Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6619

Benz, Hedwig

(1910 - 2006)

Born	19100609, Brig Switzerland
Died	20061231, Queensland
Occupation	Interpreter

Summary

Hedwig Benz was the first full time interpreter at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital – a hospital for women – in Melbourne. Benz was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1972 in recognition of service to migrants in Victoria, for her work at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital. She played a valuable role in removing the responsibility from English-speaking children of migrants in liaising about their mother's illness with hospital staff.

Details

According to her immigration records, Hedwig Schläpfer was born in Brig, Switzerland and lived in Switzerland most of her life until immigrating, with the exception of a year or two in Italy when she was 18. She arrived in Melbourne on the S M Almkerk in July 1949, intending to work as a housekeeper and a nurse. She then moved to Canberra, where she spent three years, returning to Melbourne in 1953. She married William Benz, another Swiss migrant, in Melbourne in 1954 and received her certificate of naturalization in 1958. In 1956 Benz began working full time at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital as an interpreter, where she remained until retiring in 1971. By 1977 the couple had moved to Queensland. Hedwig Benz died in 2006.

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, Melbourne Office
Benz, Hedwig

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