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## Patricia Shaffer, RSCJ

Patricia Marie Shaffer was born on June 11, 1928, in Los Angeles, to Rose Cecelia Rey and Edwin Joseph Shaffer. She was the oldest of five - three girls and two boys—in a devout Catholic household. In order to attend Catholic schools, she worked hard during summers in a local canning factory and at times helped in the fields.

Holidays were spent either at the beach or at Griffith Park. At age fifteen Pat began work in a cookie factory (in which she said she was 15 when she was really 14 years old) in Glendale, CA. Then her family moved to a ranch near Sacramento, where she got her drivers license at age 15 and learned to drive a truck.

She attended Catholic schools all her life: Holy Family School in Glendale from first grade through tenth grade. The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as the BVM nuns, were in charge of the school. She has stayed in touch with both the nuns and her classmates over the years and joined them for reunions. When she moved to the ranch, she attended her last two years of high school at Holy Rosary Academy in Woodland, CA and then college at San Francisco College for Women (Lone Mountain, operated by the Society of the Sacred Heart) for three years.



*Sister Pat Shaffer*

At this time her childhood desire to become a missionary in a foreign land through the help of her Jesuit Retreat Director evolved into a religious vocation to the international Society of the Sacred Heart. However, after receiving permission to enter from Rev. Mother Rosalie Hill, she developed a butterfly rash under her eyes that was diagnosed as *lupus erythymatosis* and could have put an end to her hope had not Sister Marion Kent organized a novena to then-Blessed Rose Philippine Duchesne. Within 10 days the symptoms of the disease had disappeared. So Pat was able to enter the Society on September 7th, 1949, at Kenwood, Albany, NY. She noted that in 1989 she joined other RSCJ and Sacred Heart Alums at Philippine's canonization in Rome. She also noted that Sister M. Kent did get to go as a missionary to Korea and died there in 1970.

Pat pronounced her First Vows on March 20, 1952, completed a BA in Natural Sciences at San Francisco College for Women (Lone Mountain) while teaching Primary School at Broadway. Then she taught for four years from kindergarten through high school at the Academy in Menlo Park (now Atherton), CA, while also serving as dormitory mistress.

In February of 1957 Pat left for Rome and five months of Probation. She professed Final Vows at the motherhouse on July 29, 1957. Pat returned to the States and taught at the Sacred Heart school at El Cajon until the day she was given 20 minutes notice to fly north and go to Stanford University to work on a Masters Degree in Physical Chemistry. She completed that degree in 1959.

She joined the faculty at the San Diego College for Women where she assisted Sister Agnes Schmit, Chair of the Department of Chemistry, for forty years. During much of her time she lived in and supervised one of the women's dormitories. In 1968 the College for Women began its merger with the College for Men to form the University of San Diego so that "the same classes were not being taught on both sides of the street." This merger was completed in 1972.

Pat had an extraordinary academic career. Her research was primarily with *fungi*, studying various metabolic pathways and genes for specific enzymes. She published thirteen papers, gave many presentations with over forty undergraduates and some high school students who carried out research in her laboratory and is completing her final research paper at Oakwood working with a very brilliant high school student at Sacred Heart Schools, Atherton.

Also during Pat's time at USD time she took several leaves of absence. One sabbatical (1968-1971) was to become part of the joint doctoral program at San Diego State University (SDSU) and the University of California San Diego (UCSD) in which she took classes at UCSD and carried out her research at SDSU and in which she was the first woman in the program. She completed her research at SDSU and worked on her thesis that was accepted in 1975 when she received her PhD.

A second sabbatical (1980-81) was taken working with a NATO Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne in England where she learned about the fungus, *Aspergillus nidulans*, and regulating gene expression in this fungus. A third sabbatical was taken working with a National Science Foundation (NSF) Visiting Professorship for Women grant at the University of Georgia, Athens, where she learned to clone genes in the fungus, *Aspergillus nidulans*.

Although at USD Pat taught many different classes in science, mathematics, and even on Vatican II documents, the majority of the classes that she taught (especially after the merger of the two colleges) were biochemistry and her special course for non-science majors, "DNA Science and Technology," a course for more than forty students per class.

She was very active in Sigma Delta Epsilon/Graduate Women in Science (SDE/GWIS), serving as the national president and finally co-authored the 87th Year History of SDE/GWIS with Michelle D. Leibbrand Wahlin (USD, 2007 graduate) published in 2009.

Besides her interesting scientific career, Pat helped to establish Founders Club at USD. It has an interesting background because first it was called Sacred Heart Club that pulled together Sacred Heart Alums who were attending USD and carrying out service projects. Then it included men whose parents had graduated from USD and wanted to be part of the club and changed the name to Sacred Heart – Second Generation Club. In 1996 the officers of the club changed the name to Founders Club, to keep the spirit of the founders of USD, Bishop Charles Francis Buddy and Rev. Mother Rosalie C. Hill. The service projects of the Club would keep their spirit.

The club activities have included:

- building houses in Tijuana
- carpeting the concrete one room houses built in Tijuana
- working at the Augustinian Orphanage in La Gloria (south Tijuana)
- volunteering at Nazareth House (retirement center) in San Diego
- working with the Mecca Youth Group out near San Bernardino, CA.

Pat also served as the chaplain of the USD Women's Basketball team during her last 10 years at USD and has continued to follow this team. She supported a variety of USD teams by attending their games and gained the reputation as lead 'cheerleader' of the home team, even after her move to Oakwood.

At the time of Pat's golden jubilee in the Society, Sr. Betsy Walsh reflected, "Pat's natural inclination to reach out to people was given a world of embrace. She organized a club that evolved into Founders Club... When she retired from USD she still worked for the study of science at USD by assisting the Development Office in their fundraising efforts for a new science building and helped the Chemistry & Biochemistry Department and, as a result, there is a lecture given each year by a former department major called the Shaffer Lecture."

Sr. Betsy Wash's testimonial to Pat ended with the words, "Pat has a great gift for friendship... She tends to be a busy person and she usually has a multitude of projects perking away. Despite that, she is always ready to assume a new care, a new concern, to spin off in another direction whenever she learns that someone needs her, whether it be a member of her family, one of her religious community, a friend, a student, a chance acquaintance. Pat never meets a stranger... She has been a sign of the exquisite and tender love of God to so many of us, far and near."

At Oakwood, Pat is very involved in the Sacred Heart Society group and with various athletic events, especially the girl's varsity basketball team.

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