

Remembering Carol Juhasz, IHM
March 3, 1951 – Feb. 26, 2014



Imagine summer, if you can with all this snow around us, a fourth of July evening. In the dark, sparklers are passed and lit. Ah ... there is a bursting forth of exuberant light giving joy to all ... then ... oh ... it's over so soon. For me that is an image of Carol Juhasz. What can we savor from a life lived somewhat briefly yet so fully?

The Juhasz's are a downriver family with Hungarian roots. Carol's father, Stephen, grew up in Carleton, and her mother, Mary (Lehr), was from Monroe. They stayed close to the area all their lives. Little did her parents realize what a firecracker they were bringing into the world with their first child on March 3, 1951. Stephen, her father, believed Carol was waiting to go to God until it was her birthday. So it is fitting that we celebrate Carol's birth into this world and her life in eternity, March 3.

Carol was joined over the next nine years by her brother John, her sister Cheryl, and finally her brother Mark. Carol went to the neighborhood schools and when asked where she attended, promptly replied, "St. Public." She took part in school activities, was always involved in sports and played clarinet in the school band.

In getting to know the family, some things became clear. Carol said she thought she was pretty funny and liked to entertain people through humor. Now we know from Aunt Merlin that the nut does not fall far from the tree. She claims that their mother Mary was the start of it all, being quite funny and a jokester herself. You immediately see the banter and teasing that goes on between the siblings.

As the eldest, Carol was Mom's assistant in child care. Her brother, Mark, wrote about these years and will share his thoughts with us. Mark, we thank you.

Looking toward her future, Carol said she always thought she would be in the medical field. She took jobs working in doctors' offices including with Dr. Hanif Peracha, so well known to many an IHM.

One day when I was with Carol for a treatment that took several hours, we talked about her life, IHM community and her thoughts on various things. Much of the following reflections are based on that conversation.

About her vocation, Carol always had a special spot in her heart for children. She envisioned herself marrying and having her own. But as she said, "God seemed to have another idea for me." Even with working and having an active social life, she felt a deeper longing. Something was missing. Then Sister Mary Alice Dalton entered Carol's life and made a significant impact. Carol spoke glowingly of how Mary Alice touched her with such a loving, prayerful, joyful spirit. Carol began to go to daily Mass. The story goes that Mary Alice wanted to ask her about being an associate. She was bit hesitant but eventually asked. Carol said, "No, I was thinking of joining!" So Carol accepted the invitation to "check it out" by living with IHMs Pat Rourke, Mary Alice and Joan Michalik through to her candidacy in the community. Carol celebrated her reception into the Novitiate in 1985; first vows in 1987; final vows in 1990; and her Silver Jubilee in 2010.

Carol said many times, "Becoming an IHM is the best thing I have ever done." She loved the Motherhouse, the celebrations, having good people to live with and being a vital member and representative for her mission unit. Once, when talking of the seriousness of her illness, she told me she made a bargain with God that if she had to go, then God had to bring another woman to IHM.

In these past years of illness, staying on the third floor became a blessing for all involved. Early on, when still able, Carol joined in and assisted with the activities. She found a ministry there with the ones she called "so dear." She formed a bond with the wonderful nurses and CENAs who were outstanding in their care of Carol right through to the end. They related how she brought a spark with her to liven things up and how she made each one feel a connection. Later, when she was unable to participate, the bond still grew. One day some of the residents came to the door of Carol's room to give her a greeting, "We love you, Sister Carol." When I told her it was the sisters, she said, "Oh, they are so sweet."

In fact, that is one of her most often used phrases. It could be an elderly man in the parish who had shared something of his life with her. In recalling it she commented: "He is so sweet." Of a child in the school or in the Rainbow Group, it was the same: "She is so sweet." The Rainbow Group is for children who have lost a parent to death or divorce. Some girls from that group described Carol as lively, fun and so on, but they got more serious to say what she meant to them: "She is always there for you."

Often in her commitment forms, Carol spoke of her concern for children. Her degree at Marygrove College was in special education. Carol was delighted when the places where she was in ministry had schools so she could be there with the children. She went over often and worked with the children on events and productions like the Passion play. She led the children to do excellent work whether it was all in fun or quite serious. Even keeping her bald head was used to make connections with children who were or had family members who were in treatment. It was one more way to touch into the reality of others' lives.

A significant part of Carol's ministry was bereavement. She helped families prepare for a funeral, conducted hundreds of wake services and did follow-up with the families afterwards. She loved this work that touched people at such a tender time.

Carol had a sense that in everyone there is a place of goodness and vulnerability that is precious and ought to be recognized. I believe this is a key to how and why she affected so many people. Looking through some of the hundreds of cards sent to her, certain themes stood out. I chose just a couple to quote as examples:

“You are in my daily thoughts and prayers. I admire your strength, bravery and unwavering faith. You are an amazing woman. Thank you for continuing to show me and countless others, how to live each day with determination, joy, love and faith.” Another said, “Thank you so much for being such a shining example of love and God in our world. You touched my soul.”

School children sent packets of cards. A class sent ones titled: “10 things I love about you.” Characteristics often repeated were: always smiling, optimistic, love of the Red Wings, kind, make me laugh, inspire me, and you hold your heart open to everyone -- from the mouths of babes!

Carol could be very hard on herself and found it difficult to hear compliments or receive gratitude for her ministry. The cards truly lifted her up and she began to believe that she had indeed touched people. Her response was: “When I get out of the way, it is amazing what God does.”

I hope you agree that Sister Pat Rourke's poem, “Metamorphosis,” was a good choice: the phrases “a sense of urgency” and “always dancing to the music of passion” speak of Carol so accurately. When first residing on the third floor, Carol said that she needed to get accustomed to the silence in her room, “I'm used to moving.” In her mind there were always more people to do for, more things to be done. At times she was grieved when others did not have a similar level of push toward service. She never quite got the concept of pacing or balance until very late in the process. Generally, she would go at 180 miles per hour and then crash! Not until the cancer was effectively stealing her energy did she agree to, and actually did, cut her hours. Still, she often needed some strong “encouragement” from the staff to leave.

We also know that certain things were to be done “Carol’s way” and you just said “okay.” A strong will can lead to tension, yet it can also get one through times of great hardship or challenge. Her ongoing struggle with asthma, serious lung infection and finally cancer testify to this. At first I was not clear about the pink boxing gloves and theme of “Fight like a Girl.” It certainly meant a lot to her and so many in the company of cancer survivors and supporters. Eventually it became clearer. The second scripture reading for the funeral Mass tomorrow, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, is the spiritual basis. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” She became a tireless champion of all things pink: from the three-day 60-

mile walk, to her pink walker and everything in between. She would fight cancer to the end, for herself and for others.

So, Carol, you have led us on an adventure at a great rate, until when everything had to slow down, waiting until all that was needed to be taken care of within was completed. We finally were quiet, still, awed at the work of God within a soul.

In the silence you still sparkle. As the Scripture continues, “Now the crown of righteousness awaits me; on that day Our God, the just Judge, will award it to me – and not only to me, but to all who have longed for Christ's coming.”

We expect, Carol, that you are fully enjoying your new life and bringing a bit of sparkle with you. Thank you for your love and service, dear sister. We ask you now to remember us here who still have lessons to learn. We still need to ponder what living faithfully to the limit can mean.

Written and delivered by Sister Betty Leon, IHM
March 2, 2014

My Sister Carol:

A lot of you have known her as Sister Carol and some of you have known her as Nene. I always knew her as Carol Jean. The most loving, caring person I've ever known. People always talk about sibling rivalry but to this day I cannot recall one instance when my sister and I ever fought. When I was much younger, my friends used to say I had two mothers because of the way she always looked out for me. She was the oldest child and I was the youngest and we always had a very special bond. She actually gave me my first car, a 1971 Camaro stick shift. I tried numerous times to drive it on my own but she ended up teaching me how to drive a stick shift as well. Sometime after graduating high school, I joined the Navy and she was the one that took me to the bus to go off to boot camp. I ended up in California for many years and she was the first one I would call because she had all the inside scoop on the family. When I did finally return from California and settled in Michigan, I would invite her over for family get-togethers. She would always ask, “what can I bring?” and I would tell her we have it all covered, maybe just bring a salad. She would show up and come to my door and tell me she could use some help unloading. She would have a trunk load of various foods from all the best places because she said she has friends that make the best this and that. This happened at every get together. When it came time for Christmas and with our extended family, we decided to draw names so we could just concentrate on one person and not have to worry about getting gifts for the whole family. Well, she would end up getting gifts for the whole family. Since I've moved back she has taken me to Tigers' games, Red Wings' games, and best of all, Monday Night Football with the Detroit Lions. What a great sister I've got.

I used to tell her that she had a real stressful job dealing with funerals all the time at the parish but she would tell me that she tried to bring comfort to the family and it made a difference. When

she called me back in March saying she was diagnosed with more cancer, at first I told her, "You'll beat this thing like you have in the past." She told me that this time was different and it was a rare form and pretty incurable. That night a big part of me died. I cried to her saying, "You were the expert at funerals and you were supposed to say nice things about me at mine!" She said "I guess you'll have to do that for me now," but I am not sure if there is anything I can say that would truly capture the beautiful person that is my Carol Jean. She has set the bar so high on being such a great sister, friend, and mentor that I believe that it cannot be reached by another unlike her. I will lose my best friend, my big sister, and our family will never be the same.

I will love you always Carol Jean.

Given by Mark Juhasz