

ZORA BRENDA DEVITT NEE PITT

5/11/1896-28/9/1952

2nd Daughter of Edwin Samuel Pitt and Cecilia Mary Thompson



Zora was born in the family store/postoffice/home in the suburb of Goodna. Her father Edwin had purchased the General Store from Joseph Broad his brother-in-law. Apart from general goods he also baked fresh foodstuffs to sell and his wife Cecilia operated the local post office in a section of the store.

They lived in the upper floor of the store. After the 1893 flood they moved the store to a better location in Goodna and then converted it into a hotel known as Pitt's Hotel Cecil.

Edwin was a third generation hotelier. His father Charles Pitt JP had a hotel in 1850 when he first came to Ipswich and his grandfather Samuel Pitt had both the Sir William Pitt Hotel and the Black Boy Tavern in Sydney in the 1830s-1840s. His maternal grandfather Thomas Grenier had the popular Grenier's Inn in South Brisbane. Edwin later became a JP like his father and both sat as magistrates in the area along with Joseph Broad. Edwin was an active supporter of the community in sports as well. Interestingly Zora became the licensee of the Hotel Cecil in 1917.

Zora grew up in an atmosphere that involved horses. Her mother Cecilia was a well-known horsewoman who competed regularly and rode to the hounds as well. Zora's father Edwin owned racehorses and by her teens she had become an accomplished rider.

One of the regular customers and a great friend of the Pitt family was J. A. Connors known as 'The Stray Leaf' and a prolific writer of poetry in the manner of Banjo Paterson. He was a great influence on the young Zora and there are records (held by the family) of poems written by her and J. A. Connors and poems written about her by J. A. Connors. These books also contain details of early 1900s racewinners, jockey's names, the racecolours of various owners as well as the aforementioned original poetry by both herself and J A Connors The records also show that around this time she began using her second name Brenda rather than Zora.



An early photo¹ outside her parent's hotel shows her at 13 sitting on a horse in a position more like a jockey than the riders surrounding her and a recent find has her recorded as best under 14 rider at the Rosewood Show in 1911.



A short few years later she was awarded best woman rider amongst other awards at what is now known as the RNA show.

Zora rode both sidesaddle and astride over jumps and on the flat with the same aplomb. It would have been a wonderful sight with flaming red hair down to her waist. It was at this event that she met a young man Michael Joseph Devitt, the son of Irish immigrants living in Warwick. The Devitts were

involved as owners, trainers and riders in horseracing in the Warwick area and were also survivors of the wreck of the Dacca on Daedalus Reef in the Red Sea.



Michael was also the champion male rider at the event when they met and it seems to have been a perfect match and they were married shortly after.

Michael and Zora were married in 1918 and had a son Francis Pitt Devitt and a daughter Brenda Pitt Devitt. Zora had a further daughter Bernice later.

After her husband Michael passed away Zora and her children lived in a house built on a subdivision of her parents' property in Gibbs Street Kelvin Grove and when Brenda married and had her first child, moved in with them to assist in the early years of child rearing. Zora moved into her own home in Dublin Street Clayfield and sadly died at the young age of 55 in Canossa Hospital on Gregory Terrace Spring Hill. She never knew her grand-daughters and they missed the chance of knowing a wonderful and caring grandmother. Her experience and knowledge of horseflesh which she passed on to her daughter Brenda and her son-in-law proved invaluable as they were deeply involved in the horseracing game and many were the contacts she provided that are so important to a beginner in horseracing. Zora a stylish dresser herself made sure her daughter had all the social graces and introduced her to the wonders of the theatre and good music taking her to see Pavlova at her peak and various other great performers of the time.



Zora on the steps of her Gibbs Street home in Kelvin Grove

¹ See photos under Pitt Family in the Grave List in this website