

ZITA LILLIAN THORNBURY

1888 - 1969

Zita Lillian Thornbury, Director Emeritus of the Vocational Bureau, died on March 17, 1969 at the age of 81. She was born and brought up in Poughkeepsie, and for 65 years she was continuously associated with Vassar College - entering as a freshman in 1904, graduating in 1908, from 1908 to 1914 serving as assistant in the Departments of History and Philosophy, then as assistant to the Dean. She left only once, to earn a Master's degree at Columbia in 1921. In 1923 the Vocational Bureau was established, and Miss Thornbury became its first director, a post she held until her retirement in 1953. Even after that she remained close to the College and its alumnae, unfailingly interested in all that went on.

She liked to recall that the Vocational Bureau began as a file in a tin box on Dean Ella McCaleb's desk. It was, she said, "a lively but diminutive teacher's registry with few applications for other kinds of jobs." When the tin box became officially the Vocational Bureau in 1923, it was one of the first such services established anywhere, and Miss Thornbury was one of the early pioneering group in the then new field of vocational guidance - a field which is today still somewhat undefined and often frustrating.

The 30 years of her directorship saw vast changes in the opportunities for women and the life pattern of the educated woman. Business, industry, the government, the professional schools began to come to the campus in the search for talented womanpower. Undergraduates shifted from the summer beaches and tennis courts to summer jobs and in the shift became far more knowledgeable about the working world. It was a busy and complex period, and Miss Thornbury occupied a special observation post. The many Vassar alumnae whom she helped remembered her with warmth and affection as an efficient, friendly, ever-present figure in the top floor of Main Building's old porte-cochere, one who had a profound

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interest in Vassar College and a genuine, outgoing interest in Vassar girls of all eras. Those of us who saw her on her almost daily visits to the College were always impressed by the depth of her loyalties. She was a dedicated Vassar woman, a fervent Roman Catholic, and a devoted adherent of the Democratic party.

Edward R. Linner

Robert E. McArthur

Jane T. Johnson, Chairman