

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Ruth Kurschner

Ruth Kurschner was born in Vienna, Austria on May 25, 1935. Her parents were Elsa Kleiner Kurschner and Nuchim Kurschner. Her entire family was Orthodox Jews and highly observant throughout their lives.

When Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938, her father wrote to his sister, Zelda Dickman, who lived in New York City, begging her to help save his family. Zelda fought the US State Department bureaucracy until finally Visas were issued to Ruth and her mother Elsie. However, immigration quotas depended on where one was born and because her father was born in Poland and her mother and Ruth in Austria, the family was split up.

Elsie and Ruth arrived in New York City on May 15, 1939 and they moved in with Zelda her husband, Simon and their two young daughters. In August 1939 Ruth's father was allowed entry into England where he was placed in an internment camp for German Jewish refugees, Kitchener Camp outside of London.

Elsa took a job as a live-in nanny with a wealthy family and had to place Ruth in an orphanage, the Shield of David Home for Orphan Girls in the Bronx.

In the spring of 1940, Nuchim's quota number was reached, and he arrived in New York City. The family settled in North Philadelphia where he found work at Penn Wax Works making candles, and Ruth started kindergarten.

She attended Wister School, Ludlow School, Cooke Junior High and graduated from West Philadelphia High School in January 1953.

She retired from teaching English Composition at Camden County College in New Jersey in January 2014 after teaching for 9 years.

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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

www.hamec.org

Kleilife, Suite 210, 10100 Jamison Ave, Philadelphia 19116

Phone: (215) 464-4701 Fax: (215) 464-4703 Email: info@hamec.org

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