



## Ethel Roberta Simon - McWilliams

May 25, 1939 - July 12, 2017

Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams was born in Washington, DC on May 25, 1939, the second of four children of the late Robert Simon, Sr. and Erma K. Simon. Ethel received Christ at an early age at Bethlehem Baptist Church. Church and education was always at the front of Ethel and her siblings lives as children. They were sometimes in church seven days a week. Ethel sang in the youth choir, participated in the "Red Circle Girls" missionary group, taught Sunday school and vacation bible school. She also worked in the church after school daycare center. One of Ethel's mottos was, "if you go to church and you go to school, you can be nothing but a winner." Educated in the District of Columbia Public School System she graduated third in her Spingarn High School class, received an undergraduate degree from DC Teachers College, a Master's Degree from the George Washington University, and a doctoral degree in education from the University of South Carolina. During her early years in South Carolina, living in Lancaster, SC, she wrote a community oriented column for the Lancaster News entitled "Soundings". The weekly article highlighted local residents, and was widely praised for its encouraging, community interest stories. Her illustrious career took her to classrooms and administrative positions in the DC and South Carolina public school systems; Director of the Desegregation Assistance Center in South and North Carolina, the University of South Carolina's desegregation laboratory, and finally, she retired in June of 2001 as Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

(NWREL) in Portland, Oregon. This position afforded her the opportunity to have long-standing contacts with decision-makers in the Washington bureaucracies. She joined the NWREL in January 1979 and served as its third Chief Executive Officer. Guided by strong beliefs, clear vision, ambitious goals, objectives and indicators, she led the NWREL into the 21st century with remarkable growth as a regionally and nationally recognized and respected private research and development corporation. In 2001, after retiring her friends established the Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams Scholarship Fund in recognition of the critical changes she inspired throughout her career. In 1998, she received honors from the Black United Fund of Oregon. In 1994, she received the "National Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Desegregation of Public Schools"; and in 1979 she received a similar award in South Carolina. Some of her accolades include; "Women in History", The Oregonian newspaper; "Living Legend", Willamette University; "Abigail Scott Duniway Award" for contributions to the status of women, Women in Communications, Inc. Portland Chapter; "Distinguished Service Award", Grambling State University and the "Aubrey Watzel Leader in Business and Community Award", Lewis and Clark College. She appears in the "Who's Who in the West", 18th Edition, 1982/83. Ethel, also known as Boo-Boo (a nickname given to her by her then toddler children who enjoyed watching Yogi bear and his companion, Boo-Boo), Eddie (a name given to her by family members because of her love of giving nicknames to others) and Doc, dedicated her life to helping others. She was known for her friendliness, intelligence, confidence, competence, beautiful smile, and her impeccable "fashion sense" and poise. She gave freely and generously of her time and finances to many, and worked hard on behalf of disadvantaged communities. Ethel was a role model and advisor to many. Throughout her life she advised and mentored children and adults. From first graders in Washington, D.C. public schools to corporations and the entire national education scene, Ethel's presence and positive work left a definite mark on the lives of many children, schools and communities. It has been written that she left a lasting legacy

strengthening education in Portland, Oregon, where she resided for many years after leaving South Carolina. She was known regionally and nationally as an effective manager, as an advocate who was very influential in ensuring equal opportunity for high quality education for all, and for meaningful community involvement. Ethel has been a member of over 40 Committees/Boards/Commissions some of which include the St. Vincent Hospital and Medical Center Board (Chairperson, 1983) and Foundation, Oregon Symphony Association, Oregon Public Broadcasting Commission, Linfield College Board of Trustees, The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon (President, 1992-94), the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Board of Directors of Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Oregon, Pacific Power, and Arthritis Foundation of Oregon Board. Ethel leaves to cherish her memory her brother Robert Simon, Jr. (Doris); sister Patricia S. Frelow, daughter Lisa S. Jenkins, son Cornell ?Chris? Jenkins (Wanda), grandsons Joshua, Caleb, Noah, and Luke, and many other loving friends and relatives. She was preceded in death by her parents, and sister Jacquelyn Simon Finch. Many people loved and admired Ethel. Instead of goodbye Ethel was known for ending conversations saying; ?love one another.? We will continue to ?love one another? Ethel and we will always love you and keep you in our hearts. We, the family, understand that Ethel?s purpose in life has been fulfilled and we take comfort in knowing that she is resting peacefully in the Master?s arms, the same arms that will comfort us in our time of bereavement.

# Tribute Wall

DS

“ God bless and comfort the family of a strong soldier for right and justice, and my dear, dear friend.

*May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.*

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**Dr. Bradley Scott** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

DJ

“ Dear Jenkins family, What a lovely tribute to your mother/ grandmother/sister. She was a remarkable woman with many talents. I know you will miss her greatly, but her memory will remain in your hearts forever. Thinking about and praying for your peace during this difficult time.

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**Deborah Jenkins** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

MP

“ Dear friends and family of my buddy, Ethel.

*How sad in reading of Ethel's passing in the local paper today. I will always hold her close to my heart and cherish the times we spent together. I mean, to be called baby by such a wonderful woman was the ultimate compliment. She had a huge fan club here at Waverly and will missed by all of us. I loved her and am filled with many wonderful memories. Feel my prayers for the family and know that I am praying for all of you.*

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**Mike Stone, Waverly Yacht Club Condos, Portland** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

EE

“ A candle was lit by E. Jenelle Brown, RN BSN MST Retired, Multnomah ESD

on July 22, 2017 1:44 AM

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**E. Jenelle Brown, RN BSN MST Retired, Multnomah ESD** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

EO

“ To The Jenkins Family, May you find comfort as your beloved Doc is sitting at the right hand of God waiting to welcome her family and friends into the Gates of Heaven. May she RIH with her wonderful smile and giving everyone her lessons in how to make education a must for those who need it most...our children of tomorrow!

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**E Jenelle Brown PPS and MESD Portland Oregon** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

RF

“ I have been out of town and just saw Ethel's obituary. She was a dear friend and we had many shared experiences at St Vincent Hospital where she was a very active board member. She was always vocal about doing the right thing. I will miss her warm smile.

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**Ron Fraback** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

SM

“ While I only knew her a short time, I will miss her a great deal. Her warm smile and no nonsense attitude was always welcomed. What a wonderful, accomplished woman!

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**Stan McCloy** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

MJ

“ A candle was lit by Mable Jeter&Famialy

on July 27, 2017 11:20 PM

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**Mable Jeter&Famialy** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

CS

“ While Ethel presided as Executive Director of NWREL, I had the pleasure and opportunity to get to know the most influencial and dynamic woman I had ever met. She was a woman of greatness, energy, and foresight. Still she valued her staff and I was lucky to be able to share wit and conversation with her as we crossed paths in the hall of the Lab. I am fortunate to have had our paths cross and thankful for having met such a dynamic archangel.

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**Cherrie Salvatore** - January 23 at 02:47 PM

MT

“ A candle was lit by Mildred Robinson Thomas

on June 15, 2019 1:40 PM

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**Mildred Robinson Thomas** - January 23 at 02:47 PM