

Hans Kurt Meier's Eulogy

02.06.1931 –
11.07.2010



The funeral was held at Centenary Memorial Gardens on 19 July 2010, and the eulogy was read by his eldest daughter, Susan.

Dad was a quiet man, but his life was marked by resilience, focus, determination, surprising drama in his early decades, and everyday heroism in the latter ones. Together with Mum, he was the rock-solid foundation of our childhood and, later, for our extended families.

Dad was born on 2 June, 1931, in Plauen, Germany (later to become East Germany), 10 years after his older sister, Lieselotte. His father, Curt, along with his mother, Liesel, ran a shop/newsagency in Plauen. Tragically in 1936, Liesel died from complications after the birth of Dad's younger sister, Ursel. Ursel was first sent to a home and was then rescued and cared for by family friends on a nearby farm.



While his father was at work, Dad as a five year old was able to roam the streets in Plauen. During this time he played chief matchmaker and found his Dad a new wife, Lotti. She lived with

her invalid mother in the same street as the Meier's. She would often look after Dad when his Dad worked late – Dad would often refuse to go home – and a friendship and eventual love developed. Two years later they married. The plan was then to bring the family as a whole together again. They visited Ursel every weekend for several months before finally bringing her home in 1939.

Dad was cut out to be a chef all his life. As a child, he loved to cook with Ursel's toy saucepans, and greatly upset her by leaving them in a mess after he finished. He remained a typically messy chef all his life (although the awesome food more than made up for it!).

In 1945, Dad finished school at 14 and started his apprenticeship as a chef in the Reichshallen in Plauen, a very well to do establishment. He qualified in 1949 and stayed on as a junior chef. During this time there was great angst and upheaval in the country, as it had split and become East Germany - a Stalinist/Communist regime. Dad badly wanted to escape to the West.

He would often go to the West and smuggle back large quantities of margarine (a much sought after commodity) and also West German currency. He was caught and questioned several times - even held in jail for a short time and made to chop wood - but even back then he had the gift of the gab and talked his way out. On one occasion he was questioned and stripped searched but the officers didn't think to ask about or notice Dad's clenched fist which contained a large wad of West German notes. Kind of makes Hogan's Heroes look like a reality TV show!

The final decision to escape to the West was made when his boss, Frau Krause, insisted he sign the papers to join the Communist Union. He refused and was sacked on the spot.

In 1950, people could still go to the West but only to visit – someone carrying several suitcases would look too suspicious. So over a few months he made numerous trips to the West taking a small bag with him each time so as not to attract suspicion and he left them in a railway locker in the West and then he would returned home. His final journey/escape to the West was in November 1950.

He was then housed in a Reception Camp in Berlin and issued with a new passport and identity card. This was because the train journey to the political refugee camp in Hannover went through both West and East Germany and he would have been arrested if travelling under his real name.

From March 1951 to March 1956 he was a cook at various US Army bases in the West and had to cook 3 hot meals a day for an average of 300 people – "No worries!" as Dad would often say!



After his stint in the Army he travelled the country and ended up in Stuttgart. In June 1957 he met Mum (Heidi) – at a dance. Mum had gone there with a group of girlfriends and he asked her to dance, and the rest, as



we know it, is history.

Family has always been important to Dad and this was made evident by him going back to East Germany several times by sneaking out of the "allowed visitor's zone" - a risky trip via back roads to Plauen and meeting up with his parents. He even took Mum on one occasion. She now can't believe she actually did it, but at the time it was just a big adventure.



The next few years he had a break from chefing and worked as a labourer in a few factories including Bosch. There he earned a decent wage and was able to save for his next big adventure

In 1960 he left for Australia, arriving by ship on his Birthday. Dad's sister, Ursel, and her husband, Horst, along with his extended family, warmly welcomed him and later Mum too, and they all lived together in Franz and Gerda Pfuhl's house in Annerley.



During his working life in Australia, Dad worked at variety of places: A couple of stints at the German Club; the Queensland Club, the Carlton Hotel, the Coronation Motel; the Melbourne Hotel and the Mt Gravatt Hotel to name a few.

One of Dad's first jobs in Australia was at Wanganui Gardens. It was also the last place he worked at before hanging up his apron strings to retire. Back then it only opened on the weekends and the exciting menu consisted of Prawn Cocktail, Roast Chicken and Fruit Salad. One advantage to Wanganui being only open on weekends was that leftover food and beer couldn't be kept so staff could take it home. The hoards at the Annerley house eagerly awaited the arrival of Hans on his food-laden Moped motor scooter each Sunday night.



Mum arrived in April the following year and they were married on 22 July 1961 (this Thursday will be their 49th wedding anniversary). After they were married they moved to their own

house in Inala where they raised their 3 children - me (Susan), Peter, and Karen.

In 1986 they moved to their current house in Middle Park.

We had a terrific childhood and we all have fond memories of family holidays, playing cards, board games and doing puzzles. He even showed us how to place a bet!

Mum and Dad both arrived in Australia with not much money or English language but managed to find work almost immediately and their strong work ethic is something that has remained with them to this day. And something they have instilled in us all.

Being a chef meant good food. Lots of it featured often in the Meier household and they have had many good parties to prove it. No function was ever too big or too small. But trying to ask for a recipe was frustrating as Dad would say, "You just need a bit of this and a bit of that!"



The resilience and determination Dad gained as a child and young man stayed with him all his life. He was however, not known for his carefulness. He would tackle any project at full steam - often not considering the consequences. There were many sliced fingers, serious burns, and bruises. And often a few choice words too! He never complained, however, that anything hurt or that he felt terrible!

We often joke as a family that Dad was like a cat with nine lives. He survived an amazing amount of very traumatic health issues (many of which were self inflicted as I just alluded to). A brief summary of these include:

- Crashing into a wooden SEQEB pole which completely squashed the passenger side of his car (missing him by inches)
- Perforating his bowel after slipping on wet grass in those bloody rubber thongs he liked to wear; while trying to hook the trailer up to the car - but not really saying anything to Mum until a few days later. Doctors were amazed he survived.
- Falling several metres from a palm tree and breaking his back in 3 places - managing to crawl/walk back into the house but not saying anything to Mum until several hours later when he lay on the lounge floor and said, "Maybe you should call an ambulance..."
- A few years later he fell off the roof! (luckily only hurting his ankle)
- The list goes on but that's for another time.....

Four years ago he had a bowel blockage which developed serious complications and while in hospital it was also discovered that he had Legionnaires Disease. It was a real miracle that he survived. After that major drama his health slowly deteriorated and these last few years saw him really slow down.

In retirement, Dad contributed to his community and family in the same, quiet, unassuming way that characterised his whole life.

He gave blood regularly for many, many years.

Three to four times a month he, and his beloved Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Toby, and later Mum and whichever grandchild they happened to be babysitting, visited various nursing homes involved in pet therapy for the residents, right up until just a few months ago.

He would scan the junk mail for the best bargains; zip around in his much loved V dub and later on, on his scooter. He cooked lovely meals for Mum and spent his time building planter boxes, doing puzzles and playing with the

grandchildren. Even after his health deteriorated, he loved sitting in his recliner with his mate Toby at his side, watching TV, sipping port, scratching Scratchies and having the grandchildren playing at his feet.



On behalf of Dad, I would like to thank my brother Peter and his wife Elizabeth, my sister Karen and her husband Dave, and Tante Ursel and Onkel Horst, for all the love and support they have given Mum over the last few weeks. The biggest thanks must go to Mum who cared for Dad so beautifully, especially over the last four years. Her selfless love and devotion is amazing.

Dad's legacy remains with us in so many ways. He gave us the kind of happy, stable childhood that helps us now to cope with adult life, and helps us to raise our own families. His strong work ethic, his strength and resilience, his constant positive happy outlook, his generosity and capacity to give/ always lend a hand and above all his great love for Mum and our family will always be with us.

Thank you, Dad. Rest in Peace.

