



## Theresa Marie Korn

November 5, 1926 - April 9, 2020

Theresa M. Korn

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Theresa Marie Korn (née McLaughlin), usually known as Terry, died of coronavirus / COVID-19 on April 9th, 2020 after a long life of achievements in aviation, engineering, publishing, community building and activism. Theresa was born in St. Louis, Missouri on November 5th 1926. While still an infant, a violent storm damaged her parents' home, and caused a window to fall on her crib, breaking her nose. This disaster prompted the family to leave Tornado Alley and move to Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where her father, William McLaughlin, worked as a civil engineer, building dams and tunnels. He was also the inventor of a drilling gun that was safer to operate than previous models, thus keeping tunneling crews safe. Theresa became fascinated with engineering and how machinery and instruments were designed and how they worked.

Theresa excelled in school and become active in her community. She was an editor of her high school year book and Valedictorian of the Greensburg High School class of 1943. While still in high school, she was active as an amateur ("Ham") radio operator and learned to fly planes. At the time, she was the youngest pilot and Ham radio operator in the United States, and also a member of the Ninety-Nines, the international women's aviation organization founded in 1929 by Amelia Earhart and 98 other women pilots. World War II

was underway, and though still in high school, she was part of the Civil Air Patrol and active in community defense. She regularly flew over the mid-Atlantic coast, looking for Nazi submarines from the air.

In her senior year in high school, she won the Bausch & Lomb Science Award, and a scholarship to Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh (now Carnegie Mellon University). Shortly before graduation, her mother suddenly died of a heart attack, which was devastating.

Theresa could not use the Carnegie Scholarship she had won for attending Engineering school, because at that time, women at Carnegie were admitted only into the affiliated Margaret Morrison Women's College. There she could take the same engineering classes as her male peers, but she could earn only a Bachelor's in Science degree, not an Engineering degree. Theresa felt that this 'was grossly unfair' and told her good friend Emma Ware, a friend from the Ninety-Nines, and a pilot in the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (W.A.S.P.), an organization of women flyers who tested aircraft and flew planes across the Atlantic for use in World War II. Emma, working with other women pilots, raised money for Theresa's tuition. Emma correctly assumed that if Theresa refused the scholarship, and paid her own way, the Engineering school would accept her. Theresa was the first woman accepted into the Engineering program at Carnegie Tech.

The university was a 35-mile commute from Theresa's home, where she lived with her ailing father. While in college, she nursed her diabetic father for a serious leg infection—well before antibiotics were available. After months of home treatment, she managed to save his leg. In high school she had considered studying medicine, but a local physician discouraged her, saying, after the Great Depression, that she would not be able to afford to open a medical office. Despite her talent for healing, the physician's discouraging advice turned her from medicine to engineering.

There were times she studied through the night, 'having just enough time to shower before leaving the house again.' She earned her First Class Radio Operators' license from the Federal Communications Commission, and began working on the weekends as a broadcast engineer for Greensburg radio station WHGB. When she discovered she was not being paid on a par with the other radio operators, all male, she requested equal pay. When this was refused, she quit the radio job and went to work wiring electric arcade games, such as pinball and horserace games.

Theresa recalled that her negative educational experiences mostly came from male faculty members, not her all-male classmates. One professor told her that he 'did not teach math to girls.' Despite this, Theresa excelled in mathematics, and often tutored her engineering classmates. Her male classmates nominated her for Eta Kappa Nu, the National Honor Society for Electrical Engineering. Unfortunately, the chapter would not extend membership to women, so she was not allowed to join. Nonetheless, in 1947, Theresa turned in the best senior paper among her peers; grudgingly, Eta Kappa Nu awarded her a certificate to honor her achievement. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering in 1947, the first woman to graduate from Carnegie Tech's Engineering program.

After college, at her first engineering job interview, Theresa was told that 'they were expecting a man, and that there were no bathrooms for women on the engineering floor.' She left, and applied to Curtiss-Wright in Columbus, Ohio, where she was hired as a junior engineer, 'the only title women engineers could have.' Later, after her talent was recognized, she was promoted to a restricted research department where she conducted missile research. At Curtiss-Wright, she met Dr. Granino A. Korn, head of the analysis division. The couple was married September 3rd, 1948. Because of a nepotism policy

at Curtiss-Wright, after the wedding Theresa lost her job. She was unemployed until Curtiss-Wright loaned Granino Korn to Boeing in Seattle, and the couple left for the West coast. At Boeing they were both able to work; Granino built a computer at one plant, while Theresa worked on analysis of the B52 tail section at another plant. Theresa authored a children's book, Trailblazer to Television, with her mother-in-law Elizabeth Korn as illustrator. The book is a biography of German physicist and engineer Arthur Korn (1870-1945), inventor of phototelegraphy (facsimile), and Terry's father-in-law. It was published in 1950.

In 1952 the couple decided to start a consulting business, G.A. & T.M. Korn, Industrial Consultants. They began writing books about computers and mathematics. In 1952 they published Electronic Analog Computers. In 1961 they co-wrote Electronic Analog and Hybrid Computers; in 1964, the Manual of Mathematics; in 1967, Mathematical Handbook for Scientists and Engineers; and in 1968, Definitions, Theorems, and Formulas for Reference. All these books were reprinted in multiple languages; Korn & Korn are considered pioneers in the computer community. Theresa remarked, 'This was a very exciting time in the computer world and for us.'

Theresa managed the business from home after the birth of their daughter Anne Marie in 1953. Children did not slow Theresa down; she continued her education, and in 1954 she earned her Master's degree in Electrical Engineering from UCLA. In 1955, Theresa gave birth to their son John.

Granino's work brought his family to Arizona in 1957, where he was a Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Arizona - Tucson, and founded the Computer Engineering Research Laboratory. During this time, Theresa balanced their consulting business, raised their children, and was active in the Tucson community. She was a member of the Arizona and Tucson Consumers' Councils (1970-1976) and she worked on the Governor's

Advisory Commission on the Environment (1974-1976). In addition to various other activities, she was a board member, risk manager, and treasurer for Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona (1983-1989) and volunteered at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and other animal rights groups.

Theresa received many awards and community recognition for her accomplishments. These range from SPCA animal protection awards, to a "Women on the Move" award from the YWCA, and a place on the Women's Plaza of Honor at Arizona State University. However, the awards she cherished most were the HAM radio license she obtained when she was 14, and the Civil Air Patrol award which gave her a pilot's license. Some of the greatest memories she had included being a part of the National Organization of Women (NOW), the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) campaign, and meeting early birth control activist Margaret Sanger in person. Another highlight was receiving recognition, with her husband, for being pioneers in the analog and digital computer world.

In 1986, following Granino's retirement from teaching in 1983, the couple settled in Wenatchee, Washington. They continued to publish and consult, until Granino's death in 2013. Theresa lived quietly in Wenatchee until her death. Arrangements are in the care of Heritage Memorial Chapel in East Wenatchee. In lieu of flowers, please make a Memorial Donation to the Wenatchee Valley Humane Society, 1474 S. Wenatchee Ave, Wenatchee WA 98801 or to the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, 635 W Roger Rd, Tucson AZ 85705. (Donations can be made via mail or at the Donation links below).

# Tribute Wall

DS

“ One of the most memorable people i have ever had the privilege to meet.

*She was such a positive person, with such great stories.*

*My love goes out to her family.*

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**Daniel Schou** - April 23, 2020 at 02:10 AM

CL

“ Theresa Korn, you are my new hero. Quite frankly, I was totally blown away by your achievements, none of which came without a fight. You helped pave the way for future generations of women to succeed in a man's world in so many ways -- for that, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I also want to thank your family for sharing your story.

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**Cheryl Lopez** - April 22, 2020 at 01:10 PM

KR

“ Terry was one of the most amazing women I have ever met. Wow. Such spunk. Such love for life. I knew her at Watson's Resort. I cherish my memories of her.

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**Karen Rutherford** - April 18, 2020 at 07:08 PM

“ *In Memoriam: Theresa Korn (Nov. 5, 1926 - April 9, 2020)*

*It is a story we have heard way too many times: A talented young girl intrigued by science and engineering is discouraged from pursuing her interests by male "gatekeepers" in academia and society in general, but persists and demonstrates her amazing talents, breaking those gender barriers into smithereens. The heroine in this particular story was my own Aunt Terry, Theresa McLaughlin Korn.*

*She was special early on; at 14 years of age she became the youngest licensed radio "ham" in the country and shortly after earned a pilot's license. She was high school yearbook editor and Valedictorian and earned a scholarship to Carnegie Institute of Technology, now known as Carnegie Mellon University. At first, she wasn't allowed into the male-only engineering program but, with some help from a pilot friend, finally gained admittance. She continued her interest in radio and earned a first-class radio operator's license from the FCC working part-time at a local radio station as a broadcast engineer when still a college student.*

*She recalled one college professor telling her that he "did not teach math to girls," but it was her own male classmates who nominated her to the National Honor Society for Electrical Engineering. Women were not allowed membership by the local chapter at that time but they grudgingly awarded her an honor certificate for the best senior paper and she earned her Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering in 1947, becoming the first woman to graduate from Carnegie with an EE diploma.*

*In industry, it was a similar story; women could not rise higher than "junior engineer;" and sorry, no women's lavatories on the engineering floor. Still, she persisted and was promoted to "restricted research" in missile systems. In her new department she met her future husband, Granino Korn, beginning a lifetime personal and professional collaboration in academia and as private consultants until his death in 2013. The result was a bookshelf of technical books and publications, completed mostly during their time in Tuscon at the University of Arizona. Their most well-known book is probably *Mathematical Handbook for Scientists and Engineers*,*

*first published in 1967 with multiple versions still in print.  
Terry was active in her community, particularly active in promoting women's rights, the environment, and animal welfare. She passed away at the age of 93 in Wenatchee, Washington on April 9 from COVID-19 infection, courageously refusing ventilation therapy even to the last.*

*Perry Kurtz  
April 16, 2020*

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**Perry Kurtz** - April 16, 2020 at 04:16 PM

LP

“ *My husband has delivered her mail for years, I recently had back surgery & he's been home a couple of weeks. He went back to work this week to find out Mrs. Korn passed away-he's so sad. He would like to attend her service. After all he was her "favorite mailman" ❤️*

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**Leslie Padron** - April 14, 2020 at 04:49 PM