

Bruno KOSSMANN

Bruno Kossmann began life in 1952 in Buchheim, a district of Köln (Cologne) on the east side of the River Rhine. He was the middle child of five born to Johannes (Hans) and Gertrude (Trudi) Kossmann. His younger brother died at age 3 years and so Bruno grew up with two older brothers and a younger sister. Herr Kossmann had served in the German Wehrmacht (Army) in World War II, and served on the eastern front fighting Russia's Red Army. He rarely talked about his war experiences and discouraged inquiries about his service. Bruno does recall that his father did reconnaissance work with a horse and a hand-held radio transmitter, an ironic assignment because he hated horses and technology! After the war, Herr Kossmann worked for the Köln Police Service, but a tuberculosis infection forced him to change jobs. He next worked in the administrative section of a large manufacturing plant producing mainly medical uniforms and other workwear. He died in 1986¹. Bruno's mother worked in the hat making industry before her marriage to Hans, after which she focused on being a mother, wife, and homemaker. She died on Bruno's birthday in 2008.



Left: Bruno's father on the right with his brother.

Right: Bruno's mother, front step of family home.

Bruno attended the Volksschule for nine years.² He next attended a Handelsschule for two years and was accepted into an apprenticeship with Mauser Werke, a well-

¹ Bruno's father and his father-in-law died within a 24-hour period, one in Germany, the other in Saskatchewan.

² This is no longer possible in Germany's education system.

known German firearms manufacturer. After 2.5 years he qualified as an Industrie Kaufmann Gehilfe and began working in the sales division of a firm which fabricated metal, plastic and fibre barrels, as well as a variety of other products. In 1975 Bruno qualified as a Betriebswirt (economist) specializing in foreign trade.

During this time, Bruno met Sharon, a Canadian who was living and working in Germany. Sharon (English-French ancestry) was born in Manitoba and later lived in Regina. In 1973 they flew to Canada to spend Christmas with Sharon's parents in Regina. It was Bruno's first trip abroad. They married in January, 1974 in the Civil Registry Office or Standesamt in Mühlheim, another district of Köln. Six months later, Bruno's family was able to travel to Canada and they married in Regina's St. Jean-Baptiste Catholic Church. Bruno explains that during the 1970s, Germany's labour market had few opportunities for so-called white collar jobs. In 1975 Bruno immigrated with his Canadian wife to Canada. Their five children were born in Saskatchewan. Bruno recalls there were no issues with his immigration visa, but it took about six months to arrive. In 1978 Bruno became a Canadian citizen, simultaneously giving up his German citizenship, a requirement at that time.

Bruno had registered with Canada Manpower Agency upon his first visit to Regina in 1973, and again in 1974 and in 1975 when he immigrated. He presented his credentials including his newly-acquired certificate as a Staatliche Geprüfter Betriebswirt or Federally Certified Economist. He was told it would qualify him for a "position", but not necessarily for a "job"!

Bruno went right to work, at first with Stelco³ in Regina, through a connection with a neighbor of his new in-laws. With money they had brought from Germany, they were able to make a downpayment on a house. Bruno says he could speak basic English before he immigrated, and with his gregarious nature, he easily fit in everywhere he went, and his English quickly improved. Canada Manpower approved and funded Bruno to take an Occupational English course, but he had to give up his job at Stelco. His next full-time job was with the City of Regina working in the Purchasing Department, as a Duplicating Machine Operator! This "position" was a far cry from his educational qualifications. Sticking with the City of Regina, Bruno transferred to the Comptroller Department where he worked for four years,

³ Stelco is a Canadian steel products manufacturer.

at first as an Audit Clerk trainee and later in the Payroll Department of Public Works, before returning again in 1999 to the Audit Department.

Bruno's brother Norbert immigrated to Canada in 1976 and lives in Saskatchewan, not far from Regina. The other brother and his sister still live in Germany. In fact his sister still lives in the Kossmann family home in Buchheim. Bruno has a weekly schedule of on-line visits with his siblings. He also communicates with an aunt and several cousins in Germany.

In 1979, Bruno made his first trip back to Germany to attend his grandmother's funeral. It would be the first of 20 return trips Bruno has made to his native homeland over the years. His last trip was in 2023 to attend the funeral of his aunt, who was also his god-mother.

While still working with the City of Regina, Bruno took a Local Government Administration course at the University of Regina. In 1980, Bruno left urban life behind when he accepted a job as Town Administrator in Eston, and moved the Kossmann family to rural Saskatchewan. The move allowed the Kossmann family to be closer to Sharon's parents who had made a life-style change when they sold their home in Regina in 1978 and purchased a highway motel in Kyle, SK. And so began Bruno's career in local government administration.

Over the next 32 years, Bruno served as Town Administrator in Eston, Kyle, Kelvington and Kamsack, as well as City Manager in Melville and Meadow Lake. Between his positions in Melville and Meadow Lake, he also worked eight years (2002-2010) in Regina for the Saskatchewan Government, as a member of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

During his career, Bruno volunteered for many things, including firefighting in Kyle, Secretary-Treasurer for the Kelvington Sports Board, and member of several Chamber of Commerce Boards. He was an avid Kinsmen member and held every executive position including President. He was a member of the Lions Club in Kamsack, and became the first Chair of the Venture Community Futures Development Corp. in Yorkton.

In 2012, while in Meadow Lake, Bruno left the field of local government administration. While still in Meadow Lake he worked as the night auditor for the Meadow Lake Hotel and as the Financial Administrator /Bookkeeper for the Extra

Foods store. In 2013, he moved his family back to Regina, where he worked in the Accounting Department for Real Canadian Wholesale Club until 2017, when he turned 65 years of age and retired.

During the years in Regina, Bruno took on extra part-time work to supplement their household income. He worked often at the Regina Racetrack, paying out winning tickets. He also sold tickets for various events at the Agri-Dome.



While living in Kelvington, and wishing to introduce his children to German language and culture, Bruno began making Saturday morning trips to Humboldt so his children could attend the German Language School. Here Bruno met Rosa Gebhart in 1988, and he was soon convinced to join the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan German Council, and became its treasurer for three years. After a two-year term as Vice-President, Bruno would next serve two terms as SGC President, and in 2023 he re-joined the SGC Board of Directors. While serving on the executive of SGC, Bruno served on the multicultural legislation review committee and served as Vice-Chair of the Saskatchewan Multicultural Advisory Committee (SMAC). He was also appointed to the Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations Committee representing the multicultural sector of Saskatchewan. *Photo: Kossmann family Christmas in Kelvington.*

In 1995 Bruno was elected to a four-year term with the Cultural Advisory Committee of the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations (SCCO), which later became SaskCulture. He served on the adjudication board which prioritized the Annual Global Funding applications, as well as several other committees. In 1999 he was elected to the Board of Directors for SaskCulture, first serving as Treasurer and later as elected President for 3 two-year terms. In 2004 SaskCulture created the Multicultural Community of Interest committee, which Bruno chaired until 2006. In 2008, Bruno was next appointed as Treasurer for the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCOS), and then served four years as its President and two years as Past-President. Bruno also served as Vice-Chair of the Provincial Government Committee for Multiculturalism. In 2022 he was awarded the Queen

Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for Saskatchewan in honor of his contributions to multiculturalism in Saskatchewan. Bruno is deservedly proud of this medal, and he recently wore it to the 50th Anniversary Celebration of MCOS.

When Bruno moved to Regina in 2002, he joined the Regina German Choir (Volksliederchor Harmonie), and has continued to sing with the choir, except for the two years he lived in Meadow Lake. He served for several years as the choir's treasurer, and is currently its Vice-President.

In 2023, Bruno was also elected to the Board of Directors of the Regina German Club (German Canadian Society Harmonie), currently serving as its Treasurer.

Bruno's involvement with SGC is only one aspect of his amazing life as a community volunteer. His love of basketball started as a High School Coach in Eston. He went on to become a certified basketball referee in 1987 and has since officiated at countless games and tournaments, including Saskatchewan High School Provincial Championships (Hoopla) in Saskatoon and Regina. Bruno is equally qualified as a Baseball Umpire. He officiated at the Western Canadian Men's Baseball Championship in 2022. He has maintained his certifications and still officiates at games and tournaments in basketball and baseball today. Somehow Bruno still finds time to golf and he loves to play table-tennis.

Bruno has also been recognized by the Canadian Blood Services for 300 plus donations of blood, platelets and plasma. A certificate is proudly displayed on a wall in his home. He still donates every two weeks when possible, and hopes yet to reach the 400 mark!

With a hearty laugh, Bruno remembers participating in a Buffalo Days competition to dress like a Western Sheriff. He remembers Henry Baker was the mayor at the time, so about 1977 or 1978. Sharon made his costume. He didn't win, but he says it was a lot of fun.

Bruno has participated in several Queen City Half-Marathon walks, and twice won the Regina Police Services Half-Marathon walk. At age 65 in 2017, he joined his older brother (70 years old), his niece and nephew in a relay race, which is one feature of the Cologne (Köln) Marathon. Bruno walked the last leg of the relay.



When asked about childhood memories, Bruno spoke at length about his favourite memories concerning the Christmas season, and how important everything about Christmas was to him and to his family. His mother's parents lived with them and were very much a part of the family activities. They always

set up a natural evergreen tree and decorated it on Christmas Eve. As they were finished with the decorations, a bell would ring, announcing that the Christkindl had visited. The children rushed to a table in another room, which contained cookies, fruits and nuts, and of course their presents. But first the Christmas story was read from the Bible, followed by poems from the children. Then it was off to Christmas Eve Mass, sometimes in the famous and beautiful Kölner Dom or Cathedral. A big family meal followed on Christmas Day. *Photo: Bruno, on the far right was the innkeeper in the Kindergarten Christmas pageant.*



Bruno's only regret about leaving Germany, and what he has missed the most, are the frequent family gatherings for birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions like Christmas, Karneval, Easter, and Erntedankfest (Thanksgiving). It is during these casual family gatherings where many family childhood memories are re-lived. Bruno feels he has lost many childhood memories because they have not been kept alive during these family social events in Germany. Visiting online is just not the same. *Photo: Bruno, far right,*

with Aunt Liesel, sister Anne and oldest brother Hans-Joachim.

One childhood memory Bruno has not forgotten is the time his two older brothers threw him into the deep end of their uncle's swimming pool, knowing he could not

swim. They just wanted to see how he would handle that! Of course, they extracted him shortly thereafter.

Bruno misses going to soccer games with his brothers, even ice-hockey games in Cologne. Bruno had also taken up ballroom dancing as a young man, and regrets the lack of opportunities to keep it up in rural Saskatchewan. He also still misses crusty buns (brötchen) and raw minced ground pork (Mett) eaten with salt, pepper and onion. It is often served as an open-faced sandwich or *Mettbrötchen*, alongside a Kölsch beer!

However, Bruno has never regretted leaving Germany. From Day One he has fully immersed himself in Canadian life, and would never consider returning to live full-time in Germany. He speaks his native German language as often as he can, and acknowledges that he lags behind in specialized words and phrases that have become part of Germany's culture today. Yet he is amazed at times when the German word for something comes to his mind before the English word. And other times when he is speaking German, an English word comes to mind before the correct German word! And then there are all the English words that have crept into the modern German vocabulary, ie. das Update.

Bruno confesses that his most difficult adjustment to life in Saskatchewan was becoming fluent in the English language. Particularly, he had early problems understanding people on the telephone, where there are no visual clues to help with context or pronunciation. The issue of Saskatchewan's weather never came up once! In fact, Bruno enjoys the four distinct seasons of Saskatchewan's climate, including the snow!

As a youth in Germany, family life was always very important to Bruno. He enjoyed having his grandparents living with him, and the close geographical connections to extended family. He has very much also enjoyed building the same relationship with Sharon's family here in Saskatchewan. This close connection with his in-laws helped greatly in making Bruno feel at home on the prairies. He enjoyed his years working in municipal government, as well as his active life as a volunteer. There are no drawbacks to life in Saskatchewan in Bruno's view.

Bruno observes that families here in Saskatchewan do not get together as often as his family in Germany. A big reason for that of course, is the geographical distances involved. His own family is now scattered between Ottawa, Houston, Regina, and

rural Saskatchewan. He doesn't get to see all of his nine grandchildren as often as he would like.

Bruno Kossmann's amazing energy and enthusiasm for life, and for whatever he does, have led to a successful and satisfying life in Saskatchewan. He is as proud of his professional career as he is about his volunteer "career". He typifies the hard-working German immigrant who has added so much to Saskatchewan and Canadian culture.

Photo Gallery:



Bruno on his way to school, 1959.



Bruno, doing “the Twist” at a dance school in Germany.



Bruno Kossmann family, joined by Sharon’s mother.
Kyle, Saskatchewan.