

Dr. Piaggio, J.M. – OAM Nomination 23/08/93 from Ken Piaggio

Dr. Jean Piaggio continues in full time private practice, after 50 years as a doctor. She maintains her vocational registration by regularly upgrading her knowledge and skills. She will have been living in the city of Bundaberg 40 years in 1994. For over 30 of those years she has devoted herself tirelessly to a number of community projects. She has fitted her projects around her busy full time practice and raising her family - although she did wait until 1961 when her sons were almost in their teens.

Medically, she has had an interesting career. She started her course at university at the young age of 16 years. She was graduated at age 21 years and was a Flight Lieutenant in the RAAF Reserve List until 1956. She was the first civilian doctor to use Penicillin in Australia. She worked as a country locum in N.S.W. and Queensland, having to perform both the anaesthetic and the operation in the pioneering way of that time. When she came to Bundaberg in 1954 she was the first woman in full time practice. After being an assistant in a practice in Bundaberg for six years, she became a solo practitioner in 1961. She learned acupuncture in 1981. In 1952 she paid ten pounds and agreed to act as a guarantor to the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia. She became a foundation member of M.B.F. She read a paper "How Fashion has affected Women's Health" in 1972 at a conference on Women's Health convened by Gough Whitlam and Queensland University. She has lectured to nurses, schools, community groups, local medical groups and the St. John's Ambulance. She has conducted free Pap Smear clinics, including one especially for Aboriginal women, and a bowel cancer detection clinic.

Her community work has been extensive and varied, but essentially it has been motivated by a desire to correct the inequities and disadvantages faced by different groups in society. Although she will give credit to the teams of people she has worked with, it is really her inspirational energy, her tenacity and her cajoling that has been the motivational forces behind the projects she has initiated.

In the early years, in the areas of both her medical and community work, she found that being a woman made it more difficult to have her ideas taken seriously. It was her tenacity, patience and persuasiveness which ultimately helped her overcome these difficulties. She also had to work the system. In the early years she would engineer for a man to be the chairman or president to raise that committee's credibility. It was always an extra consideration on top of all the other difficulties of doing community work.

