Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0945

Christian, Margaret Enid

(1920 - 2012)

Born	19200711, Burwood New South Wales Australia
Died	20120714, Parkside, Unley City South Australia Australia
Occupation	Veterinarian

Summary

Peg Christian was the first veterinarian to establish a private small animal practice in the Northern Territory; she practiced part-time in Alice Springs from 1948-1951. Later she helped pioneer the development of Wombaroo, a replacement milk formula for orphaned marsupials.

Details

Peg Christian grew up on a sheep property near Yass. For her, an only child, the animals, especially horses, were her friends. She became a boarder, first at Frensham and then at Abbotsleigh independent girls schools. She 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. 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. When her husband took up an appointment as a government laboratory veterinarian in Alice Springs, Christian opened her own private practice in the family home. In 1952, the family moved to Adelaide and again she started her private practice in the family home. 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. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia on 26 January 1984. Voluntary work has always been important to Christian, from being a an air raid warden at Sydney University (during World War II), through the Country Women’s Association (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.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

State Library of South Australia
Interview with Peg Christian [sound recording] Interviewer: Karen George

Author Details
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