

# Woodrow Williams 1913-1997

by Nadine Stoner

Anyone who has been to an annual Georgist conference in the past two decades probably met Woodrow Williams. He was a faithful attender, preferring to arrive by train.

Way back when, at a Henry George Schools sponsored conference in Evanston, Illinois at Kendal College, I was the "new kid on the block" and, along with Everett Gross, Woody befriended me. Woody faithfully reported on activities in Ohio.

In 1977, the first Joint Georgist Conference (HGS, HGFA, HGI, BEE, Schalkenbach cosponsoring) was held in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, and Woody was there. He talked about how he was trying to get land value taxation included in the stand on world hunger and world peace of the United Methodist Church.

Apparently his efforts bore fruit. At the 1983 CGO conference held in Santa Barbara, Calif., Walt Rybeck gave a great talk on "Churches and Land Question." Walt asked the conferees who were working through their churches to stand and identify themselves. We discovered a sizable group of United Methodists and later than evening convened a United Methodist/Georgist caucus! We determined to submit a petition to the General Conference (quadrennial international church body) in 1984. Between Woodrow Williams, Clay Berling, Everett Gross, Mary Davis, Otto Grimm, Glenn Weeks, and Michele Greenhill, and myself, we collected 133 signatures from United Methodists in a dozen states. Walt Rybeck helped edit my draft, "Furthering the stewardship of private property through tax reform." This was my first quadrennial conference petition effort, but not the first for Woody. He had been at it for years.

Woody, an Ohio farmer all his life, spoke at the 1985 Georgist conference in St. Louis on a panel on "The Farm Problem," along with Charles Byrne of Missouri and Robert Willis of Iowa.

Woody was elected a trustee of the Henry George Foundation of America in 1989, and came to meetings of the Board when the meetings coincided with the CGO conferences. *(continued on page 28)*



## Woodrow Williams...

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The last time I talked to Woody was on the phone in 1995. His brother-in-law said he was out chopping. "Hey, Judge, telephone," he yelled. "Judge?," I asked Woody when he came to the phone. It was a nickname dating back to early childhood. Woody liked to talk about the land value tax inroads Tom Johnson made in Cleveland and earlier this century. He lapsed into talking about World War II, of which he was a veteran of campaigns in the South Pacific. He was a frequent contributor of letters to the editor of local newspapers — among them the Toledo, Ohio and Lima, Ohio papers.

Woody's sister, Alice, wrote me in Oct. 1996, saying Woody had gone into a nursing home. Then in June, she wrote that Woody died at age 84 on May 30th. We will miss Woody. I'll always remember Clay Berling calling Woody forward at one open mike session and praising his common sense.

Sympathy cards to the family may be sent to his sister, Alice Sparks, 17500 Road U, Columbus Grove, OH 45830.