On her “page of life,” Sister Kathleen Koch expressed joy and gratitude for the “roots, wings, and embraces” that encircled her, her sister and brothers growing up in Akron, Ohio.

During her senior year in high school, she was inspired by two of her teachers, one of whom invited her to a “Mary Weekend” in Monroe, which confirmed a long desire to be a sister-educator.

Her mother fully supported her decision; not so her dad. Sister Kathleen remembers him saying they would never stand in the way of anything she chose to do, “but if you want my opinion, I wouldn’t go.”

Because her father liked to be early, she was the first in her class to arrive in Monroe. Though she was the second youngest in age, the first to arrive was considered the “oldest,” and had a few small extra “duties.”

A prevailing emotion during the postulate was homesickness, and she dreamed of returning home, but knew this was where she belonged. “Companied” by a tree on the Motherhouse grounds, she began to grow her own roots and as the seasons passed, the Motherhouse became home.

Sister Kathleen taught first and second grades at Gesu in Detroit, then St. John in Fenton and Epiphany, and St. Mary of Redford in Detroit.

Teaching was followed by pastoral ministry at St. Boniface and Our Lady Queen of Hope in Detroit. She took a year of renewal and studied theology at St. Paul University in Ottawa, an experience she describes as freeing. Having no one but herself to lean on enabled her to reach beyond her comfort zone and connect with people from all over the world.

After her renewal, Sister Kathleen worked in pastoral ministry at St. Christopher and St. Mary of Redford. She broadened her professional skills, completing her master’s degree in social work at Wayne State University and joined the staff at St. Hugo of the Hills Elementary School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., as social worker and counselor.
After eight years at St. Hugo, Sister Kathleen was called in a new direction, and she became a resident administrator at the Motherhouse.

Another enriching experience followed, when she began teaching ESL at the School to Work Academy in Dearborn, Mich. This was one more opportunity to meet and get to know people from other cultural backgrounds, namely the Middle East and China. She worked in the Dearborn system for a year before returning to her former position at St. Hugo School.

A great joy for Sister Kathleen has been discovering that she is part of something larger than herself. She realizes and treasures the fact that working with others multiplies and enhances individual efforts, and looking back over more than 50 years, her memories are enriched by the many opportunities for study, retreats, and workshops she has had, but especially by the people who have been the most extraordinary part of these years.

Sister Kathleen is currently living at the Motherhouse, where she is busily enjoying retirement.