

With a family history straight out of a best-selling thriller, we should not be surprised that Karin Glenning's own story isn't vintage Aussie meat and three veg. Born in Melbourne's Chadstone sounds ordinary enough, but weave in the War-time escapes of a mother from Czechoslovakia and a father from Austria and it does get sort of complicated — so you will have to concentrate for a minute.

Both her parents had been married previously. Her father came from a family of furriers, which proved handy when one had to sew jewels into the lining of coats to escape with a few nest eggs. His first wife was a very beautiful and enterprising lady. In the early stages of the Nazi regime the Gestapo came for her husband and, as he was absent, appropriated her brother in his place. Family legend has it that before fleeing, she obtained the name of a high-ranking German officer, travelled to Berlin to see him and used her feminine wiles to secure her brother's release. He fled to New York. Karin's father and his heroic wife made their way to London.

Meanwhile, her mother and grandmother fled Czechoslovakia for England. Her schoolteacher grandfather was to join them later. Tragically, after the War the impenetrable Iron Curtain prevented her grandparents from even knowing if either had survived, and Karin's grandfather eventually remarried and started a new family. Years later they managed to make contact, but the emotional wounds of war were too much for Karin's mother, so they never reconnected.



Although she never met him, her grandfather became a fond figure in Karin's life, sending her marvellous postage stamps, igniting a passion for philately. And she was heartbroken when her huge collection was stolen while stored at her father's place during her globe-trotting days.

After separately migrating to Australia with their then spouses, her parents both left England, moving to Australia after the War. Following two divorces they eventually met in Melbourne and married. Downtown Chadstone was not home for long. Having studied accountancy in the U.K., her father evolved into an entrepreneur, buying and selling various companies



and building the family a house in Melbourne's alarmingly prestigious suburb of Toorak. Our heroine was schooled at equally well-heeled St Catherine's. Her enterprising papa became one of the first to pop a high-rise on the river at Surfers Paradise before gracing Melbourne's Spring Street with its first residential high-rise.

At Monash University Karin studied Economics and Arts and continued her first-class schoolgirl French. She spent nearly a year in France teaching English to schoolchildren, then returned to Melbourne, completed her studies and started a blissful job in marketing with Air France. In those days airline personnel freebies included first-class travel. She ticked off most of South America, France and parts of the U.S.A., travelling in extraordinary luxury for a young woman of her age. However, airline personnel were always vulnerable to being offloaded if a paying customer appeared. Her most memorable offload landed her in a Honolulu hotel double room with five other airline staffers - for three very long nights.

Club Med came next in young Karin's CV. First up was Noumea, then Chamonix, followed by a season in Haiti in the time of *Baby Doc*, when military police lurked around corners, in dark sunglasses, brown jackets and jeans — themselves as scary as their fashion sense. Some of her male colleagues could be outrageous. Their idea of discretion was to refrain from bragging about the individual guests they had bedded, but to weigh each one on the giant kitchen scales and keep a running tally. And then there was the extremely stone dead body in the pool, with staff fussing around loudly calling an ambulance so as to calm surrounding (surviving) guests. Staff starred in evening performances, to the delight of footlights-friendly Ms Glenning, who was generally on stage every night. Her favourite roles were the pregnant bride in ***Funny Girl*** and Velma in ***Chicago***.

After a season in Sicily Karin transferred to the administrative echelon in Rome and then Head Office in Paris. As the protégé of one of the few highly placed women at Club Med, our bilingual economist was chosen to work on the long and arduous job of preparing the French accounts for a submission to the New York Stock Exchange. Toiling until the wee small hours of the morning, our indomitable Karin led the team to a successful NYSE listing.

Club Med was a dream job for a keen traveller and skier. She saw most of the world once if not a dozen times, from Africa to the Caribbean, Corsica to the ski villages of Europe. Moving to New York as head of budgeting and financial analysis, after a few short years she ended up with a huge office on the 34th floor in Midtown Manhattan and a team off support staff - the executive dream.





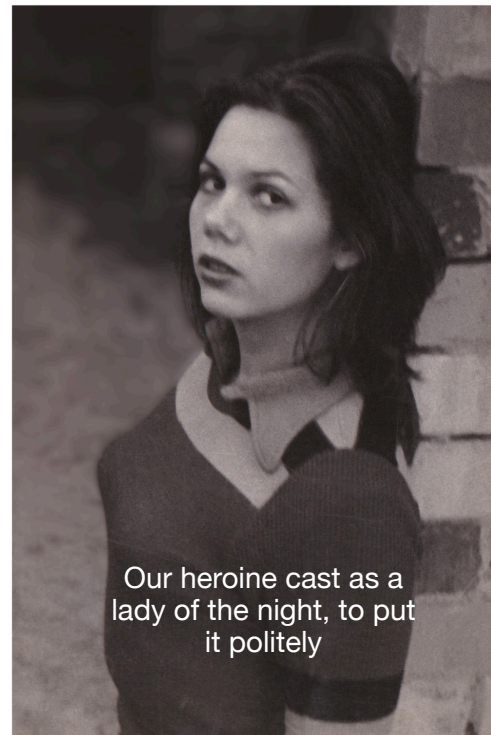
The ever quirky Ms Glenning unexpectedly resigned to take an unpaid production job in the film industry. You see, apart from a love of philately and French, Karin's school and Uni days featured more than a little acting. She had made it into **Homicide** as an Israeli spy, her speaking part sadly curtailed by the script decreeing she die on the ski slopes of Mt Buller. She also appeared in **Matlock** - that time just an extra, but not bumped off. And then there was the gig singing at one of Melbourne's best French restaurants.

Club Med had given Karin a year's sabbatical, but after a few months back in Australia following the deaths of her parents, and some time in Europe, she returned to New York, resigning later to try her luck with the silver screen. The former high flying Club Med executive was now a lowly gofer, clutching a walkie-talkie, being thoroughly bossed around by know-all 20 year-olds. Inevitably as those above her moved on she moved up, working as Production Assistant on the 1994 movie **FRESH**, starring Samuel Jackson and Giancarlo Esposito.

Finally her financial management talents were recognised and she became production coordinator and then producer, working on other live action films and commercials, before branching into post production as well. She worked on a TV horror series called **The Langoliers** and then on 1995 film **Judge Dredd**, starring Sylvester Stallone.

Along the way romance had fluttered in and out of her heart, but Cupid's alarm bells went off when she met Emmy Award winning New York art director Don Butler.

When Don was hired at George Lucas's ILM (Industrial Light and Magic) as a digital special effects artist, they moved to Northern California where they stayed until 2002. He worked on movies such as **Mission Impossible** and **Twister**, while Karin was production supervisor of the 1997 film **Farmer & Chase**, starring Lara Flynn Boyle and Ben Gazzara, and then as a producer for Red Sky Films. They married in 1998 at the Beaux Arts landmark Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.





The 9/11 attacks, the [dot.com](http://www.dot.com) bubble burst and the state of the dollar spurred them to move to Australia. Also in Melbourne were her half-brother and his children, and the family company was in need of some Karinomics.

By 2015, however, she decided to branch out starting her own festive wares business, stocking some of the marvellous Christmas paraphernalia, ribbons and such, that she had seen in Europe and America.

Reindeer & Castle was born. A rude shock arrived in the form of a broken ankle - not the run of the mill ordinary old broken ankle where you swan around for a while in a moon boot, but a 100% medical catastrophe involving huge screws and plates and pins and months of surgery and agony. Naturally she soldiered on, decorated several rooms with Christmas baubles and homewares, filled the house with friends and champagne and *Reindeer & Castle* was finally launched.

During their first years back in Australia, Karin and Don had discovered Noosa, realised its charms and bought a house at Peregrine where they retreated from Melbourne winters.

Difficult to retreat from, however, was COVID and the Victorian Premier's insistence that one should stay home for what seemed like forever more. So they sold the house in Melbourne and after obediently doing time in hotel quarantine Karin arrived triumphant here in paradise.



And Bridge ? During a winter break up here Karin took lessons with Bev Salter at our Club, and played very occasionally with her half-brother in the rarefied sanctum of the M.C.C. *Reindeer & Castle* still offers exquisite decorative pieces on line and so as not to let the grey matter go to sleep, she does a bit of consulting work with companies needing bilingual business expertise.

We might as well make up a word of our own to cover the lady's passion for pigs and pig-shaped possessions. *Porcineophile* seems to fit the bill.

So, back to grandfather from the Czech Republic ... Karin was determined to make contact with the long-lost side of her family and from a letter dated 1966 knew they had moved to Erlangen in Bavaria.

During her soul-searching sabbatical year she went to find them, armed with just the old letter and her grandmother's passport.

A friendly taxi driver suggested a visit to the local records office, where the meticulous German researcher delightedly produced a current address. Arriving at a front door opened by an older woman, Karin asked if it was the home of her uncle Wilhelm Dietrich. Her aunt dissolved in ecstasy and the whole family thronged to greet and celebrate with her. Their meeting is reminiscent of TV ancestry series, but without the rehearsals or cameras. It brings a lump to the throat, a tear to the eye, and is part of the persona of our extraordinary Club member Karin Glenning.



by Susie Osmaston