

Lady Joyce Black

Lady (Joyce) Black, founding member of the Chancellor's Committee, was made an Honorary Fellow of the University, receiving the award from her husband, the Chancellor, Sir Hermann Black, at a conferring ceremony on Saturday 1 March 1986.



Lady Black, the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor Professor John Ward, *photo, The Gazette, June 1986, University Archives.*



Lady Black with her husband the Chancellor Sir Hermann Black in 1986, *photo, University Archives.*



The Chancellor with Lady Black after the ceremony, *photo, The University of Sydney News, 11 March 1986, University Archives.*

Report

Honorary Fellowships, which were instituted in 1985, are given to those people who have 'conspicuously and continually supported the welfare and interests of the University'.

Lady Black's immediate reaction, however, was that she did not deserve the award. 'Really there are far more deserving people than me around,' she told the News.

The first Lady Black knew of the award was a letter addressed to her on Sir Hermann's desk sitting with other University mail for him to sign.

'He gave it to me saying you might as well have this now rather than bothering to post it to you,' Lady Black said. 'I nearly had a stroke on the spot when I read it.'

As to the award ceremony: 'It was a good chance for friends and relatives to see Hermann in action during a graduation,' she said, 'but I was knocking at the knees.'

'I told Hermann before the ceremony that he wasn't to say anything that would make me cry.' There was, however, a tear quickly wiped away at the moment of presentation.

Arts student in 1936

Lady Black's association with the University of Sydney goes back to 1936 when she enrolled as Joyce Ritchie, in Arts. She would have preferred to study music but there was then no music course on offer.

Music has always been Lady Black's great love and she gave her first public performance on the organ in the Great Hall while still a student. Indeed she has played the organ at many a graduation ceremony.

While studying Arts, majoring in English and Latin, Lady Black also took up part-time studies at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music. She studied the organ with the University organist of the day, Mr G Faunce Allman, later Dr Allman. In 1938 she also took up the study of the University Carillon with Mr John Gordon (the University carillonist since 1944), and was made an assistant honorary carillonist.

Awarded two prestigious musical scholarships, Lady Black had a promising recital career before her, but it was abruptly cut off by World War II. Although she describes her dream of being a recitalist as probably a 'vain' one, the many reviews of her performances suggest otherwise. And, in 1939, Marcel Dupre, then described as the 'greatest living organist', was helping her map out such a career.

Love of the cello

With the war a scholarship to the Royal College of Organists in London was postponed - it took a year for the letter of notification to arrive and travel was difficult, Lady Black said. And, by 1948 she had fallen in love with the cello.

During this time Lady Black continued her association with the University having picked up secretarial skills, much to the disgust of her organ teacher Dr Allman, and went to work in the University's Department of Economics.

Her love of music continued as she arranged bi-weekly recitals of recorded music on the University's gramophone and studied the cello with Mr Jascha Gopinko, a famous teacher of stringed instruments who taught many people in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

'If I could have my time over again, I would have started the cello much earlier,' Lady Black said. She continued to play the cello for many years as part of a small string quartet.

Lady Black has also performed on the organ in the Town Hall. Many years ago Sir Hermann, as a surprise birthday present, arranged for her to play the organ which was hired out to 'approved persons only' for the princely sum of ten shillings an hour.

Bach in the Town Hall

Her playing stopped the hall cleaners, buckets in hand, in their tracks and, according to all reports, Lady Black finished her performance with a thunderous passage from her beloved Bach - and was soundly applauded by the appreciative staff.

Since 1970, Lady Black's music has taken second place to her dedication to the University. She is a foundation member of the Committee of the Arts Association, member of the Australian Federation of University Women, the University Settlement and many other University groups, somehow finding time also to be a part of the South Sydney Meals on Wheels team.

Perhaps her greatest contribution has been to the Chancellor's Committee, set up as the result of an initiative of Sir Hermann's. It started off in 1977 with \$200 raised from a lunch put on by the committee for school children visiting the University. It is estimated that the funds raised by the committee have now exceeded \$200,000.

Since Sir Hermann became Chancellor in 1970 and she became, in his words, 'the other half of the Chancellor', University functions have been an important part of Lady Black's life. She and the Chancellor would attend, on average, three or four a week.

'But I consider it a privilege. I love this University and I have learnt so much about it and met so many nice people,' Lady Black said. 'I genuinely enjoy all the graduation ceremonies and anything I have done for the University, if I have done anything at all, has been a sheer joy.'

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