

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE2112

Eldridge, Marian Favel Clair

(1936 - 1997)

Born 1 February, 1936, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Died 14 February, 1997, Canberra Australian Capital Territory

Occupation Author, Poet

Summary

Marian Eldridge was an acclaimed short-story writer, novelist and poet, and was instrumental in establishing the ACT Writers Centre. Her legacy is the Marian Eldridge Award to nurture promising women writers.

(This entry is sponsored by generous donation from Christine Foley.)

Details

Marian Eldridge grew up on her parents' property, 'The Gap', near Lancefield in Victoria. She graduated Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne in 1957. She married Ken Eldridge in 1958 and lived at Traralgon, Victoria until 1966 and in Canberra from 1966 to 1997. The couple had four children.

Eldridge worked as a high school teacher of English and History in Traralgon, Victoria and in the ACT, and as a literature tutor at the Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University.

She became a prolific short story writer, and collections of her work were published in *Walking the Dog* (1984), *The Woman at the Window* (1989) which earned high praise from the *New York Times Book Review* in 1990, and *The Wild Sweet Flowers: The Alvie Skerritt Stories* (1994) which chronicled 'the life of a fairly typical Australian family'. Her work also appeared in a number of newspapers and academic journals and more than twenty short story collections.

She also published a novel, *Springfield* (1992), which used healing of the land as a metaphor for healing its characters, who were damaged by drug abuse and the Vietnam war. In 1996 she wrote twelve poems that were published in the Senate Hansard of 19 June 1997.

Eldridge was a book reviewer for the *Canberra Times* and the *Australian Book Review*, and became the first literature co-ordinator for the ACT Arts Council in 1986. She was writer-in-residence at Darwin High School in 1989, received an ACT Arts Bureau Literary Fellowship in 1992 and an Australia Council Literary Board Grant 1994.

She was a member of Seven Writers – a group of seven Canberra-based women writers whose work vividly portrayed life 'beneath the surface of Canberra' – and as part of this collective she contributed to *Canberra Tales* (1988), republished as *The Division of Love* in 1996, which was an anthology of short stories about life in Canberra. The work received an ACT Bicentennial Award.

Eldridge's other awards included: the Robin Hood Committee Annual Literature Competition (1972); the *Canberra Times* /Commonwealth Bank national Short Story Award (1981); the Syme Community Newspapers Short Story Competition (1983) and International Year of the Family Award in the NSW State Literary Awards (1994).

Marian Eldridge was instrumental in establishing the ACT Writers Centre and in the last few months of her life she expressed a desire to further nurture writers. Through a cash donation from her estate, the Marian Eldridge Award was established in 1998, under the auspices of the National Foundation for Australian Women, to encourage an aspiring woman writer to undertake a literary activity such as a short course of study, or to complete a project, or attend a writers' week or a conference. Six awards have been given to date.

Eldridge Crescent is named after her in the Canberra suburb of Garran where she lived and wrote for 30 years.

Published resources

Book

The Division of Love: Stories, Barbalet, Margaret et al, 1995

Springfield, Eldridge, Marian, 1992

Photograph

Collection of Marian Eldridge photographs, 1994,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an20811737>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Records of the Seven Writers group, between 1986 and approximately 2000](#)

[Papers of Marian Eldridge, 1942-1997 \[manuscript\]](#)

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Marian Eldridge interviewed by Heather Rusden \[sound recording\]](#)

Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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