



In Loving Memory

Sister Gertrude Marie Hagan, SSND

Charlotte Lee Hagan was the second of twin sisters, the oldest children, born to Alvin and Gertrude (Buckman) Hagan on April 22, 1933, in Hannibal, Mo. Crises attended their birth because Mrs. Hagan's life was threatened and the twins weighed only three pounds. They were baptized in the hospital on May 7 and given the names Shirley and Sharley. Their baptism was celebrated on May 17 in the parish church. The name registered on the certificate was Charlotte Lee. She was always known to family and friends as Sharley.

Birthday
April 22, 1933

Baptism
May 7, 1933

Profession
July 31, 1953

Death
September 27, 2014

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery
Chatawa, Mississippi

Sharley and Shirley were nurtured in a loving, pious family with three younger brothers. A younger sister was born after the twins left home. The children attended Blessed Sacrament Elementary School in Hannibal; their father ran the family farm, their mother, who taught elementary school, became a full-time homemaker. Central to their lives was the family farm and all its interests, joys and disappointments.

Sister Gertrude Marie wrote of these early years. "When I made my First Holy Communion I felt that God was calling me to be a sister, but I soon forgot about that when I had charge of caring for the cows, calves and chickens. Daddy gave me a calf when I was 10 years old. I raised it for 4-H Club competition. I won blue ribbons for my calves, and also for cooking and sewing." In addition to being a 4-H Club member, Sharley was a Girl Scout and elected as an assistant leader.

She continued the account of her youth. "When I was 14 years old and in the hospital with lockjaw (tetanus), I again decided to be a sister. I entered the aspiranture. My parents were happy, though my dad had reservations. He thought I was too much of a tom-boy for such a life"

Simultaneously, the twins discerned their vocation to religious life. They were 15 when they left home for the School Sisters of Notre Dame aspiranture [formation program for high school-aged girls who wanted to become sisters] in St. Louis to complete their secondary education. A test and a cross for the twins was their first separation since birth, when Sharley and Shirley were sent to serve on different missions, Sharley to Louisiana and Shirley to Iowa. In 1952, they were received as novices and happily were given the names of their mother and father, Sister Alvin Marie and Sister Gertrude Marie. They professed their vows in 1953.

Sister Gertrude Marie's professional preparation began at Notre Dame College in St. Louis; she continued with certification from the School of Social Service, St. Louis University and the School of Social Work, Tulane University in New Orleans.

Her first mission as a professed sister entrusted her with the care of orphan boys at Madonna Manor in Marrero, La. She remembered, "I lived in a supportive community and worked hard with little boys 4 to 8 years old." She did work hard as she nurtured a succession of children at Madonna Manor for the next 26 years.

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Gertrude Marie Hagan



To make a memorial gift,
please visit our secure
online donation page [here](#)>

For more information,
contact info@ssndcp.org.

www.ssndcentralpacific.org



**School Sisters
of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

A United Way article in “The Blue Flame” featured Sister Gertrude Marie in her role as substitute parent. The cover story portrayed her reading to the children. The photo essay highlighted her duties of making sure the boys were ready for school and soccer practice with gentle reminders to do chores and to see that homework was done, etc.

High praise from a Madonna administrator sums her effectiveness during those years, “To understand Sister Gertrude Marie’s success with children is to understand her compassion, empathy, genuineness, warmth and understanding of children. Her instinct about what is right for a child and his needs are always correct.”

Appreciation for her work as a contribution to the civic and social life of the city was indicated in certificates of merit and appreciation she received from both Jefferson Parish (county) and the City of New Orleans.

In 1979, Sister Gertrude Marie was missioned to work in child care service at St. Peter-St. Joseph Children’s Home in San Antonio, where she served for nine years. She earned accolades from staff and administrators, “Her sense of humor, her willingness to accept every boy just as he is, and her ability to set limits and to establish guidelines has made a tremendous change in the young men in her care, the youngest boys’ dorm.”

Being successful required immense physical and emotional stamina. An accident in December 1987, necessitated time for recovery. Sister Gertrude Marie wrote, “After the accident, I recuperated at Holy Rosary, San Antonio and helped Sister Emiliana with senior citizens’ meals.” She served in the senior ministry for three years until the declining health of her mother summoned her to the family home in Hannibal, Mo., where she assisted until her mother’s death in 2000.

Following her mother’s death, Sister Gertrude Marie retired to St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Miss. The twins were together again. Sister Gertrude Marie was a cheerful, prayerful presence while she enjoyed doing small tasks, reading of current events, but especially sports events, playing cards, and just being with the community.

Illness and more frequent hospitalizations were part of her life in the last years. Sister Gertrude Marie died peacefully on Saturday morning, September 27, 2014, with the prayer of her community and her sister-in-law surrounding her. May she rest in peace.

Sister Gertrude Marie was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers, Albert and James, her sister, Theresa and her twin, Sister Alvin Marie. She is survived by one brother, Larry and a devoted sister-in-law, Jane Hagan.

Morning prayer and visitation were on September 30, 2014, at 9 a.m. followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at St. Teresa Church in Chatawa. The pastor Rev. Suresh Thirumalareddy was the celebrant. Her burial was at the Chatawa Cemetery.

By Sister MarieClaire Powell