the 6 million innocent and the 1 1/2 million children who were murdered for no other reason than just being Jewish.

Warren Marcus: Thank you, Henry.

Henry Greenbaum: Thank you.

(Applause).

Thank you, thank you.

Warren Marcus: By the way, Henry, on our website there's lots more of Henry's podcast, many other survivors.

(The program concluded at 2:05 p.m.)