

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6073

Lemaire, Diane Adrienne

(1923 - 2012)

Born 1 January, 1923

Died 31 December, 2012

Occupation Aeronautical Engineer, Engineer

Summary

Diane Lemaire was the first woman to take her Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering from the University of Melbourne in March 1944.

Diane worked as a Technical Officer in the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Division of Aeronautics and after the war took up a position at the National Physical Laboratory in England. In 1962 she received the Amelia Earhart Fellowship, despite not being a member of Zonta International. Diane retired in 1986.

Details

Diane Adrienne Lemaire left St Catherine's School in 1939 having won a prize for mathematics and lived in Janet Clarke Hall until 1943. She was the daughter of Lionel Henry Lemaire, who served in the AIF and was mentioned in despatches. In March 1944 she became the first woman to take her Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering from the University of Melbourne.

Despite this distinction she attracted a certain amount of press publicity, some of which seems both sexist and extraordinary today. In 1946 the *Argus* reported on a party she and her brother Peter, at the time an Agricultural Science student who graduated in 1950, hosted for some 130 'Ex-University students, a group of young doctors, and some service types' and the following year, the *Northern Argus* reported that: 'About one mile South of Penwortham on the Main North Road on the night of May 27th, two cars driven by women drivers came into collision. The headlights of both vehicles were on.' Although there appear to have been no injuries both drivers and all passengers, including Diane Lemaire, were carefully named.^[1] Another brother, James, took his LLB in 1940.

She took a position as Technical Officer working in experimental stress analysis in the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Division of Aeronautics, later the Aeronautical Research Laboratories, running the low speed wind tunnel used in missile testing and other aircraft studies. After the war, she worked for two years at the National Physical Laboratory, in England. Although not a member of Zonta International, in 1962 she received their Amelia Earhart Fellowship. In America she took her MSc from Cornell University in 1964 with a thesis entitled 'On the Question of the Existence of a Homogeneous Solution to the Equation for the Flow over the Shroud of a Ducted Propeller'.

Returning to the Aeronautical Research Laboratories, Diane Lemaire published several more reports before her retirement in 1986. She was an active member of the Lyceum Club and bred Lhasa Apso dogs. She made several generous bequests to the University, including one to the Department of Engineering, which supports the Diane Lemaire Scholarship and another to the University of Melbourne Veterinary Hospital as well as to the Janet Clarke Hall scholarship programme and Zonta International. Sadly, she was notoriously camera-shy, so a really good photograph of her proved impossible to find.^[2]

^[1] 'At 9 Darling Street.' *Argus* . 5 October 1946: 13; 'Two Women Motor Car Drivers in Accident.' *Northern Argus*. 5 June 1947: 13.

^[2] Personal correspondence, Dr Elizabeth Flann to Juliet Flesch, 23 January 2015.

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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