

From The Bulletin of the APS (InPsych) December 1993.

Mary Nixon –Hon FAPS

By Frank Naylor FAPS

Mary Nixon was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1979. This was a belated recognition of her splendid contributions to Australian psychology and the Australian Psychological Society, contributions which have continued, and testify to her quiet effectiveness as a teacher, researcher, administrator, and publicist in and for the science and the profession. Mary Nixon is a true all-rounder in psychology who has been an unassuming mentor of students, colleagues, and the profession for close on forty years.

Mary made early scientific contributions in her research in visual perception at the University of Sydney. Following a BA with first class honours she received a Master of Arts with first class honours for her thesis: *Perceived shape and slant: The relationship examined by a method of judgements*. From 1958 she was a Senior Tutor and then a Lecturer in Psychology at Sydney. At the same time she was Honorary Secretary of the Australian Overseas Branch of the British Psychological Society: the beginning of what was to be a continuing commitment to the Society and the profession.

In the mid-1960s Mary was a Senior Research Officer at ACER, and during that time she commenced her doctorate at the University of Melbourne. Her thesis, *The development of classification skills in young children*, was published as a book in 1971, by which time she was well established as a Senior Lecturer in Psychology in the Faculty of Education at Monash. For many years she served as elected Head of the Psychological Studies Area in the Faculty. This was a period of burgeoning research with colleagues and graduate students into television and its effects on children. Like all her research it carried the hallmarks of intellectual and methodological rigour which are manifestly so central to Mary's academic values.

These values were also exemplified in her approach to the profession. Clearly her interests were not confined to laboratory-inspired problems. Her many publications on professional issues including confidentiality, report-writing, supervision, practice, and children's rights indicate the range of her interests and the outstanding quality of her contributions to the understanding of those issues. The international status of the profession in Australia owes a great deal to Mary's tireless dedication. In her formal retirement she has published invited papers on international issues in *Psychological Science* and *School Psychology International*; and her 1990 landmark paper in the *American Psychologist*, entitled 'Professional training in psychology: Quest for international standards', has begun the debate on the profession's future.

Important as these contributions are, they have not exhausted the time and energy she has devoted to psychology. She was the first woman President of the Society (1971-72), prior to which she was the Chairperson of the Committee on Ethical and Professional Standards. Since her presidency she has chaired the Membership Committee and convened or been a member of many other Society committees and working parties. She was and remains one of the Society's most important sources of counsel and advice.

Mary Creighton Nixon will grace the status of Honorary Fellow of the Society.