

**LANDERS, Mary (Kenny).** February 5, 1905–November 18, 1990.

BROWN UNIVERSITY (WOMEN'S COLLEGE) (BA 1926), BROWN UNIVERSITY (MA 1927), UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (PhD 1939).

Mary Virginia Kenny was born in Fall River, Massachusetts, the eldest of six children of Katherine (Connell) (1876–1958) and Bernard Francis Kenny (1878–1963). Her mother was a native of Massachusetts, and her father was born in England before immigrating to the United States in 1893. Both were of Irish ancestry. In the 1920 and 1930 US census her father's occupation was listed as letter carrier, civil service. The other children in the family were Margaret, Dorothy, Mildred, Rita, and Bernard Jr., the youngest. They ranged in age from about a year younger than Mary to about a dozen years younger.

Kenny attended public schools in Fall River before entering Women's College in Brown University in September 1922. Yearbook entries indicate that she played violin and was a skilled debater. After receiving her bachelor's degree in 1926, she stayed at Brown as an Anne Crosby Emery fellow in the mathematics department and received her master's degree in June 1927. Kenny was an instructor on a temporary assignment in the mathematics department at Hunter College 1927–28 and during that year became a member of the American Mathematical Society as a nominee of the publishing company Allyn and Bacon. The temporary nature of her appointment was dropped in 1928. She continued her graduate work in mathematics by taking one class at Columbia University each semester during the years 1928–30 while teaching at Hunter. Beginning in spring 1930, and continuing through spring 1932, Kenny taught in the evening and extension sessions at Hunter.

A fellow student and an assistant in the department at Brown during 1926–27 was Aubrey Wilfred Landers Jr. He was born in New Hampshire on September 2, 1906, and received a BA from Acadia University in Nova Scotia in 1926. Landers continued as assistant at Brown until 1929, when he received his MS in mathematics. That spring R. G. D. Richardson at Brown wrote several letters of recommendation for Landers to institutions in New York City, noting that Landers had personal reasons for wanting to be in the city. In 1929–30, Landers continued his graduate work by taking a class (six semester hours) at Columbia University while teaching as an instructor at Hunter College. That summer Kenny and Landers returned to Providence to attend the first of many meetings of the American Mathematical Society. That fall Landers moved to Brooklyn College as instructor, but in spring 1931 he joined Kenny teaching in the evening and extension sessions at Hunter. On July 30, 1932, Mary Kenny and Landers were married, after which they continued their positions at Hunter and Brooklyn College, respectively.

In the summer of 1933, Mary and Aubrey Landers resumed their graduate work, this time at the University of Chicago. They were in residence 1933–34 and all summers 1933–39 except for 1936. They worked in the calculus of variations, and the dissertations of both were supervised jointly by G. A. Bliss and his former PhD student at Chicago, M. R. Hestenes. Mary K. Landers and Aubrey W. Landers received their doctorates in December 1939. They and [Ellen Clayton Stokes](#) were the last of the fifty-three PhD students of Bliss.

Mary Landers continued at Hunter College as instructor 1928–47, assistant professor 1947–58, associate professor 1958–63, professor 1964–75, and professor emeritus after 1975. In 1941 she and [Marguerite D. Darkow](#), then an assistant professor at Hunter, produced a preliminary edition of a book, *Elementary Mathematics*.

Aubrey Landers was at Brooklyn College as instructor 1930–47, assistant professor 1947–52, associate professor 1952–67, professor 1967–74, and professor emeritus after 1974. In 1967–68, he directed Brooklyn College's Office of Grants and Research.

During World War II, Aubrey Landers was on military leave from Brooklyn College. As an officer in the US Naval Reserve, he was on active duty in Washington, D.C., from 1942 to 1946, doing cryptographic work. Mary Landers, who remained in New York, joined him in Washington in January 1944, two days before their son, Robert, was (prematurely) born. On leave from Hunter College, Mary Landers remained in Washington, and in September 1945 gave birth to a daughter, Patricia. The war over, the family moved back to New York in May 1946. By adjusting their teaching schedules and later hiring a housekeeper, they were able to resume full-time teaching. Their third child, Richard, was born in New York in January 1949.

Both of the Landers were engaged in early efforts to improve conditions for members of the college teaching profession. From 1959 to 1972, Mary Landers was secretary of the Legislative Conference, an organization that represented the professional staff of the public colleges in New York City and sought to influence legislation affecting the faculty and administrators. The conference merged with the United Federation of College Teachers in 1972 to become the Professional Staff Congress and the bargaining agent for the professional staff at City University of New York (CUNY). Mary Landers served as co-secretary of the new organization and as co-chairman of the Hunter College unit. In a November 20, 1964, article in the *New York Times* on the City University budget, Mary Landers is quoted as declaring that "too few promotions and too heavy a teaching load are two areas of great dissatisfaction to many members of the faculties." She also served as trustee of the City University Welfare Board and as chairman of the Isabelle Scott Bollard Scholarship Committee. Organizational affiliations in addition to those listed below include the New York Academy of Sciences and the New York State Teachers Association.

Aubrey Landers died on May 2, 1986. Mary Landers died in the Rhode Island Hospital in Providence of colon cancer four and a half years later at the age of eighty-five. She was survived by her three children, two sisters, and seven grandchildren. Both Aubrey and Mary Landers are buried in Swan Point Cemetery in Providence.

**Organizational affiliations:** AMS, MAA, AAAS, Sigma Delta Epsilon, NEA, AAUW, AAUP, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, Pi Mu Epsilon.

**Thesis and dissertation:**

**1927** [Kenny, M. V.] The Dedekind and Cantor systems of irrational numbers and a proof of their equivalence. MA thesis, Brown University. Typescript.

**1939** The Hamilton-Jacobi theory for the problems of Bolza and Mayer. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Gilbert Ames Bliss and Magnus Rudolph Hestenes. Private edition, 1942, distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries, reprinted from *Contributions to the Calculus of Variations, 1938–1941*, 209–91. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Publications:**

**1940** Review of *The Place of Mathematics in Secondary Education: The Final Report of the Joint Commission of the Mathematical Association of America and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics*. *Scripta Math.* 7:133–38.

**1942** The Hamilton-Jacobi theory for the problems of Bolza and Mayer. In *Contributions to the Calculus of Variations, 1938–1941*, 209–91. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Published version of PhD dissertation. Review: *MR* 4,47a (C. B. Tompkins).

**References to:** AmMSc 7–8, 9P–11P; AmMWSc 12P–13P; WhoAmW 3–8; WhAm 10. “Mary K. Landers, 85, Former Math Professor.” *New York Times*, 21 Nov 1990.

**Other sources:** PhD dissertation vita 1942; private communication with Robert K. Landers, Dec 2005 and Jan 2006; Brown University Archives (R. G. D. Richardson Papers); “City University asks \$104,470,000,” *New York Times*, 20 Nov 1964; US Census 1920, 1930 MA.

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