Sister M. Georgia, CSC  
(Sarah Jane Costin)  
August 26, 1923–November 30, 2022  

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Suzanne Patterson, CSC, who read them at Sister Georgia’s funeral on December 9, 2022.

The daughter of a respected and honored South Bend Tribune sports editor, Sister Georgia (Costin), CSC, continued her father’s legacy of educating the masses through her teaching, writing and editing. During her 78 years as a Sister of the Holy Cross, she taught in grade school and high school classrooms; served in Fort Portal, Uganda; ministered to prisoners; served as a historian in Congregational Archives and Records; and edited manuscripts for Congregation communications. A natural writer and historian, Sister Georgia wrote many newspaper articles and papers for the Holy Cross History Conference, as well as Priceless Spirit: A History of the Sisters of the Holy Cross; Southern Cross: Fifty Years of Ministry by the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Brazil; and portions of Fruits of the Tree: Sesquicentennial Chronicles.

Sister Theresa Diane Streif, CSC, remembers attending the Holy Cross History Conference held at Saint Mary’s in 2000, where Sister Georgia read a paper she wrote on the sisters’ ministry in Brazil. Sister Theresa said, “I enjoyed Sister Georgia’s sense of humor and low-key approach to her talk. She always had a down-to-earth approach to Congregation history.”

Sister Eileen Dewsnup, CSC, was with Sister Georgia in Uganda. Sister Eileen shared: “We spent enjoyable times together at our community house in Fort Portal. Many a walk we would take spotting the beautiful East African birds. Georgia often would check her list,
making sure of the identification. Another keen interest Georgia had was getting to know about the Uganda martyrs—again checking her list on each of their names and stories.”

Sister Eileen continued, “Georgia surely was a blessing to her students. But her love of life was a blessing to all who met her. Her love of literature, especially the C.S. Lewis Narnia tales, helped me understand how to see much wisdom in such authors. In fact, her literary skills involved listening to the early history of Holy Cross in the diocese of Fort Portal. At one point, Georgia wrote some of that history into a fictional mystery novel. My piece of enjoyment was that I got to read them chapter by chapter. Unfortunately, ill health cut short this and many other of her endeavors.” In addition, many interesting but unfinished writing projects were found tucked away in her boxes.

Sister Georgia knew her facts and wasn’t afraid to set anyone straight. In 1998, Sister Georgia and Sister M. Campion (Kuhn), CSC, were chosen to represent the Congregation at a ceremony dedicating a new health care facility at Naval Station Great Lakes in northern Illinois. The facility was being named in honor of the Red Rover, and the sisters were invited to acknowledge the contributions of the sister-nurses serving on the Red Rover hospital ship during the Civil War. Navy officers were sent to pick up the sisters to drive them to the base. While waiting for their ride to get here, Sister Campion regaled the communications staff with stories about the history of the naval nurses and Congregation history and anything else. Linda Diltz, who was to take a picture of the sisters with the Naval officers, said, “As Sister Campion talked on, Sister Georgia regularly and frequently threw in off-handed clarifying or correcting comments while Sister Campion didn’t miss a beat and kept on with her stories. They were a two-woman comedy show! And because I hadn’t worked at Saint Mary’s very long I didn’t know if I should laugh at Sister Georgia’s running commentary or not. She told me years later that I should have.”
Because the Navy drivers didn’t realize they had passed the Saint Mary’s exit on the toll road until they saw the sign welcoming them to Ohio, they got to campus almost four hours late. Both Naval officers were anxious to get back to the base, but the sisters refused to leave until the two officers had been introduced to every other sister in the dining room and they had all eaten their dinner.

When the need arose for a sister-editor in the Communications Office, Sister Georgia accepted that role. She not only read for religious and Congregation correctness, but she was also a style guide unto herself. She tightened up every article she touched. She especially enjoyed trimming mementos to the simple one-page length deemed appropriate for mailing at the time. Certainly, she would disapprove of the length of this memento, but I have one more story to tell about Sister Georgia’s avocation: betting on the ponies.

While sharing the big partner desk in communications with Linda Diltz, Linda learned that Sister Georgia and her sister Mina had gone on Arlington racecourse [Arlington Heights, Illinois] bus trips sponsored by Holy Cross College [Notre Dame, Indiana]. When the college discontinued the trips, the Diltzes and Costins began their own annual pilgrimages to the horse racing track. According to Linda, every year Sister Georgia received a $100 gift from a friend who asked her to donate it to the poor. Before donating, Sister Georgia used that gift money as her betting cash. Anything she won went toward a larger donation to the poor, but if she lost, she subsidized the shortfall to get back up to the $100 benchmark. Sister Georgia only had to minimally subsidize the amount once during those years.

Although Mina and Linda were happy to have Linda’s husband Rob go down to place their bets, Sister Georgia insisted she would place her own bets. She always put her money down on the favorite to win, place or show. She didn’t win big, but she almost always won something on her across-the-board bets on the horse with the best
odds. Mina, on the other hand, picked horses at random and only won one once or twice in so many outings.

The quartet celebrated Sister Georgia’s 80th birthday at the track. She chose the date since she claimed she didn’t want to endure the inevitable birthday hoopla at Mass. Rob and Linda gifted her with $2 with the stipulation that she had to bet on the long shot to win. She couldn’t do it, but instead bet on another horse with favorable odds (who also lost). The last year the group went to the racecourse Sister Georgia wasn’t up to placing her own bets so she trusted Rob to make them for her. Since she won nearly every race, the agent at the betting window asked to be introduced to this winning nun. With her typical lack of fanfare, she met the man on the way out.

Sister Georgia herself recounted her adventures teaching in a jail. When the parish high school in Flint, Michigan closed, a series of chances took her into a job teaching GED English in the county jail. Her students were mostly men convicted of minor offenses, and the idea was that if they were better educated, at least to the point of a high school certificate, they could get better employment and support themselves without getting in trouble.

There were some who were extremely challenging to educate, including one man who had difficulty learning the alphabet beyond the letter E. On the other hand, there were some who were doing senior high school work, including Shakespeare. One day she had on her desk a paperback copy of *Hamlet*, showing Hamlet holding the famous skull in his hand. The one who was challenged by the alphabet picked up the paperback, held it at arm’s length and looked at the cover. Sister Georgia asked, “What’s that a picture of, Joe?” He replied, “Picture of a dude, the outside of his head talking to the inside.” As good a description of Hamlet as has ever been given.

Care providers in Saint Mary’s Convent shared fond memories of Sister Georgia, including that she was a great one for lists. She also
had personal preferences that ranged from tea and saltine crackers first thing in the morning to coffee later in the day to music she enjoyed hearing. She glowed when volunteer Tim McBride dedicated his rendition of “Georgia on My Mind” to her when he sang for the sisters.

The staff loved being with her. When Trina Jackson would smile and say, “You are SO beautiful,” Sister Georgia would smile and preen a little. When Evelyn Lwanda called Georgia “our queen,” she would sit up, put her arms out and smile. Sister Georgia was never at a loss for a response. Even in her later days, she always played to her audience!

Sister Georgia was a staunch believer in keeping the season of Advent as one of quiet contemplation. She did not approve of early Christmas celebrations and concerts, and usually said so.

Sister Georgia, how appropriate it is that you are now with our Lord during the season you so treasured.