

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4884

Mulvaney, Jean

(1923 - 2004)

Born 25 September, 1923, Moonee Ponds Victoria

Died 13 November, 2004, Canberra Australian Capital Territory

Occupation Community worker

Summary

Jean Mulvaney was an active and committed community worker in Canberra from the mid-1960s until her death in 2004. She was a founding member of Canberra Lifeline, the ACT Girl Guides Commissioner, and president of the Canberra Mothercraft Society, the Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre Committee, and the University House Ladies Drawing Room. She was also an active member of the Civil Rehabilitation Committee (Prisoners' Aid) and served on the National Council of Women.

Details

Jean Campbell grew up at beachside Black Rock in Melbourne and was active in the Girl Guides and in a number of sports: swimming, yachting, tennis and horseriding. She attended the Presbyterian Ladies' College and then trained as an infants teacher, teaching at Travancore Experimental School for disadvantaged children.

From 1948 to 1951 she cycled around Australia on a working holiday, starting from Melbourne accompanied by three friends, two of whom returned from Perth and the third staying in the Northern Territory, so that she completed the trip by herself. On the way she had a variety of jobs including fruit and vegetable picking, waitressing, nursing and work on a pearl lugger in Broome, and crocodile shooting in the Northern Territory.

Jean met her future husband, the prehistorian John Mulvaney, when visiting England to represent Victorian Girl Guides at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953. They were married in Melbourne on 6 February 1954 and had six children, the first born in 1955 and the last in 1965. They moved from Melbourne to the suburb of Yarralumla in Canberra in 1965 when John took up his appointment as Senior Fellow in Prehistory in the Anthropology and Sociology Department in the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University. He was appointed Professor of Prehistory in 1971 and held that position until his retirement in 1985. Jean called herself 'a prehistorian by marriage' and shared many work-related trips with John.

Her community work in Canberra began shortly after her arrival: in 1966 she was a foundation member of Canberra Lifeline and Canberra Toastmistress, and started as Guiding representative on the Civil Rehabilitation Committee (now known as Prisoners Aid) and continued this work which included visiting prison inmates until her death. From 1969 to the 1970s she was founding secretary of the Canberra Children's Theatre (later the Canberra Youth Theatre) and in the 1970s was Girl Guides Commissioner in the Australian Capital Territory.

From 1984 to 1985 Jean was a volunteer at Massachusetts General Hospital when John was Professor of Australian Studies at Harvard. She was presented the 'Volunteer of 1985 Award'; the citation read: 'Jean Mulvaney – wise, caring, intuitive, responsible and a wonderful sense of humour...'

From 1985 Jean was president of the Canberra Mothercraft Society and the Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre Committee but left disillusioned in 1995 when the institution was renamed and moved from Civic. Jean served on the National Council of Women (ACT) from the 1990s until her death, and was Convener of the Ladies Drawing Room at University House with Lena Karmel 1993-1997.

Jean was always a very active person – John reports that she enjoyed canoeing in Canada in 1997 when she was in her mid-70s – but in their last years together her health deteriorated. She died on 13 November 2012 in Canberra at the age of 81 after heart surgery.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

Digging Up a Past, Mulvaney, John, 2011

University House as They Experienced It: A History 1954-2004, Waterhouse, Jill, 2004

Magazine article

Jean Mulvaney 1923-2004, Mulvaney, John, 2005

National Museum of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 2004

Resource Section

Remember to breathe, 2004,

http://ampersandduck.blogspot.com.au/2004/11/remember-to-breathe_16.html

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

Author Details

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Digital resources



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