

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Ruth Teena Williams

PERSON

Williams, Ruth, 1927-2011

Alternative Names: Reverend Dr. Ruth Teena Williams;

Life Dates: October 4, 1927-June 6, 2011

Place of Birth: New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Residence: Chicago, Illinois

Work: Chicago, Illinois

Occupations: Funeral Director

Biographical Note

Reverend Dr. Ruth “Teena” Williams was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 4, 1927. Williams attended public schools in New Orleans, and after graduating from high school, she enrolled in Xavier University, earning her A.B. degree in 1947. She then attended St. Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, earning her master’s of science in medical social work in 1950.

After earning her master’s degree, Williams moved to Chicago and was hired by Cook County Hospital as a social worker in 1950. In 1955, she was hired by the city of Chicago to work as a social worker with welfare recipients, and in 1957 she went to work for the Veterans Administration. In 1959, Williams joined in the family business, Unity Funeral Parlors, and went back to school to become a licensed funeral director and in 1964 she became an embalmer. Williams served as president and chairman of the board of Unity Funeral Parlors, as well as serving as president of Unity Limousine Services.

Wanting to help people, Williams enrolled in the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1977, and she earned her master’s of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees in 1980. Since then, she also earned a certificate in Anglican studies from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary and her Ph.D. from the Chicago Theological Seminary at the age of eighty. She served as a part-time priest at St. Edmund’s Episcopal Church in Chicago.

Williams was involved with numerous civic organizations, including The Links, Inc., the women's board of the Field Museum and the Chicago Network. She had numerous awards bestowed upon her over the years, including the Spirit of Love award from the Little City Foundation and special recognition from the Links.

Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 26, 2004.

Williams passed away on June 6, 2011.

Related Entries

Valena C. Jones Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

McDonogh No. 35 Senior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Xavier University of Louisiana [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bachelor's degree

Saint Louis University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Master of Social Work

Worsham College of Mortuary Science [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Embalmer, Funeral Director

Chicago Theological Seminary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Master of Divinity

Chicago Theological Seminary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Doctor of Ministry

Seabury-Western Theological Seminary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Anglican Studies Certificate

Institute for Spiritual Leadership [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Spiritual Director Certificate

Chicago Theological Seminary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Doctor of Philosophy

Unity Funeral Parlors [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

President and Chairman of the Board

Unity Limousine Services [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

President

Cook County Hospital [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2000 to ?]

Social Worker

City of Chicago [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1986 to 1987]

Medical Social Worker

United States Department of Veterans Affairs [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1957 to 1959]

Unity Mutual Life Insurance [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1958 to 1962]

Public Relations Supervisor

Unity Funeral Parlors [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1959 to ?]

Funeral Director

Unity Funeral Parlors [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1964 to ?]

Embalmer

St. Edmund's Episcopal Church [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1987 to 1988]

Priest

St. James Episcopal Cathedral [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1988 to 1991]

Priest

St. Margaret of Scotland [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1991 to 1998]

Priest

St. Edmund's Episcopal Church [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1998 to ?]

Supply Priest (Part time assisting)

Academy of Funeral Service Practice [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Certified Funeral Service Practitioner

The Illinois and National Funeral Directors Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

International Federation of Thanatologists Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

The Cook County Associates of Funeral Homeowners [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Links Foundation, Inc [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Southside Chapter of Zonta International [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

The Chicago Network [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Child Welfare League of America [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

The United Negro College Fund [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Women's Board of the University of Chicago [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Women's Board - The Field Museum [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Museum of Science & Industry, Black Creativity Gala Committee [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Founder

Lyric Opera [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]