

So she spent it. Not only that, she bought us shoes in all sizes and for the whole family. Not only that, everything that you bought-- purchased at that time to leave the country had to be packed and supervised with government supervision. The bills had to be shown. And whatever the cost was you had to pay a tax to the government for the same amount.

100% tax?

100%. And then it was packed into what was called lifts to be sent overseas. And it was all packed. And it was standing in the harbor in Hamburg to be shipped to Kenya. And the war broke out. It was bombed. None of it came.

All that preparation--

All that--

--all that work. All that money.

It's still there if you look for it.

In the bottom of the harbor somewhere.

Like the Titanic.

So despite all her preparations--

It all went.

It all went.

Yeah.

So here you are June 9, 1939-- oh, before we go there, tell us about those visas that you were able to get from the British to go to Kenya. They were not free.

Oh, no, they cost, at that time, 250-- it used to cost 50 pounds for an immigrant to go to Kenya. When all the people were trying to emigrate, the British upped that fee to 250 pounds per person.

A five-fold increase--

Mm-hmm.

--for people desperate to get out.

Right. And you had to pay that. In 1938, I believe 1,000 refugees were permitted into Kenya. And amongst those refugees were three children-- my sister, my cousin, and I.

You were the three children among the 1,000. Wow.

And we got to Kenya in end of June '39.

So you went by ship. Tell us about the gathering and the trip to go to Kenya.

Well, first, we left Cologne by train overnight through Switzerland to Genoa. In Genoa, we--

Do you know if leaving Germany was a period of danger or fear or--

Oh, awful, especially for my sister who was what? Five years old. And she didn't understand. And my mother kept her almost tied to her apron string because she didn't want her to talk.

And on the train, I was put between my grandparents-- my grandfather, me, and my grandmother. I was wedged in. My sister was put in another compartment with my other grandmother and aunt. And they were there. And she was there.

So we couldn't say a word while we were traveling through Germany because the Nazi inspectors were on the train. Once we crossed into the Swiss border, my mother said, OK, now, now you can talk. So by the time we arrived in Genoa, it was the next day. It was a Thursday. And we left on a Sunday.

And we were in a hotel in Genoa. And we left on a Sunday. And on the ship was my mother, my sister, two aunts, my grandparents, and my grandmother, who was very ill-- she was dying of cancer-- and my cousin Egon, the little boy in the middle.

As we're leaving the harbor in Genoa, they had pulled up the gangplank, but they had not put up the gate.

So just an open space there?

Open space. Water below. I happened to see him. And I just grabbed.

He was just standing right on--

He was two years-- he was standing. He was two years old. I just grabbed. And he started screaming. And of course, then everybody ran. And he's been a big donor to the museum. He's also-- he's also a very prominent attorney.

And owes you a great deal, Inge. You were forced-- your mother was forced to book passage on a German ship. That was her option. So if she's going to leave, you got to buy your tickets to go--

Double.

Double the price to go on a German ship. So you're on a ship belonging to the German government, or Germans. And you're now sailing for Kenya. There was an incident with your sister that I'd love you to share where they heard her singing, as I recall.

First of all, we were on a German ship, a Nazi ship, where we had ordered and received kosher food. Don't ask me why? How? That's how it went. Also, on this ship were Nazis that were going to Tanganyika, which was the next colony next to Kenya.

And that was a German colony, right?

A German colony. And they were traveling with carrier pigeons at that time already. And my sister has and can carry a tune. And she can sing very nicely. And they heard that, the sailors heard that. And they said, come and sing for us.

And my mother was terrified what kind of songs she would sing. [LAUGHTER] She had to go sing for them. And she did. She was 5. And she had no inhibitions.

And they had her sing at the captain's table as I recall.

Yeah. Yeah.

Do you remember much about the voyage?

No.

No.

I remember the one coming here, seven weeks on a cargo boat.

To come to the United States?

Yes.

Well, before we get there, so you make it to Kenya. You get to Mombasa. Tell us about that.

We get to Mombasa. And that's where we first saw our father again after seven months. And we stayed in Mombasa overnight and then got on a train from Mombasa to Nairobi. It still runs today, the same train. And it's an overnight trip.

And while we were en route, my father had rented a large, large house to accommodate all these people that were coming.

17 of you?

17 of us. And he-- so we moved into-- it was on the outskirts of Nairobi. And we settled in. And I think within two or three days, my family decided my sister and I had to go to school.

We didn't know a single word of English. We have to go to an English school. Well, they took us.

My sister started in kindergarten. And I started back into kindergarten with her. I didn't understand--

And you're 10 years old, I believe, right?

Yeah. I didn't understand a word of English. I was in kindergarten for two weeks. And I went to first grade. And I was in first grade for four weeks until I managed to understand enough English to get into my grade level.

You told me one time that very early, I don't know if it was kindergarten for two weeks or first grade for four, but you were told memorize--

"The Daffodils."

Wadsworth's poem, "The Daffodils," in English.

In English.

And in your grandmother helped you. And she didn't speak any English either.

No. She didn't need English. But I learned "The Daffodils" by heart with a German pronunciation. I don't know whether the teacher understood me or not. But that was one of my first assignments.

And you also had to memorize quickly, "God Save the King."

Oh, yeah.

Right. Inge, one of the most amazing things to me is here you are, you're Jews. You've escaped the Nazis. You get to a British colony. But your passports are German passports.

We had no passports.

Your papers. And therefore in the eyes--

Stateless.

And therefore-- but in the eyes of the British, you were considered enemy aliens.

Right. Tell us a little bit about that.

We came to Kenya before June, July '39. And we were considered stateless. We had a piece of paper that gave our statistics with a picture and a stamp and an exit visa. And that was all we had.

And when the war broke out, they considered us enemy aliens. So here we were Jewish, German refugees, and we were now considered enemy aliens.

Because you were German?

We were German.

And so how were you treated by the British?

Awful. Awful. They weren't friendly in the first place. But--

But once the war began--

--it became worse. And they came, and when the war broke out, the British soldiers came.

And the war broke out September 1, 1939 with Germany's invasion of Poland. So it was just a few months after you arrived.

After we were there. And they came with a big bus to intern all the men. Here, we were escapees from Germany. And they thought what were we? Spies? They interned all the men.

They also wanted to take my 80-year-old grandfather. And my grandmother stood in front of this man, this British soldier, and said to him in German, look, we've been married 48 years and we've never been apart. So if you take him, you take me. So they decided to leave him home. [LAUGHTER] They brought him back the next day or something like that.

I mean it was a circus of-- it was like-- it was like a comedy what they were doing.

Absurd. Yeah.

Yeah.

So they interned your father for a while.

Yeah. And after a week or so they decided they weren't dangerous because they were joining the army, the British army. They weren't dangerous. And they can let them go.

And then we bought this-- my family bought this big ranch in Kenya. And when we moved onto that ranch, they interned us on the farm. In other words, we couldn't leave the farm for the entire war without permission from the police department.

So every time we wanted to go to town for food or whatever--

Had to get consent.

Had to get permission.

Even though your father had his own-- now his own farm, because so many of the British men had gone off to join the war effort--

Right.

--your father was also forced to manage British farms.

British farms.

Keep them intact.

Yes.

Yes. And of course, your father had a strong agricultural background.

Yeah, my father did that. We grew pyrethrum, which was the flower that DDT is a derivative of. And the British had the farms. And the men went away. So there was my father, my uncle, and three cousins. So there were enough men to do that. And they did that throughout the entire war.

And because of your educational needs and how important that was to your family, you had to go move then--

Yes.

--to Nairobi eventually to get your education.

We first went to a girls school. And my mother moved away with us because the British only had boarding schools. And we moved close to the school and lived there for maybe a term or two. And then, my mother developed an allergy to pyrethrum.

The crop that you were raising.

The crop that was-- and the air and everything. Tremendous allergy where her face would break out. So we moved to town. And we went to school there. And my mother and my sister and I had to move away from the farm. We couldn't live there.

First of all, we had to go to school. And secondly, my mother was so allergic she couldn't live there. But this was after at least 2 and 1/2 years.

What was it like for you in school? You are in an English school. You and your sister are foreigners in their eyes.

School was so totally different for me than for my sister. It was-- I liked school. I enjoyed it. As a matter of fact, I went an extra year because of the war that the education was under the auspices of Cambridge. And before the war, the British colonial children went to England to continue their studies.

Because of the war, they added a year onto the high school program. So it would be equivalent of a junior year in college. And I was able to take advantage of that.

Did Jill take advantage of it as well?

No, Jill didn't. I completed the education in Kenya. I graduated. Jill had to go to high school and went to high school in

Vineland.

During that time, Inge, was your family aware of what was happening with the war in Europe and what was happening to Jews throughout Europe?

We were aware of the war, of course. The only radio we had on the farm was a battery operated radio. It was battery operated. And once the battery was empty, they used car batteries. It was not usable anymore.

We had no electricity on the farm. We had no electricity and no running water. And so we couldn't listen to the radio much. It was only allowed to be turned on for news.

We knew what was going on. We knew it was very bad because we had a Red Cross letter from a brother of my grandmother's. But we really did not know the extent of what was going on. We only found out after the war after the war.

After the war.

Somebody, as a parting present, somebody gave my father a book of pictures. I think they were the first pictures out of the camps. And my father looked at it. And I remember it was on the boat coming here.

And he looked at it. And he was very upset. And he was crying. And I saw him throw the book overboard. He couldn't stand to see it. And that's when we first really found out what happened to my grandmother's family.

My grandmother was one of hundreds cousins. She had hundreds cousins from a big family. She was the only one that survived.

Out of the 100 cousins?

She had one cousin on the St. Louis, my father's cousin, on the ship that couldn't land in Cuba. He was returned to France, and he died in Auschwitz.

So when you were translating those correspondence related to the St. Louis, that had a very personal family connection for you.

Yeah.

Yeah. You had to learn English very quickly in Kenya. But you also learned Swahili.

Yes.

Yes. And why did you learn Swahili?

We had to talk to the-- first of all, the local people there were all Native people. And they were the laborers. So if you wanted to talk to them, you had to know their language. They didn't know ours. And we learned the--

Swahili was a very easy language to learn at that time. It had no grammar. It just had words that you put together. And we learned that very quickly. Children learn languages very quickly.

And they were kind. They were nice. They were helpful. And we felt well because we weren't being looked down upon.

In 1945, May 1945, the war ends in Europe. When did it feel like it was normal for you in terms of the relationship with the British and being viewed--

It never did.

It never did.

It never became-- it never became-- I don't think there was a single British friend that I wrote to when we left Kenya, none. We had--

Disappointing.

We lived a very insular life because we had such a big family.

Right. So how did you make the decision, the family make the decision, then to eventually leave Kenya, I believe 1947, to make your way to the United States? And how was that possible?

They wanted to come to the States before the war and couldn't. So at that time, my mother had an uncle who had two sons that came to America before the war. As a matter of fact, one of them was in the American army. And he was Eisenhower's kitchen chef at the Potsdam Conference.

And when they came back-- when they came back to civilian life, they sent us an affidavit. And that's the way we were able to come.

And that's the way you were able to do it.

Yeah.

Also, things in Kenya had turned more difficult too, as I recall.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Actually, I consider myself a double survivor because we were able to survive Hitler's Germany. But in Kenya there was the Mau Mau uprising. The Mau-- yeah, it was an uprising. And the native Kenyans, the Kikuyus particularly, were fighting the government for independence.

The British government?

The British government. And they were killing all the White settlers in the Highlands. And we lived in the Highlands. And we left there 3, 4 months before that started.

Made your way to the United States.

And-- yeah.

Inge, before we turn to our audience for a couple of questions from them, just tell us a little bit about your arriving in the United States and what it was like for you to make yet another major transition in your life.

Yeah. For me, it was exciting. It was--

What, you're 18 years old?

18 years old, coming to America. And again, I became very independent. My parents lived in New York. And my father couldn't stand it. He said, I have to get out of New York. And they left New York and went to southern New Jersey and settled there on a farm, chicken farm. A big mistake, the chickens died. And I was able to stay in New York. My parents found a room for me to rent and left me enough money for a month and said, get a job.

They gave you \$100 basically and said, you're 18, you're on your own, kid.

Right. And I got a job. I was naive enough to say-- to think that the only place to work was on Fifth Avenue in New

York. So I bought The New York Times. And I marked down all the jobs that were looking for somebody on Fifth Avenue.

I started on 20th Street. And by the time I got to 26th, I had a job. It lasted two weeks. I was so green, they couldn't even train me.

OK, I continued up. At 45th, I found another one. This time I was smart enough not to take the job, but to take an assistant's job. And that worked. I stayed there-- I stayed there two, three years.

And then I met my husband. And I moved to southern New Jersey. And from there on--

And here we are.

Here we are.

Inge, we have time for a few questions from our audience. Why don't we turn to them. If you have a question-- we've got one hand up already-- make your question as brief as you can. I'll repeat it so that everybody in the room, including Inge, hears it. And then she'll respond. Yes, sir.

Why were the Jew so persecuted in Germany during World War II?

Why were the Jews so persecuted in Germany?

Well, Hitler came to power in 1933. And he started the persecution of Jews right then and there from day one.

What was the--

Well, I think what we'd like to do here is just keep the story focused on Inge's personal story. But what I would suggest, if you've not toured the permanent exhibition yet, terrific opportunity to do that. And you can do that right after this program, I hope. Right. Yes, sir.

Was it better for you to be in Cologne because it was on kind of the side of Germany that there was a better chance why you were able to emigrate?

Was it easier for you to emigrate or leave Germany because of Cologne-- because it was closer to Holland perhaps? Or just that was the major city for you? Why you went to Cologne from Lechenich?

Oh, we couldn't all go to Holland. We didn't have permission. We didn't have a entry visa. And Holland at that time was overrun by people that were trying to-- that were fleeing Germany. And they interned everybody. They just couldn't handle the influx of people that was coming.

So from Cologne, your mother was able to make all the arrangements--

In Cologne, you disappeared. It was a big city, and you could disappear.

OK, we got a question here.

Were there many other Jewish families in Kenya?

Question is, were there other Jewish families in Kenya?

Oh, yes. There were some that had lived there way, way for years.