

Helen Wily's Obituary

Helen Wily, a long time member of the Canterbury Branch died during the weekend 12-13 September 2009.

Helen joined the branch in 1953. She was Convener of Public Affairs during the 1970s for several years. This involved monthly meetings. At the AGM in 1978 she was elected President of the branch and remained in that position until 1980. She was then Immediate Past President and our representative on the CORSO committee.

Helen attended several conferences during her time as a member of the branch committee. These included conferences at Hamilton in 1979 and Auckland in 1982, as well as the IFUW Conference in Vancouver in 1980. The IFUW Conference of 1986 was first mentioned in branch newsletters in 1980 when a case was presented at the Vancouver Conference to have it in New Zealand. Eventually it was decided that Christchurch would be the ideal place to hold it.

When nominations were called for members of the NZFUW National Executive for the period of 1982-1985 Helen was nominated as Vice President. During the period that she was V-P, she undertook the role of Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 1986 IFUW Conference.

Helen was a superb person to have as the chair of the LAC. She and her team took on a huge task organising all the details of the conference on behalf of the IFUW staff in Geneva. This involved booking all the facilities and accommodation at the University of Canterbury. She also organised with great success staff to "man" the information desk at the Students' Union building, people to help with the smooth running of the meetings, transport for arriving delegates, help with their luggage (strong high school boys), goodies and flowers in rooms, hostesses to live in at the hostels, extra heaters and blankets when the hostels proved cold for the Northern Hemisphere participants, entertainment for NZ Night, trips for Away Day, photography, conference dinner and entertainment, home hospitality, some husbands to drive minibuses which were "on tap" throughout the conference and so on and so on. Helen was unflappable and was very particular that all delegates and visitors should have a memorable conference.

She and several others formed an editorial committee to put together a book during our time as National Executive. Called "Where has all the learning gone? Studies of NZ graduate women and work" (1985); this book was given to all the attendees at the International Conference in 1986.

She received many accolades after the conference and many years later people still were talking about the great conference and friendliness in Christchurch.

This writer has strong memories of attending a new members' morning tea at Helen's house and receiving a very charming, warm welcome to the branch.

Helen was made Member Emerita after the conference and also Honoured Member of the branch.

Joan Earl.