

Featuring St. Mary Academy Class of 1956

The three pioneer IHMs, Theresa Maxis Duchemin and Charlotte Schaaf, both from the same congregation of sisters in Baltimore, and Theresa Renauld, were together for the first time in Monroe on Nov. 9, 1845. The next day they established themselves in their own place, two small houses. On Jan. 15, 1846, they opened a school in one of the houses that would become the St. Mary Academy for Young Ladies. A very small school, with a few elementary day students and some boarders, eventually became an impressive academy for both elementary and high school.



Class Officers - 1956



Virginia Brickley
President



Mary Ann LaFrenier
Vice-President



Anna Mary Doud
Secretary



Rosemary Kuzewski
Treasurer

In addition to the very good education, students and sisters established wonderful relationships that existed for a lifetime. The boarders and day students were very loyal to the Academy. Girls had many occasions to come to know and love the sisters who lived with and taught them. Two women from the class of 1956 can attest to the fact that their relationships were very dear to them.

Featured Students

Donna Payette-Collins, a day student at SMA from first through twelfth grade, said that one of her great delights was that she had her aunt, Sister Marie Ange Payette, as her first and second grade teacher. She loved her aunt dearly and never wanted to disappoint her. Donna also delighted in Sister Miriam Raymo's chicken gizzard soup - a real treat!



Donna Jean Payette

The only difficult times she recalls were quite minor. When she had "done some bad thing" the sister correcting her would say, "What do you think Sister Marie Ange would think of you now?"

Sister Joseph Mary Aspell, Donna's favorite teacher, taught her to cook, sew and all of the talents of home economics. She even learned to bake pies!

Donna has two children and four grandchildren. She now lives in Florida where she is busy raising beautiful flowers. Donna, an only child, credits her IHM Catholic education for her being able to go through a difficult life with great faith and hope. Without it she feels it would have been too difficult to raise two girls as a single mom and to care for her parents through their sicknesses and deaths. Donna is very upbeat and loves her classmates of

1956 who, she says, were loving and strong all through the 12 years.

Peggy Posa was a resident student, and speaking about her loving and dedicated teachers (such as Sister Mary Cabrini Hohl, her advisor) still brings a smile to her face.



Peggy Posa as Maria in "One Family Sings"

A few of the ways that Peggy and friends got into mischief were short-sheeting the retreat master's bed and hiding apple cider until it turned hard and then drinking it. Peggy was always happy at school. "I never can be grateful enough for my wonderful education: about the class subjects and myself."



Peggy Posa (seated, left), A. Lynn Schorn, Virginia Brickley, and Joanne Geisler Plant

She fondly remembers Sister (Carmeline) Evangeline Nestor, her third and fifth grade teacher. Peggy's fondest memories are of the many wonderful friends she made in school and continues to contact.

Peggy loves to keep busy with such things as facilitating meetings and is currently the President of the Board of the River Raisin Institute. In the past, she has worked as Executive Director for COTS (Coalition on Temporary Shelter) in Detroit, providing emergency shelter and follow-up services for men, women and children.

If Donna and Peggy are typical of the St. Mary class of 1956, their 50th reunion should be a great joy with close and loving friends filled with much faith, love and gratitude.

1956 Trivia

- U.S. tests the first aerial hydrogen bomb over Namu islet, Bikini Atoll with the force of 10 million tons of TNT.
- New York Yankees defeat the Brooklyn Dodgers in the World Series; Montreal defeats Detroit for the Stanley Cup.
- Elvis Presley emerges as one of the first rock stars.
- *"The Wizard of Oz"* has its first TV airing.
- Woody Guthrie popularizes *"This Land is Your Land."*
- *"Marty"* wins an Oscar for Best Picture.
- Other movies in 1956 include *"Giant," "Around the World in 80 Days"* and *"The King and I."*
- The DNA molecule is first photographed.
- Tommy Dorsey dies.
- Lucille Ball wins an Emmy for best actress, continuing performance; Nanette Fabray wins as best comedienne.
- John F. Kennedy's *"Profiles in Courage"* is published.