Hello Sydney: Branka Kringas

In1941 Nazi Germany occupied former Yugoslavia. My father was taken to the war prison. I remember that heart-breaking moment. My mother, sister and I looking through the window at our father being taken way. He was twisting his body to look at us.

After World War II Yugoslavia became a socialist country. As an officer of the Royal Yugoslav Army my father couldn't come back home and join Tito's army. Instead he immigrated to Australia.

Life without father was very difficult. Mother wished to take us out of the country so, in 1954 my mother, sister and I joined father and settled in Adelaide.

I wasn't happy. Everything was strange and slow moving. I didn't speak English and was homesick for Belgrade. Luckily I found a position as a 'lady draftsman'. I made some friends and felt better.

My friends George and Gloria knew I wasn't happy and when they moved to Sydney George wrote to me: 'Leave that stagnant lake and come to the sea and surf.' So, after four years when I could speak English a little I decided to go to Sydney. Flying over beautiful Sydney Harbour I fell in love with it. 'Hello Sydney,' I said and felt I had made a right decision.

George and Gloria found me a small room with a kitchen in a closed-in verandah. It was a cosy nest to start a new life on my own.

I found a position as an architectural draftswoman. I was well paid so started saving money and within a year had enough to enrol to study Architecture at the University of NSW.

There, I met my husband. When he graduated we married and our son was born on our second anniversary. My life was the way I liked it. I was happy.
Five years after I arrived in Australia I received Australian Citizenship.

I didn't complete my architecture degree but worked as an architectural draftsperson most of my life.

I have travelled to many cities; they are all beautiful in their way but Sydney is the only city I like living in.

Moving to Sydney to start a new life was the best decision I made.