

Cally Marshall

Margret & Ethne: An Everlasting Friendship

In 1955, 13-year-old Ethne and 12-year-old Margret raised their hands in class to receive a pen pal from the newly paired cities. The pair began writing to each other immediately and continued to do so for another 5 years, updating each other on their lives, boyfriends they'd had and their countries before Margret became an Au Pair in London, living with a Jewish Family. When she arrived in Bristol she was met with open arms by Ethne and her family, she recalled feeling immediately loved when the door was opened to Ethne's home.

Margret recalled the first meal Ethne's mother cooked her, and the conversations they had sat around the dinner table. In Bristol she had her first taste of British food and she loved it. Ethne's family cooked for her, they would sit and chat while Ethne's mother would cook and her father would joke around with her. She recalled Ethne's dad jokingly call her 'fatchops' because she'd eaten a lot of sweets during her time in London. Ethne took Margret on many trips during her first visit to Bristol, I asked if she had any favourites from her first visit – she told me about her visit to the suspension bridge, their walks through the town and their trip into Bath to see the Roman Baths. She definitely got spoiled on her first visit!.

Two years after Margret's visit to the UK, Ethne visited Hannover to meet Margret's family. They explored Margret's country together, travelling to see the Berlin Wall together and seeing Margret's favourite places. Margret told me that people were more open in Bristol, everyone was greeted with open arms and kindness. She told me about the customs of meeting a new person in Germany, she said that, when speaking to someone you don't know you would refer to them as '*sie*' out of respect, but if the person you were speaking to was a

friend of yours, you'd call them '*du*': 'Margret gave me permission to call her *du*,' she says, 'and I couldn't stop a smile from forming on my face.'

Over the years, their friendship has grown stronger, and they've made so many more memories together. Margret told me of their annual tradition of going to the cinema on Silvester, the last day of the year, to hear the music of the Berlin Symphonics. Simon Rattle became a favourite of hers because of this.

Margret began her involvement with the twinning association began in 2005, she wanted to meet more people and find people who had had similar experiences to her. She told me that the group is now her best friend, all of the people she's met there hold a special place in her heart. During our conversation, she extended an invitation to me to visit her in Hannover! She told me that she's been friends with Ethne for 68 years now, their friendship means a great deal to Margret and she can't wait to see her for Silvester.