

“Where are They Now?” Donor Story: Tom Kertesz, BS Engineering 1960

For Tom Kertesz, anywhere was better than where he'd been - he came to the United States after surviving the Holocaust and nine years of communist rule in Hungary.

Tom hails from Kalocsa, Hungary, the “Paprika Capital of the World.” During WWII, Tom’s father was sent to the Soviet front as a member of one of the Jewish labor battalions and was killed there in early 1943 during the battle of Stalingrad. In 1944, Tom, his mother and grandparents were first confined to the Kalocsa ghetto, then sent to a series of concentration camps in Germany.

Tom came to the US at the end of 1956 after the Hungarian uprising against communist rule. With the help of the Ford Foundation he applied for a scholarship at SDSU. A combined student body and faculty committee raised funds for Hungarian students. The committee also asked faculty and staff to host the students/refugees for one month until the students could get on their feet. Dr. Kramer Rohfleisch, Professor of History, and Marjorie Rohfleisch, Professor of Music, agreed to host Tom - and the one month turned into 3.5 years.



After graduation, Tom worked on a hydro-electric plant, served in the Army Corps of Engineers and acquired some additional education. In 1963 he joined Lockheed Missile and Space Company, where, over a 35 year career, he rose from engineering analyst to Chief Scientist for their Space Division. He retired in 1998 and began a second career as a consultant. Later he taught spacecraft design at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.

Tom remained close to the Rohfleischs until their deaths and says he is eternally grateful to the Rohfleisch family for their kindness and humanity in giving him a home and a second family. Now, Tom has made a bequest that will establish the *Kramer and Marjorie Rohfleisch Memorial Scholarship Fund*, for the benefit of SDSU’s History Department, to honor the couple who so generously hosted him as a student. The fund will commemorate their teaching excellence and humanity, and will provide an annual scholarship to a deserving student majoring in History.

Tom is Aztec Proud and we are proud of him!