



In Loving Memory

Sister Jean Arthur Laubach

Sister Jean Arthur was born to Arthur and Genevieve (Glebo) Laubach on June 22, 1940, in Milwaukee. Both parents were of German heritage and were married at St. Thomas Parish, Milwaukee, on July 1, 1939. Her father worked for her paternal grandfather at the Ideal Tire and Supply Company, a company that was eventually passed on to her father. Her mother always worked at home, which was the custom at that time.

On July 22, 1940, Sister Jean Arthur was born, the first in her family, and was named Collette Valeria. Two years later, in the month of July, the little family received a welcome addition of a baby boy named John Edward. The third and youngest child was born in early February 1950 and was named Peter Thomas.

Collette first met the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) when she attended school at St. Leo's, Milwaukee. Sister Jean Arthur says, "I often gave the sisters a helping hand with their garden work at this time and developed a great liking for them, taking it for granted that I would one day be in their ranks. Naturally, as all youngsters, I had dreams of other futures, although I never pictured myself as actually marrying someday, even if I played 'house' as all little girls."

When she was 13 years old, Collette's family moved into a new home in the Christ the King parish neighborhood, Milwaukee. She was confirmed there with her brother and took the name, Mary. She had graduated from eighth grade and thought that she would like to go to high school at the SSND aspiranture. However, her family thought she should wait until she was a little older; so, she attended Divine Savior High School, Milwaukee, for one year and then finished high school at St. Mary Academy in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

She notes that when she was a novice she realized what a religious vocation really was, and she was so grateful to all who helped her to get there: her parents and the superiors who understood and encouraged her. Regarding her future she said, "I have a great liking for music, having taken piano lessons for eight and a half years, but at the same time, I have cherished the hope of teaching in the primary or elementary grades. Whatever God shows to be His Will is what I too desire."

In August 1961, she was launched out into the world to teach music, beginning at St. Aloysius, West Allis, Wisconsin where she taught for three years. She then taught at St. Mary, Elm Grove, Wisconsin; St. James, Madison, Wisconsin; and Holy Childhood, Harbor Springs, Michigan. However, classroom teaching was a difficult challenge for her, having had no formal training.

It was time to reassess her life. She attended a personal development program at the former Notre Dame House, Milwaukee, and decided she was not "cut out to be a teacher." She took a vocational test to help her decide what type of job would be suitable for her. Medical technology was suggested, and since she had always had an interest in science and the community had a medical laboratory

Birth
June 22, 1940

Baptism
July 7, 1940

Profession
July 14, 1959

Death
July 1, 2021

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

continued

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at Elm Grove, she decided to pursue that field with the blessing of Sister Jacqueline Buckley, Milwaukee's provincial leader at that time.

She began her intense studies in 1979 and by 1982 she graduated. As she began her new work, she was convinced that she had made a good decision. She worked at Elm Grove; St. Catherine's Hospital, Kenosha, Wisconsin; and St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee, over a period of 28 years.

In 1986, she moved to live with Sister Jo Lynn St. John who had multiple sclerosis. When Sister Jo Lynn became incapacitated and moved to Elm Grove in 1990, Sister Fran Buschell moved in with Sister Jean Arthur, and two years later, both sisters moved to West Allis, Wisconsin.

The closing paragraph of her autobiography summarizes what her family was during these years. She says, "Back in the 60s and 70s, both my brothers married, and I gained three lovely nephews, John, Jacob and Stephen and a niece, Caitlin. My father passed away in 2003 and my mother passed away in 2007."

Her years of retirement gave her new experiences. She volunteered to help with the music on Sundays at the veteran's hospital, most of the time accompanying the organist with her recorder. She loved expressing her music with the recorder and joined a group of players. She had grown close to her co-workers from St. Francis Hospital, and she met with them monthly for years. On Wednesdays, she volunteered to play for the liturgy at Our Lady of the Angels, Greenfield, Wisconsin. She helped out at the Cor el Centro Clinic, Milwaukee, using her skill of healing touch called cranial sacra. Sister Fran Buschell recalls that she loved planting flowers and some vegetables every summer.

"She is remembered for her loving presence to others, her love for music, and for the joyful and gentle ways she lived her life." (Quote from obituary in the Journal Sentinel) Sister Jean Arthur is survived by her brothers, John and Peter, her nieces and nephews, and their children, and the SSND community. She was preceded in death by her parents. May Sister Jean Arthur now continue her care for others as she celebrates her new life with God.

By Sister Elise Zettel, SSND

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