

## Gerald Granston

In May 1939 the cruise ship S.S. St Louis sailed from Hamburg for Cuba with about 980 Jewish passengers fleeing from Nazi persecution. Almost everyone had landing certificates, illegally sold to them by the Cuban director of immigration in Germany. As the ship approached Havana's harbour, the Cuban government invalidated the landing certificates and the refugees were denied entry. Ordered out of Cuban water, the captain took the ship north to Florida, but the US government refused to allow the refugees to land. After travelling northwards to Canada, the refugees received yet another refusal. "No country could open its doors wide enough to accommodate the Jews leaving Europe", stated the Canadian government immigration in chief. 'The line must be drawn somewhere'.

Reluctantly, the captain set sail back to Europe, although the refugees feared for their safety. Finally an ingenious plan to persuade different European countries to accept small numbers was successful. Britain, France, Belgium and Holland each agreed to take some refugees. Three months later war broke out.

Gerald Granston and his father were passengers on the St. Louis. The initial sense of excitement and adventure turned to panic and fear when they were refused entry into Cuba. 'It was like being in a prison', recalls Gerald, who eventually was one of the lucky ones allowed to land in Southampton, England in June 1939.

When the war ended in 1945, 60% of the passengers were dead. No country really wanted the Jews and even in 1939 many believed that Concentration Camps and persecution were just Zionist propaganda.

Since the late 1980's Gerald has spoken regularly in Britain and the United States about his experiences on the St Louis.

He says 'Never condemn people for what you think they are but respect them for what they really are. Get to know people – they are just like you'.



## Gerald Granston's Story



Gerald aged 6 on board the St Louis in May 1939

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