

# Gender Issues

Schafer (maiden name Turner) was born in 1915 in the state of Virginia. Early in her life she lost her parents and was raised by two of her aunts. One of her aunts she lived with in Scottsburg while the other helped her financially. Her family was very supportive of Alice's decisions. So, when they found out that Schafer was eager to define herself with math they were happy to help.

Alice may have had a supportive family but it wasn't always easy to get the necessary support to get what she wanted. When she decided that she wanted to obtain a degree in mathematics from the University of Richmond she was slightly set back by her high school principal. When asked to write a letter of recommendation for Alice he replied "girls shouldn't do math". Afterwards he never sent the letter. Awesomely, Alice's performance in school was stronger than the biased opinion of her principal and she was accepted to the University of Richmond with a full scholarship.

The University of Richmond turned out to be less liberal than when they gave her the scholarship. Women were not allowed in the library. As a result every time Alice wanted to do research she had to order the book she needed and had to read it in a study room designated just for women. Also, only women taught her for the first two years of her math degree. This may seem fair but the reason for this was because women were only allowed to teach up to the level of analytic geometry. The men taught the higher level mathematics.

In analysis she had a professor who had the same reasoning as her past principal. Her professor was known for saying that he wanted to fail every woman that attended his classes. However Alice proved her position when she won the Crump prize which her professor took part in grading. Soon after she graduated with a B.S. in Mathematics.

Alice wasn't just satisfied with being an accomplished mathematician. She also felt the need to fight against discrimination against women. The urge started in high school but was being full-filled during college. At the University of Richmond she was mainly responsible for the opening of the library to women. Sadly, she was kicked out on her first day in the library for laughing out loud while reading a book.

Alice didn't just stop with the library incident. More importantly, she helped the start of the AWM (Association for Women in Mathematics) and then was pronounced the second president of the organization in 1972. She took part as an active member from the start and is even a member now.

In the year of 1989 a women in the AWM came up with a prize that would be awarded to high school girls with a high degree of excellence in mathematics with the desire to continue in math throughout college. Because of Schafer's love of math and her desire to fight against discrimination the award was dedicated to Schafer. It was named the Alice T. Schafer award.