

A Notable Woman - Monica Bainter



Monica Bainter made headlines throughout her career as an advocate for nuclear power. Bainter's stance on the issue of alternative energy often made her a controversial figure in the state and national political scene.

When Governor Lee Dreyfus nominated her to serve on the Public Service Commission, consumer advocate Ralph Nader came to the state to lobby against her appointment. Bainter was later forced to withdraw her candidacy.

The controversy came at the end of Bainter's tenure as a teacher and sparked a second career for her

consultant on energy matters. Selected for the Women in Energy Award by the Atomic Industrial Forum, Bainter became a national lecturer and contributor for Wisconsin Public Radio.

Bainter was one of 90 notable state women profiled in the book "Wisconsin Women: A Gifted Heritage," published in the early 1980's by the American Association of University Women.

Her academic and professional life was full of groundbreaking events. As a doctoral student at University of Wisconsin-Madison, Bainter participated in the Manhattan Project that produced the Atomic Bomb. She also received special training in radiation measurement at the Mayo Clinic. As an educator, Bainter was the only female high school principal in Wisconsin when she served in that role at New Richmond.

During her 33-year career at UWSP, Bainter served as chair of the physics department for 13 years. Her appointment was especially significant at that time because Bainter was the only woman heading a physics program in any public college or university in the country.

In her personal life, Bainter was active building and "fixing things." She built one of her first television sets from a kit.

Following a heart attack in 1988, Bainter died at the age of 78 in Sun City West, Ariz. She bequeathed her entire estate of nearly three-quarters of a million dollars to charity.