

# We of Nojoshing

Nojoshing – Indian word for the area where our pioneer members settled in 1849; it means “piece of land stretching into the water.”  
The name was changed later to Saint Francis, Wisconsin.



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SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, St. Francis, WI 53235-3799

## **We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Mary Clara (Helen) Styger August 4, 1932 – January 19, 2024**

Sister Clara, who was baptized Helen, was born in Napa, Calif. Her parents were Carl (Charles) and Hilda (Lund) Styger. Her father was a native of Switzerland and worked as a farmer on his own ranch in California. Her mother was born in San Francisco, Calif.; she was a full-time mother to five daughters and one son. Clara, the youngest in the family, was two-and-a-half years old when her mother died; her sister, Hilda, who was 18, raised Helen and her siblings.

After high school Helen attended Napa Junior College for two years and worked as a clerk in a florist shop for three years before entering the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi on November 17, 1954. Her attraction to our congregation was the result of a visit with the Sisters at Hanna Center for Boys in Sonoma, about 14 miles from Napa. She later wrote, “By their cheerfulness and God’s grace, I knew this was the community God was calling me to.” When she became a novice, Helen received the name Sister Mary Clara. As a second-year novice, she ministered in domestic service at St. Ann Health Center.

Sister Clara professed vows in 1957 and was missioned to St. Coletta School, Jefferson, Wis. After a year, she returned to St. Ann Health Center. In 1959, Sister Clara went back to St. Coletta and continued in domestic service there until 1965.

As a nursing assistant, Sister Clara cared for our Sisters at St. Ann Health Center from 1965 to 1981. Then she spent a year working in our greenhouse but returned to St. Ann Health Center as a nurse’s aide, ministering there from 1982-1987. After this, she moved to our Motherhouse as a nurse aide/companion to our frail elderly Sisters until 1997.

From Sister Clara’s reflection in the St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care newsletter, *Seasons of Life*, we learn of her passion for the clients she served. Sister Clara said, “I came to St. Ann Center in 1997; therapy has a special place in my heart. I love the clients and am happy when they make progress. My love for the poor who show such resignation keeps me going. I hope, like St. Francis, I will continue to give them hope as they do for me. I praise and thank God for this gift.” She was an employee at first and then a volunteer at St. Ann Center, assisting clients in restorative therapy between 1997 and 2019.

Staff members regarded her as a wonderful blessing from God and an integral staff member who brought a breath of fresh air by her gentle presence and attentive listening. Sister Clara's focus with the clients was to help them continue the exercises they had done in their sessions with the physical and/or occupational therapist. The time that Sister Clara spent with the clients sent a personal message that there was hope for the future and no one was giving up on them. As Sister Clara's frailty increased, her understanding and empathy of those she was working with also increased. The clients loved her. She had time for them, didn't hurry them and made them feel appreciated.

In May of 2019, Sister Clara moved from Clare Hall to the new St. Francis Convent, where she lived until her death on January 19, 2024.

Sisters who lived with Sister Clara described her as an avid participant in the local community. Her dry sense of humor found its way into conversations. They experienced her as soft spoken and kind. Her eyes twinkled in enjoyment and she conveyed a sense of peace. Her commitment to living religious life was very sincere. On the occasion of her 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of Profession in 2017, she reflected: "I am continually amazed at the AWESOME LOVE AND MERCY OF GOD. Humbled to be called to serve as a Sister in this community."

One of Sister Clara's favorite activities with her local community was playing "Help Your Neighbor," a card game involving cards, dice, and pennies. When two nieces from California visited, Sister Clara taught them how to play and she was delighted when one of the nieces was the winner.

Gathering with the Sisters for prayer and celebrations was always a highlight. She enjoyed when they went out to eat or invited guests in. When former employees she had worked with at St. Ann Health Center came for supper one time, everyone enjoyed hearing the stories of their experiences long into the evening.

From her childhood she loved horses and a photo of her as a youngster prompted one Sister to say "she could be named the 'original cow girl,' with her cowboy hat and boots." Sister Clara shared her love of horses with the Sisters she lived with and all watched the Kentucky Derby and Triple Crown races on television annually.

The last major trip Sister Clara took was a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which fulfilled a long-held dream for her. She described it as a wonderful experience and the highlight of her life. She was grateful that she had had the energy to fully participate physically and felt privileged to be asked to do the reading at Mass at the site of the Nativity of Jesus.

When Sister Clara's health declined very noticeably at the beginning of February 2022 and she needed more assistance, she moved to Clare Circle in St. Francis Convent. The evening before she died, a nurse from hospice had been with her until late in the evening. Sometime after that Sister Clara was called by God into the fullness of life. One of the nurses found her at 5:20 a.m. in the morning at peace with God. Sister Clara had been anointed several times during the year. She was ready for God's surprise visit.

In the book of Revelation 19:11 we read: "The heavens were opened, and as I looked on, a white horse appeared; its rider was called "The Faithful and True." In death, God's faithfulness has been revealed in full to Sister Clara. May she rest in peace.

~ *Sisters Marie Colette Roy and Marcia Lunz*