

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0392

McDonald, Grace Thelma

(1927 - 2013)

Born	2 March, 1927, Ashbury New South Wales Australia
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Died	17 December, 2013
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Occupation	Community worker, Servicewoman
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Summary

A member of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) during World War II, Grace Griffith enlisted on 6 March 1945 and was discharged on 28 October 1946.

Serving as a writer on HMAS *Penguin*, *Kuttabul* and *Torrens*, her training included activities that she may not have participated in had she remained in 'civvy' street.

After being 'demobbed' some veterans were given scholarships to university and Teachers College, and Griffith was given one to the Conservatorium of Music. She achieved the position of being a Piano soloist with the Conservatorium's orchestra.

In 1950 Grace Griffith and Ernest McDonald married, they had four children including twins and now have nine grandchildren. During this time she returned to Netball as a player – a sport she had competed in while single. In 1966 McDonald was asked to be state secretary of the netball association. She held this position at a time when she was also state selector and state delegate. Later when the Randwick Netball Association was starting she was asked to be president, a position that McDonald held for 27 years before retiring in 1997. Over this period the Association had the largest contingent of Australian players from any one Association in Australia.

During her time as president McDonald was given a Community Service Award in 1986 and in 1997 a Civic Reception and a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition for years of service as president of Randwick Netball Association and to sport in the City of Randwick.

Grace McDonald was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) on 26 January 1996 for her services to netball. On 26 July 2000 she was awarded the Australian Sports Medal.

In 2002 Grace McDonald became secretary of the Council of Ex-Servicewomen's Associations New South Wales(NSW) and she represented the Association on the working group for the "Women in War Project."

Details

Letter submitted by Dorothy McHugh, nominating Grace McDonald for an Australian Honour.

It gives me great pleasure as General Secretary of the International Federation of Netball Associations to recommend Mrs Grace Thelma McDonald for an award to honour her outstanding contribution to the sport of Netball at Club, District, State, National and International Levels.

Grace was always a keen athlete – tennis, hockey, athletics and netball being her favourite sports. These were all put on hold during World War II when she became a member of the Women's Royal Australian Navy in 1944 as a writer.

I first met Grace McDonald in 1949 when we both played netball for the YWCA. In 1955 she was selected in the New South Wales (NSW) 'Rest' and became a State 'B' grade practical umpire.

From 1966-70 she was not only umpiring, but held positions of State Secretary (1966-68) and Junior Vice-President (1969-70). During this period Grace McDonald served on numerous committees concurrently with the Executive roles she held. She exhibited a great deal of versatility as the portfolios were wide and varied. One of the most significant was the Building Committee which was responsible for planning, organising, and supervising the construction of the New South Wales (NSW) Netball Headquarters 'a first for women's sport' now known as the Anne Clarke Centre.

Grace's meticulous attention to detail and her caring approach to people made her a much respected member of the State body. She played a vital role as a member of the committees which co-ordinated the National Tournaments hosted by NSW Netball Association in 1966, 1972 and in 1978 the Golden Jubilee Year for Netball in Australia. In 1966-67 Grace was a State Delegate to the National Council and in 1976 was appointed Manageress of the NSW Night State Team. In 1974 Grace set off to Papua New Guinea with a selected team on a touring and coaching exercise.

In 1971 Grace McDonald was elected President of the Randwick Netball Association, a position she still holds. Grace works patiently with a quiet unassuming dedication and zeal to maintain the standard and ethics the Association enjoys to-day. In addition, through her role as President of Randwick Netball Association she is promoting a game which provides enjoyment for some 2500/3000 girls and women within the District. The Association serves an essential community role offering physical and mental involvement with others and the opportunity to meet people with varying interests and cultures within the District and the State. Under her leadership the Association has progressed from working out of a tent to finally achieving its own Headquarters in 1980. In 1986 disaster struck when the building was vandalised and burnt to the ground. I say disaster, because with the building the archives of the Association were also lost.

Undaunted and true to her community spirit Grace McDonald surged ahead negotiating with the Randwick Municipal Council for the establishment of a new Headquarters. Mr Michael Cleary, then the NSW Minister for Sport opened the new building in 1987.

In 1981 Grace was made a Life Member of the Randwick Netball Association for her contribution to Netball within the District.

The Association has not only grown in size, but also in status. It caters for players from the grass roots level up to the elite. Randwick Netball Association boasts a large contingent of Australian players. Three of the most recent ones played in the Australian Team which won the 1991 World Netball Championships, which was staged in Sydney.

Grace McDonald's drive and administrative skills do not stop at administrative level. With a working party she was successful in securing a very substantial sponsorship from Sydney Electricity to support the Randwick District Team in the Australian Super League Series, which Randwick won in 1993.

Since 1990 Grace McDonald has been a member of the Heffron Park Action Group striving to prevent a Golf Driving Range from being put on Crown Land. The issue has become a very contentious one as Crown Land is reserved for public recreation and not for private enterprise. The issue has been tested in court several times. However, the battle still continues. More recently Grace McDonald has been invited to take a place on the Randwick Plan of Management Group for Heffron Park. (Formation of this group yet to be confirmed by Council).

In conclusion – Grace McDonald has administered Netball at all levels. She has generously shared her expertise with others and it should be noted that the many, many years she has been involved in Netball have been in a purely voluntary capacity. Anything she has ever done, not only for Netball, but within the community has reflected her high principals and integrity.

I can attest to the quality of Grace's work and the effective and efficient way she gets things done. Her dedication is reflected in the respect she commands from Netballers at large.

If further information is required to supplement this outline of the invaluable contribution made to the sport of Netball by Grace McDonald I will be only too happy to oblige.

Dorothy M McHugh OAM

Published resources

Resource Section

GRIFFITH, GRACE THELMA, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002,
<http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/script/veteran.asp?ServiceID=N&VeteranID=1118484>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre

An informal group of members of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) on the wharf at Garden Island.

Author Details

Anne Heywood

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Digital resources



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Date: 3 May, 2023



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