



## Remembering Sister Alice Flanagan, IHM

Nov. 28, 1931 – Dec. 31, 2010

Harry Flanagan and his lovely wife, Anna, moved to Detroit from their native Pennsylvania in the 1920s. They had two boys, Charles and Harry, and two girls, Rosemary and Patricia, when God blessed them with twin girls in 1931. Anna and Alice were the family darlings until another blessing, James, came along. The joy of these days turned to sorrow when little James died at age three.

According to Alice, the family was not exactly poor, for their father was employed as a factory worker, and their mother made all their clothes. She knitted, did embroidery work and was an excellent cook. At times their father drove a bakery truck – and everyone loved that for the sweets he brought home.

Alice always wanted to be a sister. Even as a child, when her mother washed her hair and wrapped it in a towel to dry, she would let the towel hang down and pretend it was a veil. At the time, she was attending St. Martin's School. When she was in high school at St. Martin's, she used to help with the school paper. Her favorite teacher was Sr. Ann Pierre. One day Alice asked her mother, "Can I stay after school to help with the school paper?" "You'd better watch out," replied her mother, "or you'll be going to Monroe with those sisters." "I *am* going. I am going to Monroe," she answered. Well, this was a surprise, but not an unwelcome one. They had a long talk about it and her mother was quite pleased.

Alice entered IHM in 1949, very shortly after high school, receiving the name Sister Marie Kyran. She enjoyed her classmates and was able to make them laugh a lot. When it was time for their novitiate retreat, however, Alice had decided it was time to settle down and be serious. She resolved to be very recollected. So there she was, sitting still, listening to the retreat master when the precious \$9.00 chair decided, all on its own, to collapse. Everything went very still until her next-in-rank got up to help. When the novices saw who was at the center of the commotion they broke into laughter – so much for that resolution!

In January of 1953, Alice was sent to St. Mary's, Monroe to teach fourth grade -- 40 boys and 17 girls. In August of that same year she was sent to St. Raymond's for a year, then a year at St. Charles, and so on—a year here, two years there. "Not long enough to know anybody, or for anybody to remember me," recalled Alice. And that's the way it went; her longest time anywhere during these days was three years at St. Raymond's and three years at St. Peter Claver's in Alabama.

In 1970 Alice answered a request for a ministry at the Motherhouse: being a switchboard operator and a driver. She did this ministry for 10 years and it evolved into many different ways of serving ...being a Eucharistic minister, shopping for the sisters, secretarial work for the transportation office, washing and cleaning the cars and filling them with gasoline. Alice was very generous, and very compassionate; she never said no to a sister's need. Alice wrote on her commitment form: "This is my home with Christ, and I will try, to the best of my ability, to bring to my sisters here the presence of Christ through my presence – serving them by my driving and any acts of service that I can accomplish."

It was during this time that she was at the Motherhouse that Sr. Mary Edwin Schroeder and Alice became good friends. They enjoyed their work and their leisure time together. Mary Edwin was not a driver, so Alice often drove her to visit the Schroeder's, who welcomed her as part of their family. At one event, Mary Edwin's brother, Fr. Ed, said, "Since we have no sisters, let's make Alice our *adopted* sister, and give her half a vote." Later in the day something came up and Alice chirped, "Let's vote on it!" "Good grief," replied Ed, "give this woman a right to vote, and she can't wait to use it!"

Sr. Mary Edwin often visited the sick and elderly relatives of our infirm sisters, and Alice was her driver and companion. They enjoyed this ministry a great deal, and were able to do many, many things to help others.

In 1980 Alice went back to school, this time to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Detroit where she taught middle grades. At this time IHMs were able *to choose* where they would like to minister, and Alice chose to remain there for eight years. This was a good experience for her. When asked about which of her ministries she enjoyed most, Alice replied that she enjoyed teaching. On her 1987 ministry commitment form she had written, "Jesus called me to be an IHM Sister, and our community educated me to become a teacher. I see a need for the presence of religious in our schools and I hope to make visible the presence of Jesus and the joy and help He is in my life. I hope to instill in (the children) the desire to accept Jesus' love, joy and message and to share it with each other and those with whom they come in contact."

After Our Lady of Good Counsel, Alice returned to the Motherhouse, where she continued driving, and serving in many ways for another 15 years. Then, a stroke and macular degeneration robbed her of her ability to drive, and that was extremely painful for her – still so full of energy and friendliness, yet limited in so many ways. Now, it seemed, her ministry was one of waiting, of prayer and of presence.

Alice's twin sister, Anna, was able to come to her Golden Jubilee, and this was a joy for both of them, and her nephew, Kevin, was very good to her. Rosaline Carbott and Katherine Garafalo Ciolino were long-time good friends who also visited. It seems that when Alice made a friend, it was for life.

And so, Alice our friend, we thank you for all your caring for us, family and friends. And we thank our God for your generous and loving presence among us these many years. Please keep on caring for us by your love and your prayers until we meet again.

Roberta Richmond, IHM  
Jan. 5, 2011