

Austria

Austria with the population of eight million people is a mountainous central European country reaching from Alps into the East Danube basin.

Mountain lakes and rivers, skiing slopes and forests make Austria a beautiful country. Many castles and palaces scattered throughout the picturesque countryside are the evidence that for many centuries the rulers of Europe liked to live in Austria.

Most of the Europe shares in the history of the Roman Empire since the beginning of AD.

Since thirteenth century most of the Europe was at one time or another part of the Hapsburg dynasty rule. Austria had a central role in many historical political formations.

The first Austrian Republic was proclaimed in the 1919 after the disintegration of Austrian Hungarian Empire. In 1955 Austria regained full sovereignty. Austrians are predominantly Catholic German speaking people.

Ursula

I was born towards the end of the WWI in 1944 in Graz in Austria as a fourth and last child.

My father studied medicine but he discontinued during his clinical years to volunteer himself to work in the Hitler's work force. He became a manager of the workers. He actually did not want to be a doctor but a vet. His father didn't think that a vet was good enough.

My father's father was a judge. He used to play a mouth organ and danced with us children. He was a kind person and has helped the Jewish people during the war; however, after the war someone accused him of mistreating Jewish people and he was imprisoned. Later they reviewed the grandfather's case and found him innocent. He became a diabetic and died an unpleasant painful death.

When the war started my father joined the Wafen SS and went on the Norwegian and Russian fronts.

After the war my father was caught by Russians and was to be deported by train to Siberia. He jumped from the train and travelled crouched on his knees by night until he reached the river Elbe. He almost died swimming across the river but his love for his family made him go on. English soldiers caught him there and imprisoned him in Austria. He didn't mind that because he was home in Austria.

After the war we were considered less desirable because my father and grandfather were involved in the Hitler's war.

When I became a thinking person with a conscience I was against Hitler. I also resented the fact that my father supported Hitler. I was born on the same day and the same minute as my father. I was afraid that I would become like him.

I had psychological problems reconciling myself with my father's choices but I don't know what my choices would be in his situation. I wondered what I would have done being in his situation when public opinion was all for Hitler. Many Austrians supported Hitler but after the war most denied it. It was impossible for me to discuss these issues with my father. He is an authoritarian figure and I felt that he would not allow me to discuss his beliefs and his choices.

My father is not a Christian and he has never given his heart to God. I have no right to teach my father. I have to honour him as he is but I am praying for him to accept Jesus in his heart.

I was about five when my father told us that he killed about six men in combat during the war. He said that he was never involved in the executions because

there were always volunteers who wanted to do that. He said that in combat it was either him or the other man who would pull the trigger first.

When I was ten we moved to Vienna. I finished secondary school and a three-year Chemistry course. I had lots of problems at school at that time. I worried about things. Perhaps the events of the war always bothered me. I was rather self centred and self-conscious. I was extremely shy and worried about what people thought of me. I never had a high self-esteem or confidence to present myself.

I believe that much of my background is racist and especially anti-Semitic. I believe that people who lived through the terrible times of racism and war carry a tremendous pain inside and they wish to heal the pain. On one occasion a Jewish boy in Vienna and I met and hugged. We could not express the pain we felt in words but the tears washed some of the pain away. We just knew that the other person was dealing with the same issues and felt the same.

I was very confused by my background and upbringing. I felt suicidal during my adolescence and I prayed to God to let me die. This was a big moral dilemma for me.

I believe that my father loves us very much but he left our upbringing to my mother. Cuddling children was something women did. My mother was gentle and catered for our individual needs as much as she had time for. Mum called on dad only when children had to be more severely punished. His ways were more regimental, rigorous and strict. He didn't want children to be confused by two different styles of upbringing. My father taught me to be honest, he was honest himself and he was very upset with me when I would make up stories as children do. I felt guilty because I knew that the stories I told weren't true. Maybe my real life was boring so I invented exciting events.

I look more like mum but I have my father's strong convictions about how things should be and how people should behave. I do not agree with my father's ideas and he does not agree with mine.

My father was in prison after the war so my mother's mother came to help us. My mother worked in the hospital as a nurse. Grandparents were a blessing for us children but parents and grandparents often disagreed on how to bring up the children.

When my father came out of the prison my parents worked on the farm. I remember living on a farm in the mountains. It was the most joyful time of my life. I still remember the smells of the mountain flowers and herbs and the beautiful sights. It was a lovely time for us children who were not aware of all the problems our parents had. We loved the animals and the trees. We saw deer and other animals. When it rained the fire salamander came out and the rainbow made the sky magically beautiful.

I loved many trees but there was a special fir tree called larch, which had tiny flowers and soft green leaves. We used to know and pick all sort of herbs and mushroom and fruit in the forest. We had blueberries, strawberries,

gooseberries and hazelnuts and chestnuts. We spent most of our free time in the forest. We had more bush food than Aborigines had here.

When we lived on the farm I had to look after the cows. We lead them through the forest to the beautiful grazing areas. Sometimes the children played and the cows disappeared. They came back on their own but we were in trouble if we didn't bring all the cows home. My father would hit us with a stick. The cows were a great responsibility because they did not belong to us but to the landowner we worked for. One cow was called Onetime one and she never obeyed. She was more trouble than all the rest together.

Easter was always a big thing in Austria. We had processions and the church bells were heard echoing in the mountains. There were three bells before the mass, the lunchtime bell and the evening angelus bell told people to stop working and to say a prayer.

I always loved the forests. Later I worked for the forestry commission in Vienna located in a remote building of the lovely castle of Schoenbrunn, which means beautiful fountain. It really was a fairy tale place. My friend, Elizabeth, attended acting classes and took me along. I completed the acting course and would have liked to act but was too shy. I trained in women's artistic gymnastics from the age of twelve until eighteen. I also worked for a doctor who did research into osteoarthritis.

I interrupted my acting studies and went to France to work as a nanny for a year. While in Paris I also worked in a little self-serve restaurant. An older man came to eat there. He must have been over thirty while I was only in my early twenties. We went to the movies and I fell in love. I felt at home with him spiritually. Both of us were at ease with each other. I had to return to Vienna and we parted without properly saying goodbye. This was my first and very innocent romantic love. The pleasant memory of that love stayed with me forever.

During my acting studies I also met William who eventually became my husband. My marriage was a bit rocky from the start. I should never have told my husband about the man I fell in love with while in France. William felt that I never loved him like I loved this first man in my life. I should never bother my husband with my feelings for another man. I loved William in a different way.

William and I got engaged. He went to Australia. William travelled before and had his passport ready. I stayed with his mother until my papers were ready in November 1969. I joined William in Sydney where he was working. We got married and had a daughter Ursula in 1973 and Barbara in 1980.

I spoke a bit of English when I arrived in Australia and I did some English courses to adjust to Australian English.

We had no problems making friends with Australians.

I visited my father in 1979 with my daughter Ursula. He played with Ursula happily.

I first came to Lightning Ridge when my husband played puppets at schools in this area. I was also performing. My husband wrote puppet scripts. We had fun times making puppets and performing.

I came in contact with Aborigines as I worked in Balmain hospital. I loved the caring way in which they related to each other. William wrote migrant success stories for the government at the time. In 1970 there was a bicentenary celebration of Captain Cook's first arrival to Australia. William's friend came with us to La Perouse celebration. I saw Aborigines put a wreath into the water as a sign of mourning because for them it was two hundred years since they began losing their way of life. For them it was a Day of mourning. Aboriginal poet Kath Walker spoke beautifully about the loss her people suffered. Her talk inspired me because she spoke strong words of truth but she spoke with love rather than with criticism and with a sense of encouragement for her people to survive.

Since then I became interested in Aboriginal spirituality and way of life. I became involved in Aboriginal women's sacred secret teachings. I fell in love with Aboriginal people. My marriage ended then. My husband left me because he felt that I distanced myself from him when I became involved with Aboriginal people and began to practice what I understood to be their culture. We were divorced in 1983. My mother once said to me that I become too involved in things.

If I were a full Christian I would have never caused the separation from my husband. He is a friendly, gentle fun person and we had some good times together. My husband and I remained friends to this day. Our children never had a relationship with their father interrupted. We had a cordial separation. I became a homemaker for my children.

After my marriage I had two more children, Benjamin and Ereehna.

My first contact with Seven-Day Adventists happened when the Aboriginal man Burnam Burnam brought two Seven-Day Adventist Aboriginal sisters to my house. They were sisters of the pastor George Quinlen. I loved them for their friendliness and they inspired me with their gentle kindness. I will always remember them.

Claire Grogan was a friend of my son Benjamin's father. Clarie was an Aboriginal boxer who later travelled with Aboriginal representatives as their supporter and bodyguard. He last worked as an Aboriginal liaison officer in north Queensland. When I arrived to Lightning Ridge I realised that I was pregnant with Clarie's child. I rang Clarie that we are going to have a baby. We have a daughter Ereehna. Ereehna is an Aboriginal name meaning under the tree. Ereehna saw her father only once at Fred Hollows funeral. Clarie died soon after in March 1993.

My husband and I applied for the housing loan and it came through just as we were breaking up. We could have bought anywhere and the bank asked if either of us singularly wants to apply. I chose Walgett area because it is an area of Aboriginal teachings I was involved in. I came to Lightning Ridge

because Aboriginal women I associated with came from this area and I wanted to get more deeply involved in their way of life.

In 84 I came to search for a place to buy in Lightning Ridge. My children and I stayed in a tram motel. I remember it being springtime. We listened to the butcherbird sing every morning. The thought came to me that if Mozart came here he would be inspired to write a beautiful symphony. I really fell in love with the place then.

I bought a little house next to Seven Days Adventist church. I had only little money and it was the only cheap place I could find. It took me a year to get the house transfer.

I didn't want to become a member of any church for a long time because of the negative church histories but when the Seven-Day Adventist pastor asked me if I would join them in the church service I was favourably inclined to do so because I had pleasant experience of my two friends who belonged to the same church. I brought my children to Sabbath school and learned along with them. Seven Days Adventists like people to really study and believe before they are baptised but you can come to church and join the congregation. I started to go to church in 85 and was baptised in 93. I was immersed in the tub of water in Moree. You can be baptised in any water deep enough to be immersed in.

After baptism I signed the contract that I will pay the tithe and live by the Bible principles. Seven Days Adventists do not drink alcohol, they do not smoke or take drugs. There are many Seven Days Adventists who can not keep the rules. They are not rejected because of it but they do not become the leaders in the community.

We pay ten percent of what we get and these tithes go into the pool to pay for the pastors. Some poorer congregations can not pay for their pastor so the congregations share the money. Offerings beside the tithe are for special purposes.

The Malachi speaks of the importance of observing the giving of tithes to keep the teachings of God alive. We worship on the Sabbath, which is Saturday and represents the day of rest after the creation.

Advent means looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ. We know the signs that tell us that the Second Coming is near but the exact coming has never been foretold. Jesus said that only his father knows when the end will come.

Our church has no holy pictures or statues; it is very sparsely furnished. During a reverent church service we invite the Holy Spirit to be with us and the presence of the Holy Spirit makes our worship very special. Lightning Ridge has a congregation of about twenty people. We have a prayer meeting on Tuesday night and the Bible study before the divine service on Saturday.

We believe that communion is a symbol in remembrance of the Last Supper rather than actually changing the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. When we have Holy Communion we also wash the feet of each other

in remembrance of Christ doing so. It means that we show our humility and unity like Jesus did.

The faith and the church helped me a lot in bringing up my children because they learned to live by the Bible principles. Glory be to God for the family I raised. The Bible studies helped them develop the conscience by which they live.

Barbara was the first to be baptised. Benjamin was next and then Ereehna. Ursula, Benjamin and Barbara live in Brisbane. Ereehna is with me and is in year 11. I am very happy with the way they live. None of them are smoking or drinking. They work and live righteous lives.

Seven Days Adventist are members of a nine-million-strong worldwide family which promotes a holistic lifestyle of healthy eating and physical wellbeing for the body; they are a close knit family of friends to nurture each other; they teach salvation through Jesus Christ, who offers the peace of mind in this busy world. Seven Day Adventists welcome Christians of every persuasion and do not consider themselves to be the only true followers of Christ. I had many health problems and was always very conscious of a healthy diet and lifestyle even before I became a Seven-Day Adventist. As lacto-ovo-vegeterians Adventists have a fine health record.

When I visited Austria the second time in 1992 my father did not want to see me because I had an Aboriginal child. He never met my children Barbara, Benjamin and Ereehna. He said that he did not approve of me having an Aboriginal child because he believes that children of mixed races are unhappy. We wanted to see him because my mother was sick but my family told me that my father does not want to see us. My mother said that he loves us but that was his way of showing disapproval. I was sad for him and for us because he would surely enjoy the meeting with the children. I spoke to him on the phone after my mother died but he sent the message through my sister never to call him again.

I have a brother in Germany and my two sisters in Austria; we love each other dearly and have contact all the time. I would like to talk to my father but I have to wait until my father allows me to see him. He is a healthy 90 years old who looks after himself in Graz. He lives in the same flat where we all grew up and I consider this place my home.

My mother's parents were Catholic but mum decided to become Lutheran even before she met my father. My father's family was Lutheran as he descends from Carpathian Mountains which is traditionally Lutheran country.

When I was about ten we had a Lutheran pastor who loved God very much. All of us children wanted to be baptised because he was an example of what we wanted to be like.

When I grew up and began to investigate the church's involvement in the Hitler's war I became upset and left the church. I was always an introverted person and daydreamed a lot when I was young.

One day I had a vision in my daydreams. I saw precious stones on the banks of a small riverbed. I felt that I had to build a bridge with these stones. I laid the stones together; they weren't held together by mortar but they remained in place. A low arch of the bridge reached into the moor. There were sad looking horses stuck in the moor. When the bridge was built the horses pranced happily on the bridge and galloped into freedom. I never forgot this daydream.

Later when I began reading the Bible, I realised we are all the body of Christ and each of us has a value and the beauty of its own. I realised that the precious jewels I have seen are God's saints.

I believe that we have to confess to God everything we are. We have to acknowledge ourself and not run away from who we are but make amends to those we might have hurt.

Since I have given my heart to God, I desire to be completely honest with everyone around me but I can not speak about things that involve other people because I do not know another person's heart and thoughts. I can only tell my side of the story because the other person may see things differently and speak of them differently.

I prayed most of my life but I never read the Bible until one day I was at my mother in law's place. There was a Bible and I opened it to Matthew 5 and the passage before me said: You have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you love your enemies, bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute you; that you may be sons of your father in heaven for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those that love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same, and if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others do? Therefore you shall be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect. When you pray, go into your room and when you have shut your door, pray to your father who is in the secret place, and your father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Reading this passage taught me to love my enemies. I realised that if only we followed this teaching we would not have wars and hatred. It became easier for me to love my father despite his rejection.

I hope to walk with God and let God lead my life. When I get up in the morning I talk to God and thank him for the sleep and the new day. Then most days I study from the Bible. I still tutor and help with gymnastics at school; I am also selling Christian books. I also want to be better qualified in healing by spinal exercises.

I pray that my children would appreciate the goodness of God and be happy with what God has given them. I was stubborn most of my life and I am myself late in appreciating his loving ways.