



Birth
October 4, 1925

Baptism
October 11, 1925

Profession
July 30, 1947

Death
November 30, 2013

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery
Chatawa, Mississippi

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

In Loving Memory

Sister Helen O'Heren, SSND

*H*elen Margaret O'Heren was born in Decatur, Illinois on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 1925. She was the second oldest of the six children born to William Harry and Beulah (Nowlin) O'Heren. She was nurtured in a family with three sisters, Joan, Rosemary and Pat, and two brothers, Charles and John. Her family was always very special to Helen.

Helen was in the third grade when the family moved to Quincy, Illinois, where she grew up in a strong Franciscan settlement. Helen attended St. Francis elementary school where she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She then spent very ordinary teenage years at Notre Dame High School. On graduation Helen decided to go to the Franciscan college in Quincy. During the freshman year, Helen felt drawn to the religious life so the beginning of the 1944 school year found her entering the formation program of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in St. Louis.

Helen continued her professional studies as a candidate then was received as a novice for a year of spiritual preparation for religious vows in 1947. Now known as Sister Marie Henry to the children she taught in the primary and intermediate grades in several schools in Missouri, in Louisiana and in Jackson, Mississippi.

After a quarter century in the regular classroom, Sister began her service to children with special needs in 1971. At the Dallas Notre Dame Special School, her specialty was enabling children to coordinate their motor skills. When horticulture was introduced to the pre-employment curriculum in the late 1970s, Sister was a natural as coordinator of the program and instructor for the young adults. For almost two decades Sister engaged her skills and her empathy in dedication to the special needs child.

In 1988 Sister Helen, as she had become known, volunteered at Irving Aid, a center to assist the poor with food, clothing and other services. Here in this suburb of Dallas she was involved in the center's evening adult education program. In addition to these works of mercy, Helen described her service as welcoming and lending a listening ear to those who came in their loneliness." She continued, "I touch many people and many people touch me. I know I make a difference."

To begin the last decade of the millennium, Sister Helen came to serve the community at St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Miss. She continued to lend a listening ear and quietly engaged in so many other — observed and unobserved — services to the convent community and to visitors.

Remarkable and apparent was her touch with plants. A "natural" as was noted earlier for she had worked with her mother in their garden in Quincy. An earliest picture shows the child Helen with a watering can and flowers. Later pictures portray her with her large watermelon or proudly standing by a Confederate rose shrub. Her way with plants had been enhanced in the special school's greenhouse program.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Helen O'Heren



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**School Sisters
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Central Pacific Province

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One guest remarked of this legendary gardener in the local paper, the *Enterprise Journal*, "You really should visit St. Mary's and get to know one of the nuns who works with her flowers so wonderfully. Just watching her and listening to her talk to them is so touching. I call her Sister Helen O."

Most of her friends called her Sister Helen O. This unassuming community member was valued as one faithful in prayer, in service, in singing, in just being a part of the group. One sister aptly described her as a gardener *par excellence*, skilled at handwork, who does untold considerate things for others."

Bringing enjoyment to others occupied much of Sister Helen's time. Her hands were always busy; even as a car passenger her crochet hook completed the latest scarf or afghan, a gift for her friend or for the gift shop. These perfect pieces earned not only the gratitude of the recipient but also a host of blue ribbons at county and state fairs.

Helen loved all of God's beauty; she loved music; she took advantage of any opportunity to attend a live music performance. Many Saturday afternoons found her tuned into public radio's World of Opera with a piece of her lovely crochet work in progress. Her principal at the special school was amazed that she even took recorded opera to her outside world of gardening.

Helen's life did tend to become less busy. Shortly after celebrating the 60th anniversary of dedication to God's service, Sister Helen declined in physical mobility and mental acuity. A need for special care took her to Campbell Cove, a care service near Jackson. About two years later more serious illness brought her home.

During her last months at St. Mary of the Pines, she slept much of the time. Hearing and speaking difficulties increased, but gratitude shown in her eyes for any service to her. She was especially grateful for the weekly letters from her brother Jack. Days before her death, seeing the cover picture of Mary on a booklet Jack had mailed, Helen clearly phrased, "She is beautiful."

Sister Helen slept into eternity early morning, November 30, 2013. Our prayer is "May Mary with all the angels and saints welcomed her into her new life and presented her to the Lord."

Sister Helen was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Charles. Her brother John and sisters Joan Carlyle, Rosemary Westfallen and Patricia O'Connor survive her and attended the funeral.

Morning prayer and visitation were in St. Teresa Church, followed by the Mass of Christian Burial. The pastor, Rev. Brian Kaskie was the celebrant. She was interred in the Chatawa Cemetery.

By Sister MarieClare Powell, SSND