

Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany is a central European country bordering on Baltic and North Sea. It has a population of 83 million people who are predominantly Christian.

After the World War 2 the British, American, French, and Russian Allies divided Germany in four parts. Later British, American and French sections of Germany united to form West Germany and the Russian part became East Germany.

Since 1961 and during the Cold War the Berlin Wall closed the border from East to West. In 1989 the borders opened and in 1990 the dividing Berlin wall was demolished and the Germany united.

Rose

I never imagined that Australia would one day become my home.

I was born in 1937 in Insterburg about 80 kilometres from Konigsberg now Kaliningrad in the Gulf of Gdansk in the Baltic Sea. My home-town in East Prussia had sixty thousand people. We had a happy comfortable life. I have two older brothers and one younger sister.

My parents had a butcher shop and my father also sold horses. I never thought of us being rich but we had cars and houses and land. My father came from that part of Prussia that is now Poland. Mum's parents came from Germany.

My family escaped to the West in 1944 and I have never been back to see my birthplace. When Communism collapsed my husband and I planned to visit but before we could do that my husband died.

I remember our dangerous escape well. My parents, my grandmother my brother (14), my sister (3) and myself (7) travelled to Germany on horseracing truck. It was already very cold, on some days we had minus 25 C and the snow covered the icy road full of other freezing people escaping in their cars and horse wagons.

Our truck was loaded with food like salami, honey, cheese and syrup. We took wool blankets, fur coats and doonas for warmth and some treasures. I brought with me to Lightning Ridge the silver knives and forks we took with us to Germany. We even took our chickens, ducks and geese with us.

My father was a very popular horse trainer and horse seller. He sold thousands of horses all over Germany. On our escape route to Germany we met many of his business friends and we stayed with them for a day or two. Very often we had to leave the truck in a hurry to hide and escape the bombs and gunfire from the aeroplanes.

I was sick most of the time with diphtheria so we travelled for a few weeks. We settled down near Weimar and my father began doing his business again. Weimar, the birthplace of our great poet Goethe, is a wonderful city.

In 1945 Americans arrived and the black Ami soldier gave me my first chewing gum. We liked the Americans but they left in 1946 and the Russians came in. Our life became tough. Curfew was on after 8 PM. Children were not allowed to play on the street, my father's business became strictly regulated and he could not travel freely any longer. We were all afraid of Russians. They looked very serious and mean; not like Americans who laughed and talked to us.

My father was a sanitary medical aide worker in the German army. My older brother was taken into the Hitler Jugend army at sixteen to fight against Russians. He was captured by British army in Netherlands and was in the North Germany prison camp until 1946. My family did not know if he was dead or alive until one day in 1946 he came to see us in East Germany. He was 18. He heard from our relations in West Germany that we escaped to East Germany in the late autumn of 1944 when the Russians advanced into

Prussia. We left our entire property in Prussia and never got it back. My brother returned to West Germany.

After my grandmother died in 1951 we also moved to Hanover in West Germany. We were lucky to go before they built the Berlin wall. Even then we had to tell the authorities why we wanted to go and how long we will stay. My parents said that we wanted to visit relatives in East Berlin. From there we escaped by railway to West Berlin and from there to Hanover by aeroplane. As I stepped off the plane in Hanover I tripped and landed on my face so I kissed the German soul like the pope does when he visits the country.

In Germany I met my relative, Ingo. He was twenty and I was fourteen. I was very impressed with this handsome young man but most of all I was impressed by his 350 cc Horex motor bike. It was an English machine with a thundering sound much like Harley Davison. To this day I love motor bikes and sometimes my son still takes me for a ride on his Harley Davison.

Ingo was my first love. I remember us sitting under the apple tree just holding hands. We did not do anything; we felt enormously happy just being together. It was the most romantic time of my life with dreams and longing. We believed that our love would last forever.

Life in Germany after the war was depressing for everybody. Ingo went to Canada and promised to get me as soon as he settled down. I promised to wait but it took him a long time. He never asked me to join him.

In the meantime I continued with my schooling and helped with cooking and housekeeping. My parents again opened a butcher shop and employed three people. I had to cook for them and for my family. I wanted to become a midwife but I met Bruno in 1954. We fell in love and got married when I was eighteen. Our marriage was very successful. We had a happy life with our two sons and three daughters.

Ingo was not so happy and successful in Canada. It was too cold for him in Vancouver and he returned to Germany in 1957. He was not happy about my marriage and my happy life. He went to Australia in 1958. This was the end of our story. All that was left were the memories of our first love. We never wrote to each other or kept in touch since then.

My life with Bruno was good and we raised our children well. Bruno and I owned a shoe shop. In 1986 I opened a handcraft shop next to the shoe shop. I loved that shop.

One day in 1989 my sister rang that Ingo was on a round the world trip and was visiting his family in Germany. We invited him to our home. When he came I looked at him and said to myself: Oh, my God, he is old. He had lovely hair before and now he was bald. Then I looked in the mirror and saw an elderly woman. I wasn't the young Rosel any more either. I couldn't believe that the years have gone.

Bruno, Ingo and I had good times together. Bruno and Ingo liked each other and we often went fishing, bowling and caravanning together.

Ingo told us about Australia and especially about Lightning Ridge opal mining. Bruno and I decided to visit Ingo and travel around Australia. We promised Ingo to come in July or August 1990 and do some mining with him. We read everything we could find about Australia. I even went to evening school to improve my English. I learned English at school but I forgot most of it. We paid for our tickets. We were to travel on 28. June 1990.

On 6th of June my Bruno passed away in my arms. He had a heart attack. I fell into a black hole of grief and despair. I did not recognise or understand the world any more. My children helped me through the days and weeks of my deepest sadness.

What was I to do with the tickets to Australia? I did not feel like going but my children urged me to go. They went with me to Frankfurt and wished me well as I went on the plane.

Ingo was waiting for us at the Sydney airport. He had no phone at the time so I could not let him know about Bruno. When I told him that Bruno died Ingo was sad because he had lost a friend. Ingo showed me around Sydney and we went to Opera house to see Aida. We stayed in Sydney for a few days but then we went by plane to Lightning Ridge.

The strange world opened to me. I had to go thirty years back in time. The dirt track to Ingo's camp brought me to the life without electricity and running water. There was only a water tank and a generator. There was one TV station. I had 35 in Germany. This New World helped me overcome my grief and despair.

Looking back now I realise that I made the right decision. Six weeks in the bush with Ingo helped us become close friends again. Ingo never married so there were no problems for me to stay permanently. But I wasn't sure if I could or if I wanted to live with him. We parted as friends. Before I left Ingo gave me an opal mine as a present. It was to say to me: please come back.

When I returned to Germany I experienced the same black hole of despair again. I thought long and hard, I talked to my children and thought again. In the end I sold the shops and came to Lightning Ridge in 1991 to stay for six months.

Now I live between two continents. For three months each year I am with my family in Germany and the rest of the year I am with Ingo in the bush.

Sometimes Ingo comes with me to Germany but he would never live in Germany again. Everything in Europe seems so small compared to Australia and specially to the Australian outback where Ingo loves to live.

Ingo and I have much in common. We both like to read, we enjoy nature, and we love our garden. We planted vegetables and flowers.

I wanted to learn English fast. I met my first English teacher Cilka Zagar and she was and is in my opinion the best. I met other nice people. For four years I went with Hilda Buchanan to the Day care and helped her with old and handicapped people. These people helped me a lot with my English. I learned a lot from them and now I am no longer afraid to speak up. I learned about other countries and I met the first Aboriginal lady Elsie Parker.

I continue to go to English classes and enjoy the company of other migrants. I became a member of Trans-cultural community and I have to speak there as well. They asked me to do a radio program on Opal FM. Many people, not all of them German, like the music I play for them. I have been making this program for three years now, in German of course. I did not have enough German CDs so I wrote to a German radio station for them. They invited me for an interview and I spoke in Mainz live for about nine million listeners. I told them about Australia and Lightning Ridge opal mining. They were very

pleased with me and I had a lot of feedback from my listeners. The station gave me thirty new CDs and later they send more to me to Lightning Ridge. I developed a good relationship with them. I have to go to Mains every year and tell stories about Lightning Ridge and my life in the Australian outback. I feel integrated in Lightning Ridge community and life. My English improved and I read only English books, magazines and papers.

My favourite author is James A. Mitchener. I like good music, preferably classic. I like a cup of coffee or a glass of good wine. This is heaven for me. My friends know that I always find time for a good conversation about music, literature or theatre or just for a chat.

Yeah, life was good to me, my relationship with my two men was especially happy. I am a very lucky woman.

My mother had a great influence on me and I still feel her presence in my life specially when I have to make an important decision. Mum was a strong, proud, confident woman. She told me to hold my head high and never let anyone put me down. She taught me to look after my hygiene and grooming. I learned how to cook and keep a home in good order. I followed her example in bringing up children and my children followed me. They all had jobs to do and we told them that they have to save half towards their bikes and we would give the rest. They learned young to work and save. We disciplined them strictly.

I still believe that a smack on the bottom at the right time and for the right reason is a quick and effective remedy for inappropriate behaviour. My husband only had to raise his big voice to make order in the house. Thank God we never had any serious problems with our children or grandchildren. I am very proud of my children and their achievements. All of them are married and have families. I have eleven grandchildren and I love them all very much. My children are very responsible and hard working. They are passing on the values they learned in our home.

My husband Bruno was a confident supportive man who let me develop into a strong independent woman. I was only a little girl when I married him at 18. He was already twenty-nine and knew what he wanted and how to get it. He was a winner in everything he did. He liked playing cards because he liked winning. He also liked travelling and fishing. Bruno liked to go to Ireland by car or plane on fishing trips. Once I went with a cycling group on a tour to Ireland. There I met my two friends and later we travelled through Europe on our bikes. We met every year and on our tours we discovered new parts of Europe. Travelling on my own with my friends like that made me more self reliant, independent and confident. I discovered Europe and at the same time I discovered my inner strength that helped me make the big step to Australia. I don't think I would be able to take this new life if I didn't first travel through Europe.

I think Bruno would be delighted to see me enjoying life in the bush camp in Lightning Ridge.

I learned to get along with people and welcome new challenges. I believe that things can only improve. This must come from my upbringing and from the teachings of my mother. I was fortunate that my mother and my husband gave me a sense of pride and self-confidence.

I did not escape from Germany; I came to Australia because I wanted to share my life with Ingo. Now I have the best of both worlds. I love the time with my family in Germany and I enjoy the tranquillity of my bush life with Ingo on the opal fields of Lightning Ridge.

Ingrid Moises

I came from Germany to Australia in 1978 with my husband Peter who is a baker.

Australian baked products were different from those in Germany so we opened our own bakery in Maroochydore and produced traditional German products for the five star hotels and up-market coffee shops.

In 1991 we rewarded ourselves with a year and a half-holiday in Germany so we could spend time with our children there.

In 1994 Peter's son came and we showed him some of the Australia. We came to Lightning Ridge and Peter fell in love with the open countryside and the laid back lifestyle. Peter knew that his delicious European products would sell well in the town with European majority. We incorporated a coffee shop, specialty grocery lines and green grocer section onto our business. We now employ local staff.

For hot summer months most miners go away and we also close our shop to return to Gold coast for a holiday.