



Birth
August 3, 1938

Baptism
August 23, 1938

Profession
July 14, 1959

Death
February 12, 2020

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 Jean Ford

Sister Jean was first of five children, born on August 3, 1938, to Clayton Ford and Beatrice DeGrand Ford into English, German and Belgium ancestry. Her father was born in Kansas and moved to Cornell, Michigan with his parents when he was twelve. Her mother was born in Cornell, Michigan, and has always lived there. Her mother was a Catholic at birth and her father was a convert at marriage. She had three brothers, Gerald, Vernon and Dale, and an only sister named Carol.

Her parents owned a 360-acre farm in Cornell, Michigan, about 12 miles north of Escanaba, Michigan. It was a potato and dairy farm and they also raised the food necessary for the cattle. Her father was an active member in many farm organizations, namely, Michigan Farm Bureau, Soil Conservation Service and the Farm co-op. He served on the Township school board and also served on the County school board.

She attended Public School for the first nine grades. In 1954, she was to be a sophomore in high school when Holy Name Catholic High School was opened in Escanaba, Michigan. When her parents gave her a choice of remaining at the public school or going to Holy Name, she and a brother chose Holy Name.

Even in the earlier grades, she knew she wanted to become a sister. Her only contact with the sisters was once a week when they came to teach catechism. In high school, she wanted to talk with one of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), but was always a little scared. They had three orders of sisters at Holy Name but the SSND made the greatest impression on her. Their spirit around school and their generosity towards the needs of their students made her make the choice.

Sister Jean have always wanted to be a teacher. The subjects she liked best were mathematics, the sciences, especially chemistry, physics and agriculture and Home Economics. She also learned a lot from her time on the farm. Her father hired extra help with the farm work only when it was necessary. This meant that the work they had, for the most part, was to done by the family. Everyone learned how to care for the animals and the field work of planting and harvesting. The housework was not left out though, for her sister and her did mending, sewing, cooking and caring for the younger children. In her spare time, she cared for the grounds around the house and worked in the vegetable garden. Besides farm work, her brothers, sister and her were very active in the 4-H club.

She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Mount Mary University with a Major in Math and a Minor in Physics, Masters degree in Math from the University of Montana and another Masters degree in Education Administration from Northern Michigan in Marquette, Michigan.

Jean served as an administrator, a teacher, a catalyst, a team member and a

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Jean Ford



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School Sisters
of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

Transforming the world
through education

business manager. She taught grades two and three, high school and college around Wisconsin. Education was one of her strengths and she was constantly broadening her own education so she could help others unleash their potential. Vision statements were important to her because she needed a broad perspective on which to build details. She served as administrator and assistant administrator in secondary education. Because of her focus on education and her vision of what education should be, she was chosen to be part of the SSND International Education Seminar. This gave her a broad experience of our international community as she spent time in Rome and Germany during which she helped author the booklet presenting the “Guidelines of Education,” for our Congregation.

As a community member, she served as a Provincial Councilor for eight years. She was always willing to serve on committees and contribute her time and talent. The SSND Central Pacific Province knows her contributions to various projects, province-wide events and committees. With her science and math perspective, we would depend on her to map out details and do further research. But beyond all this, Jean was a woman who walked with her God.

She loved to be in nature and just allow the elements of nature to speak to her. Her sensitivity to nature kept her heart open for ways God spoke to her. As Jean and I spoke days before her call to complete her journey, she said that her introversion often kept her thoughts to herself but she mentioned how everyday she was surprised and grateful for the ways God was present in her life. She let the earth speak to her about sharing and equity issues. She loved the land and worked for care of the earth.

Her study of physics and math allowed her to see patterns in nature which inspired her artistic leanings. She nurtured this relationship with her quilting and needlework. She told me that recently, crocheting allowed her to keep her hands busy while quietly she could talk intimately with her God.

Jean was a friend, a true friend and a confidante to many. Her chuckle came from a listening ear. Jean challenged her friends and wanted them to become the best. Jean never abandoned anyone who reached out but worked with them to a resolution of their request. She took the words of our Foundress, Mother Theresa Gerhardinger, as her motto, “God’s Cause is the only concern of my heart.”

Sister Jean passed away February 12, 2020. She is survived by her sister, Carol (Gordon) Shepherd, and brothers, Gerald, Vernon (Sharon) and Dale (Ann) Ford, many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Clayton and Beatrice Ford.

By Sister Marie Rose Van Deurzen, SSND