

Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in South Florida

# A TRIBUTE TO LIFE

## Holocaust Survivor Henry Flescher's Memoir



As told to Bobbi Kaufman



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Holocaust Survivor  
Henry Flescher's Memoir

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Republished by  
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and The George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies



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UNIVERSITY  
OF MIAMI

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The information in this book is presented in good faith. It is not intended to be a history of the Holocaust. The words in this book are the words of Henry Flescher as he recalled his personal experience in the Holocaust.

This is his story and his truth.

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On the cover: Holocaust Survivor Henry Flescher, prisoner number 177153.

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## FOREWARD

*“For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time....”*

*“... I have tried to keep memory alive...I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget we are guilty, we are accomplices.”*

**- Elie Wiesel**

As time goes on, the number of Holocaust survivors alive today is rapidly dwindling. With their passing, the incomprehensible cataclysm known as The Holocaust, or Shoah, is fast morphing from a ‘lived memory’ into a ‘historical memory’; from a personal experience of ‘those who were there’ into impersonal commemorative monuments and museums.

All too soon, there will be no one left to offer first hand testimony of what it was like to actually be there when all hell broke loose; all too soon, even those who knew and heard directly from the victims of the Nazis and their collaborators, will be gone.

It is, therefore, a matter of great urgency that we gather and preserve for future generations as much primary documentation and testimony as possible about the lives and experiences of those heroes who survived the Holocaust, managed to build new lives, and were willing to tell their stories.

Memoirs serve as a very important means of preserving these testimonies. Several years ago, Holocaust survivors began approaching Bobbi Kaufman, asking for help writing their memoirs, describing their lives before, during, and since the Holocaust. She began working with the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach (HMMB), writing the memoirs of Holocaust survivors who were docents and contributors to the memorial. This collaboration was instrumental in her developing a series of in-depth, book-length memoirs. Six books were completed and uploaded onto the HMMB website and the HMMB created lesson plans for each book to be used in teaching about the Holocaust.

Now, in collaboration with the HMMB, the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, and the George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies of the University of Miami, the series has been named Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in Florida. The existing books were graphically redesigned and several new books have been added to the collection, with the objective of continuing to expand the series. The complete series will be freely available to the public in digital form on the HMMB and Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program websites.

Our hope is that this series will make a significant contribution to the growing literature of Holocaust survivors' memoirs and serve as a tribute to their ability to make new lives for themselves while never forgetting.

**Dr. Haim Shaked**  
**Director, The Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program**  
**University of Miami**

## DEDICATION

To my family who has heard my stories and to future generations who can learn from history.

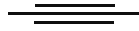
Never forget.

— *Henry Flescher*





## LIFE BEFORE THE WAR



I was born March 14, 1924, in Vienna, Austria. I have two birthdays: March 14, the date I was born, and April 11, 1945, the date I was liberated.

My parents, my brother, my sister, and I had a very close family life. We never had any problems. My parents were always smiling — like me! We had a good life until Hitler annexed Austria on March 12, 1938.

My brother, Sam, was five years older than me. He took a chance and applied for a visa to go to the United States. Everyone was warned that the moment you applied for a visa you would be in danger of being sent to a labor or concentration camp, but he tried it and he made it. He left for the United States in the winter of 1938. I was too young to go with him.

My sister, Rosalie, was ten years older than me. Her husband, Chaim (Benno) Weitzenfeld, was fifteen years older than me. They lived in Brussels, Belgium, with their baby girl. My sister was named for my grandmother. Unfortunately, no one in my family remembers the name of her baby, so no one has been named for her. I never knew a grandmother or a grandfather — they were all killed in pogroms in Poland. My parents were both from Poland. After my father served in World War I, my parents moved to Austria where my mother's brother, a well-to-do optician, lived.

My father, William Flescher, owned a kosher butcher store. The address of the store was Jagerstrasse 32, Bezirk. He bought the meat from a slaughter house in Vienna and stored it in big ice boxes — there were no electric refrigerators then; ice used to be delivered. We had a *schochet*, a kosher slaughterer, who came to the store to kill the chickens and take off the feathers. For Yom Kippur my parents would keep a nice chicken to swing over our heads for the ritual of *kapuros*. For Passover the store carried matzohs and extra eggs. I would sometimes help make deliveries — bring food to the customers' houses. The customers would give me tips. My mother, Clara Drucks Flescher, helped in the store taking care of customers and taking the money. At that time there were no credit cards; you paid cash or you owed. We weren't rich; my father just made a living.

We lived on the third floor of an apartment building at Karl Meissl Strasse 5, Brigittenau, in the 20th district of Vienna. It was an island area between the Danube and the Danube Canal. Many Jewish families lived there. We didn't have a very big apartment — but there was always room for a relative. There was a living room, a dining room, a bedroom, and a kitchen. My parents had the bedroom and we children slept in the living room. I slept on one couch with my brother, and my sister had the other couch. We had electricity in our house, but no bathroom. There was one bathroom in the corridor that we shared with the three or four other apartments on our floor.

We were religious, but not overly religious. My mother did not wear a *sheitel* (a wig) and my father did not have a beard — we were modern. We didn't go overboard, but we were *shomer Shabbas* and kosher. For *Shabbos* my mother would prepare a challah and take it to the baker to be baked. She would make gefilte fish and all the traditional foods. I remember for the High Holidays we always got something new, like a suit. On Fridays my father and I would go to the *mikveh*; on Saturdays we would go to *shul*. Our *shul* was a little *shteeble* upstairs in the building next door to our apartment. We lived at number six and the shul was in number four. I went to *cheder*, Hebrew school, five afternoons a week, plus we had a Hebrew teacher come to our home. He had a stick he would use to wake me up all the time — he didn't let me sleep. My Bar Mitzvah in Vienna was a little affair.

Once, when I was putting the *schach*, the leaves, on top of the *sukkah*, I fell and hanged myself on the big, high fence between the apartment buildings. I was very lucky that I came out alive because I cut a big vein in my neck. When I went to my mother to show her what happened to me — the open hole — she passed out. Then she took me to the hospital.

I was more afraid of my mother than of my father; I listened much more carefully to her than to my father. My father would just smile. As a child I was a pain in the neck. I always wanted food. Whatever they gave me, I always wanted more. I was never a big eater — but I always wanted food, food.

I always loved music: opera, classical, jazz. We couldn't afford to go to the opera, but every week my father and I would listen to the opera on the radio. As a child I went to the theater in Vienna as a clapper. They used to let people in who knew to applaud at the right times. I would sign up to applaud certain things and they would let me in free. I had to sit in the back and applaud very loudly.

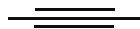
I went to a public school, but in our school we also had Jewish education classes. I was good in school. I had good marks. I was not number one, I would say I was number six or seven. I wanted to become a doctor, but it never came to be — my education stopped at age fourteen. In school we learned to write beautifully. I still remember poetry I learned when I was twelve years of age: Goethe, Schiller, etc.

I had friends who were Jewish and friends who were not Jewish. I played with all the boys in the neighborhood. After school we played soccer in the park — soccer was our biggest sport. We didn't have bicycles so we built our own scooters. I remember going to the movies to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. In the summertime my family rented a house in the country where I went boating and swimming in the lake. I had a wonderful childhood.



*The neighborhood where I lived in Vienna.*

## HITLER ANNEXES AUSTRIA



When Hitler annexed Austria on March 12, 1938, our whole life changed. There was a lot of hatred at school; there were fights all the time. I was never afraid to defend myself — if somebody hit me I used to fight back. Jews became outcasts; people would attack us on the streets. It was not a happy life anymore.

In September I saw Hitler march down the same street where my father had his store. I saw him going by with his hand up. Everybody was very excited to see him. People saluted. I stayed there and I watched it. I was behind everyone else — I didn't want to be in front — a strategy I would follow throughout the war. I didn't understand anything at that time — I was fourteen years old.

On November 7, 1938, Herschel Grunzspan, a Jewish man, assassinated the German Diplomat Ernst Von Rath in Paris. Shortly after that, the Nazis came to our apartment and took us to police headquarters. They threw us down the stairs and blamed us for everything. They told us we had to sign a paper saying we had to leave Vienna.

My father was the first in our family to leave. He left the store completely intact. He smuggled himself to Holland where he planned to wait until my mother and I could join him. Because my father could not get papers to work in Holland, they put him in a camp for refugees. He was safe there. We received letters from him from the camp. Our

plan was for my mother and I to be reunited with him in Brussels and to be with my sister and her husband.

In 1939 my mother and I paid someone to smuggle us into Belgium. When we left Vienna, we left everything behind — our clothes, furniture, everything. We couldn't sell anything to make money, so whatever we had at home is what we had. We traveled across Germany and when we got to the border of Belgium we didn't have the papers to get across. We had to hire another smuggler. This smuggler made false papers that had pictures of people who looked similar to us. He took us by train to Basil, Switzerland, and then to Belgium. Instead of it taking 3 hours it took 24 hours to get there. We finally made it to Antwerp where we rented a one room apartment. We wanted to go to Brussels, but we couldn't afford it. We had no way to earn a living — I supported my mother with tips I got delivering coal to the neighborhood apartments. I remember getting letters from my brother from New York. He would send us money.

In 1940 my father joined us in Antwerp. In 1941 they put us in a refugee camp in Ghent, a coal mining town. The camp was like a school building. We had a room there. We felt safe there — we had no worries. We had to stay there for about six months until we got papers allowing us to go back to Antwerp. Without work papers, we had to find a way to earn a living, I did some business with my father peddling whatever we could.

Then we moved to Brussels where we lived at 122 Rue Bara Anderlecht. The famous Cote d'Or chocolate was made in that area. Our entire street smelled like chocolate. It was wonderful! I worked in Brussels learning to be a furrier. I worked sewing together the pelts of Persian lamb fur. I started learning French and Flemish because in Belgium they spoke both languages.

When Hitler declared war on Belgium on May 10, 1940, France and England declared war on Germany. That's when we first had to wear the Star of David on our clothing. There were more and more restrictions; we couldn't listen to the radio, we couldn't work. If we were on the streets after 8 o'clock at night we would be arrested.

The very day the Germans occupied Belgium, I received a visa to go to the United States, but I couldn't get out of Belgium. My Belgian papers were all marked with a big 'J' identifying me as Jewish. I had papers issued by the government in Belgium, but I needed an Austrian passport and I couldn't get one. Even though I was born in Vienna, I couldn't get an Austrian passport because citizenship was according to the parents' citizenship and because my parents were Polish, I was considered Polish. Since Poland was no longer recognized, I could not get any passport. I was stateless. My family wanted to get out, but we couldn't go anywhere. We couldn't get a visa, we couldn't get a passport.



In 1942, when I was 18, I got a letter from Germany saying I had to go to a work camp there. I made up my mind I would not go. My parents said, “We will hire someone to smuggle you to France. From France perhaps you can go to Spain or Portugal and from there to the United States.”

I had two pairs of shoes. My parents put money in the sole of one shoe — about \$1,000 in American money. There was a \$500 bill — you could get them at that time — some \$100 bills and some \$10 bills.

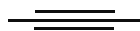
I was smuggled from Brussels to Lyon, France, with a group of about fourteen people. I believe I am the only one of the fourteen to survive the war. I never saw my parents again.

## THE CAMPS



In Lyon I went to buy some grapes (I have a fetish for grapes). I walked into a store and when they heard the way I spoke, my Austrian accent, they asked to see my papers. They immediately arrested me and put me in jail with homosexuals. I was very young and innocent — I didn't understand what was going on. I was in this jail for six or eight weeks. From jail I was sent to Drancy, a camp in Paris where people were held waiting for transport to concentration camps. It was the beginning of the transports of people to Auschwitz.

## DRANCY



*Drancy, located in a suburb of Paris, was the major detention and transit camp for the deportations of Jews from France to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. The conditions of life were extremely difficult due to inadequate food, unsanitary conditions, and over-crowding. Of the almost 65,000 Jews deported from Drancy, fewer than 2,000 survived the Holocaust.*

Drancy was a big building that looked like a schoolhouse. (It is still there today, but they have glorified it, they made it very nice.) It was crowded. We didn't know what was happening. We couldn't do anything; we just went along with whatever they wanted because they had machine guns. We couldn't escape. Once we were in there we could not get out.

I was there for over a month until they selected people for transport. They did not choose the people according to their age, they just chose people at random. We were allowed to keep our belongings with us. I wore the pair of shoes with the money in them and carried the other pair.

I was on convoy number 27 which left Drancy for Auschwitz on September 2, 1942. We were loaded into train cars — about 70 people jammed into each car. I didn't understand what was going on; I just went along with everything. We were locked in — we couldn't get out.

There was one communal bucket for sanitation. We had a little water and some bread, but after a while it wasn't enough. We were like animals closed up in a hole. I sat on the floor surrounded by terrified people and crying children. The smell was horrible. It was all very confusing. We heard planes flying over us but they never bombed the railroads.

When the train stopped, the guards started to count people. They selected 300 people to work. I was number 298. The people not chosen to work were put back on the train and sent to Auschwitz to their deaths.



*My parents, my sister, and my baby niece were taken by train  
from Drancy to Auschwitz where they all died.*



*My brother, Sam, my sister, Rosalie, my mother,  
me, my father.*

*Vienna, Austria, c. 1931*



*My sister, Rosalie, and her daughter.*











*Drancy, located in a suburb of Paris, was the major detention and transit camp for the deportations of Jews from France to Auschwitz.*



ACKER 1888 • LEOPOLD FLEISCH  
• Henri FLESCHER 1924 • A  
89 • Jacob FLICKSTEIN 190  
• Alexandre FLI  
1927 • Aron FLIGELMAN 1

*Engraved on this wall at Drancy are the names of 76,000  
Jews who were deported from France.  
My name is on the wall.*

## Convoy 27, September 2, 1942

There were 1,016 names on the lists for this convoy of adults and children. Among the 987 deportees for whom nationality is noted, there were: 215 Poles; 160 Germans; 106 French; 101 Austrians; 24 Czechs; 19 Russians; 12 Hungarians; 9 Romanians; 9 Lithuanians; 7 Latvians; 6 Dutch; 4 Luxemburgers; 3 from the Saar Basin; 29 stateless; and 262 undetermined.

The list is on onionskin and is in deplorable condition. Even with a magnifying glass the names cannot all be deciphered correctly. They are not in alphabetical order. The transport of September 2 is divided into six sublists, labelled as follows:

1. Unoccupied Zone 1--468 people. These are Jews who were undoubtedly arrested in the mass roundup in the unoccupied zone which took place on the night of August 26 (and into the morning of August 27). The roundup led to the arrest of 6,584 Jews (XXVI-58) who were surrendered to the occupying authorities. This list is composed of 17 sublists totaling 468 persons. Some of the lists comprise males only, but the majority had families. There were no children under 15. These lists were hastily prepared, and none contain the place of birth.

2. Unoccupied Zone 2--28 people, including some entire families. The date and place of birth, and in many cases the nationality, are missing.

3. Drancy 1--19 people, including families, such as David and Chana Kozak and their two children, Dora (9) and Marcel (5).

4. Drancy 2--

Stairway 8. 21 people, many of them teenagers and young children.

Stairway 9. 64 people, all adolescents and young children.

Stairway 10. 17 people. There were four Ostrjak sisters from 102 rue St-Maur: Rosa (15), Berthe (11), Paulette (8), and Jeannette (5); and three Waisbord children from 11 rue Durantin: Reine (15), Alice (14), and Maurice (11).

5. Departments--75 people. Only family and first names are indicated here. There are sublists from Dordogne (27), Correze (2), Creuse (3), Indre (2), and Haute-Vienne (41).

6. Last minute departures not yet listed--71 people. There were entire families, such as Zila and Esther Bojmal and their 8-year-old twins Pauline and Jacqueline. These people came from camps in both zones.

SS Ernst Heinrichsohn composed the usual telex to Berlin, Oranienburg and Auschwitz (XXVb-149) announcing the departure of convoy D 901/22. The telex, signed by Horst Ahnert, indicates that the departure took place at 8:55 AM on September 2 from the station at Le Bourget-Drancy, that the transport carried 1,000 Jews, and that it was escorted by Sergeant Weise.

The convoy arrived in Auschwitz on September 4. An undetermined number of males were selected before arrival (see Convoy 24). Upon arrival, only 10 men were selected for work and received numbers 63055 through 63064. There were 113 women selected; they were given numbers 19003 through 19115. The rest were immediately gassed.

Some thirty men are known to have survived in 1945. This survival rate--high relative to the other convoys--is explained by the selections before arrival in Auschwitz.

HENRY FLEISHER

*Convoy 27 carrying 1,000 Jews departed at 8:55 AM on September 2, 1942, from Drancy and arrived at Auschwitz on September 4, 1942.*





APR 12 2004

Holocaust and War Victims  
Tracing Center  
4700 Mount Hope Drive  
Baltimore, MD 21215-3231  
Tel: 410-764-5311  
Fax: 410-764-6114

"Every answer is a gift."

Reference: ISS-H-74060

Dear Mr. Flescher,

We have received extensive information and documents from the Red Cross Societies of France and Belgium and the International Tracing Service, which we forward to you as follows:

**The International Tracing Service found the following:**

**Henry Flescher** was confined in Camp Drancy by order of the Commander of the Security Police of France and was transferred to Concentration Camp Auschwitz on 2 September 1942, prisoner number 177153; was transferred 10/11 February, 1945 from Concentration Camp Gross-Rosen to Concentration Camp Buchenwald, prisoner number 130708 and on 14 March 1945 to Concentration Camp Buchenwald/Kommando Altenburg; was repatriated on 20 June 1945 and resided in Brussels, 35 Rue Couraets, St. Gallen, on 19 July 1945.

**The French Red Cross provided the following response and the enclosed documents:**

After consulting the list of deportees held in the Memorial of Unknown Jewish Martyrs we found that:

**Henri FLESCHER**, born March 14, 1924 was on convoy No. 27 which left Camp Drancy for Concentration Camp Auschwitz on September 2, 1942. Attached is an excerpt of a document from Camp Drancy; contrary to other documents that indicate the routes of the people, the back of the document concerning Mr. Flescher is blank. We also include a photocopy of the list of deportees of convoy No. 27 extracted from Mr. Klarsfeld's book; a point next to his name indicates that he is a survivor.

**The WEITZENFELD family** was deported on convoy No. 32 which left Camp Drancy for Concentration Camp Auschwitz on September 14, 1942. Attached are photocopies of the list and description of the convoy. We also include excerpts from each of the documents of Camp Drancy. We located a document under the name of Faiga WEITZENFELD, probably the paternal grandmother. It was also found that after they were deported, the family was interned in the La Lande camp. A search of the Archives Department of l'Indre-et-Loire has produced the enclosed documents covering that time.

**The Belgian Red Cross provided the following information:**

**FLESCHER Wolf** (FLASCHER, false name HOLLER Wolf)  
born on April 4, 1888 at Halicz  
married to DRUCKS Clara

*Henry Flescher, prisoner number 177153, was transferred in February 1945 from Gross-Rosen to Buchenwald.*

## OTTMUTH



We were taken from the train to Ottmuth, a Nazi forced labor camp near Gotha, Germany, where we worked in the Bata shoe factory making shoes for the army. We slept on straw spread on the floor. In the mornings we were given a piece of bread, some margarine, and imitation coffee. At six o'clock in the morning we would stand for roll call and then march off to work. We returned from hard labor at six o'clock in the evening. Dinner was watery soup. The German guards were brutal. Whips were flying all the time and dogs were barking constantly. We were there for about a month before they transported us to Peiskretscham.

## PEISKRETSCHAM



After four weeks I was transferred to Peiskretscham, a forced labor camp near Katowice, Poland. Here the conditions were much harsher. The camp was surrounded by electric fences and guarded by SS guards. The guards were extremely mean. We couldn't talk, we couldn't do anything. In the morning we got coffee. If I was lucky I would get some of the coffee grounds to chew on for breakfast. We worked twelve hours a day building bridges and repairing bridges that were destroyed. Our job was to unload sand from the trains and bring it to the mixer to make cement. Then we had to run very fast to deliver the cement before it dried out. Running fast, twelve hours a day, often in the rain, was not easy.

One of the people working with us had been a farmer. He knew how to use a shovel and a wheelbarrow. I didn't. I used to get hit because I couldn't work as fast as he did. We begged him to slow down, to work with us at our pace, but he didn't. After a while he couldn't keep up his own pace, so the Germans killed him. They accused him of sabotage.

Those who were first, the best, were expected to always be first. I always worked the same way, stayed at the same pace, and came out alive. People who could not do their job were whipped to death and we were forced to watch. My strategy to avoid being whipped was to always stay in the middle of the group when working or marching. I did not want to be noticed.

After work, when it was dark, the guards would ask for volunteers to bury the dead. The guards gave us shovels and told us where to dig the holes and bury the bodies. I must have buried 30 or 40 bodies. I always volunteered for this — I felt an obligation to give the dead a proper burial and to say Kaddish for them.

I got up each day and said to myself, "Look, you survived another day. You made it a day, you will make it another day. Let's hope tomorrow will be a better day."

## BLECHAMMER

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*Blechhammer was a satellite camp of Auschwitz. The first 3,056 male prisoners were given tattoos numbering 176512 through 179567. Those who were able to work were sent to Blechhammer. Those who were unable to work were sent directly to the gas chamber. On September 9, 1944, American bombers destroyed large parts of the camp. On January 21, 1945, 4,000 prisoners were taken on a death march which lasted thirteen days. On February 2 the survivors reached Gross-Rosen where they remained for five days. Then they were boarded onto a train to Buchenwald. The train was bombed several times by Allied planes.*

After a while I was transported by cattle car from Peiskretscham to Blechhammer, a satellite camp of Auschwitz. The train ride this time was a little better than before only because there were fewer people in the car this time.

When we arrived we were greeted with whips, shouts, and barking dogs. At Blechhammer I got the tattoo on my arm. I stopped being Henry Flescher and I became 177153.

The Germans said to us, "If we win the war you are going to work until you die. If we lose the war we are going to kill you." Our job there was work for the IG Farben Company. We worked there twelve hours a day. If we ever had a day off we had to clean the camp.

We would often be punished. When one guy was caught stealing food from the kitchen they made him stay in the latrine up to his neck in sewage for twelve hours. When some of the men needed belts to hold up their pants they picked up pieces of wire from a broken fence to make belts. Because the Germans needed the wire for the war effort, they considered this sabotage — so they hanged them.

One time they decreed that when we were marching we were responsible for the person marching near us. When a guy next to me disappeared, they claimed I was responsible for him. They put me over a bench and beat me with a dog whip. The punishment was supposed to be fifty lashes, but it was many more — they didn't care about counting. Another time they threw a stone at me and broke my jaw.

By coincidence, I met my brother-in-law, Benno Weitzenfield, at Blechammer and we became inseparable. We tried to sing together, for some entertainment, but we were very limited.

We slept together on the same bunk. The wooden bunks were five levels high. It was very painful to sleep on them. Four or five people had to sleep side by side, sideways. If someone had to turn to the other side he had to wake up the whole group.

I remember a guy was foaming, foam was coming out of his mouth. He had a piece of bread and the people stood around him like vultures waiting to grab his piece of bread. They



watched his eyes and when he closed his eyes they grabbed his piece of bread. It stays with you; certain things stay with you.

The people in the camp from Holland, Belgium, and France suffered greatly trying to cope with the circumstances. People from Poland did better — they had more experience with suffering. I didn't know why I was different, except I took everything with a smile and I never gave up. I always thought tomorrow would be better. My brother-in-law had the same outlook. I tried to encourage people — that is my nature. Perhaps it made a difference.

When I first got to Blechammer I didn't know about lice. At night people would pick lice off themselves and I asked what they were doing. They said, "Wait, you are going to get the same thing." I tried to keep myself clean — I would get up very early in the morning and go outside and wash myself with cold water. Thank God I didn't get very many lice on myself. I was also lucky that I didn't suffer very much from the cold. When the weather was very, very cold I would take an empty cement bag and put it under my clothes to keep me warm. The problem was when it rained the cement bag would stick to me.

I told my brother-in-law I had two pairs of shoes with money hidden in one pair. He had some diamonds that were hidden in baby shoes. I learned to speak some Polish, so I was sometimes able to buy a loaf of bread from the Polish civilians working together with us in the camp. I would say, "You come tomorrow and bring me a little *chleb*, bread." They would tell

me the time and where to meet and I would go there. They wanted \$10 for a loaf of bread, so I paid it. My brother-in-law and I would eat it secretly at night. Also, I was lucky enough to get a job bringing food to the barracks so I would scratch out extra food from the barrel. I also washed the toilets to get extra food. I was growing at that age and I was always hungry. With this extra food my brother-in-law and I were able to stay in reasonably good physical shape.

One day, the SS came looking for me and my brother-in-law. They brought us to a different barrack and interrogated us. They said they heard we had money and diamonds. I said to myself, "If I give it to them they will probably kill me. If I don't give it to them they will probably kill me. So I might as well say no, I haven't got it." My brother-in-law did the same thing. They took down our pants, put us over a bench, and gave us over 100 lashes. I couldn't sit down for a very long time. They said that the next day we would be transported to Auschwitz, but that never happened.

From time to time I wore the shoes with the money in them, but it was dangerous to wear them every day. I needed to hide the money. Sometimes I put it in the straw sack I used as a mattress, but I worried about leaving it there because we never knew if they would move us to a different barrack and I wouldn't be able to get back to get it. At the time we were working building streets and houses, so I began hiding my money outside. When they told us we would not be going outside anymore, I was afraid I would not be able to get my

money. I wanted it back, so I took a chance and talked to the guard. I told him I had money hidden in a house we were building. He could have said give me everything, but he said he wanted \$100. (The guards were desperate for money; they had nothing.) I said, "All right, no problem." He said, "I will make an arrangement to have you called up to work there picking up cement. You say you have to go to the toilet and you bring the money back to me." One day they called up fifteen people from the camp and sent us out to carry some cement. When we got there I said to the guard, "Listen, I have to go to the toilet, I have to go." So, I went and when I came back I gave him the money. After that he never bothered me.

Because I knew they were eventually going to take away all our belongings and give us striped concentration camp uniforms, I took the money out of the shoes, but I didn't know how to hide it. Then somebody said to me, "The only way to hide it is to wrap the money in the paper from the margarine we get for breakfast and put it in your rectum." So, that is the way I hid my money from then on. I kept my money hidden in my rectum, in the margarine paper, in and out, in and out. I managed.

One of my friends, a seventeen-year-old boy, was hanged on Yom Kippur. The cord around his neck was not placed correctly — it was on the side and not in the back where it should be. The cord let go, so they had to hang him again. He was suffering. He was hanging and trembling for over half an hour. We had to watch it; they made us be there to see it.

People in the camp got sicker and sicker. We had to stand for long hours in the freezing cold. Some of the men could not hold their urine for that long. One time, a man could not hold it and he urinated in the snow. The urine froze and a Nazi's motorcycle slipped in it. The man was hanged. One time while standing for hours in roll call, my body was ravaged by diarrhea. I knew that if I moved they would kill me. The only thing I could do was pray for strength to endure.

I remember a change in attitude when German soldiers who had been fighting in Russia came back and became guards at the camp. They were not as atrocious. They were still mean, but not as atrocious as before. They were happy to be at the camps and not fighting in Russia.

Every single morning at nine o'clock we heard American planes flying over. To hide, the Germans built bunkers plus they would fog our entire place. As soon as the fog cleared, the planes would come back. They bombed our bunkers and our barracks, but they never bombed the factories. One day they killed forty-four of us in one bunker.

## GROSS-ROSEN



*Gross-Rosen concentration camp was located near Roznica, Poland. The prisoners worked as forced laborers in armaments production for Krupp, I.G. Farben, and Daimler Benz. As Soviet forces approached in January 1945, the Germans began to evacuate Gross-Rosen. Many prisoners died during the evacuations. Soviet forces liberated Gross-Rosen on February 13, 1945.*

In January 1945 I was on the death march from Blechhammer to Gross-Rosen. I had been in Blechhammer for two years. Many of the prisoners on this death march froze to death or died of exhaustion on the way. Once we got there we had to stand for twelve or fourteen hours in the freezing rain and snow for roll call.

At Gross-Rosen I got sick with dysentery. When they wouldn't let me go to the toilet for twelve hours, I had to go in my pants. I was filthy and I smelled; everybody pushed me away. That was the first time in my life that I was discouraged. I didn't want to live anymore. I was pushed too far. One night, at the risk of being shot, I snuck out of my barrack in the pouring rain and went to a basement where the dead people were and took the clothes off a body. I washed myself in the rain and put on the clothes of somebody who did not need them anymore. Then I could go back to wanting to live.

## BUCHENWALD

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*Between July 1937 and April 1945, the Nazis imprisoned over 250,000 people in Buchenwald, a concentration camp near Weimar, Germany. Prisoners worked mostly in armaments factories, in stone quarries, and on construction projects. Those who were too weak or disabled to work were killed.*

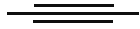
*In early April 1945, as Allied forces approached the camp, the Germans began to evacuate prisoners. About a third of these prisoners died from exhaustion on a death march.*

After being in Gross-Rosen for a couple of weeks we were sent in an open train car to Buchenwald. The car was very crowded, there was no room whatsoever. We were happy when someone died because then we would have more room — we would sit on top of the corpses. It was winter and the trip took three days. My brother-in-law and I tried to keep each other awake and warm. We knew that if we fell asleep we would freeze to death.

When we got off the train they put us in barracks. The beds were wooden platforms, five layers high. We slept fourteen people together on each platform. I always tried to sleep on the top bunk because everyone was a leaky faucet and I didn't want to be under anyone. Hunger and disease were rampant there. If they ever gave us a piece of bread, we would be like vultures waiting for somebody to die so we could grab his piece of bread.

In April, as the Allied troops were approaching, we were taken on another death march — this time to Altenburg, a sub-camp of Buchenwald near Leipzig. Sometime along the line, I'm not sure when, I was separated from my brother-in-law.

## LIBERATION



From Altenburg we were marched to Waldenburg. More and more people were dying of starvation and exhaustion. On this death march I developed an abscess on my foot and my foot swelled. I could barely walk, but I kept going. On the last day I managed to slip away from the group and hide in a chicken coop beside the road. I hid under the chickens. They were very noisy. I saw the German tanks going by — I knew if they saw me they would kill me, so I stayed very quiet, like I was dead. When I saw tanks going by that didn't look like German tanks, I came out. I was afraid to show my face because they didn't know who I was. The first thing I saw was an American soldier standing near an American tank. Fearing the soldier would shoot me, I raised my arms and said, "Brother America," the only English words I knew.

I was liberated by the Americans at around 3 o'clock in the afternoon on April 11, 1945. I had no way of knowing what day it was, but to me it seemed like it was a Friday. The Americans offered me food, but I had a problem with my throat and I couldn't eat. It was perhaps my luck that I couldn't eat because many people ate too much too soon and died. I couldn't eat, but I made kiddish over the food.

About eight or ten of us were taken to a house in the village. We just went into an empty house. It was empty because the owners didn't know what the Americans would do to them, so they hid in their basement. We didn't know they were there. We just stayed upstairs and ate whatever food was in the house. After a few days they came up and showed themselves. We were all very weak and confused; we didn't even know if the fighting was still going on.

I said to myself, "I am now free. I can't eat, I can't talk, I can't walk — how much more can I be punished? But all right, I hope tomorrow will be a better day." I saw so many people destroyed — I knew I came out okay — everything functioned pretty good. My biggest dream was to go to a place and have a chicken farm and not have to think about anything — to have a normal life, to enjoy the rest of my life. I just wanted to be normal, that's all.

Little by little, eating small portions of food, I began to feel better. I went to a displaced person's camp where survivors were helped to get to where they came from or to wherever they wanted to go. I said I wanted to go to Belgium.



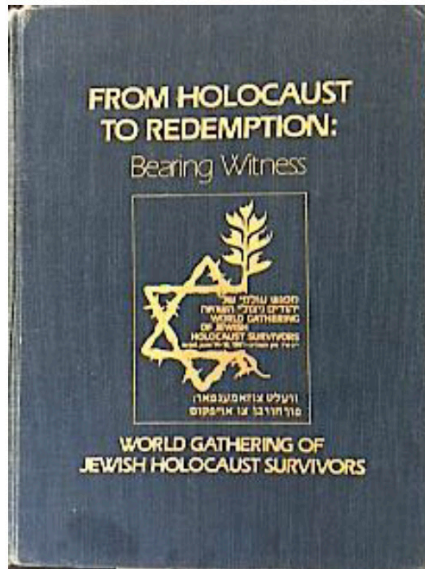
domiciles: Rue Bara, 127 at Anderlecht  
Rolvagenstraat 24 at Antwerp  
was allocated a residence in the province of Limburg  
- arrived in Genk on January 4, 1941  
- found in Genk from January 14 to April 1, 1941 and on April 4,  
1941  
- found in Overpelt from June 20 until July 24, 1941  
- left Genk on June 18, 1941  
- ordered to leave labor camp "Op den Holven" at Overpelt on July 16  
, 1941  
detained at Camp Gurs from August 28 until September 1, 1942  
deported from Camp Drancy to Concentration Camp Auschwitz on  
September 4, 1942 coming from Gurs

**DRUKS Clara** (DRUKS Elka Chaja, false name WEINLOS)  
born on August 15, 1890 at Bursztyn  
spouse of FLESCHER Wolf  
domiciles: Rue Bara 127 at Anderlecht  
Rolvagenstraat 24 at Antwerp  
was allocated a residence in the province of Limburg  
- arrived in Genk on January 4, 1941  
- found in Genk from January 14 until March 18, 1941  
- left Genk on April 2, 1941  
detained at Camp Gurs from August 28 until September 1, 1942  
deported from Camp Drancy to Concentration Camp Auschwitz on  
September 4, 1942 coming from Gurs

**FLESCHER Rosalie**  
born on September 6, 1914 at Stanislau  
spouse of WEITZENFELD Chaim Benzion  
arrived in Belgium in 1930 coming from Vienna  
domiciles: Rue Eloy 41 at Anderlecht  
Rolvagenstraat 24 at Antwerp  
detained at the camp of "La Lande et Monts (Indre et Loire)" on  
August 16, 1942  
deported from Camp Drancy to Concentration Camp Auschwitz on  
September 14, 1942

**WEITZENFELD Chaim, Benzion**  
born on October 12, 1909 at Oleczye (Poland)  
arrived in Belgium in 1938 coming from Vienna  
spouse of FLESCHER Rosa  
father of WEITZENFELD Henie  
profession: trader in furs  
domiciles: Rue Pasteur 2 at Anderlecht  
Rue Eloy 41 at Anderlecht  
detained in Camp "La Lande" on August 16, 1942  
deported from Camp Drancy on September 14, 1942 to Concentration Camp  
Auschwitz  
transferred on February 10-11, 1945 to Concentration Camps Gross-  
Rosen and Buchenwald; on March 12, 1945 to Camp Natzweiler / Kommando

*Wolf Flescher is my father. Clara Druks is my mother.  
Rosalie Flescher is my sister.  
Chaim Benzion Weitzenfeld is my brother-in-law.*



*These photos are from the book From Holocaust to Redemption. My sister is the fourth from the left in the bottom row.*



27 - FLESCHER Heinrich

*Picture of me.*

**CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS AGAINST GERMANY**  
**SWISS REFUGEE PROGRAM APPLICATION**  
**HOLOCAUST VICTIMS ASSETS LITIGATION (SWISS BANKS)**  
[www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org)



This application is for Jewish victims or targets of Nazi persecution, who either (1) sought entry into Switzerland to avoid Nazi persecution and were denied entry into Switzerland or, after gaining entry, were deported, or (2) after gaining entry were detained, abused, or otherwise mistreated. The victimization had to occur between January 1, 1933 through May 9, 1945. Eligible applicants for category (1) listed above will receive US\$1,250 upon approval with an additional amount of up to US\$1,250 upon evaluation of all claims. Eligible applicants for category (2) listed above will receive US\$250 upon approval with an additional amount of up to US\$250 upon evaluation of all claims.

In accordance with the regulations of the Court, if the refugee died on or after February 16, 1999, the heir may apply to this Fund. Heirs may be eligible only if they are the spouse, child, grandchild, sibling, or testamentary heir of the refugee. Under the regulations of the Court, heirs of a refugee who died before February 16, 1999 are not entitled to payment.

Completed applications should be returned in enclosed envelope to:

Claims Conference	OR	Claims Conference
P.O. Box 90133		44 Sophienstr.
Fredericksburg, VA 22404-0010		D-60487 Frankfurt am Main
United States		Germany

A claimant who makes a claim, as a member of the Refugee Class, is not precluded from making claims under the Settlement Agreement, under the Deposited Assets Class, or any of the other classes as defined in the Settlement Agreement.

Please type or neatly print all requested information in blue or black ink. Attach photocopies, not originals, of any requested documents.

Please note: Application must be postmarked by September 30, 2001. There is no fee to obtain or submit this application. Non-Jewish applicants should obtain a copy of a claim form from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 17 route des Morillons, P.O.B. 71, CH-1211, Geneva 19, Switzerland; Tel.: +41 22 717 9230; website: <http://www.swissbankclaims.iom.int>

The Claims Conference will send you a written acknowledgement within 60 days of receipt of your completed application.

**THIS APPLICATION MUST BE COMPLETED IN ROMAN CHARACTERS.**

**SECTION (A)–REFUGEE'S PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**1. Name**

If refugee died on or after February 16, 1999, please complete Section A with most recent information available.

NAME	First Name	HENRY	Middle Initial
	Last Name	FLESCHER	
MAIDEN NAME	Last Name		
OTHER NAME(S) used by refugee during the Nazi era, if applicable	First Name	HEINRICH	Middle Initial
	Last Name		
	First Name		Middle Initial
	Last Name		

*Applications for reparations.*

**AUSTRIAN  
RECONCILIATION FUND**

File no. 103114

Vienna, 12.2.2003

Henry Flescher

19195 Mystic Point DR Apt. 2106  
USA-33180 Aventura  
Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika

Re.: Compensation for Forced Labour

Dear Mr. Flescher,

We regret the injustices that were perpetrated against you under National Socialism.

We would like to inform you that persons, who were confined in a concentration camp according to § 42, paragraph 2, of the German Federal Compensation Act (this also includes the concentration camp Mauthausen and its annexes, as well as the annexes of the concentration camp Dachau on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria) or to a ghetto under comparable conditions and forced to work, are covered by the law establishing the foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" of the Federal Republic of Germany.

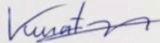
We have learned that you already received a payment from the German Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" for the forced labour you were made to carry out. Since it is not legally possible for victims of forced labour to receive compensation from both the German Foundation and the Austrian Fund, we are unfortunately unable to comply with your request.

We kindly ask for your understanding and would request that all further questions be directed to the organisation from you have already received compensation namely, the Claims Conference at the address listed below.

CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS AGAINST GERMANY, Sophienstrasse  
44, 60487 Frankfurt am Main, Deutschland, Hotline JCC 49-69-170 886 47, Fax 49-69-170  
886 49, Tel. 49-69-970 701 21

We remain, with kind regards,

yours sincerely,



Mag. Gabrielle Kusatz

P.O.B. 44, A-1011 Vienna, Phone (+43-1) 513 60 16, Fax (+43-1) 513 60 16 15  
e-mail: [info@reconciliationfund.at](mailto:info@reconciliationfund.at) | [www.reconciliationfund.at](http://www.reconciliationfund.at)

*I receive reparations from the German foundation,  
Remembrance, Responsibility and Future, for being  
a victim of forced labor.*





*I worked very hard, but I always enjoyed myself.*

## LIFE AFTER THE WAR

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I went to Brussels and shared an apartment with three other survivors from the camps. HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] helped us and gave us food. In 1946 my brother came from the United States to see me in Belgium. He had served in U.S. army intelligence in Europe for five years as a translator between German and English. I could not go to the United States with him because I did not have the proper papers.

I went to work as a furrier, a trade I started to learn in Brussels before the war. Together with two friends I opened up a business. We rented a little place to work in a basement — across the street there were prostitutes — it was the cheapest area to rent!

I worked in Brussels and waited for my time to go to America. In the meantime, I met my future wife, Lea, in 1947 at a Maccabee dance in Belgium. I love music and I love to dance! Lea was from Belgium but she was hidden on a farm in Holland during the war. While she was there she was baptized and went to communion. Her mother was killed at Auschwitz. Her father was hidden during the war.

I don't think Lea's father liked me. Even though he was also a survivor, he didn't want his daughter to marry a refugee — he wanted her to marry somebody established. When we got engaged he was very disappointed — he wanted a rich guy.

In 1948 I got papers to go to the United States. Once I got the papers I had to leave right then. Lea did not have a visa for the United States at that time. When I left for the States, Lea said to me, “You are not going to come back, are you?” I said, “I don’t know.” But, I found it was very hard to start a new life in the United States — I didn’t speak English, my brother was married, I was alone. After four weeks I decided to go back to Belgium thinking life in Belgium would be easier because I already spoke Dutch, French, and German.

I still had \$500 left of the money my parents put in my shoe. I changed the money in a bank in the United States. I should have kept it, but I needed the money to get back to Brussels.

Lea and I were married on April 11, 1948, in a Jewish ceremony. Lea was eighteen, I was twenty-four. We could not get married civilly because then she would have to take on my nationality, which would make things very complicated. I wanted to stay in Brussels, but Lea wanted to go to the United States. Our first child, Carmen, was eight or nine months old in 1950 when we left for America on a liberty ship, a ship for soldiers. I loved it! I am a traveler — it is in my blood. We arrived in New York, stayed one night, then went to stay with my brother in Providence, Rhode Island. (My brother did not sponsor me to come to the United States; someone else who had enough money did.)

I wanted to get a job as a furrier, but they wouldn’t hire me because I was not in the union. Instead I went to work for American Insulated Wire Corporation, a subsidiary of Leviton Manufacturing Company.



I started by sweeping the floor and eventually became the foreman in charge of shipping. I also did the inventory. I used to work twelve hours a day, seven days a week. After ten years I said I would like to become a salesman for them. I always wanted to advance myself. My manager said, “You can’t become a salesman because you have an accent.” I asked how I could improve it. He said, “Go to the university and learn how to speak perfect English.” I went to the University of Rhode Island and took a night course. When I showed my manager my certificate, he said, “You know what you can do with your piece of paper.” And I said, “You know what you can do with your job!”

I went to work for New York Life. I didn’t enjoy it. I sold only health insurance, not life insurance — I don’t like to talk about death. I worked about two years with them. I suffered a lot trying to make a living. At one point I couldn’t afford to feed my family. They turned off the electricity in my house because I couldn’t pay the bill. I was miserable. I was very sick with ulcers and had to have a stomach operation. At times the doctors almost gave up on me — but I always came out alive. I’ve been through hard times — that’s life.

My cousin came to me and said he knew someone in the electronics business in New York. He thought maybe I could sell radios and batteries. So I took the bus to New York, bought some merchandise, came back and sold it.

I became a distributor for companies like Sharp. After a while I started my own consumer electronics business. I was selling things like tape recorders, boomboxes, transistor radios, and Polaroid film — at that time Polaroid film was very big. I was very busy. I did very nicely. I had my ups and downs, (one day someone stole my car with all my merchandise), but at least I worked for myself. I would make a deal over a cup of coffee and a handshake with no money. That was my start of making a living.

After twenty years we moved to Brookline, Massachusetts and I wanted to buy my first house. The house cost \$27,500. I went to the bank and the bank didn't want to give me a loan. My wife asked me how we could afford it. I said, "For the first six months I have enough. It will take them six months to throw us out, so meanwhile we will live there." I don't know how we did it, but we managed. I was very happy to achieve what I did at that time.

When I was invited to a party in Florida, I was talked into buying a condo in Palm Beach. I had my home in Brookline, Massachusetts, plus, I had an apartment on West 57th Street in New York where my daughter, Carmen, lived. I felt like I was a millionaire. I felt very good; I was enjoying what I was doing.

Later, I moved my family to Williams Island in Miami. I bought a business in Miami selling anything I came across — I would buy closeouts. I bought from flea markets and suppliers and sold to stores. Then business changed completely: before,

there were small stores, now there were only big stores and I was not equipped for that. So, I got involved in health and beauty aides. I had a warehouse in Hialeah. I worked my own hours on my own days. I learned that if you want to become number one in business you have to watch every move that you do and you have no liberty. I never wanted to be number one — I wanted to travel, to see the world.

I do travel all over the world. I love seeing new places and meeting new people. I make friends wherever I go! I like to live! I like to enjoy and take the best out of life. I never say no!



*With Lea, my ex-wife.*



*All of my life I have loved music and dancing.*



*I was honored at the Williams Island Synagogue  
where I was a founder.*



*With Ann Marks, my girlfriend for many years. She passed away in 2014.*





*I love to travel, I love seeing new places and meeting new people.*



*At age 94 I am celebrating in Jerusalem on Israel's 70th birthday, May 2018. This picture captures the joy and jubilation I always feel in my heart. Shortly after returning from this trip I was hospitalized with a serious illness.*



## MY FAMILY

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I saw my parents for the last time when I left them in Belgium in 1942. I didn't know anything about them after that until I got a letter from the Red Cross saying they died in Auschwitz.

My sister, Rosalie, and her baby daughter were on convoy No. 32 which left Camp Drancy for Concentration Camp Auschwitz on September 14, 1942. They did not survive.

My brother-in-law, Benno Weitzenfeld, survived the Holocaust. I never saw him again after the war. I did not know anything about him until I got a letter from the Red Cross telling me he passed away in Brussels in 2000.

My brother, Sam, and his wife, Hella, lived in Rhode Island. They had three children, two boys and one girl. Sam passed away in 1994 at age 75.

Lea and I divorced in 1989 after forty-nine and one-half years of marriage. We have a very cordial relationship.

I have two daughters, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

My daughter, Carmen Flescher, was born in Belgium. She lives in Miami where she is very active in the Jewish community. She currently works for the Miami Jewish Film Festival.

My daughter, Wendy, was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1954. Wendy's husband, David Einis, is a builder. Their son, Garrett, went to Emory University. He is now in the real estate business with his father in Boston. Their daughter, Jaclyn, went to the University of Pennsylvania and now works for Google in San Francisco. Their daughter, Tara, went to the Wharton school. She now works for Zynga. Tara and her husband, Joe Townsend, live in San Francisco. They have two children, Lilia and Jude. As Chanukah gifts this year I gave my great-granddaughter a Chanukah menorah and my great-grandson a tallis and a yarmulke. I want them to always remember me and that they are Jewish.



*With my daughter, Carmen Flescher.*



*My daughter, Wendy Einis, her husband David Einis and their granddaughter Lilia Townsend.*



*My granddaughter, Tara Townsend, her husband, Joe Townsend, their daughter, Lilia, and their son, Jude — my great-grandchildren*



*My great-grandson, Jude Townsend.*





*My great-granddaughter, Lilia Townsend.*

*I gave Lilia a Chanukah menorah and Jude a tallis and a yarmulke. I want them to always remember me and that they are Jewish.*





*Skiing with my family:  
From the left: Wendy, her husband David, their son Garrett,  
their daughter Jaclyn, and me.*

## MY LIFE TODAY

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When I was first liberated I didn't care about anything. I lost all my sensitivity about life. I was very cold about everything. I don't know why, but I feel it now — memories are coming back. I think about the Holocaust and I get very emotional.

When I was young I used to put on *tefillin* every day. Even in the concentration camps I would get up early to put them on — until they took them away from me. Ever since then I cannot put on *tefillin* — there is something about it. I am still religious; I am the *gabbai* at my orthodox synagogue, but there are certain things I cannot do. It is as though they took away my right hand.

I have had many health problems and many operations in my life. I have a lot of trouble with my teeth from when the Nazis broke my jaw in the camps. I still have a big scar from that. One time, when the dentist in Miami put in an implant, I got an infection in my blood that led to endocarditis. The doctors in the hospital gave up on me — but I came out alive. I always seem to come out alive!

I do get reparations from the German government. When I was first living in Rhode Island I met with a group of Holocaust survivors who gave me information about applying for reparations. I wrote to them and they had to check me out. I had to go to a doctor who could say I had illnesses from the Holocaust. People got more money or less money depending

on how sick they were. In the beginning they gave me about \$200 a month. I still have to apply every year. They send me a letter reminding me, and as soon as I get it I go to the German consulate in Miami and sign the papers saying I am alive. A few years ago they said I was “too good” and I couldn’t get an increase in money.

Today, at 94, I am always busy. On Saturday mornings I am the *gabbai* at my synagogue where I am a Bar and Bat Mitzvah mentor. I participate in a program that teaches about the Holocaust at the University of Miami. I frequently lecture at schools and for organizations. On Tuesday mornings I am a docent at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach. On Fridays I play cards with eight of my friends. Every third week I meet my ‘lunch-bunch’ to tell jokes and have a good time. Several times a week I go to listen to music. One night I go dancing at Gulfstream Park and another night I go dancing at the Goldcoast. On cruises I dance with all the ladies! (I have won awards for my dancing.) All my life I have always loved music and dancing.

I love to travel, I love seeing new places and meeting new people. I make friends wherever I go. I am always planning a trip: I want to go on a train trip to Colorado, I want to go on a cruise around the horn of South America, I want to see the new Dali Museum in St. Petersburg. At 94 I was the oldest person on the 2081 Miami Jewish Federation mission to Israel. I danced in Jerusalem on Israel’s 70th anniversary. I like to live!

When I think I want to do something, I do it. I don't want to say I should have done it. If I have a desire to go, I go. I do it! That's what life is all about. Whatever I want to do, I do it now — I don't wait for the future. There is no later; we only have today. We don't know if tomorrow will come. I believe in one thing: take advantage of every day of your life. Whatever you do, enjoy it.

I am very optimistic. Yesterday — fine, I went through it, I went through a lot in my lifetime. If people ask me about my experiences I tell them, but I can't dwell on it. I don't want to get angry and mad. I don't want to be bitter. I dwell on the future. I'm here, the weather is beautiful, I can see the sun. I'm happy. I'm a contented person. I love every moment of my life.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

I began writing for Holocaust survivors in the 1990's when survivors I met on The March of the Living asked me for help writing about their feelings on returning to Poland for the first time. Later, survivors I interviewed for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation asked me for help writing down all the things they did not speak about in their interview. Soon, other survivors began approaching me seeking help writing a book about their experiences in the Holocaust. I met with the survivors, recorded our numerous conversations, organized and wrote the stories in the survivors' own words, printed the books, and then handed the books to the survivors as my gift to them. The books were written solely for the survivors and their families; they were never intended for publication. They are being published now because my friends, Carol and Jaime Suchlicki, recognizing their historical value as first-person testimony, introduced me to Dr. Haim Shaked to discuss finding a wider audience for the books.

Thank you to Dr. Haim Shaked director of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies at the University of Miami for agreeing to publish the books and for your guidance and patience as we worked together on this project.

I am grateful to the March of the Living for introducing me to the world of Holocaust education and finding a role for me in it.

Thank you to the Shoah Foundation for choosing me to be an interviewer and for mentoring me through more than thirty interviews of Holocaust survivors. Your training led me to do the work I do today.

Thank you to the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach for encouraging the docents at the memorial to work with me to write their memoirs. I appreciate your confidence in me and your respect for my work.

Thank you to the my dear Holocaust survivors for sharing your most painful as well as your most joyful memories with me. Thank you for answering questions that no one should ever have to ask or answer. Thank you for trusting me to write your memoirs accurately and respectfully. It has been my honor and pleasure to work with you.

—Bobbi Kaufman





*“I got up each day and said to myself, ‘Look, you survived another day. You made it a day, you will make it another day. Let’s hope tomorrow will be better.’”*

— Henry Flescher

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While fleeing from the Nazis, Henry’s parents paid a stranger to smuggle him into France. In France, eighteen-year-old Henry was arrested and taken first to Drancy and then by cattle car to Auschwitz where he was tattooed with the number 177153.

He spent the next two years in forced labor at Blechammer before enduring a death march to Gross-Rosen. From Gross-Rosen he was transported by cattle car to Buchenwald. He then escaped from a second death march and was finally liberated by the Americans.

Henry lived in Belgium before emigrating to the United States in 1950 where he and his wife raised their two daughters.

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There is a concept in Judaism of a positive commandment, something that is time dependent, something that must be done *now*. One must, accordingly, applaud this important effort by the Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program of the University of Miami to collect and publish Holocaust survivors’ memoirs as there will soon—too soon—come a time when the last survivors will be no longer. Sadly, tragically, this testimony is not only urgent but timely because the world in which we live echoes their world and the quality of their witness. The very nature of their survival has much to teach today’s generations. One must express gratitude for this project and in the sagacious words of Hillel say: “If not now, when?”

**Dr. Michael Berenbaum**  
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