

## Remembering Sister Rose Ange Abraham March 3, 1913 - Jan. 7, 2008



Margaret Teresa Abraham, the fifth child in a family of seven, was born in Detroit of her parents, Max Abraham and Anne Cook, both natives of Michigan. Her formal education began in grade school with the Sisters of Christian Charity at St John the Evangelist Parish in Detroit. However, her contact at Cathedral Central High School with the IHMs, especially her dear friendship with Sr. Marie Annette Horndasch, gave blossom to her religious vocation.

Margaret came to Monroe in June 1931. The following January, she became a novice and was given the name Rose Ange. For her to walk and live gracefully in the blue habit cost her quite a bit, for she states clearly in her autobiography, "In my teens my identity became a little fuzzy because I was known as "Pete." I was very successful as a ballplayer, referee, ace marble shooter, telephone pole climber (Michigan Bell liked me), and horseshoe-throwing champ. But I abandoned all of this to join IHM." Her name from "Pete" to "Rose Ange"

(the angel) implies quite a jump!

Typical of the majority of us, Sister began her teaching career as a novice at St. John's, Monroe, to be followed by nine other assignments, all in Michigan. It was during her mission at St. Mary's, Redford, that Mr. Leddy, a businessman, was so impressed by Sr. Rose Ange's business acumen and heart-warming personality that he decided to name one of his own daughters after her. We are privileged to have her as an IHM member with us today; she will participate in this prayer service later.

Sister chose St. John's, Fenton, as an exceptionally happy time in her career. Why? Because even as Principal, she related, "My earlier skills came in handy – for tobogganing, roller skating, baseball, picnics, and fun at the beach. It was here I learned to be a Bingo expert and card 'shark'". To be sure, she was a remarkably happy person.

During the last tenuous years at Immaculata High School, Sister and four others had no place to live, since the convent was being used for other purposes. This group of five went to live at Gesu at the invitation of Sister Rose Ethel while carrying on their mission work. For Rose Ange, this lasted 30 years – unpredictable, unbelievable!

At a recent gathering of those IHMs who had lived with Sister during those years, we were so impressed by their positive, affirmative commentary of their experience. We share them with you:

She:

1. Cared for needs of the sick, without counting the cost to herself.
2. Joined with others to create attractive items for the annual Christmas sale in Monroe – an important task for her.

3. Collaborated with others to plan surprise activities for the sisters to continue and preserve the spirit of fun and joy.
4. Loved nature and worked energetically in the back garden for fresh produce, especially tomatoes.
5. Kept needed supplies for the medicine cabinet to accommodate everyone.
6. Assumed the role of "Jack of all trades" as she proved to be capable of fixing whatever small things were needed in the house – constantly, generous of putting her mechanical skills to good use.

When Sister was hired at Marygrove in the computer center, she spent 19 productive years there, driving from Gesu on a daily basis. The business aspect of her work entailed working at payroll, evaluations, student records, data entry clerk for C. E. admissions. It was there, she stated, that "she learned to know and appreciate the black students and their parents." In her Ministry Commitment form in 1991, she commented, "Daily occasions arose among co-workers for nurturing and reconciling through an open, accepting trust. Communication resolved our differences and achieved a peaceful harmony among us and reached out to other departments."

Finally, after 19 years at Marygrove College and 68 years in service on the missions, she decided to return to our renovated Motherhouse. As most of us do in reflective moments, when Life's highway seems to shorten and demand a turn in direction, we found among her notes this simple statement which summarizes her position and states it honestly:

"I always tried to be of service wherever I was sent. I was recognized for this dedication on many occasions:

- 1976 – Participation in annual Mackinac Bridge Walk.
- 1979 – Service on Evaluations Team
- 1983 – Gratitude for selfless service at Immaculata
- 1983-88 – Dedication to Motherhouse Christmas Sales
- 1984 – Dedication to and support of Marygrove College (19 years)
- 1992 – 60 years of service as an IHM
- 2003 – Family's recognition of my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday – Celebrate!

And so, with a grateful heart, she finalized her thoughts:

"I arrived here at our renovated Motherhouse on November 10, 2003, not to retire but to continue the redeeming mission of Jesus by my presence, my tolerance, my ministry of prayer, sewing, helping others, building peaceful and non-violent relationships, and supporting IHM priorities."

Sister Rose Ange's life here with us these four years has been a legacy of her values. She was loved dearly, was at home, and recently in her prayers begged, "My Father, take me Home!" A passage from St. Therese of Lisieux seems fitting here. It is taken from her mother's writings:

I am nearing a hundred, my day draws to a close;  
It is more than evening, it is almost night.

But, in front of me, rises in the east  
The dawn of a more beautiful day.  
Welcome, welcome!  
It is the white light of your face, O Christ,  
Which in my sad heart awakens a great hope  
Come down, heavenly ray, appear, my Brother,  
Jesus, it is time for us to see each other!  
And we're sure she's heard His invitation,  
Come now, Rose, it's time to celebrate!

Written by Sr. Stephanie Mueller, IHM  
Jan. 10, 2008