

# **Beryl Nashar**

## **Background and Family History**

Beryl Nashar was born in Maryville, Newcastle in 1923. Nashar grew up during The Great Depression and was the eldest of four children. Nashar credits her mother as having a large influence on herself and her siblings, and noted her mother would “go without” in order to ensure her children had all they needed. Nashar was also very proud of her father, discussing his rise from a fitter and turner to a servicing engineer. Similarly, Nashar was proud of the achievements of her siblings, and was conscious of the three siblings following her, also requiring higher education. At the end of Nashar’s school days she completed the leaving certificate twice so she could win her way, receiving a Sydney University Exhibition and Teachers College Scholarship to help ease the financial burden on her family. Nashar met her Egyptian husband Ali in Cambridge, and they were married in 1952. In the attached interview (at approximately 29.30 – 31.00) Nashar discusses her husband’s links with the Revolutionary Council within Egypt, and with Gamal Abdel Nasser, who led the overthrow of King Farouk and went on to become the second president of Egypt.

## **Achievements**

Throughout her academic career Nashar achieved a large number of firsts, she was the first woman in Australia to win a Rotary Foundation Fellowship (which she took in Cambridge), and only the third Australian to receive the fellowship overall. Nashar topped her class in geology for each year of her undergraduate degree at the University of Sydney. Nashar was awarded First Class honors and also won the University Medal in Geology. In 1952 Nashar received the first Australian PhD in geology (from the University of Tasmania). Another achievement people may not be aware of is that Nashar had her portrait painted by Phil Stone, and this portrait was chosen for hanging in the Archibald Exhibition. In 1972, Nashar was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. In International Women’s Year in 1975, Nashar was presented with the Woman of the Year Award by the New South Wales branch of the United Nations Association.

## **University of Newcastle**

Nashar joined Newcastle University College in 1955, and when the University of Newcastle was established in 1965 Nashar became the Foundation Professor of Geology. Nashar became Australia's first female Dean of Science as well as the first woman to hold a Chair of Geology, upon her appointment in 1965.

## **Dedication to Teaching and Students**

In 1948 Nashar had a difficult decision to make: whether to become a school teacher or a geologist. Nashar completed her DipEd, and received a position teaching at Hunter Girl's High School in Newcastle. However, Nashar had only been teaching for one day when she received a telegram offering her a position at the University of Tasmania. Nashar states that she accepted the position because she "couldn't stand either playground duty or signing in and signing off each day." Although, it is important to note, Nashar's background in education was not wasted. The Australian Academy of Science stated that "Professor Nashar's expertise in educational matters was used by her university, local expert boards and committees, and governments." Nashar did not have ambitions for ever becoming a professor, instead, her ambition was to be "a good lecturer" and she enjoyed both "teaching and research." In the attached oral history Nashar discusses how proud she was of her graduates at the University of Newcastle, including how well they presented themselves. In addition, Nashar discussed how she always received positive feedback regarding these students and how they had been accepted and done well in their careers. Nashar also noted the good rapport between staff and students (Nashar relates a funny story about a staff member lending students ties and a member of staff swapping shoes with a student, for an interview at approximately 1.44-1.45). Similarly, Nashar describes the positive relationship between mature age students and younger students.

## **Community Involvement**

From the 1950's Nashar began to develop numerous activities outside of her role at the Newcastle University College. For instance, Nashar became involved with the Royal Newcastle Hospital Family Care and Volunteer Group, as well as being on the Board of Directors for the Royal Newcastle Hospital. Nashar also participated as an external member on the Committee of Review for the New South Wales Institute of Technology. Nashar was president of the Newcastle Business and Professional Women's club from 1958 – 1961, and

in 1968 as well. Also, Nashar was the National President of the Australian Federation from 1964 – 1966, and the International President from 1974 – 1977. The 1955 Newcastle/Hunter Valley Flood prompted the establishment of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation, Nashar assisted with this and was invited to join its Advisory Panel. Likewise, Nashar played an important role in the Hunter Valley Research Foundation’s flood mitigation investigations by testing samples of sand and rock from the Hunter Valley to ascertain the course and behavior of the Hunter River throughout its history. In addition, Nashar resided on the Secondary Schools Board from 1970 – 1975 and was a member of the Higher Education Academic Committee from 1982 – 1987.

### **Advocating for Women**

Throughout her academic and professional career Nashar advocated for women. Nashar entered the workforce at a time when there were limited opportunities for women in the public sphere. In this period, not many women attended university and women were under represented within academia. In the attached interview Nashar discusses women only receiving 80-85 percent of a man’s salary, nothing that she was one of the few women who was able to work hard receive equal pay (in 1958). Nashar also believed women had to work twice as hard as men. Nashar believed in “education for a role in life, not just for a job” and wanted women to receive adequate education and training to allow them to fully participate in the workforce, as she believed Australia could not afford to lose women’s potential workforce.

### **The University of Newcastle Library holds the following texts written by Professor Nashar:**

- The first twenty five years in Department of Geology, Newcastle University College and the University of Newcastle;
- Man's island in space (co-authored with Colin Keay);
- Geology of the Sydney Basin;
- The geology of the Hunter Valley; and
- Geology syllabus for Forms V and VI : teaching notes / prepared by Professor B. Nashar and staff of the University of Newcastle.

## References

This information has been obtained from the attached interview with Beryl Nashar as well as the following sources:

Australian Academy of science. *Interviews with Australian Scientists: Professor Beryl Nashar (1923 – 2012), Geologist*. Accessed February 16, 2017.

<https://www.science.org.au/learning/general-audience/history/interviews-australian-scientists/professor-beryl-nashar-1923-2012>

Rigney, Sam. "Obituary: Beryl Nashar." *Newcastle Herald*, May 13, 2012.

<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/116080/obituary-beryl-nashar/>

n.a. "Professor Beryl Nashar." *The Gazette: The University of Newcastle*, June 1969.

[https://downloads.newcastle.edu.au/library/cultural%20collections/pdf/gazette\\_vol-3\\_no-1\\_june1969.pdf](https://downloads.newcastle.edu.au/library/cultural%20collections/pdf/gazette_vol-3_no-1_june1969.pdf)

n.a. "Women Are Own Worst Enemy, Says Professor." *The West Australian*, January 19, 1966.

n.a. "Woman Geologist Aids Flood Research." n.p.,n.d.