



**Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi**

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Dear Friend,

It is quite remarkable to look back on our lives and take note of the changes that we have lived through. Sister Anne Stremlau is a good example of someone whose life experience contains stories of changes in every facet. She was the oldest of seven girls and two boys who lived with their parents on a farm near Mendota, Illinois. Sister Anne describes the house they lived in until she was in 8th grade as “primitive” because it was not too sturdy (affording natural air-conditioning) and lacked modern amenities.

When she began first grade, she lived with her grandparents during the week. The next year, when her brother started school, they car-pooled with the neighbors. Her first contact with our Sisters was in school at Peterstown. Sister Anne remembers her teachers well: Sister Georgiana Wagenhuber in grades one to three, Sister Bennet Pazurek in grade four, and Sister Nicoletta Stollenwerk in grades five to eight. In fourth grade Sister Bennet began teaching her piano and, after a quick lesson on the organ in sixth grade, she began playing for Mass while the Sisters were away for the summer.



There was work and fun growing up. Chores included helping with the canning, making beds, doing the wash, and taking care of the babies. Sunday afternoons were playtime. Sometimes it was hide and seek with cousins, catching fireflies, playing around the bales of hay, or climbing and swinging on a rope in the barn. In the winter there was some card playing. Sister Anne learned to do some cooking, but eye problems prevented her from learning to sew beyond basic darning.

After two years at Mendota High School, Sister Anne entered the community as an Aspirant. She said she was inspired by the kindness of the Sisters and had had a good relationship with Sister Nicoletta, with whom she had enjoyed many good talks. Her uncle was a Benedictine priest and her family supported her choice of vocation. She wanted to be a teacher and received the encouragement she needed.

Top: Sr. Anne Stremlau in the early 1960s.

Bottom: Sr. Anne at age 5, shortly after her first eye surgery.

Sister Anne didn't have to wait long to begin her teaching career because she was sent out on her first assignment as a second year Novice. It was the practice in those days to begin teaching before finishing college studies. A new teacher was paired with an experienced teacher and, in the tradition of apprenticeships, the skills and techniques needed were passed



Photos of Sr. Anne with her father:

At left: Holding his hand as she learns to walk.

Below: Helping him with the farm work.



Receiving the Sacraments

At right: First Communion.

Below: At her confirmation in 8th grade, Sr. Anne is pictured with her teacher for grades 5 through 8, Nicoletta Stollenwerk, OSF.



on from one to another. In Sister Anne's case, her desire to teach was deeply rooted and her innate abilities were strong. She would prove to be a natural born teacher and, later, somewhat of a pioneer in the emerging field of computer education.

Her teaching career spanned 40 years. She had always liked math and loved to teach it. While she was at Mauston, Wis, she developed an interest in computers and took a course in computer programming at the local MATC. As she delved more deeply into computers, she studied at Clarke College in Dubuque and earned a masters degree in computer education. Later she took a correspondence course on more advanced programming. A computer was sent to her in parts with a disc drive and then she had to assemble the system. She taught her students with a drawing/geometry program called LOGO and taught programming in BASIC to the older students. Children enjoy having control over the computer and do not fear damaging it like adults do.

When Sister Anne describes the first computers she used, they sound like dinosaurs today, though the intervening years are not that many. But the Timex 2 K and Commodore 64 are extinct today and so are dinosaurs! In those days few computer programs for school use existed, so in teachers' computer education classes, teachers were taught to write their own programs. St. Patrick School and Sister Anne had Commodore 64 computers, but the classes at Clarke College were all taught on Apple II's. So Sister had to transfer all she learned about programming in Apple to programming for the C64.

Among the programs that Sister Anne wrote was a database for the school office and 15 games for two, all with the tic-tac-toe format, but each with different data, covering math, science, language arts, U.S. geography, U.S. history, and famous Americans. Each program had 14 sets of data and 20 items in each set. Each square in the game had a different category heading. When the square was chosen, the computer randomly chose and printed the question. A correct answer gave ownership of that square to the player.

Sister Anne wrote to some companies in the hope that these games that were written for Commo-



This family portrait was taken in 1953.
Sr. Anne is in the back row, far left.

dore 64 could be marketed and used by other teachers. One company responded with interest, but for Apple computers, so they sent her an Apple computer and she rewrote the program for Apple II. Later she did the same for IBM computers. Comp Ed sold all 15 games on all three platforms for several years, but eventually they were discontinued when Windows became the dominant operating system.

Life is truly unpredictable, so besides going back to Peterstown for visits to her family, Sister Anne found herself there in some surprising ways. The most interesting is that she played for her father's wedding! Sadly, her mother died 10 days after the birth of the youngest daughter. When her father remarried, he wanted Sister Anne to play the organ for his wedding. She had already done this for an uncle's wedding, so the arrangements were made for her to go home for the event.

In the early 70s, Sister Anne was sent to teach at Peterstown along with Sr. Elaine Weber, who had also grown up there. Sister Anne was related to every family in the school except one and had to establish herself as a teacher. She remembers telling one student, "On the weekend you can be my cousin; during the week you are my student."

As events unfolded, Sister Anne became the principal in addition to teaching. Because of declining enrollment, the parish decided to close the school at the end of her third year there. The Peterstown school staff worked closely with Holy Cross School in Mendota, Illinois to make the transition as easy as possible for the students.

After Sister Anne finished teaching in the classroom, she worked as a director of religious education in Mauston, Wis., for two years, followed by nine years as an administrative assistant/receptionist at Catholic Charities in the Madison, Wis., Diocese. Now in retirement, she volunteers at the Madison St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and helps keep the computer records up to date.

In looking at the photographs, perhaps you noticed that Sister Anne wears a patch on one eye. She has two very good eyes, but they have never worked together since she was born. Some

Sr. Anne was given a Cabbage Patch doll as a gift – with a real cabbage for its head.





Sr. Anne (left) at the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, Madison, with Margie Welsh, volunteer coordinator.

surgery when she was young corrected some of the crossing of the eyes, but getting them to focus together has never happened.

One evening, many years ago, as she was trying to enter grades into her grade book and unable to keep track of the line of squares she was tracking from left to right, she happened to put her hand over one eye and found that the other eye could do the job. She experimented some more and then took this finding to her eye doctor. Since her eyes have different imaging, a patch allows one eye to work without fighting the other. For reading she covers her left eye and for the limited driving she does, she covers her right eye. She relates some interesting reactions to her patch. One 4-year-old boy who was wearing a cast on his arm asked her if she had broken her eye. Others assume that she is recovering from cataract surgery. This “low tech” patch has turned out to be a very workable solution for her.

Sister’s eye patch is somewhat symbolic of her stance in life. Being Franciscan for her is synonymous with simple lifestyle. She said she grew up in a simple lifestyle and she finds the qualities of simple living most life-giving. Her love of nature finds expression in camping, enjoyment of the backyard view where she lives, frequent Sunday visits to state parks, and some wood carving. These keep her close to Mother Earth in the footprints of St. Francis of Assisi.

Simplicity is a value that all of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi strive to live. Our retired Sisters experience the simplicity of the aging process. When frailty and/or illness enters into their lives, they are faced with many opportunities to gratefully accept care and assistance.

If you are able to make a donation to help support these Sisters, they would rest more easily knowing that so many people care about them. In return, you can be assured of their prayers for you and your intentions. May you know the peace and joy that comes with sharing with others.



With a grateful and joy-full heart,

Marcia Lunz, of

Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF

An ornament depicting the front of St. Francis Convent, the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, is available for a donation of \$25 or more. Your donation helps to support our retired Sisters. Thank you for your contribution.



As Franciscan women who have a commitment to caring for all of creation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi use environmentally friendly or post-consumer paper and soy ink whenever possible.