

## About Karla Poewe



**Karla conducting research in the Berlin Missionary Society archives, Berlin, Germany**



**Karla with her husband Irving Hexham speaking at Colorado Christian University**

Born in the historic city of Königsberg, East Prussia, Karla Poewe's childhood ended abruptly when her home, and most of the inner city, was destroyed on 29/30 August 1944 by British bombers. After that her family was moved to an estate outside the city before travelling in an overfilled cattle wagon on the last train to the small town of Werdau in Saxony.

There she lived in a refugee camp and remembers the arrival of “chocolate men,” Black American soldiers who treated defeated Germans, women and children with respect. After the Americans ceded the area to the Red Army a reign of terror ensued, and her thirteen-year-old cousin committed suicide after being raped. Her father returned from Russian prison camp in 1947 only to die shortly afterwards of gangrenous lungs. Then her mother organized a daring escape to Buxtehude in the British Zone. Life improved and at the age of seven she started school for the first time.

Her mother re-married and five years later they emigrated to Canada where she embraced her new land with enthusiasm. But, her step-father thought that young women ought to marry as soon as possible. Therefore, he made her turn down a scholarship to the University of Toronto. So, she left home and eventually became an Air Hostess with Trans-Canada Airlines. That job enabled her to save enough money to go to university. Once there her career blossomed, and she won scholarships to pay for her studies. At university she soon “parked God at the door,” and like most anthropologists embraced secularism. From Toronto she moved to the University of New Mexico to work on her doctorate which involved one and a half years of anthropological fieldwork in a remote part of Zambia in Africa.

After completing her doctorate Karla taught at the University of Toronto before moving to the University of Lethbridge where she became Full Professor. Later she moved to the University of Calgary to work in the same city as her husband Irving Hexham. She is a well-respected social anthropologist who has conducted both fieldwork and archival research in Zambia, Namibia, South Africa and, since the nineteen nineties, in Germany.

Karla is the author of ten books and over fifty academic articles. She has given guest lectures at universities in America, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Namibia, South Africa, South Korea, and Zambia. Her books include: *Matrilineal Ideology* (1981), *The Namibian Herero* (1985), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (1985), *New Religions as Global Cultures* (1997), and *New Religions and the Nazis* (2006). Currently she is researching the integration of German refugees from the East into the occupied zones and the two Germanies after World War II.

If you would like to invite Karla to speak she can be contacted at: [karlapoewe@shaw.ca](mailto:karlapoewe@shaw.ca)