



SISTER MARY HELEN ROGERS, OLVM

Sister Mary Helen died peacefully on January 13, 2014 after a rather brief illness.

She was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 10, 1913, the second of six children and the eldest daughter of Joseph Aloysius and Ellen B. Fogarty Rogers. She was baptized on August 24, 1913, as Helen Mary Rogers in St. Teresa of Avila parish.

Her parents and all her siblings, Joseph, Vincent, Lawrence, and Geraldine Rogers and, Patricia Simon preceded her in death.

Sister Mary Helen often told the story about how she actually got to Victory Noll from St. Louis. Her family sent her brother Vinnie along on the train to escort her to Huntington and then to bring her back home to St. Louis. Vinnie's instructions from his father were to accompany her to Victory Noll, spend the night in a hotel, return the next day to get her and both would board the train back to St. Louis. The family figured that after one night Helen would be ready to get home to the family in St. Louis. Helen, on the other hand, was ready for her life and had other plans. She did not return to St. Louis, instead she entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 28, 1941. After three years of training and preparation, she made first vows on August 5, 1944. San Antonio, Texas, was her first mission and for four years she taught religious education outside under trees and on benches, visited the people and lived the life she dreamed. In 1948, she was asked to go to Sienna Heights College to study. She received a bachelor's degree in Philosophy, with a minor in Spanish, in 1950. She then went directly to Loyola University in Chicago, where she received her master's degree in Social Work. She spent the year of 1951 working on her thesis and living in Indiana Harbor. She graduated with her MSW in 1952. After graduation from Loyola she was missioned to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where she worked for Catholic Charities. Archbishop Noll wanted a sister social worker on staff. It was during this time that she also lived with other sisters at Archbishop Noll's home in Fort Wayne. She always told great stories of her time with Archbishop Noll, including running interference so he could listen to the Lone Ranger. She wrote about this time in her life as, "a special phase of my vocation."

In 1957, she became the postulant mistress and helped other young women to make the transition into religious life, specifically Victory Noll life. She was very kind and gentle to the new postulants. Some have said she was like a second mother to them, helping them to grow into life as a Victory Noll Sister. After the Chapter of 1962, she was named Mistress of Novices and held this position until 1968 when she went to Gary, Indiana. She was very dear to "her" postulants and novices and this was evident by the fact that she kept in contact with many of the women even after some of them left the congregation.

It was in 1969 that she left Indiana and moved to Denver, Colorado, where she spent two decades as Director of the Holy Spirit Neighborhood Center and later the Catholic Community Services. Her adventure began when the Sisters arrived to work in the Holy Ghost Parish. The following year, the Holy Ghost Youth Center opened in an old apartment building next door to the convent on Tremont Place. The building was renovated by the parish for recreational activities and religious education classes. Recreational activities for young people were available two nights a week. Those who attended had a choice of playing pool, boxing, dancing, or just listening to music from the jukebox. Over the years the Center's focus changed and with it so did Sister Mary Helen. One thing that never changed was her desire to serve the people of the neighborhood and of Holy Ghost Parish.

Sister Mary Helen was a lifelong St. Louis Cardinals fan and loved to tell the story of how she got all the autographs from the players, like Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb. She also loved to tell the story of attending the World Series between St. Louis Cardinals and the New York Yankees in 1926. On her 100th birthday she was gifted with a letter from the Cardinals thanking her for her faithful support throughout the years. They didn't quite "gift" her with a Series win, which she would have enjoyed. Maybe this year from heaven?

Sister Mary Helen had a wonderful sense of humor, loved to tell stories and was an avid reader. She continued to be fully involved in what was going on in the world and was always watching the news. She was equally interested and engaged in the life of the community.

Several of her nieces and nephews were able to join us for the wake on Thursday evening January 16, 2014, and then again for the Eucharistic Liturgy on Friday January 17, 2014. In his homily at Mass, Father Dale Bauman talked about how Sister Mary Helen was an example and a gift. Indeed, she was a gift to many sisters, to her family and all those who knew her.

Sister Mary Helen, as in the psalm you chose for your liturgy, arise and go to your God, you can now sing with the angels and the saints your songs of rejoicing.

With Peace and Gratitude,



Sr. Ginger Downey, O.L.V.M.

