

7-4d7-
2022

Dorothy Watt Williams ^{GHR}



Dorothy passed away peacefully with her two daughters by her side on July 2, 2022. A memorial service will take place on Saturday, August 20, at 3 p.m. at Sebring-Lewis Hall in the Bucksbaum Center for the Arts on the Grinnell College Campus.

Dorothy (aka "Dot Watt") was born in 1930 in New York City. Her mother (Dorothy Isaacs Janeway Watt Rollins) was a successful fashion designer; her father (Arthur

Watt) was a security analyst on Wall Street and executive assistant to Wendell Wilkie. Dorothy graduated from Scarsdale High School, then received a B.A. in English from Swarthmore College in 1950. While at Swarthmore, she met her future husband, Wendell Williams, waiting in line to audition for the college musical; they were married in 1952. In the meantime, Dorothy went to work for Collier's Magazine in New York, where she was the first person in the company to rise from the secretarial ranks to the editorial staff. While Wendell earned his PhD in physics at Cornell University, Dorothy earned her "PhT" (Putting Hubby Through) at Cornell, where she worked as the New York State Extension Service Editor for Home Economics.

Wendell's first job took the couple to Cleveland, Ohio, where their two daughters were born. While there, Dorothy was Managing Editor for Fine Arts Magazine and feature writer/reporter for the Parma Times. In 1967, Wendell was appointed professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Dorothy was appointed Assistant Director of Public Information, covering the arts and humanities for the university's PR department. She received her master's degree in English literature from UIUC in 1976. She was later named editor of the faculty-staff newspaper, Illiniweek. In 1987, the couple returned to Cleveland, where Dorothy was an editor for the Case Alumnus magazine and wrote feature articles for the Cleveland Orchestra. They retired in 1995 and divided their time between Urbana, Illinois, and Sarasota, Florida. In retirement, Dorothy continued to write for the Cleveland Orchestra. Wendell died in 2010; in 2015 Dorothy moved to the Mayflower in Grinnell to be near her daughter Jennifer.

After their auspicious meeting, Dorothy and Wendell continued to make music a cornerstone of their relationship. They founded the Gilbert & Sullivan society (Savoyards) at both Swarthmore and Cornell, then a community chorus in Cleveland (the Southwest Messiah Chorale), with Wendell conducting and Dorothy singing, doing publicity, fundraising, and serving on the board of the local orchestra with whom the choir collaborated. In Urbana, she sang in the Unitarian Universalist Church Choir that Wendell directed. In retirement, she served on the board for UIUC's Sinfonia da Camera.

Dorothy had a wonderful way with words—she was the author of many bad puns—and she did the New York Times crossword puzzle every day until the end of her life. She was a voracious reader, and loved going to concerts, movies, and collecting art and antiques. Although she had virtually no family (she was an only child of two only children), she loved her friends—traveling to visit them, and welcoming them into her home. She served on the Swarthmore College Alumni Council and was class secretary, writing witty reports for the Alumni Magazine.

She is survived by her daughters Jennifer Williams Brown of Grinnell and Laura Kathleen Williams (Chris Matheos) of Los Angeles, and her beloved cat Georgia. She was preceded in death by her husband Wendell and her dear cat Ethel.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be directed to Planned Parenthood or the American Cancer Society.