

Gertrude “Trudy” Reusser – Biographical Sketch

I was born Trudy Palm, the youngest of three children in 1939, just months before WWII started. The doctors, who knew my mother well, told her that they had doubts about me. However my mother, who was also a doctor, had a wonderful rule. “Never believe anything negative that doctors tell you. If you do, part or all of what they say will become real.” When my mother took me home, she had faith that we would have a long and very special relationship. She was right and she really taught me what genuine love is. We were like two peas in a pod - - until she went to heaven – 47 years later.

Both my parents helped me to always expect the best in life and to “Bloom where you are planted”. Although my brother, sister and I were born in Cologne, Germany, and grew up during the war, my parents had planned ahead and moved to a small farm. As soon as I was old enough I wanted to be with her on her doctor calls and wanted to learn everything about everything—hard on my mother’s nerves. Also, there was barely enough food to make it and we were very hungry at times. With my parents’ efforts, teachings and sacrifices, we all survived.

My father had to commute to the city where the jobs were. So, he would commute about eight hours each way, working as an engineer for an iron ore mining company, specializing in magnetics. For 10 years, he would leave home on Sunday afternoon with his three children in tow, walking him to the train station. He would then travel to the city to a rented room. Friday at midnight he would come home. Oh! How happy we were to see him, especially since we sensed that his homecoming was never assured due to intense bombings all around him.

Life was hard but we were (a) blessed with close knit family and (b) blessed with strong faith in the Lord. My parents had wanted to immigrate to the United States for many years, but the German Government would not allow any one to leave the country for fear of a “brain drain”. Then, in 1948, my parents tried again and were rejected again. We were terribly disappointed and became resigned to never making it to the Land of Opportunity. Out of the blue, on Easter Sunday in 1950, a letter from the US Government arrived. It asked: “How would you like to come to America?” What a joy! My father had been chosen as one of the German scientists to be to be imported to the US. In early 1952, in the midst of a severe storm in the Atlantic, we “bounced” across the ocean and arrived at Ellis Island. We were extremely happy and excited.

Our family settled in Wisconsin, a dairy state. By now – life was wonderful and we kids had more than enough food to eat. My father chose a dairy state so that we would not have to worry about hunger again. My father also made a rule: Speak only English at home until we were all fluent and could understand the culture and history of this remarkable country and that we could participate in the political issues and elections. He instructed us to study German in school so that we would not forget. We sailed through high school and worked our way through college with the help of many good friends. After my graduation, an opportunity opened up for me in California, so I moved to San Francisco and loved the good weather.

My career: I had always wanted to be a doctor, like my mother. I loved taking care of people, always will. However, due to a back injury I could not get into medical school. Also, due to some very good luck, I became an electrical engineer, like my father. More good luck, I became a part of the team at MIT Research Engineering that established the standards that would make the internet work. With the contacts I made in this field, I met a man who was President of a Consulting company and invited me to work for his company as a Project Manager on the East Coast.

Through this new job, I met Col. Kenneth L. Reusser, in 1972, a highly decorated Marine fighter pilot who had almost 30 years of service in three wars. Wow, how lucky I am. He became my wonderful husband in 1975. He had the brightest blue eyes and a smile that could melt people. He certainly had that effect on me and that has never changed.

We lived in the Washington D.C. area for 12 years. Ken wanted to start and run a consulting company. Therefore, we teamed up, he with his specialty (aviation) and me with mine (computer systems) and we started our own company. It was quite successful and I had the opportunity to earn my master's degree. The University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School offered the "Executive MBA Program" which was designed for people who were working full time and were willing to spend all of their non-job time and effort in getting their master's education.

What's more, Ken already had two master's degrees, and he was given another formal "Master of Understanding" degree signed by the same dean. It was a nice humorous touch – and we appreciated the acknowledgment of Ken's efforts. I graduated in 1985. We celebrated and celebrated.

My career took another good turn by 1986. I was offered an exciting new position in California working for Hewlett Packard – to negotiate national and international technical standards which defined exactly how the global internet was going to work. Ken was offered the position of President of a company in California, a job that became available at the exact same time as mine – a miracle. By 1990 the international internet standards were published and began to be implemented worldwide. So, we sold the consulting company and moved to California.

Ken had always enjoyed building and when he took me on a vacation to meet his family in Oregon I fell in love with both Oregon and his family. Therefore, we retired in 1990 and Ken began building our retirement dream home in the Portland area; it was a large home to accommodate my widowed father and widowed sister-in-law. However, that did not work out. Sadly, my dad died suddenly of a heart attack and my sister-in-law could not leave where she was. We prayed about what to do. Within days, the answer was clear – an Adult Foster Care Home. I went back to school to earn a license to take care of older people who could no longer live independently. The job was very satisfying because I could do my very favorite thing – taking care of people. We had five patients at any given time. It was a pleasure to see them feel safe, comfortable, and having fun...

There were four years of success. Some of the patients and friends from that time are still good friends. However, my back did not allow me to continue. We decided to downsize and we built a smaller, one-story home in Milwaukie. We love it here and hope to stay here for the rest of our lives. I feel so very blessed that the Lord allowed me to be Ken's wife and to have the quality of life we still enjoy. "Bloom where you are planted and be grateful for all your blessings" was the philosophy my parents taught me. It has seen me through challenging times and good times and it is still working.

We are now marketing reps for Univera, a company that provides thoroughly researched, natural products with strong scientific evidence about their effectiveness. Univera owns the fields where the plants are grown and harvested and the facilities where they are tested, processed and packaged. These products, a healthy diet, proper exercise and sleep, keep my husband and me strong and healthy with enough energy and resources to help others. We have the good life.