

Mayor Krogman, former Mayor and City Foundation President Schuetz, Members of the Oldenburg City Council, museum officials, Shoer family members, esteemed guests and friends, good afternoon. Thank you for your kind attention to these brief remarks.

Our travel to be with you today has also allowed us to tour Oldenburg. This city has made a lot of remarkable history since its founding over 1000 years ago. Today it is a vibrant and beautiful city with buildings reportedly dating back as far as the 12th century in testimony to its past.

The Insel family story is a more recent chapter in that history, remarkable for the tragedy and sorrow, but none-the-less representative as a part of a city and country's longer social and political story.

The Insel's were a large and productive family, valued members of their greater community; but ultimately persecuted, threatened, hunted and murdered, not by an individual criminal but by a nationalist Nazi society who scapegoated its problems onto others.

Those deemed to be disposable at the time were many Jews, but also intellectuals, members of the arts, the physically and mentally handicapped, foreign nationals – essentially those fellow citizens, assigned and thus perceived to be “different”.

It's a representative and horrible part of our European and world history, including that of our family.

Yet, it remains an instructive and important social story with many lessons that, with our eyes to the present and future political environment, we must not allow to be forgotten.

We are thankful to the Oldenburg community for keeping the story alive through the efforts of the good officials of this city, represented by Mayor Juergen Krogmann, City Foundation president and former mayor Dietmar Schuetz, along with Mr. Jörg Witte, an educator and researcher, and of course, the excellent work by the city museum.

Let me personally thank Sabine Stuehrholdt and her museum colleagues for their extensive research and coordination in planning for the sharing of the Insel story, and preservation of the related history for current and future generations.

There is another aspect to the Insel story that will not be in the museum, but is still important to recognize and share.

The “rest of the story” relates to the foresight and heroism, along with fortunate good luck, illustrated by family members like Reuven Shoer’s mother and my grandmother, Marta Insel, among those who survived Nazi discrimination and persecution of the 1930’s and 40’s.

In 1937, Marta, an amazing woman, community activist, accomplished artist and mother to two daughters, told her husband they had to leave Germany and he was “welcome to come along if he wished”. After the initial husband’s “no”, he relented and they were able to leave and eventually settle in the United States.

I stand here with other generations of family members as part of Marta’s joyful legacy and that of those Insel family members who successfully escaped.

My grandmother had many wonderful talents, with one in particular that parents and grandparents can appreciate.

I fondly remember that my grandmother used to tell us “bedtime stories”, almost always with a moral or a message at the end.

As part of one, she told us that, “When it rains, you see and feel God’s tears”. She went on to explain that these can be, “tears of either sorrow or joy”.

When we leave to walk in the rain outside this hall today, recognizing and sharing the story of the Insel family, we experience both.