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## Remembering Kristallnacht and the S.S. St. Louis with the Salmon Family

by SHIRA STOLL

### **Commemoration of Kristallnacht and the S.S. St. Louis**

Egon J. Salmon and family held their annual commemoration of Kristallnacht and of the S.S. St. Louis on Wednesday at Wagner College.

The event honors and recognizes Egon J. Salmon's story, as well as the Salmon family's contribution to the Jewish community of New York.

### **Nazi Germany**

Salmon grew up in Nazi Germany and witnessed the horrors of Kristallnacht, known as the "Night of Broken Glass." On the eve of Nov. 9, 1938, through the early morning of Nov. 10, 1938, Nazis in Germany vandalized Jewish homes, broke the windows of Jewish businesses, set synagogues on fire, and killed many Jews. This is the night that many Holocaust Survivors refer to as the turning point of the war; the moment they realized the severity of anti-Semitism in Germany.

### **Egon J. Salmon's story**

On the eve of Nov. 9, 1938, Egon Salmon's father, Paul Salmon, was taken to prison, and eventually he was sent to Dachau Concentration Camp until December 1938. Paul Salmon was released with the condition that he leave Germany within 90 days. He was able to reside in Havana, Cuba, and arranged for the rest of his family to join him.

On May 13, 1939, Egon Salmon, his sister Edna, and his mother Erna set sail on the S.S. St. Louis from Hamburg, Germany, to Havana to be reunited with Paul Salmon. There were 937 passengers aboard the ship — many were Jews attempting to escape from the Nazis. When the St. Louis landed in Cuba, it was turned away and sent back to Nazi Germany. Fortunately, on the return trip home, Belgium decided to accept refugees, and so they settled there from June 1938 to April 1940. Paul Salmon was then able to get papers to move to the United States and Egon, Edna and Erna Salmon sailed to the United States. The family was reunited on Staten Island just two weeks before the Nazis invaded Belgium on May 10, 1940.

## **Keynote speakers**

The two keynote speakers at the commemoration were Dr. Judith Gerson, a professor in Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University and co-editor of "Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories, Identities, and Diasporas," and Scott Miller, the director of Curatorial Affairs at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. He is also the co-author of the book, "Refuge Denied: The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust."

## **Passing stories to the next generation**

Egon J. Salmon spoke about his story and thanked everyone for coming. He stressed the importance of sharing the stories of Kristallnacht, the S.S. St. Louis, and the Holocaust. "It is important for me to tell the story of what happened for future generations."