

Ursula Sheldon



Born in Zurich, Switzerland, the only girl with 3 brothers, Ursula completed teacher training but, after a stint learning English in Bournemouth, England, she got a nannying job with a diplomatic family in Paris.

Thus, the adventures begin! Ursula joined the Swiss Diplomatic Service and, after postings in Berne and Milan, finally arrived in Sydney. The Swiss government paid for her first-class ticket; a 2 day flight with 5 stops and an overnight stay in Manila.

Ursula loved 1960's Sydney, where she joined the throng of other baby boomers, challenging the straight-laced, twin-setted establishment (in Australia *Lady Chatterley's Lover* & *Portnoy's*

Complaint were both banned; cinemas & most shops were closed on Sundays by law; elbows off tables). Post-war migrants Italians, Greeks, Germans and Poles – had brought with them espresso, wine and focaccia. Over the racket of the Opera House's construction, the theatre and music scenes were pumping (Ursula loves both classical and jazz) and the 6 o'clock swill ended, giving birth to pub rock. It was a heady time!

Here Ursula met Ernie (also Swiss) – adventurous, witty, fiercely independent like Ursula. A fellow swashbuckler (think William Tell), Ernie was down from driving the huge Euclid trucks in Mt. Isa, because of the 8 month miners' strike of 1964. So began their gypsy-life, first checking out a Post Office & School Bus business near chilly Armidale. When booking into a motel, not yet married at the time, they were told that they had to rent two rooms as *this was not done in this country*. Undaunted, Ernie replied *ok then, we'll sleep in the car in front of your motel*.

They got their room.

After they got married, Ursula had to leave her job -no married women then in the diplomatic service! They eventually invested in a self-service store in Gerringong, NSW. Trade journals accompanied them on their honeymoon. After more than 2 years, they returned to Switzerland, to at last get to know their respective in-laws. They bought a VW Kombi and wandered throughout the mosaic of Europe, before returning to Australia and buying a guest house in Wollongong. One sure way to learn much about the good, the bad and the sad of human nature!

They sold this after 5 years and bought another campervan, meandering happily together again around Australia for over a year (briefly fruit picking and working in the noisy Berri cannery in SA), before settling in Gympie on 5 glorious acres. They spent 12 wonderful years there, where Ursula joined the ladies choir, performing in many productions.

Then off travelling again! Until Ernie's health required them to pull up anchor on the Sunshine Coast. Ursula did bits and bobs – TAFE tutoring, telephone counselling for *Lifeline* and representing the Sunshine Coast Swiss Community Care. About 20 years ago, a friend asked her to join her at beginners' bridge classes. Her friend stopped, but she kept going, as she always does. Card games were already well known to Ursula; as kids they played to work out who had to dry the dishes.

Unfortunately, Ernie passed away over 10 years ago. Their beautiful dog Susi, a Shitzu/Lhasa Apso cross, also passed away last year, aged 15.

Ursula will, of course, keep on going, seizing every day.