

THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE



In Memoriam

* helenka McNutt Brice *



The members of the Seventeenth Alaska State Legislature wish to honor the memory and accomplishments, both professional and personal, of one of Alaska's most vibrant women, helenka M. Brice, who passed away on May 30, 1992.


helenka Brice was born in Augusta, Michigan on May 27, 1909. Prior to making Alaska her home, helenka worked as a reporter for the Associated Press in Washington, D.C., and thereafter, broadcast radio news in Augusta, Georgia. She and her husband and four sons moved to Fairbanks in 1957 after the family's Florida timber business was crowded out by larger conglomerates. Brice, Inc., the family run, heavy construction firm, was founded in 1961, with helenka at the helm as chief executive officer for 30 years. She was known for her skillful "can-do" approach and hands-on involvement with Brice, Inc. Frequently seen at work sites, helenka demanded superior workmanship and attention to detail on all projects. An example of her style and flair for doing business was her insistence that she visit even the remotest of work sites. Often she could not get transportation, so she had her own boat built, the "helenka B". Her company was known for tackling the toughest jobs, jobs other companies would not even bid on. Brice, Inc.'s performance on the Drift River dike project earned them their latest recognition by civil engineers as one of 1990's Outstanding Projects. In 1991, the firm was named one of the top 10 fastest growing companies in Alaska.

Her personal passions also gained recognition in the community. The roses she tended frequently were made into bouquets she loved to give away. She was well noted for her fund-raising abilities, whether it be for charities or political candidates. As an active democrat, she was a mentor for many a politician in the Interior. Because of the respect she garnered, she was also able to guide political decision making across party lines. An avid supporter of the arts, helenka's son, Sam, remembers her once stating, "The pretty things are what make life worth living, we can always get bread." No one could say no to helenka.

helenka delighted in sending huge Christmas shipments to friends, family and her favorite charities, a tradition that became legendary. Most remarkable, though, was her love for her family. As the strong matriarch of the family, helenka continually brought her family together to her farm, "Brice-in-the-Hills", in Fairbanks. helenka had a special relationship with each member of her large family and took the time and effort to nurture each one.

The Alaska State Legislature salutes both the many contributions to the people of Alaska by helenka Brice and Brice, Inc., and recognizes her as a loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and grandmother at-large. She especially loved her 39 grandchildren. She was proud of each one and often said she lived to see them grow up. Her influence was felt by each one as well. We extend our sincerest sympathies to her children: Lorena, James, Nick, Al, Sam, Tom, Andy and Jerry O'Connor; her many grandchildren; great-grandchildren; and her brother, Richard McNutt. She will always be remembered for her passion for living.



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE


PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Date: June 17, 1992

Requested by: Representatives Moyer, Baker, Bruckman, C. Davis, Ellis, Foster, Koponen, Kubina and Lincoln; Senators Craft, Frank, Adams, Sturgulewski, Halford, Menard, Pourchot, Pearce, Rodey, Kerttula, Uehling and Collins