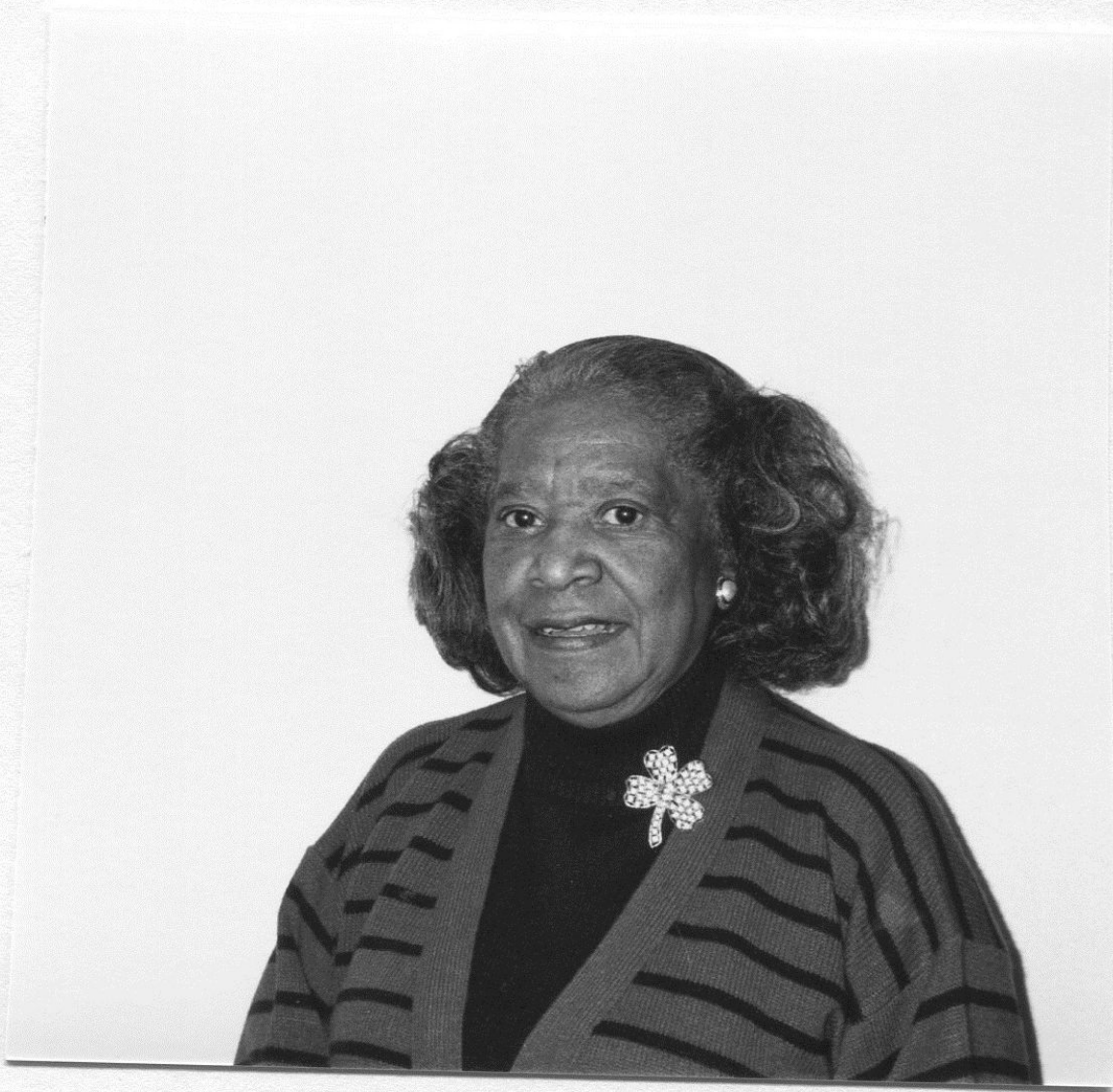


*Mary Jackson*



1921- ?

Years at NACA/NASA 1950-1985

The Peninsula recently lost a woman of courage, a most gracious heroine, Mary Winston Jackson. Mary was a champion for her race, other minorities, and women. She suffered many indignities while holding steadfast to her personal attributes and compassion for others. Mary grew up in Hampton, Virginia, graduating with highest honors from high school and received her Bachelor of Science degrees from Hampton Institute in Mathematics and Physical Science. After graduation from college, Mary was a school teacher in Maryland for awhile, then began her long career with the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), later National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) at Langley Research Center, Hampton, Virginia.

Mary began her career with NACA as a Computer (as women Mathematicians were known at that time) and was very grateful for the opportunity to serve with this fine organization. She specialized in reducing data from wind tunnel experiments and from actual aircraft data on the many flight experiments NACA was involved with. Her desk was located with other Computers and it wasn't until many, many years later that she was assigned to work directly with the flight test engineers.

As her career progressed slowly she began to recognize that many minorities and women were not advancing as fast as she thought they should and began analyzing the situation to see what was holding them back. She discovered that occasionally it was something as simple as a lack of a couple of courses, or perhaps the location of the individual, or perhaps the assignments given them, and of course, the ever present glass ceiling that most women seemed to encounter. Mary set about in her very quiet way to advise women of the educational requirements needed to allow their titles to be changed from Mathematician to Engineer and was one of the first to do this. Others followed her lead and the title change led to increased promotion potential.

After a long career of over 30 years, where she had reached her highest grade potential as an Engineer without moving into a supervisory position, she looked seriously at her own advancement and decided she would make a crucial decision concerning her own career in order to help other minorities and women. She decided to apply for an Administrative Professional position and step down from her Engineering position into the Equal Opportunity Specialist field. When she was selected for this position, it meant she had to step back in grade in order to be in a position to help others. Mary was sent to NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC for specialized training and returned to Langley to put her training and expertise into action. She was effective in being a very successful Affirmative Action Program Manager and Federal Women's Program Manager, initiating many changes and bringing to management's attention the accomplishments of many minorities and women and was instrumental in the hiring of highly-qualified individuals. She was a role model of the highest character and through her quiet, behind the scenes efforts, managed to help many minorities and women reach their highest potential through promotions and movement into supervisory positions.

Mary passed peacefully at age 83 on Friday, February 11, 2005 and left behind a legacy, that has allowed her special people to have career opportunities and advancement where the most qualified persons are considered in a color and sex-blind society.

*Contributor: Gloria R. Champine (NASA Retiree)*



Mary Jackson on far right in 1950s.