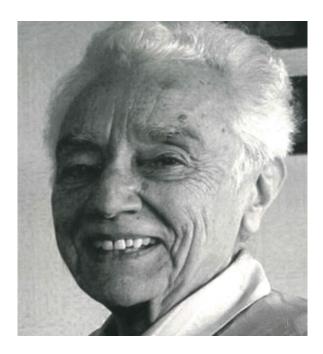# MARÍA WONENBURGER

María Josefa Wonenburger Planells obtained her undergraduate degree from the Universidad Central de Madrid in 1950. She did graduate work at the Universidad de Madrid and in 1953 was awarded a Fulbright scholarship, the first to be offered in Spain. She was accepted to Yale University and worked under the direction of Nathan Jacobson, obtaining her doctorate in 1957. Because her U.S. degree was not recognized in Spain, she returned home to complete another doctorate under the direction of German Ancochea. In 1960, she returned to North America and held positions at Queen's University in Ontario, the University of Toronto and SUNY at Buffalo before she came to Indiana as a full professor in 1967.

After joining the department at IU, María quickly became an important part of the graduate mathematics program. In the first five years, she directed the thesis work for five PhD students who completed their degrees in this period. She played an especially important role in organizing the graduate program in algebra, an area of strong interest and demand by graduate students at that time.

María's work was in group theory, particularly classical groups, and in Lie theory. She is considered one of the founders of the theory of Kac-Moody algebras, a class of infinite dimensional Lie algebras with many applications. Robert Moody introduced these algebras in his doctoral thesis, written under her direction at the University of Toronto. At Indiana, she continued this work and one of her students, Stephen Berman, has made important contributions, including joint work with Maria and Robert Moody.

In 1983, María left academia and returned to Spain to be with her mother. There late in her life, following publication of her biography in La Gaceta de la Real Sociedad Matemática Española (RSME), she was rediscovered by the Spanish mathematical community and received many honors. In 2007, she was named a Social de Honor by the RSME and the Xunta de Galicia established a prestigious research award bearing her name. In 2010, she received an appointment as Doctor Honoris Causa by the Universidad de A Coruña. In 2012, her hometown opened a new park named in her honor.

Born: Montrove-Oleiros, Galicia July 19, 1927
Died: La Coruña, Galicia June 14, 2014
Years at IU: 1967-1985