



**BORN IN IRELAND
MADE IN GERMANY**



MEL KELLY

Chapters

1. Jobless in Dublin: Failed Table Dancer.....	13
2. Goodbye Ireland; Hello Germany	21
3. German Airport Police: Don't Call Me English!.....	27
4. First Days in Germany: Doner, Dirndl and Dunkin' Donuts	35
5. First Job in Germany: No More Naps.....	43
6. First Time in the Pub: Please Be Gentle	53
7. Promised Land: Beers, Bellies and Breasts.....	63
8. German Honesty: The Truth Doesn't Always Set You Free.....	67
9. Learning German: Teutonic S&M	77
10. German Punctuality: Who Comes First?	83
11. Conversations in German: Girls, Gays and God	89
12. German Engineering: Is Bigger Better?.....	95
13. The German Accent: Permanently Drunk?.....	101
14. German Health: Don't Get Left Behind	107
15. German Passport: Showdown at High Noon	113
16. Going Home: Irish-German Soul	119
Acknowledgements	127
About the Author.....	129
Reviews.....	131

Special thanks go to:

Writing assistance: Ken MacBeth Knowles
Cartoonist: Henning Janssen
Cover and book design: Barbara Schelling

Born in Ireland
Made in Germany

Copyright © 2017 Mel Kelly
All rights reserved by Mel Kelly.

ISBN-13: 978-1542453301
ISBN-10: 1542453305

Introduction

James Joyce once wrote that to succeed as an Irishman you need 'silence, exile and cunning'.* Unfortunately, I'm not very cunning and I can't seem to stay silent; my only option was exile.

Many famous Irish writers have left Ireland: Joyce went to Trieste to write books and teach English whilst Oscar Wilde went to London to write plays and poetry. Following in their legendary footsteps, I went to Munich to write computer code and drink German beer.

But their exile was permanent. I was only going for six months ... or so I thought.

*The words of Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's literary alter ego, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Important Disclaimers

If you are looking for a politically correct text, do not read this book. However, do feel free to buy it.

If you do not like jokes about national stereotypes, do not read this book. However, do feel free to buy it.

If you are a sensitive soul, do not bother reading this book. But, of course, do feel free to buy it anyway.

Some early reviewers have warned that this book may permanently destroy my reputation. But since I don't have a reputation worth saving, it's a risk I'm more than willing to take.

If you've read all these warnings and you're still willing to read my story, let's get started quickly ... before you change your mind.

Foreword

In the annals of etymology, a metamorphosis is defined as an organic change from one form to another. In nature, such a change is quite often from the ugly to the beautiful, like the caterpillar that changes into a wondrous butterfly. It is not so in Mel's book "Born in Ireland - Made in Germany". Here, the author Mel Kelly, struggles through his own metamorphosis, in which there is little visual change, but there is substantive change clearly visible at the bottom of a beer stein.

The book describes the wistful wanderings of a desperate full blooded Irishman seeking to find himself as he moves to Germany. All this is mischievously done in a mildly blue hue! Mel's move from Ireland is described in this book as a battle of culture, language and custom where nothing is sacred. He boldly goes where no man has gone before, albeit in a meandering sort of way... and the only winner in this battle is the reader.

Foreword

The book is riddled with anecdotes, stories of some disrepute and blurred observations in which are hidden some home truths about what it is to be Irish, German, and well, a blurred blend of both. Sometimes wicked, sometimes erudite and many times hilarious, the work strips naked the author both literally and figuratively as we are exposed to his journey – his metamorphosis.

Pick up a beer, even if it is an Australian one, put your legs up, settle down and enjoy “*Born in Ireland – Made in Germany*”!

Mark Hunter

World Champion of Public Speaking 2009

Gold Coast

Australia!

Jobless in Dublin: Failed Table Dancer



It was becoming painfully clear to me that I had to leave Dublin. I was born in Dublin, I'd grown up there and I was happy there. Or at least happy in an Irish sort of way, which means my life was quite simple: I worked all week and drank all weekend. (The reason for the weekend drinking? To forget the week, of course.)

Ireland is the home of Guinness, the pub and big drinkers. *Alcohol Ireland* did a survey in 2015 and found that two-thirds of Irish people could be classified as alcoholics. I don't mind admitting I was shocked, truly aghast. I didn't know there were so many sober Irishmen.

But I was a proud Irishman. Whichever bar I went into, no matter how many other drinks were on offer, I always drank Guinness. I had a taste for the stuff, yes, but it was more than

that. I stuck to Guinness out of my Irish pride, a sense of loyalty and an ingrained reluctance to try anything new.

Dublin is a magical place with a party atmosphere like no other; I was in my element there. Where else in the world can you order four beers one minute before the bar closes? It's not clear how you are supposed to drink them in this time frame, but that's part of the magic. And where else do people love alcohol so much that nobody can tell you exactly when the bars close? In other cities of the world there are set times for bars and clubs to shut. But in Dublin no one knows, except perhaps for the police. Even then, the information depends entirely on the mood of the particular officer you happen to be talking to – they might even join you for last orders.

When the bars finally do shut, thousands of people spill out into the streets in search of food. Not only is it a city of seemingly endless bars, Dublin also has a seemingly endless supply of quality fast-food joints. Though the word 'quality' should be taken lightly here: to be more precise, the food is of questionable quality; to be blunt, it's appalling. But magically, these same foodstuffs turn into Michelin-star fare with the addition of one simple ingredient: beer. After six pints of it, the

previously inedible becomes inexplicably delicious.

Finally, the revellers take the magic bus home, wake up in the morning and have no idea how they got there. Dublin – my magical city. It's like a Harry Potter movie without the broomsticks, wizards and Hogwarts ... and with a lot more alcohol.

In Dublin I also have great family and friends who are very supportive in an Irish sort of way. Being supportive in an Irish sort of way means that every time a friend or family member succeeds you feel conflicted. Whilst you're happy for them, there's a tinge of jealousy that leaves you with a sour taste in your mouth. That sour taste? It's very Irish, I assure you.

I wouldn't necessarily say that Ireland is a nation of *begrudgers*; no, I wouldn't say that. But people from other countries might. In America when they see the big house on the hill they say, 'Wow, one day, if I work hard enough, I can own a house like that.' In Ireland we say, 'Who do they think they are, having a house like that?' Or perhaps, 'They'd better be careful they don't have a fire. Water doesn't go up hills, you know.'

As Brendan Behan, one of Dublin's most famous and most

drunken sons, once said: 'It's not that the Irish are cynical. It's rather that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody.'

Another reason I didn't want to leave Ireland was that I had a great job. I was working as a software engineer in the IT department of Guinness. (No, I'm not joking!) But really every job in Ireland is great. Where else in the world can you call in sick and the excuse of a hangover is more acceptable than a doctor's note? I just didn't realise how good I had it.

Not until disaster struck: I lost my job. The IT project I was working on came to an end and my dream job was gone. I don't want to make this more dramatic than it was, but I was devastated. It was 2003 and Ireland was booming at the time. It was the new Silicon Valley of Western Europe and I'd lost my job in IT. The irony didn't escape me, I assure you.

I searched and searched for a new job, but there were very few companies looking for the software skills I had. There was nothing out there for me and my imagination began to run wild. I found myself thinking, 'I don't want to end up earning my keep in a table-dancing bar.'

Eventually I had to conclude that no one would want me in a table-dancing bar anyway. I began to wonder if the fact I couldn't find a job was a sign; perhaps the universe was saying, 'Mel, it's time to leave Ireland.' But how could I leave Ireland, my Ireland? The land where the rain blows from the side and the only home I'd ever known. It was a dilemma. At the time I didn't think I could ever leave. Other people moved onto greener pastures, but there are no greener pastures than Ireland.

In the end, however, my hand was forced: the only job offers I received were in England and Germany, and I was broke.

England was an attractive option. If I went to the UK, the work would be interesting and the money would be good. I also had family and friends there. On the other hand, they'd left Ireland to get away from the Irish. They might not be too pleased to see me.

England, the home of the Premier League and the best footballers in the world, or I should say, the best-paid footballers in the world. England, which is at one end of the remarkable engineering feat that is the Channel Tunnel. The main

problem with England, though, was that there were simply too many English people there. There was no getting round it. That was a part of the equation I just couldn't ignore.

And what about Germany? I had no family or friends there so I'd be starting with a clean slate. The more I considered this, the more it seemed like a real bonus, at least for the first few weeks. But then again I had the same problem with the locals in Germany as I did in England. Specifically, too many of them lived there. On the plus side, I couldn't speak a word of German: if they were all babbling away in a foreign language, perhaps it would be easier for me to ignore them?

So which was it to be? England: the land of beer bellies and football hooligans? Or Germany: the land of beer and the BMW? Because I'm a very mature and responsible adult, I made the biggest decision of my life in the most mature and responsible way possible: I flipped a coin.

I called it: heads for England; tails for Germany. The first toss landed heads. 'Okay,' I told myself, 'no need to make any hasty decisions. *Best of three.*' I threw again: it was tails. This was it: the decider.

The coin was sweaty in my palm. I tossed it up as high as I could. It seemed to take forever to descend and when it finally hit the floor it bounced violently and disappeared from view. When I found it underneath the sofa, I saw it was tails; the fates had chosen for me what I couldn't quite decide for myself.

Just to make sure I wasn't completely mad, I called my mother. In the background I heard my brother say, 'Just get a job, you bum.' My mum was a little more supportive: 'Both jobs sound good. Just pick one.' So that was it: I was moving to Germany. And little did I know what that country had in store for me.