

RICHARD KIMELMAN

After hiding in Vienna, Richard Kimelman and his parents escaped to England where they spent the rest of the war years.

“After visiting Yad Vashem the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, I started to develop a mixed media style of sculpture utilizing barbed wire which expressed my deeper feelings.”

Richard Kimelman was born in Vienna in 1926 to Polish-born parents, both of whom were physician/dentists. When the German Army invaded Austria in 1938, Richard saw tanks, trucks and motorbikes rolling past the apartment sirens wailing.

Though Richard was familiar with anti-Semitism both at school and in the streets where he was attacked by gangs of boys, he felt that nothing prepared him for what happened after the German invasion. His father, who had been awarded the Iron Cross in World War I, was among the first to be arrested and remained a prisoner in Dachau for a year. Richard and his mother hid with a friend, until he killed himself and they had to find another refuge. After one year, Richard's mother courageously managed to speak to the deputy leader of the Gestapo in Vienna asking to get her husband released. She promised that the family would leave Austria immediately and with great difficulty, she was able to obtain visitors' visas to England.

Richard, who didn't know a word of English when they arrived, received a scholarship to a British boarding school. Once he narrowly escaped injury when a German rocket landed a few feet from where he was sleeping, sweeping away the house over his head and leaving him with only minor injuries.

Due to a shortage of medical personnel during the war, Richard's parents were eventually permitted to work as dentists in a London clinic. He joined them there to go to college, graduating in Engineering from London University in 1946. They decided to settle in England and became British Subjects.

Richard learned that the only survivors of both his parents' families were an uncle who was in the Warsaw Ghetto and his daughter who survived a jump from a moving train taking her to a camp.

Shortly after the war, Richard met and married Joan Sands. They immigrated to the United States, eventually living in Northern California with their three children. Richard had always been considered artistic but, during the war, attending art school was not a possibility. After a long career as a structural engineer, he became a full-time sculptor.