

Providence Archivist Loretta Greene Celebrates a Milestone

Over the years, Providence Archives has served as keeper of the past for the Sisters of Providence religious community in the West and Providence Health & Services. Officially that means collecting, organizing, preserving and making available records of enduring and historical value relating to the organizations. Providence Archives is also an invaluable resource for tracing the history of the Catholic Church, women, education, health care and social services in the Northwest.



▲ Now... Loretta Greene, celebrating her 35th anniversary with Providence Archives this year, stands with Sister Rita Bergamini, the first official Providence archivist who hired Loretta as her assistant in 1984. Sister Rita retired from the archives and “passed the white glove” to Loretta in 1992.

▼ And then... Sister Rita and Loretta pose with their first archives computer in 1986. Dubbed Noel since it arrived at Christmastime, the computer opened up a new era of archival management and the beginning of their digital database.



It takes a special person to manage the vast collections of institutional and corporate records, manuscripts, photographs, audiovisual materials and artifacts which are links to the ministries that define the Providence legacy. When Providence Archives was formally established in 1972, Sister Rita Bergamini was the first official archivist. She hired Loretta Zwolak Greene as assistant archivist in 1984. When Sister Rita retired in 1992, she “passed the white glove” to her assistant. For Loretta, 2019 marks 35 years with Providence Archives. For Sister Rita, Loretta’s long tenure is an example of how Providence provides. Here is a bit of the history.

There Shall Be Archives

From the early days of Mother Joseph’s arrival in the Northwest, Sisters of Providence kept an archives. The mandate first appeared in the congregation’s 1858 “Customary Rules,” stating, “There shall be in the secretary’s and treasurer’s office, Archives, which must be placed safe from fire and kept in such good order that it may be easy to find any records.”

Sister Rita first started tending to the archives during her term as provincial secretary from 1964 to 1971. At that time it was in a basement storeroom at Providence Heights in Issaquah, Wash. In 1972 Sister Rita attended an intensive training program on archives administration in Washington, D.C., and made a plan for a formal archives. She took her appeal to the provincial superior and was approved as the first full-time archivist.

Later in 1972, the archives was relocated to the site where it is today at St. Joseph Residence in West Seattle. Though it started out as a few collections in two trunk rooms and a broom closet, Sister Rita had a dream of transforming Providence Archives into a center that would serve the religious community, Providence institutions and the public.

Eager to develop her skills in the field, Sister Rita attended many local and national training courses and professional meetings, and was mentored by a University of Washington archivist. “I was always trying to keep up-to-date since we didn’t really have formal university programs in archival studies at that time; they were just getting started,” explained Sister Rita. Over the next 12 years she relied on sister volunteers, especially teachers who had summers

off, to help in the archives with translating, organizing papers and other jobs.

By 1984 Sister Rita needed a full-time assistant and began the search. Loretta applied. She was impressed by the East Coast archivist with degrees in history and library science and a concentration in archival studies, and invited Loretta to interview. Sister Rita shared that during the interview Loretta asked so many questions, she wondered whether she was truly interested in the position. “I told Loretta I would like someone who can be here for at least five years,” said Sister Rita. “Here she is 35 years later!”

Past Forward

As a newlywed, Loretta was pleased to have a job in Seattle where she and her husband had settled. As an archivist, she was intrigued by the opportunity to work in religious archives, an area that was new to her.

Initially, Loretta and Sister Rita spent every day after lunch reviewing materials and artifacts, discussing projects and making strategic plans. “It was very collaborative, in looking back, because it was the way you really learned the collections,” Loretta said.

By 1992 Sister Rita was ready to retire, and Loretta was promoted to archivist. Since then Loretta has successfully shepherded Providence Archives through many changes as the health system expanded, other ministries contracted, two provinces became one, ownership changed, and technological advances altered the way records and artifacts are managed. As more sisters began moving into retirement, being in the “ministry of memory” has taken on even greater significance and opened up new opportunities for mission and heritage education.

Reflecting on 35 years in Providence Archives, Loretta shared a few of the accomplishments she is most proud of: launch of the Past Forward newsletter in 1993; the uniting of Sacred Heart and St. Ignatius Provinces into a new Mother Joseph Province in 2000; the second archives renovation and expansion in 2004; the Sisters of Providence sesquicentennial celebration in 2006; increased outreach through the website, exhibits, tours and accessibility of content; and last but certainly not least, building a team of competent, knowledgeable staff — Peter Schmid, Elizabeth Russell, Pam Hedquist and Jessica Long — and three dedicated sister volunteers who love what they do. “I couldn’t do what I do if I didn’t have them,” said Loretta, “And the archives wouldn’t be what it is without them.” ●

▼ Congratulations to our 2019 jubilarians who celebrated their milestone anniversaries as Sisters of Providence on Aug. 3. Standing (left to right): Sisters Judy George (60 years), Helen Brennan (70 years), Jo Ann Showalter (25 years) and Deling Fernando (60 years). Seated: Sisters Virginia Miller (70 years), Susan Fitzmorris (70 years) and Ida Mae Marceau (60 years). Not pictured: Sister Dorothy Byrne (75 years).



◀ Sister Karin Dufault, congregational leader, came from Montreal to honor the eight sisters from Mother Joseph Province who celebrated their jubilees in August. The beautiful flower arrangements around the lectern were the work of Sister Huang Thi Nguyen.

▶ Jubilarians and their guests enjoyed a catered buffet lunch in the parish hall at Our Lady of Guadalupe in West Seattle following a special Mass on Aug. 3.



Providence in Action Photo Gallery

▶ Sisters from throughout the province traveled to Seattle to celebrate with the 2019 jubilarians. Several sisters from Spokane shared a table with Sister Ida Mae Marceau for the Vesper Banquet on Aug. 1 — a time for the religious community to come together for prayer, a special meal and slideshows in honor of Jubilee. Standing (left to right): Sisters Rosalie Locati, Beverly Dunn, Ida Mae Marceau, Huang Thi Nguyen and Annette Seubert. Seated: Sisters Joan Gallagher, Phuong Ha Nguyen, Peggy Alcorn, Liz Cole and Kitsy Rutan.



▲ On May 5, the Providence Associates in Yakima, Wash., celebrated Cinco de Mayo and the commitment of a new associate. Obdulia Rubin (center) received the Providence Associate pin and Blessed Emilie medal from Sister Josie Ramac (left), while Marta Wilson, PA, looked on.



◀ Providence Associates welcomed six new members from Dagupan City, Philippines, on July 20 during a day-long gathering and liturgy that also brought together new and renewing associates from Bataan and Manila (Punta Sta Ana). Back row (left to right): Rosalinda Basilio, Bataan; Caridad Arevalo, Punta; Lizzy Tolentino, Punta; Father Franklin Vargas, CM; Jocelyn David, Punta. Middle row: Vivian Verania, Dagupan; Gloria Garcia, Punta; Alejandra Barrera, Punta; Blanca Montemayor. Front row: Primitivo Verania, Dagupan; Translacion Abalos, Dagupan; Puring Siapno, Dagupan; Julieta Cruz, Dagupan.

► Sister Lang Tran was honored Sept. 25 with the Spirit of Emilie Values in Action Award for exemplary service at Providence Child Center in Portland, Ore. The award recognizes individuals who inspire their colleagues by making prominent the spirit of Blessed Emilie Gamelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence, and the Providence mission of service to others. Colleagues acknowledged Sister Lang's compassionate care for the infants and families she has worked with since 2012, dedication to continued education which inspires high standards of care, strong skills as a supportive mentor, respect for the talents and gifts of those who work in the classroom, and deep-rooted commitment to the mission.



▼ Over the summer, the Sisters of Providence elected their next Provincial Council. Beginning Jan. 1, 2020 through Dec. 31, 2024, these sisters will oversee the Mother Joseph Province: Sister Barbara Schamber, provincial leader; Sister Jacqueline Fernandes, provincial councilor; Sister Margarita Hernandez, provincial councilor; and Sister Karen Hawkins, provincial councilor.



▲ Sister Judith Desmarais, provincial leader (center), traveled to El Salvador in September to visit the sisters in ministry there, including Sister Marita Capili (right) who administers a youth scholarship program. Here, Sisters Judith and Marita are traveling by boat to the island of La Pirraya with two students from the program who are participating in a community service project.



▲ On May 13, the Sisters of Providence presented Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain with a Mother Joseph statue in honor of significant accomplishments and contributions to the Sisters of Providence. The statue is one of a limited number cast by Felix W. de Weldon who created the statues of Mother Joseph that reside in the U.S. and Washington State Capitols.



▲ Runners and walkers get ready to start at the Providence St. Joseph Health Renton campus Sept. 26. This Mission Week event was dubbed "Run Like the Nuns, with Heart and Sole."



▼ Sister Judith Desmarais (right) welcomed Mary Buckley as a Providence Companion in a special ceremony at St. Finbar Parish in Burbank, Calif., on June 15. Providence Companions are former Sisters of Providence who left the religious community but wish to continue a formal relationship with members of the congregation and engage with the Sisters of Providence in ministry and prayer.

Creating “Something New” – Celebrating a Covenant Relationship

By Sharon Casey, OP

June 29, 2019, was a significant moment for the Sisters of St. Dominic of Tacoma.

We gathered at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Burien, Wash., for the formal installation of Sister Jo Ann Showalter, SP, as our pontifical commissary. (Commissary is not a word we associate with a leader, but in Italian, *commissario* means leader, or one who is sent. Using more familiar language, we will refer to her as our congregation leader.)

The nine-year journey completes the structural parts of our covenant with the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province (MJP). Our sisters needing assisted or skilled care have resided at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle for more than 25 years, our financial management is taken care of at the Providence Provincial Administration office in Renton, and our governance model is now in place. Although these structures are in place, we know that the covenant relationship between our religious communities will continue to evolve, adapting as needs change.

The fourth part of a covenant relationship is legacy, which the Dominican Sisters have been addressing over the years. Critical to a covenant relationship is that neither community loses its identity. We will remain Sisters of St. Dominic of Tacoma until the last sister dies.

At that time there is a process in place for finalizing our affairs.

We knew we did not want to merge with another community but wanted to create our own preferred future. After several years of study, conversation and exploration, we discerned that the Sisters of Providence, MJP, were an ideal fit — our long-term relationship, our geographic proximity and our shared values aided our discernment. Although we express them differently, our charisms unite rather than divide us. We are united as women religious, called to live the Gospels and Evangelical Counsels.

We accept this covenant, this sacred trust, in the spirit of our foundresses, Mothers Thomasina Buehlmeier, deChantal Brown and Sister Aloysia Burns as they traveled west in 1888 to establish “something new.” We, too, joyfully accept that we are creating “something new”



▲ Sister of Providence Jo Ann Showalter signs and accepts her appointment as congregation leader for the Sisters of St. Dominic of Tacoma as part of the covenant relationship between the two congregations.

even as we move toward the fulfillment of our mission. We choose to walk in friendship and love with the Sisters of Providence.

Our image during this time of planning and transition has been a threshold. John O’Donohue says, “To acknowledge and cross a new threshold is always a challenge. It demands courage and also a sense of trust in whatever is emerging.”

In the spirit of our centennial song we say, “For all that has been we say thank you; to all that will be we say yes.” ●



◀ Sister Sharon Casey, OP, presents Sister Jo Ann Showalter, SP, with the Constitutions and a key chain with images of St. Dominic and St. Thomas Aquinas, patrons of the Dominican congregation).



◀ The Sisters of Providence Provincial Council along with the Tacoma Dominican Leadership Team and advisors celebrate the installation of the new congregation leader on June 29 at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Burien, Wash. Left to right: Sisters Judith Desmarais, SP; Peg Murphy, OP; Senaida Rivera, OP, Advisor; Jo Ann Showalter, SP, congregation leader; Patricia Morisset, OP, advisor; Josie Ramac, SP; Sharon Casey, OP; and Joan Gallagher, SP. Missing: Sister Philomena McCarthy, OP, advisor.