

For the allied countries involved in World War II, and their generations since, the word Nazi is a name easily despised. But as Anita Schulz explained to me recently, the Nazi Party also caused great suffering and exacted a terrible toll on its own people.

Anita's story is told in *Anita's War Under Hitler*, now showing at the Byron Bay Film Festival.

She recalls that during The Great Depression, *'My father was in the merchant navy and he couldn't find a job in Berlin and by joining the Nazi Party he was promised a job and even a house.'* With party membership came the expectation that their children would enrol in the Hitler Youth movement, and 10-year old Anita was no exception.

The film tells Anita's story of fleeing the devastating 1943 allied bombing raids in Berlin for Poland. With the Russian front advancing there, she was forced to escape with her classmates and just two teachers, on a life-threatening two-year ordeal to reach their families back in Berlin. They walked all the way.

After viewing the film, it strikes me how together and dispassionate Anita seems in it, as if speaking from an observer's perspective. *'You are right,'* she says, *'I was not very much engaged because I had asked Jeff [the film's director] not to make me cry.'* She offers me further insight into her deep pain, *'I have eventually cried enough with the help of a couple of councillors where the most sensitive points were the loss of my mother and the massacre of the Jews.'*

When embarking on this interview, the director Jeff Licence, an ABC Open filmmaker, suggested that some of my questions should be asked directly of Anita Schulz. I can now see why: the tale is harrowing and intensely personal.

But how did he come across Anita's story? *'I'd been running writing workshops at the Casino Library for months and Anita always came. After about the 6th session, she just happened to mention that she'd been in the Hitler Youth as a child. After picking myself off the floor I asked if she'd be interested in being interviewed about the story.'*

While Jeff now moves on to filmic ventures outside of ABC Open, namely digital storytelling workshops, Anita resides in Australia, the lure being, *'to be in the country with the least conflict and involvement in war and nuclear threat – at least this was the impression I had formed from books and television.'*

She's married to a former English bomber pilot, who years before had been involved in the Berlin bombing raids. An extraordinary story. Perhaps this peaceful union can be an example to the world that even the greatest clash of cultures and chapters of adversity can be conquered.

*Anita's War Under Hitler* is screening at the 2016 Byron Bay Film Festival, running Friday October 14 to Sunday, October 23.

