

## RUTH BICKELHAUPT *EDELTRAUT RITTER*

Ruth Bickelhaupt was born in the cold winter of 1921, a day before Christmas, as the youngest daughter of the Grellmann family in Limbach Oberfrohna near Chemnitz. Her parents were the proprietors of the Hotel Zentral in Limbach. As a young girl she became part of the service personnel. She helped out in the kitchen and at the bar. She looked after the bowling alley, cared for the dogs of the guests and the hotel rooms. To this day Ruth eats from the plates and uses the cutlery engraved with the logo of the Hotel Zentral.

In 1930, supported by her grandfather, Ruth picked up ballet classes at the local music school. She dances with great passion. The training is rigorous. She learns to dance on pointe until her feet bleed. A day prior to the outbreak of the Second World War she has her first solo performance at the municipal theatre. The war confounds the future plans of the young ballerina. Still, dancing will remain a source of great pleasure throughout her life. In 1942 she marries the young and dashing pharmacist Hans who is called to arms soon after.



Luckily Hans survives the turmoils of the war and the Russian war captivity and after his return they start a family. Daughter Eva is born. Hans works as a pharmacist, studies law and becomes an attorney. He later becomes a journalist, works for the NVA (the armed forces of the GDR) studies architecture, becomes a draftsman and even the principal of the Academy of Architecture of the GDR.

Between 1946 and 1967 Ruth and her family move house twenty seven times. Temporarily they even live in a medieval fortress, Schloss Rochlitz. From 1967 onwards the family lives in Berlin. Ruth gets a job at the German-Soviet-Friendship at the Zentrales Haus Unter den Linden. She works there until her retirement in 1983. She mainly supervises culture projects, organizes concerts and the cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and the GDR. In 1983 Ruth's youngest grandchild Axel is born. He spends the majority of his childhood and youth with his grandparents. It is them who bring him up. Ruth lived through the Weimarer Republic, Nazi Germany and the GDR. When the wall comes down in 1989 Ruth experiences her fourth system of government.

In the year 2000, Ruth had just turned 79 she loses her husband on Christmas day as the result of pneumonia and a consequential stroke. This is the end of the world for Ruth. For the first time in her life she is on her own. Statistically speaking 75 percent of the widows of Ruth's age don't live past the next three years. Ruth struggles through the following five years. However she manages to defeat her grief and gets cracking. At the age of 83 she learns how to swim and at the age of 84 she learns how to go-kart. When she turns 85 she gets in front of a camera for the first time and at the age of 86 she crosses the ocean for the first time to travel to Canada because she wants to see the Niagara Falls. At the age of 89 she has her first leading role in the feature film *Dicke Mädchen (Heavy Girls)*. Today Ruth is one of the busiest women her age. On Mondays she does Tai Chi, on Tuesdays she goes for a swim on Wednesdays she goes dancing on Thursdays it's time for Chi Gong, on Fridays she's cleaning and on the weekend she takes care of her garden in Pankow. And!!!! she can still do the splits.

### **Movies:**

**2007 Der will nur spielen** – Regie: Axel Ranisch

**2008 Glioblastom** – Regie: Axel Ranisch & Tanja Bubbel

**2009 Das erste Mal** – Regie: Axel Ranisch

**2010 Lilly und Mitch** – Regie: Valentin Mereutza

**2011 Dicke Mädchen** – Regie: Axel Ranisch