

Ms Marie Sim

Mrs Marie Sim, who served as Secretary to three Vice-Chancellors and was employed here continuously from 1950 to 1990, was awarded the degree of Master of Arts (*honoris causa*) at the 11.30 pm ceremony on 17 May 1991.



Mrs Sim with the Chancellor, Sir James Rowland,
photo, 'The University of Sydney News', 28 May 1991.

Report

Forty years of patient and dutiful service to the University were rewarded when Mrs Marie Sim received an honorary degree.

Presenting the degree, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Don McNicol, praised Mrs Sim for her dignity and tact in what were often trying circumstances. In particular, Professor McNicol said Mrs Sim had witnessed first-hand a turbulent period of student protests after her appointment as Secretary to former Vice-Chancellor Professor (later Sir) Bruce Williams in 1969.

'Sometimes the locks on the Vice-Chancellor's office were insufficient, and only the person of Marie Sim herself stood between the protesters and the Vice-Chancellor,' Professor McNicol said. 'She overcame those conflicts with the calm demeanour and dignity which were characteristic of her style.'

Mrs Sim came to Sydney University from Fort St Girls' High School, armed with her Headmistress's recommendation. She began work in the Registrar's Office, and aside from a brief secondment to an academic department, remained in administration for the next 40 years.

After serving as Secretary to Sir Bruce Williams from 1969 to 1981, Mrs Sim continued as Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor when the late Professor John Ward succeeded Williams. She remained when Professor McNicol took over the reins in February 1990 and retired on 7 December 1990.

'From her unique position in the University administration, Mrs Sim saw a great many changes - in the growth of the University's staff and student numbers, in the expansion of its physical and academic boundaries, in the attitudes towards tertiary education and in the demands placed upon it,' Professor McNicol said.

'Many will remember her as one of the public faces of the University - the calm and dignified personage who presided at the

entrance to the Vice-Chancellor's office, delicately weighing the urgency and importance of requests and inquiries from students, staff, ambassadors, Ministers of the Crown, and leaders of business and industry, and treating each person with tact and discretion.'

Professor McNicol said Mrs Sim had long harboured a wish to study for a degree at the University, but had entered during a period when women were not encouraged to do this. 'Today's ceremony allows us to satisfy one of her unfulfilled ambitions,' Professor McNicol said.

Mrs Sim's outside interests include playing the bagpipes (she rose to the rank of Pipe Major in the NSW Ladies Highland Pipe Band), and travel; recent destinations include Antarctica, Jordan, the Gulf of St Lawrence and Rwanda.

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