

KRISTINE KEREN

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Kristine Keren was born Kristine Chiger in Lwow, Poland, on October 28, 1935, to Ignatcy and Paulina Chiger. She had one younger brother, Pincas. Kristine spent her early years

playing in her parents' textile store.

In 1941, the German army entered Lwow. Kristine and her family were forced to vacate their apartment and move into the ghetto in Lwow. In 1943, after hearing rumors of an impending Aktion, Kristine's father arranged for the family to hide in the sewer below the ghetto in an effort to avoid being transported to an unknown destination.

With the help of Leopold Socha, a Catholic sewer worker, Kristine, who was eight, and her family were able to hide underground. Kristine recalled descending into a dark sewer filled with screaming voices. After awhile, the family began to adapt to their surroundings, with the help of Socha, who would visit almost daily, bringing food and newspapers to the family and others hiding with them. Socha would also help by washing their lice-infested clothes. Supported by mere wooden planks, Kristine, her family, and seven others remained hidden in the sewer for fourteen months. Due to the sheer number of sewer rats, Kristine felt she had no other choice but to coexist with them and even treated some as pets. Despite the circumstances, Kristen remembered that her family tried to keep a sense of humor, which helped her cope with the onerous living conditions. Finally, Kristine and her family heard the sound of Allied bombings and emerged from the sewer feeling practically blinded by the light. When Pincas surfaced, he panicked, for he had forgotten what life looked like above ground.

After the war, Kristine went back to school and entered the second grade. She pretended to be

Christian due to the constant threat of pogroms.

After finishing secondary school, Kristine attended vocational school and earned a degree as a dental technician. Her father then encouraged her to go to dental school. In 1957, after one year at the University of Krakow, Kristine's father was able to obtain papers for the family to enter Israel. Kristine continued her education there and went to the Hadassah Dental School at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. While there, Kristine reunited with her future husband Marian, whom she had known from Krakow, and who was also a Holocaust survivor originally from Lwow. The couple married in 1960, and had their first son, Doron, in 1961. Kristine established an office and practiced dentistry until the family immigrated to the United States in 1968.

Kristine and her family settled in New York. Several months later, Kristine took and passed the National Board Dental Examinations. She began to teach dentistry at New York University and eventually opened her own practice. She and Marian had a second son, Roger, in 1975. At the time of Kristine's interview in 1998, she and Marian were living in Port Washington, New York, and had two grandchildren: Jonathan and Daniel.