

Marie M. Rivera

February 25, 1921 — January 21, 1975

The Cornell and Ithaca communities lost an important person this year. The troubled Cornell students whom she counseled have lost a friend. The people with whom she worked lost a colleague who was not only professional but also uniquely human in her work.

Marie Rivera was born and raised and received her education in New York City. She attended New York University and was awarded her A.B. degree in 1942. She then went on to graduate school at Columbia University and received her master's degree in social work in 1945. She was a person who had much experience in counseling prior to coming to the Department of University Health Services at Cornell in 1972. From 1965 to 1972 Mrs. Rivera worked at the West Nassau Mental Health Clinic as supervising social worker and therapist, and at the New York University Graduate School of Social Work as a fieldwork instructor. In 1972 she joined the Cornell University Mental Health Clinic as psychiatric social worker. In this position she was a counselor and psychotherapist to the Cornell students whose personal problems brought them to the clinic for professional help.

Mrs. Rivera was active in local affairs, being a member of the Tompkins County Mental Health Association. Her membership in professional organizations included the National Association of Social Workers and the National Honorary Sociological and Anthropological Society. She also was a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.

Marie Rivera's concern and care for her clients was one of her outstanding characteristics. She was devoted to her work; she really listened, and she could hear both spoken and unspoken pain. She expressed the "understanding" that her clients treasured and responded to so much.

Marie's friendship was cherished; it was a happy friendship. She was fun to be near. She was a wise and gentle person whose strength and determination were cloaked in graciousness. She was without bitterness and maintained a positive outlook, an ever-present sense of humor about things past and present.

Her love and closeness to her family gave her strength. It was no surprise that in the months of pain and heartache that preceded her death, her courage and her love supported her family and friends while she herself was sustained by her own unconquerable spirit.

Her son's tribute, made at her memorial service, expresses the essence of Marie Rivera:

Mom liked flowers, trees, rain, wind, mountains, and most of all the sunshine. Life for her was happiest when she could see a new place and a new sunrise, and it follows that freedom was Mom's paramount interest. She sought her children's freedom from the bondages of servitude to others because of their race: she fought with many a torn child or adult for freedom from their own inner problems. A smile always led to inner happiness for Mom, and a love of the living—earth, wind, fire, water, animal, and man— L.O.V.E. was her strength; Life Over this Vast Earth made her want to live on.

Marjorie Doris, Joycelyn R. Hart, Marvin Waldman