

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Ronnie Reutlinger Breslow



Ronnie Reutlinger Breslow, formerly known as Renate Reutlinger, was born in Kirchem, Germany. She lived a normal life with her parents, who owned and operated a dry goods store located below their home. Ronnie collected stamps throughout her childhood, many of which were gifts from her Uncle Willie.

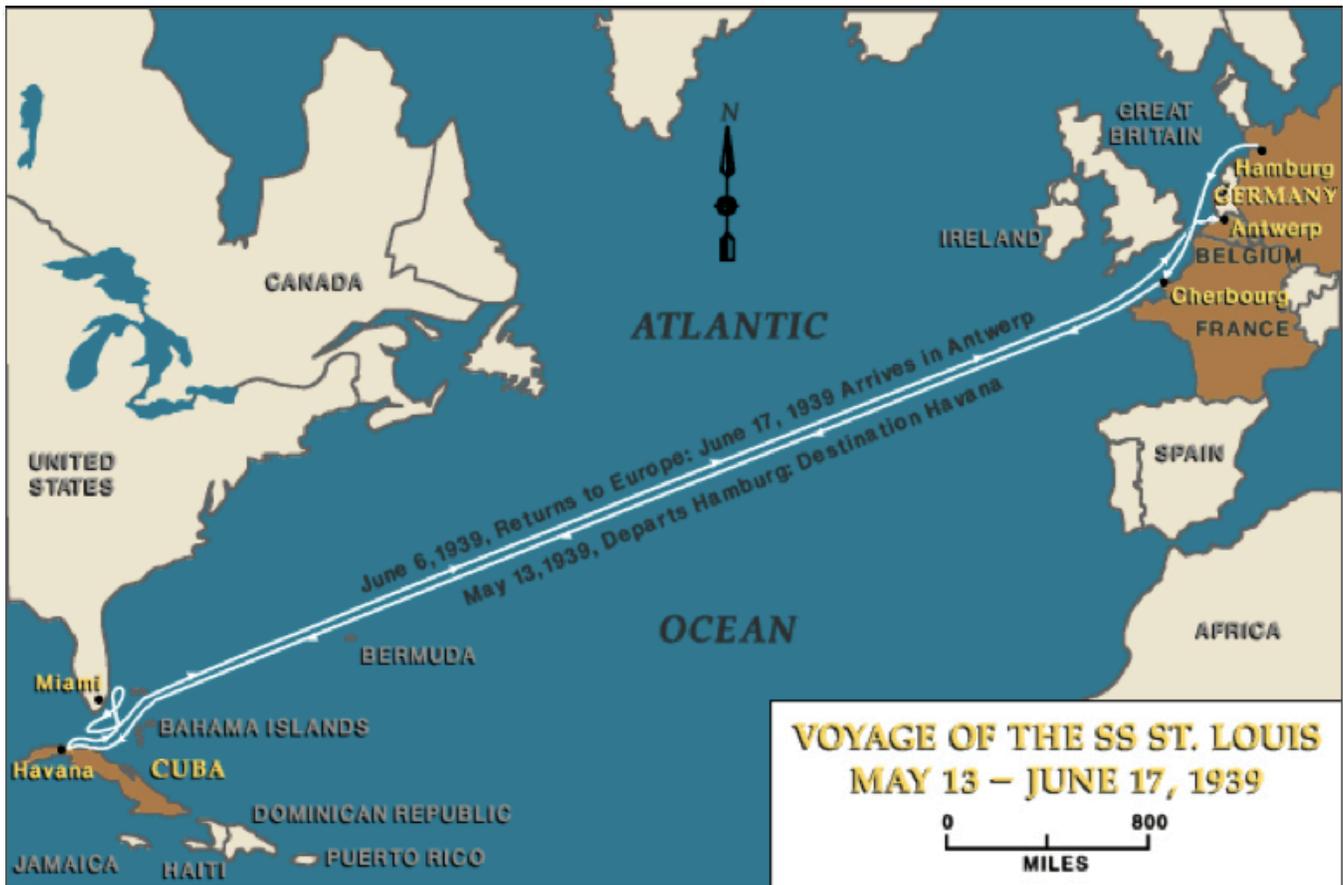
In April 1933 the Nazis passed the Law Against Overcrowding in German Schools. The law stated that Jews could not attend school with non-Jews. Ronnie's friends abandoned her. The Nazis also passed laws that restricted non-Jews from buying goods at Jewish stores. Nazis marched back and forth in front of her parent's store and the business suffered greatly for their presence.

With no business and no school, Ronnie's family knew they had to leave Germany. Passports were hard to obtain and passage on a ship became even more difficult since thousands were fleeing the country. A single ticket to Cuba became available and the family decided that Ronnie's father should go since men were in the most danger at the time. Ronnie and her mother would follow on the next boat. They boarded a ship called the St. Louis on May 13, 1939, and sailed for Cuba with 936 other Jews. For safekeeping, Ronnie brought her stamp collection.

Cuba refused to allow the St. Louis to dock. After many weeks adrift at sea, Ronnie and her mother wound up in Holland. They were placed in Rotterdam West, a detention camp, where children stayed in separate buildings from their parents, always cold and hungry. Ronnie's mother discovered that the Camp Commander was an avid stamp collector and gave him her daughter's collection to gain passage for both of them to the United States where Ronnie's father was waiting. After they left, others at that camp were moved to the Westerbork, a transit camp and deported and died. The stamp collection saved their lives.

Ronnie now speaks to students and adults about her experience and says, "if we forget the lessons of the past, we are surely to allow history to repeat itself, if not with the Jews, with the Irish, the Italians, the Africans, the Americans. Let us not forget."

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Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center

www.hamec.org

Kleinlife, Suite 210, 10100 Jamison Ave, Philadelphia 19116

Phone: (215) 464-4701 Fax: (215) 464-4703 Email: info@hamec.org

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