Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5569

Cohen, Nerida Josephine

(1912 - 2002)

Born	19120101, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Died	20020508
Occupation	Barrister, Chairperson, Lawyer, Public servant, Solicitor, Women's rights activist

Summary

Nerida Josephine Cohen (later Goodman) was the second woman (and first Jewish woman) to practise at the New South Wales (NSW) Bar. Amongst her early mentors were Professor Gladys Marks and feminist leaders Jessie Street and Ruby Rich. She was admitted to the NSW bar in 1935.

She built her business steadily throughout the 1930s and 40s, particularly in the area of divorce and industrial law, because she had an abiding interest in advancing the rights of women in the domestic and industrial spheres.

During WWII, Nerida left the Bar to play a part in the war effort by working firstly with the Women's Employment Board and then with the NSW Department of Labour and Industry as a legal officer. She was chairman of the Council for Women in War Work, which collected records of the achievements of women during the war.

In 1952, she was invited to be the inaugural president of the Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales.

Details

Nerida Goodman (nee Cohen) entered the University of Sydney at the age of 15, an outstanding scholar and violinist; she resided at the Women's College while studying Arts and Law. In the final years of her degree she was articled to Pigott Stinson Macgregor & Palmer. Following her admission on 26 July 1935, she became the second woman, and first Jewish woman, to practise at the New South Wales Bar. Her practice reflected her dedication to advancing women's rights in the domestic and industrial settings. With mentor Jessie Street, she campaigned for equal pay for women; another preoccupation was divorce law reform. During the Second World War, she left the Bar to work with the Women's Employment Board and later with the New South Wales Department of Labour and Industry. In 1943 she chaired the newly-established Council for Women in War Network. Marrying Bernard Goodman in 1946, she shortly afterwards ceased to practise at the Bar. Goodman was the inaugural president of the Women Lawyers' Association of New South Wales in 1952 and the first woman to serve on the NSW Board of Jewish Education. She also served on the provisional executive of the Liberal Party when it was formed and in 1948 became vice-president of the Party's Darlinghurst branch. An MBE granted in 1980 recognised her service to women's affairs and the Jewish community.

Published resources

Resource Section
Jonathan Goodman Interview: Jonathan Goodman interviewed by Juliette Brodsky 28 June 2010, Brodsky, Juliette, 2011, http://www.nswbar.asn.au/the-bar-association/pioneering-women/#/3_nerida_cohen

Street, Jessie Mary Grey (1889-1970), Radi, Heather, 2002, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A160396b.htm

Nerida Cohen Biography, Brodsky, Juliette, 2011, http://www.nswbar.asn.au/the-bar-association/pioneering-women/#/3_nerida_cohen

Thesis
A History of Women in the Legal Profession in New South Wales, O'Brien, Joan M., 1986, https://womenlawyersnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/History-of-Women-in-Legal-Profession.pdf

Site Exhibition
Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016, http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection
Nerida Goodman interviewed by Hazel de Berg in the Hazel de Berg collection [sound recording]

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Digital resources



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