

SHEA, Sister Ann Elizabeth. September 19, 1900–May 14, 1957.

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS (BA 1927), UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN (MA 1931, PhD 1934).

Mary Gertrude Shea, known as Gertrude when she was young, was born and reared in St. Joseph, Missouri, the second of four children of Elizabeth (Raney), born in 1874 in Missouri, and Martin J. Shea (1864–1933), a native of Kentucky. In 1900 her parents, who at that time had been married four years, were living in St. Joseph with their two-year-old son. Also in the household were Elizabeth's mother and sister and Martin's sister. Martin Shea was a policeman. By 1910 all of the family's children were born: Gertrude's brother Lawrence was three years older than she; her brother Martin was two years younger; and her sister, Catherine, was seven years younger. Her father was a sergeant in the city police department.

In the 1920 census Gertrude Shea's occupation was listed as stenographer for a railroad clearing house. She entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in 1922, made first vows in 1924, and was thereafter known as Sister Ann Elizabeth Shea. She graduated from the newly named Saint Mary College, a junior college for women in Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1923, the first year instruction at the postsecondary level was added. The school, which was chartered in 1860, was formerly St. Mary's Academy; in 2003 it became the University of Saint Mary.

After completing her bachelor's degree in 1927 at the University of Kansas, Sister Ann Elizabeth taught mathematics until 1930 at Immaculata High School in Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1930 she entered the University of Wisconsin to study for her master's degree. Department minutes of that period note that a master's thesis for her was considered optional; in February of 1931 the department considered, presumably favorably, her request for approval of the following courses to complete her master's degree: real variables (one year), algebraic geometry (one year), and higher algebra (first semester). She received the master's degree in 1931.

From 1931 until her death in 1957, Sister Ann Elizabeth was associated with Saint Mary College. The college, from which she had graduated in 1923, had just added an upper division curriculum in 1930 and became a four-year institution in 1932. From 1931 to 1933 she was instructor of mathematics. At the same time, she continued her graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin, where she was in residence 1933–34 and completed her work, including a dissertation in algebraic geometry under the direction of Theodore Bennett, in 1934.

After receiving her PhD, the first of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth to earn a doctorate, Sister Ann Elizabeth was professor and chairman of the mathematics department and later registrar of the college. In her latter role, she was also a member of the Association of Collegiate Registrars and the Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars, for which she served as secretary. In 1940 she described her positions as registrar and chairman of the division of natural sciences and mathematics. She later became a member of the board of control of the college. She also taught in the summer of 1937 at Mount Mary College and in the summer of 1942 at Nazareth College. In the late 1930s and into the 1940s she attended meetings of the Kansas Section of the MAA.

In 1954 Sister Ann Elizabeth Shea was appointed treasurer-general of the corporation of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Her 1957 death in Leavenworth at age fifty-six from a cerebral hemorrhage was sudden and unexpected. Burial was

in Mount Olivet Cemetery on the Saint Mary grounds. She was survived by her younger sister, Catherine Shea, of St. Joseph, Missouri.

Organizational affiliations: MAA, NCTM, AAAS, Phi Beta Kappa.

Dissertation:

1934 Regular Cremona transformations in S_4 . PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, directed by Theodore Lake Bennett. Typescript.

References to: AMSc 7.

“Member of Sisters of Charity Dies.” *Leavenworth Times*, 15 May 1957.

“Sister Ann Shea Dies.” *Kansas City Star*, 16 May 1957.

“Sister Ann Elizabeth, Nuns’ Treasurer, Dies.” *Eastern Kansas Register*, 24 May 1957.

Other sources: Owens questionnaires 1937, 1940; University of Wisconsin Archives; communication with Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Archives; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920 MO.

Last modified: December 13, 2008.