

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2167

Ramaciotti, Vera

(1891 - 1982)

Born 1 January, 1891, Ashfield, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Died 31 December, 1982, Sydney

Occupation Philanthropist

Summary

In 1970, *The Australian Women's Weekly* published an article entitled 'The Quiet Millionairess'. It was this same year that Vera Ramaciotti established the Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Foundation in memory of her brother – who died three years previously – and herself, with \$6.7 million in proceeds arising from the sale of the Theatre Royal in Sydney, left to the siblings by their father Gustavo. The magazine claimed that Vera was 'Australia's least-known millionairess' and 'possibly the most private woman in Australia', adding that she 'physically shrinks from seeing her name in print'.

Details

Vera was born to Gustavo Ramaciotti and Ada (née Wilson). Gustavo had migrated to Queensland from Italy with his parents. He worked as a legal clerk with William Knox Darcy ('the Mount Morgan millionaire'), then went to Sydney to work for law firm E.P. Simpson and Co, with whom he stayed for 25 years. He served as a major-general in the army in WWI, and became Inspector-General of Administration in the Australian Defence Department in 1917. Ramaciotti bought shares in the J.C. Williamson theatrical empire and acquired the historic Theatre Royal, in Sydney, around 1913. He died from a heart attack in 1927, aged 66.

Vera Ramaciotti was educated at the Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, where she boarded. The *Women's Weekly* wrote that 'Miss Ramaciotti's girlhood was spent in rather upper-British-class, genteel fashion', and pointed out with some astonishment that she owned no car, and always travelled by boat, never by aeroplane. Her first trip abroad was in 1911 for King George V's coronation.

Vera told the magazine: 'I'll take a very keen interest in the Foundation, but I'll have nothing at all to do with its administration'. The multi-million dollar gift was handed to Perpetual Trustees, with a stipulation that \$4 million go to benefit NSW specifically, and \$2 million for Australia-wide projects, with most of the money to be directed toward medical education and research. Vera's appointment as a governor of Sydney Hospital influenced her choice, as did a request that she subscribe to the Walter and Eliza Hall Foundation – she explained to *The Australian* in 1970, 'I thought I'd have one of my own, rather than give it to somebody else's. Melbourne doesn't mean very much to me... I was born and raised in NSW, I live in Sydney, and I prefer it'.

Vera Ramaciotti made a rare public appearance in 1970 to sign papers in the office of Perpetual Trustees for the benefit of photographers. Since then, the Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Foundation has contributed over \$38 million to more than 3,000 biomedical research projects.

Published resources

Thesis

In Her Gift: Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy, 1880-2005, Lemon, Barbara, 2008

Site Exhibition

In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wiph/home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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