REALTIME FILE

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
FIRST PERSON: CONVERSATIONS WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
FIRST PERSON MORRIS ROSEN
JUNE 7, 2018

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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*. We are in our 19th year of the *First Person* program. Thank you for joining us. Our First Person today is Mr. Morris Rosen, whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2018 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of twice-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, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Morris 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 Morris a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our online conversation: *Never Stop Asking Why*. The conversation aims to inspire individuals and new generations to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises, and what

this history means for societies today. To join the *Never Stop Asking Why* conversation, you can ask your question and tag the museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and #AskWhy. You can find the hashtag on the back of your program, as well. A recording of this program will be made available on the museum's YouTube page. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.

What you are about to hear from Morris is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction. We begin with a portrait of Morris Rosen, who was born Moniek Rozen, son of Jakub Rozen and Golda Chaja Warszawska, in 1922.

Morris was born in Dabrowa Gornicza in Upper Silesia where his father was an official distributer of tobacco and acetylene. The arrow on this map of Poland points to the location of Dabrowa.

Here we have a 1924 portrait of one of Morris' sisters, Rozia Rozen Bilauer, who survived in the USSR during the war.

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

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

Eventually, in 1945, Morris was liberated from the Theresienstadt camp in occupied Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. This is the train station at Theresienstadt.

We close this brief slide presentation with a photograph of Morris with his friend Regina Zilberstein taken after liberation.

Morris came to the United States in late 1949 and, following seven years of art school, built a successful contracting business in Baltimore, where he still 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 this collection as part of the Olympic Games. He has exhibited at numerous U.S. and international exhibitions including in Nuremberg, Germany, and in Israel. In 2013, he donated items from his collection of postcards, documents and correspondence from camps and ghettoes to this museum.

Morris speaks frequently about his Holocaust experience. He has spoken at such places as the headquarters of the Social Security Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, at Fort Meade in Maryland, and to 700 soldiers at the Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds, also in Maryland. He also speaks to students at numerous Baltimore-area schools and other locations on a weekly basis.

Besides his volunteer work in this museum's archives, Morris has been a volunteer for the Red Cross Holocaust and War Victims Tracing and Information Center. He 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.

Finally, I think you will appreciate this, knowing that Morris exercises at the gym three to four, often five, times a week, and on Fridays he does Zumba, which combines Latin and international music with dance as an exercise program. He mentioned to me he is the only male in his class. He still gardens, however, his doctor has ordered him to no longer go on his steep roof to clean gutters and do repairs.

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

>> [Applause]
>> Morris Rosen: Thank you. Thank you.
>> Bill Benson: Morris, I think they're ready to hear from you.
>> Morris Rosen: Ok.
>> Bill Benson: Morris, before we turn to the Second World War and the Holocaust and all that you went through, first tell us a little bit about your community, your family, and yourself before the Germans invaded Poland, your early years.
>> Morris Rosen: Ok. Well, I was born in Dabrowa when my mother was to be giving birth, she went for a turn. We lived in Dabrowa Gornicza, which is a city in Silesia, not far, by car only about five minutes away from the German border. I had a lot of Polish friends. It didn't make any difference if I'm Polish or Jewish as a lot of friends were Polish. They all liked me and I liked them. We went together out and so on. It didn't make any difference.

But things changed in 1939 --

>> Bill Benson: Before we turn to that, Morris, a couple of other questions. Tell us about your father's business and what happened to it after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, well before the war began. What happened to your father's business?
>> Morris Rosen: Well, my father had a big business, especially tobacco and also different other things. We had 28 coal mines in our city. And you need carbide, why? The coal miners put carbide in their hats, lit it up, they went deep into the mines and so on. In our city, some didn't allow no carts or horses to go because the hole fell in deep into the thing. And all the different organizations -- it didn't cost no money to rent there anyway.

It was very good but things changed when Kristallnacht started in Germany. So even my friends, they put on brown uniforms, hats and things, and started boycotting the store, knocking out windows at Jewish stores. Of course we had good clients. We only had Polish clients, non-Jewish at all, and they stood at our store and chased away saying you are not going to stay here and boycott. But anyway, we had to close up the business. It was getting very, very bad since then on.
>> Bill Benson: Morris, before beginning to talk about the war, tell us a little bit about your family. You came from a very large family.
>> Morris Rosen: Yes. We came from a large family. But it was one father and two mothers but it didn't make no difference because we were together like brothers and sisters. It didn't make any difference. We loved each other. We lived very, very fine. I have a lot of Polish friends also. And, in fact, my father was religious so we closed the store for Saturday. But Saturday evening, usually very early after supper, they went to open the store. And I had young Polish girls and guys and we had a ball. My sister cooked up Vichyssoise for my friends. [Indiscernible] very proud. We were bad, also. Believe me. If you think here are bad boys, I wasn't so good.
>> [Laughter]
>> Morris Rosen: So what happened, we had to go on, 10:00 they closed the big gates, a big iron gate. All the time to open after 10:00, you give them something. So put like a nickel, with the string. When we gave him, oh, I pick it up. This was not the worst thing. And he used to sit on the step because he could hardly walk What did we do? You think I wasn't bad? We put thumb tacks on where he sat down, and boy, did he scream. So it wasn't nice but we were boys. We weren't so good.

And then where we lived there was a big garden there. So went over the gate to the garden, picked apples, tomatoes, picked everything. And then we gave it to a store

[Indiscernible]. One day, the woman saw where we come. So she put water. When he went in, he thought he drown. I tell you, we were not such good guys but we were ok.
>> [Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: Morris, as you mentioned a moment ago, you lived very close to the German border.
>> Morris Rosen: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: You saw the Germans right after their invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Tell us what you remember about the invasion and what happened right after the Germans came.
>> Morris Rosen: I tell you, there were a lot of German Jewish people that they got thrown out from the Germans because their grandparents came from Poland. So they shipped them over to Poland. They didn't know where to go or anything. So every Jewish person had to give up their home, bring in some people to feed them. We had a big home so we gave up the room for a couple to sleep there. We gave them food, everything. But we got to help each other.

But what happened? First thing, when the Germans come in, they didn't want do the dirty work so they found the Jewish council. The Jewish council consisted of 10 people with a president. And whatever they need dirty work to do, the Germans didn't have to do by themselves. They asked the president and he had to do what they tell him to do otherwise they get shot. So what can they do?

So they announced that I need so much and so much work and so much and so much for the occupied forces. The Jews had to give money for the occupying forces. Well, Jews -- there were a couple of people that had some but 80% were very poor in our city. They hardly had what to eat but they have to give up, too, otherwise they would put them in there for the night. Then you got to feed them, wash them and everything. Who wants a stranger to have in the house? So everybody sold the gold rings and everything for money and give it to them. Then they say it's not enough again.

Then came announcements in 1942, the first one.
>> Bill Benson: Before we go there, Morris, right after the Germans came in, it wasn't long, I think, before you were forced to do labor for the Germans yourself. Tell us some of the things that you were forced to do at first, that they made you do.
>> Morris Rosen: Oh, yeah. Well, first they formed [Speaking Non-English Language], means doing buildings and so on. We were forced to do. If I don't go to work, I have to give money. Where the money at that time? They took away all of our money and everything. We were not allowed to have any stores. They have a substitute, they came in and you got to show them first couple of weeks what the store, how to sell and everything what to buy. So people didn't have any. And it got very, very bad.

In order to have some food, you were forced, at home, to have suits, sweaters, anything. My sister she escaped. They have a store with sweaters and pants and suits and everything. So we lived from this.

I took off my arm band. We used to have a arm band, white with the blue star. And go through the woods. Took about an hour and a half to two hours, it depends. And I put on several sweaters, two, three pair of pants. And then sell it to the farmers which they didn't have anything. Before the war they were starving. But end of war they got rich because their food, bread and everything. So you paying good money and everything.

So what happened, one guy -- and also meat, kosher meat, was on the black market. We didn't have money even to buy the meat it was so expensive. So my brother and I

went over to the butcher's where we bought some kosher meat, came home. We sold it to the rich people. And with this money what was left we lived because they took away all the money and everything.

But this didn't help much. The guy that was working with the butcher was waiting in the woods. When we came by, he took away the meat that we took money from other people. He says, If you do one more, I get you to the SS right away. So we were afraid. So it stopped. We stopped going for meat. It was very, very, very tough. But we had some suits and everything. We went. I slept over because we were afraid to travel. We didn't allow to travel on foot, I went through the woods and everything.

I remember it was very cold. So my father gave us a little vodka to drink to keep warm. But when we came through the forest, it was so hot I had to take off some sweaters and everything. And this didn't help. Somebody told on us. My father had a beating. I didn't get nothing but -- then we had to walk a new police station. Three buildings there. So keep all the tanks there and everything. And happened a policeman there. The police station. They took away my father everything, he came over here. I need coffee. I need silk stockings. You give me this and you have plenty meat and food. So he came business with my father.

>> Bill Benson: This police officer?

>> Morris Rosen: Yes. The same officer beat the heck out of him. So we bought him silk stockings, other things. He gave us all kinds of meats and everything. He took from the butcher. That's how we lived.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, I mentioned earlier that you were an amazing stamp collector, internationally known. At some point you had -- a police officer came and took your stamp collection.

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. What happened, my sister looked out the window and she saw her friends on the bike. She forgot to put on her arm band with the Star of David, she's Jewish. And she went out to see them. So the policeman came in with her that he's going to go to jail. She didn't have the arm band on. And he saw I collect stamps. I said, "Are you a stamp collector?" He said, You don't supposed to have. He gave me a little thing that the German government would pay, like you pay. That's how the German government pay. He took everything away.

And don't forget at that time, you didn't have computers. You didn't have other things like here. But stamp collecting, only have with kings and things. I remember King George from England, they all collected stamps. They didn't have any other things. Today, of course, to buy stamps cost a lot of money. You want to --

>> Bill Benson: You said when he took your stamp collection --

>> Morris Rosen: I cried so bad. For months I cried. Then I started again to collect and this and this.

>> Bill Benson: And your sister, because she was arrested because she didn't have her arm band on when she ran out, she was sentenced to jail.

>> Morris Rosen: Not to jail. My mother didn't allow a 12-year-old to go to jail so my mother went to jail. And I have to bring kosher food there. She wouldn't touch the food.

>> Bill Benson: Your mother served the sentence for her.

>> Morris Rosen: Mother served two weeks in the thing.

>> Bill Benson: Morris, you were forced to be a painter. That was a role that was critical to your survival during the war and also to the rest of your life. Tell us how you became a painter for the Germans.

>> Morris Rosen: Well, what happened, I was very good in geography, also. You know, I did maps with free hand, everything, lined up with colors, everything, where the river is, where it goes over to old Russia, from the First World War. I did beautiful hand work. And what happened, I was hungry and one of the SS, "Is anybody a painter?" House painter.
>> Bill Benson: The SS.
>> Morris Rosen: Ludwig. So I tell him. Our city had a big [Indiscernible] never forget him. [Speaking Non-English Language] he's a painter. He says, come over. Are you a painter? I'm a good painter. [Speaking Non-English Language] Why you keep your damn dirty mouth shut? He gave me in the face. I thought he knocked all my teeth out. When I got up, I was bleeding from the nose and everything. So I stopped bleeding. I kept my hand. Then he took out his pistol near my temple and I wet myself because I thought he was going to kill me. What would you think? He takes his thing to the temple, this is it. So he said, "I have three rooms to paint. If you're not finished in three days," [Speaking Non-English Language]. So what do I do? I said I don't have paint. [Speaking Non-English Language]. "You will have everything."

He took two policeman, German, took to the paint store. We got the ladder out. You don't work up and down. But you work -- special ladder that you work. And I came to paint the first one. The SS helped me move the furniture. And you can imagine that they were playing poker, something, cards, in the middle and everybody takes his pistol out on the table near him. One drop of paint, you lived enough. One drop of paint, you lived enough.
>> Bill Benson: So they're playing poker while you're painting around them.
>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. So what do you do? And of course they didn't have like today but use those big, big brushes. And everything -- when I come in the middle what do you do? I took off my shirt, tore it in pieces from the shirt, and kept the big brushes dry that shouldn't drip any paint. And when came the middle, with one hand, I have to -- and the hook, you know, and the other hand. I had the big brush. I paint. They applauded.
>> Bill Benson: They applauded?
>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. Then they asked me, "Where did you learn how to paint so nice?" So I said my father was the best painter in the city. But we didn't have bread to eat or anything. When I was 6 years old, I never went to school. Instead of going to school, I went to help my father. So we had bread to eat. And he took this as very serious. I think he pitied me also that I'm a good mechanic, a good worker. Because what did I do in order to make something nice, he's going to give me food.

So where the lights is, the dining room, I made out a little stick with leafs and the snake all around. He says, Where did you learn so good to paint? I told him my father was the best painter. I didn't go to school when I was 6 years. I was a good painter already. That's why I know painting. Believe me, after that, he says come, come tomorrow, too. I come to work. He brings me a big bag. What is in the bag? Goes in kilos, not pounds. How much can you eat? A big salami and a cigar.
>> Bill Benson: This is the SS man?
>> Morris Rosen: Yes. The minute he walked out, first I take the salami, ate so fast nobody's going to take away from me this. But I took a little piece and left it for my friend because he was hungry, too. I had five people, whatever we had food, we shared. And we were never, never allowed to talk about food because you talk about food, you get hungry. We always, What book did you read? What movie did you see? What girlfriend do you have? If you have a girl, 15 years, 16 years, have a girlfriend. That's the talk.

And believe me, I made it and I survived this way. I never went -- when they gave

out soap, people ran to get it with their fingers out, held each other. And the SS, intentionally, they drop pieces, cigarettes. So they ran out to get the cigarettes. And while taking the cigarettes, they got beaten over the head, they were bloody. Of course bloody things no medication or nothing, you die.

I had a friend that had the biggest, biggest bakery, all mechanized, not by hand but the first machines in the bakery at that time. And, of course, I dragged him not to take the cigarettes. And what happened? They killed him.

>> Bill Benson: At some point the Jews? Dabrowa were forced into a ghetto. You spent some time in the ghetto.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: At some point the Nazis closed down ghetto and started deporting people.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: To killing camp and concentration camps but you were asked, as part of a group, to stay behind to clean up the ghetto.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: What do you remember of that?

>> Morris Rosen: What it is, first of all, which I forgot to tell you, 1942. So all the Jewish council gave the order, the Jewish council, not the Germans. The Jews had to do the dirty work for them. Every girl from 12 years old to 40 have to register. They have to bring machine, you know, to do some work there, the machine, everything. And we have to pay a lot of money to buy a machine for my sister so she would be saved with the machine. She would work and be safe.

So meanwhile, it wasn't true. They came to register to go to work. After an hour waiting there, they came with two SS with trucks. I was there also. We waited. Huh-uh. Something smells. Something is not kosher. Why? Because I saw on the roofs from the buildings Germans with machine guns. Something smells. Then they put up three tables. And he says every family comes to the table. This was the selection. It was they select who had should live, who should die.

So we have to be with the whole family. So I was with my brush and showed I painted. Ok. You go to the right. Because I worked for them and everything. They need me. My sister they left in the center. She was 12 years old. And other ones to the left which they send away to Auschwitz. We didn't know what Auschwitz meant. We didn't know what Auschwitz meant at all.

I went to work. I didn't have too bad because as a painter, I had fresh air. And, of course, I have to get the paint. It was ether paint not oil which smells to high heaven, you know. So it was so heavy, the bucket. I made a big hole. I have a bucket of the paint. And I went to paint the machines. Where the ladies work my sister was there. So, first of all, I have some bread that the Polish girl gave me some bread. She felt sorry for me or something. So every day she brought me some bread with eggs and everything. Right away I took the food and I went over to my sister, put it in her basket where she puts things. She picked it up, went to the toilet and there she ate up the food every day. So I didn't have too bad.

And then the main SS man called me. I have to paint his house. He had another painter. He was 72 years old. He said [speaking German] don't be afraid of me, I am a Communist but I don't have much food to give you because I have hunger myself and I am 72 years old. But he brought me a little vitamin. His wife bake something, he brought me a piece, from the cake that she baked. Very good to me.

And then I have the German secretary there. She told me clean off. And when I cleaned off the room, throw out, and she packed a sandwich in not paper napkin but [Indiscernible] napkin why? Look what you have there. So when I opened up were two rolls and butter with two hard-boiled eggs and piece of fruit.

My God. You know what it means when you in such a place, hungry and everything, and somebody is still decent? I blessed her so much. I wish nothing should happen to you. You still get a nice person. And the worse thing and you have some help what this means. She was very, very, very nice to me. And not only this, she had to take me back to the camp. When I passed the guards, she stuck a roll with cheese in my pocket. And then I gave it to my sister. Because if I have to see the doctor, go through the doctor thing and I gave it to my sister. She gave some food to her friends also.

>> Bill Benson: Your sister -- after a time your sister was taken to a camp called Gruenberg. You thought you were going to be sent to Auschwitz. But you were able to get to Gruenberg which I believe was a women's camp but you were able to get there because you wanted to be there because of your sister. Tell us --

>> Morris Rosen: What happened, I painted for Ludwig, the SS man, he sends everybody to Auschwitz. But he liked me. Maybe because I painted, you know, near the candelabra with the nice things. "Where did you learn to paint?" I told him my father was the best painter and that's why I'm good to paint. He felt sorry for me. I mean it. He showed me such nice thing. How in the worst time you find still a little decency, whatever it is, in the worst man.

>> Bill Benson: So he was able to get you Gruenberg.

>> Morris Rosen: Oh, yes. He says, You are not going to Auschwitz. You get to a labor camp. So I stood up. He was [Speaking Non-English Language]. Higher, almost to a general. Saluted to him. And begged him. I don't know nobody. I have only a sister. Can you send me to my sister? He says, "Where is she?" "Gruenberg." He says [Speaking Non-English Language], this is a woman's camp. He says, don't worry, you will end there.

What did you do in Gruenberg? About 30 miles away was a men's camp, they built a new barrack near the women's, near the women's barrack, and they moved 80 people, 80 men. And he moved me there.

And while moving, I was still in the camp, was a man with the woman. She became Catholic. She was Jewish but became Catholic but doesn't matter, she had Jewish blood. They tell me to put my suitcase, I could hardly walk. So I took my suitcase, I threw everything away except a toothbrush. That's all I kept. The SS man pushed me, [Speaking Non-English Language] go faster. Why are you going so slow? I couldn't. It was heavy. And then the man -- he became head of camp for the men. So he start to give me food. But then we worked in a farm, apples and pears. Why he was so nice to me? I stuffed all loaded up with pears.

>> Bill Benson: You put pears in your pants?

>> Morris Rosen: Sure. That's why I worked to get something. Then he saw that I'm a lot of food. So he stopped giving me food.

>> Bill Benson: And you were able to see your sister during that time.

>> Morris Rosen: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I went to her where she worked. I saw her every day. But then it became -- this was a labor camp. But in September 1943, it was no more labor camp but concentration camp. And I was sent to a concentration camp. My God, it was one of the worst. We have to stay outside in the cold in the pajamas. They took all the clothing away but the pajamas in the cold until 1:00 in the morning because the floors were still wet and had to settle. 1:00 in the morning. We were freezing in the pajamas I went around like this to keep

warm. Then we can go in. It was still wet, the cement there, to lay down the cement, they put a bucket in to relieve yourself. Nobody could get out in the night because you are going to be shot.

But what happened, they didn't have electricity at this time yet. They took away my suitcase with the picture. I jumped over the fence. I knocked out a window there. Opened the door. After an hour I found my suitcase. All I did is took out the pictures and I ran away. I buried them near the end of the barrack in paper with plastic and put in where I had the food and metal can that shouldn't get damaged or anything.

But then what happened, when we went on the death march, because the Russians were already -- they came into Germany proper already. So they took us to another place.

>> Bill Benson: Before you turn there, you were there in this subcamp of Auschwitz under horrible conditions for almost a year.

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: So in January 1945, that's when you're going to tell us you were forced because the Soviets were coming, forced to go on a death march.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes. We went on the death march. It was terrible. First of all, nine days, nine days, no food, no water. They wanted to torture you, to die without bullets.

You probably saw on television the train taking out dead bodies. And there were over 30,000 dead bodies from the train. I took two dead bodies. It was cold. I laid on the bodies. No breathing. To save my breathing, covered myself with the hands with the pajama over my head, washed myself. I kept clean not to get lice because there were vermin all over. Slept all on the snow. Kept myself breathing. In the morning I wake up and danced around to keep warm.

>> Bill Benson: In fact, on the death march that you were on, now it's February and you reached the Elbe River and it's freezing cold. Can you share what you told me what happened?

>> Morris Rosen: We went to the death march and didn't wash for more than a week. Where the Elbe River is, they told us to get undressed. This was February. I remember Jewish holiday. They tell us to go and wash yourselves because you're full of vermin. Although I kept myself clean and I kept my pajama washed also with the snow. It was so cold. A couple friends when you walked out, body to body. We jumped around in a circle and kept warm. We jumped around. And then you get dressed. So the pants were still wet, everything was damp. So I went to put on my pants. It was like a ball. And frost, iced up. I couldn't. So on the right side I pushed inch by inch, opened my pants, and then open.

Over 400 people died from that cold what happened over a period of three days. One, my best friend, a doctor from Hungary. And he's a different story. He went on the death march. Saw the Hungarian men. He recognized a patient because he was a doctor, that they didn't have money and he gave them some medicine for nothing. They worked in the bakery. And he gave him food and everything. So he ran over to him, Laszlo, Laszlo, I gave him, now I'm hungry. Give me something to eat. He touched his [Inaudible]. He died two days later. He was bleeding, no medication, no nothing.

I said, how can people be so ugly? Here he helped him out with food and medicine and a man struggles and give him nothing. Since then, whenever I see [Inaudible Off-mic], I don't talk to him. I still feel angry at them. And not only this but when came to Buchenwald, mountains, some were still alive, you see with knives. What do you do? They came to me, I ran away. How can you do so ugly, cannibalism, to witness. I hope I never see such a thing in

my life. Nobody should see it. It's so ugly, so dirty.
>> Bill Benson: As you were saying, from the death march, you went to Buchenwald. You were in Buchenwald for a period of time. And very significantly, you were among the last or one of the last groups of prisoners to be forced by the Germans out of Buchenwald. Why was that so significant, the timing of when you were forced out?
>> Morris Rosen: It -- because they called all the Jews. You see, the Russians were in German. They stopped to evacuate. I was sure they would shoot. So says whoever sick remain here and whoever can work. So they take along your blanket because it's wintertime, February, February 5, never forget, and they gave you a loaf of bread with some marmalade, and this will be on the way we walk. So we walked about eight hours and then to rest. Through the woods, we came throughout woods to rest. Came over, another Commandant from another camp, What are you doing? You can't go to sleep. They can't stay here. The Russians are going to be here soon. You take them away. So they started to walk us again. People dropped. They couldn't walk. A bullet in the head. They left them on the ground.

So many people died. They are hungry -- they were hungry. How much you can walk? It's impossible. My legs got swollen from all the walking. But when we rested up, I made myself -- we lay like a mountain and with the legs up and the swelling went down. So I knew what to do. I don't know. I was very smart, an inkling what to do to help myself.
>> Bill Benson: Am I right that when you were forced out of Buchenwald on the march again, had you been in Buchenwald for one more day --
>> Morris Rosen: I would be liberated.
>> Bill Benson: You would have been liberated. The Americans arrived the next day but you were out.
>> Morris Rosen: I was out because I thought they were going to kill you there. Because they say only Jews. So I said I go out. I said so if I'm lucky, maybe I be lucky.

One little boy from my city -- this was before. We stopped at the train. We had to get off the train because they came, Russian planes, and shot out engines from the locomotives. They saw it's people, prisoners. They saw it. So they came every five minutes, shot out the locomotives, that's all. So he begged me, come here. They won't know that you're Jewish. I said, no, you come with me. And we survived. What happened, the Germans, they hated more the Pols than the Jews. So they killed all the Pols and that little boy got killed, too.

I met his sister and she told me he got killed. If I go with him, I wouldn't be around. But I went wherever I saw safe. That's my luck. And not only this, but I was very, very selfish. You got to know. First of all, we had six blocks. Every block over 500. So I didn't stay in the front because in the front if your head was crooked, like this, bloodied you. So I looked around, in the middle, where's tall guy? So between tall guys. So you're short, nobody will see me and I never got hit.
>> Bill Benson: You hide in the middle.
>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. I was selfish. You have to survive.
>> Bill Benson: After Buchenwald you ended up at Theresienstadt. You spent more time there. I know you want to spend a little time talking about your liberation and what happened afterwards. Tell us about liberation. What was that for you?
>> Morris Rosen: First of all, when the Russians came,, they took us out. And where was it? Theresienstadt, which was in Czech, a city. And we were there. They put us in about 25, 30, in one room to sleep. And here I see someone that they are dying. No food. They dying. I said, my God, they all die. I don't want to get Typhus. Vermin, they didn't wash themselves,

anything. So I jump out the window. I was probably half already, didn't know what happened. I fell asleep. I was left on the ground. I jumped down a hole, you know, from the second window, jumped out. I laid on the ground. And then I heard something, like in my think, [humming] the partisans. Came over. Said, "You free. Get up." They took water with a handkerchief, washed off my face and everything. They put me into a room to see a doctor, you're safe. It's after the war.

So what happened, when I came into the room, is a guy that he was -- must be a kapo. He came with a big, big truck, with two Belgium horses. He didn't have any gas for the truck.

>> Bill Benson: Being pulled by horses.

>> Morris Rosen: Pulled by horses. He came in. It was paper money from the bank. 100. People had diarrhea, so he put in all the money. Put for another two years. I would have at least 10,000 marcs emptied all of this.

I didn't eat anything but the guy came in with sardines and wine. So I ate about two cans of the golden -- the sardines, the best, with the oil. I ate. And then I didn't have water so I drank about two bottles of wine. They had plenty wine there. On the third day came in, a Czech girl, a nurse. How come you didn't come to the doctor yet? Everybody went to the doctor. We didn't know if you are ill or not. Go to the doctor. What did you eat? So I told them I had a good time, I ate plenty. He says, you lucky son of a gone. The sardines will kill you because you have nothing in the stomach and this is too fat. If not for the wine, the wine neutralized your stomach. And from then on, believe me, every evening for supper time I take a glass of red wine.

>> [Laughter]

>> Morris Rosen: You got to do it. [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Morris, somehow or another a brother-in-law found you. I think your brother-in-law, he wanted to get you and him to the American zone, out of the Soviet zone.

>> Morris Rosen: So what happened, my brother-in-law, my older sister's husband -- because they put on the radio every evening from 10:00 till 2:00 in the morning names and which camps the survivors are. So he heard my name that I'm in Theresienstadt.

>> Bill Benson: He heard your name on the radio?

>> Morris Rosen: Yeah. On the radio. He listened. The minute he heard my name, he took his son's I.D., because his son, they escaped a camp on the death march, and they slept in the field that an old woman, she didn't have a husband, died in the war or something, a Czech, and she brought them food at night. The snow was not too heavy. She gave them hot food, blankets, to sleep outside in the garden. Not in the house because they were frightened, in the house were Germans would kill them. He saw me. He called me up. He said, Don't you want to listen to history? History is being made.

>> Bill Benson: This is after, the next year.

>> Morris Rosen: 1945. `45. So he said, I want you to come with me. He was a Jewish --

>> Bill Benson: A journalist.

>> Morris Rosen: Journalist, a Jewish journalist, a survivor Jewish journalist. They let him in. And he was smart, Oh, my God. So I went with him. And then he came for me, picked me up. We had to wait all night long. All the time was full with the people were in camps and this. So he pushed me up on the roof, on the roof from the train. He jumped up. He says, don't you lift up, because he was afraid wires or something. He held me so I wouldn't fall down.

>> Bill Benson: The roof was full?

>> Morris Rosen: The roof was full. Finally we came. It was nighttime. We go into hotel in Prague. They gave for the refugees. I come down. 3:00 in the morning came in Polish women and Ukrainian women. They worked in the fields, not in camps but in the fields. They come to go into the bed with them. I was so afraid. My brother-in-law, he lost his pants. They grabbed his pants. They needed some. And I ran out.

When I came out, I saw -- I brushed my teeth. Came a boy. A nice boy. He asked me in a nice Polish way, can I loan my thing that brush my teeth. I looked at him. I said [Speaking Non-English Language]. He knew his father saw him. We jumped on the charter. And, boy, I tell you, such a smart man. He speaks so many languages.

So in the morning, come over here, going to have some fun. So we took a kayak. We have to leave. We don't come back. Came at kayak. So right away we're two Russian soldiers -- were two Russian soldiers, two girls. He knew so many languages. You have to have two girls; can't you have one and give one to us? They were so angry they wanted to kill us. So first we think to run away. We left the pants. [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: You left the pants.

>> Morris Rosen: Had to wait to get new pants.

>> Bill Benson: When you realized that you were liberated, the war was over for you, you said to me that then you had what you thought or you called the worst day of your life after the realization. Say a little about that.

>> Morris Rosen: Oh, yeah. Well, I tell you, when I was liberated, my brother-in-law run away. Right away he takes me to a restaurant. It was a little restaurant.

>> Bill Benson: Your brother-in-law.

>> Morris Rosen: My brother-in-law. We go up and I see the table with the white table cloths, with knives and forks and spoons and everything. I started crying. I'm still human. Because you ate with your fingers. You didn't have no tools with what to eat, with the finger, the soup and everything. And here I have nice table cloths. I cried. So he calmed me down. Then we go to bed. Pillow, new bedding and everything. I cried. My brother-in-law, "Don't cry. It's over." But I said, "Look, now I'm human again." It was unbelievable. I cried all night long. I couldn't believe that I'm human again.

>> Bill Benson: And it's also when you said to me that you really began to think about all that you had lost, the family members.

>> Morris Rosen: Yes. Then I see I lost my parents. I lost my sisters and a brother. I says, see, when you in camp, you live like a wild animal. You don't think about your family. You live to live until tomorrow and see maybe I will outlive the war. So I lived like an animal, like a wounded dog. That's all. It wasn't easy, believe me it wasn't easy. Every minute I thought I would be dead. When I saw how they beat us with the shovels and everything, I'd be dead. I was very, very careful. When I saw them hit, I was on the other side, I was very quick. I didn't get once. In the back with the shovel, that's all.

>> Bill Benson: We're about to close the program. We could spend all afternoon because you have so much you weren't able to tell us. We're going to hear again from Morris to close our program but I want to first thank all of you for being with us today, remind you we'll have a *First Person* program each Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. So if you could come back, that would be wonderful. But each of our programs are also on the museum's YouTube page, so you can view all of our programs of which we have 44 this year. So we hope you'll do that.

Unfortunately Morris had so much to share with us that he wasn't able to get to

which meant we didn't have time for you to ask questions. But when Morris finishes, Morris is going to stay here on the stage and we invite anybody who wants, all of you, want to come up and meet him, shake his hand, get your picture taken with him or ask him a question, please absolutely feel free to do that. And when Morris is done, one more comment, our photographer, Lolita, right here, will come up and take a photograph of Morris with you as the background. So we hope you'll stay with us until we get that done.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. So Morris, share your closing thoughts.

>> Morris Rosen: My last word is please, please, please be kind to each other. Don't be angry. We have the same God. We have the same blood as each other. And all the time be very kind to one another that we should have no such bad times, wars and killings and so on. You can see what goes on after the Holocaust, and other places they kill each other. That's no good. Please, please be kind to each other and make friends with each other. No wars, no being angry to one another. This leads to war. We don't want another Holocaust around the world. This should be the last one.

Thank you for listening. God bless you. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate. Ask questions but if I can't hear, he will give me the question.

Thank you so much and thank you for listening.

>> [Applause]