

St. Gerard Majella School – Kirkwood, Mo.



The pastor of St. Gerard Majella Parish in Kirkwood, Mo., contacted the IHM Sisters in 1956 to ask if they would staff the proposed parish school for children in grades one through eight.

The sisters agreed. The parish began construction of the new school in April 1956. It opened in September 1957, although the convent chronicler reports that "Because of the delay in completing the outdoor septic tank, school did not open until Sept. 16." Four IHM Sisters staffed the school, which had an enrollment of 199.

Long-standing traditions began immediately. The feast of St. Gerard Majella was a free day. The Christmas program quickly became a favorite, as did the annual May procession. One tradition the school did not adopt until the 1959-60 school year was an eighth-grade graduation. That first year, "the seventh-graders and their mothers served

breakfast to the eighth-graders and their parents in the Flamingo Room," according to the chronicler.

In 1961, four IHMs and two lay people taught the 264 students of St. Gerard. The athletic program began when "plans were laid for the new soccer teams," called the Comets. Within two years, "our fifth- and sixth-grade soccer team won the division championship in icy weather."

Other extracurricular activities also got underway in the early 1960s. Students participated in speech and music contests and always did well. They also participated in the Knights of Columbus spelling bee and regularly finished at or near the top.



Students also got involved with helping others. They held Valentine's Day parties to raise money to support a seminarian's education. They collected food during the holidays to help provide for those in need. And they raised money for the new IHM mission in Racife, Brazil.

An annual day of recollection for eighth-graders, career day, science fair and family Thanksgiving Mass were all part of St. Gerard by 1970. The school's first newspaper rolled off the presses in 1971.

The early 1970s brought a few changes.

The Class of 1974 (our **Featured Class Year**) experienced a "curriculum fair" rather than a science fair. It placed "an emphasis...on a display of work rather than a contest." Mother Appreciation Day was held in May, and the 31 eighth-grade

students enjoyed a class trip to Hannibal, Mo. With the guidance of **Principal Evelyn (Mary Louis) Craig, IHM**, the first student council was formed, and students compiled a yearbook.

Mary Ellen McDermott received the Majella Club's outstanding student award and scholarship. The liturgy at their June 2 graduation had the theme of "Friends." Graduates, their parents and teachers celebrated the milestone with breakfast at the Ramada Inn.

The last IHM at St. Gerard Majella was **Sister Elizabeth (Joseph Sarto) Fleckenstein**. She left at the end of the 1985-86 school year. The school remains open and active for students in kindergarten through grade eight.

In 1974

The United States House Judiciary Committee adopted three articles of impeachment charging President Richard Nixon with obstruction of justice, failure to uphold laws, and refusal to produce material subpoenaed by the committee. Nixon resigned and received a "full, free, and absolute pardon" from his successor, Gerald Ford.

OPEC ended the oil embargo begun in 1973 during the Yom Kippur War.

Patricia Hearst, 19-year-old daughter of publisher Randolph Hearst, was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army.

Patti Smith released what is considered to be the first punk rock single, "Hey Joe." *People* magazine debuted, with Mia Farrow gracing the cover.

The Sting received an Academy Award for Best Picture. During the Emmy Awards, Outstanding Comedy Series went to *M*A*S*H*. Its star, Alan Alda, was named Best Lead Actor in a Comedy Series. Best Lead Actress in a Comedy Series was Mary Tyler Moore for *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. At the Grammy Awards, Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly With His Song" was the Record of the Year and the Song of the Year. Stephen King's novel, *Carrie*, was published.

Bud Abbott, Charles Lindbergh and Ed Sullivan died.