



SISTER CARMELA FARLEY, OLVM

Sister Carmela was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on December 17, 1923, the youngest child of John Farley and Ruth Beban Farley. She was baptized Vivian Rita Farley on April 5, 1924 at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church. Her parents and both of her siblings, John Farley, and Mary Gaydosh, preceded Sister in death.

Sister Carmela often described herself as an Army brat because her father was in the Army and the family moved often during her early years. Some of the places she lived during her growing up were Hawaii, New York, Georgia, Panama and Texas. She prayed to have her high school years all in one place, and her prayer was answered by spending seven years in Missoula, Montana.

Sister Carmela told this touching story of how her religious vocation began when she was four years old. Her father was stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia, and the post was some distance from the nearest town. A Sister would come to the house to prepare her older sister, Mary, for First Holy Communion. Since she was not permitted in the upstairs living room when Sister was giving instructions, she waited patiently on the landing to take Sister's hand on the way down. Little Carmela was thrilled. From that time, her ambition was to be a Sister.

Her mother subscribed to "The Missionary Catechist," and from a very early age Carmela was captivated by stories and pictures. One story in particular had special significance. It was about the Southwest and showed a picture of a Sister teaching children under a tree with a Model T Ford in the background. In reading "The Missionary Catechist," her ambition reasserted itself. The seed planted long before began to sprout. She graduated from high school in 1941 with a plan to work for a year before entering religious life. All her plans were put on hold with entrance of the United States into World War II. Her family was connected to the military and Carmela felt the call to serve as well. She enlisted in the Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) in 1944 and was honorably discharged on March 6, 1946. It was a six-year delay before she could realize her dream and fulfill her aspiration of becoming a Sister.

Sister Carmela entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 30, 1947 and made first vows on August 5, 1950. She served in the missions in California, Iowa, Arizona, and at Victory Noll. Sister returned to Victory Noll in 1997 to work in the Print Shop and proofread until 2008 when she fully retired.

Sister Carmela worked in religious education in her first years. She later became an LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) and also a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant), sharing those skills in Holy Family Health Care center for several years before going to St. Elizabeth of Hungary Clinic in Tucson where she worked for nine years. She also ministered in home health care before returning to Victory Noll in 1997. Many spoke at her wake about her remarkable ability to proofread articles, worship aids and music.

Sister Carmela's deep sense of justice was inspired by an incident that happened in Panama when she was a young child. She often related the story of being told by a bus driver that she could not sit in the back of the bus with the "blacks" and she felt it was unjust for them not to have the same rights as the whites when Panama was their country, too.

In her work at St. Elizabeth's clinic she worked with pregnant women and instructed them to talk to their unborn children. She told several stories of children who would recognize her voice years after they were born and it was because she, too, talked to them before they were born. She loved this work and all her nursing years.

Sister Carmela spent many years singing in the Schola here at Victory Noll and whenever the song, "Only This I Want," by Dan Schutte, would be on the list for the liturgy, she would say, "This is my favorite song." It was sung at her funeral as the song of farewell.

Sister Carmela was very proud of her service in the Navy and her family's service in both the Navy and the Army. So when the funeral liturgy was complete and Sister Beatrice Haines had done the prayers of committal, her coffin was draped in the American flag and taken to the cemetery where she received full military honors. As the commander of the honor guard presented Sister Beatrice with the flag, he thanked the community for Sister Carmela's service. It was a touching moment and then there was a three-gun salute and the playing of Taps, which had been a request of Sister Carmela.

She could still see the picture of that Catechist under the tree after more than 65 years as a missionary, and that image continued to inspire her work and prayer. Sister Carmela may you now enjoy sitting at the foot of the master in heaven and realize all the good you have done for the poor and marginalized.

In the peace of Christ,

St. Leger Downey OLM

