

MARJORIE WILLIAMS
10-12-1900 to 12-28-1983

Marjorie Williams was introduced to Friends Meeting of Washington, in 1961, by a letter of transfer from New Garden Monthly Meeting of Friends in North Carolina. She was commended to us as a valuable and cooperative member - a Friend who would serve our Meeting with loyalty and devotion. How right this was! For an extended period she was on the Ministry and Worship Committee. She also served on the Finance and Property Committee, was a Friends House Trustee and chaired the Davis House Committee. Marjorie was an Usher, was our Representative to the Washington Council of Churches, and served as Recording Clerk of the Committee on Ministry and Worship of Potomac Quarterly Meeting. Above all, she had a friendly interest in the people who came to Meeting. When she moved to Friends House in Sandy Spring in 1976 because of poor health, we missed her.

With becoming modesty, Marjorie Williams did not talk about her personal achievements. To us, at the Meetinghouse, she was simply Marjorie. However, at the National Science Foundation, where she was Assistant Program Director for Astronomy, she was Dr. Williams, with a distinguished record as astronomer and educator. The University of Michigan awarded her Ph. D in Astronomy. At Smith College, she earned her master's degree in the same field. For 28 years she taught at Smith, progressing from Instructor to Assistant, Associate and (Full) Professor - then, to Chairman of the Astronomy Department and Director of the observatory.

A scholar herself, Marjorie emphasized scholarship, but not to the exclusion of a student's personal needs. One refugee student thought of Dr. Williams as both a professor and a mother when her own mother was far away. Indeed, Marjorie seemed to give students and scholars from abroad special attention. She was Chairman and an effective fundraiser for the International Student House, she initiated frequent AAUW sponsorship of Sunday teas.

Somehow Marjorie Williams found innumerable ways to work for people and still fulfill the demands of her profession. Thirty-five years after she received her bachelor's degree at Guilford College, she returned to the North Carolina campus as a head-resident in a dormitory and Director of the Student Union. She worked in a rehabilitation center for crippled children, directed a retirement home for older women, served in the American Friends Service Committee relief program in Germany, and chaired the New England AFSC.

Following her retirement, a friend asked Marjorie how she had been able to combine a scientific career with so much service to her fellow human beings. Her reply went something like this: "Perhaps it was the inspiration of my father, a Friends minister --J. Edgar Williams. He taught me by Biblical precept and by example that I am my brother's keeper. You know, >Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.' . . . Somehow I have never wanted to depart - not even now, while I am growing older."