

Sister M. Marcelle, CSC

(Margaret Mary Frizzie)

March 12, 1919 – December 10, 2022

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Suzanne Patterson, CSC, and the family of Sister Marcelle. Sister Suzanne read the memories at Sister Marcelle's funeral on January 5, 2023.

While I was reflecting on Sister Marcelle's life I often smiled and felt happy. That was the kind of effect that Sister had on most folks. The Flaherty family has sent us a marvelous accounting of their experiences with Sister Marcelle over the decades they shared life with her. We will share their tribute to Sister Marcelle shortly.

Sister Marcelle — Margaret Mary Frizzie — was born on March 12, 1919, in Sylacauga, Alabama, where her father worked at a sawmill. The family eventually settled in northern California and started their own lumber business, wintering near Woodland and summering in Susanville and Crescent Mills.

Sister M. Marcelle first met the Sisters of the Holy Cross at Holy Rosary Academy, Woodland, when she enrolled as a boarder. After graduation, she continued her commercial studies in order to help with the family business. She entered the Congregation from Susanville on September 29, 1939.

Many sisters and staff have fond memories of Sister Marcelle, which they lovingly recounted. Indeed, Sister Marcelle told many stories herself about her childhood, youth and experiences in the classroom. She lived life with gusto and encouraged others to do the same. She was always authentically herself, rooted in a pioneer spirit and Holy Cross heritage.

Sister Patricia Riley, CSC, has vibrant memories of being a student in Sister Marcelle's fifth grade class. Math was Sister Marcelle's forte. Anytime the class had a few minutes to spare she called students up to the blackboard and gave them math problems: seven rows of four-digit numbers to add quickly, since they were being timed! Sister Marcelle also was an avid baseball fan and coach. Sister Patty remembers that one afternoon their baseball team walked to another school for a game. On the way, Patty said to Sister Marcelle: "I hope we win the game." Sister Marcelle replied firmly, "Win, that's why we are going over there!"

Sister Marcelle herself said she enjoyed her "42 wonderful years in the classroom," teaching in elementary schools in Arizona, California, Idaho and Utah. When the last school she taught in, St. Matthew in San Mateo, California, closed in 1984, Sister Marcelle remained there in parish ministry for another 24 rewarding years as a master catechist, lector and eucharistic minister visiting the sick. She also assisted youth preparing for confirmation. Whichever ministry Sister Marcelle embraced she did so wholeheartedly, and all with whom she worked loved and cherished her presence with them.

Care partner Elayne Scott spoke about how much Sister Marcelle loved her family. She shared many stories of her sister Frances, the nurse; sister Theresa, the baby; and big brother Garland, who helped their dad at the sawmill. Elayne said, "I recall when Sister Marcelle didn't want to eat or take her medicine, the nurse and care partner would remind her that her sister Frances, the nurse, would want her to eat and take her medicine. Then the nurse would mention that she was a nurse like Frances. Sister Marcelle would say, 'No, you're not like Frances. She was so good, and everyone loved her.' Later she'd also tell us how good she thought we were. Of course, we often bribed her with chocolates to get her to do things too!"

Elayne continued, "Sister Marcelle was very spunky and full of life for 103 years old. We always admired how sharp she was and how good her long-term memory was when she talked about her childhood. Sister

Marcelle was proud to be from Alabama. We all enjoyed singing her favorite song with her, 'Oh! Susanna.' We often recited this traditional children's poem with her, even on the day she died: 'We love you little. We love you big. We love you like a little pig.'"

Yes, Sister Marcelle, we at Saint Mary's have loved you dearly. Now we are privileged to listen to the memories of your own loving Flaherty family.

"We, the Flaherty family of Sister Marcelle, wanted to share a small portion of the person that we have known and loved for decades. She was the sister of Frances Frizzie Flaherty, our mom. All of us called her Auntie Margie and she earned a place in our hearts that left an indelible mark that will stay with us all forever. To us, we saw her as this amazing Sister, who dedicated her life to God and her community, but she was also so much more than that. Sister Marcelle inspired our entire family to do better, be better, be kinder, give to others before yourself, and above all, love and honor God. She was our North Star, our inspiration, and our guiding light; she was pure of heart and soul. Everything she did was for the good of others and for God.

"There are hundreds of stories of Sister Marcelle that we would love to tell, but there are a few special stories that show her true spirit and essence, which is so pure. Back in the early days, when Sister Marcelle was young, she grew up in a logging family. She and our mom would skillfully roll logs to help their father Camille with his lumber business and even drove large trucks before even getting their license. They also had a pet deer named Buddy that would ride in the Willys-Knight with them, just like any other much-loved pet of theirs. Sister Marcelle, who was part French, could also sing the entire French national anthem, in French, never missing a word or a beat, even after reaching 100 years of age.

"Once when Sister Marcelle was visiting family in Pacifica, her great-nieces ran home to say a boy had been struck by a car. Without

hesitation, Sister Marcelle ran out the front and down the street to the boy. Her veil was blowing in the wind, and she was in full stride. She outran everyone to administer a blessing to this boy. That was Sister Marcelle.

“Once when her nieces Ann and Barbara came to visit, they took her to a pancake house in South Bend. The restaurant entrance was packed with 50 or so people. Suddenly the group parted and began saying ‘Sister’ and bowing their heads. They ushered the three of them to the front of the line, but Sister Marcelle went back through the line, taking each of their hands and saying prayers, blessing some on the forehead. One small boy hugged her. It was the most beautiful sight to see such pure respect and love shared between Sister Marcelle and these strangers.

“Sister Marcelle was our rock during the hard times, but joyfully shared with us all our good times. She was the family photographer at every event, always wearing a huge camera slung around her neck. She ensured that these moments were forever memorialized, each person carefully photographed with just the right lighting and focus. Once when Sister was trying to capture a special moment, she stepped back at the top of the stairs and tumbled head over heels down to the bottom. Though shaken, but cleared by paramedics, she continued her role as the family photographer, not missing a beat.

“Sister Marcelle had students from St. Cyril’s and St. Matthew’s, from decades back, calling her when they grew up, because she left such an impression on them. She even taught Max Baer Jr., who played Jethro on *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and once got an unexpected call from him just to say thank you.

“Sister Marcelle loved black licorice, chocolate bridge mix and songs by Tennessee Ernie Ford, especially ‘The Old Rugged Cross.’ Sister ended each, and every conversation with us, saying, ‘I love you big.’ She loved and protected her sister Frances, fiercely, and did the

same for all of us. Her service to God, her community and her family is self-evident, but the purity of her soul and spirit is what we will all remember. The word 'beloved' captures Sister Marcelle to a tee. We want to say how grateful we are to God for the time we had with Sister Marcelle and for all the staff at Saint Mary's Convent, who so lovingly cared for her until the end.

"Sister Marcelle, your life was a blessing to us, your memory a treasure, you are loved beyond words, and we will miss you beyond measure."

We are so thankful for this wonderful tribute to Sister Marcelle. You captured her spirit and brought her to life again as we listened to your stories.

A distant relative of St. André Bessette, CSC, Sister Marcelle is now celebrating eternal life with Brother André and her other family members.

Sister Marcelle, your memory will always bring a joy to our hearts. We love you big!