

Mrs Hilda Richardson 1926 – 2000

Hilda Richardson contributed to Soroptimism and its influence at every level, in her club, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Her great interest in international development matched her professional career.

A graduate of Newnham College, University of Cambridge, she joined S I Cambridge in 1959, becoming President in 1962. She was Divisional Union (now Regional) President in 1967-8, Federation President in 1973-4 and International President from 1977 to 1979.

She quickly demonstrated her talent for identifying needs for organisational change, convincing others of their merits and finding people able to carry them out.

While she was Club President, the Club worked hard to raise funds to support a residential home for the elderly and a home for blind people. This interest in housing continued after her time in office and became a permanent feature of Club activity. Beyond her own Club she revitalised a Regional project, initially proposed by the Cambridge Club, to provide a scholarship to enable a woman from the third world to study in Great Britain. She was instrumental in the growth of links between Clubs in different countries, many of which resulted in supporting each others' projects supporting women and girls.



Her continued support of women's education is evidenced by the Newnham College Hilda Richardson Studentship, available to students working towards a research degree relating to the environment.

Internationally Hilda continued her work to stimulate projects in support of women and girls, especially in rural communities. While Federation President, she worked with UNICEF to identify a project to provide clean water to a population of over 3000 people in the then Gilbert and Ellis islands. In 1978 as President of Soroptimist International she inaugurated the Federation of the South West Pacific, again enabling her to encourage work in support of women and girls.

Professionally, Hilda was Secretary, later General Secretary (chief executive) of the International Glaciological Society, at that time very much a male dominated area. This took her all over the world to meetings and conferences which she organised, and afforded opportunities to visit local Soroptimist Clubs.

As indicators of the esteem in which she was held among glaciologists, a mountain on the west coast of Antarctica is named Richardson Peak, and on her retirement in 1993 the Society created the Richardson Medal in Recognition of Outstanding Service in her honour. In the criteria for nomination for the medal 'service' may be interpreted broadly and include the advancement of the Society, education and outreach to the public, and enhancement of the public understanding of snow and ice studies. All nominees are expected to exhibit high ethical and moral standards within the glaciological and wider communities.

Hilda Richardson was the first recipient of the Medal which is awarded annually.