

# Synagogue honors WWII soldier's heroism

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ORANGE, Conn. - An American soldier who stood up to the Nazis and saved the lives of some 200 Jews during World War II was honored Sunday at Or Shalom synagogue, his heroic action held up by speakers as an example of what is needed more than ever today in the United States.

Some 240 people attended the event to commemorate "Kristallnacht," a series of brutal attacks by the Nazis on Jews Nov. 9-10, 1938 in Germany and Austria. Kristallnacht, which translates to "night of broken glass," is often referred to as the beginning of the Holocaust.

Master Sgt. Roddie Edmonds, a recently discovered hero, saved the lives in World War II by refusing to have his Jewish soldiers come forward as ordered by the Nazis, saying instead, "We are all Jews here."

Edmonds' son, Pastor Chris Edmonds of Piney Grove Baptist Church, traveled from Tennessee to talk about his father.

Roddie Edmonds, whose heroism was uncovered by his son after his death, is the fifth American and only United States soldier to receive the designation of "Righteous Among the Nations" by the state of Israel. Roddie Edmonds has also been nominated to posthumously receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

"My family and I are very proud of

dad," said Chris Edmonds. "My dad had an infectious love for others. In a defining moment when evil demanded his conscience, he bowed to no one."

Chris Edmonds said his father's legacy lives on in the more than 2,000 people alive today.

It was January 1945 when Edmonds, leader of the 422nd Infantry Regiment and imprisoned along with some 1,300 of his men in a Nazi POW camp, was told that the next morning he was to send out only the Jews in his group.

Edmonds whispered to his men, "We're not doing that." Instead, when morning came, he told the Nazi commandant, "We are all Jews here."

The commandant said, "These men can't all be Jews," pulled out his pistol, held it to Edmonds' head and demanded he order Jewish soldiers to step forward. Edmonds told him, "If you shoot me, you'll have to shoot us all," and went on to say that if he did that he'd be tried for war crimes after the war was won.

The commandant put his gun back in his holster and left the scene.

Roddie Edmonds never gave his family those or any other details of his service.

It wasn't until years after Roddie's death when Chris Edmonds was going through his father's diary that he began to research the details.

President Barack Obama, and Steven Spielberg, founder of the Shoah Foundation, participated in the 2015 event where Roddie Edmonds was honored at the Israeli embassy.

## 2016-12-15 Synagogue honors MSgt Roddie Edmonds

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