

Sister Mary Eliza (Martin), CSC

(Garno Elizabeth Martin)

April 7, 1929 – July 4, 2024

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Jean Clennon, CSC, with contributions from the sisters at Saint Catherine by the Sea Convent, Ventura, California. Sister Suzanne Patteson, CSC, recited them at Sister Mary Eliza's funeral on July 9, 2024.

Garno Martin, later Sister Mary Eliza, came to Saint Mary's novitiate, Notre Dame, Indiana, in July of 1946. She came from Woodland, California, where she had been a student of the Holy Cross sisters in Holy Rosary Academy. Another of her classmates, Pat Mulligan, came shortly after. While a postulant, Mary Eliza studied at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, where she was an excellent student. She seemed to make friends easily with those who came into her life, enjoying the walks and brief conversations held during the two "recreations" each day.

Once she completed her year as "a white-veiled novice," she was sent to teach at Saint Mary's School in Michigan City. This was the beginning of many successful years as a teacher.

As she matured, she developed what the French call *éclat*, which in English means "glow." When she was in the room, people noticed her. In discussions, they wanted to hear what she had to say. Her self-confidence and intelligence gave her word credibility—even in the eyes of the teenagers she taught. She, herself, liked to tell how high school boys in Los Angeles, California, never dared disobey orders.

She was a thoughtful, generous person, able to relate to persons of various backgrounds and cultures. Over the years she made many friends. One of these friends, Sister M. Francis Christine (Alvarez), CSC, was her traveling companion on several vacations. They went to Montreal, to France, and to Assisi in Italy. The Sisters at Saint Catherine by the Sea in Ventura,

California, knew that she liked to travel and that she planned a trip east every summer. However, it was only when they started planning the celebration for her 90th birthday that they learned she had been to more than 30 countries, including Russia and China.

If reading and travel can be called “hobbies,” they were Sister Mary Eliza’s favorites. She thoroughly enjoyed a good book. She read not only for pleasure but to learn. A good portion of her lifetime was spent as a student in the classroom. At the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, she studied biology, graduating with a master’s degree. Later, she studied at the University of Southern California, earning her doctorate in gerontology.

Her life was not all reading and travel. In the early 1980s she was appointed Regional Superior of the Western Area. She took her responsibility seriously, caring for the sisters and being supportive of them. She also served on the General Council of the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

In the waning years of her life, she retired to Saint Catherine’s. There she continued her joy of learning by reading fine books. Occasionally she and Sister M. Jacinta (Millan) took in a fine movie at a nearby theater. Sometimes she and her bandmates, Sisters Joan Allem and Margaret Ann Shield, sat together for meals and enjoyed good conversation. Celebrating the lives of those who had shared hers was very important to her. A gift of See’s candy was the visible reminder of the significance of her relationship with one of these persons.

As her physical energy diminished, Mary Eliza was aided and abetted by the use of an electric wheelchair at Saint Catherine’s. She was present for Mass, as well as at community meetings, thinking and contributing. She retired further to Saint Mary’s, where she participated in any activity she could. She was always up for adventure and looked forward to future trips east, which were only possible in her dreams.

Despite her age and physical limitations, she will be remembered best for her faith and her determination to live a full life.