Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0304

Youatt, Jean Beatrice

(1925 - 2017)

Born	19250313, China
Died	20170920, Australia
Occupation	Scientist

Summary

Dr Jean Youatt was an Australian biochemist. She graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1949 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry and microbiology, before completing her masters in microbiology at the same university, while working with Vic Skerman on the effects of oxygen on anaerobes.

Because she could not get a Ph.D. in Australia at the time, she traveled to the United Kingdom and Leeds University, where she worked under Howard Rogers and Professor Haphold. She finished her Ph.D. there in 1954, doing research on an autotrophic organism that breaks down thiocyanate.

Dr Youatt established her international reputation working with a fungi called *allonyces*. In an interview she undertook after her retirement in 1990, she said: “Fungi were new for me. I had always worked with bacteria, where all you see is a little dot or dash, but these things grew like little trees: they had roots and branches and produced different kinds of fruiting structures. Looking down the microscope, you could actually watch what was happening; you could then take samples away and analyse them to see chemically what was happening. I decided this was the nicest combination of things I could possibly get.”

She was born in China on 13 March 1925 and educated at Melbourne University after being “enclosed in a compound” by the Japanese for 4 years during the war.
Her PhD work at Leeds on an autotroph organism is still being cited as the organism is being used to deal with industrial waste. She worked for a number of years in Melbourne on a drug that was used to treat tuberculosis.

(Source: Royal Australian Chemical Institute – Chemist Profiles www.raci.org.au/New_Site_ 2001/chemporf.shtml)

[NB: the above biography was researched and written by Philida Sturgiss-Hoy]

Published resources

Edited Book
Who's Who of Australian Women, Lofthouse, Andrea, 1982

Resource
Where are the Women in Australian science?, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 2003, http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/wisa/wisa.html

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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