

Ruth B. Shipley

(- 3 Nov 1966)

Shipley, Ruth Bielaski. On Thursday, November 3, 1966, at the Kensington Gardens Nursing Home, beloved mother of Col. F.W. Shipley Jr., USAF Ret.; sister of Mrs. T.A.H. Miller of Stafford, Va., and Frederick Bielaski of Mexico City. Friends may call at Joseph Gawler's Sons, Wisconsin ave. at Harrison st. nw., Saturday and Sunday, 2 to 5 p.m., where services will be held on Monday, November 7 at 11 a.m. Interment Congressional Cemetery.

The Evening Star, November 5, 1966, p. A12

Mrs. Shipley, Former Chief Of Passport Division, 81

Mrs. Ruth B. Shipley, 81, a District resident since 1903 and former chief of the State Department's passport division for 28 years, died of a heart attack Thursday at Kensington Gardens Sanitarium. She lived at 5508 39th St. NW.

Prominent in government circles, Mrs. Shipley represented the United States as plenipotentiary delegate to the Conference on Codification of International law, held in the Hague, the Netherlands, in 1930.

Born on her grandparents' farm in Montgomery County, Mrs. Shipley was educated in public schools in the District and began her government career as a clerk with the Patent Office in 1908.

In 1914 she joined the State Department, where she performed various clerical duties until she assumed her post at head of the passport division in 1926. She retired in 1955

Mrs. Shipley belonged to the American Society of International Law and the Washington chapter of Quota International. She had been a member of the advisory committee of the Council on Naturalization and Citizenship, and was also a member of the Business and Professional Women's Association, the Panama Canal Society, the Historical Society and the Zoota Club of Washington, D.C.

She was a parishioner of the National Metropolitan Methodist Church.

She leaves a son, Col. F.W. Shipley Jr. of 8345 Orange Court, Alexandria, Va.; a sister, Mrs. T.A.H. Miller of Stafford, Va., and a brother, Fred Bielaski of Mexico City. Her husband, Frederick W. vanDorn Shipley, died in 1919.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Monday at Joseph Gawler's Sons Funeral Home, Wisconsin Avenue and Harrison Street NW, with burial in Congressional Cemetery.

The Washington Post, November 5, 1966, p. B6

Ruth Shipley, Controversial Director of Passport Division

Ruth B. Shipley, retired head of the State Department's Passport Division, died Thursday at the Kensington Gardens Nursing Home. She was 81.

Mrs. Shipley headed the division for 27 years and was in Government service for 47.

Her last years were the most controversial. Critics accused her of denying passports without due process, while her supporters said she was aiding the fight against communism and subversion.

She received the support of State Secretaries Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles. President Roosevelt had described her as "a very capable and wise woman." But Sen. Wayne Morse (D-Ore.) once accused her of exercising "tyrannical and capricious" power in denying passports without making the reasons public.

Yet she survived the controversy and retired in 1955, having reached the mandatory age.

Mrs. Shipley held her non-political position during the terms of four Presidents. One reason for her long tenure was that she expedited passport requests for Congressmen and their constituents in the days when it took an ordinary citizen six weeks to get a passport.

Criticism of the Passport Division's efficiency grew in the early 1950s after foreign travel greatly increased. Before World War II, Mrs. Shipley was frequently called "the most admired career woman in Government."

She preferred to remain as anonymous as possible, and few photographs of her were printed in the press.

She joined the State Department in 1914. Earlier, she was a clerk in the Patent Office for six years until her marriage in 1909. Her husband died in 1919.

The daughter of a Methodist minister, Mrs. Shipley was born in Montgomery County and came to Washington at an early age. She graduated from old Business High School in 1902.

Surviving are a son, retired Air Force Col. F.W. Shipley Jr.; a sister, Mrs. T.A.H. Miller of Stafford, Va., and a brother, Frederick Bielaski of Mexico City.