

TODAY AND YESTERDAY

A COLLECTION OF RECENT DISCOVERIES AND
ACTIVITIES IN THE IHM ARCHIVES

Founders' Day exhibit sparks mix of memories

By Jennifer Meacham, Archivist

On the second day of January, 1941, Eileen Houlihan received the holy habit and the religious name Mary Gael. At 101, Sister Eileen is now the oldest member of the IHM congregation. Her 82, nearly 83, years as an IHM Sister serve as the unofficial timeline of our current exhibit, "Habits Transformed," which runs through Jan. 7. While it pays tribute to the founders, this exhibit tells the story of *today's* IHM Sisters and their contemporaries, from religious formation through decades of extraordinary transformation.

The crowning jewel of our display is "Sister Therese," impressively tall and robed in the traditional IHM blue habit (see photo and details, far right). And Betty Leon donated her modified habit at the perfect time to serve as a symbol of the many changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council — both



Sisters Anne Wisda, Ellen Rinke and Jean Booms watch a slide show of photos from novitiate days.

visual and spiritual.

We in the Archives hope that this exhibit exemplifies the myriad ways each sister's hard work in her days of the novitiate bore tremendous fruit through years of successful classroom teaching and later ministries devoted to social work, pastoral care, and social justice. Though transformed in appearance, IHM Sisters have maintained their most valued habits of community, prayer, service, sacrifice, resilience and humility.

Finally! Archives has traditional habit in collection

Archives staff members for years have lamented that no genuine traditional habit had survived the move to contemporary dress. The collection included only bolts of the fabric. Sister Diann Cousino has filled that gap by sewing a complete habit — scapular, veil, collar, headpieces, gown and pockets. Starting in June, she spent more than 10 weeks adjusting original patterns to fit a mannequin and sewing by hand and machine. A long-held goal has been reached!





One reader's origin story

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and Sister Suzanne Sattler visited the Motherhouse in November to talk about his new biography. A question stirred a memory.

Known for being a voracious reader, he was asked how that habit was started. He laughed. "Sister Marie Leo, IHM."



Young Tom was a student at Epiphany in Detroit when music teacher Marie Leo Gleason realized he couldn't carry a tune. She finally

told him to sit in the last seat in class and just move his lips. Behind that seat was a bookcase and Tom discovered reading was more fun than pretending to sing. Reading became a lifelong joy.

Visitation was Sister's childhood home first



For 50 years, the barn and house off Stewart Rd. at the north end of IHM property served as a House of Prayer and Visitation Barn. But years before that, it was the home of Elaine Aldridge.

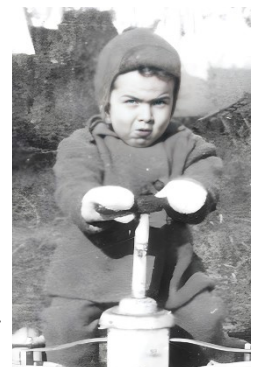


Sister Elaine Aldridge's first home (above) was later remodeled to become part of Visitation. The top photo shows the same house with an expanded west wing. The barn is seen in both photos.

Three photos from the 1940s were discovered recently in boxes of Visitation chronicles and photos that had been stored at River House. One name was written on the back.

"Yes, this is me," Sister Elaine responded when seeing the photos. "My dad worked on the IHM farms. We lived in Visitation (Grey House) by the barn which ended up being the Visitation prayer barn. Woodrow Fix was my dad's uncle. We moved from Visitation site out to one of the farm houses on our IHM farms."

Her childhood home was later expanded and a dormer added to accommodate its new use: convent.



Revisiting Sisters’ Christmas verse

COMPUNCTION

An Innkeeper’s Soliloquy

If he had only said--
the night he sought a bed
For his young wife--
That she was Jesse’s rod
Whose sacred burden--God--
She bore in life.

I might have had the sense
To forego my pounds and pence
And let them in.

But no--”Even a shed?”
Was all he quietly said
To my, “No room.”
And Israel’s holy follower
In lowly cattle bower
Came into bloom.

No matter where I go
Unceasingly I know
What might have been.

Sr. Miriam Fidelis Donohue
1893 - 1983

Night Song

That stark
white birch
beneath my window
sings its way
up the darkest night,
sending me
out among the stars.

— Helen Oprysek IHM

*The above poems first appeared
in Spinnaker, 1995 and 1987*

Sister Mary Fran, author shared same perspective in different words

**By Deborah Saul
Archives Assistant**

I recently read a wonderful new book called *American Ramble* by Neil King Jr. This journalist, observer and cancer survivor walked 330 miles from his home in Washington, D.C., to Manhattan in April, 2021. His goal was to find out who we Americans are now and what is all around us that we fail to notice or appreciate.

He wrote, “I could feel my capacity for awe and wonder grow exponentially with the days. It was, I suppose, an effort to grant pre-eminence to place, to make the present truly immediate.”

Just as I had finished reading the book, Sister Kathy Onderbeke shared some favorite

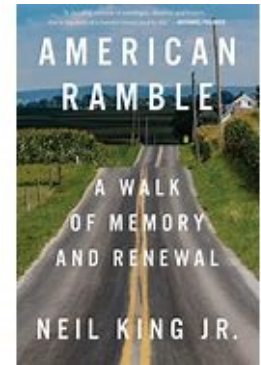
quotations, including this one from Sister Mary Fran Gilleran: “Be where your feet are.”

I was bowled over by this simple statement, so wise, so important.

It says to me that we should be present in the moment, be active in and attentive to our immediate surroundings. Having just read *American Ramble*, I thought it was a comment that could have been on the book’s dust jacket.

I contacted the author via his website to thank him for the excellent read. I added that he might enjoy that statement from Sister Mary Fran.

And he did! Neil King’s quick response included this: “Be where your feet are is indeed a great guide.



*American Ramble:
A Walk of Memory
and Renewal
(HarperCollins)*

My feet have led me to many wondrous places including those visited on the long walk to New York. That stroll showed how much we miss by moving too fast.”

Perhaps we all need to slow down a bit and really see what is right in front of us. What are we missing? What might be asked of us if we really look?

I wish you “good seeing” wherever your feet are in 2024.

Among Ourselves



In this undated photo of Motherhouse tour docents are (left row) Sisters Madonna Oswald, Marge McFarland, Margaret Alandt, Marie Gatza and Joan Glisky. On the right are Sisters Marietta Murphy, Rosemary Cassar, Marie Cyril Delisi, Marie Gabriel Hungerman and Joyce Durosko.

The IHM Archives seeks to preserve any and all materials that document the history of the IHM Sisters. Please contact the Archivist if you have items to donate or have questions about the types of items appropriate for the collection.

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