

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE3122

Jarrett, Patricia Irene Herschell (Pat)

(1911 - 1990)

Born 9 March, 1911, Albert Park Victoria Australia

Died 28 August, 1990, Frankston Victoria Australia

Occupation Journalist, Print journalist

Summary

In 1958, Pat Jarrett celebrated 25 years of continuous service with the *Herald and Weekly Times*. She was the only woman alongside seventeen men on the staff to have served so long.

Details

As a child, Pat Jarrett had a love for sport and a love for country life. She left school at 16 and worked at her uncle's film laboratory, but an interest in writing about championship swimming led to a job on the *Herald* as a sports journalist. Jarrett took on a cadetship under Keith Murdoch and Sidney Deemer. In 1940, she took something of a sabbatical from journalism and took up a position as press agent for Australian ambassador Richard Casey in Washington. Casey's post there came to an end with the entry of the United States into the Second World War. Jarrett returned to Australia to work as a war correspondent for the *Herald* and covered, among other things, the activities of the WAAF. In December 1942, she recounted the activities of 35 women – from Russia, England, Scotland, Ireland, India, South Africa and New Zealand – who spent four days bivouacking in the mountains, learning how to make an 'Aussie Bunk' out of saplings and chaff bags, and training to deal with the possible evacuation of civilians. 'In civilian life', Jarrett noted, 'the occupations of these trainees ranged from architects to botanists, so that when the daily manoeuvres included the building of a model camp site to accommodate 100 people, with children, in summer, some varying and interesting ideas resulted'.

Jarrett was well connected, both in Australia and abroad. According to her biographer, Audrey Tate, 'she particularly enjoyed having the opportunity to meet the famous, though she always remained a trifle in awe of them'. She was friendly with Sir Hubert and Lady Opperman, and she corresponded regularly with Katharine Hepburn. In 1944 she again joined the Casey family, this time in Calcutta as secretary to Lady Maie Casey following Sir Richard's appointment as Governor of Bengal. Her duties included arranging a meeting between Ghandi and Casey, and travelling to the Front to interview Generals Slim and Mersebe on the recapture of Mandalay. Casey was decommissioned at the end of the War, and Jarrett spent the three years from 1945 working as a journalist in New York.

In 1948, Jarrett was employed to edit the women's pages at the *Sun News-Pictorial*. She retained her post until December 1973. Rejecting the title of 'Social Editoress', she called herself instead the Leader of the Women's Staff, and refused to be pushed into frivolous writing on fashion and social events. With the aim of informing and entertaining her women readers, she added commentary on broader social issues to the regular pieces on clothing, cooking and sewing. Though she did not call herself a feminist, Jarrett published stories on equal pay for women, higher education for girls, and the possibility of seeking a fulfilling career in addition to marriage.

Jarrett became famous for her lively and provocative 'Fair Comment' column, in which she tackled all manner of questions. On 5 June 1965 she was discussing the need for spontaneous affection between husband and wife to avoid divorce, citing marriage guidance expert Dr Dick Glover. Three weeks later she was giving a voice to underpaid Victorian teachers. They, not their pupils, 'appear to be the ones who got the cane this week – and women teachers in particular'. The recent pay rise offered by the Teachers' Tribunal was minimal, said Jarrett: 'I reckon that while Australia's economic wizards keep telling us that ours is now such an affluent society, teachers (and any other group of salaried workers for that matter) can't be blamed for expecting a bit of it to rub off onto them, and for feeling let down when it doesn't'. In 1967, Jarrett was able to air her thoughts and opinions on talkback radio as co-host of 3DB's 'Talk It Over'.

In the early 1970s, Pat elected to retire but was persuaded to stay on part-time as editorial adviser on women's affairs to the *Herald* and the *Sun*. She continued to act as a loyal friend and helper to the Caseys, right through to the death of Maie Casey in 1983. By 1985 she was exhausted, suffering from a long bout of influenza as well as osteoporosis, diverticulitis and psoriasis. She retired permanently in December that year, after fifty-two years with the *Herald and Weekly Times*. Pat Jarrett died in 1990, aged 79.

Events

1972 - 1972

1930 - 1985

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

Fair Comment: The Life of Pat Jarrett, 1911-1990, Tate, Audrey, 1996

Newspaper Article

On Convoy with the AWAS, Jarrett, Pat, 1942

WAAF Officers Gain Bushlore, Jarrett, Pat, 1942

WAAFs Learn to Use Tablet Food, Jarrett, Pat, 1942

Tough Training at RAAF Commando School, Jarrett, Pat, 1943

White Woman in Burma, Jarrett, Pat, 1945

The Queen's Smile was Loveliest Yet, Jarrett, Pat, 1954

Supremo on Asian Front, Jarrett, Pat, 1979

Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Interview with Pat Jarrett, journalist \[sound recording\] / interviewer: Mark Cranfield](#)

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Correspondence of Pat Jarrett, 1955-1991 \[manuscript\]](#)

State Library of Victoria

[Papers of Lord and Lady Casey, n.d. \[manuscript\]](#).

[The Sun newspaper, 1954 Feb. 1-Mar. 10. \[manuscript\]](#).

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