

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON HENRY GREENBAUM
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Remote CART Captioning

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>> Bill Benson: Good morning, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 17th year of the *First Person* program. Our First Person today is Mr. Henry Greenbaum, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2016 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, and the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of 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 twice-weekly through mid-August. The museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program or speak with a museum representative. In doing so, you will receive an electronic copy of Henry Greenbaum's biography so that you can remember and share his testimony after you leave here today.

Henry will share with us his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Henry 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 begin with this early photograph of Henry. Henry was born April 1, 1928, 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.

Our first map shows Europe. Our second map shows Poland. The arrow indicates the approximate location of Henry's hometown of Starachowice.

Here we see two of Henry's five sisters. Ita is on the left and Rozia is on the right.

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

The Germans invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. By 1942, at the age of 13, Henry was sent with his family to do forced labor in a munitions factory. He was deported to Buna-Monowitz labor camp at Auschwitz and later to the Flossenburg camp in Germany. In this map of major Nazi camps in Europe, the first arrow points to the Buna-Monowitz and the second to Flossenburg.

At age 17, Henry was liberated and one year later he emigrated to the United States.

Henry, who lives in the Washington, D.C. area, lost his wife, Shirley, in 2011, after nearly 64 years of marriage. Henry and Shirley had four children, three sons and one daughter, who have

provided 12 grandchildren. And now there are six great grandchildren, ranging from 2 ½ to 6 years old, with a seventh due in January. Henry notes that all but one are girls.

Henry retired from his dry cleaning business 19 years ago and has been associated with this museum since its beginning. He volunteers at the Donors Desk where you will find him on Fridays. Over the past 35 years Henry has spoken to many groups locally and across the country. Earlier this year he traveled to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and spoke to 1,100 students at a Catholic boys school and 900 at a Catholic girls school, as well as at a Jewish Film Festival. He has also spoken to sailors aboard the U.S.S. Truman in Norfolk, Virginia; Ft. Detrick Army Base in Maryland and to the National Guard in Arlington, Virginia. He has also been a guest on Fox Radio with a live audience and on "The Larry King Show. "

In August 2014, Henry took his three sons to Germany and Poland, at the invitation of the City of Flossenburg, site of the Flossenburg concentration camp. They went to Auschwitz-Birkenau and visited Henry's home town. And in January 2015, Henry went to Poland as part of this museum's delegation to the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Henry is accompanied today by his daughter-in-law, Jackie, and her daughters and Henry's granddaughters, Lauren and Jillian.

When we first began First Person in March 2000, our very first First Person was Henry. With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Henry Greenbaum.

>> [Cheers and Applause]

>> Henry Greenbaum: Good.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, thank you so much for joining us and for your willingness to be our *First Person* today.

>> Henry Greenbaum: You're welcome.

>> Bill Benson: 17 years you've been with us.

>> Henry Greenbaum: That's right.

>> Bill Benson: All right, Henry. You have so much to share with us in a short hour so we will start right away. You were 11 years old when Germany invaded Poland. Before we turn to the war and the Holocaust, tell us a little bit about your family, your community, and you in the years before the war began.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Like you said, we had a large family, nine children. We had six girls and three boys. And we ran a tailor shop, a small business. We made a living. We were not rich. We made an honest living. We got along with our neighbors. Most of our customers were non-Jewish. We served tailoring, either new garments or repairing, mostly.

Me, as a youngster -- everybody had a chore in the house. If I didn't go to school -- after school I had to keep the iron hot so they could iron the stuff that they fixed. In those days we didn't have any electric irons. They had an iron that had a hollow inside. You had either coal or something was in there and I had to get it started so it will keep going. like a grill, so they could use the iron. Most of the time I played soccer with my neighbors, with non-Jewish, Jewish kids with non-Jewish kids. We'd have skirmishes like everywhere else you a game; everybody wants to win. Some lose. Some days you win. But nevertheless, we got along pretty good.

We were very religious at home. We lived near the synagogue, five doors away. My father was the caretaker of the synagogue. He closed and opened the synagogue every day. And then, of course, he ran the shop that we had.

One brother, Zachery, he was in the Polish Army. And then David, he was still with us, home. Him and my father both ran the shop. The girls, they were messing around with ladies' clothes. Sometimes they would come in, ladies' clothes, and they would do that, too.

>> Bill Benson: Besides your brother who was in the Army, one of your sisters had left home as well, had gone to the United States?

>> Henry Greenbaum: She came here in 1937. She came here. My father had two brothers and a sister who came here in 1905, something around that time. They settled in New York. But the immigration laws were so tough here they wouldn't just let you in. Nowadays people just cross the

border, they're here whether you like it or not like it. In those days you had to go through years, sometimes a whole year, till you passed. You're lucky if you came through the council, well, next year, next year.

My oldest brother tried for years. I don't know why they didn't let him in. He was a master tailor. He wouldn't be on the government's payroll. He would contribute. He would be paying taxes, making money and paying his taxes. But they somehow didn't let him in but my sister had no trouble. She came as a young lady. I don't remember how old she was when she came, single. She came to one of the uncles. The uncle had children of their own. One of them moved from New York, came to Washington. And he settled in Washington. And that's the one that brought my sister down here in 1937.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, your father died before the war began, right before the war began, a couple of months, I think. How did the family make ends meet during that time since he had the tailoring business?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, it wasn't that easy. It was tough. But my mother was worrying herself to death how you make a living. You know, the moms are always worried about how are we going to make a living, how are we going to eat. We were never short on food. We always had food.

My oldest brother, he ran away later on.

>> Bill Benson: We'll come back to that.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Oh, ok.

>> Bill Benson: September 1, 1939, Germany invades Poland. You were quickly occupied. Tell us what it was like in those first days when the Germans came in and what life was like before you were forced into a ghetto.

>> Henry Greenbaum: I was just a youngster. I cared less about the war. I was more interested in -- I was more interested in playing soccer with other people, with other boys, or other games. Cared less about the war. The parents were there with their small radio, like 10-by-10 radio listening to the war. My father, before he passed away, he got us jobs in the ammunition factory. There were rumors coming around what did the Nazis like and dislike when they take over a city. They liked when you worked in a factory. They could care less about tailoring. But later on they needed tailoring. So we were still in business.

Luckily one of our clients, one of our customers, happened to be a manager in a munition factory. So my father heard all of these rumors on the radio and he said, Why don't I approach that guy who came in? He knew he was working in the factory but he didn't know what capacity. Was he a manager, an owner, whatever?

So he approached him. He said, "Can you give my kids a job in the factory?" No hesitation. He says, "How many do you have?" He says, "The three girls and this young boy." And one of the girls was already -- the one we showed on the screen with the little girl, Faige. Her husband was already in America. She didn't live with us when she was married but as soon as he left for America, she moved in with us. So grandma took over with the little girl so she could go to the factory and work. And we had I.D.s. So all four of us were safe, so to speak. We had I.D.s that we worked in factory before they came in the Germans, occupied our city. Then two weeks later my father passed away. And then all of a sudden the war was already coming closer to our city. Eventually it was taken over to our city.

My mom was very protective after my father passed away, especially with the girls. You can't go nowhere. You have to stay right here with me. You can't get in trouble no place. So what happened? The next door neighbor had a horse and buggy. That's the only transportation we had, no cars in the city, I don't think, except a bus taking you out of town and bringing you back to town. Bicycles, motorcycles, and horse and buggies.

Anyway, she asked him to take us to a farmer that we knew. How she -- there were no telephones. How did they arranged that, I don't remember. But all I know is the horse and buggy took me, my mom, my oldest of the brothers, because the other brother, Zachery, was in the Army, in the Polish Army. And they took us to the farm 10 miles away so nobody would get hurt when they take over the city. They usually throw bombs and she didn't want anybody to get hurt.

So we went to that farm. We stayed in that farm for three days. We heard all the bombardments coming in because 10 miles away was not that far away. On the second day my brother and I, David, he was out there with me eating breakfast outside. The farmer, the owner of the farm, gave us a slice of bread, butter on it, and says, go out and take a tomato off the vine. It was late September, there were still tomatoes on the vine. And we ate tomatoes and bread. We were supposed to go in and get a glass of milk after that.

While we were eating, we saw from a distance, a gray uniform approaching us. We could not figure out who this was at all. As we got closer together, it was a Polish soldier, not Jewish. He had a lot of medals on him. He was not a private. It so happened that my brother David knew him by first name. They kept talking to each other like friends. They either went to school together or he was just a customer in our place. I don't remember. But all I know is that he asked the soldier, "Where are you running away from?" He says, "I'm running from the German Army. They're here three kilometers and they're coming this way."

The Polish soldier was running in the opposite direction away. My brother had an idea, which I could not believe myself what I heard. He says, "Is it ok if I run away with you?" I said, "No!" How do you do that? You're my oldest brother. You're supposed to be my protector. My father passed away already. He's supposed to be the protector. This is my brother.

He took off with the soldier but I didn't let him get away too far. I followed him, hiding behind bushes. I thought maybe he'll change his mind. I didn't want to go back in there with the girls and then am I going to be their protector?

>> Bill Benson: At 11 years old.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Yeah. I was too young. Anyway, every time he saw me, lifting my head over the fence, over the bushes, "Go back to your mother," "Go back to your mother." Of course I didn't listen to him. I was angry at him, why he's going to leave me here. I thought maybe my older brother, supposed to protect your little brother. But he didn't do that. Till the Polish soldier turned around and yelled, "You're too young" in Polish, "You're too young. You go back to your mother." I said ok. They didn't want me.

So I went back to my mom and told her the bad news. Of course she was very upset, crying. How are we going to make a living? That's what she was worrying about. The girls calmed her down, oh, we'll help; don't worry about it. You'll be ok. And the third day we all packed up and went back to our town.

I never saw a German soldier yet, until I came to my town. In my town, when we passed the marketplace on the way to my house, I saw there was nine or 10 people hung from the town. They hung them, whoever occupied, the Nazis occupied the town. They took all the doctors, the lawyers, what we in those days called intelligentsia. They were getting the lawyers, the doctors, and they hung them. Maybe some Communists, too. I don't know that but all I know is at that age, I had to witness 10 people, nine or 10 people hanging. Next to my father, that's the first time I ever saw a dead but hanging I never saw that. It was on my mind constantly why they would do something like that. Mom explained that's what happened. They took the smart people. They didn't want them to interfere with the occupancy, I guess.

And we went to business. We opened the door, cleaned up. Every time I would hear the boots clicking on the sidewalk, I would run toward the door, through a crack, just to listen, to observe the soldier. What does the soldier look like? Why am I so scared of them? They didn't do anything to me yet.

I looked. He was scary looking. Always wearing a helmet because they just occupied the city three days ago. So they all wore helmets, boots, and their rifles. They all walked around with that constantly. Then I went back after I observed them. Like I said, he didn't do anything to me.

But later on, a couple of weeks, the order came out. All the Jews in that town had to wear the yellow Star of David. So from a child on to no matter how old you were, you had to wear a yellow star on the front and in the back. That means if you walked on the sidewalk, anytime you met with a soldier, any rank of soldier, German soldier, you had to step off. We were never bareheaded, because we were

religious. Always had the hat on, the tassels sticking out. And then we walked on the sidewalk. And every time you see the soldier, take your hat off, jump off the sidewalk, and let the master, so to speak, walk through. You have to give them attention to that. If you didn't obey, he would kick you off, knock you down with the rifle butt on the sidewalk and threaten kick you off the sidewalk, on the road. It was not dangerous, the road, didn't have any cars to worry about.

But anyway, that was the first thing they introduced us to. And then the second thing, later, they left us in the street because we were already identified with the Star of David. The truck would pull up on the sidewalk. If they saw you with a star, they grabbed you on the truck.

What did we do on the truck? The truck was full. They went to the countryside, to the farmlands, and we had to dig trenches for them. They said for military tanks to fall in. It turned out to be graves later. They told us it was trenches for tanks to fall in. Whatever work they had to do, they grabbed us in the street. Clean the vehicles. Clean the place where they lived. Where they took over places.

It so happened when they grabbed me one time and I said, "I work in the factories. Here's my I.D." never be without the I.D. It's like a passport. You had to wear the I.D. You had to hide it in the pocket. "Well, you're not due until 3:00 in the afternoon. This is 10:00. You can work for us and later we will drop you off in the factory" and they did that. That day I did double shift. What type of people did the same thing? They grabbed them even though they had I.D.s. They took them to dig the trenches.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, it wouldn't be very long before you and your family and the other Jews in your community were forced into a ghetto. Tell us about the ghetto and what conditions were like for you there.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, we didn't have to move. That's one thing about the ghetto. We stayed in our little house. They took over the neighborhood.

>> Bill Benson: Where your house already was.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Yes. They took over our neighborhood, three-block perimeter, small little block. Most of them was near the area where the synagogue was, most of the religious Jews were there. They didn't make a fence. They just barbed wire us around, three-block circle around. They put two guards, a Ukrainian who joined the Nazi regime, and also a SS guy. And they were the guards. You could not walk out of this area at all unless you were on the way to the factory. You showed them the I.D., they let you go to work. There was nowhere to stop, anyway. The stores were looted. The kosher stores were looted. Everything was turned upside down. It was a mess on the outside. So there was nowhere to go anyway. The only way you could come out, like I said, you had an I.D. We stayed in that ghetto. The only thing is the family was intact, together. Everybody was in one place. No one was hurt. Nobody got hurt. We all lived in there.

Then they found out that the more Jews lived in the area but they were not aware. So they got the city police to show them where the other Jewish families lived. They drove up with the truck. That's for my sister telling us. They did not knock lightly, excuse me, you have to come out. They almost busted the door down with the rifle butt, just chaos. A lot of screaming, "Aus," "Aus."

What do you grab first? I guess you grab your kids first. Faige's little girl, she was taken care of. She grabbed her. No, one of the other sisters grabbed -- Rozia. So she grabbed them and brought them over to us. We had to put them up in a small house. No matter where they were sleeping, on bunks, on chairs, on floor. But we put up. There we stayed until all the Jews were in one area, three-block perimeter.

>> Bill Benson: What was the food conditions like for you?

>> Henry Greenbaum: The food conditions, we had leftovers what we had lived off for a while. That depleted itself. Then we had to depend on the German Army to bring our food in. So they would bring in rations. All of a sudden they stopped giving us soap to keep clean. That's the first thing they took away, the soap. There was no haircuts given to us nor to the women. Everybody had long hair while we were there.

We stayed together from October to -- we stayed from 1940 to October 1942.

>> Bill Benson: Almost three years.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Two years I think. We stayed in that ghetto. The only thing is, the family was intact, together. Dirty as we were, hungry as we were, but nevertheless the family was intact, together. So that was a helping.

All of a sudden that day October 1942 they wouldn't let us go to work for 24 hours -- because we had different shifts, 7:00 to 3:00, 3:00 to 11:00, 11:00 to 7:00 in the morning. So they wouldn't let us go to work. They brought in the extra soldiers, extra dogs. They chased us out of the ghetto area. They made sure nobody was left in there. They checked everything. Every house was checked. Everybody was at the marketplace, went over there.

And right there the selections started. The selections started. Uniformed guys were sitting and directing traffic. You walked up as a family. My family, my mom, myself with the three sisters. The older brother escaped already. So we showed him the I.D. All of us went over to one side, to the good side. Then the others, my mom and their married sisters went over. They sent them over to the opposite direction because of their children. My mom was only 54, considered too old, I guess, to work.

So we were separated at the end of the day. The workers -- and also they saved able-bodied people. If you didn't have the I.D., you still were saved if you were not attached with any children, pregnant. They took away all the pregnant women, women with children who just gave childbirth, handicapped people, older people. They separated us.

They took those people away. We didn't know where they took them until after the war. Because we were lucky through the rest of the war. They said they were taken to a place called Treblinka, nothing but a killing center. They said they probably were killed two days later after they were picked up. It was nothing but a killing center. That's where my mom went, my married sisters, three little nieces and two nephews. I never saw them again. We were looking for them. Would travel in different camps. I remember going to a place called Bergen-Belsen. It was of course by the British. The British soldiers told us we could only stay three days then we had to go back to where we lived. Go back to our city.

So then I said only need one day. While I was looking around in there, I ran into a first cousin, Ita. She helped me a great deal. I'm jumping ahead.

>> Bill Benson: That's ok. I'll bring you back.

In October 1942 you lost your mother and your married sisters and niece and nephews.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Right.

>> Bill Benson: You were left then with a couple of your sisters, three, I believe. What happened?

>> Henry Greenbaum: We were chased. After they separated us, they took them away from us. I'll never forget. My mom wanted to come and give me a little hug. I was a little baby. I was the youngest of the family. They would not let her. They kept pushing her back with the rifle butt. And I didn't like what I saw. But what could I do? I don't have a gun. Find a Goliath so big and tall with the rifles and their helmets, boots. So I could not help it. She yelled over to my sisters, "Take care of your little brother." That was the last time I saw her.

>> Bill Benson: What did they do with you then?

>> Henry Greenbaum: They turned around to us, chased us for six kilometers uphill; literally chasing us with the dogs and whips.

>> Bill Benson: You were running with your sisters while they're chasing you?

>> Henry Greenbaum: With my sisters, yes, three. We were all we had. Running with them. And then we thought we were going to go back into the ghetto. They chased us passed the ghetto, uphill six kilometers. There was a big surprise. A big slave labor camp with six-foot fences, towers, dogs, search lights. They were right there. A slave labor camp built for us. We no longer could go back to the ghetto. Whatever you left in the ghetto stayed in the ghetto. You could not retrieve anything. So if you left something valuable, somebody else got it I guess.

Then they put us in. A little blanket rolled up. One guy was at the -- I can't remember -- the barracks. I couldn't think of the barracks. The first time I saw a barrack, on stilts. A lot of barracks were built for us. The one soldier was at the barrack, one soldier was at the gate. They gave each other

signals. If capacity was full, they give a signal and went to another barrack. Separate the men from the women.

We walked into the barrack. Believe me, we looked at three shelves, bunks. Where's the mattress? Where's straw? Nothing. Just a plain wooden shelf. They put 75-inches wide, three guys had to sleep together, wide. The little blanket they gave us, we used it as a pillow so our head could rest at least. And then at nighttime, unrestful. You never could sleep on your back. Just on the side. We stayed there for another year.

>> Bill Benson: What was the work that you were made to do?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Munitions factory. Then one of my sisters volunteered to become a tailor, Faige. She was with the tailors. 100 tailors, men and women, working on the German uniforms for the high-ranking officers.

>> Bill Benson: And it was in this camp where you lost your sisters. Right?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, from the day that we carried over the dirt, filth, from the ghetto to the slave labor camp because they took away the soap. They didn't give us any soap in the slave labor camp either. They had a pump with water outside. So in the summer time, we would undress. A man could undress from the waist on up. You didn't have soap. You took the dirt from the ground, put it all over yourself like a mud bath. The next pumped the water.

>> Bill Benson: Using the dirt and mud.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Yes. But that did not kill the lice. We were lice-infested from the dirt and filth. The clothes we were wearing was already three years old. When did you change? We did not change. So we become more lice infested.

And then the Typhoid epidemic broke out. Very contagious sickness. When you sleep in such close quarters, if one catches it, the next is guaranteed. And then they did not want to wait 10 days until you get over it. So what they did is if you didn't -- every morning we had a lineup in the front of the barrack. They knew the barrack held maybe 100 people. People were missing. Well, the first thing, they let the dogs go underneath the barrack, under the stilts, under the barrack. If they didn't pull anybody out, nobody hiding. But they went inside the barrack and some people couldn't get off the bunk because they had high fever with the Typhoid. It was impossible for you to stand on your feet. No way you could stand on your feet.

So what they -- I think it was the group, Einstazgruppen. The truck was full with the sick people. We thought they're going to give them some help, take them to a doctor or get them some medicine or at least take them away from us. But they took them over to the place where we dug those trenches that they supposedly told us were for the military tanks to be falling in. But all of those people that would come down with the Typhoid, had to come in front of the ditch, undress, naked, and they were shot in the back of the head and inside they went. The ditch was full. They went to the next one. We dug three months of those. I don't remember how many, the graves, how many we dug but quite a few people.

One morning I came back from the night shift. I always would come in to see Ita. I would always check on her. We were two years apart. Are you ok? She said, "Yeah. Can you bring me some clothing so I can put on my bunk?" She had bed sores from laying there. She had a low fever. She was able to get around but still got contagious sickness. I didn't wash myself. I didn't care. It's your sister, what do you care. So if you don't catch it from her, I catch it from somebody else. Doesn't make any difference. But anyway, it took three days. I brought some clothing, the cloth that we clean the equipment off in the factory. I took some clean cloths. I brought it in and I spread it on her bunk.

And one day I walked in, she thanked me for it. She was a little better and it felt a little softer. And then she was not there. So I approached a Jewish policeman, happened would be outside walking around. We had Jewish policemen in the camp. And I asked him what happened to my sister. She was there yesterday morning. He said she died of typhoid, of the sickness, and they buried her in the bottom of the stone quarry. So it's still mind boggling to today, why did they bury her in the bottom of the stone quarry? Why they didn't take her where they took all the other sick people? Then she was already dead, throw her in with the others. But her they buried in the bottom of the stone quarry.

And then also night shift, the following week, after I was also night shift, I came back. There I saw my other sister Hia. On the pickup truck. And I yelled real loud and clear to say hello to her, where are you going. I don't know what she answered me. I can't remember. But all of those people on the truck were sick people. They took them away. In other words, high fever, low fever. If you had low fever, you could fake it, you could go to work. You would be a little dizzy, might not be 100% but you could -- you don't miss the roll call. That's the first thing. So they took her. I never saw her again. So the only one I had left was Faige.

>> Bill Benson: Just Faige and you left in the camp.

>> Henry Greenbaum: That's right.

>> Bill Benson: And, of course, you were involved in an escape attempt. Tell us about that, Henry.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, my sister was working -- there were 100 tailors, women and men in a tailor shop. One day the high-ranking German officer walked in to the tailor shop and he told the tailor she must hurry up with all of these uniforms. They have to be ready by such and such date because all of you are going to be deported out of here. And the tailors didn't like what they heard. They came back and they organized an escape amongst themselves. They wouldn't tell anybody.

Then finally my sister told me the day before the escape. My shift was from 3:00 in the afternoon to 11:00 at night. "When you come back at 11:00, do not go into the barrack at all. Wait for me and we are going to escape." I was already 15 years old. I was looking forward to get out of this hell place at 15 years old. I said -- they didn't treat me that well, hungry, dirty, filthy. And beatings all the time.

So my sister wouldn't tell me anything about it until the night before. The night before, my shift was from 3:00 to 11:00. "Do not go inside the barrack. Wait for me outside." I was waiting, pitch dark. She came along with that same Jewish policeman who I asked about the other sister. I didn't know she knew him. That I don't know. All I know is she was holding his hand. She grabbed my hand. We had to run like to the end of the room here, the theater to run out there. And we were 10 in a group. 10 lined up. So tailors were 100, 10 times 10. So we were all lined up. Waiting for escape.

Three rows got out very quietly. The third group thought of bringing something from the factory, clippers to cut the wire fence. It was not an electric fence, just plain barbed wire. Opened up a bigger place. So more than one person -- 10 ran to the place but only one at a time could squeeze through. So it took forever. A long time. And then they wanted to do it real fast so more people will escape.

We were waiting in line. Well, the same group that were destined to leave the place started messing around with the wooden fence. And the wooden fence made noise. The barbed wire didn't make any noise at all. They started breaking boards. That attracted the German Shepherd dogs. They kept barking and screaming and barking mostly. So the two guards on the tower knew there was something wrong. So they flipped the lights on. They flipped the lights on and then running around with the lights trying to find where does it come from, the noise. They found the spot where the people were running out. So both of them start shooting. Everybody that was at the hole, kept shooting there. Then the next.

Then with us, we were waiting in line. After quiet, nobody was running out anymore, things quieted. Put the search lights on us. There were 10 at the time, we were waiting in line. They only had two guns. So the policemen -- first they put the headlights on us. So it was just like a deer on the highway. The deer freezes, doesn't know which way to go. The policemen told us run, disperse, run back to the barrack where you belong. We started running back.

Somehow I got separated from my sister but they kept shooting at us and the bullet struck the back right of my head. A bullet grazed me. It didn't go inside. But nevertheless, it still knocks you out from the impact. It knocks me out. When I woke up a few seconds later, the blood was running all over me in the back, all the way down in the shirt, all the way through the pants, all the way outside. They opened up a two-inch gash in the back right of my head.

So I woke up and I said, Faige, why would you leave me alone here? I'm only 15 years old. You promised my mother you were going to take care of me. Where are you? Why would you escape?

Leave me all by myself. Then I thought I better start thinking about myself. I said, Dear God, you have to watch over me so I don't get shot again, so I can get to America someday to visit my sister in America. I know she was safe. I knew she was protected.

I was trying to get back. I did not find her on the way. Instead of going to my place, where I belonged, I went to the women's barrack. When I went into the women's barrack, the woman opens the door, "What are you doing?" She shut the door. She didn't let me in. "You're going to get us all killed." "You're full of blood." I said I almost got killed myself. The woman knew my name. I knew her name. She was just in charge of the girls in the barracks "I'm looking for my sister Faige." "She's not here." I said, "How can you answer that fast she's not here, you weren't even looking?"

By that time, they stopped shooting. And then the two guards were angry that we were trying to escape so they started randomly shooting at the barracks. The one that was picked was the women's barrack, shooting into that. All the women jumped off the bunks, on the ground. I was sitting on the ground. So I still looked for my sister Faige but I could not see her. Who do I run across? It was Ita. She's the one that helped me with the bleeding when I got hit. I came into the barrack. She said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Looking for Faige." She says, "Trust me, she's not here. I know what bunk she is and I know she's not here. What happened to you?" I explained what happened. She started cleaning. She came over with a bucket of water, rag, cleaned me up a little bit. She took a dry rag, put it in my wound. She took off the beret that she was wearing and put it on my head. She says, "Let that rag be tight against your wound so you won't bleed anymore."

I tried to get out there have because if they would catch me in the women's barrack, I wouldn't be here, escaping with a wound on top of my head. So I tried to get back to my barrack. I do remember counting up from one to 15. Why I was counting, I don't remember. But I was counting to see -- I think the search lights were going. Can I beat the search light back to my barrack? So I lowered my head. It was the opposite direction. The search light -- I made it to my barrack back before the lights came over towards me. I was already inside my barrack. And I said, thank God I'm safe now. I want peace.

In the morning, loudspeaker, Attention, attention; everybody out. Another roll call. They wanted this time like we line up for work every day. We had to line up in the front of the barrack. This time they wanted to see how many escaped. So they were counting us. Let's say there was 100 in the barrack, there was only 75. Well, 25 people unaccounted for. They either wounded at the hole, escaped, or they killed some of them.

They didn't do that exactly. The first thing they did is check the barrack if anybody else is still in there. No one was in there. The stilts, they let dogs under. Nobody was there. So all the missing people, they either got out or they were wounded or killed.

>> Bill Benson: And your sister was one of those killed. Right?

>> Henry Greenbaum: I did not know where my sister still was. Right in the front of our faces, he told us to turn in the opposite direction. We turned towards the hole. There I looked. The policeman was still alive. He was sitting on the ground, upright position, with the arm band, still sitting, moaning and groaning, other people moaning and groaning. There were wounded people there. And right in front of our faces the two guards killed all the wounded ones. So as soon as the policeman tilted over and dropped to the floor, I saw my sister Faige. She was already dead. She didn't move. She was all stretched out. She either got hit the night before when I got hit or maybe she made it to the hole and then fell and died that way. I don't know the answer. All I know is she was dead. All I know, I was 15 years old and I was by myself.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, yes, you're all alone now. You've lost everybody. We're getting close to the end of the program and you have a great deal still to tell us. Tell us now about going to Auschwitz, of course, and what happened to you at Auschwitz.

>> Henry Greenbaum: That day, that magic day came when the high-ranking officer told the tailors they must have everything ready. That day came. They got extra soldiers, always extra soldiers. They chased us down for six kilometers toward the railroad station. They packed us in like sardines into the car, the freight cars. No water, no bathroom. It was very hot, September -- I don't remember what month it was. I don't really remember. But all I know it was still hot. They stuck us in and locked the

doors from the outside. Then we were traveling for three days. Everywhere we stopped we were not priority transport. Civilian cars came through. We had to stop. It took forever, for three days, to travel. Every stop we stopped, in unison, we were screaming, "Water!" in different languages. We didn't ask for food, just water. They wouldn't give us anything.

We traveled. We finally reached our destination and it was Auschwitz-Birkenau. Auschwitz-Birkenau, on the platform they stopped. The soldiers opened our doors up. They were screaming out. One or three or one or two, I don't remember, dead people on our car. The stench was to high heaven in there. I don't know how long they were dead. But everybody ran over to that little window that the wagon has, about 15-inches, maybe 10-inches, with the barbed wire on it, to get a breath of fresh air. Some people were very selfish. They wouldn't move away from there. We had our little skirmishes in there. And then we arrived.

The first thing they did when you got off the train is gave us a haircut. That's the first thing. The second thing was a number on the arm. Everybody that came through Auschwitz, came with numbers on the clothes. But they gave us a regular tattoo number. My number was 18991. That was my number. And the third stop, shower. After three years of not showering, we finally got into the shower. They gave us a piece of soap. We were so thirsty, we kept drinking the water. We finally got through with the water drinking. Then we cleaned ourselves up. They took away our clothes full of lice. And they gave us our striped outfits with the cap, the jacket, pants, wooden bottom shoes. No underwear or socks. They still gave us a little blanket. Everywhere you go, they gave us that three-foot little blanket rolled up, later when we were using it on the march.

>> Bill Benson: You were selected for slave labor again.

>> Henry Greenbaum: We stayed in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The people that were there before us told us how lucky we were because sometimes they coax you into the shower room and it's really not a shower room. Instead of water, you wind up with gas and they gas you to death. So we were pretty lucky.

But as we came off, we had another selection, as we came off the train. Left, right, left, right. There was the I.D. cards did not help you in Auschwitz at all. They looked at your faces, left, right. They took half of our transport. We knew the next two days later that they took them to the gas chamber. They had an order how many they need to dispose of or they didn't have any room. I think they had an order how many they needed to kill. Half of our transport was taken care of, were killed.

We stayed -- I was still lucky. We stayed there for six months. A civilian German came in to Auschwitz-Birkenau with two guards, came in, the barrack outside. We were still in pretty good condition. And that civilian German got 50 of us out of there, out of the 100 that was in the barrack. 50. You could not ask any questions. What are you picking me for? Are you going to give me a job? Are you going to kill me? We could not ask anything. The guards were standing there with the rifles and the dogs. He was dressed very nicely, the man, and took 50 of us out.

We marched for three kilometers. We came to a place called Buna-Monowitz, a subcamp of Auschwitz. And that man was either a manager or owner or part owner. He was not a private person to come into a camp and get 50 people to work for him. He took us to a place called IG Farben. They produce gas, bug sprays, automobile tires, bullets, synthetic fuel. But the 50 that that civilian took, for one reason only. He wanted us to build a road in the compound of the factory with the cobblestone road and the sidewalk.

And three months we were doing that. And the winter was no pleasure, no gloves. We had to take care of that stone. We had to unload the misdemeanor to build the road. They were on freight cars. They gave you a shovel. In the beginning you work yourself in. Once you were on to the car, you have to take shovel by shovel. You get blisters all over your hand from not wearing gloves from the shovel. And they only gave you a certain time to unload. They didn't give you all day long to unload. You didn't want to get whipped with the whip so you had to work pretty hard. Three months.

And then soon enough the American Air Force finally came and bombed the IG Farben factory. They didn't go inside. They only bombed the outside, the railway leading into it. That's why they wanted to have a cobblestone road, for the trucks to be able to pull in, in case the rail can't make it.

The Air Force came back more aggressive. They knocked out the whole factory. They had a bunker in there. It was not for us. We had to work right through the bombing as they were bombing because our guy was a kapo watching us. He was hiding so he wouldn't get hit by the shrapnel but he didn't give a darn about us. We had to work right through.

One day we were working when the Air Force came back, the American Air Force came back. They were bombing the area. And sure enough we see some uniformed guys. There were British soldiers, 10 of them, with pickup wagons. They were just picking up the trash from the factory. That's all they did.

>> Bill Benson: They were prisoners of war?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Yes. They were caught by the Germans, war prisoners. But they treated them well. They looked very nicely dressed, clean and they were not hungry. They told us, "Don't give up, don't give up. This is American Air Force bombing you. Don't give up." And then they left. We never saw them again.

>> Bill Benson: Henry, you would get sent yet to another camp, Flossenburg, and then on a Death March. Tell us in our remaining time about the Death March and then your liberation.

>> Henry Greenbaum: Well, the Death March, we were marching because of the -- we were riding first in trains. Then the good old American Air Force took care of that in the beginning. They would knock out the locomotive. They wouldn't bother with the cars because they knew we were in those cars. So they didn't bother us. But they kept shooting. They put it out of commission, the railroad and also the locomotive. But then later on they got so aggressive that somehow we were riding on trains, trying to make it to Flossenburg.

We finally made it to Flossenburg. We stayed in Flossenburg only a few months. No work for us over there other than bundling up clothing. It was a story high of clothes, clothing from murdered people, children's clothes, men's clothes, women's clothes. We had to bundle them up in bundles. They were sent to Germany for recycling. Then we had to abandon Flossenburg because the American Army was coming to liberate Flossenburg. Rumors. We were told the Russians would do that. At the Czech or Slovakian border, how would the Americans get there.

But nevertheless they got there. But the Germans were not that stupid. Three days before they loaded us up on trains and they took us in deeper into Germany, only left a crew of 10, cleanup crew. So the American Army, when they liberated Flossenburg, all they found is the cleanup crew. We were already deeper into Germany. We were trying to make a place called Dachau. We were at that time already on foot.

So we came on trains, and then one day we were traveling through countryside very quietly. All you could hear was the locomotive choo, choo, choo, with the smoke running out, the steam out of the locomotive. And we were on that place called the black field. And that train had a carload full of SS guys. And the American Air Forces must have known that because that day they didn't bomb just the locomotive or the rail. They waited, circled around over us a little while first until the uniformed guys jumped out of their cars and opened our cars. That's the only way we could come out if they opened it. They told us to run into the woods. The woods, running 10 feet, you had to drop. The dogs were there, soldiers pointing the rifles, the guns at you. So you had to drop.

That train was demolished from locomotive to the last car and the rail. Everything was upside down. From then on we had to march. And it was already the 24th of April, 1945. We were already starting to get skeletal-like. Under traveling we didn't get any food, not much food in the camp. The menu was a slice of bread, a little black imitation coffee, and also in the evening after working 10 hours, they gave cabbage water soup. You could not find a leaf of cabbage in there. They gave us a spoon. I don't know why they gave us a spoon. The spoon was -- I never took it off. They never gave me any solid food to use a spoon, just watery stuff.

On the 24th of April 1945, the two guards got hungry, too. They ran out of supplies. So they located a farm. They located farms before but they didn't stay too long. This one, on the 24th of April, 1945, they knew that they were losing the war. The military people heard the news, I'm sure. We were not aware of it. We heard planes flying all over.

This time they ordered us into a silo to keep the hay and also the goats and sheep in there. They didn't let us like dogs and animals get shelter, sleep in the woods. If it was raining or snowing, you wrapped yourself up with a blanket and tried to be bones with bones, laying, trying to keep warm. And then on the 24th, they somehow ordered us into the silo. We were soaking wet from the April showers, the striped uniforms soggy. We came in, took our clothes off, laid them down on the hay to dry. Then we saw goats and sheep. It was kind of warm in there which was nice. While they were feasting on a big meal, they gave us one raw potato. That's all. And some water to drink. You were so hungry you could eat 10. Only one potato. That's all they gave you.

And then that morning they woke us up early. We had to put the partially wet clothes on. They didn't dry out. Again, we put it on the best we could. Roll up the little blanket. It was a beautiful morning a beautiful day. A breeze was coming. And then all of a sudden they woke us up early. They marched us for a couple of hours. They put us near a wooded area. And that's where you sit.

They gave us another walk in the morning. So that was a no-no. We knew something was happening. What we didn't know. But when they put us near the wooded area and then all of a sudden we saw on the highway maybe half a block away -- well, we didn't know the markings on the equipment. What kind of Army was it? It was the American Army was there. They knew it was the American Army. We didn't know. All of a sudden they ran away from us.

>> Bill Benson: The guards ran away?

>> Henry Greenbaum: The two guards ran away from us and let us sit by ourselves. We were angry why they left us here. Anybody now can kill us. But they were the ones that actually got the chance of doing it but they were afraid to kill us because the gun makes too much noise and they would have been captured by the American Army, half a block away they could hear the noise. With binoculars they probably would send a jeep or whatever after them and they would have been charged with war crimes.

>> Bill Benson: They took off and there you are.

>> Henry Greenbaum: By ourselves, 50 of us left from 100.

>> Bill Benson: And when did the Americans get to you?

>> Henry Greenbaum: Then all of a sudden we were about three hours, maybe two hours later, an American tank -- we didn't know it was American. It took off on the main highway towards us. Five feet away the tank stops. The soldier squeezes himself out of the hatch. It was kind of tight in there. Blond crew cut hair. I wish I knew his name. I don't know his name. Then all of a sudden he got out of the tank, he stood up in the hedge, put his hands on his mouth. He says "We are Americans and all of you are free." Until I hear the word free -- still runs through my body now. But I was 17 years old already. That was the best time of my life. I said, Lord, thanks for saving our life but why did it take so you long? We kept saying that to ourselves.

All of a sudden he yelled -- there was another soldier on the tank. Squeezed himself out of the tank. He yelled at him to throw out all the rations that you have. We were climbing like cats and dogs trying to grab a ration. I don't think I got to one. He saw we were going to hurt ourselves.

Somebody had to speak English in our group. I understood a little bit but I didn't know what they were talking about. All of a sudden he told us to stop with the ration. The two got back on the tank. They told us to follow them. They took us out of the field and the woods, across the road, into a farm, into the farm where both soldiers jumped off the tank. One soldier ran for the door, the other one for us to go in. We were five years' hungry. We didn't think they were going to have food inside for us. So outside the farmer's house, three big dishes of or pales, whatever you call it, potato peelings. I didn't need my spoon. Potato peelings were there with white flour on it. We never looked at the two angels that gave us back our freedom. We were on our hands and knees, shoved as many potato peelings you could stuff yourself. How we didn't choke is beyond me because you could hardly chew them. You wanted to get as much as you can. We ate up all of these -- cleaned off the three trays. Then we went inside. We looked at each other like. They had a prepared table for us with regular food.

>> [Laughter]

>> Henry Greenbaum: Food I wouldn't see at home even! Very good-looking. But we were not hungry anymore. And the two angels that gave us our freedom didn't let us eat. Drink lots of water. So we were

drinking lots of water. We heard cries. We were in there, two rooms away in the farmhouse they had some people that were liberated the night before and they had all of this good food. And they were screaming "Doctor, doctor, help. Doctor, doctor." They heard us making noise. We heard them. The two angels had to call for reinforcements, the two American soldiers. They had to call for the medics to come in. The medics came in. They gave everybody medication for the people who were complaining with the stomach problem. Either their stomach couldn't absorb normal food or they overate. I think they overate. I think they overate.

>> Bill Benson: We were at the end of our time. Obviously we could have had Henry and you here for the rest of the afternoon. We clearly had to skip over many things and we're not hearing about what happened next. Clearly he's in very bad shape and ends up in a Displaced Persons Camp and makes it to the United States.

We just hope you'll come back for another *First Person* program. Next year we'll have Henry with us again.

>> Henry Greenbaum: And I'll continue.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: And you'll continue.

It's our tradition. We're just about at the end. I'm sorry we didn't have time for questions. We obviously needed to hear more from Henry.

>> Henry Greenbaum: It would be nice if I could tell them the one story. When we got to Bergen-Belsen and I ran into my cousin that saved me with the blood, she was going to Poland. "Do you want to go to Poland with me?" "I'm looking for my brother," she said. Well, I said my brother Zachery was in the Army, maybe look for them, too, but I'm too scared to go to Poland. But if you go and you find your brother, your first cousin, tell him that I'm alive. I was in a displaced persons camp or -- three good meals a day. But anyway, make it fast.

So she went to Poland, located her brother in a Displaced Persons Camp. Her brother knew where my brother Zachery. He was caught by the Germans. He was fighting the war they didn't put him in with the military because he was Jewish. They put him into a ghetto in Lithuania, ghetto. He made his way back in after the Russians left Poland. Then he made it back into Poland. And then she told him I was alive. Three weeks later he came.

To make a long story short, he came to me and right away I said, "Where does sister live?" In the Washington area. All I knew, in New York. I didn't know where she lives. It so happened I was glad she met the first cousin and maintained the same name but spelled a little different. It was between a Y and a EE to find my sister.

>> Bill Benson: But you did.

>> Henry Greenbaum: We did find her. She sent papers for us. We had to wait a year. You don't just come into America. It's a different world now. In those days we had to wait our time till they let us in here. My sister sent papers. We arrived in New York. We came to New York. Telling you this story. We came to New York and we were waiting for my sister to pick us up. She's the one that wanted us here. Instead it was a man coming. When he got closer to us, it was my dear brother, David, who ran away with the Polish soldier. He wound up being in America in 1941 he came here.

>> Bill Benson: I'm glad got that in. I know the audience is, too.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: It's our tradition that our *First Person* has the last word and Henry's going to have the last word. So thank you for being here. Because we didn't have a chance for questions, as soon as Henry's done with his last word, we invite anybody who wants to, to come up on to the stage after the program, ask Henry a question, shake his hand, get your picture taken with him. We welcome you to do that.

Henry will stay with us. Right?

>> Henry Greenbaum: All we want you to do is don't be bystanders. They have a lot of bystanders in those days. Nobody would help. So don't do that mistake again. Don't be bystanders. Whenever you see somebody -- injustice is done to a person, speak out. If you can't do it yourself, too dangerous, get

your family involved, priest, rabbi, anybody, school teacher, professor, anybody but don't leave it unattended.

And don't bully anybody in your schools. I know these are not school children but tell your children that: Don't bully anybody. The person cannot help the way they were born. They may not look the same as with you want him to look or like yourself. So don't look away. Treat him as humanly possible to be a human being so they don't kill themselves. I was bullied for five years. So I have a little experience there about the bullying. Don't bully. It's the worst thing.

And speak out. Whatever is injustice, done to any human being.

Thank you for listening to me. Hopefully next year if I'm still around, I'll finish off the rest of it.

>> [Applause]