ARMOUR, Margaret-Ann

1939 - 2019

Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour died peacefully and gracefully at the Cross Cancer Institute at dawn May 25, surrounded by a few of the many friends who have become family to her. Tributes pouring in since testify to the legacy left by her inspirational mentorship and infectious passion for “doing science as if people matter.”

Margaret-Ann loved stories. Her own story began in Scotland on September 6, 1939, amid the outset of the Second World War. Born to Annie Dunlop and Robert Armour, she was raised by her mother, a teacher who fostered her curiosity about the science of everything, beginning with Scottish baking.

Holding a BSc and MSc from the University of Edinburgh, Margaret-Ann earned a PhD in organic chemistry from the University of Alberta and then did post-doctoral studies at both universities. Joining the U of A chemistry department in 1979, she persevered as a woman in a traditionally male field and became the University’s first-ever Associate Dean of Science for Diversity in 2005. Known worldwide for leading-edge research and teaching in hazardous chemical waste handling and disposal, she is equally revered for championing women in the sciences through initiatives such as WISEST and the WinSETT Centre. “Create an environment where women thrive, and everyone thrives,” she would say.

In addition to her induction as a Member of the Order of Canada, Dr. Armour’s many awards include the Governor General’s Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case, Canada 150 Ambassador and the prestigious 3M Teaching Fellowship. Her multiple honorary degrees include degrees from her Alberta and Edinburgh alma maters, as well as a degree from Concordia University of Edmonton presented just the day before her death.

Despite her passing, Dr. Armour’s story lives on in the many individuals, institutions and networks shaped by her kindness, integrity and commitment to equity and inclusiveness. Her dedication to wider community shone through in the leadership she nurtured within organizations ranging from Beta Sigma Phi, to the Edmonton Glenora Rotary Club, to St. Stephen’s College where she served with distinction as Board Chair. The students of Edmonton’s Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School will be among the many who dearly miss her perceptive questions, playful scientific demonstrations and heartfelt hugs.

A memorial service in celebration of Dr. Armour’s life will be held at the Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School, 3815 Allan Drive in southwest Edmonton, on Wednesday June 12 at 7 p.m.

Donations in her memory may be made to St. Stephen’s College, WISEST, and Southminster-Steinhauer United Church.