

Remembering Dolora Neumaier **June 29, 1917 – Jan. 20, 2021**



Rosalie Catherine Neumaier was born in Holloway, Mich., where her parents, Laura (Foley) and Daniel Neumaier, were farming the land that had been in the Neumaier family for years. Rosalie had two sisters, Madelaine and Monica, who died in infancy, and three brothers, John, James and Daniel.

Her first three years of schooling were at St. Alphonsus, Deerfield, where she stayed with an aunt and uncle. She was delighted to rejoin her family when her parents moved to Ypsilanti and she was able to attend St. John Parish school, staffed by the Adrian Dominican Sisters.

She entered St. Thomas School in Ann Arbor to complete the seventh grade and was ready to move into the high school. At the time the new school was being built, the students were in three different places in Ann Arbor including one student group having classes at St. Joseph Hospital.

Rosalie and her good friend, Julia Seim, could be found after school dusting Sister Grace Maher's music room while waiting for Mr. Neumaier to pick up Rosalie on his way home from work. It was his custom to make a daily visit to church before going home.

During her high school years, Rosalie had taken both piano and violin lessons from Sister Grace, who became a support to Rosalie in making the decision to join the IHM Sisters in Monroe. After graduation, Julia Seim left home first and traveled with the sisters returning to Monroe. Rosalie followed on July 2.

In her second Novitiate year, Rosalie was sent to Akron, Ohio, to teach first grade. After first profession she taught primary grades at St. Agnes, Detroit, for five years, followed by appointment to Marygrove College as supervising teacher of the Preschool, a position she held for 17 years.

Mother Anna Marie asked Sister Dolora if she would like to be stationed near her mother in Ann Arbor when her mother's health was declining. Sister Dolora was

with her mother when she died on Christmas Eve.

The following year, Sister Dolora was sent to teach primary grades at Sacred Heart, Auburn Hills. After two years, she was named principal and remained there for six years. Her final teaching years were at Gesu, Detroit. Her own words describe the decision she faced: "In the late sixties, exhausted from long hours and also from the tensions that arise from working with racial integration, she faced the question, 'do I stay in this job or move on?'"

An opportunity arose to begin a pastoral ministry program at St. John, Albion. One year later, she returned to her beloved St. Thomas, Ann Arbor, spending the next 24 years as pastoral assistant. Much of her ministry centered around care for the frail and elderly.

When it was time to consider retirement, Sister Dolora devised a creative way to retire gradually: for about five years, she would drop one day of working each year and one portion of her salary. The gradual shift helped her and the parish as well. Sister Dolora prepared for retirement by attending workshops and conferences. When she finally came to retire in 1992, she was ready. "Retirement brought me lots of joy," she says. "I was free to search out opportunities to volunteer."

Among those opportunities, she served as an on-call chaplain for St. Joseph Mercy Hospital and as pastoral minister for Arbor Hospice and Homecare. She volunteered at the Ann Arbor St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store. She served as board member for the Washtenaw County Council on Aging; the Diocesan Committee on Aging; and the Advisory Council for Respite of Washtenaw County.

It was clear Sister Dolora had found her most rewarding ministry—both as a professional and volunteer—working with the elderly. "Older people have such joy in their friendships. They know companionship has enriched their lives. Being able to see that and be a part of it was such a gift for me." From her work with Hospice, she observed: "It was a revelation to me to see how peaceful so many people were as they prepared to die."

When Sister Dolora retired, she was living in senior, low-cost housing in Ann Arbor. As her friends retired, she invited them to lease there. At one point, these

friends were enjoying each other's company – as I name them, try to visualize the group – Claudia Carlen, Hilda Bonham, Ann Virginia Bowling, John Mary Baker, Peggy Burns, and Helene Barry (who was the only one taller than five feet!).

Just imagine the quality of their conversations! They were a great community – taking advantage of the countless educational and cultural opportunities in Ann Arbor. They enjoyed time together by celebrating birthdays, playing cards and sharing meals. Always looking for ways to save money, some of the group would participate in medical trials, edit papers or apply for discounts on heating bills.

When a new member joined the group, Dolora liked to share important advice for living in Ann Arbor: "Stay home on game days in the Fall!"

Yes, she certainly did treasure her friends and enjoyed her retirement years!

Sister Dolora, aware that work alone does not produce a well-rounded person, wisely chose to be conscious of her health needs at this time. She was always grateful for the community's care and for Leadership's interest. She took opportunities for social involvement. She nurtured her spirituality. She mourned the loss of good friends Sisters Marion Farrell, Helene Barry, Ann Dumas and Hermene Hughes.

She kept growing with lectures and seminars. The program she found most stimulating was "Spirituality in the Golden Years" at the Sophia Center in Kansas. She never missed the theology weeks each summer in Monroe. She was indeed a woman who was always becoming "More!"

Originally compiled by Donna Hart, IHM, (June 2014) and Mary Ann Markel, IHM.
Delivered by Mary Ann Markel, IHM, Jan. 26, 2021