

REMARKABLE OD

Howard Cooke (1972G) made contact with the OD office recently, to share his enthusiasm about the wonderful role that women has played in the long history of Bishops. His enthusiasm was encouraged by reading the wonderful book on **Sophie Gray** called *The Bishop's Lady*, by Thelma Gutsche (Timmins 1970).

In the OD Office is a picture hanging of the Bishops class of 1910. Visitors will notice quite a few ladies in the class. It is quite a significant picture, because it was the last year that Bishops still offered University classes.



Sitting in the front row is a young lady called **Marie Mellish (1909-10) (later Mrs Grant)**, and this is the citation that she received on being awarded a Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from the University of Cape Town on 21st June 1974:

“Mrs Grant is a South African of a long and splendid tradition that has in its ranks the women such as Florence Nightingale, Emmeline Pankhurst, and nearer home, Olive Schreiner, **Bertha Solomon (1907-1910)** and Margaret Ballinger.

She has, of course, been a redoubtable fighter for women's rights. Locally, she has been President of the Cape Town branch of the National Council for Women; nationally, she has been their Vice-President, acting as President, and Life Vice-President; internationally, she has represented South Africa on the International Council of Women, not only as a member and vice-convenor of the standing committee for education, but as a member of the standing committee for suffrage and equal citizenship.

Mrs Grant has not been preoccupied with the injustice of one sect or one section. Her horizon has been the world. She has made it her business to fight wrong and right wrong wherever she can.

The Institute of Race Relations has known her as a member of its Council and its Executive Committee, and as Chairman of its Cape Western Region. She is a foundation member and patron of the Civil Rights League, and is a member of the Black Sash. During the Second World War she was Chairman of the Red Cross Auxiliary Hospitals.

She served for 18 years on the University Council. She devoted herself to the progress of the University with an unselfish tenacity, an experienced wisdom that are and will be remembered as an inspiration.

Mrs Grant is a South African at her best. But if she is not Scots by blood or Scots by marriage she is Scots by nature, for to her education is a passion. She is Chairman of the Olive Schreiner Scholarship Committee. Apart from what she has done for education through the National Council for Women, she is a foundation member and

past President of the South African Association of University Women, and was the first editor of its publication *The Blue Stocking*.

In a sentence, Mrs Grant is a women who has taken the world to her heart. That is why we have taken her to ours.”

Marie Grant’s obituary in the December 1976 DC Magazine records:

“Marie Lydia Grant (nee Mellish) died at her home in Rondebosch on the 7th July, 1983, at the age of 93. Marie who matriculated at Rustenburg, was at Bishops from 1908 to 1910 as one of fifteen women students who attended University classes at Bishops during the period 1906 to 1910. She obtained her Intermediate B.A. at Bishops, Her B.A. (Honours) at the South African College after Bishops discontinued its University classes in 1910. She later obtained her M.A. in Philosophy in 1916 and served on the U.C.T. Council for eighteen years. In 1974 she was awarded the degree of Doctor of Law (Honoris Causa) by U.C.T. Her late husband, Professor W.F. Grant, was for many years professor of Education at U.C.T. Marie, or ‘Ma’ as she was affectionately called by students when she was in charge of the Women’s residence at U.C.T. was not only steeped in education, but also a pioneer campaigner for civil and women’s rights in South Africa. She however still found time to be one of the earliest members of the Mountain Club and to take an active interest in sport generally.”

Fighting for justice, contributing to the war effort, serving her community – what an OD!

