

## Lilias Wight (1920-2005) Hummingbird Medal

16th April 1920 saw the birth of Lilias Wight, a Trinidad legend.

With a family history of service to the nation and community she developed her own desire to serve. She became a leading figure in the Girl Guides and Red Cross, the development of a Cheshire Home for Disabled, and church and community service.

As corporate secretary she gave exemplary service to Barclays Bank and other organisations.

She served in the first Trinidad and Tobago Senate - one of only five women to do so at that time. In the next general election she won her seat, becoming the first woman to serve in both the Senate and the Legislature.

With her background of service to country and community Lilias became an exemplary Soroptimist. She joined SI San Fernando (SISF) in 1965 and was a very active member, serving on the Membership and Programme Action committees and as Second Vice President. She represented the Club on committees responsible for submitting proposals on

- Constitutional Reform in Trinidad and Tobago
- Formation of National Council

SISF was chartered in 1962 and the club decided to adopt a significant project. A much needed home for the elderly was selected. Fund raising began and from 1962-1969 plans were discussed. When the club VP declined to take the Presidency the members rapidly agreed that Lilias would make an excellent President. In 1969 Lilias accepted the Presidency and announced, ***"I am a now for now person. When I joined the Club there was talk about a Home. If I am to be President, we shall have it without delay."***

She immediately appointed a committee to work with her to locate land. With just \$4000 TT (£1000) in the bank Lilias inspired the Club to go ahead. Land was found at a peppercorn rent. Oilfield houses were being sold; Lilias bid for a large one and the Club agreed the cost, \$600 TT. A ***"Soroptimister"*** agreed to transfer and re-erect the building on the land.

Many hurdles were still ahead, ***e.g.*** the Club's legal status. As a member of Parliament Lilias was able to deal with that. Through example and encouragement additional finance was guaranteed by Club members, and legal work was undertaken and paid for by a member's relative. When the building was near completion Lilias assigned members to be responsible for furnishing various rooms and areas.

On 1st March 1970, one year after Lilias' acceptance of the Presidency, "Shangri La" SISF Home for the elderly accepted its first resident. Thanks to the foresight, drive and dedication of Lilias Wight Shangri La is about to celebrate its 50th Anniversary.

Lilias advanced the Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago. She was awarded the **Hummingbird Medal** for Service to the Community by the Trinidad and Tobago Government. Her life exemplified the ideals of a Soroptimist. It is fitting that Lilias spent the last years of her life as a resident in Shangri La with those she loved and who loved her. She died on 15th November 2005.

