



Recollections of the University Press Liaison Officer

1964 to 1977

The recent celebration of International Women's Day was a great time to reflect on the University's proud claim of being one of the few employers recognised by the Australian Government as an EOWA Employer of Choice for Women.

We spoke to Patricia Petch (née Pugh) about her recollections of the University when she started in the mid 1960s – a different environment from that facing female employees today.

Patricia joined the University in 1964 as a 'Female Administrative Assistant' – a position, she was told, that would have the same responsibilities as the male Administrative Officer she was replacing, but would not be called an 'Officer' nor paid the same higher salary.

"I accepted the position on the understanding that, in recognition of my journalistic experience, when I became 'reasonably familiar with the University's workings' I would be transferred to full time duties in the field of public relations, 'the salary and status of which would be the

subject of negotiation at a later stage'."

Patricia did make the transition in 1965 when she was appointed as the University's first Press Liaison Officer with the strong support of Vice-Chancellor Sir George Paton and a majority of the members of the Professorial Board. Nonetheless, she says, "a number of the professors expressed reservations about a woman being able to fill such a responsible and senior role. This attitude was not surprising as, at that time, there were no female members of the Professorial Board."

Today the University continues to make efforts to ensure strong representation of women at senior levels, with 48 female professors and a significant number of women in senior administrative roles.

Patricia also reflected on why she decided to leave a bequest to the University.

"During my years at the University I interacted with many students and gained invaluable insights into their problems and needs. Years later, I recalled the students I had known who had difficulty in continuing their studies because of financial problems. Consequently I decided to leave a bequest towards Scholarships, Bursaries and Prizes to provide a direct benefit to students.

"Who knows – one of the future beneficiaries of my bequest may become the first female Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne."

MEET THE BEQUEST TEAM

There have been several changes in our office in recent years including two new bequest officers, Sue Girling-Butcher and Suzanne McGraw.



**Suzanne McGraw and Sue
Girling-Butcher**

Sue Girling-Butcher is looking forward to meeting as many of our bequestors as possible. Sue has had various careers which have included medical science, research for the Australian Council of Educational Research and the Institute of Family Studies, fundraising for Crisis Line and a number of years with the Australian Booksellers

Association. Most recently Sue worked at the School of Graduate Studies, coordinating programs for international and local postgraduates.

Some of you will already have met Suzanne McGraw at the Heritage Society Luncheon and she will be organising a number of future university-based lectures and events. Suzanne has been with the University since 1993 and has worked in numerous positions, including Alumni and Development roles in the faculties of Engineering and Science, and in the International Relations Unit.

We recognise that it has been some time since there has been any personal contact with many of our bequest benefactors and both Sue and Suzanne would like to meet as many of our Heritage Society members as possible. In the next few months we will be contacting you by phone to introduce ourselves and to arrange a visit if convenient or invite you to the University.

For those of you who would prefer not to be contacted but would like to receive the Heritage newsletter and invitations could you please advise either Sue or Suzanne so we can note this information.



Patricia Petch

YOUR BEQUESTS

A very recent bequest will enable Classics and Archaeology students to study an ancient language and assist with their travel to the diggings.

Dr Gertrude Spencer (MA 1992), a psychiatrist with extensive interests in classical and Near Eastern studies, left an extremely generous bequest to the University. It includes a significant collection of books on archaeology, which is housed in the Centre for Classics and Archaeology Library. Dr Spencer's passion for classical and Near Eastern cultures will be commemorated through the establishment of financial support for students studying classics and archaeology.

Gertrude Spencer was born in Vienna and spent her early years in Austria. She is believed to have been the only member of her immediate family to have survived the Holocaust. Gertrude had a love of adventure and a keen interest in comparative religion and fine arts. She was a collector of beautiful objects from her extensive travels with a particular focus on Egyptology. She studied psychiatry in Australia and the USA, later joining the staff of the Children's Court Clinic in Melbourne.

The Spencer/Pappas Trust, established as a result of Dr Spencer's bequest, has recently enabled students to undertake a four-week seminar in Classical Syriac, a still-living language whose history and literature span 3000 years. In 2007 the trust will also fund a number of travel grants for postgraduate students involved

in the study of ancient languages and archaeology.

Abby Robinson, a postgraduate student in the School of Historical Studies, has just completed the Classical Syriac course and describes it as "a rewarding experience and a great challenge."

"I've studied ancient languages in the past, but this was the first time that I'd tried to learn one with such a different alphabet. Thanks to expert and enthusiastic teaching, we can now make sense of passages from early Syriac versions of the Gospels and other texts.

"For many of us, this will help our research in practical ways; for example, I have been referring to Syriac chronicles in English translation for my master's thesis, but now I'll be able to look at some of them in their original form. I may also be able to access other documents that are not yet available in translation.

"Terry Falla, our teacher, was able to tell us something about Gertrude Spencer and we hope that we are able in a small way to repay Dr Spencer's generosity by using what we've learned over the past few weeks to enhance our future work. We also hope that the University will repeat the course so that others will have the privilege of studying Classical Syriac."

Abby's is one of many success stories made possible by bequests to the University of Melbourne.

WHAT'S ON

The University offers a vast array of lectures and events. Here are some highlights that might interest you.

Potter Morning Coffee Program

Thursday 26 April – Dr Chris McAuliffe, Director of the Potter

Thursday 28 June – Louise Adler, CEO of Melbourne University Publishing

Forthcoming Exhibitions

At the Baillieu Library - *Tea: The Global Infusion* - 20 March to 18 May

A number of aspects of this everyday pleasure will be explored, including the history of tea, its social importance, medicinal uses, tea growing, tea trade and tea merchants.

At the Ian Potter Museum - *Discovering Egypt* - 31 March to 26 August

This exhibition includes artefacts drawn from the University of Melbourne and Queen's College Collections.

The Faculty of Music Free Monday Lunch Hour Concert Series

These concerts take place every Monday during semester in the Melba Hall starting at 1.10pm until 2.00pm. They feature local and international artists, Faculty staff, students and ensembles.

Dean's Lecture Series

Various faculties hold a Dean's Lecture Series each year. Each series is designed to demonstrate current research using both international guest lecturers and University members of staff.

If you are thinking of attending any of these events or would like more information let the bequest team know (see left for contact details) and they can organise to meet you and get together a group of members with similar interests for discussion afterwards over tea or coffee.



Dr Gertrude Spencer

Contact the Bequest Team

Sue Girling-Butcher
Senior Planned Giving Officer
Tel: 03 8344 1056
Email: s.girling-butcher@unimelb.edu.au

Suzanne McGraw
Planned Giving Officer
Tel: 03 8344 1754
Email: slmcgraw@unimelb.edu.au