



Sister served lovingly in a single ministry

Because of the long, active lifetimes of many IHM Sisters, an individual's ministry list can be extensive, frequently documenting 10 to 25 different missions and locales.

One of the shortest ministry lists in the IHM Archives database consists of three lines. It belongs to Sister Gracelma Beavis. Despite a relatively long life of 76 years, Sister Gracelma spent her ministry years all in one place: the Motherhouse Infirmary.

Born on Jan. 9, 1907, in Detroit, Norine Rose Mary Beavis was baptized a month later in Our Lady of Help parish. Her mother's chronic illness might have helped prepare young Norine for a career in health care. She took advantage of an invitation to finish

her high school classes and begin nurse's training at Providence Hospital School of Nursing. She graduated in 1928 as a registered nurse.

While working in a hospital, she continued to care for her mother until Mrs. Beavis died on Dec. 12, 1932. Six months later, Norine entered the IHM congregation. Taking the name Sister Gracelma, her skills were quickly put to use in the infirmary, where she spent the next three decades.

Her title "Infirmarian" carried the roles of nurse, head nurse, supervision of the Hall of the Divine Child infirmary, 12 years in charge of the clinic and two years in charge of pharmacy. At one time her annual work schedule was one day off a week, two weeks' vacation and



one week's retreat.

In 1962 she was stricken with polio which required her to wear a heavy brace for the rest of her life. Her fellow nurse and dear friend Sister Joella Poupore helped her get around the building as well as have a good time. On a 1966 autobiographical form, Sister Gracelma listed her main interests as "advancement of nursing," ball games, reading and puzzles.

Having suffered for years with Myasthenia gravis, a

weakness of the muscles, she became a patient in the infirmary she knew so well in 1982. Sister Gracelma died of pneumonia on Dec. 23, 1983, after a three-day illness. Her funeral was on Christmas Eve.

A few days later the congregation received a letter from Sister's physician, Dr. Abel A. Applebaum of Toledo. He had known her for 50 years. He wrote that she had tolerated her illness "with great peace of mind" and his memory of her would be as a "fine nurse and a very lovely, intelligent and serving person."

Her ministry list reads:

1936-1965

Infirmary staff

1965-1982

Motherhouse

1982-1983

Motherhouse Infirmary

On this date: March 25, 1931

*From the Motherhouse
Chronicles:*

“On this glorious day – March 25, 1931 – we had the sod turning for our new Academy. Although it had rained continuously from early morning, our dear Lady gave us a dry afternoon, at least dry overhead. A very simple ceremony had been prepared, however, it turned out quite Motherhouse elaborate; about a thousand people presented themselves. It



seemed as if all Monroe turned out. The Academics from

Marygrove, accompanied by their teachers, parents and many of St. Mary's

Alumnae helped to swell the crowd. The Sisters from Carleton, Erie and Newport were home. . . .

At 2:30 the line of march started from the Convent led by the Hall of the Divine Child band. The Academics, Novices and Postulants walked. The Monroe Chapter of St. Mary's Alumnae furnished autos for the Professed Sisters. At the campus the Boys from the H.D.C., carrying American flags, joined the procession.

14 weeks later they had this:



7-2-31
OWNER: ST. MARY'S COLLEGE & ACADEMY
LOCATION: ELM AVENUE, MONROE, MICH.
BUILDING:
ARCHITECT: D. A. BOHLEN & SON
BLDG. CONSTRUCTION: W. E. WOOD CO.
FILE No. 830
No. 8 DATE 7-2-31
PHOTO BY GUSTAVE BECK

Promptly at 3 o'clock the ceremony started with a bugle call, followed by the school song, hymns, patriotic songs, raising of the flag, salute to the flag, the blessing of the ground by the Chaplain, Reverend Walter Marron, and then Reverend Mother Ruth turned the sod. Just at that moment the steam shovel whistled; this was taken up by the City whistles, and the Church bell at St. Michael's rang. Thus another great project was started by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

When Chrysler treated Catholic college presidents to a test drive

In 1965, Chrysler Corp. invited the presidents of Catholic colleges to try out some of its latest models. Mary Emil Penet, IHM, then president of Marygrove College, is shown (far right) with representatives of Siena Heights, Madonna, Mercy and Nazareth. Behind them and the Chrysler reps are Plymouth Fury station wagons, van and the Belvedere, price tag \$2,198. Sister Mary Emil later accepted the keys to a 1965 Dodge Polara for use at Marygrove.

Comments from Facebook:
Jean Kearns Miller: Sr. Mary Emil was a powerhouse as Marygrove's president.

Joyce Agnes Durosko: Sr. Mary Emil Penet was my high school teacher for four years. Amazing woman and teacher!

Stephen Wetmore: Sr. Mary Emil later taught me at St. John's Seminary in Plymouth.

Gloria Perry: My mom & dad used to drive 'the



nuns' on errands back in the day when sisters didn't drive. Mom & Dad had some funny stories about the 'adventures' they had along the way! Stuff like stopping for burgers and

milkshakes, or some fun, not really necessary shopping, that sort of thing.

Maria Graziano Strom: Love the history and the photo!

The Hall of the Divine Child opened 100 years ago this year



school room were a common sight but boys twenty-four hours a day were indeed a novelty.”

Comments from Facebook:

Colleen Duffey: Spent a lot of Mother's Day there. My Dad and 3 brothers attended and they all knew how to polish 🍷!

Pat Littrell: My Aunt Jeannette met her husband, my uncle Jack when he came to Monroe as Commandant at The Hall of Divine Child after World War II.

Kurt Linsenmeyer: I went there 1st and 1/2 of 2nd since it was closing went to st johns; still have my hat

Pam Doepker-Clark: A real tribute to young men who went to school here & to their educators.

MaryEllen Byrne Hunt: My brother was HDC Class of 66. Retired from the US Army as a MG.

The Hall of the Divine Child opened on Jan. 14, 1918, with Sister Alphonsine Robischung in charge as superior. Memories written later say, “These were ideally happy days. The children seemed like one big family. Everything was so new for us all. Boys in the

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Since 2000, all IHM sisters have been encouraged to submit individual chronicles to the IHM Archives. These records about your own life and ministry over the course of a year or more add breadth and depth to the documented history of the IHM Sisters. Your contribution will enrich the future record of the IHM, so please be sure your life's story is included in the community's story.

Graceful moves on the ice at Crawfton part of winter downtime

IHM Sisters enjoyed the frozen surface of Lake Erie for a bit of ice skating and lighthearted fun in 1968. The congregation owned the Ontario resort called Crawfton and used it as a place for retreats and escapes for almost 40 years. Often thought of a summer destination for the sisters, winter also was a time for work and recreation. These sisters clearly were having a blast.

Comments from Facebook:

Miriam Nahas DeLamielleure: Love the I H M s, I was so blessed to have them for teachers. Family could not afford tuition, so from the 9th to the 12th grade, I cooked for them at Annunciation, Sister Mary Kenneth Agnes Soefker was in charge of the kitchen.

Patty Geiman: This is the best, I love and respect the IHM sisters, 12 years Catholic Education.

Peggy A Erdman Henegar: I love the IHM Sisters. I'm so happy to know they had some well deserved



FUN time. They gave up so much to serve our God.

Theresa Borawski: IHM sisters rock!!!! This makes me smile!

Kevin William Mace: Celebrating the wonder of God's works.

Maria Antonia Aranda: Woooooowonderful !!!!

Annie Kerwin: L 🤔 ☐ VE!