

[00:03:01] **Nora Shenouda:** We have a lot of books about him and lot of letters and documents, but we know very little about him as a private person. [00:03:10][9.6]

[00:03:11] **Walburga Habsburg Douglas:** From his writings, you cannot get his personality. You cannot understand that there were evenings when he was at home, that after dinner he would be sitting down with us kids and start to play, sit on the floor and play. There were these different things that we were playing together. When we couldn't fall asleep he came and sat with us and sang and told long stories. I mean, as any father would. I have one son. I was constantly singing to him, and my husband asked me: why are you singing to this poor child. It was because that's what my father did. I remember when often he would be saying, you know, I'm out for giving a speech, and if I come home, I come by your room. And if you are still awake, I will sit with you and tell you something. And I tried to be awake to be capable of experiencing this. I mean, he was very well organised, so he took every minute that was free, he wouldn't - just like we today - sat down and played with a mobile game on his phone. I was incredibly impressed that he never sort of sat back and just read a book or did a thing like that. But he always was trying to write or read. And the thing is, I mean, it was at a time when you couldn't just Google something. You had to find the roots of things in articles or so. There were so many hours when he sat in the car and had the papers on his knees and he would open up his coffer and then he would start to dictate an article or just read something. [00:04:48][97.4]

[00:04:49] **NS:** So he wasn't a distant father, although he was a busy father. [00:04:52][2.9]

[00:04:52] **WHD:** He was a busy father, but very close. I mean, he was always... I was just discussing it the other day with my husband because we were speaking about that the worst thing was when I was expecting my son. My father was saying, what is the due date? I said: the due date is the 29th of February. Then he said, look, I just check for a date for christening, and the date where I could come to Sweden for the christening of my grandchild would be the 14th of April. I said, Look, Papa with the first child you never know when will they come. But then he said: Look, you must see that the kid comes before the 1st of April so that we can have the christening on the 14th. I remember ringing my friends and saying: please save the date of 14th of April for the christening of our child. They said, why? Is he born? I said: No, he's not born. Then they said: You know, it's too bad, it's very bad that you planned for the christening before the child has come. I said, Look, if you have a father like I do, it's not a bad thing it is the only way to have him here. And my son was born on the 31st of March, so everything was all right. It's this how busy he was. Busy but he always tried to be there when there were important things happening. [00:06:09][77.3]

[00:06:11] **NS:** I know that he liked to hunt and he liked old cars. But was there anything which he also liked to do, but we don't know about it? [00:06:20][8.8]

[00:06:22] **WHD:** He was very interested in local food. I mean, I often think how comes that my son is a cook. And then now, since we say that, I remember that when we were travelling for Europe to go to our summer place in Spain, he always tried to eat the local dishes wherever he was. That shows he was interested in food. That's possibly something that my son has inherited. He said: I don't have to eat the steak. I know how a

steak tastes, but if I eat the local dish, I learn something about it. He was interested in local culture and he was very interested also in languages, and he was always trying to tell us kids: I cannot give you masses of things. I cannot give you a good job. I cannot give you a big house, but what I can give you is knowledge. So what you have to do is you have to learn languages, because languages open doors. He was quite gifted in languages. And this is why I just think it's so much fun to learn languages because without it you cannot understand culture. And if you are interested in Europe, you want to understand the culture of different countries. He was always telling us, you must always try to understand the culture. And I remember my Hungarian teacher, my first class, said to me: Look, if you can't read Petőfi Sándor, you don't understand Hungary. And I can't read Petőfi Sándor, so I cannot say I understand Hungary. [00:07:50][88.6]

[00:07:52] **NS:** Can we speak a bit about your mother as well? [00:07:54][2.0]

[00:07:55] **WHD:** If you have such an overpowering husband you sort of disappear somehow... [00:07:59][3.7]

[00:08:00] **NS:** And did she disappear? Of course we don't speak much about her, but she doesn't strike me as a person who is irrelevant. [00:08:08][8.7]

[00:08:10] **WHD:** I mean she is very relevant because... when I was just looking at the diaries, I was thinking, OK. My grandmother ran her family like a big company, which you have to do when you have many kids. And I think my mother was also the one who was sort of at home and she was running the show. I mean, I think it's very important that you have somebody at home who is, you know, when the other one comes back, everything is going to be all right. The kids have gone to school, they've got fed, they have nice clothes, they know how to behave because I mean, the whole education part was on my mother. And keeping the whole family together to know that everything at home is organised. I very often think when there were problems in school for my son, I would say to my husband, I go now to speak to the teachers, but I want you to be there. She would not do that. She would say, OK, I can do that myself. So she would clean the house. She would clean out all problems with kids. And I mean "betegségék" and she saw that when he came home, everything was sort of running nicely. [00:09:21][71.3]

[00:09:22] **NS:** So we can see that she was old school in a way, but she was also a strong character. [00:09:28][5.9]

[00:09:29] **WHD:** Very, very strong, since she had a very clear way of thinking. And I mean, it's not very easy to be married to somebody like my father who was so overpowering and he was playing such an important role. And then you yourself coming from a different family background and sort of you have to adapt. And she was adapting perfectly. And I mean, she was also the one not only at home, but she also kept in touch with my father's siblings, and she was very often travelling to my grandmother. She was the one who kept the contact with my grandmother, and she was the one who was looking after my grandmother each year to come to our house for a stay and for her to get the chance of meeting her oldest son. Because I mean, that's not obvious either. I mean, that the Empress, my grandmother was very, very careful, she never wanted to intrude. I mean, if you would say to my grandmother, we are having dinner at seven o'clock, she would come down with one minute to seven, not at 5 minutes to seven or 10

minutes to seven. So what you needed to do is you needed to sort of get her out of this and come and live family life with us. So that was my mother who was seeing that this worked out because my father, not even crossing his mind because he had so many other things to think about. When I got my child and I knew I would only have one child because I knew it wouldn't work out with more. And I was asking her: How can you manage your kids all over the world and you don't miss them all? And she said: I miss everybody because I love each one the same. I said: how is it possible? I mean, I have one, and I know it's very easy because I have one child and then I can love him most in the whole world because it's my only child. And she said: no, the good thing about being a mother is that she has to love all the seven kids equally much. I was always incredibly impressed by her saying that. This is not very easy because I mean, between siblings it also varies, one sibling is the closest to you now and an other two days later. And she was saying, I love all my seven kids the same, but I guess the closest to her was Gabriella. [00:11:40][131.5]

[00:11:42] **NS:** Seems like to me that she had a lot of energy like your grandmother, Zita. [00:11:44][2.3]

[00:11:48] **WHD:** It's impressive, that when we took out all the diaries and we saw how my grandmother wrote down the weight of every kid and what they did in school, it was so human you just think, OK. I mean, I also think if somebody has a high role, you think, they are somehow superheroes, but they are not. They are not, they are completely normal human beings and you see it when they are with their family, with their kids. I will never forget one scene, which is sort of very funny and very evocative. My mother was very interested in natural things, and we had a neighbour at home who was Konrad Lorenz, and I remember that he was coming to dinner to our house and they were sitting at dinner table. And my father was telling: I just bought a new car. And Konrad was saying to my mother: did you also buy a new car? And my father was saying, no, I bought the car because I need it. Konrad looked at my father and said: Typical, you try to impress everybody because you are male. And my mother laughed so much, because my mother had a tiny little car, and my father always had his Mercedes. I mean, I guess they needed it because they had so many kids, so they needed two cars. My mother always had the Volkswagen, and my father had a Mercedes. And I mean, Konrad Lorenz thought this was typical, that the man would have the big car and the woman had the little one. But she was capable without any bad feelings to stand back two steps. [00:13:19][90.4]

[00:13:19] **NS:** Do you think that you inherited his sense of responsibility for the people of Central and Eastern Europe? [00:13:27][7.5]

[00:13:27] **WHD:** That's a thing that you sort of breathe in when you hear it constantly. And then when we were talking very much about geopolitics and politics, and so I got very interested and I got very involved. And one thing which I think is very important that you feel a big responsibility to a country and especially if a country fares badly or lies under communist rule. You suddenly feel, OK, I have to do something to change that. This was incredibly touching and moving for me to read about Hungary and see films. I remember when I was starting to learn Hungarian, which I do not speak. I mean, I understand it a little bit that I can read it, and if I have time, I can even sort of figure out what somebody is talking about. But I remember I had a Hungarian teacher who said, look to get into the mood, rightly you have to watch a film of '56. And I remember I was

so incredibly moved that I started to cry and if something touches you so deeply in your heart that you start to cry when you see a film, that's a thing that sort of puts your whole life into a different direction. At home, we had a very political atmosphere when we were all sitting around the table in the evenings, my father would say: quickly tell me what countries have borders with whatever; say Turkey, France, Spain. And then we had to try and think and then it was geopolitics, obviously. And then he would be telling us about different countries. He would tell us brief histories about it, and then we would ask him about more topical things. And then you get involved and you get interested. I was six years old when I told him, I am going to become a politician. That was funny and he was sort of repeating it to me when I was elected first time to parliament in Sweden. He came up when parliament opened and he said to me: Look, you remember when you were seven years old, you said, I want to become a politician. I said, Yes, I know. Probably the interest was awoken much earlier, but I mean, it's just so that we have a very political family. Politics was always the main topic, but I guess I mean, it's not something specific to my father and us, but I think that in every family, if you have a father who is an architect, he's going to tell you about how to paint a bridge or whatever. And if you have a father who is a politician, he's going to tell you about politics. [00:15:54][146.2]

[00:15:55] **NS:** Georg, your brother told me that he's missing sometimes that he can't ask your father anymore about the turbulent times of today, and that he can't ask for his advice. And I don't know if you have that same feeling. [00:16:09][14.1]

[00:16:10] **WHD:** Yes, I can tell you one thing. I was used to ring to him very often, and I used to talk to him a lot. And now when things with brexit started, I was constantly thinking, OK, I would love to discuss it with him and just ring, and hear his voice, his ideas about it. And I remember it was one of the feelings: now I'm becoming an adult. When I took away the telephone number of home from my mobile phone, I decided: OK now I can't ring him anymore, and he just isn't there, he's not going to answer. But when I sit and prepare for speeches, I often write down something and then I think so what would my father say that way or this way? And then I'm missing not to be able to just be able to check with him. [00:16:51][41.6]

[00:16:52] **NS:** This feeling doesn't go away, does it? [00:16:53][1.3]

[00:16:54] **WHD:** It think it remains there your whole life. I mean, people say it's like a scar, and becomes less and less visible, but the scar like not being able to ring to your father... I mean, we worked very, very closely. So I mean this was a logical thing an everyday thing to just check with him on different aspects. [00:17:11][16.8]

[00:17:12] **NS:** Can we say that you are following in his footsteps? [00:17:14][2.6]

[00:17:15] **WHD:** Well, I would say all of my of my siblings are. But obviously, since I was working together with him so much in the Parliament and in the Paneuropean Union, I would say I was probably the one who was most closely collaborating with him. And I think when I came into parliament for him, somehow the circle was closed because the child of his that was working closest to him became an MP. I had the chance of sort of living at home and then when I was a student, I went home for the weekend and then we were very often going to the same meetings that I was giving a speech at a Paneuropean

thing and so we went together and on the way there we would just sort of kicking around ideas of what to say and so on. [00:18:02][46.2]

[00:18:03] **NS:** Sometimes you don't feel that they consider you as the daughter of Otto von Habsburg, not yourself? I guess your achievements now can speak for themselves, but sometimes I felt like that at the beginning of my career that I was my father's daughter. [00:18:19][16.9]

[00:18:20] **WHD:** I was always my father's daughter, and still today very often when I travel somewhere, especially in the former Eastern Europe, I say I am Walbruga Habsburg, the daughter of Otto, because that's how I consider myself. And this explains why I have good contacts all over. And I am very proud that we worked so closely together. [00:18:40][20.2]

[00:18:41] **NS:** Why do you think it's important to cultivate your father's memory and his legacy? [00:18:46][5.4]

[00:18:47] **WHD:** Obviously, since I'm a politician, I think he really was a pillar of Europe, and there were so many things that he foresaw and he could judge them, had the important contacts to people, and he was the one who could speak to politicians and they would listen to him. And not only in Europe, also around the world. The Sultan of Oman was keeping a very close relation with my father to understand Europe because he was saying, I don't have to ask my ambassadors, I can ask him, he's going to give me the relevant answers. But that was not only Oman, there were many countries where they just knew if they would ask my father, they would get relevant answers and they didn't have to ask all the ambassadors. [00:19:32][45.1]

[00:19:33] **NS:** So he had a great influence... [00:19:33][0.4]

[00:19:35] **WHD:** Sure, yes. The thing is, he wrote a lot about different aspects, and I think when you now start to look for his books and articles, it's just very relevant to see how he foresaw certain movements. I mean, he published many books about different parts of the world, and he was comparing notes. I was thinking about this. I was right now at the conference in Vienna this past weekend, and we were speaking about migration and there was I thinking, OK, when we speak about migration, we think about Syria or Afghanistan. And then there was a man, a South African, who was telling about circular migration and how people want to come back and what problems they face when they come back. And I was thinking, OK, it's so important that you manage to see things from different angles. And my father was perfect at seeing things from different angles. So when you look into his writings, you find such a mass of ideas. [00:20:35][59.8]

[00:20:35] **NS:** So his vision could be useful today as well. Sometimes we see that he could be really passionate. I mean, I guess he was passionate all his life in a way, but for example, there was the case when he threw out Ian Paisley from the European Parliament because he was insulting Pope John Paul. Was he often like that? Or it was just this burst of energy? [00:20:57][21.3]

[00:20:59] **WHD:** He had occasional bursts. And I remember I always thought it was terribly embarrassing. I remember especially for me who was working together with

him. When he did that, I was saying, OK, can it be that this happens because he's getting old? But I mean, in the end, I always understood why he was doing it. But then imagine, I mean, when you have somebody to say, OK, just take it easy, it's going to be alright. He was sort of very passionate and I mean, if he was disappointed by people, he could be passionate because he was always trying to see the good sides. But if he suddenly was really disappointed, he was sort of showing it and that's good because he was always true to his convictions. He said: „if I am an idiot. you can say that I am an idiot.”
[00:21:44][44.6]

[00:21:44] **NS:** So this this side of him was only to be seen for his closer circle?
[00:21:48][3.9]

[00:21:50] **WHD:** Yes, because we were trying to refrain it, because, you know, you always think people are going to say stupid things behind his back if he loses his temper. But we were always trying to refrain when he lost his temper. But in a way, it's nice to see that he was human in a way. I remember that when he burst out in parliament, we went to the stenographers and said: look, could you be so kind and not write down this? But I mean, that was not very often. I can tell you it feels very well to be here in the office of the Foundation with pictures of my parents all over. I must say we are very glad to have such a fantastic team. I mean, everybody is so dedicated and they know so much more about our father than we do. [00:22:42][52.1]

[00:22:42] **NS:** And can we say that this attitude, which was planted in you and your siblings towards the languages and to understand cultures, can we say that this is Otto's legacy for you as a father and as a grandfather? [00:22:56][14.2]

[00:22:57] **WHD:** I would say that there is one other thing which is equally important, that was his conviction of religion, which he instilled in us as well. It was on one side the thing about culture, and on the other side, he was always saying the most important value that you always have to think about is religion. And I think it's very important, because religion easily becomes something that is forbidden, allowed, forbidden allowed and he was always saying: no, this is much more than grey scales and white scales, it's not only black and white, so just sort of be careful and think about it the other way around, but always tried to see that there is the bigger thing of religion behind every single thing and try to see it, because that will also change your attitude. In politics it's very important. [00:23:51][53.2]

[00:23:52] **NS:** What stroke me when I was speaking to Georg was that he seems to be like a very positive thinking person, and he claims that it's coming from your father's that he was always thinking very positively, even in the darkest of times.
[00:24:09][17.2]

[00:24:11] **WHD:** I think that's the way in which he survived the darkest of times. This is something that can be related to the thing about religion, because when you are a deeply religious person, you always see a ray of light shining on the cross. And then that's precisely what my father did when it was sort of darkest he would always try to see positive things of persons. I mean, if you live with somebody who always does that, you yourself become also more positive. [00:24:42][30.8]
[1262.4]