

JOAN LEONE HOPKINS, RSCJ

January 16, 1929 – August 25, 2014

Joan Leone Elizabeth Hopkins was born the fourth daughter of five to Alice Dellone and John Hopkins in Omaha, Nebraska, January 16, 1929. Her mother had been a teacher, an officer of the juvenile court, and later was active in the Christ Child Society. Mr. Hopkins was an attorney who had worked his way through Creighton University Law School and who spent much of his career in public office in Omaha. The age range of the five Hopkins girls—Mary Alyce, Marjorie, Patricia, Joan, and Grace—was nine years. Joan's family was always important and dear to her. When she lived in Omaha as a nun, near to her family there, she was able to visit and stay connected. When she moved to California in the late 1980's, she was happy to get to know her west coast family members.

Realizing that there would probably be no boy to take his name, Joan's father, John, preferred to name his fourth daughter Joan, so she liked to claim two patron saints, Joan of Arc and John the Baptist. After grade school in the nearby public school, she attended Mercy High school for one year, and then transferred to Duchesne Academy where her three older sisters had preceded her and her younger sister, Grace, would follow.

At Duchesne Academy her class numbered thirteen, and she had a cohort of three she hung out with. After high school graduation, Joan began her college career at Duchesne College where she was a good friend of Sr. Madeleine Sophie Cooney and helped her with her artistic stage productions. Madeleine Sophie was a wonderful support later as Joan, after several annual school retreats, found in herself a desire to be a missionary. She chose the Society of the Sacred Heart, though, because in her words, "I was very impressed with the loving attitude of the nuns who taught at Duchesne and admired them while they were at prayer in the chapel." After Joan's junior year of college she entered the Society at Kenwood for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 1949, joining, among others, Ellie Carr and Marie Owen as postulants.

Two stories highlighted Joanie's time in Albany. One New Year's Eve, she was sent to get the camp stools for the novices to join the community for night recreation. There was one elevator, one novice, and one hundred campstools. Joanie excelled at her task; the elevator, on the other hand, failed. Joan was stuck in the elevator on New Year's Eve for three hours until the maintenance company could come and free her, but she was rewarded by Mother Schroen with a little drink of bourbon. Unfortunately, there was no bourbon to be had on the day the bee keeper at Kenwood forgot to put up the sign that said "The Bees are Angry," and Joan, still a postulant and therefore with no protective veil yet, was working in the garden and was attacked by many angry bees. According to Joanie, the bee incident was her claim to fame.

After first vows, Joan returned to Duchesne Academy. There, she taught Biology and worked with the middle school girls. She kept this combination of high school Biology and middle school girls for many of her teaching years. During these teaching years she completed her Bachelor's degree, with a major in Biology and a minor in Sociology. She acquired a Master's degree in Education from Creighton University in 1961.

Joan made her Probation in Rome 1957—58, directed by Reverend Mother Elizabeth Zurstrassen. The forty-two probanists were given the name "Faith in the Society" and the devise, "The success of God's work depends on their fidelity," a heavy responsibility, according to Joan. Reverend Mother de Lescure died during this probation, which had a big impact on the probanists. In 1962, she went to Woodlands Academy in Lake Forest, Illinois, which had just opened two years previously. There she was assistant to Reverend Mother Agnes Regan. Of that

time, Bonnie Kearney recalls: "I remember the secret parties at Woodlands, with music and limbo, and food and talking. The risk taker in you rose." Three years later Joan spent a year at Clifton in Cincinnati, Ohio, which had recently been included in the Chicago Province. After one happy year there, Joan began her ministry at Barat College where she was director of services, head of the community infirmary, and, for one semester, taught botany, "the extent my college teaching career," she said.

A lot happened in the Society of the Sacred Heart in the 1970s. Joan, along with Srs. Virginia McMonagle, Betty Shearman, Anne Webster, and Eileen O'Donnell from the U.S., went to the first international *recyclage* at the Mother House during the 1972 Probation. *Recyclage* was a wonderful experience because the recyclants had their own program and also joined the probanists for some of theirs. After their time in Rome, the U.S. RSCJs drove from Rome to Venice to Germany, and finally France, culminating in a stay at Joigny, birthplace of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat.

In the mid-1970s, Joan took some nurse's training courses followed by pastoral care training in Omaha. This course work would prepare her to work with our elder sisters. In 1978, she became director of the Caritas Christi community, twelve RSCJs in retirement living at Duchesne. She liked working with the elderly and with her lay assistant, Marie DeMott. During these years, two friends Father Darrell Rupiper and Sister Mary Kay Hunyady, drew Joan into the anti-nuclear weapons movement that remained dear to her heart. She worked at New Covenant Justice and Peace Center in Omaha, an inter-congregational organization that provided community outreach with programs on justice and peace issues. She was the researcher and author of the two U.S. province corporate stances, the first on the province's opposition to the death penalty, and the second, on opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq. Joan was arrested at the San Francisco Federal Building protesting the first U.S. war against Iraq the day before her 63rd birthday. As a member of Religious Witness with Homeless People, she was again arrested because she supported the use of some newly released housing in the Presidio in San Francisco for people who were homeless. Many were the times that she protested or participated in actions or prayer vigils against U.S. intervention in Central America, the death penalty and the U.S. wars in Iraq.

While she was living in San Francisco's Mission District, in response to the province's social analysis process and *An Act of Hope* priorities, Joan began *Programa de Inglés*, an ESL program for refugees from various Central American countries. After *Programa de Inglés* ended in 1995, Joanie began volunteering at Oakwood. She had been director of Oakwood for two years in the late 1980's, so it was like coming home. Joanie was loved by the sisters at Oakwood, always found to be kind and ready to help.

In late August, 2013, Joanie had an X-ray that happened to include the lung and discovered that she had lung cancer. One thing that Joan asked to do once she knew she was dying was to visit again the Los Angeles cathedral, and her good friend, Mary Kay Hunyady, facilitated this wish. Joan loved that place for its magnificent tapestries of the saints moving forward toward the sanctuary, toward Jesus. There she sat, in the communion of saints, in that sacred space, pondering this journey she was on, moving with the saints toward Jesus. Then, for seven months, her Vera Avenue Community cared for her lovingly and tirelessly until Joanie moved to Oakwood on Friday, June 25, 2014. There, the Oakwood community, the Oakwood staff, family and friends, and her Vera community lovingly cared for her until Joanie died peacefully on August 25, 2014. May she rest in peace.