

Ruth Dilley - Obituary

Marion Galbraith Merrill - Obituary

Marion Galbraith Merrill, born in St. Johnsbury, Vt., in 1914, died on Feb. 16, 2012, at the age of 97 at the Cokesbury Village Health Center in Hockessin, Del.

Marion was a graduate of St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury, Vt. and received her bachelor's degree from Rollins College, Winter Park, Fla. She served as an executive assistant at Rollins College and as an assistant to the president of American University, Washington, D.C. While working at American University, she met and married the love of her life, Horace Samuel (Sam) Merrill in St. Johnsbury in 1943. After their marriage, she became her husband's research assistant, a position she held until they retired in 1980. Together, they co-authored a book, "The Republican Command, 1897-1913," published in 1971. Marion did extensive research and editing for her husband's other publications. During her husband's teaching years, they lived in Washington, D.C., Columbia, Mo., Elmira, N.Y., Madison, Wisc., Cambridge, Mass., and Tacoma Park, Fla. Following World War II, they lived for one year in Europe when Dr. Merrill taught at U.S. military bases. They settled in Silver Spring, Md., where her husband taught American History, specializing in American Political History at the University of Maryland for 34 years. They moved to Cokesbury Village in 1988.

Marion was active all her life on social issues. She cherished her freedom, freedom to make up her own mind, and has striven all of her life for unity of all people without regard to race, religion, class, education, social status or sexual orientation. Together, Marion and Sam mentored many graduate students of U.S. History at the University of Maryland, housing and mentoring them in their quest to earn a college degree. Marion and Sam became known as their surrogate parents. They were both active



in the Civil Rights Movement, attending the "I Have a Dream" rally and marching with Martin Luther King to Montgomery, Ala. Their commitment to racial justice took a personal turn in their friendship with John Hope Franklin, one of the most distinguished Black historians in the U.S. When Dr. Franklin came to Washington to study at the Library of Congress, he regularly stayed with the Merrills and after being invited to the White House, called Marion to remind her that Sam and she were the first "white" people he dined with in Washington, D.C. Marion has been recognized by the Vermont Historical Society as one of the notable women in the state's history. While at Cokesbury, Sam and Marion were instrumental in organizing activities for the residents of Layton Nursing Home previously located on 8th and Walnut streets in Wilmington.

Marion was predeceased by Sam, her husband of 53 years, and was the only child of her parents, John Service Galbraith and Alice Albee Wilson Galbraith. Marion and Sam had no children. She is survived by her nieces and nephews by marriage, Mary Beth Metcalf, Md. (Robert) of Sacramento, Calif.; Judie Shelp of Madison, Wisc.; Cindy Secher (Dale) of Oregon, Wisc., and Lincoln Merrill (Lorie) of Arizona. A niece, Kathryn Witzke and a nephew, Bruce Merrill predeceased her. Marion also has a large extended family of former University of Maryland graduate students, mentored by her and Sam and a circle of friends in St. Johnsbury, Vt. She will be missed by her many friends at Cokesbury Village, in particular Rev. Richard and Mary Anne Stazesky and June Valentine. Special thanks to the Health Center Staff of Cokesbury and her private aides, Elsie, Noddine, Jessie and Mimi for their compassionate care by providing her with quality of life during her declining years.

Marion will be buried next to Sam in St. Johnsbury, Vt. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 27, 2012, in the chapel auditorium at Cokesbury Village. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Marion Merrill to Cokesbury Village Employee Recognition Fund, 726 Loveville Road, Hockessin, DE 19707 are appreciated.