

Life Stories: Audrey Armitage – April 2014 Newcastle Herald

- EMMA ELSWORTHY, from notes and interview from Robin Gordon OAM. April 2014

Community – Newcastle Herald.

AUDREY ARMITAGE

1925-2014



Audrey Armitage had an interesting and exciting life

CELEBRATED veteran journalist and author Audrey Armitage died recently, aged 89.

Armitage was born in Murwillumbah in 1925, the second of four children. She moved to Newcastle at the age of 12, the winner of a Bursary and completed her schooling at Newcastle Girls' High School in 1942.

Armitage went on to study a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education at Armidale University. Upon undertaking a brief stint as a teacher, she began her much celebrated career as a journalist at ABC Radio. She moved into print journalism following a position at the Newcastle Sun, but soon migrated to the United Kingdom on the liner Orontes – a trip that took five to six weeks.

Armitage travelled around Europe with a fellow Novocastrian, journalist Jack Cahill, on Cahill's motorcycle. The two went on to obtain journalist positions at the Parisian Continental Daily Mail, where Armitage worked for six months. She then took a position at American Associated Press in London.

"This was an interesting and often exciting career, meeting all manner of people, celebrities, covering exciting events and historic and memorable occasions," friend Robin Gordon said.

"She'd dreamed, from childhood, of such travels and often spoke of her years of dreaming, of where she'd go and what she hoped she'd do."

"Her dreams came true and she told of these adventures – of how she took Tiffin with three Maharajas in New Delhi's top hotel, accepted a glass of champagne high over the South American chain of snow-capped volcanoes, or clinging to the top of a road barricade to watch the running of the bulls at Pamplona in Spain."

Following her return to Australia, she obtained positions as chief sub-editor and sub-editor with such celebrated newspapers as the Melbourne Herald, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Daily Mirror. Armitage also worked as a chief sub-editor and travel editor for Woman's Day, the latter of which, combined with her passion for travel, led to a stint as assistant editor of Walkabout magazine.

In 1960, Armitage spent two years completing her Masters of Arts at Sydney University. Upon graduation, Gordon attests to the fact that Armitage was one of only three people, presented that day, with the qualification, along with Germaine Greer and Bill Peach.

Armitage soon moved on to a career as a novelist, writing for Mills & Boon. She wrote more than 30 novels, "written wisely", she said, "under another name". Her pseudonym, K.T. McCall, was soon revealed after law proceedings were lodged against her by a woman who felt misrepresented in an article. The case was quashed soon after.

She lived, for years, at Collaroy Plateau in a house she named "Wits End", so named because she was building her home at the time of that court case and thought she could lose the case and therefore the cottage.

She relocated to Belmont NSW some years ago where she remained until her death.

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In 1983, Armitage wrote the history of Newcastle High School in a book entitled Newcastle High School – The First 75 Years. She also wrote A Golden Age of Nursing, a history of the Nurse’s Training School at the Royal Newcastle Hospital.

Armitage’s passion for adventure also encompassed a deep interest in motor boats. She joined Kuringai Motor Yacht Club at Cottage Point, at the time, as the sole female member and served for eight years on the management committee. She established the “Club Doings” magazine and newsletter and was made a Life Member of the club. In later life, Armitage joined the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol at Pelican, where she was a radio operator.

She was described by Gordon as a passionate and adventurous woman who loved her dogs, which she referred to as her “kids”, until her passing in February.

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