

True Love and Warm Beer

Leni and Philip Ralph celebrated an unusual Silver Wedding, multicultural and “very British”. Their marriage was a result of the town twinning between Crawley and Dorsten



Philip and Leni Ralph (left) with friends and family at their silver wedding on Saturday.

Photo: Jo Gernoth, WAZ

By Jo Gernoth

Dorsten/Gelsenkirchen. A silver wedding is not exactly a gem to excite a local news reporter. But Leni and Philip Ralph’s 25th anniversary is something special.

Flashback to 1973: A group of Dorsteners founded an association to forge links with their English twin town of Crawley. The people of Dorsteb were then fascinated by the language and many of the

customs and traditions of the English.

Among the anglophiles were Brigitte and Klaus Poloszyk. In 1987 they hosted a young Briton from the twin town, who wanted to get to know Dorsten. That man was Philip Ralph, who had a most unusual occupation: he was a calligrapher (an expert for artistic lettering) and involved in heraldry, the art of coats of arms.

He was also an early computer freak.

The rest is a true love story

“And then my best friend Leni invited us round for an informal evening. I explained that we had someone from Crawley staying with us, and that I could only accept her invitation if we could bring our guest with us. That was no a problem for Leni, and the rest is a true love story,” said Brigitte

Poloszyk, laughing. Her role changed from conscientious host to international matchmaker, though she didn't realise it at the time.

"It was love at first sight," admits Leni Ralph, who in those days was a single mother, bringing up two children. For Philip Ralph, on the other hand, it was love at second or third sight, when over the next few days he turned up at his Leni's house time and time again, just by chance.

It doesn't matter. Cupid's arrow had wedged itself deeply in both their hearts and they formed what today would be called a patchwork family.

Philip wedded not only his beloved Leni, but also her son René and her daughter Yvonne. After they had been married for only a short time, grandson Maurice completed the family quintet. They had found love in Dorsten, and then settled in Gelsenkirchen.



Wedding couple as finger puppets.

Photo: Jo Gernoth, WAZ

"We took on these responsibilities and made a success of it," said Leni Ralph, adding: "Philip managed to resolve many problems with his charm and sense of humour."

And just how British has Philip remained after 25 years living in Germany? "Even with the best will in the world, I still find German beer too cold and prefer Scotch whisky," confessed this likeable man.

However, he has never regretted choosing a haven of marriage in Germany.

Written by Jo Gernoth
of Dorsten's local newspaper, the
Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung

WAZ

Translated by Philip Ralph

Two Anglo-German success stories: The town twinning and the Ralph Family

■ **The children** of this Anglo-German patchwork family obviously value their parents' happiness – and that of the whole family – very highly. In great secrecy, they organised a surprise party for the silver wedding couple, with visitors from England, a stretched limousine and, of course, genuine Scotch malt whisky.

Here's a toast to the next decades: **Cheers!**

■ **The town twinning** is a similar success story. Following visits by delegations from both towns, the twinning agreement was signed and sealed on 15th October 1973 in a ceremony at Dorsten's town hall, the "Rathaus".

Last Orders is a round table for informal conversation in English, organised by the "Freundeskreis" (town twinning association). It's held on the second Wednesday of each month in the "Wacholderhäuschen" pub, Dorsten.



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