

Remembering Rosalind Naebers, IHM
May 22, 1937 – Sept. 9, 2021

On Saturday, May 22, 1937, William and Bernadette (Grunow) Naebers welcomed their second child into their family. She was named Mary Rosalind. Rita, her older sister, was 13-months old at the time. They were always together and always remained best friends.

Rose's father was born in Germany and fought in World War I for Germany. He had learned the tool-and-dye trade from his father and that helped him secure a job at the Ford Motor Company when he immigrated to this country. Her mother was born in Detroit of immigrant parents, also from Germany.

Her parents were married at St. Catherine's Church, Detroit. They worked as a team raising a family of four girls and four boys. Rose was in the Novitiate when her youngest sister was born. Rose wrote the following about her childhood:



Even though my growing up years were spent in the city of Detroit, I felt I had a lot of room to spread outdoors. We lived across the street from a fenced-in baseball field, surrounded by lots of green grass for running games with the many neighborhood children. A block away was Pingree Park with swings, slides and lots of play spaces and equipment. Barbour School with indoor-swimming pools was also across the street. I enjoyed the pools as much as possible. I loved ice skating on the Belle Isle Canals in the winter. We walked to the public library and filled the summer with reading. I also read to my four younger brothers, as we had to check out library books for them. When I was in the tenth grade, I got a part-time job at Kresge's Dime Store, earning fifty cents an hour – the minimum wage did not cover part-time workers. All in all, I had a busy, happy childhood.

It was at St. Catherine's that Rose received the sacraments of initiation and attended school for twelve years. When she was in the third grade, she knew she wanted to be a sister, and the idea never left her. After graduation, Rosalind entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart, Monroe, Michigan, on Sept. 6, 1955. The difficult part was leaving her close-knit, loving family.

Rose was received into the Novitiate on June 17, 1956 and was given the name "Sister Marie Gerard." Her first profession was June 29, 1958 and final profession June 29, 1963. During her years of formation, she completed her bachelor's degree from Marygrove College, Monroe Campus.

In September of 1960 she received her first teaching assignment to Annunciation School, Detroit and taught first grade. For a total of 16 years, she taught grades one to four in four different parochial schools in the Archdiocese of Detroit

Rose had a longing to experience a summer in a House of Prayer but was unable to because of her study program. However, in July 1974 she had the opportunity to experience a thirty-day retreat. This prepared her for one of the most difficult years of her life. During the retreat, her grandmother died. Although it was not sudden, this death affected her deeply. Shortly after her grandmother's death, her mother was diagnosed with bone cancer, and died within the year. Her funeral was on Rosalind's 38th birthday.

In 1976 she requested and received permission to spend a year at Visitation House of Prayer in Monroe, Michigan. During that year she spent time reading and in prayer, as well as in service to the Community. She also took advantage of workshops including Enneagram and Life-Planning. She wanted to continue in Church ministry, use her education background, and move to another part of the country. An adventurous missionary spirit was stirring in her. Since her parents were both with the Lord, and all her sisters and brothers married, she felt free and wanted to spread her wings and do something different from classroom ministry. She moved to Roswell, New Mexico to minister in Religious Education as well as other areas of parish work. During her eight years there she was involved in ministry to the elderly and shut-ins, preparing liturgical ministers, working with bereaved families, out-reach to the needy, RCIA, and other areas as the need arose. She served as president of the Roswell Ministerial Association and other service-oriented committees.

An unforgettable thrilling experience was a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome and Lourdes. This was a surprise gift for her Silver Jubilee from the people of St. Peter's Parish, Roswell. She was accompanied by Mrs. Rosemary Smith, a close friend from the parish. Rose and Rosemary remained friends all during their lives.

Another exciting thing was the formation of the Diocese of Las Cruces in 1982. The new Bishop, Ricardo Ramirez asked Rose to be the local editor of the monthly newspaper, '*Aqua Viva*'. One of the perks of the job was attending the Catholic Press Association Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. She wrote:

"At lunch on the second day, I sat with three women from Oakland, California and remarked on the unusual room I had at the hotel, which was the Salt Lake City Hilton. They said that their room had nothing special about it. I described mine – with a wet bar, a nice sitting area downstairs and sleeping area upstairs on a loft area overlooking the sitting area. I invited them to come and see it. First, they showed me their room, nice but ordinary. Then we went to my room and I showed them what I meant. We also noticed a basket of fruit on the table with a card saying 'Welcome, compliments of the Salt Lake City Hilton!' It hadn't been there that morning, and I had no idea why I merited such a gift. However, we needed to go to our next session. About 4:00 p.m. when I returned to my room, I was even more astounded to find pop, chips, wine, and more on the wet bar. I

went across the hall to get my friends to come and see. Then I thought it best to call the main desk to find out what this was all about. "Oh," the gentleman said, "Were you planning to stay two nights?" "Yes, the conference goes another day." He replied, "We've been having trouble with our computer and it erased your name. We've given your room to the University of San Diego football team! Would you mind moving to the executive floor, compliments of the hotel?" I told him I wouldn't mind!!! Another adventure! I quickly packed my suitcase and my friends helped me as I went to the lobby to exchange keys then up to the fifth floor. It was a huge room with a king-sized bed, a nice sitting area and cookies the size of a dinner plate on the table. We shared those. That night my bed was turned down and a truffle was on the pillow! There were other perks, too. I was in luxury! After the conference the next day my friends and I said we'd always remember this conference, and not for the presentations, either. What an adventure! By the way, San Diego won and really celebrated that night as I slept in my king-sized bed."

Rose also worked with the diocesan Sisters' Council and spent several years in leadership positions. These duties were in addition to her parish ministry. Other ministries in the diocese included four years at Our Lady of Grace, Artesia, and one year at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Hobbs. Both parishes were about 98% Hispanic. In 1990, she returned to Monroe and requested a year of renewal and rest. During that time, she attended a renewal program at Wellsprings in Glens Falls, New York. The following two years she ministered at St. Francis de Sales Parish in Toledo, Ohio, as pastoral assistant.

In July 1993, she was asked to be caretaker at Visitation House of Prayer in Monroe. With five buildings, plus the grounds to oversee, she was kept busy. In October 1995, the community celebrated Visitation's twenty-five years of service to the IHM Community.

In October 1999 a routine mammogram revealed a breast tumor and was diagnosed as stage two cancer. Major surgery followed. She opted to participate in a clinical trial for her cancer therapy. January 2000 was the beginning of that therapy which included intense chemotherapy, harvesting stem cells from her bone marrow, two and a half weeks at Henry Ford Hospital, etc. She since learned that the chemotherapy used in her trial is now used as a regular treatment plan. (Attributed to Sr. Catherine Mallon)

She added another angle to her therapy and that was a 'pity party.' As we've all heard about making lemonade when you have lemons, so she had a party to celebrate life! Everyone was encouraged to come wearing a head scarf or hat in solidarity.

Rose left Visitation in 2004 and moved into Norman Towers. Living there with other IHMs, as well as other retirees, was a great experience; she made many friends. She wasn't jobless for long as Sr. Elizabeth Chmielewski asked her if she'd consider coordinating the Motherhouse Service Office; Rose accepted yet another challenge. In 2014, she moved to the Motherhouse and continued her work in the Service Office. She served as Volunteer Coordinator from 2016 until 2020.

(This ends the text written by Sister Roberta Richmond and begins that of Sister Rita Fisher.)

My knowing of Rosalind, "Rosie," is of a kind, hard-working, generous, down-to-earth, practical person. She also had a sense of humor. But recently, there was a change. She knew she had two aneurysms that were being closely monitored, and there was a pending appointment with her doctor, but she was becoming anxious. When severe pain developed, she was taken by emergency, to the hospital. The staff worked to regulate her blood pressure, control the pain, and take scans of the area. The hospital doctor immediately sent the scans to the cardiac surgeon in Toledo and told Rosalind that the helicopter would be there in 20 minutes to take her to Toledo [for surgery].

The doctor had no sooner left the emergency room, then he returned. He said calmly and seriously that the surgeon said he could not perform surgery because it was too close to the aorta and surgery would kill her. He continued to say, "We are D-O-C-S not G-O-D-S. We will do everything we can to keep you comfortable in I.C.U." Rosie knew that she was preparing to meet God. Though in pain, Rosie's demeanor was calm. She waited a moment then said, "Someone will have to call Dennis in Transportation and tell him to cancel the car that was going to take me to the Doctor tomorrow." Practical, down to earth.

Let us trust that Rosie spends eternity rejoicing.

Written by Roberta Richmond, IHM

Supplemented and delivered by Rita Fisher, IHM, Sept. 21, 2021