

## NANCY ANN KANE, RSCJ

December 6, 1929 – May 13, 2010

Born in Omaha, Nebraska on Dec. 6, 1929 to Margaret Kastner and Leo E. Kane, Nancy was the middle child between two brothers. Her elementary education with the Sisters of Mercy took place at St. Margaret Mary parish, where she attended daily Mass and recalled that she wanted to belong totally to God—actually as a priest! She described her sacramental preparation seated on her father's lap, where she met God. "Dad knew everything I had done, but he loved me just the same."

Although she met six different religious communities during those years, none of them attracted her. When she went to Duchesne Academy to take an entrance exam during her eighth grade, she was very impressed. "This is it!" she said to herself. The school was quite expensive, but she was awarded a scholarship, and her grandmother helped defray the expenses.

During a high school retreat, Nancy recalled the priest talking about the person of Jesus, a personal Jesus. She asked for the grace to meet Jesus.

In her senior year she visited with Mother Mabel Dorsey to announce that she would be a Sacred Heart nun. When Mother Dorsey asked when, she replied: "After a year of college." Whereupon Nancy took a scholarship exam and won. She had a choice of Duchesne College in Omaha or Barat College in Lake Forest, Illinois. She chose the latter.

Her memories of Barat were ecstatic—great teachers, 100 freshmen, wonderful spirit. In 1948, She was accepted into the Society of the Sacred Heart, by Rev. Mother Rosalie Hill, and was among four "westerners" who took a grand tour to Kenwood, Albany, NY.

If Nancy's story was euphoric up to this point, the time of testing came at Kenwood, where, as she stated, her Mistress of Novices invited her to go home "every two weeks." But she stayed.

She pronounced her first vows on March 5, 1951. In the following years she completed her undergraduate degree in history at Duchesne College, Omaha. Nancy made her final profession of vows in Rome on July 30, 1956 with the name: "Joy in Faith". Again, with her usual enthusiasm for life, she reported that her Probation was a "fabulous experience"

Nancy saw her life during the next twenty-five years as divided into three categories: (1) moving or closing houses (and her expertise was sought out by many) -- St. Joseph, Missouri, Forest Ridge, Seattle, and Duchesne College, Omaha among them; (2) vacations and retreats with her good friend Sr. Ann McElhatton; (she had a strong delight in driving the scenic highways of the USA and family sites in Ireland) (3) travel in Europe and Asia in which she got a first hand view of places she taught about in history courses. (She reported that it was reassuring to visit places about which she had pontificated in classrooms.)

Having received a Masters in History from Lone Mountain College in San Francisco in 1956, she continued her studies, receiving a Ph.D in history, as well as her teaching certification, at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California in 1958. And so began her long career in higher education.

From 1958 to 1987 she was Professor of History, Director of Placement and of Graduate School Counseling and Foreign Studies at Duchesne College, Omaha and Barat College, Lake Forest, IL. During this time she traveled to western Europe, especially Oxford, England, where she placed students.

She celebrated her silver jubilee in the Holy Land and spent two summers in Japan, recruiting students for Barat College. She also traveled to Australia on frequent flyer miles to spend time with Sister Mary d'Apice, a close RSCJ friend. Then, feeling that she needed renewal and a transition from teaching, Nancy enrolled in the nine-month Spiritual Leadership Institute in Chicago.

As Nancy began searching for a new ministry, her gift in relationships came to the fore. In a letter of recommendation to the Academic Vice-President of Creighton University in Omaha, Sr. Muriel Cameron stated, "besides mentioning all her outstanding credentials, I must speak about Nancy in terms of my personal contacts with her. She is bright, lively, attractive and warm, so that her presence brings a real graciousness and light to those with whom she is in contact. She has always been noted for her abilities to relate to students, and is much loved by her fellow religious."

Others reported that the students always respected her clarity, openness, and her deep interest in them. Whether students, nuns, faculty or maintenance staff, Nancy was a focused listener and supporter of the other's interests and needs.

Nancy, moved to San Diego in 1987 where she served as Academic Dean at St. Francis Seminary for three years, then became Vicar for Religious—a post she held for sixteen years and which she loved dearly. She called herself a snob when she began this ministry, and exclaimed, "I learned so much!" What she failed to report was the profound influence she had in this role and the legacy she left behind.

Towards the end of these years, in her own words, Nancy wrote: "I recognized signs that changes in me were appearing over which I had no control. I decided to check out these signs, while having a physical at Oakwood. The results of all this indicated the reality of Parkinson's for me. I was already losing my eyesight. All of this necessitated for me a departure to a care facility in a relatively short time."

"I certainly never thought that I'd be in this state. Joy in Faith better come to my rescue!" Martha Curry recounts a visit she made to Nancy as she was failing. "Her memory came alive, especially when I asked her about the trip which she, Margaret Green and others from Barat took to Montgomery, Alabama, to be part of Martin Luther King's march from Selma to Montgomery. She recalled several vivid details, including the fact that, since their flight back to Chicago didn't leave until the next morning, they slept that night on benches in St. Jude Church, one of the black churches in Montgomery."

Nancy joined the Oakwood Community in September, 2003, but in April, 2007, she went to our Lady of Fatima Villa in Saratoga, California, where a small number of RSCJ needing skilled nursing care were temporarily housed, only to return to Oakwood in July of 2009. Nancy gradually became more infirm and blind.

The cost of being dependent was hard for Nancy. Comforted by the support of the many lifetime friends that she found at Oakwood, she persevered, as she did in all things and found great peace. Those around her were struck by the peaceful smile and beatific serenity that characterized the last week of her life—indeed even her death. Nancy entered the fullness of JOY on Ascension Thursday, May 13, 2010. Her funeral Mass and the sharing of memories, which followed on May 22, highlighted the theme of JOY which followed her all of her life.