

07/06/2019

**CHRISTOBEL MATTINGLEY, ICONIC AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S CREATOR,
PASSES AWAY AT AGE 87**

Allen & Unwin and the Australian children's book community mourn the loss of Christobel Mattingley, who died on Saturday, June 1 2019, aged 87, after several months of ill health.

Erica Wagner, Allen & Unwin Executive Publisher, Books for Children and Young Adults, says 'Her passing is truly the end of an era.'

'Born in 1931, Christobel was a contemporary of Patricia Wrightson, Colin Thiele, Max Fatchen, Ruth Park, Ivan Southall and other giants of Australian children's publishing. Her books confronted some of the most pressing ideas and issues of our time — conservation issues, Aboriginal social justice and the plight of refugees — well before such themes became widely explored in children's literature, and during times when they were actively considered to be unsuitable or not of interest to a child audience. She won the inaugural Children's Book Council of Australia Junior Book of the Year Award in 1982 for *Rummage* (1981). *The Miracle Tree* (1985) and *The Angel with a Mouth-Organ* (1984) are widely regarded as children's classics as are her more recent titles *No Gun for Asmir* (Puffin, 1993), the first in her trilogy about a Bosnian refugee family and *Battle Order 204* (A&U 2004) about her husband David's experiences as a bomber pilot in World War II.'

'In addition to her 47 published children's books, Christobel wrote articles, film scripts, short stories, poetry and books for adults. Some won or were shortlisted for awards in Australia and the UK, and were translated, or made into films by the ABC. Working with Aboriginal people for decades, Christobel wrote the landmark history *Survival in Our Own Land* (1988) and *Tucker's Mob* (1993), since translated into four Aboriginal languages, as well as the acclaimed *Maralinga, the Anangu Story* (2009) written with the Yalata and Oak Valley Communities about the effects of British nuclear testing on their traditional lands and *Maralinga's Long Shadow: Yvonne's Story* (2016) which won the NSW Premier's History Awards - Young People's History Prize in 2017.'

'Christobel devoted her writing life to promoting peace between people, social justice and international understanding and was an ardent conservationist and social activist. She was fierce and fearless, dogged and exacting, complex and big-hearted, and an inspirational mentor and friend to all of us who worked with her.'

Robyn Sheahan-Bright, President of IBBY Australia, says:

'IBBY Australia laments the loss of Christobel Mattingley, an inspiring writer who has, since publishing her first book, *The Picnic Dog* (Hamish Hamilton, 1970) always evinced a passionate commitment to subtly articulating and provoking debate via the prism of artfully constructed language. She was a 'groundbreaker' in the field of Australian children's literature long before the term was used widely. She was considered a pioneer in writing for junior readers. Her work was also underpinned by an ardent commitment to social justice and conservation issues. IBBY Australia nominated Christobel Mattingley for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing 2012 in recognition of her many acclaimed works for children. She was a stately and gracious woman of deep convictions imbued with both an intense intellectual curiosity and boundless empathy. The Australian children's literature community is greatly diminished by her passing.'

Sarah Mayor Cox, VIC Director of the CBCA National Board, says:

'I had the good fortune to know Christobel first as an assignment topic at teachers' college in the late 80s, then as an author to be reviewed and critiqued in the early 80s, as a speaker at Text Marks the Spot, the then Biennial La Trobe University, Children's Literature Conference. We awarded her the Pheme Tanner Award in recognition for her services to Children's Literature. And finally as a mentor and friend. It is a cliché to say she will live on through her books, but she will. Her ways of exploring difficult issues, never ducking the pain involved shines through in her characters and settings. She has left us wisdom, and new ways of thinking as we learn to live without the anticipation of her next book.'

Susannah Chambers, Publisher at Allen & Unwin, says:

'Working with Christobel was always wonderful – intense, funny and interesting. I remember editing *Battle Order 204* and hearing Christobel and David on the phone together, carefully discussing specific word choices. And travelling with Christobel to Oak Valley to work on the *Maralinga* book and seeing her energy, purpose and clarity in action, bringing people together and making lasting change. Her warmth and care made her much-loved, as well as much-respected.'

Illustrator Craig Smith says:

'The first book I illustrated was Christobel's text, *Black Dog* (1979). However, my enduring memory of Christobel was driving her to Yalata and Oak Valley in 2008. The image of arriving in community on a hot, gusty day, and watching Christobel sit with two older ladies and then a gathering group will stay with me forever.'

Elizabeth Honey, author and illustrator says:

'Christobel cut a striking figure, tall, often wearing bright colours, she had strong wavy white hair and a warm sparkling smile. She was gracious, but never in a stuffy way. She was generous. I illustrated *The Big Swim*, *Brave with Ben* and then *No Gun for Asmir* which she wrote in Vienna, on the edge of her bed, standing up, because she had shingles and it was the only



comfortable position. The royalties from the book went to Asmir's education. She was a mentor to me and an example to us all.'

Erica Wagner says 'Here's a last thought to contemplate from Christobel herself, from 1986: *If we can begin with peace in our hearts, it will spread in ever growing circles, through our families, our friends, our schools and workplaces. It will spread into the wider world through time – tomorrow and tomorrow and all the tomorrows which are the inheritance of the children we love and serve – world without end.*

Christobel is survived by her daughter, Rosemary, and her two sons, Christopher and Stephen, with their families.

A funeral service will be held on Wednesday 12 June 2019, 11 am, at St David's Church, 492 Glynburn Road, Burnside, Adelaide, near Greenhill Road.'

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