Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6234

Casey, Ethel Marian Sumner (Maie)

(1891 - 1983)

Born	18910313, Brunswick Victoria Australia
Died	19830120, BerwickBerwick Victoria Australia
Occupation	Artist, Author, Aviator, Painter, Poet

Details

Ethel Marian Sumner (Maie) Ryan was born on 13 March 1891 in Brunswick, Victoria, to parents Charles Snodgrass Ryan and Alice Elfrida Sumner. She was privately educated by a governess, before being sent to board at St George's School in Ascot, England. Her formal education was completed at a finishing school in Paris and after attending the Westminster School of Art, London, she returned to Melbourne in 1910.

In England during World War One, Maie volunteered at Douglas Shield's Hospital for Wounded Officers and then with Vera Deakin's Australian Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau. After the war she acted as hostess for her brother Rupert in Germany.

Maie returned to London in 1924 and after becoming reacquainted with Richard Gavin Gardiner (Baron) Casey, the pair married at St James's parish church, Westminster, on 24 June 1926. They had two children, the second of which was born in Melbourne in 1931. On 21 December that same year, Richard was elected member for Corio in the House of Representatives.

It was around this time that Maie began to paint and she occasionally attended classes at an art school in Melbourne. Then, after experiencing flying whilst in England in 1937 for the coronation of King George VI, Maie and Richard obtained their licenses, bought a yellow Perival Vega Gull and built an airstrip at 'Edrington' in Berwick.

Between 1940 and 1946 the Casey's lived in various countries overseas as Richard fulfilled his many appointments, including London, Cairo, Washington and Calcutta. Back in Melbourne from 1946, Maie began public speaking, in addition to her passions for art and flying. She also became a patron for young Australian artists, such as (Sir) Sidney Nolan.

In 1950 Maie was named inaugural patron of the Association of Women Pilots of Australia. In October 1953 she flew her Miles Messenger in Australia's first all-woman air race and the following year she became a member of the Ninety-Nines. Also in 1953, *Early Melbourne Architecture*, a book she had collaborated on with various other people, was published. From this time, Maie received increased recognition as a writer, publishing numerous texts and verses.

In 1965, with the appointment of Richard as governor-general, the Casey's moved into Government House. Maie set about converting the house into a salon for artists, musicians and writers.

Maie was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1979 and was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) 'in recognition of service to the community, art and literature', in 1982.

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Maie Casey, 1831-1987 [manuscript]

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

National Gallery of Australia, Research Library Archive
[Maie Casey : Australian and New Zealand Art Files]. / Maie, Casey

State Library of Victoria
[Maie Casey : Australian Art and Artists file]

Papers of Lord and Lady Casey, n.d. [manuscript].

National Library of Australia
[Biographical cuttings on Ethel Marian Sumner Casey, widow of former Governor-General, Lord Casey, artist, writer, aviatrix, publisher, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

State Library of New South Wales
Papers of Lady Maie Casey : [manuscript], 1959-1982.

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