

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6071

Kinsman, Irene Mavis

(1917 - 2006)

Born 1 January, 1917

Died 31 December, 2006

Occupation Administrative officer, Secretary, Women's advocate

Details

Irene Mavis Kinsman nee Moffat spent almost all of her working life at the University of Melbourne from which she took her BA in 1950.

Before moving to Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, she attended a state primary school which she recalled with affection and respect:

The time was the late 1920s. Miss Trollope taught the whole curriculum (three grades (some 35 boys and girls aged seven to nine) in a big airy room. Within the three groups there was a weekly shuffle of desks. Those with good marks the previous week sat at the back of the group and those with poor marks sat in front. Here they were closer to Miss T who could give them more help; but I suspect the-front row pupils saw this arrangement as punitive rather than philanthropic.[1]

In 1940 Irene Moffat married Arthur Kinsman (1913-1994), an American who from 1966 to 1978 was the University's Staff (later Principal) Engineer.[2] She began work as a typist in the Psychology Department under Oscar Oeser in 1951, was promoted to Senior Secretary in 1964 and reclassified as an Administrative Assistant the following year.

Irene Kinsman was, as her 1981 article demonstrates, a frequent writer of Letters to the Editor, sending noticeably progressive missives from addresses in blue-ribbon Conservative electorates:

Not being able to afford regular haircuts during the Kennett regime will at least ensure that workers have a forelock to tug.[3]

She was also, as the *Newsletter* of the Lyceum Club recorded in 2008:

A woman of strong beliefs... particularly interested in women's education and considered that her old school and the Lyceum Club played an essential part in helping women gain and maintain their independence.[4]

Roderick Buchanan noted that the labour-intensive nature of secretarial work of the time, with women required to copy and transcribe large amounts of material, ensured that they learned a good deal about both psychology and those who taught it. [5]

Irene Kinsman endowed the Irene and Arthur Kinsman Award for Postgraduate Studies which provides financial assistance to female graduates of the University of Melbourne enrolled full-time as graduate coursework students at the University of Melbourne in a Social Sciences discipline, who are in very difficult circumstances. It provides three small grants per year.

[1] Irene Kinsman. 'Thank You, Miss Trollope'. *Age*. 24 April 1981: 14.

[2] Juliet Flesch. *Minding the Shop :people and events that shaped the Department of Property & Buildings 1853-2003 at the University of Melbourne*. Melbourne: Department of Property & Buildings, 2005.p. 209.

[3] Irene Kinsman. 'Right Style'. *Age*. March 15, 1993.

[4] Janette Bomford. *Circles of Friendship: the centenary of the Lyceum Club, Melbourne*. Melbourne: Lyceum Club: 2012. p. 319.

[5] Roderick D. Buchanan. *A Fiftieth Anniversary History the Department of Psychology the University of Melbourne 1946-1996*. Melbourne: Department of Psychology School of Behavioural Science, University of Melbourne, 1996.

Published resources

Book

40 Years 40 Women: Biographies of University of Melbourne Women, Published to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the International Year of Women, Flesch, Juliet, 2015, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/4040/>

Author Details

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Created 31 July 2017

Last modified 16 August 2017