

Diana (Hodgkinson) Page '39

(1922 - 2009)



Diana was born on 19 November 1922 and graduated from Kambala in 1939, where she earned the roles Head Prefect and Dux of the School. She also excelled in sport. On the advice of her history teacher Freda Skinner, Diana applied for the diplomatic cadetship, as established by Dr. Herbert Evatt. In 1943 she was selected from a field of more than 1,500 applicants, as one of Australia's first twelve diplomatic cadets. Diana was one of three females selected and the group who became known as "Dr. Evatt's quiz kids".

The appointment of three females into a male-dominated field prompted a minor controversy in wartime Australia. Despite the scarcity of male civilians to take up diplomacy, critics warned that it was a waste of money to train women who inevitably would marry and have to leave the service. However, Diana was of independent mind and gender blind, pushed through the critics and became Australia's first female diplomat when she was posted to New York as a Vice Consul. She worked under Dr. Evatt whilst he was President of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

In 1947 she married Colonel David Page who had been chief of publicity and psychological warfare for the US Army under General Omar Bradley. The family had five children and moved back to Australia in 1966. Her daughters Carolyn Page '68 and Susan Page '79 are Kambala Old Girls. Later in life she obtained a degree in librarianship and became a lecturer in Children's Literature at the University of Canberra, and an Australian Children's Book of the Year judge. She had a particular love for the pre-war Billabong series by Mary Grant Bruce. In 2006, Diana was an invited speaker at the 40th anniversary of the "lifting of the marriage bar", for Australian women public servants. She passed away on 26 July 2009.