

Audrey Jones: artist, author and explorer

By John Koning

Audrey Jones' home is a gallery of colorful art. Her paintings and drawings say a lot about her creativity, but there is a large map of the world on Audrey's sun-room wall that has the most to say about this adventurous and indomitable woman.

Audrey uses the map to track her odysseys using brightly colored stars. Those same stars can also be seen twinkling in her eyes when she recounts her trips into all parts of both hemispheres.

Recalling so many experiences with crystal clarity can sometimes be a chore, so Audrey decided to condense a lifetime of love and adventure into 230 pages of her autobiographical book, "A Journal of Journeys."

It is an entertaining and enlightening read.

The book was first organized on a 45-day, around-the-world, freighter cruise. It was distilled from 40 years of Christmas letters and audio taped messages that Audrey sent home to her parents while she lived abroad.

When you think about it, what better time is there to organize thoughts and feelings than on a freighter cruise?

After all, this kind of sea travel doesn't offer theatrical shows, belly flop contests or Karaoke nights to distract the serious author.

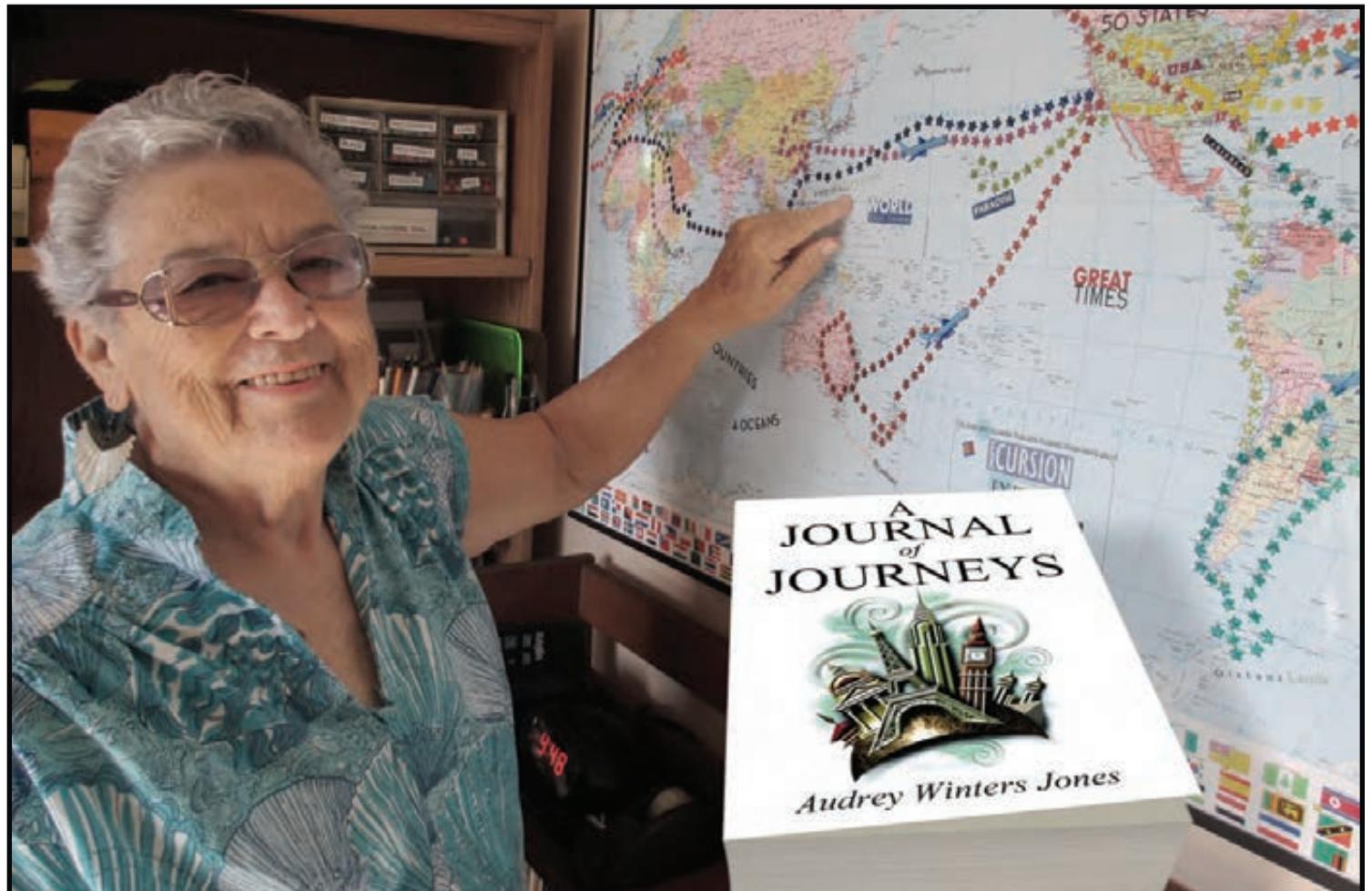
The book was further refined at home and on another 54-day, around-the-world cruise, before being published in 2011.

Audrey's penchant for exploration began in 1964 when she lived in Bitburg, Germany, with her husband, Jones, who was serving in the military.

If you're an astute reader, you are probably wondering why Audrey's husband's first name is the same as her last. Well, Norman (his given name) wanted to name his son after himself but didn't want the lad to be saddled with the moniker, Junior. Nor did he want the confusion of duplicate names around the house so he adopted his last name as his first. Thus, Norman (the first) became Jones.

Back to Bitburg.

Audrey and five other military wives decided to explore Europe while



Audrey Jones has stepped foot in all 50 states, plus 58 different countries. It's too much work to recall all her trips, so she uses stars and a map to tell the story for her.

(OTOW News photo by John Koning)



their husbands were pursuing military duties. They chose London, England, as their first destination and headed across the English Channel.

On that first trip, Audrey and friends discovered more than just a historical city. They found a shared love for travel, and so the Bitburg Bunch travel group was formed. It has thrived for 40 years since then.

Audrey learned something important on that inaugural trip. She discovered the importance of having a decision maker on the team. That decision maker was, by necessity, Audrey Jones. She's OK with that.

Now, as she enters her 80th year

of life, Audrey leads the On Top of the World Travel Club, a vibrant and growing group of travelers who share a mutual taste for adventure.

Audrey brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the club. Her previous trips are too numerous to list here, but they are as diverse as our planet. She has traveled from the Arctic to the Antarctic and has circumvented the globe. She has visited 58 countries ranging alphabetically from Argentina to Wales. She has set foot in several Canadian provinces and in all 50 American states.

Audrey puts her life and travel experience to good use as an Elderhos-

teler. It is the world's largest travel and educational program for seniors. She has participated in all three main components of the program – domestic, international and inter-generational.

If that's not enough activity for one lifetime, Audrey earned her Associate of Arts degree at the tender age of 68. Over a decade later, all signs indicate that the happy wanderer is not ready to close up her suitcase just yet.

So, as the journey continues, it seems apropos to use Audrey's own words, borrowed from the finale of her book to summarize this article:

"I stand on the stern and watch the wake of the ship slowly disappearing back into the sea as we move further ahead. I cannot see where we are going, I can only see where we have been. I have spent countless hours working on this Journal of Journeys. I have enjoyed reliving the memories and remembering the friends."

Bon voyage on the rest of your journey, Audrey.



Your Box Office Website is Changing

If your group contributes, you will be greatly rewarded