Wednesday, March 26, 2014

11:00 a.m. - 12:01 p.m.

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON: HENRY GREENBAUM

Remote CART

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>> Warren Marcus: Good morning. My name is Warren Marcus. I'm the host today of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. This is our 15th year of the program. Our *First Person* today is Henry Greenbaum, whom we shall meet shortly.

The 2014 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, to whom we are grateful again for sponsoring *First Person*. I have a special connection with *First Person*. In 1999, my father recently passed away, we were honored to fund, endow the first year of *First Person* in my father's honor, so I have a special connection.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experiences. Each guest serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue until mid August. The museum's website, www.ushmm.org provides information about upcoming *First Person* guests, so if this extends to August. Please come back.

Henry Greenbaum will share with us his *First Person* account as a survivor for about 45 minutes. As time allows towards the end of the program, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask a few questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Henry is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We've prepared a believe slide presentation to help with this introduction.

Good-looking devil, isn't he?

Henry was born April 1, 1928. His family lived in a small, one-story house that served as both his family's residence and a tailor shop. He was the youngest of nine children. Henry lived in the

town of Starachowice, Poland. This arrow shows the approximate location of the town in Poland.

Here are two of Henry's five sisters, Ita on the left, Rozia on the right. In this photo, we see one of Henry's sisters, Faige, who you will hear more about, 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, the labor camp at Auschwitz, and later to the Flossenburg camp in Germany. At 17, Henry was liberated and one year later immigrated to the United States. Please welcome our *First Person* guest, Henry Greenbaum.

[Applause]

>> Warren Marcus: Henry, how are you?

>> Henry Greenbaum: I'm doing fine. Just fine.

>> Warren Marcus: Me too.

>> Henry Greenbaum: What a crowd they are. Thank you for coming.

>> Warren Marcus: I always say Henry is a rock star. Very happy to have you all join us.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Thank you. Thank you.

>> Warren Marcus: I've known Henry for a long time. He could speak for hours and hours. We have less than one hour. We're going to talk about four or five particular segments of his life during this time period, then we'll have time for questions. There will be frustrating times where I'll have to interrupt so we can move on. I hope you bear with us. Let's start with a discussion of your life before

the Germans invade in 1939. A little about your family, relations with other neighbors. What was life like before the Germans invaded?

>> Henry Greenbaum: We had no problem at all. I was the youngest of nine children, and I went to public school. I went to Hebrew school. I did play a lot of games with other children. We got along fine. Now and then we had a skirmish, but who doesn't? When you play soccer, you always argue. Two minutes later, you make up. You're still buddies. Our neighbors, we got along with our neighbors. We didn't have any problem. They used to come to the shop, and they were on a first-name basis with my father. He was still alive at that time. We couldn't see any problem whatsoever. Of course, all that changed. My father passed away two months before the war, and then my mom, being protective of kids, not the married sisters, they had husbands to protect them, with the kids, but the others were home with us, and she decided to go, to take us with a neighbor on our horse and buggy to to farm.

>> Warren Marcus: Tell us how many siblings with you, boys, girls. Describe the family.

>> Henry Greenbaum: On that farm, we came with our three sisters and myself, and the oldest of the brothers. The other brother served in the Polish army. I didn't know where he was. He was fighting in the war. They were no match for the Germans, of course. They were understaffed of after the war, we found out he was a prisoner in a ghetto in Lithuania, and I didn't meet him till after the war.

While we were on the farm with the oldest of the brothers, we were out there on the farm, eating some tomatoes on the vine, they still had tomatoes believe it or not on vine. They probably gave us a piece of bread. That's our breakfast. When through, we are supposed to get a glass of

milk. While busy eating, we saw a Polish soldier distorted, pulling a broken bike with him, then he also, his uniform was a little ripped. He had a lot of decoration, a lot of medals on him. Somehow, my brother knew of his name. Maybe he was one of our customers. Maybe he served in the outskirts of the town, maybe like whatever soldier he was, but then he knew his first name.

He says to him, Where are you running from?

He said, I'm running from the German army. They're coming this way. They have three kilometers to come here. He didn't want to get caught by the German army to become a prisoner. He said he was running away.

All of a sudden, I could not believe my ears what I heard my brother said, Is it OK if I go with you? He said, Yeah, be my guest.

>> Warren Marcus: How old is your brother at this point?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Late 20s, I guess. My hero brother, my protector. My father passed away, I was expecting him to protect me.

Anyway, he took off with that soldier, and I didn't like that. I hide behind bushes. Following a couple miles almost. Every time I stick my head out, Go back to your mother. Go back to your mother. I didn't listen to him. When the soldier put his hands on his face, he yelled at me to go back to my mother, I said OK. I wound up going back to my mom, and I told her the news, what happened. They disappeared, they run away. He was the bread winner in the family after my father died. We didn't have that big a shop, but nevertheless you still have to have somebody running it.

He was a good tailor. Then she was crying a little bit. She got over it. We got into the horse and buggy, went back to our little city. We were only 10 miles away. We heard the bombardments in

our little town anyway, before the German army took over the city.

Then we came into the house, cleaned up a little bit, there had been a few shrapnels in there. Our little house was not too far from the railroad station. We cleaned up. I was frightened of the Nazi soldiers, the army. They had helmets. They looked like Goliaths to me. Boots, helmets, everyone had a rifle on his shoulder. I was really frightened of them. They didn't bother us for a little while, they left us alone.

>> Warren Marcus: You're 12 or 13?

>> Henry Greenbaum: No, not quite 12. Still not quite, two months shy of 12. Then all of a sudden, all of a sudden they decided they needed people to go to work. So who did they grab in the street? The one that looked Jewish. I had the little curls here. I had the tassels sticking out. They were bare headed. Anybody that walks on the sidewalk that way they were grabbing to go to work, because they knew they were Jewish. Later on, they changed it. They took us, put us on the yellow Star of David. Every one of us had to wear this yellow Star of David.

We lived near the synagogue, about five doors away maybe. Quite a few other Jewish people lived there. Because of the Sabbath you're not supposed to walk through there, not supposed to ride to the synagogue, so walking distance was helping. My two married sisters didn't live where we lived. They lived on the outskirts of the town.

The Nazis, the Germans decided to -- we had to live in a Jewish neighborhood. The Jewish store was near us. The synagogue was right there. The public school was away somewhere. We had to go a couple miles to the school. We walked all the time.

Then all of a sudden, they Barb wired this area where we stayed, not with a fence, five-foot

Barb wire with an opening. In the opening they put a Nazi soldier there, also a Ukrainian who joined the Nazi regime and their dogs. The only way you can come out of the ghetto, we named it the ghetto already, not all the Jews were in that ghetto yet. They found out from other people, I don't know how they found out, that some other Jewish people live on the outskirts of the town. Not every one of us lived near the synagogue. They got the city police to show where the other people lived. The little pickup trucks went there. They yelled at them. They were either marching, to walk or picked them up in the pickup truck and brought them to the area where we were behind the wires. They got overcrowded. We had to put up two, my sisters with their little children, had to put them up. Other families did too. But we managed. We stayed in that area for almost two years, we stayed in that ghetto area.

We heard news from out of town what did the Nazis like and dislike. They liked if you worked in a factory. They liked if you worked for the government. The Shoemaker, tailors, it didn't make any difference. They like when you work in the factory or stone quarry or producing springs or brakes, aircraft shells. They like that.

My father was still alive. One of our customers came into our shop, and my father approached him. He knew that he is running a factory not far away from us. He says, Would you give my children a job in your factory? It was a Polish man. He says, Yes, sure. He took me, not quite 12, and my three sisters. We all worked in the factory. We had IDs. The only way you can come out of the ghetto if you show the guards the ID number, the ID card, you went to the factory and worked. We stayed there over two years working. Then we got really overcrowded, but miserable as it was in there, hungry and dirty and filthy from overcrowding. Then all of a sudden, they decided to go to have

a selection, someday they'll have a selection. They didn't let anybody go to work that day. They kept everybody in this ghetto, then chased us out of the ghetto into a more open field. Then the selection started. You had to walk up to the front of them, of the soldiers, and they had little whips with them, the dogs of course. They pointed at you where you go, left, right, left, right. If they saw a woman, my mom, 54 I guess, she looked old to them, then she came up with me and my two married sisters. Actually, three married sisters, but one gave the little girl to the other sister to take care of while she worked in the factory.

Then wound up at the end of the day they separated us. Handicap, pregnant women and women that just gave childbirth, all one end, and the able-bodied people that had IDs or that looked able-bodied, they went to the opposite side. At the end of the day, they took those people away from us, and we didn't know where they took them till after the war. We found out they took them to a place called Treblinka that was a killing center. Because we were looking for them after the war.

>> Warren Marcus: Who did you lose that day, Henry?

>> Henry Greenbaum: My mom, my two married sisters, with three little nieces and two little nephews under 7 years old, the children. The other one, Faige, gave up a little girl to go with grandma or the other little cousins. That's why she wound up with three little girls. They took them away, then they chased us back from the area to go. We thought they'd let us into the ghetto, we'll have more room, maybe more food. But they took quite a few people away from us.

It so happened they chased us for six kilometers uphill. They had other ideas for us. They didn't let us go into the ghetto area. By the time we hit our destination, by six kilometers, we saw there a six-foot fenced area with barracks, the towers, the dogs. We approached, we stayed there.

Last week we came home, and they said, Attention, attention! You must empty all your pockets, all your belongings, jewelry, money. You cannot come through this gate other than yourself and your clothes that you're wearing. And nobody got hurt that day. We all emptied that. I didn't have anything. My sisters did have some. Then they put it into the box. Nobody got hurt. We were assigned to barracks. It was the first time I was introduced to a barrack, a wooden shack. One guy at the barrack, one at the gate. They knew how many people the barrack would hold, then they give each other signals saying, Enough. They put us inside the barrack, three people to a bunk, 75 inches wide. We all had to sleep together on a bunk. We didn't have any mattress. The bunk was just like a shelf, like a wooden shelf.

So they did furnish us with a three-foot-wide little blanket rolled up. We used the blanket, actually, for our head, to rest our head on the bunk. We slept in our clothes anyway. All we did was take our shoes off and socks off.

Mind you, we already wore those shoes already for two years already. The clothes for two years. We are dirty, filthy. Only the way you can wash yourself in some way, we had a cold water pump. In the summer, the man cannot dress from the waist up. They didn't give us soap. They say you take dirt from the ground, a mud bath, put it all over yourself. The next person pumps the water, cleaned off. I don't know how the women stayed clean. I don't know. I know my experience. I can only relay that to you.

That doesn't kill lice. It cleans you up a little bit. You put on the dirty clothes again, still dirty, filthy. We stayed in there for almost three years in that area, two years in the ghetto, one year in the slave labor camp. From that dirt, from the filth, not keeping yourself clean, the typhoid epidemic

broke out in that camp.

Then it was a disaster. It was very contagious. They had three different fevers, middle fever -- high fever, middle fever, low fever. I caught low fever. I went to work every day. My oldest sister Faige had low fever she went to work every day. The two middle ones, Ita and Hia, she died of high fever. Ita and Yita, she died of typhoid. I come back from the factory, I stop to my sister Yita. She was the only one in the barrack by herself. Why? It's beyond me. It's mind-boggling why they didn't take her where they took all the other sick people away and shot them and they just killed them.

She was suffering a slow death. She was in that little barrack by herself, on a shelf. You would think it's supposed to be a sick person, put some straw so she can rest or something. She complained to me, I have bedsores from the wooden shelf. Can you get me some cloth? Cloth, cloth, I figured out in the munition factory they might have cloth there, especially from the cloth that I wipe the equipment off. I tried to take the clean clothes. It took me three trips to smuggle them in, lay them on her bunk. She thanked me for it. It's a little bit better now, she says, and it's softer.

One day I walked in after that, she was not there. I said, Where would she go? She couldn't walk. I approached the Jewish policeman, which we had in our slave labor camp, I asked him what happened to Yita? She was there yesterday morning. What happened to her? She said she died during the night. We buried her in the bottom of the stone quarry. Where? What? I don't know. That's the answer I got from the Jewish policeman. So I lost one sister. I came back from the night shift, one of the other days, there I see Faige, the middle sister, in a pickup truck. The Einsatzgruppen come every day to that slave labor camp, and if you didn't line up for work they knew how many each barrack, in the front of the barrack how many they need people. If somebody was

missing, they went inside to look for them. They couldn't get out of the bump. It's impossible when you have high fever, no way you can shake, you can stand on your feet.

The Einsatzgruppen put them in the little pickup truck and take them to the outskirts of the town if the truck was full, barrack to barrack. If it was full, they take them to the outskirts of the town. Mind you, when I was telling you they put us on the yellow Star of David, they grabbed us in the ghetto or the street, wherever, we had to dig trenches for them. They told us the trenches were for tanks to fall in. The war was still going on. They knew what they were going to do, they were going to kill people and need somewhere to bury them. They can't leave the dead people on the outside, bad publicity for them, and not clean for the rest of the population, so they had to bury them. That's where the pickup truck takes them, the front of the outskirts, the front of the ditch. They get undressed, naked, shot in the head, into the ditch they went. That ditch was full, they went to the next one. Quite a few got filled up, believe it or not, because that sickness was hanging on for almost ever. Less than a year, anyway.

Eventually, it wore itself off. It wore itself off. We were back to normal, to work every day to the factory. You get a little piece of bread in the morning, black imitation coffee. You come back, they give you cabbage water, cabbage soup. You couldn't find a leaf of cabbage. That was our diet every day in the slave labor camp, or even in the ghetto we had to scramble around to get extra food.

Then, all of a sudden, my oldest of the sister, Faige, she transferred from the munition factory for quite a while she already was a seamstress. They had 50 tailors working for the German army, for the high ranking officers. They had special privilege for them. Then one day, the high-ranking officer walked in, into the tailor shop and told them, You have to have these uniforms ready by such

and such date, because all of you are going to be deported out of here. Mind you, we were already three years into it already, helping them with the war machinery. Why are they going to ship us out there? The tailors didn't believe it. They said they're probably going to kill us now. They don't need us anymore.

These tailors came back into the camp and organized an escape. Impossible for a whole camp to disappear. Whomever they can trust, brother, sister, uncle, cousin, friend. Then they got together a group, they decided they're going to escape. My sister wouldn't tell me what about the escape till the night before. My shift was 3:00 in the afternoon to 11:00 at night. You come back at 11:00, do not go into the barrack, wait for me outside. I'll come get you, we're going to escape out of here. I was already 15 years old looking for that privilege to run out of there. What am I going to miss here? This misery and the dirt, the filth, the beating? I'd be better off running out. I listened to her, and I waited for her to come by a little after, I stayed outside, pitch dark. All of a sudden, she came by with this Jewish policeman. I didn't know she knew him. She held his hand. She grabbed my hand, all three are running. I was like 10 feet away from the opening, somebody cut a hole in the double fence. It was only a barbed wire, not electric wire. It was easy, you brought a pair of clippers from the factory we worked in, made a hole. Didn't make it that big, but anyway, some people did get out. It was time for us. We were running in different times in there. Somebody was like organizing it, huge thing, we run. We came about 10 feet, 5 feet from it, the three of us, the lights came on. They started shooting, and the dogs kept growling, attracting the soldiers, because they knew the German shepherd dogs were growling and barking, then they started shooting. They started shooting. The bullet caught me in the back of my head and I let my sister's hand go and I dropped. I dropped, took

a few seconds later, I come back to myself, I felt a lot of blood running down the back of my shirt. I did feel my head. I didn't have any holes in there. I did have a cut. I cut like two-inch cut, like you take a knife and cut the skin on the top of your head. The bullet grazed me, didn't go inside, otherwise I wouldn't be here. All of a sudden, I'm getting up, I'm screaming bloody murder for Faige, Faige, where are you? Why would you leave me Aileen here? I was 15 years old, she was not quite that old yet, late 20s. She already has a child.

Anyway, I could not find her. I said she would not, maybe she ran away. She thought maybe I died when the bullet hit me from the impact, it knocks you out.

So I decided instead of looking for her outside through that hole, which I made a good decision, because had they caught me close to that they would have probably this time I wouldn't be so lucky, the bullet grazing me, I would probably have caught a bullet in my head or whatever. I decided not to go there. I decided to go into the ladies barrack, where all the women are. It wasn't too far. I lowered my head, there was shooting, lowered my head, made it into the woman's barrack. I opened the door in the woman's barrack, she said, You cannot come in here. You're full of blood. You'll get us all killed. I said how am I going to get you killed? I know it's a woman's barrack. I'm looking for my sister Faige.

She's not here. Get out. Get out.

In the meantime, shooting outside. I didn't want to go outside and be exposed to that. I stayed in the doorway arguing with her. Evidently, it was a little stronger than her, I was 15, she was much older than me, but a woman not that strong, I guess. Anyway, at the put up a little argument. All of a sudden, three, four bullets came into the women's barrack. They were shooting from the tower.

People start running out. They were angry, shooting inside the barrack.

All the women jumped off the bunks, on the ground they went. They sat up on the floor. I had eye level with every one of them, still looking for my sister. No sister. I recognized a first cousin, Ita. She asked, What happened to you? I said, I'm looking for my sister. She said, Definitely she's not here. Trust me, she's not here.

I said what am I going to do now? 15 years old, without her, my cousin said, What happened to you? I said I was injured, I'm bleeding still. She said, Let me help you with the bleeding. That woman stopped bothering me after three bullets came into the barrack. She stopped bothering me. They went back to normal. Only four times the bullets came in.

Then my cousin cleaned me up a little bit. They happened to have a bucket of water, she had some ration in there. She cleaned me up a little bit. She took a dry rag, she said, Wear it on top of your wound, I'll give you my beret she was wearing and put that on so it would hold the rag underneath, observing the blood. I still got to get out of there, because if they catch me in the woman's barrack I'll be a dead duck, because I tried to escape with a wound on the head, I wouldn't make it.

I started to figure out a way to run. All I wanted to do is run back to the men's barrack where I belong.

I figured out when I saw the search lights in the evening were going back and forth, back and forth. I was figuring out, it took me a little while till the search light went away, until it came back. I said I'm 15 years old, I can still run fast and outdo this flood light here. I made it. I lowered my head, no shots were fired and I made it into the men's barrack.

I said thank God now I'm safe. You're not really safe, because the loudspeaker came on, achtung, attention, attention, empty out the barrack, because they wanted to count each barrack to see how many people escaped, how are they going to know? The night chief was coming back from work, they would not let him in. They kept him between the two fences, the wires, until the day shift went out, then they let the night shift out.

They were counting, saw quite a few people missing. Went to look inside. Let the dogs run around. They didn't bring anybody back. These people must have run out or wounded and in that hole that we cut through.

All of a sudden, they told us to face another direction. I faced the other direction, and there was the hole. I look, the policeman is still alive, he's sitting upright position with his uniform cap, the white band. He was sitting in upright position, moaning and groaning, other people moaning and groaning, men and women were there. They were wounded. They couldn't go nowhere. I don't know where this they were shot at, but it affected their walking. They could not move.

All of a sudden, he took his gun out and killed all the wounded ones in that hole. This is what you learned a lesson, never try to escape again because we will kill you.

Shot the first one was the policeman. He tilted over when he dropped, there I saw my sister Faige stretched out, by his legs. She must have got killed the night about.
He was blocking my view, the policeman. I could not see it until he dropped. Then I saw her laying next to him. I said, I'm 15 years old by myself. What am I going to do now? I said I have a sister in America. I said she's safe. Someday, I will be in America. She immigrated to America in 1937, before the war. I knew I had her.

>> Warren Marcus: Let's move on a little bit. Eventually, they close the camp and you get on a train to destination unknown. Take us from there, please.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, they wouldn't let anybody go to work. They took us by buses or marching towards the railroad. They filled us up on those freight cars like sardines. 75 people to a car, at least. No water, no bathroom for three, four days we were traveling. Every station we stopped we were screaming in unison, in different languages, Water! Water! That's all we asked for. We didn't ask for food. All we asked for was water. They wouldn't give us water.

>> Warren Marcus: Did they say anything where you were being taken?

>> Henry Greenbaum: No. Riding along. We finally stopped one afternoon, we finally arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau where that famous sign says "Work makes you free." Then another selection, of course, when you many do off the train, left, right, left, right. What is the other selection for? In the uniform standing there directing traffic, half of my transport we found out the next day they went straight to the gas chambers. I was the lucky one again. They sent me to the good side. The good side is you got a number on your arm, my number is A18991. If you want to see it later, I will gladly show you. They took away your name, you became a number. The next stop, a haircut after three years. Still full of lice in the head. There was a Jewish barber, only Jewish people were lined up there with the three chairs, and clippers, hand clippers cutting your hair. He did question me, the Jewish man, What happened to this? Why did you get hurt?

he talked to me in Jewish, Yiddish. I said I don't have to be an I frayed of him. I said, I was trying to escape with my sister, with the policeman, they were killed, I was wounded. He didn't say another word. Next.

The third stop, finally, we had to go through an maze, made it into a shower room. They gave us a piece of soap before you went to the shower room, and we were not well advised about what they do when they coax you into a shower room instead of water, you get gas and gas you to death. We were not aware of all that yet.

We came, we knew it was a strange smell over there, yes. We saw little gray flakes flying around in the air, ashes I was told. He says, We're burning here people. We got from other inmates today that were there before us. They're burning here people. They're gassing here people.

Anyway, we were so thirsty, never mind washing. All we were interested in drinking enough water. We drink enough water, then cleaned ourselves up. They took away our dirty, filthy clothes and furnish us with a three-piece outfit, the stripes. The jacket, the hat, jacket, pants, wooden shoes, and the wooden shoes with no socks or underwear. They gave you a small little three-foot blanket rolled up.

We were assigned a barracks. The barracks were the same, three people to a bunk. We stayed in there, Auschwitz-Birkenau, for almost like five months. It was really no work for us, other than helping the other people with lifting up bodies who from exhaustion just fell and died on their own.

They take them, pick them up in the pickup truck. Sometimes they couldn't pick them up themselves, we helped them. That's all we had. The only work we had in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The first night we arrived there, we heard screams to high heaven in there, in the next barrack during the night. We did not know what they were doing to those people, but we were too scared. We just arrived there. We kept the door closed in the barrack, but the noise, you can hear the

screams. This was a barrack of gypsies. They didn't like them either. So they were trying to get them on trucks and taking them to the gas chamber. They put up a fight, the gypsies. Of course, the Nazis won. In the morning, you had nobody in there, it was quiet. They took care of them. By the time daylight came, they were already burned to death. That was gypsy night.

I was there, not too much work to do in Auschwitz. What happened, luck was with me, a German, well-dressed man came into Auschwitz-Birkenau looking for free labor. I didn't know till later that that is what, you can't ask him, What are you picking me for? You can't ask that question. He points at you, you got to go there. He's standing with the dogs, the two guards with the rifles. You got to obey.

He was like a life saver, that civilian German. He was like a life saver. He took 50 of us out of the barrack, and he took us into a nearby camp which was part of Auschwitz, Buna-Monowitz, a subcamp of Auschwitz. That man was either a manager, worked there, owner, I don't know, who from a chemical company called IG Farben. They're still in existence. That man gave us jobs in there, the 50 of us. What kind of job did we have? Building roads in the compound of the factory. Part of the factory was on a dirt road. He wanted the trucks to be able to go on the road instead of getting into the mud. They had a rail leading into there, but that area didn't have anything. He wanted us to make a road with the cobblestones and the sidewalk. By the time it was already 1945, and the United States Air Force finally, finely paid us a visit.

They came, and bombed the area, the rail leading into the IG fact risk then we ran across 10 British war prisoners there, they said, Don't give it up. Don't give up. These are the American Air Force. Somebody must have spoke English in my group. He said, These are the American Air

Force. Don't give up. They know you're here. So try to stay alive.

Eventually, they had a bunker in there, in the IG factory. The guards were allowed to go in there, the dogs, and non-Jews were in there. The Jewish workers were outside, the British war prisoners, 10 of them, outside. They told us, when you hear the whistle they'll release the bomb. He said dive in like you're diving, I can explain it, like a swimming pool, into the area. We had a lot of sand, waiting to get the cobblestones in. Dive in there, lay there for a while until the air raid stops.

Eventually, they got very aggressive and I got the whole system. They get us again on the train, taking you to another camp, called Flossenburg. We arrived there, bombarded on the way. We had to March in two miles, because the rail was knocked out by the United States Air Force. We stayed in there, in this Flossenburg. There was not any work for us to do other than bundling up clothing from people who they murdered, whether from other camps or just from Flossenburg. There was a story high of clothing, baby clothes, every kind of clothes. We had to bundle those coats to coats, pants to pants, shoes to boots. They send them to Germany for recycling, I guess. I'm not sure. All we did was bundling up. We stayed in there. The war was ending. Until we heard the artillery closer, closer and closer, to come near the Flossenburg camp. But we didn't know what army is coming to liberate us. We thought that was going to liberate us. We didn't know. All we know, we were near the Czechoslovakia border that made sense if the Russians would have come there. They were closer. Guess what -- it was the Americans that came to liberate Flossenburg.

>> Warren Marcus: A quick question. All this time in the labor camp, then into Auschwitz and Buna, are you with anyone you knew from your town or are these just people you sort of just helping each other out? Are you still with any relatives?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Still had people from the town.

>> Warren Marcus: About 16 at the time?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Other people too. A lot of them, we knew each other, neighbors. Related, cousins.

>> Warren Marcus: Still alive. OK. Thank you.

>> Henry Greenbaum: We knew each other. Anyway, before the Americans came to liberate Flossenburg three days before, we were all put on those freight cars and they only left 10 people for clean-up crew to stay there. We were already on the trains taking us deeper into Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Bavaria, Germany, riding around the train. The Air Force bombed the rail, we were on the top. Some people take off the striped jackets, on open wagons some at the end, or half wagon, take it, shake the striped uniform. They knew who we were anyway, the Air Force knew the rail system. They didn't have to do that.

Anyway, they got so to a point where there was knocked out a whole rail system. We could no longer go by train. So they decided to take 100 of each group with the two guards and the dogs and we were marching. In my case, middle of February to the 25th of April we were liberated. We marched. Marched means you didn't get that little slice of bread in the morning. You didn't get that imitation coffee in the morning. You didn't get the water soup at night after you come back from work. Nothing to eat. The only way you got one raw potato if the two guards were hungry, they needed to feed the dogs, they didn't have supplies with them either. They located a farm, went to the farmer, one of their people, I'm sure they had a good meal. The order was to the farmer one raw potato per person. You could eat 10, you were so hungry. Only one raw potato. If you want to take a chance,

get in line again. They recognize you, trust me, that's the last potato you would have. He would definitely shoot you. That's how mean they were. We were content with one potato. We also get water to drink. We have to wait till they're finished. We kept marching to the 24th of April 1945. We marched. We were in a farm. This time, all of a sudden, they gave us a roof over our -- all of a sudden they gave us a roof over our head in the silo where they keep hay. They have goats, sheep, kind of warm in there. We were drenched, soaked wet from the April showers. Those striped uniforms, didn't take much to soak them through. We got inside, undressed naked, wringed our clothes out, laid it on the hay to dry. To dry. They gave us a raw potato. They gave us a roof over our head. We knew something was wrong, couldn't figure out what. We stayed, spend the night in that silo. The next morning they woke us up, they gave us another potato. Again, we said we couldn't figure out, was something wrong? We heard a lot of planes flying overhead, low flying. We didn't have the British to tell us these are American. We didn't know who the airplane was. We thought they were Germans protecting us. They marched us out. Marched only two hours that morning. Then near a wooded area, they put us in, not too deep, we see the skyline. We saw the planes. We saw not too far away, you could see every little piece of equipment, the anti-aircraft shells, the guns, the tanks, the Jeeps, the whole army coming through.

All of a sudden, the two guards guarding us with the dogs, all of a sudden silently disappearing. They left us by ourselves. We said saved. No, they're probably hiding behind a tree, they want to see if you get up and try to escape, they'll pick you off in a second. That's what they told us when we were trying to escape. You ever try to escape again, we'll kill you. Nobody moved. We stood still.

Out of nowhere, a tank took off from the main highway towards us. Five feet away from us, we sit in a circle, shaking. We didn't know who the army is. Who is that tank? Who's going to show up here? Nazi soldier? American soldier? Is it going to be a Russian soldier? It so happened God sent us down an angel, an American. It was General Patton's third armed division tank. He took it away from the highway towards us. They slipped out of the hedge. It was a tight squeeze for him, a skinny young man, maybe 18, 20 years old. I don't know how old. He was a young person. I was 17 already then at that time.

He slipped out of the hatch, he took his hands on his mouth, he says, We are Americans, and all of you are free. I still get goose bumps from that day. I shake from that day, like this, it goes through my body, because you lucked out for five years, you're 17 years old, all of a sudden an angel tells you you're free.

I could not believe it. I did say, Thank God for helping save us, all of us. Why did it take you so long? Five years it took for God to help us. I was freed. He yelled to his partner, two of them, Dump out all of the rations that you have. He dumped them out, we're fighting like cats and dogs to grab a ration. We were unsuccessful. So we lined up behind the tank, with sign language or somebody spoke English, he took us out of the wooded area, across the field, across the highway into a farm. The farm, it was a house farm. One soldier opened the door and the other American soldier used sign language, Go in. Go in. We didn't want to go in. We saw in the front of the farmer's house three big pails of potato peelings with white flower on there. When you're hungry, you're facing a steak. We got on the hands and knees, shoved as many of those peelings into your system. You didn't get any water till you went inside.

>> Warren Marcus: That was the slop for the farm animals, right?

>> Henry Greenbaum: That's right. That was food for the animal feed. We went in there, we could not believe it ourselves. We should have listened to the American soldier, to go in. There was a table with regular food, with breads, boiled potato, hard-boiled eggs, all kind of things in there. I said why did we eat that? All we wanted to do was drink water. We were not hungry anymore.

>> Warren Marcus: You were starving.

>> Henry Greenbaum: People were there liberated from the night before. They were there. They had this good food. Guess what -- they were all sick as dogs. Their system could not hold, their stomach could not absorb the good food or they overate. One of the two. They're all moaning and groaning, screaming for the two angels, the two soldiers to get some doctors in there.

They dialed this funny telephone they had in those days, they took three hours for the medics to come. They helped out with medication. I showed one of them the wound on top of my head. He gave me a sign of I didn't know what this means, like this. He shaved part of my head, put medication on it. I was in a human being's hands. Not these animals. They would have killed me if they thought I had a wound on I am head, I was trying to escape. They wouldn't be here.

Thank you for listening to me. It was really a full house. I'm just the happiest man when I see the house is full. I like that better.

>> Warren Marcus: Thank you, Henry.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Thank you for coming.

[Applause]

>> Warren Marcus: OK, so this works out. Good job, Henry. This works out well. We have a lot of time for questions. And then our tradition here is to give the *First Person* the last word, so Henry will close. We'll ask your cooperation in taking a special crowd photo with Henry. I'll explain when we get to that.

The questions will go like this. We have microphones on either side in the back. If you could raise your hand, we'll get a mic to you. I may repeat it to help Henry out. I may help with the answer. We like to keep the questions to Henry's story and anything you want to know about it. OK? Who would like to start? Lots of time. Don't be shy. He's got lots to share. Right here. Please stand up. There's the mic. Thank you.

>> I was wondering if when your sister immigrated to the United States what was the reason that nobody else in your family was able to follow her or why didn't anyone else go to the United States with her when she left in 1937?

>> Warren Marcus: Want me to repeat that?

>> Henry Greenbaum: No, I think I know what she means. The immigration laws were very tough in America. My father had two brothers and a sister who immigrated to the United States in 1904. Those three families were able only to get one person out, and it was my lucky sister. She came to America in 1937. She was the only one. My older brother tried, but always failed. They kept telling him, Come back again and again. Why? I don't know. He was a domestic tailor. He wouldn't be on the government's payroll here, had he ever made it here. He wouldn't be drawing money from the government. He made his own living, he would. But yet, they did not disqualify him. My sister was lucky. She made it here. That's how I got here.

>> Warren Marcus: Let me add to that. All of us, many years later, know what happened, but the people back then, whether it was in Germany or Poland had no idea what was coming. In some cases had faced different kinds of persecution in the past and gotten through it, where they were hopeful about their country or were tired of the Russians. They're all very complicated, for example. So we don't want to assume that everybody was -- should have tried to get out, because it's a completely different situation for each one of but thank you for starting.

Another question? Right in the middle there. We'll pick the worst place to get a microphone. [Laughter]

>> Was it too hard to keep up with your faith, or did you stop believing during this time?

>> Warren Marcus: Did you stay religious during these five years or did you question things?

>> Henry Greenbaum: On that March, believe me, I had a direct line to God. I said, Save me, dear God, so I will see my sister in America. But as far as I knew, I had no one left, as far as I knew, that I'm the only one alive and her in America. So constantly, every day I pray to God, I said, Please save me another day and another day. I never lost my faith in God, and that sustained me, because I believed in God I think.

>> Warren Marcus: Thank you. Another question? All the way back in the middle. Thank you.

>> Since you were saved and came to the United States, what has been the most painful thing that you hear from people, or what's the thing that hurts you the most that you hear from people?

>> Warren Marcus: Since you came to the United States, what's been the most painful thing someone has said to you or happened relating to this history, I assume?

>> Henry Greenbaum: What they said to me wasn't painful, but they didn't want to hear me. I first came here in 1946 full of stories I wanted to tell what they did to us. We promised one another on the death march, if you should survive, make sure you tell your story what they did to us. That's the only communication we had. We kept that promise. When we first came here, no one wanted to listen. They kept saying, Why do you harp on the past? Why don't you think of your future?

I said, I know I'm the future, but you have to tell what happened so we can avoid it happening again, by us telling the story what they did to us.

I took till 1978. I thought, that was my idea, they had a picture playing, it was called "Holocaust."

>> Warren Marcus: TV show, right.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Three nights on NBC. No Hollywood in there. It was a lot of true things in there, 99% I would say, but really happened. Right after that, people were interested in the survivors.

Then we didn't have enough time to talk. We were invited everywhere. Now I'm not trying to show you off, but I was invited to Larry King radio in Crystal City right after that film was playing. I was there on radio with a priest by the name of Eugene Fisher.

>> Warren Marcus: Right.

>> Henry Greenbaum: I guess you know him. He's a Catholic Jewish relations, I guess. Very smart man. Also a man from NBC. We stayed from 12:00 to 3:00 a.m., in the morning, people called in, asked questions. There's your answer.

>> Warren Marcus: It changed. Thank you. Other questions? Yes, sir?

>> So did your sister know what was going on after you got back to America? Did your sister know?

The second question, is your name, which is your correct name? There's two names here on the paper.

>> Henry Greenbaum: The correct name is G-r-e-e. Greenbaum. The reason I changed that is because my father's two brothers and their children spelled their name G-r-e-e, why shouldn't I do that? Then I said Chuna, in Europe, here in America, Chuna, C-h-u-n-a.

>> Warren Marcus: What's wrong with that, Henry?

>> Henry Greenbaum: My sister said people will laugh. You need to change it.

>> Henry Greenbaum: I said I am going to change to G-r-e-e, I might as well change to Henry. In public school, they called me Henyik, with an H. Henry was close.

>> Warren Marcus: So I understand, the sister already here, are you saying did she have any idea what was happening during the war, to the rest of the family?

>> Henry Greenbaum: It wasn't that bad, really they didn't bother us until the war started. Then it was too late to send messages to her. It wasn't like we have now, those little things you have, you carry, in two seconds they know the news. Yeah, in two seconds. It was days or weeks.

>> Warren Marcus: No tweets in 1938.

>> Henry Greenbaum: That's right.

>> Warren Marcus: I'm sorry?

>> Did she know?

>> Warren Marcus: Did she know what?

>> What was going on.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Unless she read papers.

>> Warren Marcus: I suggest that was a long question what sources she had of information. The US didn't get into the war until 1941, so once you go into the main exhibit you will see headlines that the American public knew all about things up to the start of the war, in Germany. Then once the war starts there's a lot going on, a delay in terms of when the mass killing information comes out. So investigate the broader context, then you will find out. OK?

One? Yes, ma'am, right here. You will be next.

>> Throughout the span of the 10 years, you lost a lot of family members, and I was wondering, I'm sorry about all of your losses, I was wondering if when you lost your sister Faige if you had the time and energy to mourn her loss in the camps, what that was like?

>> Warren Marcus: She feels bad about all of your losses, and wonders when you lost Faige in the escape attempt did you have time to mourn or was there too much going on?

>> Henry Greenbaum: I was mourning every day. Every day I missed her. She became like a mom to me. I missed her stretch. I saw her stretched out, that was like almost the end, the end of me. I said I was almost ready to give up, but then I said, no, I still have my sister in America. She's safe. Someday, with God's help, I'll make it to America.

>> Warren Marcus: By the way, have you mentioned your brother in silver spring? How old he is?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, he's 103. But that was the one that ran away, that was a story. That was a massive story. When we came and I teamed up with the brother in the Polish army, through a cousin we met. He was liberated in Poland, I was liberated in Germany. Near Frankfurt. That same cousin that helped me with the bleeding, one day I met her there, in Bergen-Belsen, she says I'm going to Poland to look for my brother. I said, Ita, she wanted me to go with her, I said I'm too scared,

didn't want to go nowhere. That was the British zone, Bergen-Belsen. I went to the American side. I said Ita, if you go to Poland, you locate your brother, look for my brother. Maybe the one in the Polish army is there too. It was in Poland, they had a displaced person there, organized by the United States, where there was enough food, it had to be the United States organized.

She was there, she flew over there and met her brother. He had brother knew of my brother, that he's also in that Displaced Persons Camp, because they're first cousins. She told him I'm alive, near Frankfurt. It took him 3, 4 weeks to visit me, he stayed with me. He was 10 years older than I was, that particular one. I said where do we have our sister? She's in America, I did not know where. The soldiers tried to help, but I didn't know where. He said the best I can come up with, in the Washington area. They started looking, the people in that displaced person camp. It so happened that they came up with she married a first cousin, the uncle that took her down sponsored her. She moved into their house. They fell in love with the cousin. She was born in Europe, he was born in Washington. In New York, I guess. Then she fell in love. What we're trying to tell is they maintained the same name, except spelling different. So it wasn't too hard to find her. G-r-y, here G-r-e-e. What I'm getting at, after she spent papers for us, we arrived in New York, somebody was supposed to claim you once you arrive, we were looking for a woman. We didn't see a woman. We saw this young man coming, looking for me, my other brother. It was that brother who escaped, with the Polish soldier.

I said Dave? How did you get here? He says, I came here in 1941. I said, Goody-goody for you, but why didn't you let me run away with you?

[Laughter]

I would have been here in 1941. So he says, No, you were a young boy. You don't know how much trouble I had myself. He started complaining and complaining. I said, You know what? I don't want to listen to it, because there's no way he went through what I went through.

Anyway, you're my brother. I hugged him. Take me to my sister. He took the two of us on a train, we came to Washington. We stayed again there. Then we started giving him a hard time. Me and my other brother said, You're staying with your sister since 1941? This is already 1946. Why don't you get a wife, move out?

>> Warren Marcus: That's our next interview.

[Laughter]

Thank you, Henry. We have to wrap up.

>> Henry Greenbaum: OK. OK.

>> Warren Marcus: A couple announcements. First, if you're interested in keeping in touch with the museum, and its programs, complete that stay connected card you were given at the door or speak with some of our museum representatives at the back of the theater. If you do that, you will receive an electronic copy of Henry's biography so you can remember and share his testimony before you leave today. It's our tradition at *First Person* that our *First Person* has the last word. So after Henry has his last word, we're going to -- Joel will come up, take a picture with you guys. Hopefully standing and cheering in the background. Now we'll complete our day. Then Henry will stick around, chat for a few minutes as he can, take pictures. Henry and I have a lunch date, so we can't take too long. We'll stay, as many people want to talk to him.

On that note, Henry, your final words for our wonderful audience? Thank you.

>> Henry Greenbaum: I want you all to remember the survivors, because we're not going to be here around too long. We're all aging. I'm 85. I'll be 86 in April. Some 95-year-old people here. We're dying out. We want you to carry our legacy. Don't forget that 6 million Jews that got murdered and the million and a half children and 20 million others for other reasons. Keep it in mind. If you see anything is done injustice to any human being, speak out. Don't be a bystander. Just speak out. If you're too young, you can't help, ask your parents, tell them to help you. Ask a teacher, rabbi, whoever to help you. To keep this memory alive, because we need that. Maybe someday it won't happen. I don't think it's going to, but for my lifetime, but might be the young people maybe eventually become better citizens and don't fight with one another and try to get along.

So mainly remember us. That's the only message I have to you.

>> Warren Marcus: Thank you, Henry.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Warren Marcus: Turn around and face Joel. He will get a picture of you with the audience.

>> Henry Greenbaum: OK.

[Applause]

>> Warren Marcus: Thank you all. We have lots of museum reps here if you want to stay connected or if you have questions about the exhibit. Thank you for coming to our exhibit, and thank you for meeting Henry. Have a good day.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Thank you very much.

[Program eEnded at 12:01 p.m.]