

Ted Morrisby – Obituary in the Guardian

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Among the footloose Australian writers of his generation, Ted Morrisby, who has died aged 77, was the most travelled of them all. He visited the far-flung corners of the globe as a researcher, documentary film-maker and travel writer, and his most memorable vehicle for travel exploits was Whicker's World, the television series narrated by Alan Whicker.

Morrisby was born in the Tasmanian capital, Hobart - and he was intensely proud of his soldier ancestor, James Morrisby, who was transported to Botany Bay on the First Fleet for stealing a 10-penny iron bar. Educated at Newcastle Boys' High and Sydney high school, and briefly at Sydney University medical school, he gravitated to Sydney's "Push", a group of bohemian intellectuals, writers, painters and free-range radicals who outraged stiff-shirted Australia in the postwar years. Showing the first signs of a deep interest in other cultures, he began to haunt the Chinese clubs of Chinatown, as well as the Greek, Italian and Maltese clubs of the inner city.

When his lifelong friend, the journalist Murray Sayle, left for England in 1952, Morrisby took his place as "Sidney Mann", providing a racy column for the Sydney Daily Mirror. He loved the work and the notoriety, but, in 1957, followed Sayle and another lifelong friend, journalist Phillip Knightley, to London, almost immediately landing a job on the Manchester Guardian.

His big break came in 1959 when he joined the BBC-TV's Tonight programme, which he saw as inventing the current affairs/news magazine format. It taught him, he wrote later, to think intelligently about television, and it was there that he found a rapport with the then Tonight reporter Whicker, later becoming his researcher and reconnaissance man.

Morrisby then studied at the London School of Film and Television. With Whicker, his acclaimed programmes including ones on "Papa Doc" Duvalier's Haiti, and General Alfredo Stroessner's Paraguay.

In the early 1960s, in a typically laddish escapade with Sayle, Morrisby travelled to Turkey to make a documentary on Gallipoli - and ran out of money. The pair were bailed out by the Turkish government, which hired them to make the country's first tourist film. To their eternal embarrassment, it was titled Fabulous Turkey and became an award-winning hit. From 1965-1972, Morrisby, was a successful independent documentary producer.

Back in Australia in 1972, he worked for producer Reg Grundy, on a series of noteworthy films, one of which, on the Vikings, took him to the Faeroes, Newfoundland, Iceland and Greenland. In 1977, he was appointed executive producer for South Pacific Television, the second New Zealand channel, where he researched and produced a series about castaways in the South Pacific, including the Pitcairn Islanders.

When he hung up his walking shoes in the mid-1990s, due to the advance of Parkinson's Disease, Morrisby could record, with some pride, that he had "crossed the Nullarbor (by train), the Namib (in a four-wheel drive), the desert between Baghdad and Damascus (on a bus) and paddled on the shores, so to speak, of others - the Sahara in Algeria, the Atacama in northern Chile and the Western Desert across the Nile from Cairo". His experiences are recorded in his book, *Unpackaged Tours: World Travels Off the Beaten Track* (1988).

He is survived by his Finnish wife Sisco, one previous wife and his only child, Ximena.

- Edwin Shropshire 'Ted' Morrisby, documentary film-maker, born April 7 1924; died November 22 2001