

Lillian Kirkpatrick

Take a deep breath before trying to list all of Lillian Mae Rogers Gildroy Kirkpatrick's accomplishments – you will need it!

Lillian Rogers was born in Wisconsin in July 1904, but it wasn't too long before her family moved to the Roundup area. She attended the local schools and started working at the age of 18. She began her business career in 1921, shortly after graduating from Roundup



High School when she went to work as a stenographer with the Bair-Collins Coal Company in Roundup. There she met Gilbert Gildroy, an engineer for the company, and they were soon married. She worked hard and well to learn the coal business, working her way up until she was named President of the company in 1952, succeeding her husband in that position after his death.

For some time, Lillian Gildroy had held strong opinions about local government. She decided to do something about it. In 1951, she ran for Mayor of Roundup, defeating a long-time incumbent for her first term. She won a second term in 1953. Her projects as mayor included improving the water supply, installing new lighting, street repairs, and upgrades to city park facilities. She was named the Executive Director of the Montana Municipal League, the first woman to hold that position.

In 1954, she remarried, to insurance executive T.N. Kirkpatrick. They formed a husband-wife team at his insurance agency. She also served as Administrator of the Roundup Memorial Hospital, and as a member of the board of directors of the state Chamber of Commerce.

That same year, Kirkpatrick was chosen by the American Business Women's Association as its national "American Business Woman of the Year" at their convention in Atlanta. She had served as regional director for the ABWA, had helped to establish chapters of the organization in Montana and Idaho.

And also that year, the Del Monte Company picked Roundup, MT to build an advertising campaign around. Their "Del Monte Roundup" gave Kirkpatrick the chance to promote the town of Roundup to a national audience. She named any number of grocers across the country as honorary Marshals for Roundup. She made the rounds of the national radio and television media as well, promoting both Del Monte and Roundup in New York. As part of the campaign, she appeared with Arlene Francis on the "Home Show" where she showed a short movie about the town, with Dave Garroway on the "Today Show" and with Steve Allen on the "Tonight Show". The hosts of these programs also

became honorary Marshals for Roundup. It was said to be the largest group of honorary Marshals in the world.

Kirkpatrick was just as active outside of her professional life. She had served as President of the Montana Federation of Woman's Clubs and as Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star. She was involved with Women of the Moose, Rebekah Lodge and the American Legion Auxiliary. And add to that some gardening, bridge games and crafts.

Kirkpatrick moved to Billings in 1956, after she and her husband sold her insurance agency to her son and daughter-in-law. She began working as a Realtor here until 1969. T.N. Kirkpatrick died in 1965, and her son had moved to Helena, so she relocated there as well. She sold real estate in Helena, along with organizing and running the local office of the Montana Senior Citizens.

After finally deciding to retire in 1984 when she was 80, she kept going with her civic service, assisting in the creation of Helena's Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse. The organization named a scholarship in Kirkpatrick's honor to recognize her service. Lillian Kirkpatrick died in 1994, and is buried in Mountview Cemetery in Billings.

Sources:

Billings Gazette, "Lillian Gildroy Kirkpatrick", December 19, 1994

Billings Gazette, "Roundup Business Woman Honored", October 24, 1954

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Fugleberg, Paul, "Woman on the Go", *Great Falls Tribune*, June 5, 1955

Great Falls Tribune, "Ex-Roundup Mayor Moves to Billings", February 13, 1956

Great Falls Tribune, "Roundup Woman Follows Busy Program", June 5, 1955

Photo Credit:

Photo of Lillian Kirkpatrick with Dave Garroway (who is wearing a Marshal's star), published in *Chamber of Commerce*, November 1955, p. 6