



OBITUARY

EVELYN GREENBLAT (nee Fisher)

Born Glasgow, Scotland, 4 August 1946

Died Melbourne, 13 June 1996, aged 49

From August 1990 until January 1996 when she retired on grounds of ill health, Evelyn Greenblat was a valued member of the research staff of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Evelyn's career in social research spanned a total of 27 years, the major part of which was spent at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne where, between 1969 and 1985, she had responsibility for a longitudinal study of the relationships between socio-economic background and tertiary level students' academic performance.

At the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Evelyn worked initially with Dr Gay Ochiltree on the Institute's study of early childhood. Her work resulted in two significant monographs in the Institute's *Early Childhood Study* series, both co-authored with Ochiltree; Evelyn was senior author of

The use and choice of child care, published in 1993. During her career at the Institute Evelyn also contributed to the *Australian Living Standards Study*, the *Australian Family Formation Project*, and the *Work and Family Life Project*; these contributions, along with her collaboration with Ochiltree, are reflected in Evelyn's co-authorship of several papers published in *Family Matters* in recent years.

Evelyn Greenblat grew up and was educated in Scotland. I first met her at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow where we were both psychology undergraduates in the late 1960s. I came to know and respect her as an earnest, able student with a profound respect for knowledge, a desire for understanding and a commitment to excellence in her work, traits which were amply evident throughout her later career. But she was also possessed of a delightful sense of

fun and a contagious zest for living. Student life – outside of class – was rarely dull when Evelyn was present.

Evelyn was one of the brightest students in her year and graduated in 1967 with a good degree in psychology and sociology. Shortly afterwards she emigrated to this country with her Australian husband Hymie Greenblat. They had met when Hymie visited Glasgow while Evelyn was still an undergraduate. It was to be love at first sight! Accordingly, Hymie's stay turned out to be longer than he originally intended, his return to Australia being postponed until Evelyn's graduation and their subsequent marriage.

It was a matter of great personal delight to me, on being appointed Director of the Institute early in 1994, to discover that my fellow student and friend of undergraduate days was a member of my new staff! I had met Evelyn only once previously during the intervening years, on a visit to Melbourne in 1978. Though a little more mature in years, outwardly Evelyn had changed but little. The same commitment to high standards in her work was much in evidence; also, not far beneath was the same twinkling spirit of old.

Over the later years of her life Evelyn experienced much ill health and in November 1994 was diagnosed as suffering

from cancer of the liver. On learning of the diagnosis Evelyn determined to put up the best possible fight for life that she could. In the course of her struggle, she drew upon enormous resources of inner courage and strength and, with Hymie's support, endured more than a year of an almost constant succession of unpleasant and debilitating surgical and chemical interventions.

During periods of remission from symptoms Evelyn returned to her work at the Institute. There, her quiet courage and demeanour, her commitment to getting on with her life and with her job drew the admiration of her colleagues. She was a model for all of us of how to behave in adversity.

Evelyn never lost her sense of optimism, evident still in the speech she made at the farewell lunch in her honour held at the Institute a few months ago. That was a delightful occasion of which we all have fond memories.

Evelyn Greenblat died peacefully late on the evening of Thursday 13 June 1996 with her husband Hymie at her side. Courageous to the end, she will be sadly missed by her colleagues at the Institute.

Harry McGurk