

# ANC HIDE-OUT COMES TO LIFE

Hi-tech makeover allows visitors to experience the farm where Mandela once hid as living history

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JOHANNESBURG: Anti-apartheid activist Denis Goldberg spent his last day of freedom for 22 years on Liliesleaf Farm, an 11-hectare piece of land north of this city where ANC guerrillas like Nelson Mandela plotted apartheid's downfall.

"We weren't supermen and women," the 74-year-old Goldberg said as he surveyed the farm, recently opened as an interactive museum. "We were just ordinary people who had a commitment."

He urged visitors to "remember that freedom costs lives and liberty and struggle and dedication. It doesn't just fall into your hands".

Liliesleaf has been restored to look, from the outside, just as Goldberg remembers. The inside of the buildings, though, have received a hi-tech makeover.

In one room, visitors can touch sensors on a table to access audio-accompanied newspaper clippings, black and white photographs, text, and videos of famous activists.

Centre director Nicholas Wolpe, whose father Harold Wolpe was among the men arrested at Liliesleaf in 1963, says the feature is the first of its kind in the world.

"We don't want a static experience; we want people to experience this place as what it was," Wolpe said. "It was a hive of activity. It wasn't a still frame."

Tourists can see the veranda where Mandela held target practice, an outhouse once home to an underground printing press, and the thatched cottage where activists were eventually arrested as they discussed a military operation to be carried out by uMkhonto weSizwe, the military wing of the ANC.

They can also see Mandela's small, brick-walled bedroom, and listen to an old radio broadcast in the farmhouse kitchen where he first heard that ANC president Albert John Luthuli had won the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize.

The Liliesleaf museum opened officially on June 9, but exhibit construction is still in progress. Wolpe says the centre will continue to evolve as more of the farm's history is uncovered.

Much of the farm's past is murky, and Wolpe and others are still conducting interviews to learn more about what happened there.

Liliesleaf became a centre for anti-apartheid activists in the early 1960s, after the government heightened its brutal crackdown and forced the resistance movement underground.

The regime banned the ANC in 1960, the same year its police shot and killed 69 civilians at Sharpeville who had been protesting against the government's pass laws.

In 1962 the government imposed a state of emergency, one of several declared in the period up to 1989, when the apartheid regime began to founder.



**PRESENT:** The Liliesleaf farm has reopened as an interactive museum

**'I have no regrets. What we did was right. We just should have done it better and not got caught.'**

The South African Communist Party (SACP), in alliance with the ANC, purchased Liliesleaf in 1961 through a front company called Navian.

Communist Party member Arthur Goldreich and his family pretended to be the owners of the farm, which grew market produce and leased land to neighbours.

Mandela lived at Liliesleaf for a short while, taking the name David Motsamayi and wearing blue overalls in an attempt to look like a farmworker. Some neighbours say they often saw "David" selling produce on the street outside the farm.

The raid on Liliesleaf led to the Rivonia Trial, where Mandela made his famous "I am prepared to die" speech, and testimony recounting apartheid's evils focused international attention on South Africa's racist regime.

Mandela wasn't arrested in the Liliesleaf raid - he was already in prison for inciting workers to strike and leaving the country without a passport.

Other defendants in the trial included Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki - father of President Thabo Mbeki. Eight of the 10 defendants were sentenced to life, and two were acquitted.

Of the original eight defendants, only Mandela, Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada and Andrew Mlangeni are still alive. Kathrada is 78, Mlangeni is 81, and Mandela turns 90 on Friday.

"I have no regrets," said Goldberg, a SACP member who was the only white person sentenced to life in Rivonia. "What we did was right.

We just should have done it better and not got caught."

Goldberg, now retired and living in Cape Town, went into exile in London after his release in 1985 and eventually became an ANC spokesperson.

No one knows how Liliesleaf was exposed. Some suspect CIA involvement, others place the blame on an opportunistic snitch, and some believe an insider confessed during interrogation.

By 1963, suspecting that Liliesleaf was no longer secure, resistance leaders had bought a farm west of Johannesburg for their new headquarters.

A meeting on July 11, 1963, was to have been the last of its kind at Liliesleaf.

The day of the final meeting, Goldberg and other activists went to visit the new farm.

About 45 minutes after they returned to Liliesleaf, activists were discussing a plan to overthrow South Africa's racist regime when a mysterious van drove up the dusty driveway. Before anyone could ask farm workers about the unannounced vehicle, armed policemen burst out of the doors and arrested everyone in sight.

"We were taken to the Old Fort (a Johannesburg prison) and I was looking around the night sky when I got there," Goldberg recounted.

"And one of the police said, 'Don't think you're going to escape.' "And I said, 'No, I'm just looking at the night sky. I don't think I'm going to see it for a long time.' "

"And I don't think I saw the night sky for the next 22 years."