



Ursula AnnMarie Zehl

JAN 13, 1927 - MAY 31, 2008



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Ursula AnnMarie Zehl went home to the Lord on Saturday, May 31, 2008. She was born in Rudolstadt, Thüringen, Germany on January 13, 1927. She was drafted, as a teenager, to work in a Czechoslovakian munitions factory during World War II. After the war, she had to find her way home, on-foot, through war-torn Germany and narrowly escaped a Russian's soldier's attack.

After reuniting with her family, she eventually was swept off her feet by the love of her life. Walter, a gregarious mail carrier back from the war, would routinely shower her mailbox with gifts. After the whirlwind courtship, the couple married on December 24th, 1949, Christmas Eve, to maximize food rations for the celebration.

Since the Russian occupation of East Germany was harsh, the couple made the painful decision to leave their family and friends for the freedom of the West. The adventurous duo left all their possessions, severed all family ties, and risked their lives to escape across the heavily guarded eastern border under the cloak of darkness. Walter made it, while Ursula got caught but managed to coax the young guard into letting her cross.

Life was better in post-war West Germany but estranged from all family ties in East Germany, the couple eventually decided to take their sojourn one step further and left for America. Selling everything they owned for the fare, they immigrated via ship to New York in 1954. Their first sight of America was the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

They stayed with their cousin temporarily in Connecticut on their way to Georgia to live with their sponsors. They settled in the Bronx, and they genuinely loved America: their new homeland.



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They took English classes at night while they worked long hours during the day, dropped their native tongue and became proud U.S. citizens in 1971. After fourteen years of marriage and many prayers, their only daughter, Patricia, was born.

Ursula's journey did not end there. The adventurous couple snaked their way across the United States to Houston as opportunities presented themselves. They visited Germany on vacation three times, but the first time was the scariest. It was before East Germany was reunited and the family was worried, they were still on a watch list as they passed through the border checkpoint crossing. Eventually, they end up in Friendswood where they retired.

Ursula worked at Foley's department store and at Memorial City Hospital. She was a member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church and loved attending Sunday Services. She enjoyed taking care of her family and travelling, especially to seaside destinations. Everyone loved Ursula because she was such a kind, worldly-wise soul with an irresistibly cute German accent.

Ursula is preceded in death by her parents Annemarie Freund, brothers Herbert and Werner; and sisters, Gertraud and Charlotte. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Walter Zehl, daughter and son-in-law, Patricia and Mark Hoesl, and grandson, Ryan Hoesl. Her presence will be greatly missed, but we rejoice in knowing that one day we will be reunited in Heaven. Ursula is inurned at South Park's Garden of Hope in the Hoesl Family Cemetery next to her lifelong soulmate: Walter.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Ursula by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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