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Interview with Peg Christian [sound recording]

Interviewer: Karen George

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Finding Aid Full transcript available, (57 pages)

Details

3 hours 4 minutes??Peg Christian grew up on a sheep property near Yass. For her, an only child, the animals, especially horses, were her friends. Peg was nineteen and studying Veterinary Science at Sydney University when her father died and the property was sold. Although her mother strongly believed in the education of girls, she did not consider that her nineteen year old daughter could run a sheep property. Indeed, Peg Christian speculated that her mother always thought that her daughter's veterinary work 'wasn't anything terribly important'. Peg Christian was a boarder, first at Frensham and then at Abbotsleigh independent girls schools. She reflected on the advantages of single sex schools and the Headmistress' support for her ambition to be a vet. Peg Christian recounts in detail the veterinary science curriculum, its strengths and weaknesses, the impact of World War II and the social life at Sydney University between 1938 and 1943. She was the twelfth woman in Australia to graduate in veterinary science. After graduation and before her marriage, she worked in a small animal practice on the North Shore. Peg Christian stressed the importance of treating the owners as well as their animals. When her husband took up an appointment as a government laboratory veterinarian in Alice Springs, Peg Christian opened her own private practice in the family home. For this she is featured in the Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, Alice Springs. In 1952, the family moved to Adelaide and again Peg Christian started her private practice in the family home. Peg Christian is best known for her work with native animals, especially joeys, wombats and kangaroos. She learnt by trial and error because care of native animals was not included in her studies at Sydney University. As a pioneer in this work, Peg Christian's memories are a valuable record. She was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1984. Voluntary work has always been important to Peg Christian, from being an air raid warden at Sydney University, through the CWA in Alice Springs, to the Girl Guides, the RSPCA, and Cleland Reserve in Adelaide. She retired from private practice when arthritis caused her to lose the feeling in her fingers. Peg Christian's philosophy is that humans are responsible for animals. They do not have dominion over them. She also believes strongly that if you want to change something you must become involved with it, without being too aggressive. She reflected on modern day feminism.

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