

## **Sister Mary Carla Radermacher, SC**

February 23, 1918 - January 3, 2012

Sister Mary Carla Radermacher was born February 23, 1918, to Bruno Jacob Radermacher and Theresa M. Chartener Radermacher. She was baptized in Saint Joseph Church, North Side, and given the name Theresa Marie. She had two sisters, Margaret Radermacher Monahan and Sister Judith Radermacher, Order of Saint Francis, and a brother, Charles, all of whom predeceased her.

Sister Marie Cecily Chartener, Sister Mary Carla's mother, and my mother were sisters. Therefore, my sister Mary Lou, and my brother Bob (who spends winters in Florida) and I are first cousins.

Conscientious, hard-working, determined, strong-willed, meticulous, and a perfectionist are some of the qualities of the person we know as Sister Mary Carla, or Tess or Tresa to her family. She lived a long, productive life, and passed from this life on Tuesday, January 3, 2012, at the age of 93, in her 66<sup>th</sup> year of consecrated life. My sister Mary Lou and I, along with Sister Mary Edmund Speer and Sister Cecilia McClain were privileged to be at her side when she breathed her last breath.

Sister Mary Carla was an active member of the Church of the Assumption in Bellevue, North Side. She attended daily Mass, taught in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, as it was referred to at the time, belonged to the IMMAGON Club, an acronym for the Immaculate Conception Club, a group of young singles who gathered regularly to act in and produce plays. She enjoyed swimming, bowling, and playing tennis. It was in the IMMAGON Club that she met Herman Scholz. They dated, and whenever she came to visit my family and me in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, the subject of Herman was always one of the pieces of conversation. We were expecting a letter any day telling us of her engagement and subsequent marriage. The day finally arrived, and my mother expectantly opened the letter, read it and reread it, and informed us that Tess (Theresa) was entering the Sisters of Charity. It seemed like the aftershock of an earthquake. After all, she was dating, and she was "OLD," 28 years-old to be exact, which at that time in our community was not a young age to be entering religious life. In sorting through her belongings I came across a copy of Francis Thompson's "*Hound of Heaven*," and I like to think it had a special meaning for her and described part of her life. Herman and Sister Mary Carla remained close friends throughout life. In her hands now is the rosary Herman gave her when she entered our community.

Sister Mary Carla was a perfectionist personified in her work as a secretary in the Registrar's Office at Seton Hill University; at Bishop Canevin High School; at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral School, Greensburg; and at Seton La-Salle High School in the South Hills. (Recall that there was no copier, no computer; simply typewriters, carbon paper, and of course, no correction fluid or white out!)

We heard last evening of her expertise with sewing: the many habits she cut out and sewed, managing the clothes room, and so on. When her sister Margaret was married, Sister Mary Carla made the bridesmaid dresses.

In 1999, many of us saw the first and only replica of the Nativity Scene from Saint Peter's Square in Rome which is still displayed at the base of the USX Tower in Pittsburgh. The seven-foot Saint Joseph Statue was clothed by Sister Mary Carla. She took the statue to Elizabeth Seton Convent where she proceeded to draft a pattern which other seamstresses could use for other figures, and to create clothing for Saint Joseph, one of her favorite saints. This was no small task. The figures were wood-frame, with the hands and feet modeled from clay. They were covered with paper mache' to withstand Pittsburgh winters.



Everything she did had to be “perfect,” to her way of thinking. Every typewritten letter was without error, every hemline had to be just so, every article of clothing had to either match or coordinate. One day, when I was in her room, she said, “Pat, do you know what those nurses did?” (Now, I’ve experienced the excellent care we receive here at Caritas Christi, so I didn’t know what to expect.) She said, “Those nurses put black shoes on me, and I’m wearing a beige flowered skirt!”

Her hair was a concern for her lately when she was unable, because of her declining health, to schedule a perm from Sister Barbara Boss. Actually, she looks better now than she did in recent weeks. Her suit is pressed, emblem shiny, cuffs on the white blouse showing just a bit below the jacket sleeve. Very stylish! Perfect! As the “Men’s Wearhouse” television commercial states: “You’ll like the way you’ll look!”

When Sister Mary Carla began to experience health issues, her determination and strong will were legendary. She was radically concerned with her high cholesterol and was adamant about not taking medication to lower the level because of the possible side effects. This caused her to read labels on everything. When a physician would say, “Sister, watch your intake of red meats, carbs, eggs, milk, pasta and on and on, she would totally eliminate everything that contained these products. Therefore, everything tasted bland, bland, bland. No goodies in her diet - no doughnuts, pie, cake, chocolate, cookies, red meat! (And, my father was a baker by occupation!)

In the past two months, I introduced her to Panera Bread pecan rolls, which she avidly ate. I hope I wasn’t fibbing when I said I thought they were made with all natural ingredients!

Occasionally, I would make early evening runs to “Steak’ n Shake” when the food on her tray was not to her liking, thinking a milkshake would be tasty and nourishing. She was so weak she could take only a few sips through the straw, but the rest she could manage with a spoon. She commented that a milkshake half the size would be more than enough for one person, as she scraped the last from the container. One day she asked me what was in the milkshake, and fearing she would never drink another one if I mentioned there was ice cream in it, I merely said, “Oh, probably milk and strawberries.”

To capture a long life of 90+ years in a few minutes doesn’t begin to do justice to the person we know as Sister Mary Carl, Sister Mary Carla, Tess, or Tresa. Yet, this is not a biography, merely a reflection on her life. It is bittersweet to say “Good-bye.” Bitter because she is the last relative on my mother’s side of the family. Sweet in that she struggled so very long with “letting go,” and she is now in God’s presence forever.

Quoting the words of Joyce Rupp in her book “*Fragments of Your Ancient Name*,” I read this excerpt entitled, ‘My Journey’s End’.

No one knows the precise instant  
When death steals their last breath,  
When the heart that beats steadily  
Ceases its rhythmic functioning.  
Whenever this moment arrives,  
You will be ready to welcome us,  
Your faithful love sweeping us away  
Into another sphere of existence.  
Your radiance intertwined with ours  
Assuring us there is no need to fear.  
Today: I place hope in “MY JOURNEY’S END”.



*Funeral Liturgy Reflection*  
~Sister Patricia Best, SC  
January 5, 2012