

JILL BEARD : Kate Adie

d.o.b. 19/09/1945 – age 75. Lives in “semi-retirement” in Dorset.

Biography: Kate was born in Whitely Bay, Northumberland to Irish Catholics and was adopted by a pharmacist and his wife John and Maud Adie growing up in Sunderland. She gained a BA from Newcastle University (Scandinavian Studies studying Swedish and old Icelandic). On leaving university in the mid 1960s Adie sat the Civil Service exam and a life in the ministry of Ag, Fish and Food beckoned until she spotted an ad in her local paper for the BBC’s new local radio network. Her career began as a station assistant at BBC Radio Durham followed by Radio Bristol (where acting as a farming reporter she first encountered Dorset). Then she became a regional TV news reporter in 1976 in Plymouth, and Southampton.

On the time she was at Radio Bristol Adie said “I did everything from Thought for today to the farming programme... [however] the newsroom was not a place where women were welcome”. On a catastrophic nine months at BBC South “working for a news editor who hated news ..I was doing soft stories which is what they gave women...I couldn’t put my heart into it”... a gangland killing offered Adie a way out. Following a tip-off she was the first journalist at a Brighton crime scene “discovering a corpse hanging over a fire escape”. Her editor refused to run the story and then fired her for failing to cover a local embroidery exhibition. Fortunately the BBC London newsroom had a firmer grasp of “news” and ran the report which led to Adie landing the national TV job. Adie said “I was lucky, lucky, lucky”.

In 1979 she joined BBC national news as an Investigative Journalist being promoted to Chief News Correspondent BBC News 1989 -2003.

She is credited with being one of the first British Women sending dispatches from danger zones around the world. She met Colonel Gaddafi and Radovan Karadzic. She still has shrapnel from Bosnia inside her. She had flesh torn from her elbow in Tianamen Square by a bullet that killed the man next to her and was shot at close range in Libya.

From 2003 she has been a Freelance Journalist including presenting the radio 4 “From our own correspondent”.

She sought out her birth family in 1993 and subsequently presented two five-part series of Found for BBC 1 in 2005 & 2006 considering the life experiences of adults affected by adoption and what it must be like to start one’s life as a foundling.

Awards & Honours:

- Royal Television Society Reporter of the year 1980 (for her duty reporter coverage of the SAS end to the Iranian Embassy siege and her BIG BREAK leading to regularly being dispatched to report on disasters and conflicts throughout the 1980s);
- Richard Dimbleby BAFTA Award 1990 (after reporting on the Tianamen Square protests of 1989);
- Winner 1981 & 1990 Monte Carlo International Golden Nymph Award; OBE 1993;
- Deputy Lieutenant for Dorset 2013;
- CBE 2018 for services to the media;
- Honorary Doctor of Letters (DL) – Plymouth University 2013;
- BAFTA Fellowship Award 2018 (Lifetime achievement award given in recognition of outstanding achievement in the art forms of moving image – the highest honour the academy can bestow)

Appointments: – served as judge for the orange prize for fiction now the Bailey’s; the Whitbread now the Costa prize; and the RSL Ondaatje Prize. Served as a trustee of the imperial war museum and Sunderland Football Foundation.

Chancellor of Bournemouth University from 7/01/2019.

Honorary Degrees/fellowships: from York St John; Newcastle; Bath; Nottingham; Cardiff; St Andrews; Royal Holloway; Bournemouth University; Honorary Professor of Journalism at Sunderland University.

Charitable associations: Ambassador for SSAFA the UK’s oldest military charity 2017- ; Ambassador for SkillForce and the NGO Farm Africa; Ambassador for the medical charity Overseas Plastic Surgery Appeal from 2018;

Quotes: “we can’t start yet.. Kate Aide isn’t here”. “a good decision is getting on a plane at an airport where Kate Adie is getting off;

From Adie herself:

circa 2018 referring back to Tiananmen square 1989 “my team were the only crew out in the square and were able to witness the massacre by the Chinese army of its own citizens in Beijing which had never been acknowledged by the government nor reported in China....at least we were there and we have the evidence of what they did. They would like to erase it from history”

2018 on receiving the BAFTA fellowship “I feel so strongly about freedom of speech and the importance of journalism in democracy.....We seem to be living through a time where there are threats to journalists everywhere, whether it’s repression or censorship, and its hugely important to recognise that the intention of journalism is to tell it as it is and we need to do that more than ever now” Adie said of her break into national BBC news “I was lucky, lucky, lucky”.

2018 on receiving her CBE from the Queen “I suppose as a journalist you never think something like this would happen, it’s a job that’s taken me to all sorts of places.... I care about these stories where I think stories needed to be told”

2019 on becoming the Chancellor of Bournemouth University “Higher Education and Dorset are both things I care passionately about and I will be a strong advocate in highlighting the important role BU plays in learning and research in the county and the world beyond”“verifying news sources are critical in this climate of fake news..... getting your person there is an absolutely standard lesson...news is not news without verificationif you only have the station cat to send , send them!”

Publications: *The Kindness of Strangers* (2002). London; Headline Book Publishing. – Autobiography.

Nobody’s Child (2005). London; Hodder & Stoughton. – Tracing families