

Bronskill, Joan

# Quinte Women of Distinction

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**Joan Francis Bronskill  
1924 – 1978  
By Joan Rickards**

What we in Belleville knew about Joan related partly, perhaps primarily, to her avid enthusiasm for the arts. We remember her delight in theatre, ballet, music and movies. We recall that she was one of the founders of the Belleville Ballet Guild, an early supporter of the Community Concerts Association that brought first-rate musicians to the city and a strong administrative player in the development of the Belleville Theatre Guild and its Pinnacle Playhouse. To each of these organizations she gave her energy, time and considerable talents,

despite the pressures of a profession that few of us ever understood.

We did know that she worked at the "Bughouse" the government-run laboratory that had something to do with insect research. Some of us knew she had a doctorate in entomology (having only just learned that this word meant the study of



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insects). What hardly any of us realized was that she was one of Canada's few internationally-admired scientists in the area of biological control of destructive insects. How were we to understand the embryology of parasites, let alone "good, parasites? In the 1950s how could we lay-people have known about the consequences of the larch sawfly or spruce budworm? Joan did not speak much about her work, feeling perhaps that we weren't terribly interested in bugs. Given a child's listening ear however, she could make the life cycle of bees a veritable rhapsody of a bedtime story!

Joan was reticent also about her physical limitations. After all, as a youngster she had learned to ride a bike, could now drive a car and sail a boat, even though she was only a little over four feet tall. She did get out of breath sometimes on long stairways but she would have had to know you very well indeed before she admitted that nature had equipped her with only one lung. This proved a concern during several of her long trips to international conferences, field stations and related travels in far-away places. Respiratory infections had to be treated effectively and with dispatch.

Joan could not change the physical problems she was born with but she certainly could manage them,

and did, without fuss or complaint. Her professional achievements and honours were many, her kindnesses, enthusiasm and skills were legion and her determined, energetic approach to life continue to be an inspiration to all of us who were her person good friends.

*This is the latest instalment of a weekly feature, to appear in this space each Saturday, on Quinte Women of Distinction. The book of the same name has been written, compiled and published by the Canadian Federation of University Women Belleville & District. Proceeds of the book will go to the C.F.U.W. Belleville & District Scholarship Fund.*