



## IRENE SCHONEK KROUSE

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Children: Johnathan, Cristi and Kimberly

Grandchildren: Tyler (10), Katherine (7), Natalie (11), Will (8), Hunter (1)

If you remember me, you knew me as Irene Schonek. My parents were afraid to use my name which is Ircsi (Earchee). I hated Irene, so when I got some confidence, I started using it and no one laughed at me.

I landed at SSH half way through my junior year. This was my fourth school since we immigrated to the USA after the Hungarian revolution in 1956. We didn't get to Portland until July of 1957. Other than my Dad, none of us spoke English, nor had any English classes available, so we learned from a typewritten book. My parents held several jobs and got started with a donation that Dad couldn't wait to pay back. Unlike today, I was the only foreigner with an accent at any of the schools I attended, including SSH.

Some of you stayed away from me like I was an alien. Luckily for me, many of you sensed that I was overwhelmed and intimidated. You were very kind and brought me into your group so I would start feeling like I belonged, even though I looked like a refugee and lived on the wrong side of the track.

After graduating from U of O, I immediately moved to LA and soon got hired as a stewardess with Pan Am. This job was life changing. My confidence went sky high and I got to see the world quickly all around the world, because Pan Am only flew international. There was a glitch because just before I flew off to NYC to live, I fell in love with my husband who lived in LA. I had no time for a relationship when all I wanted to do was travel the world. Of course, I could fly to LA for \$5 one way, so we got to see each other frequently. I was crazy about Tim and still am after 44 years. We got married 9/68 and we traveled the world together when he could get away from work. After a few years, I was ready to unpack my suitcase.

My family lived here, so we moved from LA to Portland. I got my master's at PSU and started teaching. Tim had a son at age 19 and paid support, but didn't get to spend time with him until recently. Tim and I have two girls and adopted a Down Syndrome boy who lived with us until we moved to Tokyo in 1981. He then lived with my Mom and on his own until he passed away 3 yrs ago.

Tim was very interested in getting an international engineering job and he got a great assignment in Tokyo. I quit teaching and started an international business in Asia. After 5+ years in Tokyo, we moved back so our daughters could experience American life. They went to public schools and learned quickly that life is not cushy like it is when you are an ex-pat. After they went off to college we moved back to Tokyo for three years. We really wanted to live in Hong Kong. We moved our offices and lived there for almost six years. It was better for business for both of us since China was super active. We had offices in several Asian countries, with the main one in Hong Kong. We were able to easily fly out of the HK airport for business and pleasure to super islands in Thailand the Philippines, etc. for short periods enjoying all our diving adventures.

We had condos in Kauai so we could have family gatherings half way from here, so we had a place to move to when Tim said "I am a year late". He was 56 and imagined retiring when he was 55. We did so in 2001.

At that time we moved back and forth between Kauai and Portland and kept traveling. We designed and built our dream house in Kauai, but circumstances required that we move back Portland. We are happy about that in the end because we are so much closer to our 5 grandchildren ages from 1-11 years old, who are here and Southern California. Since most of our grandchildren are in school, getting together in Kauai got complicated. So, now we live in Portland, keep visiting kids in CA and see the ones who live here often and keep traveling. My requirement is that we don't move again. During our 44 years together, the longest we ever lived in a house was four years.

We still feed our insatiable appetite to see the world. We have seen a lot while we were working, but didn't have time for touristy things. Of course, we visited Budapest/Europe frequently to spend time with relatives.

After retirement, we went back to Asia several times and explored it leisurely. We also went on two safaris on each side of Africa and we are getting ready to go on a cruise down the Nile in September. We have not seen the pyramids, so it is a must. We consider ourselves blessed for all the opportunities we have had to travel the world and especially for the strength to successfully fight major health issues.

I guess I am a Hungarian gypsy and the love of my life has the same urge to explore. We are proud to say that we never inherited a penny. In fact, we helped both our families frequently, especially as they got older. What we did is dream big and worked our butts off so we could be independent in a comfortable way.

The only teacher I remember at SSH is Mrs. Hise who told me I will not make it in college and should consider manual work. Her comment was so devastating that it turned into a SUPER MOTIVATOR. At times, it is the ones who annihilate us who indirectly have the most positive influence in our lives, if we believe in ourselves.

