**By LYNN NEUMAN
McDOWELL
of The Advocate**

"Don't call me Ms.!"

This from the first woman to be lieutenant-governor of Alberta, the first solicitor general of the province and first woman to hold a full — and massive — government portfolio in Alberta.

When Helen Hunley, who turns 66 today, began her political career as a Rocky Mountain House town councillor in 1960, she wasn't championing a cause for the women's movement or anybody else. She was, she thought, simply doing her civic duty.

That sense of duty has taken her from a farm implement dealership to a government position that supercedes the premier's. Through it all, she's been Miss Hunley — Second World War lieutenant, first woman mayor of Rocky Mountain House, minister of Social Services, and president of the Alberta Progressive Conservative party.

Now, however, she's Your Honor. And she'll let you know if you forget. It's not personal pride. It's part of her job as the 12th lieutenant-governor of Alberta, personal representative of the Queen.

"Whether they like me or not, care about me or anything else, they should respect the office. That's what I want people to do — respect the office of the Queen."

The Queen's representative does everything from attending citizenship ceremonies and inspecting cadets to opening stampedes and talking to high school students about government. She shakes a lot of hands.

When Helen Hunley reaches out her hand, she does it in the old sense of the gesture. Originally, a noble stretched out his hand to show goodwill and that he bore no dagger. The political veteran of 19 years has never backed down from a fight, but she's never carried a hatchet either.

"We'd have some dandies," said Art Bott, who was a councillor when Miss Hunley was mayor of Rocky. "But we'd always go for coffee afterward. If Helen's got anything against you, she'll tell you to your face and that'll be it. No way she'd ever hold a grudge."

"My office is neutral ground," she says, leaning back into her chair with a cup of coffee. "I'm apolitical now. I've divorced myself totally from loyalties to either party. I'm here to represent the Queen, who is neutral."

The conversation always finds its way back to duty and responsibility, just as Helen Hunley, private citizen has.

In 1979, the lieutenant-governor was tired of politics. After four years in the hefty Social Services portfolio, she announced she was leaving public life.

But when the call came from Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, asking her to represent the Queen in Alberta, she packed her suitcase, marshalled her Labrador dog Kelly and her ingrained sense of duty, and moved to Edmonton.

"What are you going to say — no, I'm too lazy?" asks the dyed-in-the-wool monarchist.

Even in retirement, she served as chairman of Rocky's town library board, chairman of the provincial mental health advisory council and president of the Alberta Tory party.

When a person considers politics, she says, the first question is whether she's willing to make sacrifices: time, personal freedom, sometimes even income.

Next, and equally important, is to determine purpose.

"If you want power, that's too bad. You may make it, but it's bad for the people."

She says responsibility was the factor that most shaped her life. Others agree.

"Helen came up the hard way," says Lou Soppit, mayor of Rocky. The eighth of 11 children (named alphabetically), little was handed to her.

As a farm girl she was responsible for chores and contributing to the family income by picking berries for 20 cents a pound. There was never any question she'd get a job to pay for her board when she moved into Rocky at 16 to finish high school.

Working the night shift as a switchboard operator may not have done much for her concentration at school (she tended to fall asleep), but it prepared her for her next big responsibility.

In 1941, the 21-year-old joined the Women's Army Corps and soon became a telephone operator instructor. She wasn't fussy about rising in the ranks because, she says, she enjoyed what she was doing. But others had a different idea.