

Horst's Speech

Welcome.

First of all, Ursel and myself would like to thank you all for attending this milestone of the 80th birthday of our miracle birthday girl Ursel.

The miracle is that she survived her birth and lost her mother in the process. Her life was also in great danger (she received an emergency christening as she was not expected to live). Whilst she was deteriorating in hospital, old friends of her family urged her father to get her out of that hospital into their care, which he finally, in desperation, and against strong protest and threat by the hospital, did. To everybody's surprise the elderly lady managed to turn things around and she started to grow up normally.

Because of the following war years, the loss of her mother, and her father being drafted into the army, she was placed with various friends and families at different times, but finally returned to her old home with a new stepmother which was very good to her, although it took a little time to get used to. At about 14 years old, she got a job as a farmhand with family friends which she liked a lot (especially because of the animals, which she is still very fond of). At 17 ½ years old, she was invited to visit her sister in Hamburg (West Germany) when her sister persuaded her not to go back to East Germany.

And she stayed and got a job in a household with good people. This is the time we met (and we are still annoying each other!). In 1955, she made the bravest decision of her life and agreed to join our family as we were preparing to migrate to Australia. But that was not without problems either, as I broke my leg and we were delayed until the authorities were satisfied that it would be OK.

Now Ursel had a real problem because she was nearly 18 years. She needed the permission of her parents, which had to be certified by the East-German authorities. They could not risk it as they didn't know where their daughter was. So they got the necessary paperwork done through good friends. They couldn't do it again.

Fortunately my Uncle Helmut and his family were already 2 years in Australia, so Ursel went 3 months earlier on another ship and stayed with Uncle Helmut and family until we arrived 3 months later. We married on the 27th of October. The party went over a few days and it was very hot. Money was a little tight in

those days, so we all got jobs as soon as we got here. In 1957, Ursel had our first child, a boy named Axel. He weighed 10/11 pounds (approx. 5kg+). 2 years later, his sister Birgit was born.

Ursel has always been a very good mother and a fantastic homemaker, housekeeper and cook (she still feeds me well). Nobody refused an invitation to her house! Then she gracefully accepted the job as a grandmother to 3 grandchildren, and then as a great-grandmother to 5 great-grandchildren. She loves them all.

And now (with her health fading a little), let's celebrate her 80th birthday by singing together "Happy Birthday to you".