

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lovenia Deconge-Watson

PERSON

DeConge, Mary Lovenia, 1933-

**Alternative Names:** Lovenia Deconge-Watson; Mary Sylvester Deconge

**Life Dates:** October 4, 1933-

**Place of Birth:** Wickliffe, Louisiana, USA

**Residence:** Baton Rouge, LA

**Occupations:** Mathematician

## Biographical Note

Mary Lovenia DeConge was born on October 3, 1933, in Wickliffe, Louisiana, to Adina Rodney and Alphonse Frank DeConge. Her family was Creole, and she was bilingual speaking both English and French. In 1943, The DeConge family settled in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and six years later, at the age of 16, DeConge was called to the Order of the Sisters of the Holy Family. She took her permanent vows as Sister Mary Sylvester DeConge in 1957.

Two years later, DeConge earned her B.A. degree in mathematics and French from Seton Hill College in Greensburg, Pennsylvania and began to teach high school Mathematics and French at Holy Ghost High School in Opelousas, Louisiana. In 1961, DeConge applied for and received a National Science Foundation Academic Year award to study for a master's degree in Mathematics and French, which she earned from Louisiana State University in 1962. That year, she began teaching math at Delille Junior College, and from 1964 to 1968, she attended St. Louis University and earned her Ph.D. in mathematics with a minor in French. After receiving her degree, DeConge served as assistant professor of Mathematics at Loyola University of New Orleans, and she transferred to Southern University as Associate Professor of Mathematics in 1971. In 1976, DeConge chose to leave her Order of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and in 1982, she was promoted to Professor of Mathematics at Southern University. One year later, DeConge married Roy Watson, Sr., and became Dr. Lovenia DeConge-Watson.

From 1986 to 1995, DeConge-Watson served as Chair and Professor of Mathematics at Southern University, and from 1993 to 2003, DeConge-Watson served as Director of "Modeling Integrated Mathematical Experiences" (MIME), a National Science Foundation Project at Southern University aimed at improving mathematics and science education at all levels. MIME was funded by a \$10,000,000 grant from the National

Science Foundation. From 1995 to 1998, DeConge-Watson directed the Center for Minorities in Science, Engineering, and Technology at Southern University and the A&M College System. A recipient of Southern University's Outstanding Chair and Department of the Year Award in 1990 and St. Louis University's Outstanding Graduate of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Award in 1996, DeConge-Watson has served as an interim Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs in 1998, and as interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in 2003. She retired in 2004.

Lovenia DeConge-Watson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 9th, 2010.

## Related Entries

**Seton Hill University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A. in Mathematics and French**

**Louisiana State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**Saint Louis University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Holy Ghost High School in Opelousas, Louisiana** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1959 to 1964]

**Math teacher**

**Delille Junior College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1962 to 1964]

**Math teacher**

**Loyola University of New Orleans** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1968 to 1971]

**Assistant Professor of Mathematics**

**Southern University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1971 to 1982]

**Associate Professor of Mathematics**

**Rockwell International** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1982 to 1995]

**Southern University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1998 to 1999]

**Interim Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs**

**Southern University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2002 to 2003]

**Interim Chair of the Department of Mathematics**

**Southern University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1969 to 1977]

**Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs**

**Modeling Integrated Mathematical Experiences (MIME)** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Director**

**Center for Minorities in Science, Engineering, and Technology at Southern University** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Executive Director**

**Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**President of the Gamma Eta Omega chapter**

**Sisters of the Holy Family** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]