



Birth
October 5, 1914

Baptism
October 18, 1914

Profession
August 2, 1935

Death
January 25, 2013

Burial
Notre Dame of
Elm Grove Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Jane Van Deuren, SSND

Sister Mary Jane Van Deuren, was a woman of many gifts which were freely and gladly given during her lifetime. When she left Green Bay in 1998 to live in retirement at Notre Dame of Elm Grove she took with her a lovely quilt that she enjoyed making. This quilt moved with her to Elm Grove, and then to Our Lady of the Angels where she used it as a bedspread. This quilt comes to mind in recalling the story of her life. There is a pattern made of several colors, which, when looked at as a whole, is the beautiful Mary Jane. Her colors were: friendship-maker, generous, creative, competitive, faithful, courageous, and fun-loving. The hue overall was of daughter, family member and servant – in the loving spirit of a School Sister of Notre Dame.

Life began in Green Bay when she was born to Christine Butler and Frank Van Deuren on October 5, 1914. She was baptized at St. Willebrord's Parish as Anna Jacobi. Her father was a barber and her mother, a homemaker. She was preceded in the family by Russell and Ruth (Sinclair). Following her were Betty (Elliot), Rosemary (Carpenter) and Robert. There were two children, a boy and girl who died early in life. Anna went to St. Willebrord School and she made her First Communion when she was ten. Her favorite memory is that of learning the school cheerleading song taught to the class by Sister Ambrosia, who later became the General Superior of the congregation.

In those years she discovered her athletic gift, especially in cross country and biking. In fact, she had a tendency to be quite competitive. Sister Doris Jean LeBrun recalls the times when they lived together in Freedom and they would bicycle and cross country ski in the cemetery adjacent to the convent. She says that Jane always had to be out there in front being first up and down the hills, even though she was 21 years older. And, Rosemary, her sister says that when she would come with her family to Mount Mary in the summer to visit Jane, the two of them would go to the tennis courts and have a good game. But, again, Jane would always win, habit and all.

Remembering how she got to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, she says, "I had always wanted to be a Notre Dame Sister. When I was a junior in high school, I wanted to enter the candidature; but I was unable to get my parents' consent. Then for about a year and a half, the desire was gone. It returned again and kept gnawing at me. This desire was much stronger, and if it was God's will, nothing could hold me back. I waited until Christmas Eve (to tell my family). Upon recognizing the Will of God, I at once tried to obey it. I was 18 when I came to the convent. When I was received, I was 19 years old." Jane was professed in 1935 at the age of 20.

Answering the call of her first obedience she went to St. Aloysius, West Allis, Wis., to teach second grade and so began her ministry of education in the primary grades, which lasted 39 years. It seems that she was willing to take on new challenges because her record shows that she was reassigned suddenly from one place to another when there was a greater need. For example, she says, "In August of 1950, I traveled back to Wisconsin (from

continued

In Loving Memory



*Sister Mary Jane
Van Deuren*



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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

Gary, Ind.) being assigned the intermediate grades at St. Mary, Burlington. The first few years I taught the fourth grade, then the fifth and ended my time (there) by having combined class of third and fourth grades. Catechizing and library work were also among my assignments and I continued during the summer. I was one of the trio to start our new mission at Elkhorn, Wis. I had catechized there every Saturday for seven years. ... This first year I had 59 children in the second and third grades. I also did the cooking. Many episodes could be written about our first years there. You live and learn.”

In 1974 she moved to the cathedral convent in Green Bay. She worked in the library in the mornings and took care of her dear mother in the afternoons and evenings. She says, “The cathedral sisters were very supportive and helpful at this time.”

After a sabbatical in Chatawa, Miss., she moved to St. John Nepomacene in Prairie du Chien, Wis. where she was a part-time aide, teaching three subjects in the fourth grade. Adjusting to the times, she began teaching computer to first through third grade students. After four years of helping in the school, she ended 53 years of teaching.

Next, she took classes at St. Francis Medical Center in La Crosse, Wis. for a certificate as a parish visitor. For four years she was a pastoral minister and was in charge of senior activities. She loved being with seniors. Her job was to plan trips and fun times together. She had some great stories of the friendships, trips, Bible classes, and quilting sessions they enjoyed.

Her last six years on mission were at Fox River Community in De Pere, Wis., living with Sisters Janet de France and Mary Alyce Lach. She helped make community there while on the side she worked in the Butterfly Book Store. Again, she had a wonderful time making friendships and using her creativity in this sweet little place which featured children’s books.

Retiring to Notre Dame of Elm Grove at the age of 84, she was still not finished giving. She soon found herself contributing to the enhancement of the library at Notre Dame Middle School for several years. Completing this quilt design image of her life was the gift of Mary Jane’s creativity. In addition to her teaching art in the classroom, she also became pretty good at watercolor painting at Elm Grove. She produced a nice collection of paintings, some of which graced her bedroom at Our Lady of the Angels. At some point in her life, Jane became interested in healing. There were many who reported that she gave great massages. She still has a book in her room about reflexology.

Sister Mary Jane is survived by her sister, Rosemary Carpenta, other relatives, dear friends and the SSND Community.

What a spectrum of color she has been for all of us who were touched by the impact of her simple life. So many of us are grateful for the dedicated and loving service she has given us. May she now enjoy the well-deserved rewards God has prepared for her and may she cover us with the quilt of her warm intercessory prayer.

By Sister Mary Elise Zettel, SSND