

## Holocaust Liberator Biography: Don Greenbaum

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Don Greenbaum was born in Philadelphia and was one of three children. His father was a leather manufacturer in the Wynnefield neighborhood.

In 1943, Don graduated from a military school in Georgia and joined the American Army. He was 18 years old.

He served as a Forward Observer for the 283<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion. His job was to ride in front of the army and spot German positions. He then reported in and called for artillery barrages. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944 he was wounded in Aachen, Germany and was awarded the Purple Heart.

After he was released from the army hospital, he fought in the Battle of the Bulge from December 1944 to January 1945. He was under the direction of General George Patton's Third Army, which rapidly advanced through Germany.

By late April 1945, allied troops were liberating concentration camps throughout Germany. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Don and other troops from the Third Army were on their way to seize a Germany army supply depot but stumbled across the Dachau concentration camp. They were not prepared for what they witnessed. As they approached, "there was an odor we could not identify." They did not encounter any Germans because they fled before the American troops arrived but what he saw on that horrific day forever changed his life. He was 20 years old and helped liberate approximately 32,000 prisoners, many starving and near death.

After the war, Don returned home to Philadelphia, got married, and never discussed the war and his experiences until the mid 1990s.

# The Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center

The Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center, *America's First Holocaust Museum*, is fifty years young. Yaakov Riz, the museum's founder, was a Holocaust survivor who lost eighty-three members of his family in Hitler's death camps. Riz vowed that if he survived he would dedicate his life to establishing a museum that would memorialize the six million Jews and millions of non-Jews who perished at the hands of Nazi barbarism. The museum's genesis, growth, and struggle against intolerance are the realization of his dream, courage, and commitment.

## **Why Teach Holocaust History?**

The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the 20th century, but also in the entire history of humanity. The study of the Holocaust provides us with one of the most effective ways to work with students to examine the basic moral issues and value systems. We have an opportunity to teach students through the use of the primary sources in the museum to explore the fate of the Jewish people and other innocents in Nazi Germany and throughout Europe between the years 1933-1945.

## **Witness to History Project:**

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

**Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center**

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