

THE MEMOIRS OF DOROTHY POTTER (MRS. ERIC POTTER) - NEE DOROTHY CLAPHAM

I was born on 24th June, 1899, at Taringa, Brisbane. My father was Ernest, the son of William T. Clapham, ~~who was the first Minister at the Ann Street Church of Christ.~~ <sup>when</sup> The present church building was purchased <sup>in 1896</sup> ~~during his ministry.~~ He was one of the early Presidents of Conference. My Grandmother was President of the first Women's Conference held in New South Wales in 1894, also the President of the first Women's Conference held in Queensland at West Moreton in 1898. My mother was Dorathea (Dolly) Mills, daughter of Anna Mills, later Mrs. James McNae. All of Ann Street Church. My mother and father were both in the Ann Street choir. I was brought up in a Christian home. My mother taught in Sunday School with me sitting on her knee, so I am told. I lost my father when about two years of age. My mother then owned a mixed business at Spring Hill. At the age of 5 I attended, with a neighbour's daughter, the old Normal School, but after about 6 months left to attend a private school on Gregory Terrace, conducted by two elderly sisters, one of whom taught school and the other music. After three years I transferred to the Leichhardt Street School, where my mother had attended and afterwards my son was a pupil there. When I was 13 I attended the Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, where I learnt the usual subjects with a little French, German, music and typing. After 18 months, because it was expensive and I wanted to do a business course, I attended the Underwood and later Wadley's ~~Business~~ <sup>Commonwealth</sup> Colleges. In 1917 I came 6th in the ~~Public~~ <sup>Commonwealth</sup> Service examination, and was duly appointed to the Taxation Department in March 1917. I was 18 years in this Department, becoming Senior Typiste in charge of the typing staff and Private Secretary to the Deputy Commissioner. *of Taxation.*

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I was baptised at the age of 15 at Ann Street by Mr. A.C. Rankine. I taught Kindergarten, becoming Superintendent of the Ann St. Kindergarten. When the Hawthorne Sunday School needed teachers some of us went to help and I became Superintendent of that Kindergarten. We had three tennis teams at Ann Street, playing competitive tennis in the Church Association. I was Secretary of the Tennis Club for some time. I was also in the Ann St. Ladies' Gymnastic Club. I was pianist and later organist at Ann Street for a number of years. During these years I was interested in my musical career and passed most examinations of Trinity College, Royal Academy and University. In 1920 I received my A.T.C.L. (Associate of Trinity College London) degree.

In 1921 I passed St. John Ambulance examinations for First Aid and Home Nursing, and became a member of the St. John Ambulance Association, wearing

their uniform (a long black cape and a white dress) and attending Hospital casualty, Football Matches and other places where first aid or home nursing was needed. During this time I spent a lot of time climbing mountains, and have climbed all of the Glasshouse Mountains, Mt. Warning and others. I later became keen on Philately, and any spare time was spent with my stamps, sometimes until 2 a.m. During this time I was engaged for two years to a young man who was studying at the Glen Iris Bible College and later became a Minister. Then I broke off the engagement.

During the years 1926 to 1935 I was Secretary of the Bible School Union (now the Christian Youth and Education Department). As Secretary, I helped organise and conduct the first Youth Camp which was held at Pingal, New South Wales, in 1930. We slept in tents and the administrative work was done under a house owned by an Aboriginee Mission. Every morning "Uncle Keith Gerrard" and I would rise at 5 a.m. to prepare a Newspaper which was distributed at breakfast. Copies of the paper are now in the Archives as are snapshots of the Campers, etc. In 1929 I bought my little car - a new Triumph 7 - and it cost £250. I called her "Pandora". It was all red, and it was wonderful to travel to so many city and country places in it.

In August 1935 I left the Youth Department to marry Eric Potter also of the Ann Street Church, and whose Grandfather (Jesse Crawford) was one of the 6 men who started the Brisbane Church of Christ, so that our son, Ronald, who was born in August 1936, is Church of Christ from both sides of the family. We lived at Redgliff (Eric had the Mail Contract there, and when that finished, travelled to Brisbane to work each day). We attended first a Congregational Church at Woody Point, as this was the only church (apart from Church of England and Roman Catholic). When the Baptist Church opened at Margate we attended there, but we still had our membership at Ann Street and attended quite often. I was Treasurer of the Baptist Women's Fellowship at Margate from 1939 until 1947. We had a wonderful time at Redcliffe, and while there formed a choir in our home. I was the pianiste, we had an elderly gentleman as conductor, and we met every Friday night.

In 1947 when my mother died we came to Brisbane to look after my aunt (Miss Jane Mills) and to live with her at 6 Leichhardt Street, Spring Hill. We came back home to Ann Street, and in 1948 I followed Mrs. Berlin (a lifelong friend of my mother's) as Secretary of the Ann Street Women's Fellowship. I remained in that position until 1953, when I became President of the <sup>Australian</sup> Women's Fellowship. Eric had become Treasurer of the Church a few weeks after we returned (in 1947) and held that position until about 1960.

Then, following in "Grandma's" footsteps I became interested in

Women's Conference. I was Home Mission Superintendent 1949 to 1951, and as such was on the Home Missions Committee. In 1951 I became President of State Women's Conference and held that position for two years. I visited every Women's Fellowship in Queensland. At that time there were no rail passes for the Presidents. I met so many people, and in some homes where I ~~was~~ enjoyed hospitality I was shown Bible School examination certificates which I had signed as Secretary of the Bible School Union years before. It has always been a thrill for me to visit our churches, especially in the country. I again held the position of Women's Home Mission Superintendent from 1953 until 1957, and in 1959 I was Prayer Meeting Superintendent.

From 1952 until 1954 I was President of the Federal Women's Conference, and when the Conference was held here I was on the committee appointed to arrange the Conference.

In 1953 I was appointed President of the Women's Interchurch Council (now Australian Church Women, Queensland Branch). As President, in 1954, I was presented to the Queen during her visit to Queensland and was privileged to present her with a bouquet. At an exhibition of women's work I was asked to show part of my Stamp Collection. The Queen was very interested and asked a few questions about the collection. Her Equerry was also interested and told me I had one stamp which he did not. Needless to say I didn't give it to him. During 1953 to 1955 I was Associate Gambling Superintendent of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and was on the W.C.T.U. executive from 1959 to 1961.

For about two years I was working with David Mansell in the Church of Christ Bookroom in George Street, and believe it or not, was a member of the Federated Clerk's Union.

I was a foundation member of the first Old People's Home at Burdeu House, and many times did the washing there, and helped in many ways as there was no money with which to pay ~~the~~ staff. In later years I helped with therapy at that Home, and received recognition as "Guest of the Year". I was also a Foundation Member of Kenmore Theological College.

For 10 years I organised the State Conference Women's Camps at Caloundra. While we owned the Bretherhood Centre I was a member of that Committee.

In 1955 I became Associate Secretary of General Conference, and held this position until 1969. In 1962 and until 1964 I was Associate Secretary of the Federal Arrangements Committee and during Conference had overall charge of the office facilities and the cloak room.

For a number of years my husband and I attended the Church of Christ at Rocklea for an early Service, attending the Ann Street Service later. Help was needed at Rocklea as one or two key members had left. We started there in 1950. Some of the ladies from Ann Street and myself visited most of the homes in Rocklea and we were able to start a Women's Fellowship of which I was President until 1953. During part of this time I helped the Editor of the "Messenger" at Ann Street, and during his absence edited and printed it.

In 1952 I attended the National Council of Women as a represented <sup>at</sup> of the Church of Christ Women's Conference, and in 1954 became a Vice President. In 1956 I was appointed President, with 95 Organisations affiliated, being the first Church representative to become President. This meant that I had an opportunity to witness for my Lord, and with other church representatives we made our stand as Christians. After becoming President of N.C.W. my busy times really started. When I look back it is hard to believe it all happened, but I have it in my "N.C.W. Scrap Book", mostly in letters and newspaper cuttings. I can only set out a list of the things I did -

1956 - November: Became President

1957 - January: Attended the N.C.W. Conference in Tasmania.

- On a committee appointed to organise celebrations for the Qld. Centenary Year.
- Opened a new Simpsons Flour Test Kitchen.
- In June written up in the "Telegraph" as "Woman of the Week".
- With Past President of N.C.W. prepared a case for extended shopping hours.
- Organised a women's farewell function for Lady Laverack in the City Hall. Over 1000 women attended, and I presented her with a diamond watch.
- Spoke on 4BK regarding the Road Safety Campaign.
- Became one of the Vice Patrons of the United Nations Assn. Rehabilitation Fund.
- Member of Appeals and Publicity Committee of Y.W.C.A. 1957 to 1959, and member of the Newmarket Girls' Hostel Committee.
- Worked towards the establishment of Meals on Wheels Services by organising a survey by the Qld. University Dept. of Social Studies.

1958 - Arranged a Women's Welcome Function for the Queen Mother, and presented her with an Address of Welcome, also attended a State Govt. Reception.

- Attended the Australian Old People's Welfare Council Conference in Melbourne, in May.
- With Past President and Economics Convener, represented N.C.W. at a hearing to abolish Saturday trading.
- Led a deputation of 5 women to the Premier asking for the appointment of



- women to Hospital Boards. An appointment was made at a later date.
  - Tried to have Remedial Kitchens to train handicapped women to play their normal part in the home. These were established later at the Royal Brisbane and Princess Alexandra Hospitals.
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- Arranged Women's Welcome for Lady May Abel-Smith and her daughter. There were about 500 women there.
  - Presented an Address of Welcome to Sir Henry Abel-Smith at his Swearing in Ceremony and attended Government Garden Party and Civic Welcome in the City Hall to welcome him.
- 1959 - During my term as President a 50 years history (in book form) of the N.C.W. was published.
- A Vice President of University Women's College Building Appeal Committee.
  - Foundation member of English Speaking Union organised by Sir Henry Abel-Smith. Early meetings were held at Government House.
  - Name included in current "Who's Who in Australia".
  - Member of Qld. Historical Society and Fortitude Club (another Historical Society)
  - One of Judges in "Telegraph" - "Baby of the Year" contest.
  - Attended, and was presented to Princess Alexandra at City Hall Ball in August, also State Govt. and City Council Receptions and University Function.
  - Vice Chairman World Refugee/Committee (United Nations).
  - Attended Function to commemorate 100th year of holding first meeting of City Council (13th October).
  - Attended Australian Old People's Welfare Council Annual Meeting in Melbourne.
  - Visited Children's Hospital with two other members of N.C.W. and inspected wards with ~~with members~~ Medical Superintendent. Suggested improvements as conditions there were not very good. Later Govt. granted £60,000 for improvements.
  - Spoke on 4BH regarding the National Council of Women and the influence of women in politics.
  - One of panel of Judges to choose a girl for an Australia wide scholarship - sponsored by Hills Heists to select top Home Science student - held at Lennons.
  - Attended functions in connection with Queensland Jubilee Celebrations.
  - Member of Qld. Health Education Council - later appointed to Finance Committee of that Council.
- 1960 - Attended Civil Defence School at Mt. Macedon, Victoria, in July.
- With other members of N.C.W. pressed the Government for legislation to ban children from beer gardens and lounges.

- Attended State Govt, City Council and Government House welcomes to the Governor General - Sir William Slim, this being his final visit to Q'land. as Governor General.
- Became Vice President of the Aeronautical Association.
- Member Qld. Council for Children's Films and T.V.
- Invited by Methodist Conference to sit on a Commission to go into the matter of "How the Church can help in world economy" 1959 to 1961. I learnt quite a lot while serving on this Commission.
- Presented an Address of Welcome to Sir Allan Mansfield.
- Member of Social and Morals Committee.
- Foundation member of Home Help Service.
- Attended meetings of Royal Flying Doctor Service, Qld. Braille Writing Assn., Qld. Training and Placement Centre for the Blind, Handicapped Rehabilitation Centre, Save the Children Fund and Travellers' Aid.

I completed my term as National Council of Women President in November 1960 with 107 Organisations affiliated.

In 1957 I attended the first meeting of the Old People's Welfare Council, sponsored by Rotary, later to become the Queensland Council on the Ageing, and became a foundation member. I was Vice President for a number of years and became President in 1959, a position which I held until 1962. During this time the first issue of the magazine "Later Years" was published. This is still being published. Whilst holding the position of Queensland President I was also a Vice President of the Australian Old People's Council, and attended the annual meeting in Melbourne each year. At present I am a Vice President of the Qld. Council on the Ageing and as such attend meetings of the Pre-Retirement Committee and Education and Research Committee, also of any other sub-committees formed. *In 1982 I was appointed a Life Member of the Council.*

For a few years, with my husband, I delivered Meals on Wheels, but he has another helper now as I have a meeting on that day.

I became Secretary of the Church of Christ Historical Committee in 1972 and still hold this position. Have been Organiser of the League of 500 from 1968 until 1978, and as such was on Conference Executive 1968 to 1975 and on the Property Committee 1975 to 1978. In 1973 I was made a Life/<sup>Vice</sup> President of the Women's Conference (now named Qld. Christian Women's Fellowship). In 1977 I received the Queen's Jubilee Medal, with ~~hundreds of~~ <sup>two</sup> others who had spent a busy life such as I had.

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*A few years ago I was invited to give a lecture to a group of Nurses at the Princess Alexandra Hospital who were taking a further course in connection with the care of the Aged. This was in 1983 + again in 1984*

## FOREWORD



Mrs. E. W. POTTER, President National Council of Women of Queensland since 1958-1957, Vice-President Old People's Welfare Council, Mothercraft Association and United Nations World Refugee Appeal Committee. Representative of National Council on English Speaking Union. Member of Queensland Health Education Council. Past President Women's Inter-Church Council. Past Australian President Church of Christ Women's Conference. Past Queensland President Church of Christ Women's Conference.

AS President since 1956, it gives me very great pleasure that we are publishing a history of the National Council of Women of Queensland.

As we look back we see a long and honourable record of service. The history brings before us the fact that women are playing an increasing part in the community life of our State, and that the Objects of the Council are being effectively upheld, namely:

1. To unite Associations and Societies of women, or of men and women, into an organisation for mutual counsel and co-operation.

2. To advance the interests of humanity, and to confer on questions relating to the welfare of the family, State and Commonwealth.

3. To join with the National Council of Women of the other Australian States and of Canberra to form the Australian National Council of Women which, in turn, is a member of the International Council of Women.

Anything which the National Council of Women is to achieve in the years that lie ahead will be achieved, not only through the efforts of generations which will follow, but also through the unselfish work of their predecessors.

Let us look forward optimistically to the future and to a great expansion of the National Council of Women, maintaining and improving the status of women and of family life in general, for on the unity of the family depends the strength of the Nation.

May women through their voluntary organisations, and individually, make an increasingly valuable contribution to the welfare of our country.

*Dorothy Potter*