

ENTERTAINMENT

Timely celebrations of women's achievements

Books and periodicals published to commemorate a noteworthy event or individual usually have limited success. The special occasion may seem special only to those involved.

But two recent examples of the genre prove there are exceptions to every generalization. One is *Still Running . . .*, a book published by the Queen's University Alumnae Association (169 pages, \$12.95). The other is a special Margaret Laurence issue of *Canadian Woman Studies*, a feminist quarterly published by York University (144 pages, \$6). Both publications have much to commend them.

Still Running . . ., edited by Joy Parr, celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Marty Scholarship at Queen's. The scholarship is named after Aletta Marty, a Queen's graduate and pioneering Ontario feminist and educator who, in 1919, became the first woman inspector of public schools in Toronto. It's administered and funded by women graduates of Queen's, and is intended to help exceptional women students at the university pursue advanced work.

One of its recipients was Pauline Jewett; when she won in 1949, she was able to earn her PhD in political science at Radcliffe University. A more recent recipient was Toronto playwright Judith Thompson; she used the award — now worth \$10,000 — to help research her second play, *White Biting Dog*, which won a Governor-General's Award.

Still Running . . . contains essays



WILLIAM FRENCH

by 15 of the almost 50 women who won the Marty Scholarship between 1938 and 1985. They've had impressive careers in a wide variety of occupations — medicine, education, science, the civil service and the arts but not, for some reason, in business and industry. The common theme in their essays is the difficulty they experienced in being accept-

ed as intelligent women in a male-dominated world. That was particularly true of earlier recipients of the scholarship, but even recent winners have faced the problem.

Joy Parr, in her introduction, comments on the essays: "Here are school girls in northern mining towns in the twenties and Montreal suburbs in the sixties struggling to compensate for the stunning oddity of being bright and female. Here are doctoral candidates drawn from three generations contending with supervisors who were skeptical or not much interested and who, by shouting matches, brilliant exceptionalism and quiet subterfuge, had to be convinced that fine students, even if they were female, might be worth the time."

Ironies abound in the essays, but perhaps the greatest concerns the events that led up to the creation of the award. When the idea of a scholarship restricted to women was first proposed at Queen's in the early thirties, it was rejected by the administration on grounds that it would be discriminatory.

The Margaret Laurence issue of *Canadian Woman Studies*, for which



Margaret Laurence

Clara Thomas was guest editor, is a celebration of her life, not a dirge. Admiration and affection for the novelist, who died in January, is abundantly evident. Among the

contributors are Adele Wiseman, Timothy Findley, Rudy Wiebe, George Ignatieff, June Callwood, Lynn McDonald, Hugh MacLennan, Miriam Waddington, Al Purdy and George Woodcock. They knew her at different times and places, and in different roles — in Africa, England, British Columbia and Ontario as a novelist, environmentalist, civil libertarian and peace activist.

Some of the contributors taught her novels in school, and recall their students' joy of discovery. Margaret Atwood contributed a poem she wrote in 1964, when she was 24 and living in Vancouver, and only recently rediscovered. "Jane Rule told me about *The Stone Angel* by this very promising young writer, Margaret Laurence," explains Atwood. "I read it and was knocked out by it . . . (the poem) records how the book impressed me."

Among the unexpected discoveries are four letters from Gabrielle Roy to Laurence, written in 1976 and 1977. Laurence was under attack at the time by the local school board, which wanted to ban *The Diviners*. "I wouldn't let the attack from the school board worry me too much if I

were you," wrote Roy. "After all, it places you in the company of Flaubert, Lawrence and several others among the greatest . . . There are no reasons for attacking you so vilely. To speak of your books as 'muck' shows where the muck is; in the mind of the villifier (sic). I can understand how painful it must be to you to be attacked, as it were, by your neighbors."

One of the essays was contributed by Joan Johnston, a friend and neighbor who organized a 60th birthday party for Laurence in July, 1986. She describes how she and Laurence had amassed a considerable file of newspaper and magazine clippings and audio and video tapes about the book banners, then sold the collection to York University's archives and used the money to pay for the party. "We both chuckled to think that the fundamentalists were, in effect, buying the food and drink for Margaret's party." Johnston then describes, with considerable poignancy, the writer's last days, as she battled cancer and struggled to finish her memoirs, *Dance On The Earth*. She did; the book will be published next year.