

ELIZABETH MERTO ENGLE
(HS 1958; BSCE, 1963)



After finishing her civil engineering degree, Elizabeth “Betsy” Merto Engle moved to Alaska, becoming the first female engineer registered in the state. In 1978, she started out as design manager in the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. Serving in government service for 20 years, she eventually was appointed Director of Design and Construction, the first woman to hold this position. As director of the department that runs on a \$100M annual budget, she was responsible for planning and construction of various projects, as well as supervising over 300 staff members. Serving in the largest region in Alaska, she completed projects that included rural, municipal and international airports; multi-million highway projects; a Fish Hatchery; an Indoor Firing Squad; and detention facilities. Some of these projects stand out proudly as “benchmark projects,” symbols of excellence for the entire Alaska state.

After a 20-year career in public service, she retired, but was immediately recruited by the Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. where she served for eight years. The only woman on the team, Engr. Engle was given the lead position to complete a high profile project — the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System Bypass Project, which supplies 25 percent of the oil needs of the United States. It is the company that averted several crises that threatened the worldwide economy by building and maintaining the 800-mile pipeline that pumps oil from the Alaska North Slope to the Valdez Port terminal.

Her contributions to the welfare and growth her alma mater are nothing less than outstanding, especially through her achievements as a SUACONA leader. In 2005, Betsy became president of SUAA Alaska chapter, a position she held with distinction for ten years. Since then, she has become one of the pillars of SUACONA through her outstanding leadership and her generous contributions to various fundraising projects. Her most notable accomplishments took place in a recent two-year span. In June, 2011, SUAA Alaska hosted Tipon Silliman 2011, SUACONA’s 6th biennial convention, as well as its 10th anniversary. The success of that event, given the multitude of tasks involved, was all the more incredible because her chapter was one of the smallest chapters with only seven active members. Betsy again applied her remarkable skills as an event organizer when she co-chaired the highly successful Tipon Silliman 2013 held at the Silliman campus in August, 2013. She served two consecutive terms as SUACONA vice chairperson before being elected and installed chairperson in May, 2017.

Over the years, SUACONA has had four flagship fundraising projects to benefit Silliman, in all of which Betsy was actively involved. The largest of the four was the Tree of Life campaign, a response to Silliman Board of Trustees’ request to raise funds for the construction of the Portal West Building. More than \$370,000 in donations and pledges have been raised. Of the more than 150 individuals and organizations that donated, only one gave more than Betsy did. Moreover, even long after SUACONA turned over the Tree of Life campaign to Silliman, Betsy continued to support the project. In both Tipon Silliman 2011 and Tipon Silliman 2013, she headed the editorial board for the souvenir program which solicited contributions from overseas OSAs to purchase a special two-page spread with the stipulation that any excess beyond the cost of the ad would go toward the OSA Trunk of the Tree of Life. An extraordinary achievement which is yet another facet of her generosity is that she gave \$1000 toward the OSA Trunk of the Tree of Life in memory of four deceased OSAs, something that nobody else has done. In the other three SUACONA flagship projects, namely the

Oriental Hall Conversion, the Silliman Church Allen Organ and Guy Hall renovation, Betsy was an active campaigner and contributor.

Betsy's strength of character is exhibited by her extreme generosity toward her friends and colleagues, which she does without fanfare or expectation of reward. One instance that clearly comes to mind is her devoted service to her best friend, the late Alaska Congresswoman Thelma Garcia Buchhold. Betsy and Thelma shared many things and supported each other in various endeavors. When Thelma was honored in Manila in December 2006 by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo with the Banaag Award for Most Outstanding Filipinos Overseas, Betsy took the 20,000-mile round trip to be with her friend. And when Thelma was terminally ill, Betsy lovingly cared for her, visiting her almost every day, bringing gifts and food to her bedside just like a devoted family member would.