A trip to the Seattle Aquarium brought broad smiles.

St Joseph Residence

Editor's note:
A remodel completed in September 2004 brought a new glow and sparkle to St. Joseph Residence, a former convent with beautiful grounds and a stunning view of the city of Seattle. Today, the main, or 2nd floor, houses guest rooms, private residences for sisters, the archives and the religious community library. The 3rd floor offers licensed, skilled nursing care and a chapel, and the 4th floor also has a private residence for sisters. Currently, there are 20 Sisters of Providence on the 2nd and 4th floors and 17 on the 3rd floor.

Now that the dust has settled, what is it really like to live there? Here are some answers to that question. (We'll look at life at Mount St. Joseph and Emilie Court, in Spokane, in a future issue.)

Can you guess who dressed up for the Bingo party?

Eighty-eight-year-old Sister Germaine Chabot knew it was time for a change when she left Portland a year ago for St. Joseph Residence. "It was a big adjustment, but I made up my mind before I asked to come here. I had seen sisters coming to SJR by ambulance, after strokes or broken legs." She decided to come while she still could enjoy the place.

Sister Germaine gave up her car keys and left Portland, where she had lived for 41 years, and the 24/7 bustle of the community's residence at Providence Portland Medical Center. She came to a new home offering a plethora of outings to choose from including movies, concerts, picnics and exercise classes, plus a host of services at her fingertips like drivers, an occupational therapist, a nurse practitioner and a hair stylist. There are plenty of diversions at SJR, Sister Germaine says, so many in fact that sometimes there's not much time in between them for the knitting, crocheting and calligraphy she enjoys. For her, the icing on the cake is Providence Mount St. Vincent right next door, "and the beautiful chapel where I made perpetual vows and had my golden Jubilee celebration."

"I couldn't ask for better," Sister Germaine says of her new home. "Sisters should not wait too late to come here. They are sometimes afraid they will lose their freedom. If they only knew …"

Life on the 3rd floor

It is the beautiful view of the Olympics from her room that tops Sister Cecile Roux's list of SJR raves, right up there with the exceptional care received from the aides and the nurses, the library downstairs and the companionship of the weekly social hour before dinner.

Sister Rose Lulay loves the outdoor patios when the weather is nice and reveled in a recent trip to Alki Beach. The outdoors means a lot to her after 44 years and four months in Burbank. "I didn't have to walk. I don't have a walker anymore; I've got my Cadillac," she adds, giving her walker with a seat a pat. When she does come inside, she wiles away the hours at her computer or watching the Mariners on television. "I've got everything I need here, including a nurse if I need one."

A cruise at the Locks was a hit.

Life on the 4th floor

Life at SJR is a natural for Sister Shirley Smith. After years of doing pastoral care at Providence Hospital in Oakland and at Mount St. Vincent in Seattle, "I was used to convent life in institutions and in nursing homes," she explains. "I have no desire to live alone."

SJR is ideal with the access to daily Mass, the chapel, the opportunity for prayer time together and the sharing with others. She takes an active role at SJR, leading weekly vespers, helping with parties and acting as a driver on occasion. Although retired, Sister Shirley does a lot of outreach including pastoral ministry at the Veterans Administration Hospital and at Mount St. Vincent, as well as home visits. With so many activities of her own, she is grateful to be able to use a car without the responsibility of owning or maintaining it. She does her own housekeeping, cleaning and laundry. "I don't need assisted living yet, but it's great that it's here if you're sick," she adds. "I don't think I lack anything, spiritually or materially. I am really very blessed."

One of the newer SJR residents, 85-year-old Sister Georgette Bayless, delights in the camaraderie, friendship and support the people at SJR give each other.

Take me out to the ballgame, some of the sisters said.

Friends who have come to visit have expressed amazement at the cleanliness, the quality of the furnishings and the ambiance of the place. Special treats include the monthly birthday dinners with menus chosen by the guests of honor, "and, of course, the beauty of the dining room view that is like a garden that restaurants would die to have."

It was Sister Jacqueline Fernandes, local superior, who convinced her to make the move, Sister Georgette says. "She is very, very concerned about the sisters. She goes far beyond the call of duty to meet the sisters' needs, known and unknown." The climate of caring extends from the administration to the staff and to the residents. "You're not alone when you come here," Sister Georgette stresses. "You are welcomed by everybody and they keep on welcoming you."

The ability to remain independent is the best thing about SJR to Sister Jeanette Benson. She thought her move to the residence was 10 years away until she suffered a stroke in Portland and the co-ed assisted living facility that she called home was sold to a for-profit company. Early in 2005 she made the move by train, accompanied by three friends. She left behind her first-floor garden and the ease of traveling by motorized scooter to places in the city she had lived in for 39 years like a nearby nursery, shopping at Lloyd Center, and her favorite, Powell's Books. She still had her scooter, but hilly Seattle posed much more of a navigational challenge. But where there's a will there's a way. Sister Jeanette keeps her scooter charged up to take on those hills, uses Seattle's Access bus for transportation around town, and has her own garden spot uphill behind SJR, complete with waist-high planting beds. It is accessible via a gate always left open so that she can glide up the path to reach it.

"I can still get around and go where I want to go," Sister Jeanette says. That includes the Sculpture Park, the Seattle Art Museum, the Redmond Town Center for the puzzles she loves, and just about anywhere else.

Not just for Sisters of Providence

In addition to the Sisters of Providence, others call SJR home. Among them are women religious from the Tacoma Dominican and Adrian communities in addition to six lay women and sisters from five other religious communities.

"There are 16 from my community who live here," says Sister Anne Heger, OP. "We are orphans with no motherhouse. It was in Spanaway and it was sold. We were always poor and very small, with 70 or less sisters, and we're old," the 91-year-old explains. "The spirit I feel here is very important," Sister Anne says. "The Providence sisters have sort of adopted us. They are very charitable and very kind."

A series of small strokes meant she could no longer live alone in Burien, so Sister Anne brought her television, her lamp and her pictures and moved to SJR. "This is Grand Central Station. With people coming and going it is a very busy place," Sister Anne quips. "There isn't anything that a person needs that they can't have here, including therapy and exercises." Macular degeneration keeps Sister Anne out of some activities, "but I still do yoga; I don't need my eyes for that," she says. A new pleasure is the community library's machine that will magnify and project with big letters. "I can read slowly, but not for very long."

Another sister from her Adrian community, 85-year-old Sister Mara Pasquier, says St. Joseph Residence "is a much better fit for someone from tiny Sumner, Washington," than her community's new headquarters in Michigan. She has fit right in at SJR. There are five Adrian sisters who now live at SJR. "I do anything I feel I can do healthwise. I don't turn anything down – bus rides, the hair salon, movies and ball games.

"I feel most of the time like I'm a Providence sister; they're very kind. I've just been happy. There's nothing missing." One of her special joys is the Ya-Ya Table, where six sisters kibbutz nightly over dinner, discussing any topic under the sun.

A dream place to work as well as live

Among the many staff members who contribute to the quality of life at SJR are the activities directors, Amanda Calabro on the 3rd floor and Anne Sakrison, on the 2nd and 4th floors. Amanda has been with Providence since 1999, holding six different positions between Mount St. Vincent and SJR – certified nursing assistant, activities coordinator, adult day health, gift shop barista, supportive care and switchboard. When the position she currently holds opened up at SJR, she crossed the path between the two buildings that are like an extended family.

"I try to find activities that are meaningful to the sisters, not just to relieve boredom," Amanda says. "I try to provide an opportunity for everybody, from one-on-one visits and the Rosary with stimuli that is not overpowering to things for the extremely active and everybody in between." Third-floor residents enjoy Bingo at least once a week and an outing each month, including restaurants, the aquarium, museums and van rides.

The rewards are all hers, Amanda insists. She is visibly moved by memories of a Tacoma Dominican sister who passed away New Year's Day 2001, just two hours after Amanda said goodbye before leaving work for the day. "I told her I was going and she said, 'I love you and I appreciate everything you've done and all your understanding.' Then she hugged me."

"In the nursing and health-care industry, salaries don't nearly meet the amount that we do, but the gratification of knowing the impact we have made is worth a million bucks," Amanda says.

Anne would entirely agree. Her husband of 25 years died last February after a long illness, and she was not yet ready to return to her job at the day care at Mount St. Vincent when the Sisters of Providence called. She was being offered the newly created position of activities coordinator for the 2nd and 4th floors at SJR. "The sisters were taking care of me at the time that I needed it," says Anne, who began her new job in April.

"This is the best job I ever had," she declares. "The budget is there and so is the enthusiasm." The sisters vote on what they want to do for their three outings a month, plus there is a craft or activity scheduled each day. There may be bowling with real balls and pins in the hallway, shuffleboard, golf or archery with rubber-tipped arrows. Or you may find the sisters exercising with stretch bands, weight and poles, or doing the Macarena. And that's just when the sisters are in. Other times you will find them headed for destinations like Bainbridge Island, Snoqualmie Falls, the glass factory or to Luna Park Café for hamburgers, shakes and the jukebox. One of this summer's delights was a Teddy Bear Picnic with the children from the day care at Mount St. Vincent.

"I feel lucky," Anne says. "This is like a fine resort, but some people don't realize it. These sisters have given their entire lives to serve and help people. This is their chance to enjoy life."

Briefs

PA receives Seattle Police Department award

Audrey Jernigan, PA, pictured with Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske and Mayor Greg Nickels, received a 2007 Citizen Appreciation Award from the Seattle Police Department in August. Audrey was an AmeriCorps volunteer with the Community Service Officers' Program, 1995-96. She returned in 2005 to work with the Community Outreach Program and in fall 2006, Audrey became an associate chaplain.

"Her warm and outgoing personality has endeared her to many in the department," wrote Maggie Olsen, Community Outreach director, one of Audrey's nominators for the award. "She is a thoughtful listener and always has a kind word for everyone she meets."

Earlier this year, Audrey worked with Rep. Jamie Pederson (43rd District) to encourage the Washington State Legislature to make Juneteenth an official day of remembrance, and she stood beside Gov. Christine Gregoire when the bill was passed into law in April. Juneteenth, June 19, commemorates the day when news of the Emancipation Proclamation reached Texas, the last state to learn that slaves were declared free. Audrey helped organize a Juneteenth celebration for police personnel this year and has a goal of making Juneteenth a day of unity within the police department, Olsen says.

"Audrey has always been a loyal friend to SPD and speaks highly of the department wherever she goes. She is a wonderful ambassador and is truly deserving of the Citizen Appreciation Award." ●

Birthday celebration in Spokane

Three friends of Sister Loretta Marie Marceau honored her with a special 93rd birthday celebration at Mount St. Joseph in August. Pictured with the birthday girl are (from left) Dr. Thomas Tiffany, CEO of PAML; Bill Bouten, PA, president and owner of Bouten Construction; and Joe Legel, former chief financial officer at Sacred Heart Medical Center. ●

Time capsule preserves mementoes of Providence Services

Providence Health & Services employees from the WA/MT Region gathered in August in Spokane to dedicate a time capsule filled with mementoes of Providence Services (PS). A similar ritual was to be held in Seattle in September for the former Providence Health System (PHS). Providence Health & Services was formed in January by reunification of PS and PHS.

"We pray that this heritage will always ground us in compassionate service," participants said before scooping miniature shovels of dirt over the time capsule. Its contents included a copy of "The Bell and the River," the story of the arrival of the sisters in the West; a brick from the original St. Patrick Hospital building in Missoula, a candle from the ceremony commemorating the 10th anniversary of Providence Services, a Rosary from one of the Sisters of Providence and other PS items like business cards, coffee mugs, signs and stationary. ●

Pictured (from left) are John Fletcher, vice president and chief executive of the WA/MT Region of PH&S; Susanne Hartung, SP, regional director of mission and ethics for the region; Provincial/ Leadership Team Coordinator Margaret Botch, SP; and Anna Kay Dykes, chief administrative officer for the region.

Donor dedicates symphony performance to Sisters of Providence

Thanks to the generosity of Sam and Harriet Van Wyck, the Friday, October 19, Spokane Symphony concert will spotlight the Sisters of Providence. Another symphony patron, Ruth H.S. Pearson, has given a performance spotlight for the concert to the Holy Names Music Center, in Spokane.

Classics 2 Concert: Greatest Work for Orchestra and Chorus, will begin at 8 p.m. at the INB Performing Arts Center. It will feature the Verdi Requiem performed by the Spokane Symphony with the Spokane Symphony Chorale, conducted by Music Director Eckart Preu. It will be the last classics concert at the INB Center, formerly known as the Spokane Opera House, before the move to The Fox Theater.

For concert tickets, contact the Box Office at (509) 624-1200. ●

SP volunteers for Habitat for Humanity

Sister Helen Brennan was delighted to participate in the High Point Dedication Ceremony for Habitat for Humanity, Seattle/South King County, in August and to see the fruits of her labors as a volunteer from St. Patrick Parish on Capital Hill in Seattle. Duplexes and triplexes built for five families in the West Seattle neighborhood were blessed by Rev. Ron Thompson, of the University Presbyterian Church Habitat Task Force. In addition to the Sisters of Providence and UPC, other sponsors of the project from interfaith congregations included University Congregational Church, University Unitarian Church, St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Plymouth Congregational Church, Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue, Interfaith Community Church, Temple Beth Shalom, Temple Beth Am, Idris Mosque, Kol HaNeshamah Synagogue, St. Patrick's Parish, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish and St. Barbara Parish. ●

(From left) Srs. Rose Marie Dillman, Scholastica Lee and Helen Brennan join in Habitat's celebration.

Two more Daughters of Mary graduate from Seattle University

Imagine what a challenge and a wonder *it must be to journey thousands of miles to an unfamiliar country and culture, take up residence with strangers and remain there long enough to earn a college degree. The last four years have indeed been an adventure for two recent Seattle University grads, Sisters Jane Frances Nabakaawa and Immaculate Kyampeire, but there has been a distinct comfort in knowing they were following in the footsteps of 15 other Daughters of Mary from their native Uganda.*

The Daughters of Mary, founded some 95 years ago, is the first indigenous religious community of women south of the Sahara. Members of that religious community first came to Seattle in the early 1960s. Pope John XXIII was encouraging relationships with Third World countries at a time that Mother Antoinetta, General Superior, was looking for ways to obtain education for the Daughters of Mary. Though she spoke no English but only her native dialect, Mother Antoinetta reached out across the ocean and found helping hands in Seattle. Sisters of Providence provided room, board, and the support of community life while the Ugandans pursued their educational goals. The Jesuit community at Seattle University offered full scholarships for tuition and books.

Today, 45 years later, this amazing connection continues. Though the sisters who have come from Uganda speak English, their country's major foreign language, they still have experienced culture shock. Still, the Ugandan women who have made this journey across continents, communities and cultures have returned to their country to teach, to nurse and to assume leadership roles in their communities. Among them is Sister Catherine (Cate) Nakatudde, who graduated from Seattle University in 1996 and now is a member of her community's leadership charged with formation of postulants and novices. Sister Cate returned to Seattle to celebrate on June 10 with the community's two newest graduates – Sisters Jane Frances and Immaculate.

Sister Jane Frances, who earned a bachelor's degree in theology and music, jumped right into a master's program in divinity this summer. She hopes to finish the four-year program in a little more than three years, then return to Uganda to teach. A high school teacher before she came to the United States, Sister Jane Frances says, "I think the spirit is preparing me to teach college." Her associate degree earned in a two-year college in Uganda prepared her for her eight years of teaching high school, "but the superiors said it was time to upgrade, so I came to Seattle in 2003," she recalls.

Sister Immaculate left in mid-August for the campus of Indiana University in Bloomington, where she is studying for a master's degree in biology. Her Seattle University bachelor's degree is in chemistry and biology. After earning her master's degree, she plans to teach both subjects in high school in Uganda.

The Indiana University master's program, for which she received a full-ride scholarship, is 2 ½ years full time. "I met people on my visit who were very nice; I was very well received," she recalls. Because Seattle University does not offer a master's degree in biology, she went searching for schools that had research in tropical studies.

"This will be very good for my community," she says of the Indiana University program. "We need science teachers in Uganda and good resources to educate young women." Science is compulsory in secondary schools there, but without good science teachers, the students will not be as competitive in national exams, she adds. "I was always interested in science, but the laboratories were not that good." One of the challenges when she came to Seattle University was how to use a microscope and other science equipment. "I tried and I wasn't afraid of asking." Her scholarship will allow her to work as a teaching assistant, giving her valuable time in the classroom.

Sr. Cate Nakatudde, DM, (center) beams as she congratulates graduates Sr. Immaculate Kyampeire, DM, and Sr. Jane Frances Nabakaawa, DM.

Sister Immaculate resides in an apartment on the Indiana University campus that she visited in July, but she will miss Seattle and especially her friends at St. Joseph's Residence. "I have been here 4 ½ years and I have liked this place; I have loved the sisters and will miss them," Sister Immaculate says wistfully. "I have told them, I will keep your informed. Pray for me."

Sister Jane Frances says she will miss her friend, but suggests the separation will be harder for the latter. "I'm with the sisters and in a familiar school," she explains. And she has the hope that another Daughter of Mary will soon come to join her in Seattle.

The relationship between the Daughters of Mary and the Sisters of Providence continues to grow and to deepen. In January 2001, they met for the first time on Ugandan soil when the Sisters of Providence came for a visit. They had been invited by Superior General Mother Antoinetta, who wrote: "…we are not rich and you may find some inconveniences, but what matters to us is to have with us a friend. For as you know, you have befriended us. You are our benefactors and we would like to see one of you walking our land, sitting at table with us and accepting the little we have. I believe it is the loving heart that matters most."

Rest in Peace

Teresa Kissel, SP
(Sister Mary Jonita)

Sister Theresa Kissel died June 28 in Seattle at 87 years of age, after 62 years as a Sister of Providence.

She was born Daisy Kissel on September 27, 1919, at St. Joseph Hospital in Aberdeen, Wash. She was the oldest of six children (three boys and three girls) born to John and Mary (Miick) Kissel. Her father, a Czechoslovakian immigrant to the United States at the age of 12, worked as a logging camp cook, managed the Great Northern Hotel in Portland, and worked in a shingle mill. Her mother took care of the children and made dresses for the poor.

Sister Theresa entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence in Seattle on August 27, 1944. She professed her first vows in 1946 and her final vows in 1949.

In her early years, she attended public grade schools, then went to live with her grandparents in Woodburn, Ore., where she attended seventh and eighth grades at St. Benedict School. She then attended Oswego-West Linn High School, where she graduated. After high school, she worked at the Oregon Tuberculosis Association and the Oregon Nurses Association in Portland.

In 1941, she took a civil service job with the Department of the Treasury in Washington, D.C., later transferring to the War Department, Army Engineers, in Portland. She decided to enter a religious community and chose the Sisters of Providence because of her call to serve the poor.

In 1970, Sister Theresa received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Seattle University.

From 1946 to 1981 she worked in bookkeeping and accounting at Providence Medical Center in Portland, St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Yakima, Wash., Sacred Heart Hospital in Medford, Ore., St. Joseph Hospital in Vancouver, Wash., Providence Administration at Providence Heights in Issaquah, Wash., and Seattle, and Providence Mount St. Vincent in Seattle. She then worked as Medicare clerk at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle from April 1981 until she retired in January 1993.

Three brothers and one sister preceded her in death. She is survived by one sister and brother-in-law, Frances and Ed Sharpe, Portland, and her cousin, Mirietta Miick, also of Portland.

Vigil Service was held July 2 at Providence Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, where the Funeral Mass was celebrated July 3. Burial followed at Calvary Catholic Cemetery, Seattle.

Donations in memory of Sister Theresa Kissel to support the ministries of the Sisters of Providence may be sent to: Sisters of Providence, Office of Development, 9 East 9th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202-1209.

Please Remember in Prayer

Eileen McGee, sister of Jim Plampin, PA, and sister-in-law of Dorene Plampin, PA, died April 11 in Boise, Idaho.

Robert Henry Joyce, brother of Elizabeth Joyce, SP, died in late May in Kissimmee, Fla.

Margaret Doherty, mother of Mary Doherty, PA, died June 15 in Port Angeles, Wash.

Anthony Nguyen, Sr., brother of Anna Loan Nguyen, SP, died June 17 in Vietnam.

Juan Vega, a longtime employee of Providence Peter Claver House, died August 9 in Seattle.

Emmanuel Sagles, brother of Blanca Sagles, SP, died August 17 in the Philippines.

George Magladry, brother-in-law of Dorothy Klingele, SP, died August 24 in Eureka, Calif.

A publication for the Sisters of Providence and Friends • FALL 2007

Caritas

Sisters of Providence
Provincial Administration, Mother Joseph Province
9 East Ninth Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202-1295

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Spokane, WA
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CARITAS is published by The Office of Communications, Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province.

Jennifer E. Roseman, Director of Communications & Development