

ROMAN KENT

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Roman Kent was born Roman Kniker to Emanuel and Sonia Kniker in Lodz, Poland, on April 18, 1929. He had two older sisters, Dasza and Renia, and

one younger brother, Leon. His father owned a textile factory. Roman attended a private Jewish school. On the way to school, Roman remembers that non-Jewish children called him and his classmates names and threw stones at them.

In 1939, soon after the Germans invaded Poland, Roman and his family were forced out of their home and had to move into an empty room in the factory that had been confiscated from his father. At the end of 1939, the family was imprisoned in the Lodz ghetto. They had to leave the family dog, Lala, behind, but Lala found them in the ghetto where she remained until the Germans took her away. In the ghetto, Roman was made to sew leather knapsacks for German soldiers, but he and the other laborers resisted by slowing down production whenever they could. Conditions in the ghetto were harsh, and Roman's father eventually became ill and died of malnutrition in 1943.

In the fall of 1944, the ghetto was liquidated, and the family was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. When they arrived, Roman and his brother were separated from their mother and sisters. To get transferred, Roman and Leon said they were tradesmen and were sent to Gross-Rosen that winter. Several months later, Roman and his brother were transferred to Flossenburg.

In April 1945, Roman and Leon left Flossenburg on a death march to Dachau. En route to Dachau, they were liberated by the U.S. Army. Shortly after, the brothers began to search for any surviving family members.

They found out that their mother had died at Auschwitz-Birkenau, but their sisters had survived and were in Sweden. The brothers decided to travel to Sweden, where they were reunited with their sisters in a hospital in Lubeck. However, Dasza was very sick and passed away a few months later. In June 1946, Roman and Leon immigrated to the United States. Their sister Renia decided to remain in Sweden where she later married.

Roman and Leon lived with foster families in Atlanta before attending Emory University where Roman studied business. After college, the brothers moved to New York and changed their last name to Kent because it was easier to pronounce. Leon went on to become a neurosurgeon, but he became ill and passed away at a young age. Roman met his future wife Hannah in New York, and they were married in 1957. They had two children, Jefferey and Susan. Roman became involved in Holocaust education and was instrumental in the making of *Children of the Holocaust*, a documentary film dedicated to the memory of the children who died during the Holocaust. At the time of Roman's interview in 1996, he and his wife Hannah had two grandchildren, Eryn and Dara, and were expecting a third.