

Winter 2019

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A collection of recent discoveries and activities in the IHM Archives



Sister's U-M recognition finally completed

A special project to recognize the first 25 women to earn doctorates in physics at the University of Michigan includes a member of the IHM congregation. Posters have been created by the student organization Society of Women in Physics to honor these trailblazers. IHM Sister Ambrosia Fitzgerald is near the top of the list. Graduating in 1934, she was the first religious to earn a Ph.D at Michigan and the fourth woman to earn a doctorate in physics there.

Archivist Jennifer Meacham recently visited the physics department to see the poster and bring back a copy. The introduction reads: “The Sister-Doctors were a group of nuns who attended the Rackham Graduate program for physics at the University of

Michigan in the 1930s and 1940s. These women brought their expertise back to their communities, going on to teach in primary, secondary and post-secondary education, and holding two university physics chair positions. They were also prolific researchers, collectively earning more than 15 grants and awards. Some of the most prominent of these women are presented here.”

This is the text about Sister Ambrosia: “Dr. Sister Mary Ambrosia Fitzgerald, IHM [Born Elizabeth Fitzgerald, 1906-1971] was the first nun to earn a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. She achieved this honor in physics in 1934, with her dissertation, ‘The Fifty-Three Electron Spectra of Caesium and Barium: Cs III and Ba IV,’

published in the *Physical Review* in October of that year. In her doctoral research, Dr. Fitzgerald used infrared spectroscopy to investigate the structure of ionized atoms of cesium and barium, relating their measured spectral lines to their predicted quantum electron levels. She had previously received B.S. and M.S. degrees, both at the University of Michigan.

“During her life, Dr. Fitzgerald taught both at Marygrove College and at several high schools in and around Monroe and Detroit. She went on to gain positions within the administration for high schools in the Archdiocese of Detroit. She published several articles, particularly on physics education, including an article in the *American Journal of*



This shows part of the poster that hangs in the University of Michigan physics department.

Physics in 1940, in which she discussed how to encourage women to study physics at the college level. During her life, she received several awards and recognitions, for both her academic and educational work. These included induction into the Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi honors societies and Fellow of the American Association of the Advancement of Science.”

Requests often lead to unexpected reminders

Sometimes outside requests arrive in the Archives with only a vague notion of what is wanted. A recent one was for “something written by an IHM about teaching children right or wrong.” The requester saw a mention of it “somewhere” two years ago.

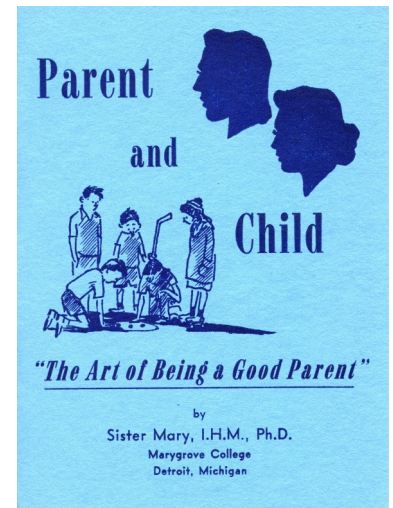
Sister Diann Cousino, Archives assistant, had a suggestion immediately: Sister Mary McGrath’s books and booklets based on her education and experience teaching pre-school and kindergarten at Marygrove.

This image (right) shows the cover of one of Sister Mary’s booklets, one from January 1955. Teachers were sent out to local parishes to meet with parents for training in best practices, sharing and support.

The Marygrove Preschool opened in 1942, a joint effort of the psychology department led by Sister Mary and home economics led by Sister Ann Catherine Ellis. Each day included a health check, group activities, rest, a snack, and

plenty of time for playing outside. They even had a dog!

Sister Mary had earned a Ph.D in 1922 with her dissertation on “The Moral Development of Children.” Her life was spent helping parents and parishes raise healthy, productive, God-fearing children. We aren’t sure this is the information the requester was asking for, but it was a lovely reminder of an exceptional teacher, lecturer and Sister.



New feature: Among Ourselves ... in pictures

Among Ourselves was the name of a letter sent out by Mother Anna Marie Grix beginning in September 1954. We think it is a fitting title for a photo page showing IHM Sisters together, but not on mission or in a classroom.

Southwest-West Mission Units meeting in San Antonio on the Riverwalk

Left side:

Ginny Celmer
Marcia Andrews
Ann Oestreich
Anne Crane
Marie Brigid O'Reilly
Betty Leon
Anita Pfeiffer
Kate O'Brien



Right side:

Margaret Brennan
Chris Dobrowolski
Jean Burbo
Pat Aselyne
Mary Ann Mahoney
Gina Joseph
Agnes Louise Murray

Standing in back left to right:

Mary Ann Markel, Cecilia Schmidt, Gail Addis, Joann Witucki, Margaret Basso

Mystery photo: identified, explained

It was wartime – 1942 or 1943 – when this photo was snapped of eight IHM Sisters leaving the Motherhouse in Monroe for summer school in Washington, D.C. And the cases they're carrying are not luggage, but typewriters.

Thanks to Sister Marie André Walsh (front left), the Archives now has names and background for this previously “mystery” photo.

Standing on the lowest step with Sister Marie André is Sister Agnes Therese Bailey. Behind them (left to right) are Sisters Joan Therese Lynch, Frances Loretta Hackett and Ann Margaret Hughes. On the top step are Sisters Marie Elise McDonell and Maria Froehlke and finally with a partially hidden face is an unidentified sister.

Marie André said that most of the universities had been enlisted to help the military at that time, so Catholic University of America in D.C. was one of the few choices the IHM had for their sisters to continue their educations. In this photo they were expecting a bus or taxi to take them to the train depot on Telegraph Rd. They did this for five summers.

“We lived in very primitive conditions. Brady Hall,” she said. The first year their accommodations were not even on the campus. The second year they lived in Graduate Hall squarely on campus. Ironically, the building was located on the corner of Monroe St. and Michigan Ave. One summer they lived in a



classroom because it was the only space available. “The heat and humidity were insufferable.” One sister took advantage of life in a classroom: Sister Ann Margaret Hughes. She was a biology major so she would do her drawings on the chalkboards. One drawing Sister Marie André remembers was the kidney of a squid.

The sisters followed their Rule to get up at 5 a.m. and to be at prayer at 6 a.m. Since the chapel wasn't open that early they would walk to a park on campus to pray.

Sister Marie André was told to study French and Spanish. She already had three years of high school French and four years of

college French when she entered the IHM community.

She also had grown up in Portland, Maine, where she heard lots of French on the nearby beaches because of the French-Canadian vacationers.

The first day Sister Marie André arrived in the IHM community, Sister Rosalita Kelly asked her to work on French translations for the Archives. She eventually spent nine years working on Father Gillet's correspondence while also teaching at St. Mary Academy and at Immaculata High School.

Our thanks to Sister Marie André for this memory and clearing up a mystery!

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Since 2000, all IHM sisters have been encouraged to submit individual chronicles to the IHM Archives. These records about your own life and ministry over the course of a year or more add breadth and depth to the documented history of the IHM Sisters. Your contribution will enrich the future record of the IHM, so please be sure your life's story is included in the community's story.

Facebook favorites: A popular recent Archives post



This bus was taking IHM Sisters to their own college-level classes in Detroit in 1961. These are the identifications (left to right):

Mary Jane (Mary Howard) Tromley,
Brigid Mullane,
Jean (Carol) Hengesbaugh
Joy (Marie Michael) Halpin,
Mary Ellen (John Elizabeth) Keyes,
Rena (Mary Columba) Geary,
Angela Sullivan
Ann (Nicholas) Bracken.