

LEHR, Marguerite. October 22, 1898–December 14, 1987.

GOUCHER COLLEGE (BA 1919), BRYN MAWR COLLEGE (PhD 1925).

Anna Marguerite Marie Lehr was born in Baltimore, Maryland, the eldest of five children of Margaret (Kreuder) (b. 1871) and George Lehr (b. 1870). Her mother was born in Maryland, and her father was born in Germany. Her father immigrated to the United States in 1890 and was naturalized in 1912; he was a grocer. Her siblings were Elizabeth (1900–1985), Charlotte (ca. 1905–1967), Charles G. K. (1908–1993), and George K. (1911–1996). In the 1930 census their occupations were listed as instructor in a school, librarian, draftsman, and bookkeeper, respectively.

Marguerite Lehr received her primary and secondary education in the public schools in Baltimore and graduated from Western High School. She entered Goucher College in 1915 and graduated in 1919. Lehr wrote in 1934 that she had planned to continue her studies at Johns Hopkins University “until [an] instance of Dr. [Clara Latimer] Bacon’s unceasing interest in the careers of all her students changed that plan more radically than she (I think!) or I foresaw” (“Clara Latimer Bacon,” 3). Bacon suggested she apply for a position at Bryn Mawr College as an assistant to Charlotte Scott. She spent her first two years at Bryn Mawr, 1919–21, as a reader and graduate student, half time in each position. Patricia Kenschaft indicated in her 1981 article with interview excerpts that Lehr had graded papers and held office hours for Scott, the latter because Scott was deaf. Although Lehr was awarded the M. Carey Thomas European fellowship for 1921–22, she postponed using it and remained at Bryn Mawr as a resident fellow in mathematics that year and as a scholar in mathematics 1922–23. She spent the year 1923–24 in Rome as an AAUW European fellow and as an M. Carey Thomas European fellow. While in Rome she worked on her dissertation and studied with Guido Castelnuovo, Federigo Enriques, and Vito Volterra. Soon after she returned from Italy in July 1924, she began her long career on the faculty of Bryn Mawr as an instructor. She received her PhD in 1925 with a physics minor and was the last student of Charlotte A. Scott.

In 1929 Lehr was promoted from instructor to associate. She was promoted to assistant professor in 1935, associate professor in 1937, professor in 1955, and retired as professor emeritus in 1967. In response to a question about obstacles in her career, Lehr wrote on her 1970 Bryn Mawr alumni survey that “Only at B.M., with its full graduate school, would a woman of my generation, in mathematics, have had graduate level courses to give, from the first – regardless of rank. My engagement was with mathematics, not ‘teaching,’ consequently I refused any & all feelers in administration or editing in spite of slow promotion! But the choice was mine – I wanted the full range of thought, live, not text-book concerns.”

Lehr was an honorary fellow at the Johns Hopkins University 1931–32, her first sabbatical year, and published two more articles in algebraic geometry, one of which was coauthored by Virgil Snyder of Cornell University. During World War II she taught mathematics needed to produce maps using photographs in an engineering science and management war training program at Bryn Mawr; she also taught mathematics in a V-12 program at Swarthmore College. During the late 1940s and into the 1950s, Lehr often attended meetings of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics. In 1950, during her second sabbatical, she visited the Institut Poincaré in Paris. During the first semester of 1952–53, she presented a fifteen-week course, “Invitation to Mathematics,” on the television show “University of the Air” in

Philadelphia. This led to several articles, including one in the *Monthly*; to talks on presenting mathematics on television; and to her membership on the MAA committee on films for classroom instruction. In 1954 she was a curriculum consultant for the state of Pennsylvania. In 1956–57 she was a visiting fellow at Princeton University. In 1958–59 she was chair of the Philadelphia Section of the MAA and was an MAA visiting lecturer; as such she presented talks at various colleges in Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, and Ohio. From 1957 until 1966 she served on a regional award committee of the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation. She was a member of the School Mathematics Study Group at Yale University, was an MAA representative to the NSF, and was a member of the examining committee on the new type of mathematics for the College Entrance Examination Board. She also gave talks to many Bryn Mawr alumnae groups. In 1954 Lehr received a Goucher alumnae achievement citation, and upon her retirement from Bryn Mawr in 1967 she received the Lindback Foundation teaching award.

In addition to her year in Rome in 1923–24, Lehr made at least four more trips to Europe; ship records indicate that she returned from Europe in September in 1928 and 1932 and in August in 1938 and 1950. For a 1961 Bryn Mawr Alumnae Association survey, Lehr listed some of her “general interests and activities” as poetry, including “attempts at translation from Fr[ench], Germ[an], Ital[ian],” “upholstering and other house projects (some of which do oddly have a math side, too), not a bad carpenter,” and gardening in Maine, where she spent many summers. In 1968, the year after she retired, Lehr was living in Salisbury, Maryland, where her sister Charlotte had been living until her death after a lengthy illness in August 1967. In May 1971 Lehr reported to Bryn Mawr from Baltimore that “I am gone from Salisbury a great deal.” Part of that time is likely to have been in Manset on Mount Desert Island in Maine, which she described for her 1954 article in the *Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bulletin*, as “next to Mathematics, her greatest obsession” (p. 9, caption).

In November 1972, Marguerite Lehr moved from Salisbury back to Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. She died there in 1987 at the age of eighty-nine. A memorial service was held in the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, where she had been active, and burial was in Baltimore. In 1988 the Marguerite Lehr Scholarship Fund was established at Bryn Mawr. The fund was made possible through gifts from her former students and friends and is for undergraduates with need who have done excellent work in mathematics.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, IMS, Soc. Math. France, Biometric Soc., AAAS (fellow), AAUW, AAUP, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi.

Dissertation:

1925 The plane quintic with five cusps. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, directed by Charlotte Angas Scott. Printed version, 1927, reprinted from *Amer. J. Math.* 49:197–214.

Publications:

1927 The plane quintic with five cusps. *Amer. J. Math.* 49:197–214. Published version of PhD dissertation. Review: *JFM* 51.0620.03 (E. A. Weiss). Presented to the AMS, Washington, DC, 29 Dec 1924; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 31:209–10 #6.

1928 with D. Agassiz. *La Cathédrale: L'Eglise St-François*. Lausanne, France: SPES. Pamphlet with poems by Lehr and illustrations by Agassiz.

1931 with V. Snyder. Generating involutions of infinite discontinuous Cremona groups of S_4 which leave a general cubic variety invariant. *Amer. J. Math.* 53:186–94. Reviews: *JFM* 57.0797.05 (F. Schaale); *Zbl* 001.15903 (E. A. Weiss). Presented as “Generating

involutions of infinite discontinuous Cremona groups of S_4 which leave V_3 invariant” to the AMS, Bethlehem, PA, 26 Dec 1929; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 36:191 #91.

1932 Regular linear systems of curves with singularities of a given curve as base points. *Amer. J. Math.* 54:471–88. Reviews: *JFM* 58.0689.03 (H. Kneser); *Zbl* 004.36305 (B. L. van der Waerden).

1934 Clara Latimer Bacon. *Goucher Alumnae Quart.* 12 (4): 3–4.

1940 The right to think. *AAUW J.* 33 (3): 152–54.

1941 Review of *Elementary Mathematical Concepts*, by J. H. Zant and A. H. Diamond. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 48:548–49.

1949 Foreword. In *Children Discover Arithmetic: An Introduction to Structural Arithmetic*, by Catherine Stern, xv–xxi. New York: Harper & Brothers. Also London: Harrap, 1953.

1954 A television program in mathematics. *Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bull.* (Fall): 8–9.

1955 An experiment with television. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 62:15–21.

1956 Of dice and men. *Goucher Alumnae Quart.* (Fall): 10–13. Presented to the Seven Colleges Program, Detroit, MI, Oct 1955.

1958 *Eight Topics: Interplay between the Fields of Algebra, Geometry and Probability.* (Pamphlet) Mathematical Association of America.

1961 Mathematics: A bibliography prepared especially for alumnae. *Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bull.* (Winter): 5.

1969 Review of *Analyse statistique du style*, by H. H. Somers and S. J. Louvain (Editions Nauwelaerts). *J. of Biblical Literature* 88:246–47.

1971 Charlotte Angas Scott. In *Notable American Women 1607–1950*, ed. Edward T. James, vol 3, 249–50. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

1983 with [G. S. Quinn](#), [R. S. McKee](#), and O. Taussky. Emmy Noether in Bryn Mawr. In *Emmy Noether in Bryn Mawr*, eds. Bhama Srinivasan and Judith Sally, 139–146. New York: Springer-Verlag. Review: *Zbl* 557.01012 (I. Schneider). Presented as part of “Emmy Noether at Erlangen, Göttingen, and Bryn Mawr,” panel discussion at AWM Symposium in Honor of Emmy Noether’s 100th Birthday, Bryn Mawr, PA, 18 Mar 1982.

Abstracts not listed above:

1933 On curves with assigned singularities. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 40:64 #3. Presented to the MAA, Swarthmore, PA, 26 Nov 1932.

1945 Mapping problems in aerial photography. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 52:234 #1. Presented to the MAA, Philadelphia, PA, 2 Dec 1944.

1955 with F. G. Bender and R. F. Jackson. Mathematics through the television lens. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 62:302 #2. Presented to the MAA, Princeton, NJ, 27 Nov 1954.

Presentations not listed above:

Mathematics on television (demonstration and discussion). Discussant at meeting of the MAA, Pittsburgh, PA, 30 Dec 1954.

A little mathematics of the multiplication table variety. Presented to the MAA, Haverford, PA, 23 Nov 1963.

A human attitude. Presented to the NCTM, New York City, 15 Apr 1966.

Parades and geometry. Presented to the MAA, Towson, MD, 23 Nov 1968.

Presentation to the MAA of work by young mathematicians with whom she corresponded, Baltimore, MD, 24 Apr 1971.

References to: AmMSc 4–8, 9P–11P; AmWom 1935–40; BiDWSci; [BioWMath](#); WhoAmW 5–6; WhoEast 1930.

Denckla, Martha Bridge. “Miss Lehr Retires.” *Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bulletin* (1966–67) (4): 13–14.

Kenschaft, Pat. “An Interview with Marguerite Lehr.” *AWM Newsletter* 11 (Jul–Aug 1981): 4–7. Reprint: “An Interview with Marguerite Lehr: In Memoriam.” *AWM Newsletter* 18 (Mar–Apr 1988): 9–11.

Other sources: PhD dissertation vita 1937; Owens questionnaire 1937; Bryn Mawr College alumnae files; Maltby, *History of the Fellowships*; Cockey, “Mathematics at Goucher”; Kenschaft, “The students of Charlotte Angas Scott”; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 MD; SSDI.

Last modified: June 23, 2011.