

## Irene Kirstein Watts - Video Transcriptions

### CLIP 1

My father was sent almost immediately to the Isle of Man as an enemy alien, as were, you know, thousands of other German refugees, because everybody was in a panic. And then he was sent to a camp in Australia. And by the time the Australians found out that they had all these harmless people, they couldn't send them back because it was too dangerous to send them back the ocean [sic]. So that's what happened.

But I do have one vivid memory of the first time I saw them [her parents] again, after they came from Germany, and we had a meal together, and after the meal, my father excused himself and he was sitting by himself on a chair and he was crying. And it was a dreadful, dreadful thing for me to see, to see your father crying.

And of course, with hindsight, I realised this man arrived with the equivalent of five bucks [dollars] in his pocket, no language, no, no real skills. And what was going to happen?

[...]

My father eventually came back. His health was totally broken and we had, you know, there were the years between we never were able, able to make contact; I mean I hadn't really known him before I left Germany except for that hour on a Sunday. And there was no contact at all. And I feel sad about that.

He, he was a refugee and he stood at the local market behind a stall and, and sold fabrics; that's how he made a living. And then he became a commercial traveller, leaving the house at six in the morning with his suitcase, no car.

And he was, he was already 50 when he came to Britain, so he was a...you know, getting on in years and he made a living selling things on commission only.

And we found out after his death that in fact his, his customers loved him very much and he travelled all over Wales.

[...]

My father committed suicide when Judy [her sister] was seven or eight and nobody knows exactly why.

But he, as I say, his health was broken and what he did was send my mother away for a couple of days on a trip to London to see me.

And they were living in a cold-water flat [a flat provided with only cold running water] above an insurance office and he made all the beds, tidied up, covered the crack on the kitchen floor with blankets and put his head in the gas oven.

And seems a long way to come to, to do what the Nazis were trying to do in the first place.

And it was, it was very sad.

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### CLIP 2

**Interviewer:** When did you immigrate to Canada?

**IKW:** In 1968: It was a very quick and wonderful decision.

I was teaching in a girls' school, was teaching drama, and somebody from Indian affairs came over and watched me teach and offered me a job and a house. And my husband and I discussed it and the children were the right age, aged sort of seven to 12.

I'd like to show you a picture of my children as they were just before that time.

[Holds up photograph]

My oldest daughter Julia, my daughter Tanya, my son Adam, my daughter Victoria. And Julia works for the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] as a dispatcher. And Tanya is a scientist working for cancer research in the field of immunology at the University of Toronto. And Vicky is a teacher. And my son Adam is in construction. And between them they have eight children, so, I'm blessed with eight grandchildren, aged two to 13.

[...]

I've always worked with children; I write plays and books for children, I have, I've taught. And people have often said, 'Why always children? Why haven't you done other things?'

And I think it's because I didn't have a childhood, I'm making up for the childhood I didn't have.

I imagine that's why.