

“I Remember When...”

– Sisters’ Favorite Stories

As we celebrate 125 years as Duluth Benedictines, we asked some of our Sisters to submit their favorite memory or inspiration as a Benedictine Sister. Enjoy!

Sister Donna Schroeder: I came to Duluth in 1956 to attend College. My first view of the campus astonished me by its beauty. Later I was amazed by the quality of the faculty and staff.



Sister Donna Schroeder

One particularly impressive person was Sister Ann Edward Scanlon. It was usual for her to take her evening meal with the students in the college dining room. I liked the conversation at her table. I was excited when the Catholic University Players were scheduled to come to campus because I had never attended so professional a performance. They were slated to perform Shakespeare’s “The Taming of the Shrew”. Sister Ann Edward wanted me to get the most out of the play and so she used her magic keys to go into the library after hours and get me a copy of the play to read before I attended the play. That was the kind of attention the faculty and staff provided for us.

Sister Pauline Micke: Sister Leona Michlitch was in the original group who founded this Monastery in 1892 when she was in her early 20s. I entered in 1958 and was near that same age when I came to know her. It was my responsibility as a young Sister to do tasks for her such as get her laundry.

When I would come to her room, she would be sitting in her little rocker (she was shorter than me).



Sister Pauline Micke

I would sit on this little stool and listen to her stories. One of her favorites was how they wanted her to be bookkeeper. She said, “We had so little money it hardly took

even one bookkeeper to keep track of it.” A further story was, “We didn’t have enough money to buy a bar of soap or a wash cloth.”

These are treasured memories learned from a woman who was truly a “Wisdom Figure” in our history.

Sister Barbara Higgins:

“Higgins, get it out of your system!” That was the mandate of my Cathedral High School sophomore music teacher, Sister Eucharista Dalbec. I think Sister had reached her tolerance point of seeing me mime every classical piece she played. Violin, piano, harp, tuba, and especially male operatic voices – I sat in the back of the room and went to it, imitating each masterful piece of music. I did “get it out of my system” when I acted out *Figaro* for our Girls Athletic Association talent show. Sister Eucharista sat in the front row and rocked back and forth with hysterical laughter.



Sister Barbara Higgins

That was just my debut, as I continued to entertain our Benedictine Community through the years with Al Jolson, Mario Lanza, *Figaro*, Maurice Chevalier, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and many, many more. One time for *Figaro* I wore glasses with attached bushy eyebrows, huge nose, and mustache. The Benedictine Sisters, my favorite audience, roared with laughter. One came up afterwards and asked, “How do you keep the mustache on?” I said, “It’s stapled to the nose.” Her puzzled response, “Doesn’t that hurt?” Needless to say, I threw that prop out. Another Sister said in a puzzled voice to Sister Mary Rae Higgins (my own blood sister, who had always laughed even after seeing the pantomime many times), “I didn’t know Sister Barb had such a deep voice.”

I have performed for a variety of groups and find joy in bringing much-needed laughter to so many people, especially my Benedictine Sisters.

Sister Mary E. Penrose: One of the memories I have is that of sitting and hearing Sister Ann Edward Scanlon as she entered her classroom to teach history. She was so enthusiastic that it was contagious and I ended up with a minor in history in graduate school, though it was not my minor field of interest, because I always signed up for any history classes that were optional.



Sister Mary E. Penrose

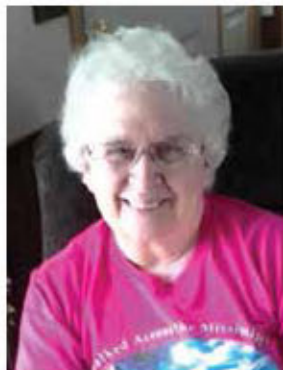
Sister Johnetta Maher: It was a fall day in 1940 when I made the first trip to Duluth to enroll in The College of St. Scholastica as a freshman, majoring in Home Economics Education. Little did I realize that a year and a half later I would be making that same trip to enter Saint Scholastica Monastery as a postulant! My parents made these trips with me and the family has been supportive of my decision throughout these years.



Sister Johnetta Maher

After graduation, I was assigned to teach Home Economics at Stanbrook Hall, our women's High School. It was good to see so many former students and friends at the recent Stanbrook Reunion. In the fall of 1949, my assignment was to teach at Cathedral High School where I spent the next fifteen happy years. During several summers, I attended St. Louis University to prepare for my next teaching assignment at The College of St. Scholastica from 1964 to 1996. I still see many former students and faculty and am most grateful for those lasting friendships. 1998 marked my official "retirement". What has happened since? That is another whole story about heritage, antiques, pictures and other treasures. When would you like a tour?

Sister Lois Ann Glaudel: Our 125th Anniversary is huge considering I have only been a part of it for 55 years. During my early years of formation in the 1960s, we were a really large community. The most exciting time for me was summer when all the Sisters would come home from their missions. There would be laughter, fun, and picnics outdoors behind Tower Hall. After eating, we would sit around and have "hootenannies." I loved singing and just being together was the best, and made for such a closeness that it's hard to describe. I hated to see August 15 come when the Sisters



Sister Lois Ann Glaudel

departed for their missions, leaving us behind. I wanted to go, too. Then in 1966 I joined the exodus of Sisters for the school year, and others were left behind until the following summer brought us back together.

Sister Mary Christa Kroening:

One hot summer day, as I was walking near the greenhouse [which once stood behind the College], I saw this Sister in full habit running towards Tower Hall. Taking a better look, I saw a skunk after her.



Sister Mary Christa Kroening

Sister Sue Fortier: My litany of Benedictine women in heaven and on earth who remain an important part of my life is long, but one woman, in particular, has influenced my life to this day. Sister Elodie DeSmedt, a down to earth woman with a childlike spirit was delightfully human. As an educator she sparked my sense of wonder. Among her favorite books was the "Velveteen Rabbit." Like the Skin Horse, Elodie knew that becoming real takes a lifetime and that it can happen only with love. She studied in Belgium with Cardinal Suenens who was a leading voice at the Second Vatican Council. Returning to Scholastica, she taught contemporary theology, stretching our minds and hearts. She encouraged us to become critical thinkers and to reimagine religious life. Whenever she wanted us to remember something of great importance she would always say, "Now, write this on your underwear." She inspired me to believe and to trust that, with others, I have everything I need to carry forward the mission of Jesus.



Sister Sue Fortier

Sister Theresa Jodocy: My childhood dream came true! When I was little, our family always said prayers together, morning and evening, on our knees in the kitchen. Daily, we prayed to St. Thérèse of Lisieux, patron of missionaries, and I added my own intention that I might one day be a Sister. I didn't know any Sisters growing up, as we had none near where we lived, so I had no idea how this could happen, but through the influence of a college friend in Marquette, Michigan, I transferred to The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. There I met Sister Ann Edward Scanlon, who intuitively sensed my desire without my saying a word. I entered the Monastery, and after teaching in Minnesota for a number of years I was



Sister Theresa Jodocy

sent on mission to Phoenix, Arizona, where I worked for 35 years teaching adult faith formation in parishes. I thank God daily for answering so generously my prayers as a child and giving me a joy-filled vocation as a Benedictine for 63 years.

Sister Mary Susan Dewitt: I remember coming to the 'Villa' (The College of St. Scholastica) in the early 1960s. There were only two buildings then: Stanbrook Hall and Tower Hall, but I still managed to get lost at times. I also remember some of the legendary teachers from those days, who have mostly gone on ahead, but not all. Among them were Mrs. Swanson ("Swannie") of First Aid and Phys Ed Fame, +Sister Celeste Shoup and Sister Johnetta Maher, the Dynamic Duo in Home Ec, Sister Mary Andrew Aleck (now Sister Agnes), Queen of the chemistry lab, +Sister Bernice Braegelman, who taught Sacred Scripture, +Sister Timothy Kirby, dorm prefect and drama coach – and who could forget +Sister Ann Edward Scanlon, our College President?



Sister Mary Susan Dewitt

We know that beloved past and, while we don't know what the future holds, we do know who holds the future. God has a plan. This same God, our strength, hope, and joy led and inspired us in the past and is moving among us and within us today. Our next 125 years are in good hands.

Sister Marie Thérèse Poliquin:

Thinking about the 125 years of the Benedictine Sisters in Duluth, I am reminded of my mother, Jeannette Beaurivage, who was born here in 1889. She attended elementary school at old St. Clement's School on 21st Avenue West, and on Saturdays the Sisters would invite the students to walk with them up four miles of steep hills from St. Clement to the "Daisy Farm" that the Sisters had purchased in the countryside above Duluth. There they shared a picnic and became acquainted with the human side of the Sisters outside the classroom. My mother moved on to the Sacred Heart Institute for her secondary education, at 3rd Avenue East and 3rd Street.



Sister Marie Thérèse Poliquin

The story came full circle when I was a student at The College of St. Scholastica, built on the old Daisy Farm. I worked as an editor of The Towers under the watchful eye of Sister Katherine McCarthy, my mother's first grade teacher.

Sister Dorene King: Sister Armella Oblak was an important mentor and friend. When I first came to St. Scholastica Monastery, Sister Armella greeted me, introduced me to Sister Kathleen Hofer who was the Prioress, and overall gave me a feeling of acceptance. As I had never been in Duluth, that first evening we drove downtown. I was delighted by her teasing remark, "That is a red light, it means stop."

After one week in Duluth, I looked to her for help and trusted her advice. When I received an 'offside' parking ticket near St. Mary's Hospital, Sister Armella went with me to City Hall where such offenses were handled. "Say as little as possible." So I did just that and promised never again to park on the wrong side of the street.

Sister Armella modeled for me the importance of noticing another's needs, acknowledging and including all, and being free to leap and dance if so moved.

Sister Melanie Gagne: One memory stands out as I recall the elaborate holiday celebrations. On Independence Day we played baseball, danced the Virginia reel, and held three-legged and gunnysack races. Later we sat outside and enjoyed a delicious picnic and countless goodies. Story time followed, and I dearly loved to listen to comical events from the past – perhaps a bit exaggerated! The day ended peacefully with Compline in the beautiful big chapel.

Sister Elizabeth Ann Gilbertson:

Sister Elaine Loubert played an important role in my formative years as a Benedictine Sister. I had met her before becoming a postulant, and she took this opportunity to teach me about Benedictine monasticism, St. Benedict, and his *Rule*. Importantly, I learned about our Benedictine values, among them peace, respect, stewardship, hospitality, justice, and mission. Sister Elaine stressed prayer and communal life. Nothing was left out. Even though she was confined to her room because of age and ill health, she always asked what the Community had voted on in Chapter so she could "keep up on things."



(L) Sister Dorene King and (R) Sister Armella Oblak



Sister Melanie Gagne



Sister Elizabeth Ann Gilbertson

From the time I first met her she was my teacher, giving me an education for my future life as a follower of St. Benedict. It was important to her that we knew Benedict's *Rule* and the Scriptures.

Sister Jeanne Ann Weber: Our 125th Anniversary year has been a time to remember, to give thanks, and to celebrate what has been, what is, and what will be in God's faithful and steadfast love for this Community. However, our roots are even older than 125 years, going back to St. Benedict and St. Scholastica who lived in the 5th century.



Sister Jeanne Ann Weber

There have been many changes over the decades and centuries, but what remains stable through the generations has been the *Holy Rule* with its many Scripture references, the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours (our common prayer), and Community. I have been so blessed to have these gifts to support my journey in life. I have been enriched through various ministries, amazing opportunities, and wonderful people, including family and friends who support me as we endeavor to "prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may He bring us all together to everlasting life" (*Holy Rule*, chapter 72).

Sister Therese Carson: Shortly after I entered the Monastery, I came upon a touching scene that has stayed with me. A Sister had been asked to take on challenging work and was near tears. Her Prioress held her gently and said, "One day at a time, dear Sister. One day at a time." That is how I manage the often-overwhelming work and the many demands on my time and energy: one day at a time, with love.



Sister Therese Carson

Thank you to Sister Mary Catherine Shambour for gathering these stories.



*Sister Mary Catherine Shambour (left) with
+Sister Noemi Weygant in Russia, 1990.*

