

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0640

Bowen, Sally

(1918 - 1999)

Born 9 January, 1918, Gunnedah New South Wales Australia

Died 25 February, 1999, Thirroul New South Wales Australia

Occupation Peace activist, Women's rights activist

Summary

Sally Bowen, who lived most of her adult life in Wollongong, was a prominent union, political and community activist. During her life Bowen was involved with Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, the Women's Centre in Wollongong, the Union of Australian Women, the Save Our Sons movement, the Jobs for Women Campaigns and the Environmental Movement.

Details

The fourth child and only daughter in the share-farming Phipps family, Sally Bowen's first job was droving sheep. She later helped her mother run a guest house. For the period of World War II she was employed at Lysaght's factory, where the Owen Gun was produced. Here she became a shop steward for the Federated Ironworkers. A member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), she became an organizer of socials and fundraising for the party, the Red Cross and for Soldiers' Parcels.

From 1944 until 1947 Bowen worked for Berlei, leaving to look after her elderly parents. To supplement the special benefit [now carer's pension] she became a dressmaker and in her spare time participated in CPA activities. During the 1949 coal strike she helped organize activities for children of the striking miners.

In 1950 she was elected the secretary of the South Coast District Committee of the CPA. She met her future husband, miner David (Dave) Bowen (died 1984), when she spoke at Balgownie against Menzies' referendum to ban the Communist Party. They married in 1954 and had two children.

Bowen resigned as district secretary of the CPA in 1955 but remained on the committee, later to become president. She worked with the Women's Centre in Wollongong and Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. It was the auxiliaries that initiated the celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) on the South Coast in 1938. In 1964 Bowen led a CPA women's delegation to the USSR.

A member of the Save Our Sons movement, Bowen was one of the participants who chained themselves to the railing in the gallery of Parliament House (Canberra). She also demonstrated against Australian Iron and Steel, a subsidiary of BHP, for the Jobs for Women campaigns.

Bowen was involved in the environmental movement and was prominent in promoting aged care issues. She became chairperson of the Healthy City Aged Task Force for the South Coast area.

In 1994 Bowen recorded her life experiences in the publication *A Garland of Poetry*.

Aged 81, Sally Bowen died at Lawrence Hargrave Hospital, Thirroul on 25 February 1999.

Published resources

Article

Sally Bowen, 1918-1999,
<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/1999/352/352p4e.htm>

Book

A garland of poetry, Bowen, Sally, [1994]

motion picture

Kemira: diary of a strike, Zubrycki, Tom (Producer), 1984

Book Section

Sally Bowen, 1996

The women of Wollongong, 1984

Sally Bowen: Political and Social Experiences of a Working-Class Woman, Robertson, Sally

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

Anne Heywood

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