

Mary, Lady Gray 1930s – 2002

SI Glasgow

Mary, Lady Gray was a remarkable woman, who truly 'made a difference' during her lifetime.

Mary was a bright child and grew up in Lanarkshire, Scotland in the 1930's. Her father was very ambitious for her, nurturing Mary to do well educationally and enjoy a full, well balanced life.

Mary qualified as a psychologist, carving a life for herself as an Educational Psychologist with Glasgow Corporation Education Department. She worked with physically handicapped children and, in particular, those with visual impairment. During this time she developed an interest in hearing impairment, autism and pioneered recognition and support for children living with dyslexia.



In 1972, Mary's husband, William Gray, became Lord Provost of the City of Glasgow and later received a Knighthood. Mary, in turn, became Lady Provost – and also Lady Gray – employing her organisational skills to juggle work, two young children and Civic Duties. One of her most enjoyable 'Lady Provost' duties was to open Richmond Park, a custom built school for children with physical disabilities who needed para medical care.

Mary joined Soroptimist International Glasgow Central Club in 1963, she was an active member from day one. She was club President in 1980-1981 and 1996-1997. Mary became President of Divisional Union Scotland South (now Scotland South Region) in 1988-1989 and an Honorary Member of Glasgow Central in 2000.

During Mary's year as President of Divisional Union Scotland South, it was the turn of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland to recommend the International Project for 1991-1995. Using her specialist knowledge, Mary started work on the submission 'Sight Savers and Soroptimism: saving the sight of the under-fives in Bangladesh', a country where 30,000 under-fives lost their sight annually, due to Vitamin A deficiency, malnutrition and disease. Mary forged a link with Sight Savers (formerly the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind). The task was to fund seven clinics for children suffering illness or injury, where they would receive diagnosis and treatment; the mothers would be educated in hygiene and nutrition. The project

won through and Soroptimists worldwide pledged to raise £261,000 to enable seven clinics to be set up during the four year project, using Sight Savers as the agent on the ground. In the end, £434,000 was raised, enabling an additional outreach programme to be added and Sight Savers to expand the network to 25 clinics. At the close of Soroptimist International's involvement, the clinics became part of 'Bangladesh National Society for the Blind' and Sight Savers committed to further funding. This was one of the most successful charitable ventures ever launched by Soroptimists around the world, enabling them to join hands with some of the world's poorest women and leaving a wonderful legacy for the children of Bangladesh – all due to the vision of Mary Gray.

Mary was a formidable lady. She never retired, instead she continued to serve her beloved Glasgow as a Magistrate and Patron of the Arts until her untimely death on Christmas Day, 2002.