

## **Karin Southgate (Nee Dawson) – 1981 Schoenstatt Girls' Branch Golden Jubilee.**

On the eve of this milestone celebration of 100 years of women in Schoenstatt I am humbled to be able to share with you my journey.

I have been blessed to have known Schoenstatt as a child growing up in South Africa, where I was first introduced to, and invited to Schoenstatt by a teacher of mine at the age of 10 years old. I joined the children's branch then. From there my entire childhood and youth was spent as part of the Schoenstatt Movement in South Africa, where I made many lifelong friends, with whom, thanks to modern technology, I still connect with and share further experiences now in my adult life.



This childhood and youth journey in Schoenstatt meant that I was able to connect and befriend many young people who shared my interests and spiritual life. This comprised school holiday camps and weekends together, where we embarked on learning

more about Schoenstatt and the Schoenstatt way of life, according to the example and teachings of Father Kentenich. I have memories not only of profound religious discussions, but also of midnight feasts and picnics and mountain hikes together.

In 1981 I was particularly blessed in that I was chosen to be a delegate at the Girl's Youth 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee celebration in Germany, where I was able to represent South Africa, together with 7 other young women. In preparation for this event our branch had very many fund-raising activities including a fete to raise funds to be able to send our delegates to Germany. One of my group spent hours and hours making fudge to sell at our meetings and gatherings, as her contribution towards this huge event. This was such an amazing experience and a milestone in my life. As an English-speaking group, we were asked to join up with the Australian delegation, who were none other than Mary Walsh (aka Sr. Mary Louise) and Doreen. At this time, I knew that my parents had applied for immigration to Australia, but that this application was still pending. Who would have thought that at the end of 1981, I would be leaving my country of birth to make my home in Australia. A point of



interest here is that a youth sister in Germany, who was also part of the jubilee, would come to be in Australia and eventually become the moderator for Melbourne. This youth sister was none other than Sr Isabell. How interesting God's plan is for our lives, where destinies are entwined.

Upon arrival in Australia, I did not connect again with Schoenstatt until many years later, through my father and mother, who sought out Schoenstatt again after settling in Australia. I was blessed to reconnect again at Mulgoa for the crowning of Our Lady in 1995. My parents were part of the Family Branch in South Africa, and Mum and Dad were pivotal in restarting the Schoenstatt connection in Melbourne and at the Kew Shrine. As I have testified before, there were many

changes in my life, but trust in Our Lady of Schoenstatt and my Schoenstatt connection was and always will be the one constant. I am blessed to be part of the Mother's branch in Australia with strong bonds and friendships with a group of Mothers that provide support and encouragement in my status as wife and mother, and now, also grandmother.



I was able to have a reunion in 2018 in South Africa with my fellow Schoenstatt ex-girls' youth with whom I had travelled to Germany with. We have remained connected since 2014 and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Schoenstatt. Funnily enough, although many of us are now grandmother's, we still refer to each other as "Girls".

