

Anita Cecilia Bremner, RSCJ  
May 3, 1914-February 27, 2012

Anita (Nancy) was born in Chicago, one of five girls and one boy, to John Berchmans Bremner and Mary Ella Taylor, and baptized a week later. One of her sisters, Mariella, also became a Religious of the Sacred Heart and died in 1990. Their grandfather was David F. Bremner, a baker in Cairo, Illinois. After the great Chicago fire of 1872, there were opportunities to expand his business in the city, so he moved to Chicago and set up a successful bakery. The company that produces Bremner Biscuits and Wafers today is operated by one of Nancy's nephews, a member of the fourth generation in the business. Nancy's mother was active in the Girls Scout Movement in the 1930s and 1940s in Chicago. Through her efforts and those of Bishop Bernard J. Sheil, the Catholic Girl Scout Movement of Chicago was affiliated with the national Scout movement and the National Federation of Catholic Women.

Nancy attended Pine Grove School and Sheridan Road, but graduated from secondary school at Noroton. She received a B.A. in History and Sociology at Manhattanville College in 1936 and spent the next five months on a bicycle tour of Europe with her brother Jack. "We traveled and begged hospitality at Sacred Heart schools and convents. It was safe to do it that way." She entered the Society a year after graduation, on June 3, 1937 at Kenwood. She later wrote that she entered religious life "because God told me to." Her novice director was first Ursula Benziger and then Agnes Barry. She received the habit on December 8, 1937 and made her first vows on December 12, 1939. Her first assignment was as teacher of high school classes and athletics at Sheridan Road, 1939-1945. At that point she went to probation February to July of 1945 at Kenwood, since this was during the war years when travel to Rome was not possible. She made her final profession at Kenwood on July 31, 1945.

After probation, she returned to Sheridan Road and to the same work of high school teaching, 1945-1952. While there, she received an M.A. in French from Loyola University of Chicago. In 1952, she moved to Barat College as Assistant Superior, a post she held for the next ten years. In 1962 she was back to Sheridan Road as high school teacher and sacristan until 1969. By the end of this time, she was also doing inner-city tutoring. In 1969 she went to Woodlands Academy in Lake Forest, Illinois as teacher and sacristan and in charge of the Service Club, in which capacity she coordinated outings for inner-city children. In 1970, 1971, 1974, and 1976 she was able to take summer trips to France with students from Sheridan Road and Woodlands. From 1974-1984 she was CCD teacher and catechist at St. Mary Parish in Lake Forest. In 1984, Nancy had her first move outside the Chicago area other than Kenwood, to Grand Coteau to teach at St. Ignatius Parish School and to do literacy courses at the Thensted Center. She remained there until 1993. During these years at Grand Coteau, she began a program called VITA, Volunteers in Teaching Adults.

In 1993 she moved to Pax Christi Community at Kenwood and in 2006 to Teresian House. On the evening of February 27, 2012, as her breathing became shallow and, toward the end, intermittent, she did not seem to be struggling, but her face seemed to grow younger and lovelier by the hour. Joan Gannon, watching at her bedside, played various concertos and symphonies during the afternoon and evening, mostly Brahms but at the end Rachmaninoff's

Second Piano Concerto. With the replay of the rich melody at the very end of the Concerto, she went quietly to God.

Nancy's sparkling and energetic personality always welcomed with joy whatever came her way. Any encounter with her was a ray of sunshine. One wrote of her: "For me she was someone who took totally to heart the life of a Jesus with no boundaries - she would feed anyone, talk to anyone, let anyone into the house - her openness to others was totally Christian! Her approach was simple: love your neighbor as God loved you and spread the word. She was also very immediate - the present mattered and the now was important, so all the planning wasn't as necessary for her as acting now, with or without thought. It drove people mad but it is where she lived in good faith. May she be at peace and in the presence of all those she welcomed."