

A brief bio of Ruth Russell

Ruth Russell spent her early life in the remote Kimberley region on an aboriginal mission known as Kunmunya.

Her parents in their 20s, had earlier been the Superintendents of the first leprosarium for Aboriginal people, situated 20 miles out from Derby in the 1940s. It was there that her parents got to love working with the Aboriginal people but sadly they had to leave when her Mother became pregnant with her. So she had a wonderful childhood there with her Aboriginal playmates, whom she is still in touch with today. She just returned from visiting them again, seventy years later at Derby, for the launch of her book about her parent's time with them.

Ruth went to New Zealand when 20 and became a Judge's Associate to a Supreme Court Judge in Wellington for many years where she learned about justice and how minority groups can be marginalized. Later she travelled extensively, working in London for several law firms, while travelling Europe regularly. On her return by ship to Australia with a new car that she could bring duty free, she was able to stop over for three months in Africa and rejoin the boat as it came around again. She travelled to Rhodesia in the dying days of the white Rhodesian rule - there she witnessed the racial vilification and apartheid that existed - which she found intolerable and was asked to "leave within seven days" due to her activism - or be arrested and gaoled for her outspoken actions.

Ruth married and settled in Adelaide, went to University and then had a marvellous job in the 1970s, organising new services for children and teenagers being released from Strathmont Centre (where they had been taken to at birth). She spent the next 20 years developing services for people with disabilities and then older people when the Home and Community Care (HACC) program commenced in the 1980s.

Ruth spoke at the largest SA rally opposing the war in Iraq in 2003 and then left to join the human shield movement in Baghdad where she stayed throughout the horrendous bombing as a witness for peace. She joined WILPF in the late eighties and has been on their SA and National Committee for many years. She was selected by the Australian government to organize and support Prof Lis Porter in 2003 to gauge national support for a new women's peace initiative - UNSCR1325 - "Women Peace & Security" which is now in its third phase of the national rollout.

Today she remains a committed peace activist through WILPF.