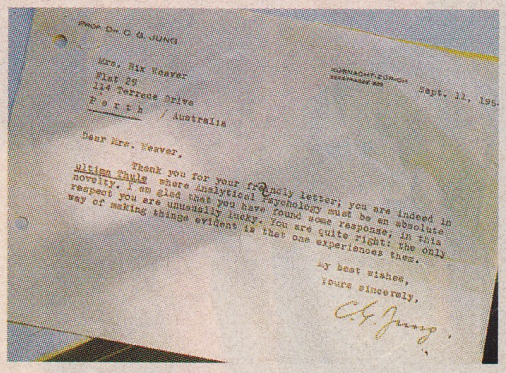
Irene Rix Weaver was one of life's high achievers — but her main claim to fame, celebrated this week, is as the person who brought Carl Jung to Australia. HELEN CROMPTON reports.

A leading spirit


PROF. DR. C. G. JUNG

Mrs. Rix Weaver
Flat 29
114 Terrace Drive
Perth / Australia

Sept. 11, 195

Dear Mrs. Weaver,

Thank you for your friendly letter; you are indeed in Ultima Thule where Analytical Psychology must be an absolute novelty. I am glad that you have found some response; in this respect you are unusually lucky. You are quite right: the only way of making things evident is that one experiences them.

My best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

C. G. Jung

Barbara Brackley (above left) with a portrait of her mother, Irene Rix Weaver; and the letter written by Jung to Rix Weaver (above).
PICTURES: FRANCES ANDRIJICH

WHEN Irene Rix Weaver died, her hospital room's night light went out and the clock beneath her bed stopped. She was 87 and had not been afraid to die; she saw death as the drawing together of two worlds where the human being was only a bridge. In her last three months she no longer asked doctors to keep her alive: she felt her work was done.

It is probably inevitable that residents of the world's most isolated city — Perth — look outside for figures of great influence. Yet nine years ago when the Cottesloe-born Rix Weaver died, people from around the world acknowledged the contribution made by a woman who refused to be bound by convention or her sex.

"It is important that women do not simply exist until they are faced with a hollow in their lives," she had said. "They should plan. Children prefer to see a mother who has a life and interests of her own rather than demanding that they visit her on Sundays."

Rix Weaver planned well, lived fully and pursued a surprising number of interests. She made furniture, hats and clothes, she was a recognised graphologist (handwriting analyst), she sang and danced, designed gardens and a house for her bedridden mother. She painted, wrote novels and psychological texts, studied Aboriginal myths and lectured in Switzerland and America on the same. She was a traveller, adventurer, historical researcher, teacher, student of micro-physics and even showed an interest in water divining — strong enough for her to attend a conference on it in Britain's Bognor Regis. She was also a practical and supportive mother.

She'll go down in history, however, for bringing Carl Jung to Australia.

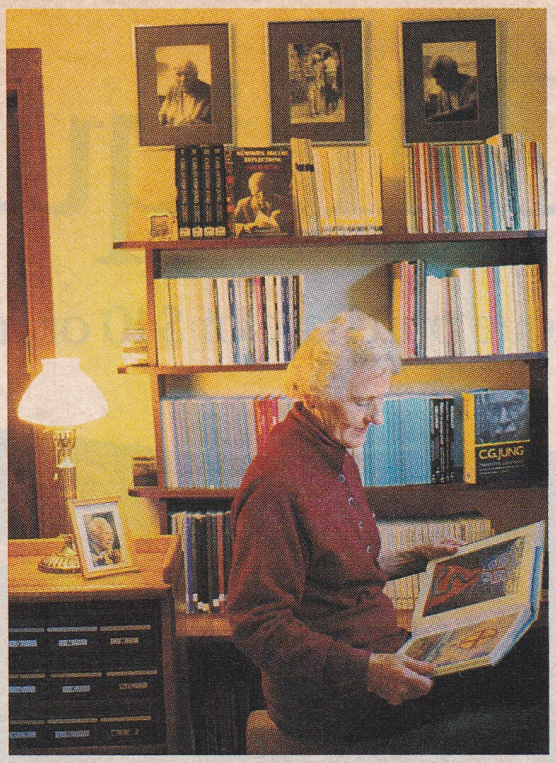
Irene Rix Weaver was the first Australian to study with Jung. She was the first Australian to become a student at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich and the first to be accepted as a member of the International Association for Analytical Psychology. When she wrote to Jung telling him of her intention to set up what was then known as the Analytical Club of WA (she convened the first meeting in 1954 on Jung's birthday - July 26) he wrote back saying: ". . . you are indeed in Ultima Thule where Analytical Psychology must be an absolute novelty. I am glad you have found some response; in this respect you are unusually lucky."

Jung indicates his lack of acceptance at that time. Similarly, a close friend of Rix Weaver's, Muriel Stanley, said after her death: "Of all the places in the world for her to come and be a prophet without honour, Perth would have to be the most isolated and least aware of what she had to offer."

It appears that neither obstacles nor ignorance slowed the energies of Rix Weaver. Because of her "missionary" zeal, her determination to share the work of Jung, WA has a prized Jungian library.

"I think she was a woman before her time. They told her at school that she was a rebel. That she was another Sylvia Pankhurst. She did well at school. She actually won a scholarship to (Perth) Modern School, but her father didn't let her take it — she always had these things that held her up," says →

'Fifty years ago Rix Weaver was a household name. Her novels were broadcast by ABC radio'



Irene Rix Weaver's close friend Olive Mason, vice president and librarian of WA's Jung Society, browses through one of the society's journals.

➜ Barbara Brackley, Rix's only child with whom she shared her Applecross property for her latter 29 years.

What might have "held her up" but for an "indomitable spirit" was ill health. When a young Irene contracted meningitis she wasn't expected to live. As an early teen she suffered acute arthritis — her father made a special chair so she could attend school. At that stage she was told her adult life would be spent in a wheelchair. It wasn't. Later she suffered high blood pressure and a heart condition that provoked doctors for the second time to tell her she would not live — she was in her 50s.

By the end of her life she was crippled by the ever-present arthritis and she was blind: "Though you'd never know it," says Olive Mason, a close friend, vice president and librarian of WA's Jung Society. "She'd always look straight at you when you came into the room. But her blindness was a terrible blow to her."

On Friday a memorial lecture to honour Irene Rix Weaver will be lead by Professor Renos Papadopoulos, a consultant to the United Nations, who co-chairs the Jungian seat at Britain's Essex University.

"Many of our members don't know who Rix is. It's amazing how quickly the memory fades," says Olive Mason as she explains the society plans to hold a similar memorial lecture every two years.

Fifty years ago Rix Weaver was a household name. Her novels, Behold New Holland, New Holland Heritage and Beyond Cooralong, were serialised and broadcast by ABC radio. Behold New Holland was read by teenagers as part of their high school curriculum — chosen for its detailed historic content.

Barbara Brackley says despite publishing success, Rix Weaver had little money — money made by her novels she gave to the war effort. Money she got by selling the house left by her mother, funded her trip Zurich when she was in her 50s. Like lack of good health, she didn't allow her l of money to stop her.

"She came from a long line of str women. She had dogged determination, that's what got her through life. Otherv she would never have survived.

"When I was seven I got polio. The doc said take her home because she hasn't long. My mother turned to Christ Science then. The philosophy is to see p fection, not to see the wounded. I remember learning to walk again. She m garters for my socks but she used to m them both the same size — she would make one smaller even though one leg withered. She saw it as perfect. So my s fell down for a year or so, but gradually limb filled out.

"To be told I would die must have b quite devastating for her. But she was de mined I was going to live and here I an 72. She was an interesting and exciting p son to be around, but she was always v caring and supportive."

It is typical of Rix Weaver's complexity caring that one of the last things she said her daughter was: "Poor Barbie. She ha mother who doesn't know how to die".

"At that time she was ready to die," Brackley. "She was fully aware it was the of her life and I think she was concerned me, though I have never fully underst what she meant by that."

What is clear is that Irene Rix Wea even at the end, concerned herself with "Most of all she encouraged you not to h any fear. She would always say 'Go and d Don't hold back'."

● For details of the memorial lecture by Professor Papadopoulos or a seminar to be l tomorrow phone Aimee Gibson, 9386 5767.