



## Jean Stahl Chittenden

March 30, 1924 - March 8, 2016

Jean Stahl Chittenden, beloved mother and longtime Foreign Languages Chair at Trinity University, passed away peacefully at her home in San Antonio on March 8, 2016.

Jean was born Margaret Jean Stahl on March 30, 1924 in Davenport Iowa. Jean's father, Charles Russell "Jake" Stahl was a civil engineer who moved the family to the outpost Panhandle oil "boom town" of Borger, Texas when Jean was only three. Jake became the head of Panhandle Power and Light and Jean went on to become the Valedictorian of Borger High's class of 1940.

Jean spent her first two years of college at Stephens College in Missouri and then graduated from the University of Arizona in 1944, majoring in Spanish. When in Tucson, Jean met a young airman, Robert Chittenden, who left for the European air war and ultimately was interned in a German POW camp. After the war, they married and moved to Champaign-Urbana where Jean taught at Illinois and obtained a Masters Degree in Spanish. A son, Russell William, was born

June 23, 1953 in Elmhurst, Illinois. When Jean and Bob divorced, Jean moved the family, now including Jean's mother Margaret, to Austin in 1957 where Jean taught at the University of Texas as she completed her PhD in Romance Languages.

With her PhD in hand, in 1964, the family moved to San Antonio where Jean became a professor of foreign languages at Trinity University. During her 34-year tenure in the Department of Foreign Languages, Jean taught a variety of Spanish courses at all levels, rose to the rank of full professor, and served as Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages later to become the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures for more than a decade. One of the first women faculty members to be appointed chairperson, she was an advocate for women and other minorities on the campus and encouraged the employment of qualified female scholars.

In 1994, Jean was honored to be selected as an international observer of the federal election in Monterrey, Mexico, and served along with several other Trinity professors. Jean also served as President of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese in 1995.

When Jean retired in 1998, the Trinity Board of Trustees voted to name her Professor Emerita. Jean traveled the world in her retirement, especially relishing trips to Spain, where her interest in Spanish playwrights could be indulged her doctoral thesis was

on "The Characters and Plots of Tirso's Comedias". Jean also loved the Spurs. In fact, when Serbian Zarko Paspalj joined the Spurs in 1989, Gregg Popovich contacted Jean then head of foreign languages to supply an interpreter for the press conference. Jean scrambled to find a suitable speaker and the press conference went off without a hitch although Paspalj's Spur career proved to be short-lived.

Jean had an indomitable spirit that no one could miss. One summer evening in July, 2002, after being caught in a flash flood at McCullough and Basse, Jean's car sank under many feet of water at the bottom of the Olmos Golf Course. Jean, however, managed to open and crawl through a window as the car sank to the bottom of a fairway. A strong current threatened to sweep her to the Olmos dam, but Jean grabbed a branch at the top of large oak tree and held on. Eventually, SAPD officers used a jet ski to rescue her after the current proved too difficult for the officers to swim. The rescuing officer told a TV newsmen that he arrived just in time because Jean couldn't have held on much longer. Jean, however, told her friends that she could have clung to the top of that tree for as long as it took.

Jean passed away on March 8, 2016 at the age of 91. Her kind, loving spirit and keen wit will be missed by her son Russell and all of her many friends.

A Memorial Service will be held at the Margarite B.

Parker Chapel at Trinity University on Saturday, April  
16 at 11:00 a.m. A reception will follow.