REGINA FINNEGAN, SND de N

January 11, 1922 – August 29, 2013

*“Her children rise up and call her blessed….”*

(Proverbs 31: 28)

Facebook responses to news of Sr. Regina’s death are the best possible tribute to her life as a dedicated educator. One alumna of Notre Dame Academy, Villanova, wrote: “In my darkest days I am shored up by the steel she helped put in my spine and the faith she helped instill in my heart.” Another remembered: “… Every prom night Sr. Regina would stay up praying in the convent chapel for the safety of her girls. She loved us so deeply and we felt it....” Still another: “I remember having to sit … waiting for my dad to pick me up, and Sr. Regina would always check on me and bring me crackers if he was really late.”

The messages are a cascade of moving, grateful memories of Regina’s “shepherding young women into adulthood”:

She “made every person that walked through the gate feel welcome.” She “knew every student’s name.” She “taught me about the power and strength of elevating others.” She “possessed incredible leadership skills that she was able to instill in others.” “Often, because she took chances on hiring a teacher or accepting a girl into the school, they decided ‘to go for it!’ and they achieved more than anyone thought possible” “A mistake was always viewed as an opportunity to make things better.” (Her mantra: “They are ours when they do us proud and they are ours when they don’t.”)

As one alumna and especially close friend put it, Regina instilled in her students “confidence, a standard of excellence, and the same love of learning she possessed”; offered their parents “guidance, an example of Christian values well lived, and a willingness to be available whenever a crisis arose”; gave her faculty her “support, encouragement, and gratitude”; and extended to everyone she served “a generosity of spirit that was warm, full of kindness and tempered by fairness and a sense of humor that kept her real.”

True blue New Yorkers by temperament as well as birth, Regina and her sister, Marge (who also became a Sister of Notre Dame), were raised by Irish-American parents. She was proud of her roots. “I am from city streets,” she once wrote; “I grew up with city kids. I love animals. They were part of my family. And my family loved them and me.” The warmth she had known in her family of origin (which family, Regina would be the first to point out, included her dog Beansie), carried over into her life as a Sister of Notre Dame.

In community, Regina loved to organize parties that often included sisters’ families & friends – anticipatory Thanksgiving dinners the Sunday before the feast; jaunts to Philadelphia on New Year’s Day for the Mummers Parade and, once back home, parties in Villanova’s “great hall,” with everyone doing the Mummers strut. One sister’s niece remembers: “When I was little I spent Good Fridays with my Aunt Nancy at the convent.... All of the sisters and I would go to the Abbey for services, and back to the convent for dinner. Then I would dye Easter eggs for the sisters. Sr. Regina, Sr. Patricia Joseph, Sr. Mary Hyde, Sr. Joyce Shaub, Sr. “Gussie" were as much a part of my life as I was to them.” And of course, another part of everyone’s life at Villanova was the “canine in residence” – first Heidi, then Sasha, and finally Millie.

Regina’s love of Notre Dame extended beyond local community to the province and the congregation as a whole. She cherished the charism of Notre Dame, especially its call for “hearts as wide as the world.” She was extraordinarily gifted -- with wit, intelligence, clarity of vision, entrepreneurial skill, no-nonsense decisiveness, tenacity, a profound sense of mission. But “over all these” she “put on love” (Col. 3:14). Love was the oil that kept her lamp burning, long after she could no longer talk. On the night of August 29th, when the bridegroom came, Regina was ready to meet him:

*"Ephphatha!"* (Mark 7:34)

*“… Then the tongue of the dumb will sing.”* (Isaiah 35: 6)

BIODATA

Born January 11, 1922, Queens Village, NY

Parents: John Finnegan (born in Ireland) and Margaret Farrell

Baptized January 22, 1922, SS. Joachim & Anne, Queens Village

Educated by Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Joachim & Anne and at Trinity Preparatory School, Ilchester, MD

Entered Notre Dame September 7, 1941, Ilchester, MD

First Profession: February 17, 1944

Final Vows: July 23, 1949

B.A., Trinity College, 1953 (Chemistry and Mathematics)

M.A., University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN (Biology)

Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa,* Trinity College, 1992

*Assignments include:*

*Elementary-school teaching*

Gesu School, Philadelphia, PA (4th-grade)

St. Joseph, Bound Brook (7th grade)

Julie Billiart Country Day School, Ilchester, MD (7th and 8th grades)

*Secondary-school and college teaching*

Little Flower High School, Philadelphia, PA (history)

Maryvale Preparatory School, Brookland, MD (science and math)

Villa Julie College, Stevenson, MD (part-time teaching)

*Administration*

Notre Dame High School, Greensboro, NC (Principal)

Trinity Preparatory School, Ilchester, MD (Principal)

Secondary-school Supervisor for the Maryland Province, Ilchester, MD (1968 – 70)

Academy of Notre Dame, Villanova, PA (Principal. 1970 - 2004)

Board of Trustees, Trinity College, Washington, DC

*Member, 1980 – 93; Chair, 1987-93*

*Retirement*

Trinity University SND Community

Villa St. Michael, Emmitsburg

Mount Notre Dame, Cincinnati, OH

* Mary Ann Cook, SND, with the assistance of Nancy Bonshock, SND; Marita McGrath; and Michelle France