

Remembrance for Aunt Inge

By: Kathy O'Connor

As a younger kid, I remember hearing that Aunt Inge was from Germany. I had no idea what that meant. Then, I needed to write a paper on World War II for my high school history class. My mom told me - the best person to speak with was Aunt Inge. When I called Avon, Uncle P.J. answered the phone and gave me a few tidbits for my paper. At that time, I would not know that Inge's origins, experiences and relationships would have a significant impact on my life.

She invited her dear friend Agnes Preissel from Switzerland to visit the U.S. Inge and Agnes had worked together as young women. Inge included my mother and me in entertaining Agnes while she visited. We had great fun eating lobsters and touring around. It was clear from their fondness for each other that they were like family. By seeing Inge with her friend, I learned more about her life before coming to the U.S. I was only beginning to appreciate her unique background.

Years later, I was offered an internship in Switzerland. At age 26, I had never traveled out of the U.S. I was

completely intimidated. However, after discussing the opportunity with Aunt Inge and Uncle PJ, they assured me that Agnes would be there to watch out for me, “just in case”. When I arrived in Basel, she assumed full responsibility for me. She took me in, fed and entertained me like I was her family. This was all because I was Inge’s niece.

While there, it was easy to fall under the spell of the Swiss and European culture. I could see where Inge got her love of flowers and gardening. The culture that I saw for the first time was part of her history.

After returning, I had lunch with Aunt Inge and Uncle PJ at the cape where we shared our love for travel and European culture. Inge said, “We always have a bag packed. We’re ready to go at a moment’s notice”. Thanks to Inge, I feel the same way.

Soon after my trip to Switzerland my mother moved to Cape Cod and we would see Inge and P.J. more often. On a few occasions, we celebrated my birthday, my mother’s birthday and Uncle P.J.’s birthday which were all within the same week.

On my 50th birthday, I was in New York preparing for a dinner party with friends. Aunt Inge and Uncle P.J. surprised me with a beautiful flower arrangement. When I told my friends who sent the flowers, I shared the story of Inge and P.J. My friends said that story should be a movie.

We also spent a few holidays together in Boston and Florida. Wherever we were, we shared some wonderful memories. For me, Aunt Inge was quite special. She introduced me to her world and I will be forever grateful.