

APR13-2013-000333

Abstract for an Invited Paper  
for the APR13 Meeting of  
the American Physical Society

**Remembrances of Maria Goeppert Mayer and the Nuclear Shell Model.**

ELIZABETH BARANGER, University of Pittsburgh

Maria Goeppert Mayer received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1963 for her work on the nuclear shell model. I knew her in my teens as a close “friend of the family.” The Mayers lived a few blocks away in Leonia, New Jersey from 1939 to 1945, across the street in Chicago from 1945 to 1958 and about one mile away in La Jolla, CA from 1960 till her death. Maria held primarily “vol” (voluntary) positions during this period, although in Chicago she was half time at Argonne National Laboratory as a Senior Physicist. She joined the University of California at San Diego as a professor in 1960, her first full-time academic position. I will discuss her positive impact on a teenager seriously considering becoming a physicist. I will also discuss briefly the impact of her work on our understanding of the structure of nuclei. Maria Mayer was creative, well educated, with a supportive father and husband, but she was foreign , received her Ph D at the time of the Great Depression, and was one of the few women trained in physics. Her unusual career and her great success is due to her love of physics and her ability as a theoretical physicist.