

*Grandpa Joseph, otherwise known as Joseph Krosberg, told by his granddaughter Amy Goodman*

Grandpa Joseph, whose full name was Joseph Krosberg, had a very difficult life, but he never gave up. His story teaches us about courage, determination, and the importance of remembering history. Joseph was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1920. Before he was even born, his father died after being badly beaten in an antisemitic attack while serving in the Polish army. Joseph's mother, Shayndl, had to raise him by herself. They were very poor and lived in small basement rooms that did not have running water, electricity, or an indoor bathroom.

Even though life was hard, Joseph was close to his grandparents and cousins. At home, he spoke Yiddish with his mother and Polish with others around him. When Joseph was about eight years old, he and his mother moved to Belgium in search of a better life. There, he learned to speak French. Joseph sometimes faced antisemitism in Belgium. At school, other children called him hurtful names because he was Jewish. Even though most people were kind, some refused to rent homes to Jewish families or treated them unfairly.

When Joseph was about 13 years old, he left school to help support his mother. He worked in a raincoat factory and learned sewing skills from helping his mother with her work as a seamstress. Everything changed in May 1940 when the Nazis invaded Belgium. Joseph was 19 years old. He and his mother tried to escape to France because they believed they would be safer there. However, when their train reached the border, police checked everyone's papers. Joseph was taken off the train because he was Polish and was expected to serve in the Polish army. Sadly, this was the last time he ever saw his mother.

After being held for several days, authorities discovered that Joseph was Jewish. He was sent to the Le Vernet Internment Camp in France, where he was forced to do hard labor. In July 1942, Nazis arrested him again and sent him to another camp called Drancy. Just three days later, he was forced onto a crowded train headed to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. The trip was terrible. Around 150 people were packed into each train car. There was almost no food, water, fresh air, or space. Many people became sick, and some died during the journey.

When Joseph arrived at Auschwitz on August 14, 1942, he was frightened and confused. Guards shouted orders in German, a language many prisoners could not understand. The Nazis took away his identity and tattooed a number on his arm. From that moment on, he was known by a number instead of his name. At Auschwitz, Joseph worked as a coal miner. The work was exhausting and dangerous because he spent long hours breathing in coal dust and fumes. He worked as hard as he could because he believed that if the guards saw him as useful, they might let him live. He also volunteered for extra jobs such as cleaning showers, washing uniforms, and

scrubbing soup kettles. Sometimes he scraped leftover soup from the kettles so he and a friend could have a little extra food.

In December 1944, Joseph became very sick. Many prisoners who got sick were killed, but Joseph's friends told a guard that he was a hardworking prisoner. Because of this, the guard spoke up for him, and Joseph was allowed to recover instead of being sent to die. Only a month later, on January 27, 1945, Soviet soldiers liberated Auschwitz. Joseph was finally free. After traveling with the Red Army for several months, he returned to Belgium.

When he arrived at the train station, his uncle Avrum was waiting for him. Joseph immediately asked about his mother. His uncle hoped she would arrive on one of the trains carrying survivors home. Sadly, she never came. For the rest of his life, Joseph searched for answers about what happened to her. It is believed that she was sent to Auschwitz and died there, but no one ever found definite proof.

After the war, Joseph lived with his uncle in Belgium. Later, he married Esther and started a family. In 1952, he moved to Sosúa in the Dominican Republic as a political refugee. In 1958, he immigrated to New York. His wife and daughters had arrived a few months earlier, and Joseph was finally able to join them. In New York, Joseph worked in the clothing industry, using the skills he had learned as a young boy. He often worked two or even three jobs at the same time to support his family. Later, the family moved to Brooklyn, where they lived for many years before Joseph and Esther moved to Marlboro, New Jersey.

Joseph was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He enjoyed watching Jeopardy, listening to opera music, and spending time with his family. Being with his loved ones was his favorite thing in the world. Joseph believed it was important to tell people about his experiences during the Holocaust. He wanted future generations to understand what happened and make sure it was never forgotten. Even though he survived terrible hardships, he built a happy life and remained focused on his family and future.

Grandpa Joseph passed away in October 2004 at the age of 83. His story reminds us of the strength of the human spirit and the importance of standing up against hatred and prejudice.