BEENKEN, May M. October 22, 1901–December 21, 1988.
University of California, Southern Branch (BEd 1923), University of Chicago (MA 1926, PhD 1928).

May Margaret Beenken was the daughter of Sophie (Kirn) (1862–1941), born in Pennsylvania, and Henry Beenken (b. 1852), born in Germany. She was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and had at least three older siblings: Daniel (ca. 1886–1954), a sister born in 1893, and Walter (1896–1959).

May Beenken attended public elementary school and three years of high school in Philadelphia before the family moved to southern California. After one year there she graduated from the Manual Arts High School of Los Angeles in 1919. She then was a member of the first class to receive bachelor's degrees at the Southern Branch of the University of California (now UCLA); she received a bachelor of education degree in 1923.

Beenken taught in the public schools of Los Angeles 1923–24 and was an associate in mathematics at the Southern Branch of the University of California 1924–25. She entered the University of Chicago in the summer of 1925 and was in residence there, except for summer quarter 1927, until June 1928, when she received her doctorate with a dissertation in projective differential geometry. She was a university fellow her last two years at Chicago and during that time served as chairman of the committee on arrangements and of the program committee of the Junior Mathematics Club.

After receiving her PhD in 1928, Beenken joined the faculty at Oshkosh Teachers College (now University of Wisconsin Oshkosh) as head of the mathematics department and remained in that position for nineteen years. She was joined in 1929 by Irene Price. In February 1931 Beenken organized the mathematics club at the college. She was in charge of mathematics for the US Air Force 96th column training detachment at the college 1943–44, and was director of the division of pre-professional education from 1944 until she left in 1947.

Beenken attended almost every meeting of the Wisconsin Section of the MAA from its first in April 1933 until she left the state in 1947; she served as secretary in 1934–35 and chairman in 1943–44. She was active in other state organizations as well; she was chairman in 1936–37 of the mathematics section of the Wisconsin Education Association and was a member in the late 1930s of a state committee on the uses and appreciation of mathematics.

Beenken was a lecturer at UCLA in the summer of 1945, and in 1947 returned to southern California as associate professor of mathematics and department chairman at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles; she was promoted to professor in 1951. During the summer of 1953 she attended an eight-week conference on collegiate mathematics in Boulder, Colorado, that was sponsored by the National Science Foundation. She received grants from the NSF for work at the University of Oregon in summer 1954 and at UCLA in summer 1959 and from the Social Science Research Council for work at Stanford in summer 1957. She retired from Immaculate Heart College as emeritus professor in 1969.

Beenken died at age eighty-seven in 1988 at St. Vincent Medical Center in Los Angeles. She was buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, California. In the memorial note that appeared in the *Immaculate Heart College Alumni Newsletter* after her death, a former student and colleague recalled that "she was indeed a

superb instructor, always prepared down to the minutest detail and utterly meticulous in her comprehensive presentations" (p. 8). He added, "I remember once when over 80% of her graduating mathematics majors were above the 90th percentile in the nationwide Advanced Area Test in Mathematics – no students of Dr. Beenken's could ever say that they did not receive the best instruction that any educational institution could ever offer." And, finally, "Dr. Beenken was at all times a creative person, and when she retired from the College she decided to turn to painting. She applied herself here with the same single-mindedness as in teaching" (p. 10).

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, NCTM, AAAS (fellow), AAUW, Sigma Xi, Pi Mu Epsilon.

Thesis and dissertation:
1926 On the projective equivalence of plane curves. MA thesis, University of Chicago, directed by Ernest Preston Lane. Typescript.
1928 Surfaces in five-dimensional space. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Ernest Preston Lane. Typescript. Abstract: *University of Chicago. Abstracts of theses. Science series.* 6:9–14.

Publications:
1933 Review of *Arithmetic for Teachers*, by H. E. Glazier. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 40:418.
1934 Improving the teaching of college mathematics. *Math. News Lett.* 8:97–103. Presented to the MAA, Beloit, WI, 8 Apr 1933; abstract: *Amer. Math. Monthly* 40:567 #1.
1956 with C. J. A. Halberg, Jr., R. B. Herrera, P. B. Johnson, P. A. White. College mathematics for non-science students. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 63:639–42. A report of the Special Committee on College Mathematics for Non-Science Students, a Subcommittee of the California Committee for the Study of Education, presented 20 Apr 1956.

Abstracts not listed above:
1929 Surfaces in five-dimensional space. *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 35:457 #19. Presented to the AMS, Chicago, 29 Mar 1929. Based on PhD dissertation.
1939 Projective equivalents of the trigonometric functions. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 46:379 #2. Presented to the MAA, Milwaukee, 6 May 1939.
1954 Report on a conference for teachers of collegiate mathematics. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 61:447 #7. Presented to the MAA, Los Angeles, 13 Mar 1954

References to: AmMSc 5–8, 9P–11P; AmMWSc 12P–13P; AmWom 1935–40; WhoAmW 1–3.
Delaney, Matthew S. "In Memoriam: Dr. May M. Beenken." *Immaculate Heart College Alumni Newsletter*, Spring 1989.

Other sources: Master's thesis vita 1926; PhD dissertation vita 1928; Owens questionnaire 1937; communication with Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles; US Census 1900 PA, 1930 WI; California death certificate.

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