

# Rest in Peace

## Mary Stephen O'Brien, SP



Sister Mary Stephen O'Brien died December 19 at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle. At the age of 91, she had been a Sister of Providence for 66 years.

From childhood, Sister Mary Stephen knew that she wanted to become a nurse. "My childhood games were those of playing nurse," she recalled. "My dolls – and often the neighborhood children – were my patients. Whenever I visited hospitals, I thought the sight of people serving others was lovely."

One of six children of William O'Brien and Ida Miller, she was born Florence Margaret O'Brien on March 18, 1911, in Rugby, N.D. She had two sisters who died in infancy and three brothers. She had no surviving siblings at the time of her death.

Florence remembered the pleasures of her childhood, particularly visits to her grandparents' farm. "We took long walks in the beautiful woods and along country roads. I remember picking strawberries, choke cherries, blackberries, wild currants and hazelnuts; then we would prepare these into jellies, jam and preserves. There were hours spent swimming in a nearby river and taking fishing trips in boats." Alongside the pleasures of country life, there was the hard work that came with each season on the farm. The habits of caring and cheerful hard work she learned as a child remained with her throughout her years of nursing and pastoral care.

When Florence graduated from high school in 1930, she eagerly anticipated the opportunity to realize her dream of becoming a nurse. She made the decision to go west because she had an aunt in Portland who lived near St. Vincent Hospital, which had a school of nursing. The nursing school regimen included long hours at the hospital, assisting nurses in the

days of 12-hour shifts and one-on-one patient care. "We almost had to sneak out the back door if we wanted some rest," she recalled, laughing at the memory of the time she and others did just that.

"After my graduation I did special duty nursing. In those years there were no coronary care units, intensive care units or recovery rooms. During my training years and during this time of nursing, I was deeply impressed with the sisters and with their thoughtfulness to the medical personnel and to the aged and poor patients."

Florence entered the Sisters of Providence in Seattle in 1936. She professed first vows in 1938 and final vows in 1941. She took as her religious name Mary Stephen because of her first nursing experience after graduation. On the feast of St. Stephen, King of Hungary, she was called to begin a difficult case of special duty nursing. "I told St. Stephen, 'If you help me with this case, I'll do something for you someday,'" she said. Years later she remembered, and kept, her promise.

Her first assignment was to St. Vincent Hospital. In 1943 she spent a year at St. Peter Hospital in Olympia before beginning eleven years of nursing in Anchorage and Fairbanks. "The years in Alaska are among the most memorable," she recalled. Confronted with a shortage of doctors and nurses due to the war, Sister Mary Stephen and other hospital personnel learned to adapt to difficult situations with the frontier spirit of make-do and can-do.

After she left Alaska, she worked at St. Joseph Hospital in Vancouver, at St. Vincent Hospital again, and Sacred Heart Hospital in Medford, usually in a supervisory role in the surgical and maternity departments.

Throughout her years of nursing she frequently was assigned to night shifts. "I never did become accustomed to sleeping in the day. It was a cross to bear. Yet the hours on night shift gave me time to grow spiritually. At night there were not so many distractions and interruptions to prayer life. Also, if a patient were suffering, night shift gave me the opportunity to get close to him or her. Often, when I thought I had done the least is when I had done the most. God worked through me."

In the mid 1960s, Sister Mary Stephen began a second career in pastoral care after completing Clinical Pastoral Education at Providence Hospital in Portland. She served in the pastoral care departments of Providence hospitals in Seattle and Everett and at Mount St. Vincent in Seattle.

Sister Mary Stephen retired to St. Joseph Residence in 1986. Her hobbies included knitting, crocheting, playing cards, reading and listening to classical music. "In my retirement years I can still live out my commitment to God by using the more available time for praying with and for others. During my religious life I have tried to be a true daughter of Mother Gamelin and of the Church," she said. Her favorite Scripture was Romans 8:28: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose."

Sister Mary Stephen felt blessed by God to have been called to the Sisters of Providence. She was always involved in the life and ministry of the community. ●

## Sedonia Doyon, SP



Sister Sedonia Doyon, 93, died December 11 at Mount St. Joseph in Spokane. She had been a Sister of Providence for 72 years. With a spirit of strength and pioneering determination, Sister Sedonia was an excellent nurse, nursing instructor and administrator.

The sixth of 13 children, Sedonia was born July 28, 1909, in St. Camille, Quebec, to Louis Cerenus and Rose-Aimee Turcotte. As a small child, she moved with her family to Scobey, Mont. Her father saw within Sedonia great academic potential and sent her to St. Thomas School in Great Falls, where she was taught by the Sisters of Providence. She then attended high school in Missoula at Sacred Heart Academy, graduating in 1928. Sedonia liked and excelled in school, but her educational pursuits meant a childhood spent

away from her parents and twelve brothers and sisters. "I became independent at a very young age," she later said.

Sister Sedonia became a postulant in the Sisters of Providence in 1929 and entered the novitiate at Mount St. Vincent in Seattle in 1930. She made first vows in 1931 and received Sister Providence as her name in religion. She professed final vows in 1934.

Sister Sedonia wanted to become a teacher and attended Seattle University to major in education. But after her second year of religious profession, she was asked to go into the nursing field. She was sent to St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver, B.C., where she completed the RN requirements at the School of Nursing in 1936. She earned a BSN from Seattle University in 1940 and a MSN in nursing education from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., in 1955.

Although Sister Sedonia ministered in the health care field her entire religious life, she was able to fulfill her original dream of teaching. Her first assignment was instructor and director at St. Paul School of Nursing, Vancouver, B.C., from 1940 until 1942. "I didn't know beans about teaching nurses when I first started," she said, "but I grew to enjoy it very, very much." A deep commitment to excellence, with high expectations of herself, her students and her employees, took root early in her life. "I am from a large family," she said. "We all worked hard. That's just the way it was."

After the United States entered World War II, Sister Sedonia was transferred to Columbus Hospital School of Nursing in Great Falls, where she served from 1942 to 1953. She later returned there for a year in 1959. Her other nursing ministries included: St. Patrick Hospital, Missoula, 1955-56, 1965-66; Providence Hospital, Oakland, 1957-59; Holy Family Hospital, St. Ignatius, Mont., 1960-64; Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, 1964-65; and St. Clare Hospital, Ft. Benton, Mont., 1965. Sister Sedonia next served as director of the Student Health Clinic at Gonzaga University from 1966 through 1977. She lived with her mother in a house very close to Gonzaga. → →

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Sister Sedonia's next ministry was being in charge of the Infirmary at Mount St. Joseph in Spokane from 1978 to 1981. At the end of her career, she said her nursing ministry was a treasured part of her religious life. She retired at Mount St. Joseph in 1981. She was a quiet presence there during her retirement years. She enjoyed many hobbies and crafts, music, playing cards, sewing, reading and making toys to give away.

Sister Sedonia was also very close to her family and was important to her sisters, nieces and nephews. Surviving immediate family members include a sister, Jeannette Suchy of Cherry Valley, Calif., and a brother, Maurice Doyon of Reedsport, Ore. ●

## Reda Perrault, SP



Sister Reda Perrault died February 1 at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle, at the age of 86. She had been a Sister of Providence for 68 years.

The seventh of fifteen children, Ethelreda (Reda) was born into a large French Canadian farmer family on April 21, 1916, in Moxee City, Wash., child of Alberic Perrault and Salome Regimbal. Two of the first six children died in infancy. Reda said, "We were fortunate to be raised on a farm where we had plenty to keep us busy as well as nourish us during the difficult Depression years."

Reda began first grade at Holy Rosary School in Moxee, spending the next 12 years gleaning a Catholic education from the Sisters of Providence. Side by side with the education received in school was the more influential Christian training given by thrifty and loving parents in a well-organized Catholic home.

Sunday mornings found the family car packed for the short trip to early Mass. This day was

really set aside as "Sabbath" – a day of rest from work on the farm. During Lent the entire family usually gathered in the evening to pray with the rosary. During Lent, May and October the family attended daily Mass.

Since both parents enjoyed outings in the mountains, Sundays after Mass often found the Perrault family picnicking, camping and hiking in the American River and Bumping Lake areas in the Cascade Mountains. Because the family was so large, some younger and older children were left home on each trip, knowing it would be their turn the next time. Thus, little lessons in self-denial were instilled early into the members of so large a family. All her life, Reda continued to enjoy the outdoors. With a twinkle in her eye, she declared, "I know that I am one-sixteenth Indian – way back several generations – and I secretly harbor the thought that this heritage is part of my great love for nature."

Each summer from eighth grade through high school, Reda replaced the sisters as sacristan at church while the sisters were away attending summer school. She attributed this closeness to Christ as a big influence in her religious vocation. Reda graduated from Holy Rosary High School in June of 1934.

Reda entered the Sisters of Providence postulancy in Seattle in July 1934 and the novitiate in 1935. She professed first vows in 1936 and perpetual vows in 1939. An older sister, Florence, had entered the Providence community three years earlier, becoming Sister Bernice Marie. A younger sister, Yvonne, entered a year later, becoming Sister Bernard Maria. These sisters had an aunt, Sister Joanna, and several cousins in the Providence community.

Sister Reda received a teaching certificate from the College of Great Falls in 1939. She received a bachelor's degree in education, 1943; a master's degree in education, 1957; and a bachelor's degree in accounting, 1968, from Seattle University.

Sister Reda served as a teacher and/or principal at Holy Family School, Seattle (1938-40, 65-66); St. Joseph School, Yakima (1940-44); Sacred Heart School, Tacoma (1944-47); Providence Academy, Vancouver

(1947-51, 52-53); St. Catherine School, Seattle (1951-52); St. Patrick School, Walla Walla (1953-54); St. Joseph School, Vancouver (1954-59); and Immaculate Conception School, Fairbanks (1959-65). She served as accountant at Providence Heights, Issaquah (1969-74) and Kennedy High School, Seattle (1974-78). She served as insurance auditor at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Portland (1979-87).

Highlights for Sister Reda during her many years of teaching included summer schools for religious education in Anchorage, Kotzebue and Tanana, Alaska. Living with the Eskimo and Indian peoples in the remote villages was especially enriching to her. "I learned to greatly appreciate other races and cultures," she reflected. This concern for people of many races intensified during the three summers she worked at the Interracial Center in Seattle's central city.

"We ran a day care center there for ten weeks each summer to help out parents who were working. We usually had about sixty or seventy children," she said. "Those were hard but rewarding summers, and they gave me great empathy for minority people and their problems."

In 1978 Sister Reda had the privilege to spend a sabbatical year at the CREDO (Continuing Religious Education Development Opportunities) program at Gonzaga University, in Spokane. It was truly a year of renewal for her, a time that she saw as a real highlight of her life. "This was a year during which I studied the Bible and theology, increased my prayer life, and just relaxed. It culminated in a 26-day tour to the Holy Land, Athens and Rome. Those days are a cherished memory for me."

In 1987, Sister Reda retired to St. Joseph Residence in Seattle, where she served for nine years as executive housekeeper. She continued to oversee the housekeeping staff until a stroke forced her to stop active ministry. Sister Reda greatly loved her religious community and enjoyed living and praying with her religious sisters.

Immediate survivors include a brother, Frank Perrault of Kennewick; and a sister, Veronica Dettling of Yakima. ●

# Briefs

## Sister graduates from University of Great Falls

**K**aren S. Hawkins, SP, graduated from the University of Great Falls on December 14, receiving a bachelor of science degree in human services with a minor in addiction counseling.

Sister Karen, a Sister of Providence in temporary vows, is a member of St. Luke Parish in



Great Falls. She is involved with the Beyond the Circle mentoring group that works with at-risk

children and is employed at the Gateway Treatment Center. At Gateway, she works with women and children at the recovery home and as a case manager doing advocacy work for patients who are getting their lives back on track.

Sister Karen formerly worked for 20 years as a financial analyst in New York, then as a client advocate and financial manager at Sojourner Place in Seattle, and as a certified nurses' aide at Providence Elder Place in Portland. ●

## Novice wins essay contest

**S**ister Brenda Velasco won third-place in The Pacific Northwest Inlander's fiction writing contest in December. Her story, "Garlic Milk Cures the Soul," can be found on the weekly newspaper's website at [www.inlander.com](http://www.inlander.com). Search the story archives for "Velasco".

Sister Brenda, who is entering her second year in the novitiate, also recently wrote a story about her candidate year that was published in Vision magazine, a national religious vocation discernment guide. ●





## Providence Chapel to close

**A**t a commemorative Mass in their honor in November, the Sisters of Providence bid farewell to the 92-year-old chapel at the former Providence Hospital in Seattle. The sisters, pictured here gathered around the altar, were joined by the leadership of Providence Health System, Swedish Hospital, and David Sabey Corp., which purchased the building to develop a biotech and medical research facility. The chapel will close in April and a new chapel will be part of the redevelopment project. The chapel's six large stained-glass windows were put into storage for some future use. ●

### "Come Find God's Treasure for Your Heart"

#### Sisters invite women to a summer retreat

**I**f you are a woman, age 18 to 40, who may be exploring a call to religious life as a sister, the Sisters of Providence invite you to a summer weekend retreat in Spokane. The theme of the free weekend retreat is, "Come Find God's Treasure for Your Heart." This is a time to participate in prayer experiences, to hear the sisters' stories and experiences of entering the religious community and to meet other women who are seeking similar information.

The retreat will begin at 7 p.m. Friday, June 6, at Mount St. Joseph, 12 West Ninth Avenue, and end at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, June 8. For further information, please contact Joan Gallagher, SP, vocation director, at 206-932-6272, or by e-mail at [jgallaghersp@yahoo.com](mailto:jgallaghersp@yahoo.com); or Judy George, SP, Vocation Office manager, at 509-474-2323 or by e-mail at [vocations@providence.org](mailto:vocations@providence.org) ●



#### Providence Event 2003 to be held in Spokane

**T**he Women of Providence in Collaboration will hold one of three Providence Events for 2003 at Providence Auditorium, in Spokane, June 27-29. The theme of the events is "Come & Dance a New Song at Cana: Providence and Discipleship through Mary." The other two Providence Events will be held August 1-3 in Allison Park, Penn., and Oct. 10-12 in Kingston, Ontario.

"The purpose of these events is to continue to explore our evolving theology of providence through the lens of Mary and discipleship," organizers said. "We will explore new insights into some of the images of our Mother of Divine Providence."

Three theologians will serve as presenters: Michelle Bisbey, CDP, director of mission effectiveness for her community in Pittsburgh; Anita DeLuna, MCDP,

an associate pastor at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio; and Mary Kaye Nealen, SP, acting provost and vice president for academic affairs at the University of Great Falls. The facilitators are Jane Ann Slater, CDP, and Ann Petrus, CDP, both from San Antonio.

The Spokane event begins Friday, June 27, at 7 p.m. and concludes Sunday, June 29, at 12:30 p.m. The cost of the conference is \$225, which includes tuition plus room and board, or \$185, which covers tuition plus meals. Registration deadline is March 26.

Associates are encouraged to join the sisters attending the event, which is being coordinated in Spokane by Sue Orlovski, SP. For information, contact her at 509-474-2300. ●



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## Providence Child Center honors Sisters with 2003 Heart of Gold Award

**P**ortland's Providence Child Center Foundation presented the Sisters of Providence with the 2003 Heart of Gold Award at a dinner at the Oregon Convention Center Ballroom in February. The award is presented annually to citizens who have improved the lives of children with special needs through advocacy and action. Archbishop John G. Vlazny of Portland was the dinner's honorary chair.

"For more than 159 years, these intrepid women of the Sisters of Providence have cared for society's most vulnerable with pioneering spirits and enduring commitment," the foundation's board of directors noted in its award presentation. The sisters have had a special mission of care for children in need, including establishment of Our Lady of Providence Nursery in Portland in 1945. Beginning as an orphanage for children, the facility has transitioned over the years under the name of Providence Child Center.

Proceeds from the Heart of Gold Dinner benefit the medically fragile children at Providence Child Center, the only 24-hour pediatric skilled nursing facility in the Northwest dedicated to children with severe disabilities and complex medical needs. The center's 58 beds are designated for children who need long-term chronic care, short-term respite, physical maintenance and end-of-life services.

Assistance is provided without financial burden to the families. The Providence Child Center pays for the daily care of the children with support from community donors and fund-raising events such as the Heart of Gold dinner.

The Sisters of Providence continue in ministry today throughout Mother Joseph Province, which includes Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Washington, California, and El Salvador. Their ministries help children and families contend with child abuse and neglect, emotional disturbance, addiction, homelessness and education. The sisters'

strong commitment to helping society's most vulnerable children and their tireless efforts on behalf of those less fortunate show they are truly women with "hearts of gold," the foundation noted. ●



Sister Barbara Schamber, team leader/provincial (center), accepts the Heart of Gold Award from Pat Budo, Providence Child Center administrator. Sisters sharing in the moment are (from left) Scholastica Lee, Margaret Pastro, Carolyn Koreski and Rose Marie Dillman.

## Full House in Yakima



**S**everal young women recently spent the weekend at the Come and See House in Yakima. Pictured are (back row, from left) Sr. Irene Charron, Sr. Dianne Crawford, Sr. Pauline Lemaire, Sarah Cieplinski, Sr. Clare Lentz and Sr. Alice St. Hilaire; (second row) Phong Chu, Tina Vo and Mai Phuong Do; and (front row) Sr. Fe Sumalde, Sr. Georgette Bayless, Janet Ramirez, Kimthu Nguyen, Chi Phan, Micky Nguyen and Amy Le. Sisters JoAnn Showalter and Lang Tran helped the sisters in Yakima arrange this vocation event. ●