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CELEBRATING WOMEN IN MATHEMATICS

IRMGARD FLÜGGE-LOTZ

1903-1974, Germany - After graduating from school in 1923, Irmgard entered the Technical University of Hanover to study mathematics and engineering. She obtained her first degree in 1927 and a doctorate in 1929 for a thesis on the mathematical theory of heat.

Irmgard then went to the Aerodynamics Research Institute in Göttingen. Here she applied her mathematical skills in finding



solutions to differential equations which resolved an important problem on the distribution of lift on wings. She published what is now known as the “Lotz method” in 1931.

In 1938 she married Wilhelm Flügge, a civil engineer from Göttingen. In 1944 they moved to a region of Germany which became France at the end of World War II and Flügge-Lotz and her husband both were offered posts at the National Office for Aeronautical

Research in Paris.

After moving to the United States, Flügge-Lotz became Stanford's first woman Professor of Engineering in 1961. She received many honours including being chosen to give the von Kármán lecture to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics in 1971 and an honorary degree from the University of Maryland in 1973.

Biography courtesy of The MacTutor History of Mathematics archive