Gertrude L. Fife was one of the AANA founding members, and died on October 6, 1980. She collapsed in her Cleveland Heights, Ohio, home, and died shortly after being hospitalized.

Mrs. Fife, born in Vermont in 1902, moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1924 to study nurse anesthesia at Lakeside Hospital. She remained after graduation to become Agatha Hodgins’ first assistant at the University Hospitals School of Anesthesia. She was at the organizational meeting of the Association on June 17, 1931, and made the formal motion that a national association of nurse anesthetists be formed. She was one of the signers of the Articles of Incorporation and a member of the first Board of Trustees.

When Agatha Hodgins, founder and administrative leader of the Association, became ill in 1933, Mrs. Fife stepped into Miss Hodgins’ administrative role. She was elected president later that year at the first Annual Meeting of the National Association of Nurse Anesthetists (as it was then known) which was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although the country was in the midst of a depression, fully one fourth of the total membership managed to attend.

From the very beginning, Mrs. Fife promoted the idea of accreditation for nurse anesthesia schools and advocated a national examination for all nurse anesthetists. Together with Helen Lamb and Marian Shupp, Mrs. Fife developed the mechanics for the Qualifying Examination, the first of which was given in 1945. Additionally, many of her efforts were directed toward building the membership up to a strong, effective level. Externally, she was influential in obtaining the close relationship which the Association shared with the American Hospital Association.

Mrs. Fife served as president of the Association for two consecutive terms (1933-35), and was elected treasurer in 1935, a position she held until 1950. She served as editor of the Association’s first official publication from its initial issue published in November, 1933 (containing the proceedings and papers from the first Annual Meeting) until an editor was hired on a part-time basis in 1945. She also served the Association as member and chairman of numerous committees, including the Publications, Finance, Education, Government Relations, History, and Planning Committees. Although she worked many long hours on behalf of the Association, she was a full time educator as well. She remained director of both the School of Anesthesia and the department of anesthesia at University Hospitals until 1944. Janet McMahon, CRNA, a former student, remembers Gertrude Fife the teacher. “She was fair, open and always approachable, and her students not only respected her knowledge and command of the art of anesthesia, but liked her as a person. They knew ... they could depend on her support and loyalty.”

In 1978, Mrs. Fife received the 4th Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment. Miss McMahon, accepting the award for her at that time, said, “Mrs. Fife was a dynamic and dedicated leader whose work provided a foundation for subsequent growth ... and her business acumen stood the young organization in good stead. She was a farsighted educator who implemented and extended many of Agatha Hodgins’ educational goals.”