

# Women Engineers Rare, But Total Slowly Rising



**THREE WOMEN** engineers work in offices at the Customs Building in Portland. Meredith Thoms and Isabel Allison (from left) are both with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Carita Harris (right) works for the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, compiling map making information.

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How many women engineers do you know?

Doctors, lawyers, merchants, yes, but women engineers are rare.

Although women pioneered in engineering as early as the 1890's, and everyone knows about Dr. Lillian Gilbreth of "Cheaper by the Dozen" fame, of all the principal professions, engineering is lowest in the proportion of its members who are female.

With Feb. 21 to Feb. 27 being Engineers' week (timed to cover the birthday of George Washington, a trained surveyor and builder of note), the Pacific Northwest Society of Women Engineers have decided to educate girls to opportunities in Engineering.

For the first time there will be girls among the some 65 students which have been invited to be guests at the Engineers' Banquet Wednesday night at the Hilton, the young people all chosen as being exceptionally oriented in technical fields.

George Gleeson, dean of the school of engineering at OSU, will be the speaker, and afterwards a forum will enable students, especially the girls, to learn of career opportunities in the field.

At best count, there are some six women engineers practising professionally in Portland, but a number are hoping to follow in their footsteps.

Miss Meredith Thoms and Mrs. Isabel Allison are both with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and serve as president and secretary, respectively, of the Women's Engineer-

ing Society.

Miss Thoms is working on flood control and water reservoir data for the long-negotiated Canadian water control treaty.

Mrs. Allison, voted federal woman employe of the year in the Portland metropolitan area, is a hydraulic technician, with her job often involving computer work for establishing power generation, flow data for navigation and water transportation.

Another woman engineer is Mrs. Carita Harris, with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. She compiles the data necessary for map preparation, often of coastal areas and navigation channels.

Mrs. Hildegard Oswald is a structural engineer who holds a doctor's degree in architecture from the University of Brunswick in Germany and met her husband, Joseph,



**DESIGNING WOMAN** is Connie Wilson in the design engineering department at Tektronix. The cathode ray tube she is testing here is one of her own design, one of several she's done since joining the electronics firm in 1957.

there. She is with Cooper and Rose Associates, consulting engineers who work with architects on building structural stability in the Portland area.

She points out that many countries have a far higher percentage of women in engineering than is the case in the U.S.A.

Connie Wilson is a design engineer at Tektronix in Beaverton. Miss Wilson studied applied and general science at Portland State before joining this electronics firm in 1957.

She designs cathode ray tubes and, according to the personnel director, Dan Thompson, is a notable example of a woman succeeding in

the field of engineering.

These professionals will no doubt soon be joined by such as Linda Thomas, student at Reynolds High where she has taken the equivalent of six years of math and science and is the only girl there to have ever taken advanced electronics. She hopes to be a nuclear engineer and is the local scholarship candidate in the National Society of Professional Engineers competition.

One girl, Diana Jones, is a senior in electricity and electronics in the school of applied science at Portland State, and will be graduated this spring.

The University of Portland has two young women enrolled in the school of engineering,



**STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING** is field of Hildegard Oswald, shown here with Rowland Rose of Cooper & Rose Associates, firm for which she works and which was consultant for both new Equitable Plaza and Standard Plaza.

Karen Michaud of Portland, and Linda Ethridge of Vancouver.

U.P. engineering dean, W. S. Williams, has encouraged these girls in their pursuit, saying, "Those brave enough to try should be given all the encouragement possible." Oregon State University has six women in engineering, according to Louis N. Stone, head of electrical engineering at the Corvallis university.

Teresa Roemer is in chemical engineering; Diane Fragall is enrolled in civil engineering. Two freshmen, Ardabeth Ebeling and Julie Latham, are in the general engineering course of study.

Shirley Ann Hansen, sopho-

more, and Sherry Elizabeth Smith, senior, are both studying electrical engineering at OSU.

So the field will broaden gradually. And rightly so. The fact that the profession is predominantly male should prove one incentive.

Besides, women are born engineers. Even Martha Washington would agree to that.