

WILLIAMS, Martha (Hathaway). January 25, 1914–July 22, 1989.

WELLESLEY COLLEGE (BA 1935), MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MS 1936, PhD 1939).

Martha Eldora Hathaway was born in Montclair, New Jersey, the daughter of Sarah Emma (Vaughan) (b. ca. 1885) and Joseph Wood Hathaway (b. 1885), natives of Massachusetts who married in about 1911. She had younger brothers, Edward W. (1916–1994) and Vaughan (1923–2003). Her father graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1910 and worked for many years for Western Electric Company in New York City. In 1918 he described his occupation as electrical engineer and in 1930 as accountant.

Martha Hathaway attended public schools in Montclair and graduated with honors in mathematics from the high school there in 1931. She then entered Wellesley College, where she was a Durant scholar and served as president of the Wellesley mathematics club her senior year, 1934–35. She graduated with honors in mathematics in 1935. On June 19, two days after her graduation, Martha Hathaway married Herbert Fitz Randolph Plass in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Herbert Plass was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1912, and he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1934 and 1935, respectively, before entering medical school at Harvard University.

Martha H. Plass entered MIT in 1935 and finished her work for her master's degree a year later, having written a thesis supervised by George Rutledge. She continued at MIT, where she minored in physics and where D. J. Struik supervised her doctoral dissertation. During the second semester 1937–38 she was an instructor at Wellesley and was the nominee of Wellesley for its institutional membership to the AMS. In the fall of 1938 she became an instructor at the University of Maryland. In 1939 Martha Plass received her PhD from MIT and Herbert R. Plass received his MD from Harvard; they also were divorced that year.

Martha Plass continued to teach at the University of Maryland as an instructor until 1940, when she married Jonathan Wilber Williams and moved to North Carolina. Jonathan W. Williams was born March 5, 1910, in Olmsted Falls, Ohio. He earned his BS at Baldwin-Wallace College in 1930 and his MS and PhD in organic chemistry in 1932 and 1935, respectively, from Northwestern University. He taught at a junior college the first two years after receiving his doctorate and was on the faculty at the University of Maryland 1937–39 and at the University of North Carolina 1939–41. During the war he worked at the US Naval Research Laboratory 1941–42 and with the National Defense Research Committee of the Office of Scientific Research and Development 1942–45.

Martha Williams was again an instructor at Maryland 1941–43. After the war, Jonathan Williams worked for the DuPont chemical company 1946–54 and then for the Haskell Laboratory of Toxicology and Industrial Medicine, established by DuPont, 1954–60. In 1960 he took a position with the patent and licensing division of the US Department of the Interior.

Martha and Jonathan Williams had two children: a daughter, Susan, born in about 1943, and a son, Jon M., born about five years later. The family lived in Wilmington, Delaware, by the early 1950s. Martha Williams was a member of the Canterbury Garden Club and the Delaware Daffodil Society and was president of the Delaware Federation of Garden Clubs 1962–65. She was president of the Wilmington branch of the AAUW 1961–62.

Jonathan Williams died in June 1970 at the age of sixty. Martha Williams died of heart failure in St. Frances Hospital in Wilmington in 1989 at age seventy-five. She was survived by her two brothers, her two children, and three grandsons. Memorial services were held in the First Unitarian Church in Sharpley, Delaware. Contributions could be made to the Delaware Nature Education Society in Ashland, Delaware.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, AAUW; Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi.

Thesis and dissertation:

1936 [Plass, M. H.] Review of methods of contour integration. MS thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, directed by George Rutledge.

1939 [Plass, M. H.] Ruled surfaces in Euclidean four space. PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, directed by Dirk Jan Struik. See also **1942**.

Publication:

1942 Ruled surfaces in Euclidean four space. *J. Math. Phys. Mass. Inst. Tech.* 21:144–58. Published version of PhD dissertation. Review: *MR* 4,170b (V. G. Grove).

References to: AmMSc 7–8, 9P.

“Hathaway–Plass.” (Marriage announcement) *New York Times*, 26 May 1935.

“Martha H. Williams.” (Obituary) *Wilmington (DE) News Journal*, 25 Jul 1989.

Other sources: PhD dissertation biography 1939; application for social security account number 1963; Alumnae Register, 1942 Record Number of the Wellesley College Bulletin; communication with Wilmington (DE) Public Library and with MIT Libraries Document Services; AmMSc 10P&B (Williams, Dr. Jonathan W(ilbur)); US census 1930 NJ; SSDI.

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