

THE BOROUGH

GRYMES HILL

Wagner College to host Holocaust observance

Thursday-night program is free and open to the public

By Diane C. Lore

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Well-known Staten Island Realtor Henry Salmon and his cousin, Deborah Salmon, will share reflections, photos and videos of their parents and grandparents' escape from Nazi Germany, during a presentation Thursday evening at Wagner College, Grymes Hill.

The program, presented by the Wagner College Holocaust Education and Programming

Center, is called "Our Grandfathers were Arrested on Kristallnacht: Their flight to Bolivia, Argentina, Cuba and Staten Island."

Henry will share his thoughts on a recent trip to Germany to explore his family's heritage and the meaning of the Holocaust today. Deborah's presentation will include photos taken by her grandmother Trude, a professional photographer, who captured family moments in their life in pre-war Germany.

The program begins at 6:30 p.m., with a light kosher dinner and candlelighting, in

the Wagner Union building on the Grymes Hill campus.

Deborah's maternal grandfather Eduard Blumberg, a doctor in Leipzig and World War I veteran, was arrested on Nov. 10, 1938, and sent to Buchenwald. On release, after a brief time in the Netherlands, he secured a visa to Bolivia. They made the difficult decision to leave Deborah's mother Lisa, and sister in the Netherlands for six months until they were finally reunited.

Soon after she arrived, Lisa met another German refugee, Walter Salmon (a cousin of

patriarch Egon Salmon). Deborah's family continued to speak German in Bolivia and later in Argentina, where she became a psychologist. Ten years ago, Deborah's family immigrated to Staten Island, and since then she has been able to work at the Alan and Joan Bernikow Jewish Community Center and the YMCA New Americans Welcome Center helping other immigrants.

Paul Salmon, a businessman in Rheydt, was taken by the Nazis to Dachau. Released on condition he leave the country at once, Paul was forced to leave his wife, Erna, and children, Egon and Edith, in Germany while he sought a visa in the U.S. They too attempted to flee, on the ill-fated Voyage of the S.S. St. Louis, which was turned back in Cuba.

They took refuge in Belgium until, just weeks before the Nazis invaded, they came to Staten Island. Two years later, Egon was drafted into the U.S. Army to serve in World War II



Deborah Azur Salmon's grandfather Eduard Blumberg, wife Trude, and daughters Lisa and Ruth, before they were forced to flee Nazi Germany during the Holocaust.

in Italy and North Africa. Egon then established one of the oldest real estate firms in the borough, and strengthened the Staten Island Board of Realtors (SIBOR).

This business and his legacy of community service have been continued by his sons Jon and Henry, past president of the Staten Island Museum. Henry twice returned to Germany with his wife, Linda, to visit family heritage sites, and will discuss the impact of that trip.

On Kristallnacht — Nov.

9-10, 1938 — Nazi storm troopers and sympathizers raided and destroyed thousands of Jewish homes, shops and synagogues. Ninety-one Jews were killed and 30,000 Jewish men were taken away.

"Kristallnacht is a turning point in the history of the Holocaust. We are honored to learn more about a family who was directly affected by the escalation of violence against the Jews in Germany. And, this is a family who has contributed so much to our community," noted Dr. Victor Avis, co-chair of Wagner College's Chai Society and one of the supporters of Wagner's new Holocaust Education and Programming Center.

Wagner students, junior Julia Loria, and senior Sarah Cappiello, have prepared the presentation with Deborah Salmon.

Loria's great-grandparents were taken from Germany to Treblinka, after her grandfather fled to France. "The Salmon family history, and their journey around the world, has impacted me in a way no other holocaust story has," she said. It has reinforced the meaning of staying strong and positive to survive. It really demonstrates the value of family through the worst and best of times."

The program Thursday is free and open to the public. Voluntary donations can be made to the Wagner College Holocaust Education and Programming Center.

For more information about the Holocaust Center, or to schedule interviews for Holocaust survivors, call Professor Lori R. Weintrob, director, at 718-390-3309.