

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6062

Fabinyi, Elisabeth Clare

(1912 - 2002)

Born	1 January, 1912
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Died	31 December, 2002
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Occupation	Administrative officer, Librarian
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Summary

Elisabeth Clare Fabinyi worked as assistant secretary to the Spanish Relief Fund after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. She was also employed as a clerk at the ICI. In the 1960s she qualified as a librarian and taught briefly at Caulfield Technical School. Throughout her life, Elisabeth held a lively interest in both politics and literature.

Details

Elisabeth Clare Fabinyi, nee Robinson was the daughter and granddaughter of Hansard reporters. The career of her father, Charles Herbert Palmer Robinson (1870-1945) bridged the transfer of the Commonwealth Parliament, which had sat in Melbourne since Federation, to Canberra, obliging him to commute weekly, well before the standardised railway gauge made this a relatively simple journey, between the new capital and his young family in Toorak. Her mother, Grace Robinson, took her Arts degree from the University of Sydney.

Elisabeth Robinson attended several private girls' schools and took her BA from Melbourne University in 1934. The writer Vance Palmer was a distant relative and during their undergraduate years Elisabeth was introduced to the Labor Club by Vance and Nettie's daughter Aileen (1915-1988). After graduation she left for Europe to accompany two of her aunts one of whom, Josephine Paxton, was a painter who had studied at the Slade School of Art. Elisabeth spent time in Paris and two happy terms at the Foyer de l'étudiant attached to the University of Grenoble.

On her return to Australia after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil war she worked as assistant secretary to the Spanish Relief Fund of which Aileen Palmer was President, raising money to support the republicans. She was also employed as a clerk at ICI. In 1940 she married Andrew Fabinyi (1908-1978) who had left Hungary in 1939. The first of their five children was born in 1942.

Elisabeth Fabinyi lived a life dedicated to her family and the life of the mind. Her husband's as role general manager of the publisher FW Cheshire and in bodies such as the Australian Book Publishers' Association, the Library Association of Australia and the Australian Institute of International Affairs brought a constant stream of authors and artists to their house and Elisabeth Fabinyi's lively interest in politics and literature were always in evidence. She qualified in the 1960s as a librarian and worked briefly at Caulfield Technical School. Always interested in other civilisations she continued to travel until late in life to Egypt, Europe, Hong Kong and Singapore, taught English to Japanese students and maintained a beautiful garden.

Three of the Fabinyis' children and one grandchild are, like their mother, graduates of the University of Melbourne.

Published resources

Book
40 Years 40 Women: Biographies of University of Melbourne Women, Published to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the International Year of Women, Flesch, Juliet, 2015,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/4040/>

Author Details

Juliet Flesch

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