

This Issue Is Dedicated To Elsie Gregory McGill

1905-1980

Elizabeth (Elsie) Muriel Gregory MacGill was born on March 27th, 1905 in Vancouver, B.C. and died on November 4th, 1980 in Cambridge, Mass. Early in what was intended as a brief visit she was found to be critically ill and lay in intensive care at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge for four weeks until her death.

She was the first woman to graduate in electrical engineering from the University of Toronto (1927) and she went on to a master's degree in aeronautical engineering at the University of Michigan (1929), another feminine first. That summer she was stricken with a form of myelitis which endangered her life and left her permanently lamed; her triumph over that catastrophe has for 50 years been the admiration of all who have known her. In 1933 she was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for further aeronautical study, and in 1935 was employed in her profession by Fairchild Aircraft Ltd. at Longueuil, Quebec. In 1938 she became Chief Aeronautical Engineer at the Fort William (Thunder Bay) plant of Canadian Car and Foundry Co. Ltd. and held that post during the plant's very successful wartime production of Hurricane and Hell-diver fighters. After her marriage in 1943 she engaged in consulting practice in Toronto.

Increasingly predominant in the post-war years was her concern for the rights and status of women. She became active and well known in women's organizations throughout Canada, highly valued for her energy and her thoughtful con-



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structive views. She was appointed to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1967) and was a signatory of its Report to the Federal Government in 1970. In 1971 she was named to the Order of Canada and thereafter received Honorary Doctorates from Toronto (1973), Windsor (1976), Queen's and York (1978). At the time of her death she was serving as Chairperson of the Ontario Building Materials Evaluation Commission and had accepted appointment to the Canadian Organizing Committee for the International Year of the Disabled.

Elsie Gregory MacGill, the name by which she has been so widely and affectionately known at every age level, has been described as 'one of the most important individual women in Canada' but this scarcely does her full justice for she was, above all, a perceptive 'person' with intellect, ingenuity and conviction, who pioneered and triumphed alike in the innovative pursuits of both men and women. In her comprehensive career, she

was a 'feminine first' several times over, but she would consider her gender as quite secondary to her innate, perhaps hereditary, sense of obligation to use her talents to serve her community. The breadth of this community is reflected in this further listing — which cannot hope to be exhaustive — of groups and organizations of which Elsie MacGill was a significant part — as member, fellow, officer and/or award recipient:

Engineering Institute of Canada and Branches (1940; Gzowski Medal; 1973; Julian C. Smith Award). Canadian Society for Mechanical Engineering. Committee on Penal Reform for Women. Government of Canada (1967; Centennial Medal). Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs; Toronto B. and P.W. Club (1955; Elsie Gregory MacGill Bursary established). Iota Alpha (Beta Chapter) Honorary Engineering Fraternity. Art Gallery of Ontario. Royal Aeronautical Society. American Society of Women Engineers (Medal and Citation). Ontario Association of Professional Engineers (1979; Gold Medal). Association of Consulting Engineers of Canada. Consulting Engineers of Ontario. Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute. American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Royal Society of Arts. Ontario Committee on the Status of Women. National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Women for Political Action. Soroptimist International of Toronto. International Association of Women Pilots (1975; Amelia Earhart Medal). ☺

Those who wish to participate in an ongoing tribute
are invited to support the 'Elsie Gregory MacGill Commemorative Fund'
from which fitting educational memorials will be established. Donations may be sent to:

Donna J. Haley, Q.C. In Trust

Suite 507, 200 University Avenue, Toronto M5H 3C6

From the Memorial Service held on Wednesday, November 26, 1980,
at Knox College Chapel, University of Toronto.