



## **Remembering Virginia Pokrifkie, IHM**

Feb. 25, 1919 - March 17, 2009

Born Feb. 25, 1919, Virginia was fourth in a family of eight, five girls and three boys. She was baptized March 3, 1919. Her mother, Susan Helen Kott, was a native of Detroit. Her father, Paul Peter Pokrifkie, was born in Germany.

Her father died when Virginia was only six years old. He had been working as a carpenter and got pneumonia from working out in the cold. Virginia's mother was 39. The baby was only three months old and the second youngest child was one year old. The

doctor wanted Virginia's mother to give up the two youngest but she was determined to keep the family together. The doctor then arranged that she would receive a Widow's Pension of \$50 a month, and from this Mrs. Pokrifkie managed to care for her eight children. Monsignor Hugh McCarthy arranged to have the children attend St. Leo's School tuition free.

Virginia attended Chadsey High School and graduated June 25, 1937. While in high school, Virginia worked at a movie theater after school hours to help support the family. After high school Virginia was employed for a time at J. L. Hudson. Later Virginia found a good office job at Edison.

Interest in religious life was spurred on by a visit to Monroe when she went with Dorothy Phelps to visit her sister Ruth, who was a postulant at the time. To help her discern, Virginia used her vacation time to make an eight-day retreat at St. Mary Reparatrix Convent. The novice mistress met with her each day to assist her in her discernment.

Virginia went with the Phelps family to Ruth's reception into the Novitiate Aug. 15, 1943. While there Virginia met with Mother Theresa and made plans to enter the IHM community. Virginia said that she would like to enter after Christmas so that she could be with her family for the holidays. Mother Theresa indicated that it would not be such a good time because it entered into a more penitential season. Instead, she suggested that she enter on Sept. 8, Our Lady's birthday. Thus on Sept. 8, 1943, Virginia entered the Postulate at the age of 24. Her mother and aunt accompanied her to Monroe. They arrived at 11 a.m. and were given a tour and a lovely lunch. Virginia remembered fondly that Sister Antoinette McNamara was her guardian angel.

Received into the novitiate Aug. 15, 1944, Virginia was given the name of Lenore. She made first vows Aug. 15, 1946, and made final profession August 15, 1949.

Virginia received a BA from Marygrove College August 1960 with Majors in philosophy, psychology and elementary education and minors in English, French and social studies. She received an M. Ed. degree from Wayne State University Dec. 16, 1960.

In 1946 Virginia began her ministry of teaching at St. Mary's in Monroe. The next 20 years Ginny exhibited her marvelous flexibility in ministering in the middle grades teaching a few years each at St. Mary in Mt. Morris, St. Joseph in Trenton, St. Philip in Battle Creek, Christ the King School in Detroit, St. Columban in Birmingham, St. Michael's in Flint, Nativity in Hollywood, Fla., and St. Mary's in Redford. Then in 1971 Virginia settled at St. Felicitas in Chicago and ministered there until June 1988, with the exception of one year when she was back in Michigan at Our Lady of Loretto in Detroit. In 1988 Ginny left Chicago and began her ministry as a member of the Conference Center staff at St. Mary Center in Monroe.

Virginia enjoyed being part of the team at St. Mary Center and was always willing to do whatever tasks were assigned. The guests at the Center often commented on her gracious presence and generous service. They looked forward to seeing her when they came for their annual retreats.

Virginia and Ann Bracken had been friends for years and were happy to be ministering together at the Center. Always open to learning and new experiences, they delighted in participating in programs for spiritual growth offered at the Center and in the surrounding areas. They also took a course in reupholstering furniture. There was no lack of furniture needing attention at the Center. However they found the project to be quite strenuous and did well to finish one piece each.

The Theological Education Program offered in the community was taken very seriously by Virginia. She delighted in participating in the various programs and together with a few friends formed a study group to encourage reading and discussion of the suggested materials.

Virginia was always open to learning. When the Center closed and she retired, she became even more involved in the projects promoted by the Office for Peace, Justice and Sustainability. She enjoyed being part of the Organic Garden project, especially in nurturing the seedlings to be set out in the spring.

It was in the spring of 2003 that Virginia moved into the Health Care Center and in 2004 she became part of the Memory Care Unit. Those who cared for her considered her a delight, always gracious and welcoming to any visitors.

In August 2006 Virginia asked that this note be included in her Remembering.

Dear God,

You are an eternal companion, so loving. Ever since my conception in my mother's womb, you have constantly nourished my awareness of your presence in my life. You have shown tenderness, love, generosity and giftedness through my talents. You have inspired me to observe and appreciate your beauty in nature, people, activities, reading and contemplation. You comfort me in my prayers, the changes in my life and my daily decisions. Amen.

Eternally,

Sister Virginia Pokrifkie, IHM  
Monroe, Mich., Aug. 19, 2006

Rest now, Virginia, in the light and love of your Eternal Companion.

Written by Evelyn Booms, IHM