

Thursday, May 2, 2013

1:00-2:00 p.m.

**UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM**  
***FIRST PERSON: MORRIS ROSEN***

Remote CART

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**ROUGH DRAFT TRANSCRIPT**  
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>> Bill Benson: Good afternoon, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson, I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 14th year of *First Person*. Our *First Person* today is Mr. Morris Rosen, whom we shall 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*.

*First Person* is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each guest serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue through mid August. The museum's website at [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Morris Rosen will share with us his *First Person* account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If we have time, at the end of the program there will be an opportunity for you to ask Morris a few questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Morris is one individual's account of the Holocaust.

We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.

We begin with a portrait of Morris Rosen, born Moniek Rozen, son of Jakub Rozen and Golda Chaya Warszawski in 1922. Morris was born in Dabrowa Gornicza in Upper Silesia where his father was an official distributor of tobacco and acetylene. The arrow on the map of Poland points to the location of Dabrowa.

Here we have a 1924 portrait of one of Morris' sisters, Rozia Rozen Bilauer, who survived in

the USSR during the war.

This photograph is of Morris and his friends on a hillside in Dabrowa. Morris is at the top.

As you will hear shortly, Morris survived several Nazi camps, then after a six-week forced March he arrived in the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. The arrow points to Buchenwald.

Eventually, in 1945, Morris was liberated from the Theresienstadt camp in occupied Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army.

We close this brief slide presentation with a photograph of Morris with Regina Zilberstein, about whom we shall hear more later.

Morris came to the United States in late 1949 and, following seven years of art school, built a successful contracting business in Baltimore, where he continues to live today.

He is well-known as a stamp, postcard and letter collector, especially for his Holocaust postal history collection including those from Nazi-created ghettos in Poland. He is also recognized worldwide for his collection on the Olympics and has traveled and lectured about this collection as part of the Olympic games. He has exhibited at numerous US and international exhibitions, including in Nuremberg, Germany, and in Israel. I am pleased to share with you that today Morris is donating to this museum several items from his collection of postcards, documents and correspondence from camps and ghettos.

Morris speaks frequently about his Holocaust experience at such places as the headquarters of the Social Security Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the US Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds and Fort Meade in Maryland. He also speaks to students at

numerous Baltimore-area schools and other locations.

Besides his volunteer work in this museum's archives, Morris has been a volunteer with the Red Cross Holocaust and War Victims Tracing and Information Center. He was named the Baltimore-Washington, DC Man of the Year for the American Red Cross. Morris, who lost his wife in 2000, has two sons and two grandchildren.

Finally, I think you should know that in addition to his vigorous gardening that he continues, Morris works out three times a week doing, are you ready for this, zumba.

[Laughter]

Which combines Latin and international music with dance as an exercise program. However, his doctors have ordered him to no longer go on his steep roof to clean gutters and do repairs.

With that, I would like to ask you to join me in welcoming our *First Person*, Mr. Morris Rosen.

[Applause]

Thank you for joining us.

>> Morris Rosen: Thank you for that introduction. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Yes, it's very difficult to condense five years of the darkest chapter in mankind history into 45 minutes.

Believe me, I would talk all day. But unfortunately, I have to skip many months, a year or two, but it's impossible to do five years what I went through, which I remember every day of life in the camps.

Thank you.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Morris. And thank you for being willing to do this with us. Before we turn to the war years and the Holocaust, tell us just a little bit about your family and your life before the war began. Just a little bit.

>> Morris Rosen: Well, before the war I was well-known in school, because I was an athlete all the time in school. Had many, many friends, not only Jewish friends, but gentile, we were very close. But everything changed in 1938 during the crystal night in 1938. This was November 8, they started boycotting our store also. Although it wasn't Poland, in southern Poland, Silesia. People that knew us, students that I went to school with, they boycotted. I remember two sisters, they took a broom from the store, started chasing away the ones that they told everybody, don't buy from Jews, this, this, and that. It didn't help. We had to close up our store. That's what happened. It's a very short --

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about your father's business and what happened to it after Hitler came to power in Germany.

>> Morris Rosen: Well, after Hitler came to power, it was very, very bad. First of all, you have to give up everything. If it was radios, other things, valuables, people that they own stores for so many years the Germans take over the stores. They closed up, and it was tough.

After 6:00 in the evening, they announce whoever is going to be caught on the street might get shot or in prison. You couldn't walk any more than two or three people, the most. Not gathering, not in the church, not to synagogue. It was very, very tough. It was restrictions, and then they made us put off this was -- this was already in November 1939. They made us wear armbands on the left hand, white armbands with the Jewish star. This is, if they needed any forced labor or to do any dirty work when Germans moved in some places, we had to do the dirty work. It was very easy to recognize the people. This was there.

>> Bill Benson: Let's go back a little to the actual beginning of the war, September 1, 1939. You remember that?

>> Morris Rosen: Oh, yeah. It was about 5:00 in the morning. I was sleeping very sound. Suddenly, I heard noises from airplanes, I look out the window. I mean, the sky was dark from the planes, over 60, what I count. They flew very, very low, and the reason they flew low, because they dropped the fifth column, which they were dressed in civilian clothes. They were actually army people. They were the ones that they let know the German army, with assistance from the Polish army, was safe to go, where it's not safe to go. But the Polish army kept a lot of them, which they hung them in the woods. They took off everything, except their underpants. This is shameful, because they were not soldiers; they were just like private people, not army. They didn't wear the uniforms.

We started to run away also from our home, because we were very close to the German border. We heard already the canons, bombardments and everything. We started running away. Once you were expelled from Germany, from Hamburg to our city, but we run away. After about five days, we were caught by the Germans near the river. That's when we started to be overcome.

>> Bill Benson: What did you find when you went back home?

>> Morris Rosen: So many Jews were already killed at that time. One was a good friend of ours. It was rough. It was miserable. Food, you couldn't buy any food. There was a special place where Jews can only buy bread in a certain bakery, a Jewish bakery. And you have to stay for hours in order to get bread. I was all night long hidden in the little woods, and then to be the first one to be at 7:00 in the morning to stay at line.

I came out at 7:00 in the morning, it happened that a German battalion on the bikes came over, wanted to keep order. One Polish guy, which he didn't belong to them, he said all the Jews. I

got kicked in the back. "You can eat the dirt. You get home, with no bread." I started crying, after staying all night long. It was tough.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, you were at the start of the work in September 1938, October, you were not 7 years old.

>> Morris Rosen: No.

>> Bill Benson: One of the first things you were forced to do was help build a scaffold.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes. What happened, they formed a Jewish council. The Jewish council was responsible for every order that the Germans gave, they have to do the dirty work. The Germans didn't do the dirty work.

They started a Bauleitung, a construction company. You would be lucky to get in. I know my father paid a lot of money. Why? First, we were more safe not to be sent to Germany. Second, you got a little bit extra food. My first job I became a bricklayer, painter and carpenter. My first job was as a helper carpenter to build hanging scaffolds in the market. I will never forget this. We did about 10 hanging scaffolds. It was scary. Then the police, German police, not soldiers, went from every person they took away their IDs, you had to have IDs, otherwise you couldn't walk on the street. You'd be 11:00 at the market, you get back. Otherwise, you don't get back your ID.

It happened the next day, I saw it myself. They brought 10 -- at the foundry, before the war they made all of the locomotives for Poland. During the war they made parts for planes. Motors for planes for the Germans. They brought 10, and one of them they did sabotage, that's the reason. This is not right. They didn't do anything. They did in every city in Silesia. They hung people for

sabotage which people didn't do, just to scare of the people. That's why they were successful, because they murdered, they killed and people were scared. That's what happened.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, about that time, I think your sister Rozia, who we saw a picture of, she escaped to Russia.

>> Morris Rosen: What happened, she lived in Bedzin, which was 65% Jewish people. When the Germans came in about a week later, they burned the synagogue there. When they burned the synagogues, the rabbi wanted to save the holy scriptures. They pushed them into the synagogue. People were watching, because it was like a Jewish city, everybody was pushed in there to the synagogue, and they put fire to the synagogue.

Next to it was a church there. The priest from the church opened the gates, metal, he pointed out to people that they looked out the window. Several did, about 12 people jumped down. He unlocked the gate, they were safe. Then the Germans went house by house, chase out the Jews, then the synagogue. Machine-gunned it. One of it, I met in Israel, I exhibited in Israel my stamp collection of the Olympics, and I talked also about it, what happened at the ghetto. Said, you want to meet somebody that was right there? You come to the meeting. He picked me up, went there to the meeting, which is from my region, from Silesia, the room was full from papers from the priest that saved the Jews. He was one that chased out from the house, and he was shot, but he managed to run into the church there. The priest locked the door, and he showed me a bullet hole here. He was treated, but I took pictures, if I told the story, of the man that actually survived this and lived through.

>> Bill Benson: Your sister went to Russia?



>> Morris Rosen: My sister when she saw hanging Jews, 35 Jews hung in the market, after the synagogue was burned, she came home, said goodbye to my father, her husband, said I'm going. Because the Russians at that time were in good things with the Germans, because they signed a pact. She managed to escape. She swam through the river to Russia. Some of them, the Russians sent back. She was lucky with her husband. About four weeks later, we received the first postcard, I remember the stamp has a horse that I collected stamps as a youngster. She walked -- she never knew Russian all the time. She walked in a bank, and then she escaped further when the war broke out. It's a long story. But it's not her story, it's mine.

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: You were a bricklayer for a while.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Assistant carpenter. But before long, you were forced to become a painter. That would play a really important role in your survival.

>> Morris Rosen: In the ghetto I worked painting. The Germans sent me away. In fact, every Friday evening I walked to three buildings for the Germans, which was a police state. In the third building, unfinished yet, paint and everything. Every Friday my older brother, myself, went through the woods, which was about 20 kilometers through the woods, and to be there Friday evening, this was the safest place. Even I have such a good ID card sometimes it didn't help.

So I was hiding at the police station. This was the safest place. But the war soon came, which I have to skip also. It was March 1942 that they called all of the Jewish girls in our city from 12 years old to 30 to register, that they're going to work in the shop for the Germans as tailors, and they should

come register. Whoever won't register won't get any food stamps or anything.

They came there to the place, to Chemnitz, which was a transition camp, and they were examined by a doctor. They didn't let them out no more. My father went there, tried to get out. Didn't help anything.

Two days later, they shipped them away. Let me tell you, my house was like after a funeral. Can you imagine a 12-year-old girl, the youngest, to be taken away. My mother cried constantly. My father. It was like after a funeral. It was terrible. Till about three weeks later, we got the first postcard from her that she works in lower Silesia, in a camp, in a factory where they make clothing and everything, 12 hours a day, if it's possible to send some packages of food. So we knew they're hungry.

My mother baked everything she could. I could go to the post office. Though it was restricted. It was already in our city, the ghetto, which you couldn't go everywhere. We were still not in the ghetto. And I went to the post office and mailed those packages all the time. But the war thing happened, I never forget, was August 10, 1942. There came an order from the Jewish community, 5:00 in the morning, we have to come near the Jewish community there was a stadium, to be there at 5:00 in the morning. Put on your summer clothing, so you look presentable. There you will get new ID cards.

We waited till 8:00 in the morning. It was so hot, August, the hottest season in Poland. Kids were crying. Of course, they were thirsty, no water, no nothing. People were fainting from the heat. 7:00, 8:00 in the morning I thought something is not kosher like, to say. Came three cops with SS and soldiers. On the roof were already soldiers with machine guns. Something smells. I saw it is not

right.

At that time, I walked as a -- worked as a painter, but the head of all of the gestapo in Silesia, Dreier, I did painting for him. My father too. We came in the morning. They put up three tables. There came a selection. The one, the elder people, over 40, some people younger, but they have beards, you know, go to the right. To the center were people that haven't got IDs, young people, but they're still able to work. Went to the center. The left is like people like my brothers and I, that we have ID cards, we work for the Germans, to the left.

About 10:00, they finish, they march all the people, about 2,000 of them, to Bedzin, next city.

I didn't know where to go in, because my father didn't keep them in our home. I found out where they were in Bedzin, so at 8:00 in the morning I went there to see my parents if I can get first the key to the house. Who was there? Jewish police, not German. They didn't let me in. What do you want? I knew a policeman from our city. I said I just want for a second. I am there for a minute, I come back out.

The scene I was there, crying, I will never forget in my life. I saw my father, gave me his keys, his pocket watch. My mother said don't forget your younger sister, 12 years old. See to send the packages. See that she gets the best. That's the last time I saw my parents.

I came back to work there, I told him you promised me my parents would be safe.

Oh, don't worry. I find them. Like you found them, like he did.

On the third day, I went back from work, I worked with my older brother, I walked through the fields, not the city. I see somebody wave to me like this. It was my friend's father, my best friend's father. I said this is the transport. German soldiers are there, on the roof, on the outside. As I wave,

suddenly a German started shooting. So I jumped in there, waited 10 minutes. When I didn't see the train anymore, I went home.

Went home, the next day I get from the Jewish community we have to move to the ghetto. We didn't even have time to cry after my parents. You were busy moving. What can you move? We didn't have horse and wagon or anything. We got a little two-wheeler. What did we pack? Some bedding. We took my father's library, because he has a very well-known library, books, Jewish books on history from the 17th century, 18th. This I took. What can you take? The rest, everything we left. We came back to the ghetto. We were 16 people, nine girls, seven boys. Just hay on the floor, wooden floor. We let the girls sleep there. We went to sleep outside. When it rained, we stood in the foyer like this.

There was one lady, she was pregnant, she begged me, she baked something for her husband in a forced labor camp. This is important to you when I tell you later the story. He was our tailor that actually for my bar mitzvah, if you know what it is, he did my suit. He was our tailor from home.

To him I sent the packages. And then came the high holidays about a week later, we went to the cafe, everybody cried. After that, I have a friend. We were five people, very good friends. One of them was very poor. He didn't have no parents. He had the elder brother that went to the Polish army. He didn't come back. He probably got killed.

He was so hungry, he didn't have food to live. That he went as a volunteer to the slave labor.

So we put some money together. I went and bought some on the black market, some beer, some kielbasa, good good oils, went to a garden there to someone's, we had a little party there, and that man that was so poor, he was so talented, he was a good singer. Every time he saw a picture

with Fred Astaire, he did step dancing, like, like Fred Astaire. I never met him after the war. I have pictures of him.

Then I came home, I have a letter from the Jewish community that this gets you on the special permit, they sent me to a leather factory. There we were about eight months. After eight months, they were only in the factory two Jews. One was the chief engineer for leather that he knows what to do everything, a scientist. The other one that knew the motors. That man, one of them went to Bedzin to see his brother. Never came back. They caught him, he never came back. He left his wife and little child.

About a week later, we got the food from the Jewish community. I heard there was no more Jews there, it was clean of Jews. I thought I might escape, because I came, went by a church, somebody whistled. It was a Jewish guy. He says come with the bread. I said no, the people won't have anything to eat. The next morning, 6:00, who comes in? SS with the truck. They took us all then. But one, a friend of mine, an electrician that used to go with me, he must have escaped through a window, but I never heard him after the war. I don't know if he made it or not.

There was a lady, the wife of the engineer with the little baby, who we saw. I held the baby going to the train, and when we arrived, I gave back the baby, lucky me. Right away, the SS came for her in the private car, took away the baby. If I would hold the baby, I would go with her, because I am her husband. They took them to Auschwitz. We didn't know at the time what Auschwitz meant. We were the ones cleaning out the ghettos, because no more Jews were there. Mountains of shoes and leather, bedding to separate, this to separate.

On the third day, we stood at the guard going to the ghetto. Here comes Ludwig. Ludwig was

the head of the slave labor in all of camps, and the concentration camps. He worked for Mr. Paul, he was the head of all of the slave labor camps. He asked is he a painter? "Ein maler"? I'm skinny as can be. Don't kill me. Wanted the one with the big mouth.

[Speaking German]

Are you a pointer? I told him I'm a very good painter.

[Speaking German. ]

He gave me right away in the face, he hit me, I started bleeding from the nose. I got dizzy. He asked are you a painter? I says I'm a good painter. He puts me on the size. The people went to work, I stood there. Then he comes over to me to assess. "We're watching." He said I have three rooms to paint. If you're not finished in three rooms, he takes the pistol to my temple, "You lived enough." I almost fainted. I was dizzy. I was sure this is my end.

Then I came myself, I said I don't have no paint. I have no brushes. If you let me go home, it's not far from her here, I thought I could escape, then I'll have everything to paint. He said you will have everything.

Two SS men took me in the middle of the road with machine guns. I'm the big prisoner. Two of them with machine guns. They helped me move the furniture. I started painting. Nobody was home. A beautiful Polish woman about 25, 26, like a movie star, blonde hair. She didn't even give me a glass of water, anything. Silently, what kind of Polish woman, knows I'm hungry, she knows I'm thirsty, not to give me anything? Doesn't she have a heart?

What happened, I painted the dining room, the chandelier there, I thought maybe this will help. I was very good in artwork, even in school. I painted very good colors. I started from the chandelier

coming twigs, and from the twigs, the snake, the mouth open, the colors everything, it was beautiful. I thought maybe she'd give me something to eat.

I finished washing her floor. I went home, I had my sliced bread with black coffee. This was the dinner. In the morning again, one sliced bread with the dark coffee. It wasn't coffee. I come to work again, started the second room. Who comes in? Ludwig half-hour later, he smiles. Smile is a good sign. He calls me over. He says where did you learn so good to paint?

I said, well, my father was the best painter in the city. What do I tell him, we're a businessman? I said we didn't have much to eat. When I was 6 years old instead of going to school I have to help my father. That's why I learned good to paint. That's why I'm a good painter.

He smiled. That's all. He left. Half-hour later he comes with a bag

[Speaking German]

I shouldn't get caught. Don't get caught. He left, I looked, it was a big kielbasa, with the loaf bread, which is four pounds, and a cigar that he shouldn't get caught.

Believe me, it didn't take 10 minutes, the kielbasa nobody is going to take away. I finished all of the kielbasa.

[Laughter]

Bread, how much bread can you eat? I took a piece, I left myself a piece for the next day. I took back the rest of the bread for my colleagues there, which they were hungry, with the cigar. I don't smoke.

The next day I come to work, the same thing. I finished the three rooms. I washed the windows, the floors, he brought me steel wool to do the floors, which I got from the shellac, it's

alcohol, opened the windows, lucky I didn't smoke, otherwise the thing would go up in flames.

[Laughter]

Yeah. I didn't know that, but I learned later after the war what happened in Baltimore to one when at the did the floors, it went up in flames. Then came, well, are you finished?

Yeah.

I don't send you to Auschwitz.

I didn't know what Auschwitz meant.

I send you to a camp. Since he was so nice to me, I stood at attention. I begged him, I have nobody from my family, one sister. Is it possible to come to the camp where my sister is. He says where? I told him. He says this is a woman's camp.

[Speaking German]

First I go to a transition camp, transition camp was murder. No work, no bread, three times a day cabbage soup. You didn't have no potatoes. Can you imagine three times? Cal kohlrabi soup. It was terrible.

I had beatings. I didn't go out except time for soup, then I went out. About a week later, who comes? Ludwig. OK. So I saw him, he gave a note to someone, and then he called up, there was a transport to Gruenberg, 20 people, I'm not on the list. I jumped over the fence. It was not electrified or anything. I knocked on the door. Comical, really. No shirt, no pants, in the boots with his underwear.

[Speaking German]

You promised me I'd go to Gruenberg. I'm not on the list



"Was?"

He left, I followed him like a little doggy. He started screaming at the SS. Nobody goes. Next morning, 4:00, he pulls me down from the third bunk, I hurt myself "Get dressed." I took my suitcase, I go out. There was already one woman, one man. The man was in a transition camp from the war, from Berlin, he was the head of the transition camp. The woman was Jewish, she was the one that is going to be the new head of the woman's camp.

We three go to the train, the SS pushed me hard. They gave me their suitcases. I couldn't carry them. It was heavy. I couldn't say anything. What am I going to say?

Went to the train. They emptied it, we couldn't be with the Germans together. We arrive in Gruenberg, same evening, I want to see my sisters. What happened? They took already from another camp nearby men, they put them, they started out a camp. There was about 80 people at the camp.

Next morning, they gave me a nice, beautiful new suit, two shirts and shoes, you got to be clean, you got to shower every morning, because we worked in the factory in Gruenberg where the women were. The women had it very bad, no food, very little beatings, but the men had it better.

My God, I had a clean suit, everything. All of the men, we worked with the Germans together in the same factory. I became their painter. When I came there, they put me to the painting thing, there was an elder German, 72 years old. "Don't worry about me, I'm a communist. But watch out for the dog, he's a Nazi."

He brought me every day a piece of bread I don't have myself, with a vitamin pill. Only Monday when his wife baked something. But I have enough food. Why? We had the paints, we

waited where it was five women working there. One of the ladies, about 30 years old, clean up here. I swept up everything. Pull out the garbage. She pointed to something there. I came out, take out the garbage. A nice hall, she's in the back. Every morning she brought me a sandwich. I knew it, I took the sandwich.

I saw my sister every day, I painted the machines with ether paint and the windows also, and I too ate the sandwich. She had the basket for garbage there. I had it very good there, because where I worked, I had it. Once the assessment, it was Christmastime, I should carry this Christmas tree to his house. To paint his room. I painted it.

Comes lunchtime, his daughter calls me, sit down. With the white tablecloth. With the good linen. No, I can't do it. I was scared.

Don't be afraid. I will look out the window. My father is not coming. With the white tablecloth, napkins. Not paper, linen. She packed me something. I said I can't take food. I will be caught. I will be shot. I ate it there.

Three days I worked there, she gave me food every day. It shows you some Germans were good. Not everybody was bad.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, during that time in Gruenberg, did you continue to be able to see your sister?

>> Morris Rosen: Every day. Every day I went to the machine right away, because I knew which machines.

>> Bill Benson: How was she doing?

>> Morris Rosen: Well, how she did, I'll tell you when she escaped from the death march. But it didn't last long. After eight months, we didn't go to work. What happened? Ludwig came. Ludwig,

everybody got petrified. Something is going on. OK. We went to work, Ludwig left. I come back from work, the head of the SS, Rosen, I should go to his office. Sit down. I sit down. He brings a loaf of bread with the soap. You come every day after work to my office. Ludwig told him to treat me good. I gave right away the bread to the girls there. I went to the doctor there. Every day I go to that. I have preference, you know. Because I held the suitcases for them. It didn't last long. A week later, they took us in trucks, went to a concentration camp. We couldn't eat with the women no more, because the women's camp, the slave labor, everything in 1944 became concentration camp. No more slave camps. They were attached to it. We come there about three hours later, we come in the woods with the trucks, snow, dirt, it was in March, cold as can be.

As we arrive --

>> Bill Benson: March 1944?

>> Morris Rosen: 1944. Came over with the beret, leather pants, with this,

[Speaking German]

Then we formed a circle. And then he takes two guys, throws them on the ground, puts his foot on their throats and killed them. That's how we're going to look if you don't give up everything what you possess. You're not allowed to have anything.

So people have watches, have this.

I threw everything down. The Juden-Eltster, very handsome, tall guy, he didn't do anything, why kill him? He pushed him into the ground. Came day one of the soldiers that was a guard in the camp, he was very nice, we called him the savior. Because he was so good. He never touched anybody.

What do you want from him? Don't you know he's the Juden-Eltster? He pushed him to the

ground. Unbelievable. We stood there. Till late in the evening, 10:00.

Then you go into the camp. What happened? Our bunk wasn't finished yet. The cement was wet, no windows, no water. Just a bucket to relieve yourself. You can't go out.

What did I do? I saved some pictures. I knew where they put them in our suitcases. One of the pictures from home. Especially I have my first love, like you say girlfriend, when you are 15 years old. I have a picture from her. I says I'm not going to lose this picture.

I got 2:00 in the morning, it was pouring, no electricity, so I wasn't afraid to jump over the fence. Went to the back where there was my suitcase, knocked out a window. Nobody there. Took me an hour to find my suitcase, took out the pictures and went back to the back. I have like a metal can for the soup in the morning to take, put everything, and I made a hole near the back, deep hole, with cement, piece of paper wrapped around that has plastic, the cement.

>> Bill Benson: You buried your photographs?

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. I organized another camp.

OK, I have the worst job there. We were a company about 50 people and cutting down trees, which was for wood. I have the worst job. Why? I worked on a tank. There was stumps to go, and I have to feed the tank, they didn't have gas, but wet wood, the smoke going, I stopped breathing, I couldn't breathe anything. I became like a Musselman after 10 days, like only skin and bones, that's all.

So one evening comes over someone to me with a piece of bread and soup. This is from Grossman. That's Grossman that I sent him packages, that his wife was with me in the ghetto with the nine girls. I didn't want to accept.

He came, what do you think you're somebody special? At home you were somebody. Here you don't eat, you die.

I want to die. Look how I look. If you want to help me --

>> Bill Benson: You said at that point, you told me you were ready to give up?

>> Morris Rosen: I gave it up, because I couldn't breathe anything. If you want to help me out, the food won't help me. Get me out from that job, because the smoke kills me. 12 hours a day. You know I was a painter, bricklayer in the ghetto and everything. Two days later, I don't go to work anymore, I became a painter.

When we stood there at roll call, it was off. We stood six blocks. Every block has about over 500, 600 people. When you stay in the front it was a long row, five deep. The one at the front all the time had beating. The one with the scar. You don't stay straight. Your head is crooked. It was terrible.

I was healthy. I all the time look for some tall guys, and hid in the center under tall guys that I wouldn't be beat. I was selfish. You got to survive, that's all. So I did.

Then I come there in the morning to work, three painters, and everybody has a can, like the milk can, 50 people, 10 people, 3 people, the same amount. I see they're giving the soup away. What are you doing? I'm hungry. Giving them my soup?

You'll have plenty to eat.

We came to work, we went where they had the paint. They made a little fire, baked potatoes. We had plenty to eat.

What happened? We worked in the hospital painting. You work in the hospital, those big

rooms with 30 wounded soldiers, they came from the east. When we painted this big room, the beds were standing there with everybody, with the cabinets open, with food plenty. Wounded soldiers got out, and we helped ourselves. We ate butter and bread. Not butter and butter. We have so much food. Even chocolate there. You name it. Everything.

I became right away I got my skin, everything back, and I took down garbage and I packed under the garbage food, because people were hungry walking outside in the cold. I threw it out, they knew there was food. I became healthy again, and I went to the block number 6 with the -- I got right away a little boy, 16-year-old from Hungary, I gave him my food. I didn't need my food. I had plenty there. He cleaned my shoes. We organized another -- we have no underwear, no shirts, but pajamas. That was the clothing. He organized another pair of pants. I gave him all of my food, another one I helped. But it was miserable. Every day we -- every block had the dead people. 25 to 30, 40 people dead. Because they worked them to death, with 600 calories, 12-14 hours a day. Beating, every day. Roll call and cold, to stay with nothing, you were shivering, till them came to count. They have to count. One day three people escaped. Not going back. Every 10th person is shot, unless we found them. Two days later, two of them they found. They brought them back. One was a good friend of mine. He was in Gruenberg with me. His sister was there also. They put black things, like clothing, and they got such a beating you didn't see the eyes. On the third day they took him, from the main camp, they hung them there, brought them back. They laid on the ground. That's how we're going to look if you try to escape. The third one they didn't catch, which I met him, in 1982 in Los Angeles, he managed to go into a metal purse, that he knows metals. He walked there. He had papers. He lived through the war.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, you would stay there until February of 1945.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: That's when you were forced on death marches.

>> Morris Rosen: What happened, February 5, I never forget. We don't go to work. We heard that the Russian Army was there. Didn't go to work. Everybody take your blankets, and everybody got a loaf of bread with marmalade in a can, we started marching, in the woods. Eight hours.

We came out from the woods where German soldiers, they were retreating. One of the officers, why don't you let them go, to the head of the SS that led us? Don't you see the war is almost over? We're retreating. Let them go. The war is almost over.

No, he has other things. He took us back to the woods. We marched another eight hours. People can't walk that long. Whoever couldn't walk, a bullet in the head. We go again. We didn't wash for two weeks. It was so cold, in February --

>> Bill Benson: This was an especially brutal winter too?

>> Morris Rosen: My God, the winter. We got undressed, everybody going into the river to wash themselves. Can you imagine? And wash your clothing. It was full of lice. If you don't wash, one sleeps with the other one, we slept first in the barn. The farmer had food for the horses, the pigs, we ate everything up. People were hungry. You didn't get any food, just a potato a day, that's all.

So punishment, we slept in the snow. One on top of the other to keep warm. So we washed ourselves, then we get dressed. I was with a nice bunch, youngsters, about five people. We jumped around, back-to-back. We were never allowed to talk food. When you started talking food, you got hungry. You were never allowed, between the five of us. We helped each other what we can.

And what movie did you see? What book did you read? What girlfriend did you have? That kind of talk. Never allowed to talk about food. We jumped around. We got dressed, we walked again.

I want to put on my pants, it was a board, frozen. I worked one shirt, the other one like every centimeter till I got unfrozen and --

>> Bill Benson: Your pant leg broke off because it was so frozen?

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. It was like a board. You put on wet clothing, it dried on you, and so many people within three days died. What happened, we walked further, on the fourth day, we saw a Hungarian platoon, SS Hungarian platoon. They worked with the Germans. I worked in the front with the doctor, what a beautiful person. Intelligent person. He saw the person they helped out, they were poor, the father worked in the bakery --

>> Bill Benson: Helped him before the war?

>> Morris Rosen: Before the war. Never took a penny from them. He gave him medicine.

Sometimes money to buy the medicine. He ran over "Don't you know me?"

He knew who he was. He says that's when you have friends, you help them out, what pay did you get back? I tell you, then I had a friend that was a Baker, Jewish Baker during the war. He was older than me, because so many people died, so they brought a transport from Auschwitz to supply more labor. Who came? One, a friend of my brother, elder man, who was in Auschwitz. He gave me the first greetings that the two brothers are alive in Auschwitz. And he looked terrible, like a skeleton. He told me what happened in Auschwitz, that they burned people. Then I found out what Auschwitz meant. I didn't know. Nobody knew. He told us a horror story. The SS, the stump from the



cigarette, the people want to get it. They went to get it, they got beaten up. I told them, does it pay to get beat over a cigarette? Of course, he died, why else? He died in my hands. He couldn't survive.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, in the time that we have left, tell us, eventually the march took you to Buchenwald.

>> Morris Rosen: The march took us to Buchenwald. What happened, we came to Buchenwald, uphill, we can hardly walk, with no food, no nothing. He was the one that killed the two guys and killed so many people. Like a soldier, he walked left and right, he wanted to show off who he was. When we came to the gate there, who was at the gate? Germans, that they were couples, elders, political prisoners, communists and socialists. When they saw what he did to Jews, they grabbed him: Are you any better than they are? They threw him to the ground. He had a beating. He was bleeding all over.

My God, we have God to punish him. We was lucky they kept him long enough we went inside. They gave us -- it's a whole story, because it's not much time. But anyway, the next day somebody noticed and they tore away his clothing, he was afraid we would kill him. He took probably from a dead person his uniform, put it out, but he managed to escape not where we are. I was all the time like for history. It smelled to high heaven. I looked, there were mountains of dead, six mountains about eight feet high with all dead people that they -- the high heavens smelled.

I walked over there, who was on the top? Morris, Morris, one eye open, one closed. He was a German Jew. They sent him to Poland because his grandparents were from Poland. We played Ping-Pong in the Maccabiah club. He was at my camp. He had it nice. He did nothing. He was so good. He had a lot of food. On the death march, they were the ones that didn't survive. The same

thing with the Hungarian Jews, in 1944 they were all healthy. We knew already what's going on. We knew the hunger. They didn't know. They couldn't take it. He later, oh, you would be soon.

Then I saw cannibalism for the first time in my life. I never saw this in my life again. People with two knives, tall guys, dark-skinned. People are still alive. What are you doing, you murderers? They started telling me. I run away. I ran away, they start yelling all the Jews out. They started phasing out all of the Jews from there, because the Americans were already very close by. We didn't know, but that's what happened.

I didn't go. I said, no, I'm not going to another death march or something. I saw one guy, I went into the wall, a hollow wall in the back, I ran in there for about an hour. Then some other people came, they noticed. They started machine-gunning the wall. I managed to get out, knocked out the window with my back, which I bloodied myself. I ran right out. I saw the people there staying out. I ran to them, they should see me. We'll be shot, because they killed everybody running from that wall. This was the last transport getting out. If I would have stayed another day, I would be liberated by the Americans. Instead, I suffered another two weeks.

We went all the way to another station, because there was no station in Buchenwald. Hungry, some people barefooted, wooden shoes and pajamas. It was full of glass, because what they bombed, it wasn't the house there with glass.

We went to the woods, cold as can be. Didn't have a place to sit. During the night, we started pulling out dead bodies. It came so bad, on the fourth day it was only 1/4 of the people left who went out. We didn't pull out the bodies. We put them as pillows, because it was very cold to lay down. No food. For nine days, no water, no food. Suddenly, we come to Gera, we see water from the

locomotive. People come with the bucket. This was the first water in nine days. Then they gave us soup. I said don't eat this. This is poison. I grabbed it from someone. I threw it out. I knew right away, they want to poison us. They couldn't care.

What happened, two Russian planes came every five minutes for about a minute to check on the locomotives, we were not the only one, about 10 in a row. One got wounded. We jumped off the train, ran away. The soldiers there let us in. As we go back, I noticed a young boy from my city. He was only about 14. Oh, Morris, come. They don't know I'm Jewish.

I says no. So far I'm lucky. I stay. You come with me.

I didn't go. I found out later on they took all of the Poles into the woods where we escaped, they shot them all.

Finally, we walked in the woods, we walked on foot, we went to Dresden. I don't know if you know the history how they killed 100,000 Germans.

>> Bill Benson: In Dresden?

>> Morris Rosen: He punished them, what we went through in the Elbe River. OK, we come there in the night, they didn't know where to put us. All over Germany, they're supposed to kill us off there. But what actually happened was a German officer let know that they meant to kill us. So the Russian Army said go first, they came around, and they came to Theresienstadt, that's why we're safe. They came the next day, they took off my clothing, they burned everything, it was full of lice. And they gave me two shirts with a pair of pants, the same shoes what I had, no socks or anything, and we were about 32 in the back to Hamburg. We were there, and I don't know what happened, I only know that I laid on the ground, I must have jumped out the window. I know what happened. Russian

officer woke me up, rushed me off with a little water, put me back to the back, and there was only 12 people. Everybody died of typhus.

There must be one, a couple there, who was healthy, hefty, he came with a pair of Belgium horses, the big ones, full of wine and the sardine, the Portuguese sardines, the best. And thousands and thousands and thousands, hundred Mark bills that he went to a bank there.

We put the money on hooks, because we didn't have toilet paper. We used it. I wish I would have known. I would be rich. The money was still good for two years.

So we ate there. On the third day came a nurse, a Czech nurse. Took us to the doctor. The doctor asked me what did you eat? I said all day wine and sardines. He said you're lucky, if not the wine, you wouldn't be here, the sardines would kill you. In Theresienstadt, there were so many people killed, which the Russians killed them. What happened, they came in with the same kitchen, what the soldiers ate, with beef and cow and potatoes. People didn't eat for 2-3 weeks, their stomachs were shrunk. They killed them with that food.

Lucky me, I only ate a potato and a piece of bread. I didn't want to touch their food. I was smart enough. I don't know why. I thought about it. I was sane. I knew what I'm doing. Then suddenly, on the fourth day I hear somebody calls my name. My sister's husband heard on the radio that I'm alive. Because in Europe every night between 10:00 and 12:00 the Red Cross put out names from each camp who was alive here, in Budapest I'm alive. He came. He got me out from there.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, we're right at time to wrap up in a couple of minutes. I know you had said that you wanted to be sure to say a little bit about your sister and your brothers, what happened at the end.

>> Morris Rosen: What happened, so they were -- I have three sisters, which they escaped with their husband, this is the husband later that took me out of Theresienstadt. Two sisters, they couldn't escape with my other sister, but they won't say goodbye to my father. When they started going back, they were killed. There were 12 kills. They were killed with axes and shovels by the Ukraines. I had a witness who saw it. A neighbor who moved away. They got killed there.

I have another sister that was -- there were four girls, she was with a 2-year-old boy with her husband. Her husband went to dynamite a train, this was near Krakow, when the train went to the east. When he came back he saw all of the four Jewish girls cut their toes and stomachs. But the little boy wasn't hurt, but bloody from my sister. He grabbed the baby, ran away right away, washed it off, put it in Krakow near an nunnery where the nuns he knew were there. He left to the house looking out for the windows from the third floor. After half-hour, the baby was crying. Some nun came out, grabbed the baby, then he escaped.

He escaped back where he came from. He joined the communists on the ground with the Russian soldiers also, in the underground. When the Russians came in, in 1945, to Lemberg, he had a brother in the Polish army, which started at that time, he says any POW wants to join us fighting the Germans will be free. So he joined, he came right away to his own home. He saw his brother, my sister's husband. He told them what happened to my sister, that the kid was alive. They went to a restaurant to eat. Came in, the Russian officer saw my brother-in-law in civilian clothing. Killed him. Because he was not in uniform, he doesn't belong there.

The day from liberation what he went through, he killed him. But anyway, his brother later on took after the war six months till we find the baby. He came there finally to a farm. He was so many

places. When he came there, there was a little boy with cows, barefooted, "Help, help, the Jews want to kill me" because he called them. He ran into the house. He ran into there. He said, yes, I won't give him up. I'm his uncle.

No, I saved him, I spent money, he's my son. I don't have kids. He says, but I'm his uncle. He got to go where he belongs.

Didn't help. Next day he came with two Jewish guys from the Russian Army, also from Poland, they put on a full table money, they didn't want to touch it. They grabbed the money, they ran away, they tore away their uniforms, in civilian clothing, ran over the Italian border and went to Palestine. After the war, my only sister that escaped, she was in Jerusalem, she went to court because she wanted the baby. No, he risked his life, so they gave it to him.

I met him. What a good-looking boy. Looked exactly like my brother. But he just passed away a couple of months ago of cancer. He went through the war and everything.

Then what happened with me, after I was liberated by Russians, I wanted to go back to Poland so if anybody is alive. The Red Cross gave me money, a ticket in Prague. I came there. There came a train. I see Jewish guys from the camp. I asked are you Jewish?

Of course. Where are you going?

I said I want to see my family. He says you're crazy. We hardly make it. We have to buy the Russians to buy everything. What do you want, to get killed? Not every Pole was bad, but it was an element pretty bad, because they killed a lot of people in the city, I know it.

I came back, that's when my brother-in-law, I told him what happened. He said I have enough of Stalin, I don't like Stalin. I said but he liberated. Never mind. We're going to the American side.

Maybe from there we go to Palestine.

So he told me when you're on the train, when the Americans come up don't you tell them you're from Poland, they'll send you back to Poland. Tell them you're a German Jew, you go back to German.

We come on the train. His son was on the train too. We come to the border, came up, the American GI. That's impossible. With ties, with elegant shoes, with the MP, they looked so handsome. This is not soldiers.

My nephew, only 16 years old, started talking English, better English than they did, the British English. He spoke French. They had a housekeeper, a French lady, spoke with them only French and English. So they knew better probably than Polish. Spoke several languages. Also Lithuanian, because he escaped from Lithuania right away.

They took them as spies.

>> Bill Benson: The Americans thought he was a spy because his English was so good?

>> Morris Rosen: Right, because English was so good, they're spies. You go, we find you. Next day, I get off the station in Pilsner. I see American soldiers there. I'm cold, dirty, tired. They see from the ground bags covered. I keep the cover to me. I fell asleep. I woke up, I'm the only one on the cement floor. 11:00. Cold, what do I do? I go to the police there. I ask for the police. I tell them I'm Polish, I'm hungry, I'm from the camp. They say don't say you're Polish. Tell them you are a Jew from Poland. They hated the Poles.

Why? In 1938 when the Germans occupied all parts from Czechoslovakia then Prague, so Poland went to war, because they claimed Szczakowa belonged to Poland. They hated the Poles.

Many Czech soldiers died. There was only one Polish soldier that died. His name was Moise, a Jewish guy. One guy. I think the time is up.

>> Bill Benson: I think so. I'll turn back to Morris to close our program in a moment. I want to thank all of you for being with us. Morris was absolutely right, we could spend until the wee hours tomorrow and not even begin to scratch the surface for all that he could share with us. I'm grateful for you being here. I remind you we'll have *First Person* programs every Wednesday and Thursday through the middle of August. I hope you'll come back if you have a chance or next year.

Look to our website for information about the program for next year.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our *First Person* gets the last word. After Morris concludes our program, he's going to step down off the stage over here. We didn't have a chance for you to ask questions of Morris. If you want to, please do it. Meet him, say hi to him, get your picture taken with him or ask him any questions you want. That will be OK?

>> Morris Rosen: Of course.

>> Bill Benson: All right. Morris?

>> Morris Rosen: One thing I want to tell you, especially the younger generation also, you are the future of our country. Please be kind to everyone. It doesn't make any difference if you're black, yellow, white, what religion, if you're Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jewish, we all are God's children. You know what happened later on, Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, Darfur, everything. Hate can bring us to that again. Be kind to each other. That's my final word. Thank you for listening to me.

[Applause]

Thank you.