

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4474

Plant, Merilyn

(1946 -)

Born 1 January, 1946, Toowoomba Queensland Australia

Occupation Agriculturalist, Farmer, Marketing officer

Summary

Merilyn Plant was a nominee for the ABC Rural Woman of the year Award in 1994. She and her husband run a Poll Hereford Stud Farm near Toowoomba, in Queensland.

Details

A self-described 'city slicker' from Toowoomba, Merilyn Plant only came to agriculture when she married a farmer. She admits to being quite lonely for the first few years as she made the adjustment to life on the land. Loneliness is what prompted her to establish in 1971 the 'Poll-Hers', a social support group for women like herself, living on Poll Hereford farms. She felt that women needed to have some means of contacting people beyond the farm gate.

When her husband became state president of the Poll Hereford Society, she convinced him to allow her to invite the wives to their annual meeting, so that they could have a separate gathering. Not all women were allowed to come when the invitations were first issued. It seems that there was quite a bit of opposition to the ladies meeting together in some quarters. 'I think they thought we were going to run up the national debt' says Merilyn. Only women with what she referred to as 'enlightened husbands' were allowed to come.

It started as a social thing – going to galleries and having lunches and teas etc. in Toowoomba – but grew into something more. The women began to think about how they could promote poll Herefords and beef in general. Still a social organisation the Poll -Hers nevertheless decided that they wanted to do something to support farming activities.

They decided upon publishing a recipe book containing nothing but their favourite beef recipes. This good idea proved difficult to implement – no-one was prepared to lend the women the money to cover the printing costs. They eventually had to rely on the aid of three men who put the money up front. Their faith in the venture was rewarded. The book sold 25,000 copies. They had an easy distribution point through which to sell – hundreds of local butcher's shops around the nation. After the book, they moved into other forms of merchandise marketing – t-shirts, caps, teaspoons. When it came to advertising their product – the Poll-Hers were leaders in the field for their industry.

Published resources

Edited Book

The Poll-Hers pantry presents basic beef, Plant, Merilyn and the Poll-Hers, 1971?

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Merilyn Plant interviewed by Ros Bowden in the Women of the land oral history project \[sound recording\]](#)

[Women of the land oral history project](#)

Author Details

Nikki Henningham

Created 15 March 2010

Last modified 20 November 2018