

Hesba Fay Brinsmead (nee Hungerford) (1922-2003)

Hesba Brinsmead is remembered with great affection for memorable characters and evocative Australian settings. She was born in Beraming, a remote and isolated settlement in the Blue Mountains. Her primary schooling was by Blackfriars correspondence school, and she attended a small church high school at Wahroonga, Sydney. She left her teacher-training course because of illness, but later worked as a governess and schoolteacher. She eventually saved enough money to take a course in journalism, then later began publishing novels in the 1960s.

Her first novel, *Pastures of the Blue Crane* (1964) was immediately successful, winning awards and subsequently was published in many English and overseas editions. With this novel, she began an emphasis on the environment, which features in many of her novels. Her books reflect her life experiences especially her *Longtime* series, which include *Longtime Passing*, *Longtime Dreaming*, *Christmas at Longtime* and *Once There was a Swagman*.

After her marriage to Reginald Brinsmead in 1943 she had two sons, Bernard and Kenneth. They lived in Victoria's Mallee district (prior to the boys' birth) and in Melbourne, then eventually settled on the Tweed coast in northern New South Wales. Although divorced from her husband in the 1990s, Brinsmead and he remained close friends. She continued to live at Terranora until 2001 when debilitating osteoporosis forced a move to a retirement village in Murwillumbah.

Today we would describe many of Brinsmead's works as young adult novels. At the time she began writing, her two sons and many nieces and nephews in the family were teenagers. She said of this audience, "In fact the longer I live the more knots and tangles I am aware of for the perilous teens; and the deeper my sympathies for those who sail such seas impossible to chart" (McVitty 1989: 28).

Sources

AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource <<http://www.austlit.edu.au>> Accessed 11 July 2011

McVitty, Walter (1989) *Authors & Illustrators of Australian Children's Books*. Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton.