

Miriam Schumann, RSCJ  
February 19, 1911-October 25, 2009

Miriam Agatha was the second of four children of Carl Julius Schumann and Mary Agatha Griffin in Brooklyn, New York. Her sister Virginia, five years younger, was to follow her into the Society later. Miriam attended elementary school for seven years at St. Savior's School, Brooklyn, and the final year at Kenwood, where she continued through high school, graduating in 1929.

A few months later, when her sister Virginia was still in the First Academic, she entered the Society at Kenwood on December 8, 1929, with first Mother Bodkin, then Mother Benziger as Mistress of Novices. She received the habit on June 6, 1930 and made her first vows June 8, 1932. For the next five years she was at Eden Hall, Philadelphia, charged with the junior school. This was her special gift, to which she would devote most of the rest of her apostolic life. In 1937-1938 she did the same at Overbrook. During some of this time, she was also *dépenrière*, and loved the relationships she formed in this capacity.

Her probation of "the will of God in the present moment" took place at the Villa Lante in Rome beginning September 15, 1938 under the direction of Mother Giulia Datti, with final profession on February 8, 1939. For the rest of that academic year she was back at Overbrook, then for ten years, 1939-1949, at Elmhurst in Providence, Rhode Island. She continued to be charged with the junior school until 1949-1952 when she was at 91<sup>st</sup> Street as dietitian with classes and student advisement at Duchesne Residence School.

In 1952-1962 she was at Greenwich, again with the junior school until Elizabeth McCormack, Manhattanville College president, recognized her gifts in elementary education and the training of others, and called her into the classroom at Manhattanville in 1962 as Lecturer in Education. At the same time, she was in training with the Montessori Teacher Training Program. By 1966 she was appointed to the Montessori Teacher Training Committee, and by 1967 she was supervisor of a Montessori school in New York. This supervisory role continued in several venues while she remained in the classroom at Manhattanville until 1979, and in years beyond. Also in 1967, at the request of Manhattanville's Student Government, she organized a course called "Methods of Tutorial Instruction" to prepare them for the tutorial work that was urged by the service program. She continued to teach this course over the years. Many students said that it was a turning point in their lives, giving them the interest and confidence to work further with children. In 1968 she was instrumental in the establishment of the Kenwood Child Development Center.

Miriam earned glowing reports from her students for making Education classes, traditionally theoretical and uninteresting, come alive into real and concrete learning experiences from "a born educator." During these years, whenever possible, she enlarged her horizons by taking summer enrichment courses, ranging from Biology to Thomistic Theology to Shakespeare. She was called on as lecturer and consultant in many states and in Canada.

In 1979 she left Manhattanville for New York, where she was until 1985 coordinator of elementary classes at the Caedmon School in New York. She continued in the city as educational consultant and volunteer at Ronald McDonald House and Mary Manning Walsh Home.

Miriam was described by those who knew her as a “little soldier,” small, resolute, plucky, one who did everything to the full, and as a warm and stylish woman who walked with confidence on the streets of her beloved New York. She was widely known as particularly gifted in early childhood education and sought out as consultant to schools, college departments of Education, child development centers, and teachers’ institutes. Her secret for success was “praise, praise, praise,” a positive approach to teaching that mirrored the key elements of her life.

Miriam (“Mim”) and her sister Ginny were able to spend quality time together in later years. If any program was offered by the province, both would sign up so they could be together. They made a retreat together at Noroton. Sometimes they signed up to cook together: Ginny was *sous chef* to Miriam’s major role. When Ginny learned to drive, she drove with Miriam to visit their sisters in Long Island and North Carolina.

In 1997 Miriam moved to the Pax Christi Community at Kenwood, and to Teresian House in 2007, where she died suddenly and unobserved, an appropriately gentle ending to her ninety-eight years.