The Australian
Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1157

Porter, Una Beatrice

(1900 - 1996)

Born	19001017, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Died	19960624, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Philanthropist, Psychiatrist

Summary

Una B. Porter (née Cato) was a renowned psychiatrist, philanthropist and devotee of the Methodist Church in Melbourne, Victoria. She was the first female member of staff at Ballarat Mental Hospital in 1946. In 1963 she was elected World President of the YWCA and travelled extensively. In recognition of her services to the community she was appointed Officer of the British Empire (OBE) in 1961, and Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1968.

Details

Una B. Porter was the youngest daughter of Fanny (née Bethune) and Frederick John Cato, prominent businessman and co-founder of the Moran & Cato grocery company, known for his generosity and commitment to the Methodist Church. From her parents Una inherited a deep and lasting Christian faith that would become the driving force behind her own career and philanthropic activities.

Though Una was forced to cease her formal education at the age of 14 owing to ill health, she returned to study at the age of 30, matriculating before gaining entry to the University of Melbourne as a medical student. There she specialised in psychiatry and trained at Prince Henry's Hospital, the Royal Park Mental Hospital and the Children's Hospital, before taking a post in 1946 at the Ballarat Mental Hospital where she was the first female member of staff, overseeing 512 female patients. She later worked in private practice and was instrumental in the establishment of a psychiatric clinic at the Queen Victoria Hospital, where she continued work in her retirement as Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist and counsellor for nurses.

In 1946 Una married James Roland Porter, an ex-RAAF squadron leader and lifelong friend.

Throughout her life, Una maintained a strong link with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and in 1963 was elected World President of this organisation. Her post, which she retained for four years, involved frequent overseas travel (including India, the Philippines, Europe, North and South America, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Greece, Africa and Israel), advising and encouraging local YWCA groups. In 1964 she was elected Woman of the Year.

Una's philanthropic work was extensive. In addition to administering the F.J. Cato Charitable and Benevolent Fund together with the Cato Lectureship, and later the James and Una Porter Trust Fund, she made substantial personal donations to hospitals, universities and community organisations, notably the University of Melbourne, Monash University, Epworth Hospital, Methodist Ladies College, Cato College, Queen Victoria Hospital and of course the YWCA.

Una B. Porter was appointed O.B.E. (1961) and C.B.E. (1968) in recognition of her services to the community.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book
If God Prospers Me: A Portrait of Frederick John Cato, Blainey, Ann, 1990

Resource Section
Cato, Frederick John (1858-1935), East, Ronald, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070598b.htm

A Great Form of Love: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Lemon, Barbara, 2008,
http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/

Edited Book
Growing Together: Letters between Frederick John Cato and Frances Bethune, 1881 to 1884, Porter, Una B., 1981

Newspaper Article
Una Porter, CBE, OBE 1900-1996, 1996

The YWCA and the Subject of Great Concern to Women: The Boss Speaks Up for Her Girls, Hamilton, John, 1972

Thesis
In Her Gift: Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy, 1880-2005, Lemon, Barbara, 2008

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wiph/home.html

Archival resources

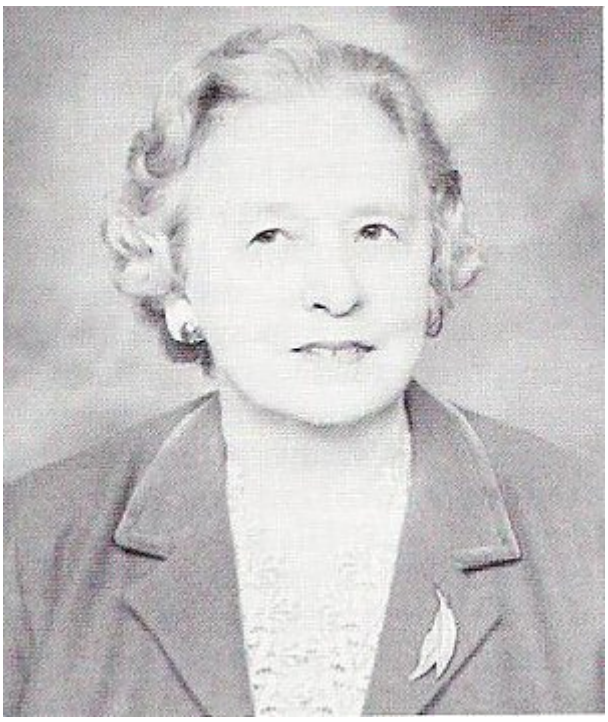
The University of Melbourne Archives
Porter, Una Beatrice (1900-1996)

State Library of Victoria
Records, 1912-ca. 1970. [manuscript].

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Digital resources



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