

BRIGID KEOGH

1909 ---

Brigid Keogh was born in New Rochelle on September 9, 1909, and was educated at Kenwood. One year at Manhattanville College showed her that she would rather sail a boat than read a book, and so she spent four years in her own boyish pursuits before entering the novitiate at Kenwood. As a result, the first fifteen vacations of her religious life were spent at summer school, retrieving her B.A. and M.A. degrees. In the meantime she was professed at Rome on July 31, 1938, then served as surveillante and mistress general at Rochester and Overbrook. In 1947 she volunteered for the Far East.

Sister Keogh brought to Japan a Peter Pan spirit of daring and of perpetual youthfulness. Like Peter, she scarcely touched ground between flights, and became a well-known figure in all the airports of the Orient. Mother Sheldon said to her: "You are young, you are American, you are sure of yourself. You will outgrow the first and third." She was at once named superior of the college in Tokyo, and astounded the students by addressing them on the first day in memorized Japanese.

When Mother Sheldon died in 1954 Mother Keogh became Vicar of the Far East, and began an amazing career of expansion. Under her vigorous leadership the Society reached out into Taipei, Korea and the Philippines. Native religious soon outnumbered the foreign missionaries. Four international colleges were opened, and staffed by volunteers from all over the Society. Four races, Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese and Philippino, with a bitter history of war among themselves, blended happily in as many novitiates. When Mother Keogh retired as provincial the government of the Far East passed into the hands of Sister Sumiko Iba.

Sister Keogh did not return to the United States upon retirement, for "the Far East is my home". She went behind the Bamboo Curtain where she was joined by Sister Miki Nagamine. These two together carry on the mission of the Society, all but lost in the Chinese hinterland. The work of Philippine Duchesne did not end where it began, for the American Mosaic, RSCJ, is still in the making.