

## LIBERATION ■ MORRIS SEES AN AMERICAN TANK

*Morris Glass was born in 1928 in Pabianice, Poland. He was 11 years old when Germany invaded his country in 1939. He and his family suffered through four and a half years in the ghettos of Pabianice and Lodz. In August 1944 the Lodz ghetto was liquidated and its residents sent to Auschwitz, where Morris, his father, and his brother were separated from his mother and two sisters, whom he never saw again. Soon after, Morris's brother was sent to a forced labor camp in Germany, Morris and his father volunteered to work in Germany in order to leave Auschwitz. They arrived in the Dachau concentration camp in October 1944, where his father died from the hard labor and brutal treatment. In April 1945, as U.S. troops approached Dachau, most of the prisoners were marched to a train as the Germans evacuated the camp.*

**W**alking the half kilometer from Kaufering IV [Dachau subcamp] to the railroad tracks was no easy task for most of us. We walked as slowly as possible and as close to each other as possible in order to help those who were struggling—otherwise, they would have been shot. After we had waited several hours, a huge train appeared. It stretched as far as the eye could see and held thousands of people. Because the cattle cars were full, my group was put in a coal car where we were stacked like sardines, one on top of the other. Most were sick and burning with fever. People were dying all around me. Once again I thought, “This is the end.” But now more than ever, I desperately wanted to live. I was certain that the war would end soon. Liberation seemed very near.

***Once again I thought, “This is the end.” But now more than ever, I desperately wanted to live.***

There were a number of signs that indicated that the days of the mighty Third Reich were numbered. The Allied guns sounded very close. I saw very young boys, maybe 14, 15, or 16 years old, manning huge anti-aircraft guns—a sure sign that the Germans were on their last leg. Furthermore, it was whispered that some of the SS guards had been heard to say that the surrender would be soon. I had listened to rumors for years, but I knew this one must be true. Unfortunately, we also heard troubling reports that we were being sent to the Tyrol Forest on the border between Germany and Austria to be fed poisoned soup. This was a rumor that I hoped was not true, but knowing the Nazis, I feared the worst. Thank God for Generals Patton, Eisenhower, and Taylor, and all the others! It was because of their rapid advance that I never found out if there was truth to the poisoning rumor.



Morris Glass shortly after the war, wearing a borrowed beret of the Jewish Brigade

I'm not sure how many days I was on the train. At some point, we came under fire from American and British planes that were attacking German anti-aircraft guns. In order to discourage the attack, the Germans deliberately parked our train next to the guns. The Allied planes were flying very low—so low the pilots could see us. I know that they tried not to hit us, but sometimes they did. Those of us in open cars lay there totally helpless, like dead ducks. There were a lot of casualties. I saw people

with missing arms and legs and other terrible wounds. There was no one to care for them. All of a sudden, I felt wet and warm. I thought, "Oh, no, after all these years, I'm to be killed by my friends." When I recovered from my fright and I checked myself, I was okay. What I had felt was hot water gushing from a locomotive that had been punctured.

As a result of the Allied attack, our train was damaged and stalled, and there were piles of dying people in my car and along the tracks. There was confusion and panic everywhere.

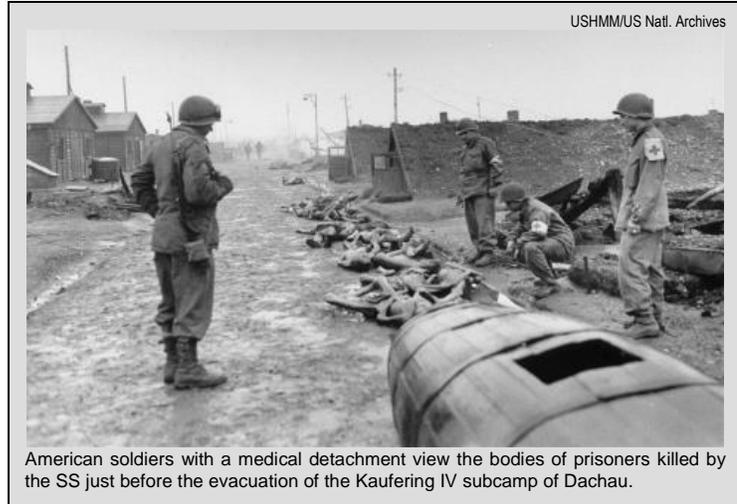
When I saw some SS fleeing into the woods, I thought that I must be hallucinating, but then I realized that the war just might be over. I decided that if the SS were leaving, then I too would leave, and so I and four others rolled off the train. I said to them, "It's a matter of hours. Our liberators must be very close. Let's walk toward the village," and off we went. One of my friends, Libel, had pneumonia and was burning with fever. He was very sick, so we walked slowly.

We walked to a farm, where the family gave us food. Thinking that the war must be over and that we were safe, we rested for several hours. But our dream of freedom was soon ended when some German militia arrested us. First, we were taken to a Wehrmacht [German armed forces] officer who spoke kindly to us and assured us that the war would be over shortly. We begged him to let us go, but he said that he was under orders to detain all prisoners. Then the SS came and accused us of being spies who were running toward the Americans. They wrote down our numbers and told us that we would be executed in the morning. I don't know why they did not shoot us then, but luckily for us they didn't. The SS took us to a wooded area where there were hundreds of wounded and dying prisoners. We could hear them crying "Hear O Israel" and pleading for help. Amidst all the suffering, it was hard to think about myself.

Nevertheless, knowing that the war was almost over, my friends and I were determined to escape execution. Since the SS knew us only by the numbers on our jackets, we exchanged our jackets for the jackets of dead prisoners. Feeling protected by our new numbers, we slept through the night. In the morning, after some SS gave us permission to get water for the sick and dying, the five of us started to walk away from the camp. Just as we started walking, the sky became very dark and rain started to come down in sheets. With our movements shielded by the dark and the rain, we walked away from the SS as fast as we could. Finally, we met a farmer who took us in, gave us food, and hid us in his hayloft. While we were lying in the hay, we heard the SS come. They searched and searched, but they did not find us. When we went to sleep that night, we were aware that we had much to be grateful for.

When we awoke in the morning, we were greeted by the great news that there had been a radio announcement (which it turned out was incorrect) that Germany had surrendered. Our joy at this news was tempered by the worsening condition of Libel. We knew something had to be done immediately or he would die. Seeing how sick Libel was, the farmer told us that there was a hospital only a kilometer away. It seemed once again that luck was with us.

Jauntily, we set out for the hospital. Believing that the war was over, that we were out of danger, and that there was a place nearby where Libel would be cared for, we were a happy group. Unfortunately, we had not walked far when we learned that all was not well. The messenger of



American soldiers with a medical detachment view the bodies of prisoners killed by the SS just before the evacuation of the Kaufering IV subcamp of Dachau.



Waffen SS soldier, 1945

bad news was a hulking SS officer who was sitting on a motorcycle in the middle of the road, holding a machine gun. As we rounded the curve and saw him, I thought, “Oh, my God, what will we do?” Somehow, I quickly came to my senses, calmly walked up to him, and told him that we were lost and wanted to go back to the train. He must have believed me because he gave us directions and let us go. We started walking as instructed, but as soon as the road curved, we raced into the forest.

We would have been happy to have stayed in the forest until we knew for certain that the SS had departed and that the war was really over, but Libel was very very sick and we had to get him to the hospital. We waited until dark and then set out once again. Covering the short distance to the hospital took a long time because every time we heard a car or any strange noise, we would jump back into the woods. Finally, we saw the lights of a large building. We went around the back, and I knocked on the door. It was opened by a nun. I didn’t have to say anything; she just motioned us to come in. We had arrived at St. Ottilien, a Benedictine\* monastery that

had been converted into an SS hospital. We were now under the care of kindly nuns and monks, but we were not yet out of danger.

The nuns were so good to us. They gave us food and took our filthy prison clothes, which they burned. When I said, “I have one wish. I would like to take a bath,” they took all of us to be bathed. And wonder of wonders, there I was, I who had not had a real bath in years, in a bathtub with soap, hot water, and a nun who came and scrubbed me. This was heaven!!! I must have been in that tub for hours. After the bath, the monks gave us new clothes, and then they whisked us away and hid us in a hayloft—it was still an SS hospital. The monks told us that it was a matter of days until the war would be over and we would be free. In the meantime, we could stay where we were and they would bring us food.

A day or two later, the monks told us that the Americans were very near, and since there might be some shooting, we should move to the basement where it would be safer. We went to the basement. I found a box to stand on so that I could see out of the window—I was not going to miss a thing. Before long, I was rewarded with a view of an American tank coming up the hill.

How can I describe the jubilation I felt when I first glimpsed that tank flying an American flag? There is no way to describe the joy in my heart—the joy of being free! I ran outside and embraced the first soldier I saw and then another and another and another. I was happy beyond my ability to describe it. I was free! I was free! I was free! A



U.S. Army  
An American tank of the 1st Infantry Div. rolls through Gladbach, Germany, March 1, 1945, as the Allied troops neared victory over the Nazis.

\* A Roman Catholic monastic order.

minute ago, I had been a prisoner and hiding, and now I was free and hugging every American soldier I could find. I just could not believe it.

I was then and I remain now very grateful to the American army for giving me back my life and my freedom. My gratitude has no bounds. Every time I see the Stars and Stripes, I am reminded of my debt to those soldiers and to the American army.

On spotting us, one of the soldiers yelled out, “We need five beds immediately.” On his orders, we were taken into the hospital and everything possible was done to help us. The Americans put us on a strict diet and checked us

***How can I describe the jubilation I felt when I first glimpsed that tank flying an American flag? I was free! I was free! I was free!***

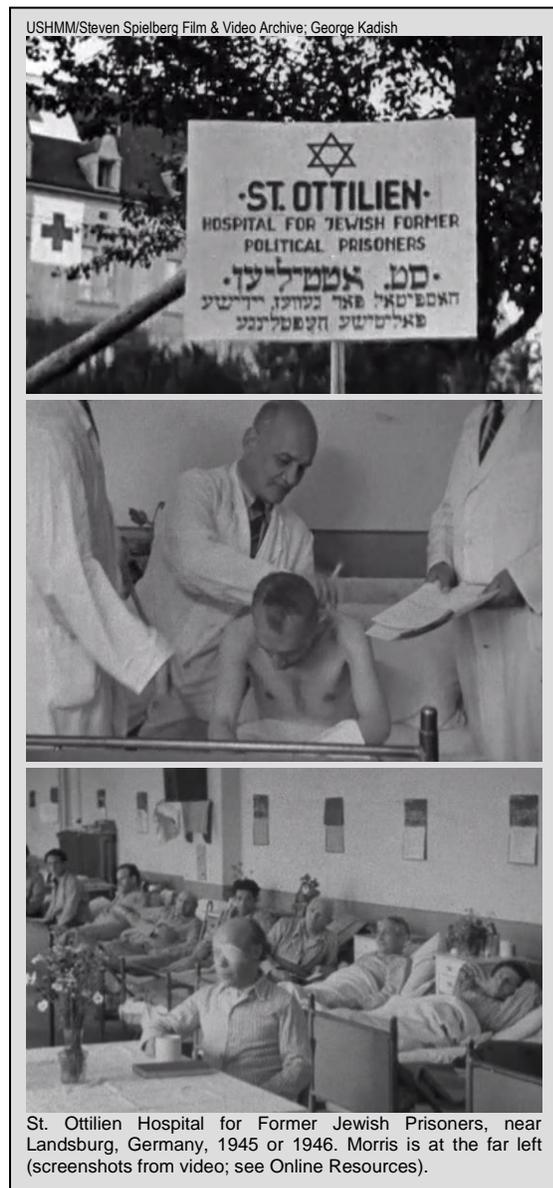
***My gratitude has no bounds. Every time I see the Stars and Stripes, I am reminded of my debt to those soldiers and to the American army.***

every few hours. Because so many survivors had died from overeating, they carefully supervised what and how much we ate. The German SS doctors treated us politely and tried to help us—they said they wanted to redeem themselves. Of course, the nuns and the monks were wonderful. Much care was devoted to Libel. The Americans and the Germans tried to save him, but he died shortly after we were liberated. To lose him, especially after we were free, put a damper on our spirits, but even his death could not destroy our joy.

Shortly after I was put in the hospital, the soldier who had ordered the beds came to check on us. When he was giving the order, I thought that I heard him using some Jewish words, but I said, “No, no, Morris, you are fantasizing.” Well, I wasn’t. It turned out that he was a Jewish guy from Brooklyn. That made me so proud—one of my saviors was an American Jew! Also among the American liberators was a black man; this was the first time that I had ever seen a black person except in the circus.\* My life was indeed full of new and wondrous things.

St. Otilien was a perfect place for me to be. In addition to the hospital, it included a farm with cows and other animals, and wheat and potato fields. The bounty of nature and the serenity of the countryside buoyed my spirits, and with the good care that I was receiving, I improved rapidly.

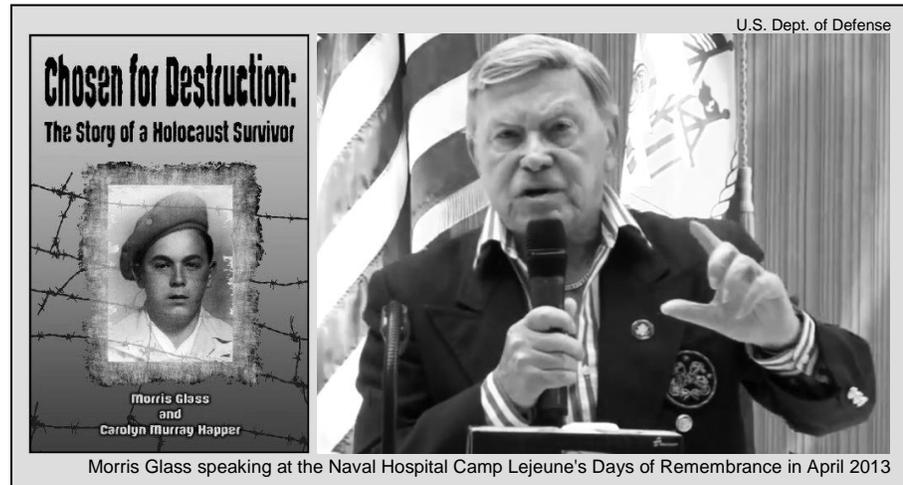
Recognizing that this was an ideal place to recover, General Eisenhower decreed that St. Otilien was to be a hospital for Jewish survivors. Within two or three weeks, there must have been a



\* Most major European circuses featured black African performers.

thousand of us there, all needing medical attention. The SS doctors were removed from the hospital and replaced by American doctors and by Jewish doctors who were themselves survivors. The Jews there, like survivors everywhere, were desperately seeking their loved ones. As soon as I met another survivor, I would immediately ask if they knew my family and they would ask me the same question. It was a search that was to go on all over Europe and the world for a very long time.

*Of 42 members of his family, only Morris, his brother, and a cousin survived. While in a DP camp in Italy, Morris learned that his brother had survived and was in a DP camp in Germany. Sponsored by an uncle (the brother of their father), they came to the U.S., arriving in New York City on June 2, 1949. Morris settled in New Jersey where he*



*bought and expanded a coat manufacturing company. There he met his wife Carol; they have seven children, 18 grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. In 2000 they moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where three sons live. For years Morris spoke across the state to school, military, and public groups about his Holocaust experience. In 2011 he published his Holocaust memoir, *Chosen for Destruction: The Story of a Holocaust Survivor*, co-written with historian Dr. Carolyn Murray Happer.*

*[Read other selections from Morris's memoir in Ch. 1 (Anti-Semitism) and Ch. 4 (The Holocaust: Ghetto).]*

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

---

- Video: Morris Glass's presentation with Carolyn Happer (co-author of Mr. Glass's memoir, *Chosen for Destruction: The Story of a Holocaust Survivor*, 2011), Raleigh Weekend C-Span, 16 May 2013, 28:56  
[www.c-span.org/video/?313006-1/chosen-destruction](http://www.c-span.org/video/?313006-1/chosen-destruction)
- Video: Morris Glass's presentation to the Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, April 2013, video possibly taken by the U.S. Dept. of Defense, uploaded on YouTube by the *Jacksonville Daily News*, NC  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSkq-kYI\\_\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSkq-kYI__o)
- Video: Morris Glass reviews the experiences in his memoir, *Chosen for Destruction*, 2013 (C-Span/YouTube, 28:32)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_-1sYifN5U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_-1sYifN5U)
- Video: St. Ottilien Hospital for Jewish Former Political Prisoners, 1945 or 1946, 6:23 (Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum)  
[collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/fv1260](http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/fv1260)

Selection from *Chosen for Destruction: The Story of a Holocaust Survivor*, by Morris Glass and Carolyn Murray Happer, 2011. Reproduced by permission of Morris Glass and Carolyn Murray Happer. Images credited USHMM reproduced by permission of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Photograph of Mr. Glass after the war (with beret) reproduced by permission of Morris Glass.