Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00330

Prentice, Una Gailey

(1913 - 1986)

Born	19131106, Brisbane Queensland Australia
Died	19860325, Brisbane Queensland Australia
Occupation	Lawyer

Summary

Una Prentice (nee Bick) was the first woman law graduate admitted to the Bar of the Queensland Supreme Court, first woman admitted to the Bar of the High Court, and first female Commonwealth Prosecutor.

Details

Having already completed her Bachelor of Arts, Una Prentice (nee Bick) was one of four people to enrol in the newly established law course at the University of Queensland in 1936. On 29 April 1938 Una Prentice became the first female graduate from the Faculty of Law at the University of Queensland. Over the next two years legal firms showed no interest in her, as either a solicitor or barrister. Finally Una received an offer from the University of Queensland to catalogue the vast book collection of Sir James Blair, who had just retired as Chief Justice. This collection became the nucleus of the Law Library of the University of Queensland.

When World War II broke out, and because of an associated skills shortage, Una was offered a job with the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor. In 1942 she became the first female lawyer to be employed in the Department, performing legal duties as well as being the office bookkeeper. Despite her prestigious position, Una was paid as a typist – the only salary scale the department had for women. After a few years Una eventually was paid a proportion of the legal officer's scale.

Una joined the Brisbane firm of Stephens & Tozer in 1946. She then became Australian President of the Business and Professional Women's Association and attended an international conference, touring England for eight months talking about the status of women in Australia. Una married Tony Prentice, a barrister, in 1946 and they both practised law until Una's legal career was cut short, due to the birth of their son Roger. With no provision for working mothers at that time, Una was contented to stay home and raise her son and actively involve herself in a number of community organisations.

Published resources

Book Section
Una Prentice, Nissen, Judy, 2005

Una Prentice (1913-1986): Queensland's first law school graduate, Grant, Heather, 2005

Resource Section
Una Prentice, Supreme Court of Queensland Library, 2003,
http://www.sclqld.org.au/schp/exhibitions/witl/biographies/prentice.htm

Una Prentice, Grant, Heather, 2009,
http://www.women.qld.gov.au/q150/1930/index.html#item-una-prentice

Law, Kerwin, Hollie and Rubenstein, Kim, 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0624b.htm

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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
[Biographical cuttings on Una Prentice, Dr., first woman to graduate in law from the University of Queensland, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

Author Details
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