

Karin Heintze

Our first contract started in 1961 in Saudi Arabia. We were young, happily married, with a 6-months old daughter. We lived in Abquaiq, an Aramco-serviced camp in the desert. Everything was furnished in best quality, nothing missing. I still think we were so lucky to start with such perfect living conditions. American people around us were always friendly and helpful. It prepared me for the life to come.

Our son was born in excellent conditions in the American hospital in Dharhan. He almost became an American citizen, then an Arabian, but we kept him German. For the men it was very hard work in the desert, in the Persian Gulf. I had a great life, I loved the amazing quality and beauty of the desert.

The next assignment was Burma. I arrived in March 1963, three months after Manfred, with an infant baby (our third child born during vacation in Germany). We lived in Chauk, Burma's main oil field in the Irrawaddy Valley, not very far from Pagan, the famous Pagoden monument.



The expats normally lived in beautiful houses with lovely gardens, in a wonderful area. We were housed in a 3-bedroom room bachelor bungalow in close proximity to the rigs (Intercom 124 Feb. 1965 pictures the

situation). The rudimentary and unsanitary conditions of this property was unbearable, the constant noise of the drill pipes bothersome.

Due to the political situation, the living conditions in Burma changed rapidly.



After Burma's independence in 1948 General Newin took over in 1962 with strictly military rule, virtually closing the country to the outside world. Non-essential expats had to leave the country, those who were needed could not leave without special permission. General Newin wanted to block the border, and he did for 40 years.

That made life extremely difficult for us, we soon had great problems finding adequate food, there was no proper medication available to treat dysentery for example. There was one doctor left, an Anglo-Burmese Surgeon, a very kind man, but he hardly could help as there were no medical supplies available.

At that time I was pregnant with our fourth child, he was born in Chauk under unbelievable conditions. Fortunately I was a very healthy person so everything went well.

After 18 months (March 1963-July 1964) we got special permission to leave the country as Manfred needed an operation which could not be done any more in Burma because of lack of medication.

The time in Burma was a traumatic experience. I could not talk about it for a long time

I loved the country, it had its charm and beauty, the people were kind, mostly well educated, and it has an interesting history and culture. So in a way we were sad that we had to leave under these circumstances.

Back at home the children had health problems, they needed to be nurtured and cared for.

With our next assignment, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, starting in December 1964 we were luckier.

We had the chance to live in the Shell camp which had all the facilities you can ask for in a tropical country, wonderful houses with air-conditioning, a club with a swimming pool, shops, a hospital and lots of families with young children. The social life for us grown ups was fabulous. We met lots of people and with some we had a life-long relationship. In this context, I never forgot Michel Fiquet and his lovely wife Nicole, or André Salaber and his wife Monique.

The most important thing: there were schools as it was time for our two eldest to start their education.

We would have liked to stay in Port Harcourt a long time, but unfortunately there was General Ojukwu who decided to create his State Biafra, which caused a terrible war between Lagos and Port Harcourt.

In 1967 women and children were evacuated under partly incredible conditions. My children and I were flown in a small Piper plane to Warri just across the border from Biafra, where we had to wait for another small plane to take us to Lagos. Interesting flights a few meters above the tropical forest in order to avoid enemy attacks. We stayed in Lagos in a hotel for about 4 days before a big plane would take us to Europe.

Manfred arrived safely about 3 months later. During his stay in Nigeria I had hardly any news from him, there wasn't any contact possible.

After a few years in Diepholz, Germany Manfred was transferred to Aberdeen, Scotland, from where he retired in 1985. (Manfred will turn 90 in May 2019, Karin is his junior by eight years.)

Scotland up to this day became our second home country, the children got school and university education in Aberdeen, we had the chance to meet a lot of people locally and internationally, two of our children live in Scotland (Aberdeen, Edinburgh). It is always a great joy for us to spend some time of the year in Scotland. We love the country and the people.

Schlumberger life for me was a great challenge. Although sometimes to have reached the border of what one can carry, I loved every bit of it. To cope with it one needed a lot of courage and improvising talent. The children grew up perfectly bilingual, they never complained. From early on they got to know the different people and educated themselves to understand their special way of life. Tolerance is not a strange word to them.