



GLORIA BORJA NELSON  
EDUCATOR AND CIVIC LEADER

Gloria Borja Nelson, mother of four children, is married to Senator Ted S. Nelson and is presently residing in Yigo, Guam. Mrs. Nelson's educational background began in a rather unconventional manner due to World War II. Because of the fighting and occupation of the island, Gloria was not able to enter kindergarten until she was 11 years old. However, her inquisitive mind, aggressive personality and lively intellect enabled her to advance rapidly and graduate from high school 9 years later at age 20. After completing an Associate of Arts degree in elementary education at the Territorial College of Guam, Gloria was awarded a scholarship from Ohio State University, where she completed a Bachelor of Science degree in education. In spite of Gloria's unconventional schooling, she was an honor student during all her college years. Also during this time, Gloria married Ted Nelson, another young education student from Guam.

Following the Nelsons' return to Guam, Gloria's exciting professional career began to develop. Having served in all professional positions within the Department of Education from substitute teacher to Chairperson of the Territorial Board of Education and Director of Education, Gloria Nelson is certainly the quintessential educator.

Her leadership qualities, however, have not been limited to the field of education. Gloria has been involved in a wide range of civic and organizational activities. In addition to her work with organizations such as the Red Cross, Muscular Dystrophy, parent-teacher organizations, and the Guam Professional Women's Club, Gloria, along with four others, established Sanctuary, Inc., an organization devoted to runaway and troubled youth.

This concern with helping people is one of Gloria's most notable characteristics and has been an underlying goal in all her endeavors. Her husband, Ted, shares this concern and the two are well known for their assistance to anyone in need. The Nelson home has continuously provided temporary refuge to young people and adults in need of help.

From 1962 to 1964, Gloria and her husband established the first high school on Palau. This unique experience enabled Gloria to develop a deep appreciation and understanding of other cultures and social systems. The concern for helping others, however, remained constant even in Palau. The Nelsons helped many young people obtain an education and even adopted two bright high school students so that they could continue their education on Guam.

Following their 2 years in Palau, Gloria and her husband pursued graduate studies at the University of New Mexico. After completing a Master's degree in elementary education with an emphasis on remedial reading and administration, Gloria returned to continue her career and provide the Guam public schools with many years of outstanding leadership.

After taking advantage of an early retirement option at age 41, Gloria was continuously called upon by the Governor as a problem-solver. One of the tasks she was given was to develop the Agency for Human Resource Development. Perhaps the most comprehensive test of Gloria's leadership came after Typhoon Pamela in 1976. Gloria was appointed by Governor Ricardo J. Bordallo as a special assistant to coordinate the Federal Disaster Assistance efforts. This involved overseeing more than 800 major projects. Her well-known ability to deal with even the most difficult tasks was again recognized by Governor Bordallo in 1975 and in 1983 when he asked her to coordinate both of his inaugurations.

Religion has always played an important part in Gloria and Ted's family life. Devoted to the Church, Gloria and her family spend weekends providing help to the sisters at the Carmelite Convent. Gloria is also very active in the Catholic Daughters of the Americas as well as other church activities.

In 1983, Gloria resumed her career in education when she was appointed Director of Education by Governor Ricardo J. Bordallo. Her dynamic leadership was once again called upon to serve the children of Guam. Now in the fourth year, her administration is characterized by long-range educational planning, a refocusing on instruction, a commitment to staff development and effective schooling practices, as well as, operational excellence.

A tough-minded, aggressive and demanding leader, Gloria B. Nelson is also a warm, compassionate woman deeply concerned with her island and its people. She stands as an inspiration to all educators and as a model for the evolving leadership role of women in the Pacific.