



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Second World War Discovery Box

Personal Stories

Inge Oswald

Ontario Farm Service Force

Although originally classified as an enemy alien, Inge joined the Ontario Farm Service Force in her teens, supporting food production during the war.



Inge Oswald in her Ontario Farm Service Force uniform.
George Metcalf Archival Collection
Canadian War Museum 20120014-004 (cropped)

Early Years

Inge was born in Austria in 1925. Her father was a chemist. Inge and her parents came to Canada when she was 11.

The family settled in Toronto, Ontario, but Inge knew very little English. Her parents sent her to a private girl's school for a year, to help her learn the language.

Enemy Alien

The war years were not easy for an immigrant family from Austria. Although the Oswalds had become citizens, Canada was now at war with Germany, which had taken over Austria in 1938.

Under Canadian regulations, the family had to register as enemy aliens. They also had to report regularly to the police station.

Inge had found it difficult to move to a new country, learn a new language and adapt to a new culture. She now worried what her friends would think if they discovered her status as an **enemy alien** and her frequent visits to the police station. She was glad when this requirement was dropped.

Volunteering with the Ontario Farm Service Force

While still in her teens, Inge joined the Ontario Farm Service Force (OFSF). Food production was a crucial part of the **Allied** war effort, but farmers had lost many labourers to the military and war industries.

To help fill the gap, young people in Ontario were encouraged to join the OFSF. The Force was divided into various sections, based on gender, age and availability. Young women like Inge, still in school and free to spend the summer working on farms, became members of the Farmerette Brigade.

Many farmerettes lived in dormitories, some of which were as basic as converted stables. They were supervised by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). In exchange for spending the summer in the OFSF, students with good grades did not have to write any final exams.

Inge joined the OFSF with a friend, Nora Cumberland. Together, they went to work on a fruit farm in the Niagara region of southern Ontario.

Inge's summer as a farmerette in the field was cut short when she had a serious allergic reaction to peach fuzz. This was quite a problem for a fruit picker. She then went to work at a Campbell's Soup factory, which she liked far less than fruit picking.

Life After the War

For the rest of the war, Inge supported the war effort through non-agricultural pursuits, such as volunteering and knitting.

In 1945, she married William Cumberland – brother of her best friend Nora – and they had two daughters. Inge died in 2004, in Mississauga, Ontario.

Vocabulary

Allied

The countries, including Canada, that joined together in opposing the Axis powers during the Second World War. The largest Allied nations were the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

Enemy Aliens

A term used to describe citizens of foreign states legally at war with a country, and who reside in that country during the war.