

## THE ARTS



for 49 years as a secretary for the German government and she was able to retire this year, so she could come and visit," Sissi says. "She started working her job at the age of 14 years old, and also took care of our mom for four years, after she suffered a stroke.

"We would visit her separately and stay with her in Germany, because we were so grateful she was able to do that. But now, she can visit in Florida."

Though distance and timing played a factor in keeping the sisters separated, there was one bond which kept them connected—art. "All five girls are artistic, but our two brothers, not so much," Sissi says, laughing. "We realized we all had talents, though."

There was also another common thread connecting three of the sisters—Hawaii. Roswitha moved to the islands at age 23, went to school and eventually became a psychologist and yoga instructor. Gitti soon followed as a 25-year-old and became a preschool teacher. Sissi was the next sister to become a resident

of Hawaii, while Emmi took a different route and moved to Switzerland to become a yoga instructor. However, she met her husband in San Francisco on a trip to Hawaii to visit Sissi.

Art transformed each sister and linked them, Sissi taking her skills to another level as a full-time artist. "I graduated from art college in Munich," she recalls, "where I studied all medias. But when I moved to Hawaii, I saw all the vibrant colors and its beauty and I began to paint with a passion. I had a wonderful art teacher in John Young, who is a famous artist, and he gave me the idea that I was able to support myself as an artist."

Sissi's beginnings as a professional artist started with a piece of fence in Waikiki. "A lot of the starting artists in Hawaii would show their artworks at art shows that displayed the art along a fence in Waikiki every weekend," she says. "You would just get a piece of the fence to display your work. A lady, who worked with hotels, discovered me."

Group painting sessions (below) are popular in Southwest Florida. Sissi Janku (below in the center, wearing blue) teaches on Captiva and at the Sanibel Community House, reopening in January after a remake of the historic building that dates to the 1920s.

