

## Vale Barbara Ashbolt 18 April, 1926 - 15 August, 2010

*By Helen Barry*

Barbara was born on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1926. She lived her early years in Caulfield and attend MacRobertson Girls' High School. Barbara commenced duty at the CSIRO Division of Forest Products on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1950. She was appointed as the Typist in Charge of the typing pool, which consisted of Barbara and two typists. The Division was located at 69 Yarra Bank Road, South Melbourne, 3207 (where the casino is now housed) overlooking the Yarra River. The 'pool' was responsible for typing all letters, documents and papers for the Division's general staff. Most of the Heads of the research sections had their own PA.

Barbara was a fair but strict typist in charge. She always read over letters typed by her staff and if she found a mistake would draw it to their attention. Instead of criticising or being heavy handed she would comment "well if you are happy for your work to go out like that ....." and inevitably her assistants would re-do their work thus maintaining the high standard of the typing pool. Some of the 'girls' she trained were Kay Wale, Raelene Breadmore, Helen Barry, Claudia Appleton and many more.

As time went on the typing pool ceased to exist. In the 1970's the Division was restructured; some staff were appointed to the Division of Building Research at Highett and others to the Division of Chemical Engineering. Barbara remained at South Melbourne as Chemical Engineering staff and was Personal Assistant to the Chief, Don Weiss. She eventually moved to Clayton where she was Personal Assistant to Warren Hewertson, the Chief of the Division of Forest Products.

In the early 1950's Barbara took extended leave and visited her brother, Allan Ashbolt, and his family in the US. Allan was an ABC broadcaster and journalist, the ABC's first North America correspondent (1959) and one of the first executive producers of the Four Corners program. He was known for his belief that the ABC should promote free speech and controversial political content.

Barbara had strong views, both politically and social. In 1970 she marched with her family in the Melbourne Moratorium led by Member of Parliament Jim Cairns against the Vietnam War. Barbara was a staunch and supportive defender of her staff and brought to management's attention any unfair or wrong decision.

She was a cricket lover and was nowhere to be seen once the test matches started in the summer.

Barbara was one of the original 50 members of the CSIRO Cooperative Credit Society which commenced in 1957 and at the end of the first year there were 240 members, Forest Products members being very supportive in the formative years.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1986 Barbara retired from CSIRO to a house she had built in Somers. She had spent many happy holidays there and had a group of friends who also lived there.

However, in later years and after spending almost 20 years in Somers, her niece, Jenny Porteous and her family took Barbara back with her to the Blue Mountains. Barbara lived independently in her own house in the Blue Mountains until recently when she went into care. Despite being in care, she maintained good health and died last Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> August sitting at the dinner table.

Barbara's departure brings back many happy memories of life in the Division of Forest Products and marks the end of a special era.