PROVIDENCE HEALTH INTERNATIONAL teaches and learns about services to the aging

Mark Koenig (left), Cáritas Cubana staff member Miguel and Sr. Kaye Belcher on an informal tour of Old Havana

CUBA –

It is a land of beauty. It is a people suppressed/ controlled. It is a people of Faith. It is a people who care when others cannot or do not.

– Kaye Belcher, SP

It was a privilege to accompany Mark Koenig and Robert Hellrigel (some named us two guys and a nun) from Providence Health & Services to Cuba for a week in February. (Mark is system director for Providence Health International and Robert is PH&S Washington/ Montana Region director of senior and community services.) The purpose of the trip was to continue development of a long-standing relationship between caregivers from both countries that began eight or nine years ago. It has included periodic visits both ways, observations and discussions of caregiving practices. Because of the U.S. embargo on trade with Cuba, no funds can be sent, but Providence Health International sends donations of medicines and medical supplies to the Cubans.

The visit to what some consider a forbidden land was eye-opening for all of us. "I have never been so far removed from our own culture," Robert says today. "How different we all live our lives, but how similar we are, too."

I agree. I come back not seeing with the same eyes and not hearing with the same ears the world affairs that so deeply impact the individual person.

The Cuban government offers health care, but no social programs. Cáritas Cubana, the church's social service agency in Cuba, has stepped in to fill that vacuum, providing services for the aging. Its mission is to reveal God's love to the poor by caring for them.

Cáritas Cubana is a country wide organization with its regional office located in Havana and an outreach that spreads across the island. Through it, children, the elderly, HIV/AIDS, conflict management in families, social teachings of the Church, psychological assistance programs and many other areas all are addressed through the efforts of hundreds and hundreds of volunteers. They are trained and then return to their "regions" to train others. There are 600 volunteer groupings across Cuba that have been developed and trained by Cáritas Cubana. These volunteers are electrical engineers, university professors, doctors, nurses, teachers, wives and husbands – all working with the knowledge that the Love that is God is lived and felt through one another, spreading the Good News to and with people who have unmet needs.

Sr. Kaye (right) gets a reading lesson in Spanish from the granddaughter of Dr. Magdalena, a gerontologist in Cuba.

The three-member team from PH&S and the staff of Cáritas Cubana in front of the CC office in Havana

"Caritas is a heart that sees……" is the theme Cáritas Cubana used at its national convention in February. I would add that

"Caritas is a heart that sees and responds."

The church and the government collided with each other in the early years of the revolution, when Fidel Castro's immense charisma and popularity with the people allowed him to redirect the revolution along the road to communism. Many of the institutions run by the Catholic Church – schools, universities, seminaries, hospitals – were taken over by the government. For many years,

Sr. Kaye walks with Dr. Magdalena in the women's section of Casa Santa Susana, a long-term-care facility run by the Daughters of Charity.

and at times today, religious affiliation and participation entailed very serious social costs. It could mean the loss of a promotion at work, or a fellowship to the university, or the award of a major consumer good, such as a television or refrigerator.

Time does bring change, however. Today, Cáritas Cubana is a source for tangible help, presenting a vision of a society where the social message is about justice and mercy – helping others through compassion.

The Daughters of Charity have a presence in Havana today. They are sisters working in a state-operated institution, The Golden Age, which is a place for those with severe developmental disabilities. It reminds me of Fircrest in Seattle in the '60s. The Daughters also manage Casa Santa Susana, a long-term care facility for the elderly. At this point in its development, it reminds me of Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, in the '40s. These sisters are a small, dedicated group of religious women who attend to those unmet needs that were also so much of our community's history and works and still are today. ●

Briefs

A new name

Mother Joseph Catholic Cemetery of Vancouver

On Memorial Day, the cemetery in Vancouver, WA, where Mother Joseph and other Sisters of Providence are buried, was rededicated with a new name: Mother Joseph Catholic Cemetery of Vancouver. Father Dominic Hahn, pastor of St. James Parish in Vancouver, presided over the rededication of the cemetery formerly known as St. James Acres and the blessing of the sign bearing the new name. The sign also has a picture of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the foundress of the Sisters of Providence in the West. ●

Sisters of Providence to consolidate administrative offices in Renton

Sisters of Providence will move administrative offices in summer of 2008 to Renton, Wash., and will share a building complex and services with the System Office for Providence Health & Services. Since January 2000, when Mother Joseph Province was formed by combining the former St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart provinces, the religious community has had provincial offices in Seattle and Spokane.

The discussion about a single administrative site, as requested by the sisters of the province, has been going on for some time, but the decision of PH&S to leave the Smith Tower in Seattle's Pioneer Square speeded up the process. "However, our choice for Renton is the fruit of our own listening, prayer and consensus," said Margaret Botch, Provincial/Leadership Team Coordinator for the province. "We are confident that this decision will enhance our leadership and administration with greater efficiency, but even more with a stronger presence and communication."

The new address in Renton will be 1801 Lind Avenue SW. The decision to consolidate administrative staff there is not a decision about the operations at Mount St. Joseph, Spokane, where some retired sisters live, Sister Margaret said. There are plans for a study of the future of that building at a later time. ●

Mother Joseph Day

Sharing the Heritage of Providence Health & Services

On April 16, Mother Joseph Day in Washington State, Sister Barbara Schamber fascinated an audience in the System Office of Providence Health & Services with a slide show and presentation on the heritage of PH&S. She began with the sisters' vision of addressing and alleviating human suffering, rooted in their belief in a Provident God and following in the footsteps of their foundress Emilie Gamelin, "whose heart was deeply touched by those who had so little. Even as a young child, she turned suffering into works for others." Sister Barbara described the begging tours that financed the early ministries, adding, "we do it with more finesse today, but we still are doing the original works by begging so the works can continue."

In little more than an hour, Sister Barbara hit the highlights of the sisters' ministries, right up through the dwindling number of sisters, the increasing involvement of lay people like the Providence employees, the collaborations with other religious communities, and the new initiatives like low-income housing. And she inspired with the thoughts of Sister Michelle Holland, who was near death in Spokane: "Her focus was on each person's story; on each person's call," Sister Barbara related. "She said you have to claim your own gifts for the ministry of healing."

Sister Barbara, who entered the religious community in 1961 and is a former provincial superior, is writing a history of the religious community in the western United States from 1856 to the present. Her preparation has included extensive research in the Providence Archives and oral histories of sisters in Mother Joseph Province. ●

Sr. Barbara Schamber shares the heritage of PH&S for System Office employees.

Briefs

Our Lady of Providence

Sisters gather in the Philippines to celebrate new Vice-Province

"*Celebrating Providence: Taking Root and Growing,*" was the theme of a gathering in the Philippines on February 19 to mark the growth of the sisters' mission there from a sector to a vice-province. The date was significant as the anniversary of the birth of Blessed Emilie Gamelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence. The General Council and sisters from throughout the congregation marked the birth of the new Our Lady of Providence vice-province with cultural events, planting of seeds and seedlings, and a tour of the national museum, where the group gathered for a photo.

Since 1989, Sisters of Providence have worked with people in need in the Philippines. General Superior Kathryn "Kitsy" Rutan, SP, said the process of establishing the vice-province included "the study of the availability of present and future sister personnel for the mission and for leadership and formation roles, as well as the present and future financial viability of the Sisters of Providence in the Philippines." ●

The planting of seeds and seedlings illustrated the celebration's theme.

A tour of the national museum offered a group photo opportunity.

"No Paper Cups Ceremony" award winners

Mugs for Mother Joseph Day

The Washington/Montana Region of Providence Health & Services celebrated Mother Joseph Day with a conservation-friendly gathering that included a "No Paper Cups Ceremony." Prizes awarded in the judging of participants' mugs were as follows (from left): for "Prettiest Mug," a travel mug to Vicki Osburn, internal auditor; for "Mug with the Best Story," a Starbucks card to region CAO Anna K. Dykes; for "Most Humorous Mug," a travel mug (seen in the picture) to Martina Beirau, administrative assistant; and for "Most Unusual Mug," a Starbucks card to Jodie Peterson, conference coordinator. ●

"Kindred spirit"

Cheryl Sjoblom retires after 26 with Providence

Back in 1977, Cheryl Sjoblom began her relationship with Providence as a communications consultant. Working with the sisters and Providence administrators, she became totally immersed in the celebration in 1980 when the statue of Mother Joseph was placed in Statuary Hall in Washington, DC. Cheryl wrote the speeches, designed the brochures, wrote the stories of Mother Joseph and completed a video about the foundress of the Sisters of Providence in the West.

The celebration ended, but Cheryl stayed on, taking a position in the Public Relations department. In 1990 she became the department's director. It was clear that she "got" Providence, effectively spreading the word about the mission and the lives and works of the Sisters of Providence.

Her retirement party at the System Office of Providence Health & Services in May was well-attended by current and former Providence employees, Sisters of Providence and other friends. The following day, more Sisters of Providence said thank you and farewell at a special luncheon at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle. ●

Cheryl Sjoblom (left) bid farewell to many Providence friends in May, including Sr. Scholastic Lee (center) at a luncheon at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle.

A completed makeover

Providence Vincent House shows off its renovations

April 20 was a day to show off for Providence Vincent House, the four-story, 61-unit building near Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle that offers low-income housing and supportive services to the homeless, disabled and frail elderly. The Sisters of Providence have sponsored this housing ministry for more than 20 years and originally developed it in partnership with the City of Seattle.

At the end of 2004, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated $6.3 million to preserve and rehabilitate the building. Sister Mary Grondin, housing director, said the renovations were done by Walsh Construction Company and by Fancher Architects.

The celebration's primary speaker, L. Patrick Carroll, assistant housing director, linked St. Vincent dePaul, "who *organized* charity," and Blessed Emilie Gamelin, who surmounted the personal tragedies in her own life by helping others, to the response of Providence to the great need for low-income housing today. Then guests prayed blessings on the house as "before all else, a home, a dwelling place of love and peace." Refreshments and tours of some apartments followed.

Tenants' special thank you to the construction company and the architects

Sr. Mary Grondin (left), Providence Vincent House director, and Therese Jensen, Providence Elizabeth House director, enjoy the celebration.

Others included (from left) Tim Zaricznyj, head of Providence Senior and Community Services-Housing Division; Sr. Alexis Melancon, former director of Emilie House, Portland; and Ebanezor Baffoe, of the Finance Department servicing senior housing.

Sisters enjoyed another PHS gala (above) and its award presentations (right).

Providence High School hosts *Promise for the Future* Gala

"Celebrate the Magic of Giving" was the theme for the sixth annual event to benefit the students and programs of Providence High School, located in Burbank. The school was founded by the Sisters of Providence in 1955.

Guests got all gussied up on March 31 to go to Lakeside Golf Club to enjoy elegant surroundings, a sumptuous meal, an auction and dancing. Sisters of Providence in attendance were (from left) Renate Hayum, Lucy Villanova, Lucille Dean, Susanne Hartung, Mary Hawkins and Charlotte Van Dyke.

Awards were presented to individuals who have exhibited dedication in the area of service to the high school and to the community at large. Pamela Corradi, a member of the PHS Board of Regents, received the Pioneer Award, the school's highest accolade. She is shown here (center) with Principal Michele Schulte and Sister Lucille, who provided leadership to the school for 25 years. Sister Lucille continues to serve on the Board of Regents, as does Sister Charlotte. PHS also honored Catholics in Media Associates, Patt and Jack Shea and Marlene and Bob O'Neill with the Excellence in Media award, which recognizes projects and people in media who help share the word of God through their work.

New Providence Associates welcomed

Spring brought a new crop of Providence Associates, men and women of all faiths who share the mission and spirituality of Providence but do not seek vowed membership.

Margaret

Cheri

The newest associates include Margaret Bauer, of Anchorage; Cheri Allan and Karie Owens, of Greater Seattle; and Deacon Jim Barrow and Kathie Oreb, of Walla Walla.

Karie

Jim

Kathie

Jubilee Celebration

11 Sisters of Providence mark 25 to 70 years of religious life

Sisters of Providence marking 25 to 70 years of religious life are being honored with a special Mass on Saturday, August 11, at Sacred Heart Parish, 219 East Rockwood Boulevard, Spokane. The Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, Bishop of Spokane, will preside at the liturgy, which will be followed by a luncheon honoring the Jubilarians at Providence Auditorium.

Look for these sisters' Jubilee stories on the Sisters of Providence website (http://www.sistersofprovidence.net) after August 11.

70 years

Sister Germaine Chabot,
Seattle
(formerly Sister Germaine of the Seven Dolors)

Born in Clarence Creek, Ontario, Canada, Sister Germaine made her novitiate in Montreal, then was missioned to the former Sacred Heart Province in Seattle. She is known for her expertise in the health-care ministry as a capable and loving nurse, supervisor and administrator. Her assignments include 41 years at Providence Portland Medical Center, as well as service in Olympia, Yakima and Alaska. ●

Sister Ann Dolores Ybarrola,
Great Falls, Mont.
(given name is Catherine Ybarrola)

Born in Havre, Mont., Sister Ann Dolores began her life in ministry as a third-grade teacher in Missoula, Mont., and has spent the last 14 retirement years as a volunteer in Great Falls. In between were elementary, secondary and college assignments in Montana, Idaho, Washington and Illinois. She served in institutional research, in the registrar's office and in financial aid at the College (now University) of Great Falls for a total of 19 years. ●

60 years

Sister Maryann Bochsler,
Seattle
(formerly Sister Mary Carmelita)

For more than 30 years, Sister Maryann has been a spiritual caregiver. She still is a presence at Mount St. Vincent in Seattle, where she volunteers once a week as a Eucharistic minister. Born in St. Paul, Ore., she grew up in Mount Angel. For more than 20 years she was a nurse and nursing supervisor, serving in Walla Walla, Yakima, Seattle and Vancouver, Wash.; Portland, Medford and Astoria, Ore.; and Burbank, Calif. ●

Sister Anna Burris,
Seattle
(formerly Sister Frances Ann)

A native of Grand Forks, N.D., Sister Ann taught for five years at Maryville Academy, an orphanage for children of all ages in Des Plaines, Ill., followed by more than 20 years teaching in Seattle, Moxee, Olympia and Yakima, Wash., Burbank, and Fairbanks, Alaska. She also taught special education at West Seattle High School for 20 years before retiring. She then became treasurer of St. Joseph Residence, Seattle, for the next 13 years. From 1983 to 2004 she and her sister organized six "all-year" reunions of students, teachers and family members at Providence Academy, the sisters' first school in the West. ●

Sister Wilma Fitzgerald,
Seattle
(formerly Sister Lidwine)

Sister Wilma, who grew up in a central Washington farming community, taught in Wallace and DeSmet, ID; Missoula and Great Falls, Mont.; at the College of Great Falls, and at a preparatory school in Baltimore. She spent one year as a research associate at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, continuing there as a junior and senior fellow until 1980, working with medieval Latin and Greek manuscripts.

She also worked on other manuscript research projects at St. John's University's Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and for their Brepols Publisher. Today she spends time tending the garden at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle. ●

Sister Mary Fox,
Vancouver, Wash.
(formerly Sister Kathryn Ann)

Sister Mary was born in Vancouver, Wash., where she lives today. Her first ministry was in the business office at the old St. Vincent Hospital in Portland. She worked in hospital business offices in Seattle and Portland, as a switchboard operator and receptionist at Providence Heights in Issaquah, Wash., and as secretary at St. Joseph Elementary School in Vancouver for 18 years. Her last ministry was 12 years as secretary to the director of volunteers at Providence Portland Medical Center. Today she is a volunteer at St. Joseph's Parish. ●

Sister Elizabeth Gress,
Spokane
(formerly Sister Rose Monica)

For the last 11 years Sister Liz has lived at the novitiate known as Nally House. Born in White Bluffs, Wash., she has been a teacher in Great Falls and Glasgow, Mont.; Walla Walla and Colfax, Wash.; Des Plaines, Ill.; and Kellogg, Idaho. She returned to St. Thomas Home in Great Falls several times, as a helper with the boarders, and later as a teacher and principal until its closure. She also was a teacher and principal at St. Peter and Paul School before becoming admissions counselor at the College of Great Falls. Sister Liz later went to Mount St. Joseph, Spokane, to work with elderly sisters, then studied pastoral education at Seattle University before spending nine years at St. Luke Parish in Great Falls. She also served as a provincial councilor. Since 2000, she has been a volunteer at Mount St. Joseph, Holy Family Hospital and Our Place. She also is on the board of St. Joseph's Hospital, Polson, Mont. ●

50 years

Sister Margaret Botch,
Spokane
(formerly Sister Eva Marie)

Sister Margaret currently is Provincial/ Leadership Team Coordinator for Mother Joseph Province. She also was a member of the first Leadership Team for the province, which was formed in 2000 by joining the former St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart provinces. Born in Belt, Mont., and raised in Hamilton, Mont., she also spent two of her high school years living in Iraq, where her father was director of an agricultural foreign aid program. Her ministries have included teaching high school English in Great Falls and Walla Walla, and serving as a campus minister at Gonzaga University, Spokane, and as a member of the formation team. She also has done facilitation and spiritual direction for more than 30 years. ●

Sister Nancy MacLean,
Harlem, Mont.
(formerly Sister Karen Marie)

Sister Nancy was born in Missoula. Her ministries began with elementary teaching in Great Falls; Kellogg, Idaho; Des Plaines, Ill., and back to Great Falls. She then took up pastoral, religious education, serving in Northern Idaho and in the Spokane Valley. A recovering alcoholic, her discernment with the community leadership led to the birthing of a treatment and recovery center known as River House in the Spokane Valley in 1976. She later joined the pastoral team at St Gerard's parish in Great Falls, then in 1989 moved to the reservation at Fort Belknap, Mont., among the Native people, where she remains today. ●

Sister Roberta Rorke,
Yakima
(formerly Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity)

Sister Roberta was born in Yakima, where she resides today. A lifelong learner and educator, she holds a B.A. degree in philosophy and M.A. degrees in history and theology. She taught before entering the religious community, then returned to the classroom after her vows, teaching at all levels. Other ministries included the Formation Team, Constitutions Committee, the General Council in Montreal, as provincial superior and as a member of the first provincial council for Mother Joseph Province. Today, she teaches history at Heritage University in Toppenish, Wash. ●

25 years

Sister Margaret "Peggy" Alcorn,
Spokane

Born in Little Rock, Ark., Sister Peggy was baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church in 1977, then entered the Sisters of Providence in 1981 at the age of 51. In her earlier life, she was married and divorced and worked for many years for an aerospace company in Sacramento and for the Screen Actors Guild in Los Angeles. Her ministries have been in pastoral care and social work in Great Falls, with Elder Services in Spokane, and as assistant superior and then superior at Mount St. Joseph. After training in clinical pastoral education, she became a volunteer in social work at St. Joseph's Hospital in Polson, Mont., before returning to Mount St. Joseph as a member of the Community Life Team. She retired in 2000 but continues to serve as part-time receptionist for Provincial Administration and in other community responsibilities. ●

Rest in Peace

Judith Edwards, SP

(Sister Maura)

Born Judith Elizabeth Edwards in 1936 in Denver, Colo., Sister Judith was the only child of James William and Edith Elizabeth (Sorensen) Edwards. Her father, a bricklayer, was sent wherever the federal government was building, so her family's early travels took them across the United States. In 1944, Mr. Edwards took a job at the Hanford Atomic Energy plant, and the family moved to Yakima, Wash.

Judith first met the Sisters of Providence when she entered St. Joseph Academy in the second grade. That very first day she was given a book and a pencil to take an achievement test. "The nuns don't waste any time," she quipped. Her parents instilled in her a love of reading, nature, flowers and poetry. Her father had a vivid imagination and loved poetry. He took Judith to the public library children's room where she would check out the maximum of eight books on horses and dog stories. Then she would hide the other books she wanted to read within the library, coming back later only to discover that they'd been re-shelved.

During her high school years, Judith worked on the school newspaper as advertisement manager and helped with the layout and printing. She loved English and journalism and wanted to be Brenda Starr, cub reporter. Judy and one of her close classmates, Sue Ann Caton, were great debaters in high school. They traveled within the state to debate. They later both entered the religious community and everyone enjoyed their sense of humor, especially when they were together.

When she was a senior, Judith decided that she wanted to be a Sister of Providence, "to learn to love God more and help others love Him, too." She graduated from St. Joseph Academy in 1954.

Judith then traveled to Seattle and entered the postulancy and later the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence. She professed first vows in 1958 and received the name Sister Maura. She made her final vows in 1961. Whenever people wondered why her parents had allowed their only child to enter religious life, Sister Judith would relate to them that when she had her appendix taken out at 5 years of age, her mother vowed to God that if Judith recovered she would not stand in the way of whatever she wanted to do with her life.

Sister Judith earned her B.S. degree in education from the College (now University) of Great Falls in 1965. She happily proclaimed that she read her way to her master's degree from Seattle University in 1970 in English, studying literature. Her one regret was that she did not study a foreign language.

Sister Judith's first ministry was teaching sixth grade at St. Patrick School, Walla Walla, Wash., followed by assignments at Holy Family and St. Catherine schools, Seattle; St. Finbar School, Burbank, Calif.; Our Lady of the Holy Rosary School, Sun Valley, Calif.; Catholic Junior High School, Anchorage; St. Michael School, Olympia, Wash.; St. Joseph School, Vancouver, Wash.; and Our Lady of the Lake School, Seattle.

Her favorite assignments were teaching seventh and eighth grades and serving as assistant principal at St. Michael School in Olympia. "The people were stable and knew their families and their roots, as they did in Yakima," Sister Judith recalled. "It was a one-parish, small town, but the people knew what was going on in the world." Likewise, the St. Michael's parishioners truly valued her many contributions and gifts shared in their community. She was an excellent teacher, especially in English. She inspired her students with her love of poetry, especially the English poets.

Sister Judith had a good sense of humor. If she saw an opportunity to have some fun, she didn't pass it up. One day, she and other sisters were walking down the school hallway. They noticed a message posted outside the Sister Principal's office. It read, "Whoever took my Scotch tape, please return it now. I need it desperately." Sister Judith quietly erased the word "tape" and continued down the hall.

Sister Judith also worked in the following capacities: Central filing and as records manager for the Sisters of Providence Health System (aka Corporation); business office, John F. Kennedy High School, Seattle; and assistant to coordinator of chronicles, part-time assistant to the assistant superior, part-time staff member, St. Joseph Residence, at which time she became the part-time librarian for the Religious Community Library, Provincial Offices, Seattle. "When I was offered the library position, I took a second and a half to say 'Yes,'" she recalled. She loved to share the wealth of the library's resources with the sisters, getting to know their likes and interests and making and sending packets to them.

Sister Judith was a very warm and friendly person. Her upbeat attitude and her gratefulness permeated her beautiful smile in spite of all of her infirmities. She was always positive, especially when it came to the Seattle Mariners baseball team.

She really worked at keeping in touch with her friends and family by phone and correspondence. She loved talking on the phone and this was one way she kept in contact with many friends. She also sent many birthday and get-well cards.

She was very generous. When she received gifts, she often gave them away, but she always asked the giver if she could give them to someone else who could enjoy the gift. She was always very grateful and wrote "Thank yous."

When Sister Judith retired to St. Joseph Residence, Seattle, in 2005, she took advantage of her confinement to bed. She had time to read the mystery novels she loved and, on a clear day, she could savor a view of the Cascades and of downtown Seattle from her window.

She died at St. Joseph Residence on April 23 at 70 years of age, and after 52 years as a Sister of Providence. She was preceded in death by her mother in 1997 and father in 1978. She is survived by her cousins.

Vigil was held on April 25 at St. Joseph Residence, and Funeral Mass was celebrated there on April 26, followed by burial at Calvary Cemetery, Seattle.

Memorial contributions in Sister Judith Edwards' memory may be made to Sisters of Providence Retirement Fund, 9 East 9th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202-1209.

M. Michelle Holland, SP

(Sister Mary Michelle)

Sister Michelle Holland was born Marion Jean, the fourth of five children and the only girl, in the small North Idaho town of Bovill, to Joseph James and Marion Frances (Scott) Holland. She wrote: "The day was Tuesday, May 16, 1927. I have always liked to associate the day, Tuesday, with the devotion to the angels, and was especially happy on this account to be given St. Michael as my patron at the time of my religious profession."

One week before Michelle made her First Communion, someone tried to burn the parish church down. The attempt failed, but two weeks later the arsonist was successful. During the next several years, the families celebrated Mass in the rectory. The oldest members of the parish were given the honor of sitting in the living room, the boys sat in a bedroom, the girls in another bedroom, and young couples in the kitchen. It was a happy day when an unused church building from a neighboring town was moved to Bovill. All of Michelle's early memories were closely associated with these "church" events.

Michelle attended grades one through ten in the town's school, which had two grades in each classroom. When her own lesson work was completed, she would listen in on the next grade level's lessons and challenged herself to understand them.

At age 12, she had surgery on her hip at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane and was influenced by the sisters during that time. When her parents needed to return to their home in Bovill, Michelle started to cry. Her father put his hands on her shoulders and said, "Young lady, if you cry every time something goes wrong, you will cry often during your life. God made your shoulders just the right size for you to carry the crosses that God will send you." She was bedridden at home for a year during her recovery. That experience led her to be a reflective and prayerful person.

When she was in the 11th grade, she wrote: "I rode an antiquated school bus to a school in a nearby town. That year was both challenging and disturbing. It was in a predominantly Scandinavian settlement and one which was definitely anti-Catholic. On Friday, the school cafeteria served chicken or hamburgers and would taunt the four Catholics in attendance to see if we would eat it. We knew we could since they did not serve anything else, but we would not – just to show them our convictions. One teacher was a lady minister on the side and spent much time from English and American History trying to convert the class. In biology it was openly taught there was no need for a supreme creator. At the end of the year my parents decided it was time for me to live in Spokane and to attend a Catholic school." It was at Marycliff High School that Michelle became serious about her desire to become a religious sister.

One day after graduation, Michelle's close friend suggested that they go for a little car drive. Michelle wrote: "The drive ended at Sacred Heart Hospital and Mother Pascal's office. My friend told me she would pick me up in an hour. It was long enough, for by the time she returned I had formally asked my entrance. There is one amusing memory of that first meeting with Mother Pascal. I told her about my leg and the fact that it was about an inch shorter than the other, causing me to limp. She had me walk up and down in front of her and then stated perfunctorily, 'You don't limp; you "waddle" like I do.' We settled on a February 1946 entrance, and I left for home – to see the sisters again only when I came to enter in Seattle. What influenced me to become a Sister of Providence was that in the town that I was raised there were many lumberjacks and railroad workers. I often wondered, who ever prayed for them? Who was concerned about them being able to know God? So I wanted my life to make a difference in people's lives." Michelle became a novice in August 1946, and she professed her first vows in February 1948 and her final vows in 1951.

Michelle attended the College (now University) of Great Falls, Mont., and later Gonzaga University in Spokane, where she graduated with a B.S. degree in chemistry in 1951. She received her teaching credentials from the state of Montana and an M.A. degree in chemistry in 1962 from the University of Notre Dame. She returned to Notre Dame in 1980-81 for a year of Theological Studies.

Sister Michelle's ministry assignments as a Sister of Providence were chiefly in education and administration, including Sacred Heart Academy, Missoula, Mont.; Central Catholic High School, Great Falls, Mont.; College (now University) of Great Falls, one year as acting president; and director of education and provincial councilor, 1964-74. In 1971, Notre Dame named her the first woman to be given the "Man of the Year" Award. In 1974, she became the first "elected" provincial superior of St. Ignatius Province, Spokane, where she served from 1974 through 1980. From 1981 to 1999, she was assistant to the president at Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, and also was director of mission effectiveness and values integration. She served as a member of the St. Joseph Corporation Board, Sacred Heart Medical Center's Development Fund Board, and as a trustee for the Mother Joseph Province Retirement Trust Board.

Sister Michelle served on many Sisters of Providence governing boards and was chair of several of them. She was a member of the Columbus Hospital (now Benefis Health Care) board in Great Falls. She also served on the Washington State Hospital Association Committee on governing boards, on the CHA (Catholic Health Association) Board of Trustees, a special study commission

→→

Please Remember in Prayer

Tue Nguyen, grandfather of Gabrielle Nguyen, SP, died March 7 in Dallas, Texas.

Ann Denson, sister of Joan Gallagher, SP, died March 9 in Bellingham, Wash.

Noble Burkhart, father of Donna Burkhart, SP, died March 28 in Lafayette, Ind.

James Parent, brother of Annette Parent, SP, and Jeannette Parent, SP, died April 26 in Richland, Wash.

Willard Julum, brother of Marian Julum-Weaver, PA, died May 9 in Lake Taps, Wash.

Caritas

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M. Michelle Holland, SP...

of CHA, as chairperson of Region XV of LCWR (Leadership Conference of Woman Religious), on the board of the National Sisters Vocation Conference, and on several boards connected with Sacred Heart Medical Center. In 1992, she was a founding board member of Providence Services, which oversaw institutional ministries of St. Ignatius Province/Mother Joseph Province through 2005. She assisted Sacred Heart Medical Center in the development of the Providence Center for Faith and Healing.

In June 2005, Sister Michelle received the first Woman of Providence Award at the 25th anniversary celebration of Women in Providence in Collaboration (WPC), an organization she helped found. WPC is a collaborative group of 15 Providence congregations throughout the United States and Canada. Sister Michelle, then provincial superior of the former St. Ignatius Province, and others saw the need for an organization for the dwindling number of Providence sisters with similar goals. They organized Providence Events for the sisters and others to explore the meaning and charism of "Providence."

Sister Michelle belonged to that generation of women religious who made the transition from the pre-Vatican II to the post-Vatican II forms of religious life. She wore the traditional habit for some twenty years. She said, "I was very positive about making that change, from the very beginning." After the change, she felt she was better able to relate to her Protestant relatives and to the lay community.

Sister Michelle highlighted, as her most rewarding experience as a woman religious, the relationships she formed with people along the way. "I was a science teacher, and I always wanted to teach religion and I had a minor in counseling. I think that some of those relationships with my students have been lasting, and that is what has really given me personal enjoyment. That's why I entered [religious life], to try and make a difference in people's lives."

Sister Michelle spent her final years in Spokane, living with Sister Dorothy Byrne. She used her electric wheelchair to get around – going to the parish and community events, and greeting her many friends along the way with her beautiful smile. Sister Dorothy was Sister Michelle's good friend for 59 years. They lived together for 39 years, at Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula, Mont., and at 34 East 8th Avenue and 205 East 9th Avenue in Spokane. Sister Dorothy said that Sister Michelle's greatest gift was her wisdom. She was a visionary and was able to articulate her reflections. Sister Dorothy felt that Sister Michelle lived what Micah said in 6:8: She acted justly, loved tenderly and walked humbly with her God.

Sister Michelle died April 28 at the age of 79, and after 60 years as a Sister of Providence. She was preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Marion Holland, and her brothers, Joseph and Robert Holland. She is survived by brothers Maurice (Dutch) and wife, Colleen, Holland of Clarkston, Wash., and John and wife, Muriel, Holland of Spokane; many nieces and nephews, and grandnieces and grandnephews.

Vigil was held May 2 at Mount St. Joseph and the Funeral Mass was celebrated there May 3, followed by burial at Holy Cross Cemetery, Spokane.

Memorial contributions in Sister Michelle Holland's memory may be made to Sisters of Providence Retirement Fund, 9 East 9th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202-1209. ●

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Sisters of Providence

A vocation discernment live-in weekend for single women age 18 and older

6:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 24, through 1 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 26

Free meals and lodging are included.
Caritas Court, 4415 SW Oregon St., West Seattle

For more information or to register:

Contact Sister Clare Lentz
(206) 923-4028 clare.lentz@providence.org