

# 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 St. 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 Charlene (Wen Min) Chang September 21, 1921 – December 15, 2019

Wen Min Chang was born in Shantung, northern China, the daughter of Charles and Martha (Wang) Chang. She had seven brothers and three sisters. “My parents had a great desire to give us a good education,” she wrote. She attended the only middle school for girls in Shantung, where she met the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, and she entered our congregation on August 14, 1941. Two years later at reception into the novitiate, she received the name Sister Mary Charlene. Her first profession of vows was in 1945.

Sister Charlene taught third grade at Li Ming (language and music school) in Tsinanfu, China, from 1945-1948. With other Chinese sisters and American missionaries, she came to Milwaukee in November 1948. She was a student at the Motherhouse until 1950, and then taught in the girls’ Transition Class at St. Coletta of Wisconsin for 17 years. Her next mission was Holy Apostles School in New Berlin, Wis., where she taught intermediate grades from 1967-1977. She completed her bachelor’s degree in education at Cardinal Stritch College in 1967.

On April 17, 1967, five of the sisters from China took their oath of allegiance during naturalization ceremonies held at Rock County courthouse before Judge Arthur L. Lueble. Sister Charlene was one of the five sisters and they were proud to be United States citizens.

Sister Charlene served in domestic work at the School of Pastoral Ministry in Milwaukee from 1977-1985. This was followed by a move to the Motherhouse, where she volunteered her services until retiring in 1991. She celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee of her profession in 2015.

Between 1979 and 2006, Sister Charlene made ten home visits to China. Her first visit was very difficult because she saw how the life of her family had turned upside down since 1947. Their property had been confiscated because they were land-owning farmers. A priest nephew spent 15 years in a labor

camp. What had not changed was the deep faith of the family.

Sister Charlene kept up with world events by reading the newspaper and watching TV news broadcasts. Cooking good Chinese food was one of her joys, as was extending hospitality to friends and other sisters. Walking outdoors to enjoy the beauty of nature was a favorite pastime.

A great hardship for Sister Charlene was the loss of her eyesight and later her hearing. Nothing delighted her more than having someone approach her very closely and announce clearly who she/he was. Her face would light up with recognition and her conversation would be energized.

At the time of her golden jubilee in 1995, her reflection gives some insight into the feelings of her heart.

*“As I reflect on my fifty years of religious life, gratitude fills my heart. I am grateful to God for calling me to be a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi. I am thankful for all the people who have touched my life with gentle care. I look back with love on my family suffering in China while I am safe in the United States. I thank God for letting me be of service in peace, joy and friendship with Him and others.”*

God called Sister Charlene to her eternal life on Sunday, December 15, 2019, at St. Francis Convent. Saturday evening she had been at the table – eating yogurt. Sr. Jane Denning had stayed with Charlene on Sunday morning, but left when she became very quiet and peaceful after receiving a small amount of morphine. Kim Kunert (Recreation/Memory Care), Betty G. (a nurse), and two aids were present when Sister Charlene died peacefully. With her death, Sr. Leander Liu is the only one still living of the 21 sisters who came from China to the United States in 1948.

~ † Marie Colette Roy, OSF, and Marcia Lunz, OSF