

Remembering Anne Crane, IHM June 4, 1934 – Sept. 19, 2024

Good morning. We take this moment as a community of faith to remember—to remember our sister, classmate, colleague, “partner in crime,” and dear friend Anne Crane. But how to remember someone who herself never wanted to be the center of attention, who detested the thought of being fussed over?

“You don’t want to hear the story of my life,” writes the poet Mary Oliver.¹ “And anyway,” she continues,

I don’t want to tell it,
I want to listen

to the enormous waterfalls of the sun.

And anyway, it’s the same old story –
a few people just trying,
one way or another,
to survive.

Mostly, I want to be kind.



If put on the spot, Anne would likely say that the story of her life is just “the same old story,” nothing special, nothing to fuss over. She would immediately turn the tables and say, “Tell us that story about when you did such and thus?” ... “Say more about that.”

For Anne, the story of her life was woven into the stories of her family, friends, colleagues and students. Who has been in Anne’s presence and not heard Anne tell a story about someone? Now, whether or not that story actually happened or was entirely fictional is anyone’s guess, for Anne was a phenomenal writer and storyteller. She also was adept at the craft of “spinning a yarn,” that is, telling “an unusually long and sometimes imaginative story.” She especially loved to tell spin stories to prank her close friends, knowing how much they’d get a kick out of it while simultaneously mystifying others.

One such story began on an ordinary day right here in the Motherhouse.² A sister returned to her room only to find an ornament of a dog hanging on her door. The dog had a sign on it saying, “Coming Soon.” Every time someone passed her door, they’d ask, “Are you getting a dog?” A few days later, a bag of dog food appeared at her door. Passersby got even more excited and asked, “Did you finally get a dog? Where is it?” This poor sister patiently handled all the attention with a chuckle, knowing Anne was at it again. The story of the dog even made the circuit around the dining room tables as

¹ from the poem “Dogfish” by Mary Oliver

² Carolyn Campbell, IHM and Joyce Durosko, IHM, sharing with Julie Vieira, IHM (Sept. 23, 2024)

Anne and her friends played it up, creating comprehensive backstories for both the sister and the dog. The story was so compelling that a concerned staff person was ready to stage an intervention. Anne finally had to come clean. There were a lot of laughs and to this day, the story of Humphrey the dog is still told.

Be sure to look at more stories about Anne's pranks, including one about Killer, the nun who sent a goose to its eternal reward due to an errant golf ball. You can find the stories in a binder in the remembering room.

For Anne, these elaborate jokes were a way to show her love and respect for someone. "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness," wrote the Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde. For Anne, it was crafting stories about someone that was her sincerest form of flattery.

Anne respected the power of storytelling, especially when it engaged people and deepened reflection and conversation. She found companions in storytellers everywhere – poets and theologians, novelists and literary critics. She read the likes of Laguna Pueblo poet Leslie Marmon Silko, English writer J.R.R. Tolkien and Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson.

Anne made it her life's work to encourage people to tell their own stories and to listen to the stories of others. In preparing for her retirement party from St. Edward University in Austin, Texas, in 2007, Anne wrote:

I think being an English professor all these years has influenced my interest in stories and the storyteller. Stories, I believe, tell where we have been both individually and collectively and help to preserve the culture and myths of the past. They also are the occasions for gathering around the table or fire and forming community, and finally they lay the foundation and set the directions for the future.³

"Enough about me," Anne is probably saying right now, a firmness in her voice and a twinkle in her eye. Rather than risk getting pranked by Anne from the afterlife, let me shift the focus from her to the stories of people and places in her life.

Of her beginnings, Anne wrote:

I come from a big family that, besides, we 8 "kids," included our parents [Byron Crane and Anne Loeffler, who was a kindergarten teacher] and two aunts—Tillie and Lovey. We lived in a large Victorian-style home where many of our friends spent a lot of their time ... Everyone gathered together in our big living room for talk, games, snacks, etc. It always surprised me that our [more well-off] friends seemed to prefer being at our house when they had such nice "stuff" at their own.⁴

³ Anne Crane, IHM, in her un-condensed "Retirement Party Remarks" (Nov. 28, 2007)

⁴ Anne Crane, IHM, in her un-condensed "Retirement Party Remarks" (Nov. 28, 2007)

Hospitality and kindness were key for the Crane family, as was watching out for the underdog. Anne tells this story.

One snowy, winter day, a large group of us—high school-aged kids—were sitting around gabbing when my sister Rose, the baby of the family, 10 years younger than me, came in from outside very upset.

“What’s wrong?” we asked. “The kid from down the block threw snowballs at me as I walked home.”

The whole group ... stood up and said, “Well, we’ll take care of that!” as they rushed to the front door. With hastily made snowballs, they pelted the poor kid who had thrown at Rose until he ran to his own house for shelter. Rose never had a problem after that. In fact, often when she went out to play, we heard little neighbors saying, “Watch out. Rose is out.”

One of my brothers remarked at the time, “We’ve always got to stick together and take care of one another. If we do, we can be and do anything we want.”⁵

Reflecting on this, Anne wrote, “That sense of teamwork, caring for others, looking out for those who are little or weaker has stayed with me—as has the joy and fun of being with others in worthwhile—and even some not so worthwhile endeavors.”⁶

Anne would find this same spirit of both joy in being with others and care for others in the IHM Sisters. Anne had heard about the sisters first from her mother, who had graduated in 1917 from Saint Mary Academy, which was run by the IHMs. Anne writes:

As an Academy girl myself from 1947-51, I came to love “Monroe” as my mother had before me. In 1955, when I entered the postulate, I became a permanent part of it all.... We were establishing the common foundation for future years together. We learned about our heritage, the traditions, the rule. We studied, we listened, we prayed. Most of all, though, I learned by living with and observing those who were strong and good women.⁷

Anne notes that religious life as an IHM Sister, by and large, fit her to a tee. However, she writes, “One of the hardest things for me to learn was the rule of silence.” Many of us can agree that Anne was not one to keep silent, especially if she was told to do so!

Anne’s light-hearted spirit was infectious in the community. A sister who was her classmate noted, “With her very special laugh, we would get caught into her shenanigans, sometimes innocently, sometimes deliberately, but ALWAYS WITH

⁵ Anne Crane, IHM, in her un-condensed “Retirement Party Remarks” (Nov.28, 2007)

⁶ Anne Crane, IHM, in her un-condensed “Retirement Party Remarks” (Nov. 28, 2007)

⁷ Anne Crane, IHM, in “The IHM Book of Life Page for Anne Crane, IHM” (1998)

FEELINGS OF JOY! ... She was a wonderful, happy and loving person to know, so human and real.”⁸

Anne had a way of seeing that was both realistic and hopeful. She was interested in and read widely about the future of religious life, recognized how it was changing, and supported leadership emerging from younger members.

In addition to immersing herself in the life and spirit of the IHMs, Anne participated in its teaching mission. She did her undergraduate and graduate work in the fields of English and literature.⁹ She taught for many years in grade and high schools in Michigan and at Marygrove College in Detroit. We’ve heard from many of her students, especially her senior English students at Immaculata, who recalled her as one of their favorite teachers.

But it would be in Austin, Texas, at Saint Edward’s University—some 1400 miles away from the IHMs—that Anne would experience a deepening integration of both her love of education and her love of being in community.

Anne writes:

Here, at St. Ed’s, I found a wonderful synthesis of the intellectual rigor and commitment to social justice I knew as an IHM, what I had learned from my family about the advantages of working with others, and the spirit of Holy Cross, accepting others, whether colleagues or students, where they are and educating the heart as well as the head.

Over my 35 years here, I’ve always found it more fun and more productive to work together on a team than alone....¹⁰

Anne had many wonderful colleagues at Saint Ed’s, including the Brothers of Holy Cross, her IHM Sisters, lay faculty and staff and, in particular, Holy Cross Sister Judy Hallock. She also had a dear friend, Donna Jurick, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. We’ll hear from Donna a bit later in this liturgy.

During her long career at St. Edward’s University as a professor of English, Anne offered her gifts to the community in many capacities. Among them were serving as dean of the School of Humanities for 16 years, creating a writing program and major, and working closely with the College Assistance Migrant Program.

Not every opportunity to work together was “academic.” Anne notes that often, they gathered together to enjoy one another and to create good times for the St. Ed’s community.¹¹ Undoubtedly, these “non-academic” endeavors included a prank or two instigated by Anne!

⁸ Alice Baker, IHM, in an email to Julie Vieira, IHM (Sept. 22, 2024)

⁹ Resume written while at St. Edward’s University as an Associate Professor (date unknown)

¹⁰ Anne Crane, IHM, in her un-condensed “Retirement Party Remarks” (Nov. 28, 2007)

¹¹ Anne Crane, IHM, in her un-condensed “Retirement Party Remarks” (Nov. 28, 2007)

Reflecting on her time at St. Ed's, Anne writes: "I loved being an integral part of the St. Edward's family where teaching and collaborating with others in an environment where faith, hospitality, innovation, creativity, friendship and community were all valued."¹²

When Anne returned to Monroe in her "retirement," she found community once again and an opportunity to listen to and tell stories. She spent time with her IHM Sisters and friends and delighted in trips to Bolles Harbor for a picnic by the lake with her dear friends. Anne also enjoyed volunteering with the Archives team and helping with various writing projects of the community. She was known for her kindness and always finding a way to affirm others in the stories of their lives.

At this point, I'm sure Anne would prefer we not carry on about her any longer. Yet, the stories about people dear to her, her accomplishments and, yes, her pranks are literally endless. But allow me to add just a few more to give further texture to Anne's story by way of a "speed round" of facts about Anne according to a "getting to know you" questionnaire she did for the St. Ed's community.¹³

My favorite cake:	carrot cake
The worst advice my mom ever gave me:	"Get serious."
My pet peeve:	righteousness
Two things on my Christmas list:	books and golf equipment
The happiest day of my life:	the day I walked through the front doors of St. Mary's in Monroe, Michigan and became an IHM Sister

And now, it's time to engage with our own stories. Yes, stories about Anne, but also stories that get us thinking, stories that open us to dialogue, stories that make us laugh and forget ourselves, stories that are forever reaching out to new horizons.

Anne's words at her St. Ed's retirement party are appropriate now more than ever. "Thank you all for being here. Seeing all of you is the best part of the party."

***Written by Julie Vieira, IHM. Delivered by Patricia McCluskey, IHM
Sept. 26, 2024***

¹² "Anne Crane, IHM: IHM Sisters Then & Now" (April 2017)

¹³ "Extraordinary People: Sister Anne Crane, IHM" in "HillTopics: St. Edward's University Community Newsletter" (Feb. 1999).