

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Ruth Fisch Kessler



Ruth Fisch Kessler was born in Vienna, Austria in 1933. She lived with her older sister and her parents. In 1939 her parents were forced to choose whether she or her sister would escape to Great Britain as part of the Kindertransport, a rescue operation that saved 10,000 children from Nazi terror. Ruth was chosen.

In May, six-year-old Ruth waved goodbye to her family at the train depot. With tears in her eyes, she shouted to them, “Will I see you soon”?

Ruth traveled by train across the Europe and then boarded a ship. Bewildered, confused, and with nothing but what she wore, Ruth set sail for Liverpool, England. During the war, Ruth lived with a foster family in London. To avoid the German air raids, she was sent to a hostel at the northern tip of England, for safety.

While Ruth escaped to Great Britain, her father fled to the United States with the only authorized visa for the family. He intended to obtain additional visas for Ruth’s mother and sister, but the American Consulate failed to produce the promised visas, even after her father had met the many bureaucratic demands. Meanwhile, Ruth’s mother and sister escaped to Poland, where the family of their former maid provided them with a place to hide. Later, they were murdered in Belzec and Sobibor.

After the war, Ruth came to the United States at her father’s request. By the time she was 16, she had lived in five foster homes and attended 15 schools. She eventually settled in with her uncle and aunt in Philadelphia, where she completed her education. Ruth and her husband, Lou, have three children and four grandchildren.

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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

Kleinlife, Suite 210, 10100 Jamison Ave, Philadelphia 19116

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

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