

Reporter's curiosity the formula to success



Josephine Brouard

Catherine Zahra

It is not difficult to feel overwhelmed by writer Josephine Brouard's energy – and success. Formerly a journalist for South Africa's leading newspaper *The Star*, television reporter and producer, feature writer, magazine editor, and communications director for a government agency, Ms Brouard recently launched her second book, *Monsoon Rains & Icicle Drops*, at Gleebooks.

Co-authored with former Sydney advertising executive Libby Southwell, it tells the story of Libby's quest to cope with the death of her fiancé and two close friends, her travels through Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia, coping with the effects of the 2004 tsunami while she was in Sri Lanka and finally, setting up the 'AdoptSriLanka' which has raised about five million dollars to rebuild the island nation.

Sitting in a local café in Surry Hills, Josephine reflects on her life and work. She is articulate and entertaining and her thoughts pour out like a torrent. Asked what it is that keeps her going and she hesitates – for once. Beneath the confidence, Josephine admits "It's not all roses. I've also got a quiet, thoughtful side which is what

makes me creative and a writer."

She says her ambitions to be a writer began at a very early age. "I remember when I was small, somebody asking my sister and me 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' And I said, 'I want to be the correspondent for *Time* magazine' and my sister said, 'I want to be a mother.' We both became what we said at the age of eight."

Born into a French-Mauritian family in Johannesburg, South Africa, Josephine began her career as a news reporter on *The Star*. It was here that she first realised her potential as a writer. As a direct result of her socio-political report for the newspaper on famine in kwaZulu, the non-for-profit organisation Operation Hunger was founded to address problems of malnutrition and poverty in South African homelands. She says the article helped create a shift in consciousness and awareness in South Africa, that it made people think.

From feature writer for a lifestyle magazine, to on-camera television reporter and producer, Josephine made her way up the career ladder. But she found the opportunities

were diminishing. "I remember thinking that South Africa was too small for me and that I had to go somewhere else. I didn't want to go to London or New York – too big, too scary. So I thought of Australia – where they speak English and the sun shines."

She applied for and got a job as a feature writer on *Cleo* magazine and a new life in Sydney. "It was a joyous miracle. Unbelievable," she says, adding that her South African journalist friends were envious.

Josephine went on to become editor of *New Woman* and *Pink Ribbon* magazines – where the profits of each publication increased – and communications director of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency. Circulation.

Although she says "the achievements and hard work become like a drug that keeps you going", she acknowledges success comes from tremendous discipline.

"I'm not a procrastinator. I'm the opposite of a procrastinator. If I could give words of advice, especially to writers, it's 'stop procrastinating, get up and do it'. I believe that if it's something

you fear, face it head on."

Such determination and tenacity underscore Josephine's professional and personal life. "I think it is really important to have the courage to make choices – and then to make the most of them."

Having just celebrated her third wedding anniversary at the age of 48, Josephine says that she has "hardly shed a tear" about the fact that she has not had children of her own.

"It was never really on my agenda," she says. "Sometimes you get to my age and you look back and you think: 'Did I make the right choices?' I don't know, but I made them."

"To be honest, I have a dark side. I have a lot of fears. I worry about our aloneness, the futility of life, the lack of love in the world, the growing rich-poor divide, the lack of understanding of others who are different, the way we are all ruled by fear, including myself."

"So I seek love and admiration all the time; it is positively inexhaustible and my journey is the Buddhist way... to conquer my ego and find inner peace."