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Wednesday, April 23, 2014

11:00 a.m. – 12:08 p.m.

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

REMOTE CART

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>> Bill Benson: Good morning and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson, host of the museum's program *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 15th year of the *First Person* program. Our *First Person* today is Mr. Morris Rosen whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2014 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

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 of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue through mid-August. The Museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests. Anyone interested in keeping touch with the Museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in their program, which is this one, or speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater after our program today. In doing so you will also receive an electronic copy of Morris Rosen's biography so that you can remember and share his testimony after you leave here today.

Morris 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 our program, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask Morris a few questions. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.

We begin with a portrait of Morris Rosen, who was born Moniek Rozen, son of Jakub

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Rozen and Golda Chaya Warszawski in 1922. Morris was born in Dabrowa Gornicza in Upper Silesia, where his father was a distributor of tobacco and Acetylene. The arrow 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 of Dabrowa. Morris is at the top of the photo.

As you will hear, Morris survived several Nazi camps. After a six-week forced march he arrived in the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. The arrow points to the location of 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 whom he met after the war. We might hear more about her if time allows this morning.

Morris came to the United States in 1949 and following seven years of art school built a successful contracting business in Baltimore where he lives 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 his collection as part of the Olympic Games. He has exhibited at numerous U.S. and international exhibitions, including

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the Nuremburg, Germany. He donated several items of his collection to this museum.

Morris speaks frequently about his Holocaust experience at such places as the headquarters in the Social Security Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, and the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Fort Mead, Maryland. He speaks to numerous students at Baltimore area schools and other locations. He will speak at Johns Hopkins University, for example, this Friday.

Morris was named the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. Man of the Year for the American Red Cross. Morris, who lost his wife in 2000, has two sons and two grandchildren.

And finally, I think you should know in addition to gardening, Morris works out three times a week doing Zumba, which combines Latin and international music with dance as an exercise program. He told me he's now added to that another form of dance and exercise which is even more vigorous than Zumba. He also mentioned to me that he is the only male in either class. Morris' doctor ordered him to no longer go on his steep roof to clean the gutter and do repairs.

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

>> Bill Benson: Morris, good morning.

>> Morris Rosen: Thank you, Mr. Benson, for your eloquent introduction. Hello and good morning everybody. It is difficult to condense ideas of the darkest of mankind history into one hour. I wouldn't have enough in one day what I lived through in five years. I will do my best. But I might have to skip a year or two.

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>> Bill Benson: Start, if you don't mind, Morris, by telling us just a little bit about your family and your community before the war began.

>> Morris Rosen: I lived with my family. I have a large family; eight children, my parents. We lived very nice with the gentile people. Our store was mostly 99% gentile people. But things changed in 1939. The war started out September 1, 1939.

I woke up in the morning, such a noise from the airplanes. I looked out the window and there were about 60 of them. I counted them. I was surprised. I didn't know they were German. A lot of people went out to hear what the noise was. Then I found out that the war started out and the planes went out.

The fifth column out in civilian clothing, with walkie-talkie, they could report everything to the enemy what's going on, where the Polish Army is, how many they have there in the Army, what kind of equipment they have. So on and so on.

>> Bill Benson: Just so we understand, the fifth column was the name given to people of German decent who were living in Poland and now were providing all the information to the German Army.

>> Morris Rosen: Not this. They spoke Polish. Some of them were caught. They were hung, all naked. They were not in uniforms. So they hung them.

When I escaped --

>> Bill Benson: You and your brother were warned to run away.

>> Morris Rosen: We were warned to run away from the Germans, that they were chased out in Germany. They came to our city. They came in. The war started Friday. The sky was all

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red from all the artillery and everything to run away. We ran away.

But the Germans, after six days, they caught us. So the first came, four motorcycles with machine guns. They said, “Refugees.” So one of the German guys says, ok, we can go home, in beautiful German. He says, “How do we know so well German?” I says, “Well, I went to the university, I'm a German.” Says, wait, we can't do nothing. But the end of the column from the soldiers, they would take. That's what happened.

When we came home, finally, after four days, walking back home, we found out that so many Jews were killed already on the way going home. That's what started out. And right away, occupied the 3rd of September. Only three days. It's only, by car, 20 minutes from the German border.

Right away, we can't meet any more than two, three people. Jews have to walk on the street, not on the pavement. And schools were closed up. Anybody caught with weapons or something, we would be punished by death. It was very bad.

After 6:00 in the evening until 7:00 in the morning, nobody could walk on the street. It doesn't make any difference. It was very difficult.

Then came orders right away. I skipped a little bit. This was already in November 1939. Just the search, still bloody from the battles because put up 30-day battle. More than any other European country. And they started out right away with Jews, they have to wear arm bands. We have to wear, first, white arm bands on the left hand, Star of David. Later on we changed because where we lived, Upper Silesia, was incorporated into the general itself. So we have the same laws as the Germans. And we have to write letters -- you

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have to write everything in German. We have the German money, not the government money, the Polish money, still. It was very difficult. We have to stay in line only for Jewish bakeries. Only two bakeries. It was very, very difficult. But this was not the worst.

Then came the order. Jews have to deliver in so much gold, so much silver, in order to pay for the German Army, for the occupation. People didn't have any gold or anything. It was really we were about only 5% Jews in our city. We had 5,000 only. And there was 50,000 Pols. Who had gold? They had to give away their rings. You have to buy gold. You have to deliver so much and so much. And this was not the worst.

Then came another order. I skipped some. People had to live so many Jews, young people to work and they have to work for the Germans. So they start building community there. We have to do everything what the German wants. And in order to get a little bit more food -- and of course, my father had to pay some money -- that I should work with my father in the bauleitung, the building.

First, you have especially ID cards that with you could walk on the street. We already worked for the Germans, so they shouldn't catch us in the street or send away to Germany. That's what they did at that time. And we had a little additional food, also.

My first job was I became a carpenter, a painter, and a bricklayer. All I did. My first job, unfortunately, was in the market to put up hanging scaffolds for 10 people. I said this is wrong.

>> Bill Benson: To make the hanging scaffolds.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes. The next day police rather than around -- not soldiers but the German police, they took away IDs from every person, Jew, not Jew, Pols, we have to come on the

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market 10: 30 in the morning. You get back to IDs. If you don't come that day, you won't get IDs, you won't get food stamps.

So of course, the market was packed. We wait. They had a truckload with 10 Pols. They wore masks. They committed things against the government, which it's not true. They were condemned for hanging. And the thing what I saw there, the screams from them, "Long live Poland," "Take revenge." And this they did in every city in Poland just to make sure that nobody does sabotage. And they were picked up from the Polish foundry in our city, which the locomotives for the tanks were built there for the war. And during the war they made parts for airplanes. This was the first experience.

Then I have to skip to 1942. They started out a ghetto. Nobody could go out for the ghetto except with a special permanent. Like I work only for the Germans, I was free to go everywhere with my special ID card.

Came an order that all the girls between 12 years and 25 have to register that they're going to be working in the shop, potato shop there. And they have special IDs. But the thing was wrong. They came to the Jewish community there where 450, all the young generation in our city, Jewish girls, and came there and said send them to work. They took them to a transition camp. We found out where they are. So my father went there. He thought he knows people, he can take you out. Nobody could tell. They took the girls and shipped them away. We didn't know where.

You can imagine our home, a 12-year-old girl, it was like coming home after a funeral. My mother was crying. My father showed the bitterness. Everybody was terrible.

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And finally, after two weeks, we found out -- we got first postcard that she works in Lower Silesia in a factory where they make materials. She works 12 hours with the machine walking forward and back and gives to levenstein.

We understood they were the two Jewish bakeries that they could only bake bread for the Jews. The Jews couldn't buy any other place bread. So my mother baked up whatever she could. It wasn't easy until you got some flour on the back market, which wasn't allowed. You got caught, you get shot. She made out some packages. It was allowed to send once a month a package. And I went to the post office because mine ID, could walk everywhere because I worked for the highest, highest German officials that existed in Silesia, only for them. This was not the worst.

Came August 12, 1942, again came order: Every Jew has to register near the Jewish community, to be there at 5:00 in the morning. And you know in August how hot it is in Poland. 5:00 with the rest of the families. We are going to get new IDs. You don't get IDs, you won't get any -- and the Jewish community, either way, the head of the Jewish community put up clothing, look presentable. We were there 5:00 in the morning. The heat was unbearable. Kids were crying. People were panting from thirst. You couldn't go out until 8:00 in the morning.

8:00 in the morning, said to myself, oh, something doesn't look right. I saw soldiers with machine guns on the roofs all around the community. Then came two trucks with SS and a commission which at that time I worked for the highest official from the SS that was responsible for sending out the Jews, Auschwitz, which I don't know what Auschwitz meant at

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the time. We didn't know, but he was responsible. There should be no Jews in the cities no more in all Silesia. I worked for him at the time.

When I was there, they put up tables and everybody, the head of the family have to stay first. The elder people, like over 45, go to the right. To the left were the ones with IDs, that I worked for them, to the left. And the center were youngsters, barely able to walk. But they don't have IDs yet. It took until 10:00. 10:00 they got all the Jews to the right: women, children, men, and they chased them to Bedzin.

We didn't have the keys to the house or anything. My father had everything. Then we had to sleep outside. We couldn't get into our apartment. In the morning I found out where they are. I went on foot. I didn't want to take the street car, though I had a special ID. I was afraid. It wasn't too far, about a half-hour I was there in the next city.

Come there. It was only Jewish police there guarding them. I came up, and I saw they didn't let me in. I said, “I don't have the key.” And I saw they want Jewish policemen from our city. I only need to take the keys. Take only a minute. And when I came up, I saw the scene at the top I will never forget in my life. People were tearing their hair out. They knew what's going on. And my father gave me the keys to the house, gave me his pocket watch. My mother cried. He says don't forget my sister who was already in camp. This is the last time I saw her.

I came back to work right away. I went to the same one. And my older brother and myself walked there. We tell them we walk here, you can take our parents back? Oh, I find them. Like you find them like he did. He didn't care much.

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On the third day, I walked home separate and my brother. We shouldn't be all in one place. I didn't go to the city home but to the field. I came to the field there and I see -- one waived to me. His son was my best friend. And I waived back. So I saw that this was a transport going away. I didn't know where. So there was police, SS, on the top of the train. They started shooting at me because I waived. There was a ravine, so I jumped in. Lucky me, I jumped in there. I waited 10 minutes. Then I went home.

I went home. We didn't even have time to cry. This was just before the high holidays. We got the sense that we got to move into the ghetto. Our part of the city didn't go to the ghetto yet. We went to the ghetto. There was only youngsters left for prayers, nobody to pray. Who prayed? We cried.

Somebody looked at police. So they gave us one little room, 16 people. Nine girls and seven boys. A little room. The poor section of our city. No floor. So we have to get some straw to put down for the girls. And one of the women was like a distant cousin. She was pregnant. Yes, at that time. And we slept on the outside. When it rained, we stood in the foyer because we didn't even have room to turn around. And what could you take? We didn't have work. We took our books and so on. He was a collector of these items; some bedding, some clothing. The rest we have to leave the house everything what it is. You couldn't take with us.

>> Bill Benson: I'm going to jump in for a minute. The one thing that I think you hung on to were some photographs.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes.

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>> Bill Benson: Tell us about keeping your photographs as long as you -- you still had your photographs.

>> Morris Rosen: I still have all the photographs. This will come later. No, this I had. Photographs, about 200 photographs. And still from my first girlfriend that I have in a different city. I kept this right in front of it, with my family pictures, organizations, everything.

Then we came to the ghetto. Like I told you, we slept outside when it rains; inside we stood. After one week only I get invitation from the Jewish community. They handed me tickets for the train with a special pass on the train and go to Szczakowa, a leather factory. I went to the train. I took all my pictures. That's all I took, and some things. And I came there, but on the train I noticed one girl and neighbor. She was the daughter of the principal from the school. And she shook like I shouldn't come over to her or nothing. I noticed she had a Jewish kid that she took somewhere probably for hiding. I came there. It was a leather factory. And all we have to eat was dry food, what the Jewish community sent us and bread. I was picked with another guy because I spoke very good Polish. And we went once a week to the bakery. We got bread, about 60 breads for the week for us.

And suddenly, after two weeks, we didn't get any more food there. So what happened, SS came 5:00 in the morning for us. We went a day before a church. And from the church I hear a whistle come over. Was a Jewish guy hiding. He says: Leave the breads here. I know who you are. We are going to go through the church. Nobody knows we are here. The Polish woman, she bring you food. I said no; the people are starving. We have to take the bread. Maybe tomorrow. But 5:00 in the morning the SS came for us.

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What happened? It was no more Jews in all Silesia. Everybody was transported. No Jews at all.

So my partner, electrician, very fine, intelligent guy, he was missing. He went with me for bread. He probably jumped out the window and probably went to the church. But I don't think he survived. Otherwise I would have found him after the war.

Ok. We come there, came SS for us. There was a young woman about 23 years old. Her husband was the only Jewish engineer there. They couldn't lose him because he was the only engineer that knew everything. But he went to see his brother. He didn't come back. So there was no more Jews.

The police took us. His wife, a young woman with a young kid, 2 years old only, I helped her carrying the baby. She took her suitcase. And then I have pictures that I found while I worked for the SS men. We got on the third floor to put up heavy cases. And one case broke. It was so heavy. Pictures came out. And all the pictures were Jews hanging, burning synagogues, all over Poland. This was ready to be shipped to Germany. We quick put back. But a couple of pictures, when I came for the next one, I know I hid them. And these pictures I was afraid to keep. I would get killed if they found them. I told SS I need to go to the bathroom outside the station. And I threw it in the toilet. Not to be caught.

And lucky me that when we came to Sosnowiec, I gave her the baby; otherwise it was waiting on the car there. They took letter with the baby. If I would hold the baby, I would go along with her. They were killed in Auschwitz. I would be the father.

Our job was to empty out the ghetto there in Sosnowiec where all the Jews were in

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the last days. On a separate mountain, led on a separate mountain every day. We worked there 12 hours a day cleaning up. We came back. We slept on cement. Not even straw. We got a slice of bread and a coffee.

On the third day came out, an SS officer, Ludwig, high officer. Is anybody painter here? I'm 17 years old, skinny as can be. He's going to kill me. One of the guys said oh, the Rosen's a painter. He calls me over. “Are you a painter?” I told him, “I'm the best painter. I'm very good painter.” [Speaking German] Like to a dog you talk. He gave me right away in the face. I start the bleeding from the nose. Ok. I felt a little better. I came to myself and I told him, “I don't have no paint. I don't have no brushes. If you leave me there” -- I have everything. I thought maybe I can escape there. You will have everything. He took two SS men. They went to work. I stood two SS men and took to a paint store. We took paints, everything. They helped me move the furniture, everything.

Before I went, he took out his pistol to my temple and says I have three rooms to paint and three days. If I'm not finished, [Inaudible]. I painted at that time. I was sure this was the end. I came to myself. And then when I went to the store. I came there. Who was there? He had the mistress. She looked like a movie star; young, young Polish woman, tall, blond, about 23, 24 years old. And that Nazi wasn't any taller than I am. Really. She didn't give me not even hot water. My stomach was growling. I was: What kind Pol is she? She sees I'm hungry. I woke her up.

So what happened, I worked the first room, the dining room, the chandelier. So I was very good in art school in my school. So I painted like around chandelier, with the snake

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coming out with the open mouth. I had all of those paint, water colors that I had. I mixed the paints. And I thought maybe she will give me something. I cleaned off her kitchen. I brought coal to her. Nothing doing. Tonight give me nothing. I cussed when I went out. What kind Polish is she? She knows I'm hungry. I worked so hard.

Next day, I started second room. Who comes, Ludwig with the smile. Oh, he was pleased. He calls me over. “How old are you?” I told him I'm going on 17. “When did you learn so good to paint, the way how you paint is so beautiful?” So I tell him -- you're a businessman. I told my father was the best painter in the city. We didn't have what to eat. When I was 6 years old instead of going to school, I had to work with my father. So we have to eat. So that's why I went to work. I never had any school. He went away, comes back a half an hour late with a big bag, hands it to me. [Speaking German] Don't get caught with it. He's got life and death I shouldn't get caught with it. He walked away.

I looked in. It was a big salami, a round salami, kielbasa. It didn't take 10 minutes the whole kielbasa was gone. I won't eat for nobody this. Bread, how much bread you can eat? The loafs in Europe is two kilo; over four pounds. I took home. Bread I ate. And a cigar was there. But I don't smoke. This was there. So I put away for the next day's. Covered over with papers, nobody take away. And the rest I took for my buddies, more half a loaf because those big breads, they don't have to eat.

The next day -- yeah? The next day the same thing. Then I became her maid. I cleaned for her the windows. Brought me -- I shouldn't get bloody on the hand. I cleaned. After two weeks he said, well, Morris, I don't send you to Auschwitz. I didn't know what

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Auschwitz meant. But you go to a labor camp. [Speaking German]

So since he was so nice to me, I stood at attention. Like this. And I begged him. I don't have nobody from my family. I only have one sister and she is in camp. Can you send me to this camp to be with my sister? [Speaking German]

It's a woman's camp. First I go to a transition camp. I won't tell anything. Too hard to mention. Then about a week later came a transport to go to Gruenberg. I am not on the list. I knew where he went in. I am not on the list. So I jumped over the fence. It wasn't electrified. I knocked at the door. And what a picture. He laid in his only underpants, no shirt, no pants, but his boots. [Speaking German]

I said, you promised me I'm going to Gruenberg. I'm not on the list. “Das?” I went like a little doggy behind him to the fence. He tore up the list. Nobody goes.

So what happened, I found out, there was one Jew, Dr. Lieberman, he went over to Christianity in the 1930's. And he became the biggest anti-Semitic. He wrote semitic papers in Poland. But by the Germans he was considered a Jew. And he was there in that camp. So they says, well, you think you are better person? You're still a Jew. He got such a beating every day. It was only Jewish couples. Only Jews. He was bloody all over. He paid so much there to go out from here because he knew he was going to get killed there. And he took my place. That's what happened. But we only went three people went to Gruenberg.

Came on the train, everybody from the train has to go off because a Jew can't be with the Germans together. Took about two hours on train. We came to Gruenberg. Who was with it? The eldest of the Jews in the transition camp, very handsome, tall, yes. And a

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woman, a Czech woman from Prague. She became a Christian also.

We arrived there. They brought about 18 Jews, men, from another camp they closed up also in Gruenberg. So in order to see my sister I have to go through to the doctor. So the first day after work they let me in there. And I saw my sister every day. I didn't -- right away when I came there, they took away my clothing and they gave me two new suits. We worked with the Germans together. Two new shirts. You have to be shaved, your hair combed. Because worked with the Germans together. Beautiful suits, I tell you.

And there was a nice, little old man, old German. So he said to me -- a painter. He was a painter helper. [Speaking German] Don't worry, I am a Communist. Watch out for the dog. The boss he is an SS. I should watch out for him. He brought me every day like a little piece of bread. I don't have much. And a pill he says is a vitamin. But on Mondays he brought me -- Sunday his wife baked something, brought me a piece. I had it good there.

We have our office where it was office of six girls working. So one of the women, about 30, I would say, says, oh, sweet, take out the garbage. I take the garbage out. I shouldn't throw out everything. I should watch. I come there. It was packed nice, a roll with butter, with the egg, and a piece of cheese. And every day she gave me this. And right away I went up to my sister. She started that I would paint. She would eat the paint. But, it didn't last long.

After six months, Ludwig came. Don't like when Ludwig comes. Something's wrong. We didn't go to work. We stood there, all in a circle. “Where's my Rosen? Where's my painter?” I came up. “Did you see your sister?” I says, “I saw my sister and I will never forget

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you all my life." He started smiling. When he left, we went to work. Come back from work. The main SS man in the camp: "Rosen" -- I should come to his office. I should sit down. He brought me loaf of bread. "Every day you come to my office." That's what Ludwig told him to do. But it didn't last long.

Two weeks later we couldn't be anymore with the women there because it became a concentration camp. And they took us on trucks, two trucks, 80 people. We come there. It was winter time. Cold as can be in February. And came like a white animal. He was dressed in leather pants, leather jacket, with the beret and with the scar like this. And he started hitting left and right: Get, quick, get quick out from the trucks. We formed a circle. And he said if you have watches, money, diamonds, money, you put everything in the center out. He grabbed two guys, stepped on their throats and killed them. That's how we're going to look.

So, of course, in German: They didn't do nothing. Why did you kill them? He pushed them in the dirt also on the wet snow. So an SA says, don't you know, he's the -- he pushed them into the snow.

>> Bill Benson: This camp that you're at now was a subcamp of Auschwitz.

>> Morris Rosen: No. Not Auschwitz. It was the main camp in Silesia. Lower Silesia. And this was Kretschamberg. They took everything away with the suitcase, with my pictures. All I have is the pictures. So I knew which they put in.

2:00 in the morning, it was pouring raining. There was no electricity. Because where we came into the barrack, there was no windows yet. The cement was still wet. No straw, anything. They just put a bucket to relieve yourself. That's all.

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I thought, well, I jump out there. The guard was there. No lights. I jumped. I found where they put our luggage. I knocked out the window. I looked. I found my suitcase. I only took the pictures. Hid them right away in a metal can where I had the soup. Buried behind the barrack. And this is it. I helped myself for the soup.

This was the worst job I ever had. We went -- first of all, we got up early in the morning. 4:30 in the morning they woke you up. Right? They gave you a black coffee, one slice of bread. 10 minutes you have to be out in roll call. If you're not, you got killed from the Kapos. And I was in block one. So every block has about 900 people, six blocks. I have the worst job that can be. I had the job that we cut down trees from the burned out forest, what the Americans burned out, the forest. They -- a couple of accidents that the young boy, Hungarian, cut off his toe with the axes. I was like on a tank. All the time peed in the woods. Wet wood. So all the time was the smoke. I couldn't breathe anymore. I thought I'd die. I became like a Musselman, skin and bones. That's how I became.

So suddenly one day comes a boy after walking with a slice of bread and soup. Somebody gave me the soup. Who is it? Mr. Bossman. This is the lady was with me in camp. This was her husband that sent the packages. He knew me very well. He was our tailor. He was in block six. I didn't want to accept. So he came himself. Everybody recognize you. You won't eat. You die. I said, “I want to die. Look at me. You want to help me out? I was a painter, carpenter. Take me out from this job. I won't live long.” On the third day I became a painter.

So I became a painter. Three painters, two and myself. In the morning we go to

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work. Everybody had like a milk can with soup. If it was 50 people, 20 people, three people. Right away they took the can filled in the other. We don't need. I says, “I'm hungry.” “Don't worry, you have plenty to eat. Give it to everybody.”

We came there to the camp. It was a new camp there, a new hospital that they brought wounded soldiers from the Russian front. We painted the hospital. Three painters. They were not even painters. They didn't know about paint. Helpers. A painter was a German. Then he came there.

So right away they made a fire. Baked potatoes there. The boss came because after Sunday he brought everybody a piece of cake. He didn't know at the time. And gave room to paint, which they thought I'm going to paint the whole day, the whole week. I painted in a couple of hours because I was a painter. Why are you doing it so fast? The boss came in. “Who did that?” “I did it.” “Oh, you are a real painter?” I says, yeah, I can mix colors and everything.

Well, let me tell you, we painted the halls there. All this has to be moved out. And every soldier has a cabinet with food. We helped ourselves. One was near the door. We didn't eat bread and butter but butter and bread, eggs, chocolate, cigarettes. We stole cigarettes to give to the guys outside. Then I filled up a whole bucket with food, garbage, threw it outside to people. I became right away myself. I gained weight. I moved into block six. I have a little helper. I only have one -- he washed my pants. Probably from a dead person he pulled off another pair. So I often had fresh to wear. I gave him all my food what they gave in camp I didn't eat. I had plenty to eat. But it didn't last long.

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It came February 5, 1945. The Russian Army were very close. So they said we don't go to work. Everybody takes a blanket and everybody got a loaf of bread with some marmalade, margarine, and we started walking. Go into woods. We walked for about eight hours. We come out from the woods to a little city. We see German soldiers retreating. They came. "Why don't you even go? Don't you see the war is almost over? What do you want for them?" They don't know. They have different orders. They took us back to the woods.

We walked another eight hours, 16 hours walking. I had swollen legs from the walking. I could hardly walk but somebody helped me. And other people wouldn't walk, got a bullet in the head. The woods were full with dead people. Who could walk that much? We were hungry, skeletons. I had better than anybody else, but they were skeletons. Walked 12, 14 hours a day with a little slice of bread and black coffee and this was the food.

Anyway, I came to myself. So the second night it was winter, cold, snow, everything. We went to sleep in the barn. We sleep in the barn. There was food for the horses and cows. Everybody helped themselves that they finished off all the food what was. The farmer complained. They ate up all the food I prepared for the horses and cows. For punishment, we didn't sleep anymore in the barn but on the outside in the snow. We huddled up.

After two weeks walking, we went by --

>> Bill Benson: Just so -- our audience knows this. This was what we now call a Death March because so many people died on your march.

>> Morris Rosen: But what happened two weeks, we went by the Elbe River. Everybody had

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to get under it, everybody, lice, no washing, dirty. We slept one on another because it was cold. We got to get undressed and jump into the water, wash ourselves and wash your clothing. Ok. Washed ourselves.

Have a nice bunch of friends. Eight people. Only intelligent people. We never mentioned food in camp. If you mention food, you are hungry. Only what book did you read? Did you have a girlfriend? What movie did you see? Highly intelligent friends I had. It helped because when we came out of the water, we rubbed our back, jumped around. Then "Get dressed." Put on my pajama. It was only a pajama. No underpants no undershirt. Wooden shoes without socks. And I put on my pants. It was like a board. It falls. So I was warm on the left side -- like walking shorts. The other one I pulled apart, little by little.

Let me tell you, about three, four days later, about 400 people died from the cold. No eat. No nothing. Then finally we come up hill to the camp. Like you say, no good person, he starts screaming, “Walk like soldiers.” Well, he was number two when they opened up the camp for killing. He was a murderer. That's what they picked to be in the camps, murderers.

He started hitting left and right. One, two, three. And we should start singing. Who had power to sing? We were tired. We couldn't walk. We were hungry. We came to the gate. Who was at the gate? Only communists. Political prisoners. When he arrived, “Are you better than them?” They put them down to the ground. He got a beating from all the Kapos there. They left us. He got bloodied all over his eyes. He says, “Now we are going to kill them inside.” Soon he comes out, but we didn't have the luck. We went in. He was still there. Finally somebody saw him at the other end of Buchenwald. He got out from the dead person

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the uniform. So we couldn't catch him, anything.

And the smell in Buchenwald was unbelievable. What you smell -- they give us the first food, so a bunch of people, they came, call people. They grabbed your food. We didn't eat for so many days. I'm all the time, you know, about the situation. What is it? The smell, I want to see where the smell comes. I went to the left where eight mountains, about six, seven feet high, with bodies. And some people were still alive. I come there to look at it. One guy chased out from Germany, lived in our city. I played with him in the Maccabiah, ping-pong, chess, everything. He was laying on the top. He was in our camp, but he was planting flowers by the SS so he had a lot of food to eat. But on the Death March, he didn't have food so they're the ones that died first. The ones that were used to hunger, they held out. So he was on the top with one eye closed, almost. He says, "Don't worry" [Inaudible].

Then I saw for the first time cannibalism. Two guys with knives cut out from bodies that are still alive. I said, “What are you doing?” So he came with the knife for me. I ran away. As I ran away, there was an order. “All the Jews out!” Everything. I says, “What all the Jews out?” The Americans brought in Air Force near Buchenwald. I said, “I'm not going out.” So I saw a guy jump into the -- the walls. Cement built the blocks. It was hollow. So I saw him jump in. I jumped in. I'm not going nowhere. I'm not getting on the Death March.

Then we wait. After two hours, a lot of people noticed that they jumped in. One SS noticed. He have started chopping up. I managed to get out, knocked out the window in our block. I cut myself. I ran out to the transport that was ready to go out, otherwise I would be shot. This was the last transport out of Buchenwald. I would wait till the morning, the

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American Army came the next morning.

We walked on foot. It was full of glass. People were barefoot that didn't have shoes cut themselves. It wasn't a building where a painter should be in the window. Everything from bombing. Everything destroyed. They load us in in open wagons, about 120. No food, no nothing on the train.

Ok. We were so tight that we have to stay in cold as can be. Don't forget it was March. Very, very cold. And what we have? Pajamas. No food. No water. Nine days. We threw out bodies every night. Finally we slept on the bodies because it was so cold to lay down. So we slept on the bodies.

On the ninth day we come. The train stopped. We begged them for water. They put the locomotive buckets of water. So we begged them. They brought a bucket of water. And everybody. Then they gave us some soup. They gave us soup. I look at it. I taste. I spit out. I says, “Don't you take the soup. This is poison.” They wanted to poison everybody before we arrived somewhere. I threw away the soup. Everybody did.

Then suddenly, every five minutes two Soviet planes. And they machine gunned on the locomotives. They saw that this is prisoners. And there were so many, about eight different trains, all with prisoners from all over Germany. And they start shooting up the locomotives. And finally, two of them got wounded. And people started jumping out. I think maybe we can escape. No, there was transport soldiers. So we rounded everybody up. Back.

So suddenly I see a young boy from my city, a neighbor. He was only about 13

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years old. He says, “Morris, I'm with Pols. They don't know I'm Jewish. Come here. We will survive.” I said, no, my luck is with this transport. I'm going to be -- you want, you can join me. Come in here.

Of course, we didn't have more to go so we walked. We started walking. We came. Everything was on fire. You probably read that over 100,000 were killed. Says, oh -- when we were bathing here in the water, in the river, in the Elbe River, now everything is on fire.

Finally, on the seventh day we arrived to Theresienstadt. We arrived 11:00 at night. They were full of transports from all over Germany. Cold as can be. They couldn't take us into sleep, so we slept on cobblestones. But they gave each one hot soup with a lot of bread. And this was good.

The next morning, they took us into barracks. They took off our clothing because it was dirty, filthy. And they gave us -- I got a new pair of pants from somebody, from the ghetto. Two shirts. I got -- I lost what -- I had a picture that my boss took in the camp where two SS men to take us, the three painters. I show it up. My head was full, so I have to give up. I lost the picture there. It would be probably the only picture taken where they took us with machine guns to work.

>> Bill Benson: Was that the last photograph you had?

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: You had lost every photograph.

>> Morris Rosen: All the photographs I lost in Buchenwald. Why? He said if you have something, hide. And he gave away a lot of gold pieces. They had money. So I gave this.

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Meanwhile, we didn't take a shower. They take everything away, I would lose. Meanwhile, I came back, that man got shot. Never found anything.

I went back to Buchenwald after the war with the Red Cross. They sent me there. I begged them maybe the pictures are here. No. I lost all the pictures. Maybe they can find them.

They put us in barracks. 30 people we were there. I'm there with the 30 people. It was terrible. People got sick. People got sick there. And finally the Russian Army came over. I don't know what happened, but I jumped out the window from the second floor and I laid unconscious. I don't know if one day, two days, three days. I will never know. But the only thing I know that the Soviet officer with the Czech partner woke me up. They get up, you liberated.

But I heard, like in sleep, like a song that the Russians sing. I keep this every time thinking about it. And I found a record. I put it on to remind myself, the song. Yeah. You can go back to the barrack. I come back to the barrack. There were only 12 people. There were 30. They all died from Typhus. It was Typhus epidemic. Came here. Must have been a couple of the Belgium horses with a whole wagon, with wine, money. He must have gone into a bank and millions of marks, hundred mark bills still in the packs. So people had diarrhea. They put on a hook their money.

>> Bill Benson: Hundred mark bills.

>> Morris Rosen: That was our paper to use. If I would have known it was good, I would be rich. I would take a couple thousand of them. I didn't know that the money was still good two

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years later. Yeah.

So what happened after three days, they come, two nurses, take me to a doctor. What did you eat? You were three days not here. Well, we had -- [Inaudible] he said, “If not for the wine, you wouldn't be here. You wouldn't alive. The sardines too fat.” And people have their graves, 40,000, 60,000. My friends from the camp. They all died from Typhus and for the food. The Russians didn't have no sense.

The American soldiers, if they liberated again, they treated them like babies. They didn't give them no food. Only like babies they feed them. The Russian came with the same food the Army ate: bacon, meet meat, potatoes, sauerkraut. You don't eat two, three weeks, the stomachs are shrunk, so you die. That's why you have so many dead. That's why Typhus.

Then somebody calls me. Who was there? My sister's husband heard on the radio I'm alive. In Europe from 10:00 to 2:00 in the morning, they said on the radio from the Red Cross where everybody from the camp. Think father-in-law heard on the radio I am alive. He was in Budapest. He came and took me up on his son's paper. Otherwise -- it was Typhus epidemic. They didn't let nobody out, to spread around. But I was -- I came with him as a journalist. I went out with his paper.

So we walked. The train supposed to leave in the morning. So we go into a restaurant, white table cloth. I started crying. This is the first time I'm human being again. A white table cloth with napkins not paper napkins but linen and the soup and bread and go out to sleep in white bedding with two pillows. I cried all night long. I couldn't take it because suddenly I became not a wise man but a person again.

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So in the morning the train comes by. The train is full. My brother-in-law pushed me on the roof. He went on the roof. Hold on. He held me on the roof. Full with people there. Unbelievable. We arrived in Prague. Did they treat us with food? I didn't eat much. Every corner was the Jewish heart. All you want to eat. Roll and butter, this, milk. I ate so little. We slept there in the hotel floor, all the refugees.

At night comes the transport. Some hefty girls, must have been farmers, back to Poland, and jumped on our beds. They want to sleep with us. Are they took -- I had a nice pajama that they took. Everything was torn up. My brother lost all from his pants all the things.

In the bathroom I brushed my teeth. I had my cup and everything. So a little boy, redhead, freckled, asked me in a nice Polish way, “Can I borrow the cup? I want to brush my teeth.” I looked at him, I said, “Moniek,” because I knew a redhead, freckled. He jumped on me. He knew who I am. We both cried. What a character. We went on the river there in Prague. On the boat, he wanted to make some happy things, a kayak. And then he knew so many languages. There were two Russians and two girls. “Can you give one girl to us? You have two of them.” They started chasing us. We got out. He was something.

And then I'm supposed to go back to Poland. I am at the station. They gave me a ticket to the train. At the train I see coming from -- I was supposed to go by train. I saw survivors. You can't recognize them. You recognize a survivor. “Why do you want to go back? You must be kidding. You won't get killed by the Pols?” No. You just come out from camp. So I went back to my brother-in-law. He says, “I tell you what, I don't like Stalin. Stalin

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any better than Hitler but they liberated. But he's not better than Hitler. We go to the American side. When we go on the train, don't forget, don't tell them you're Polish because they send you right back. Tell them you're from Germany. You go back to Germany."

Ok. We go on the train. Yes. We come to a station where the brother comes out. So elegant. I said soldiers? That's impossible. Handsome, tall guys. Not like soldiers with the heavy boots, elegant with ties and things. I couldn't believe it.

>> Bill Benson: You are now on the American side. Morris, we're go --

>> Morris Rosen: So right away -- my nephew started talking in English. He spoke better English than that. They – spies, "how can a 15-year-old guy know English so perfect?" They took him off. He says, "You go. We'll find you."

What happened --

>> Bill Benson: Morris, I got to stop us now. I'm going to turn back to Morris to conclude our program in just a moment. But we're passed our time. As you said in the beginning, you could have spent all day, all night, tomorrow, you skipped over so many things. I'm sorry.

>> Morris Rosen: Tell them how I came to Volary, two minutes.

>> Bill Benson: Two minutes. All right.

>> Morris Rosen: They took him out. They took him out. He says, "Go. I find you." I come there. I come there to Pilsner. Full of American soldiers sleeping there. It was about 1:00 in the morning. So I went where the Americans sleep, pull the blankets. They pulled back. I woke up in the morning, 11:00 in the morning. Boy, oh, boy. They all go. I sleep on the cement.

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I went to the police. Right away I told them I'm a survivor. I'm Polish. Don't tell them you're Polish. Tell them you're Jewish, a Jew from Poland. They hated the Pols because when the Germans took part of Czechoslovakia, the Pols -- oh, they took. And a lot of Czech soldiers got killed. Only one Pol was a Jew that got killed. His name, I remember still his name. I said -- he got to be killed. That's what I had in mind all the time.

Anyway, I went there from city to city they gave me to sleep. I approached the hospital there. Because the police tell me they, too, Jewish girls. I went there with -- they wouldn't tell me. Wouldn't tell me who they are. I almost cried. So there was a nurse probably going up. There were five girls sick from Typhus. As I walk out, one started, “Morris, don't you recognize me?” In Polish, a neighbor of mine. She was there. “Where's my sister?” She was in the same camp. Says she's in Volary. Says you go there, you'll find. Sick from Typhus, so on. Ok.

I collected some flowers, white flowers. I was walking. Two days later I come to Volary. I went to the police. They took me to the hospital where 120 girls were there, survivors out of 2,000. She got a medal from the President Obama, also. And she was there. It was a hospital.

As I came in, up on the first floor, who is there? A girl, my best friend's sister. I slept in the ghetto. She give out a scream. She was all hysterical. Every guy came around again. Let me tell you. They thought I'm the only Jewish guy alive. They didn't let me go. I have to sleep there. They gave me a bed near them with the thing.

Then when the American Army had to leave -- and I worked for the Army. I worked

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for the army at the time because I was in good health. So the chaplain for the Army, I will never forget, he says, “You can't be here. You've got to go.” So since I don't know English, he gave me to a hospital where Polish doctor from Chicago there speaks Polish. But what happened somebody -- got the needle.

>> Bill Benson: We don't want to let you go either but we're going to do that. I'm going to turn back to Morris in a moment to close our program. I'd like to thank all of you for being here very much. Hope you can come back. We'll have our *First Person* program every Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our *First Person* has the last word. You know he's going to get that. I'm going to give it back to Morris for the last word.

>> Morris Rosen: He doesn't miss anything.

>> Bill Benson: When Morris is done, I'm going to ask you all to stand because our photographer, Joel, will walk up on the stage and he's going to take a photograph of Morris standing facing the photographer but with you as the back drop. It's a great effect. So when Morris is done, I'll ask you to do that.

Morris, you're going to stay around afterwards for few minutes?

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Please feel free to ask Morris a question, shake his hand, whatever you want to do.

Your last word.

>> Morris Rosen: I tell you my last word. You heard my story. I you know how painful this is.

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Please, pretty please, be kind to people. Don't be ignorant. Don't hate nobody: white, black, yellow, whatever it is. We all got children. You are the future generation. So, please, be kind to everybody. With this, I want to thank you for listening.

[Applause]

[The First Person event ended at 12:08 p.m.]