

Sister M. Albertine, CSC

(Emma Marie Kramer)

May 4, 1930–August 5, 2021

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Ann Therese Sinclair, CSC, who read them at Sister Albertine’s funeral on August 12, 2021.

Everyone who has shared their reflections about Sister Albertine since her unexpected death on August 5 remembers her as a warm, generous and loving people person. Being born at home on a farm in rural Illinois, on May 4, 1930, near today’s village of Verona may have grounded her in her reputation for being very down to earth. Emma Marie was the oldest child of Cecilia Marie and Albert Kramer. Her one brother, Mathew, with whom she was very close, died a few years ago.

She and her brother attended a one-room public school in nearby Mazon, where the teacher of all the grades was her aunt Velma Muffler. When Emma was the only eighth grader, she would hurry and get her work done, and while her aunt taught the other seven grades, she would “read, read, read, a children’s travel series, traveling to every country in the world.” Thus was nourished her curiosity, her love of adventure, and her wide vision of life. Emma’s parents sent her to St. Angela’s Academy in Morris, Illinois, for high school. It was there that she met the Sisters of the Holy Cross and where her vocation was born.

She entered the Congregation the July after her graduation in 1948. Emma Marie Kramer received the holy habit in 1949 and the name Sister Mary Albertine, a name she retained throughout her life in honor of her father. She made her first profession in 1951 and her final profession in 1954. Perhaps because of the education by her aunt in that one-room schoolhouse, Sister Albertine happily majored in elementary education at Holy Names Academy in Oakland, California, and became an excellent teacher. For 30 years, Albertine taught

mostly math and science in the upper grades in numerous parish schools throughout the West and Midwest. She had an amazing way of connecting with teens. In addition to being an excellent teacher, she enjoyed her students, who appreciated her creativity, her fairness, and her boundaries. She made learning a positive experience. Albertine understood their early adolescence, with their spurts of growth, curiosity, anxieties and practical search for self. Wherever she was missioned, with her friendly, outgoing personality, she became involved in the parish and made many friends with parents of her students and other parishioners. She engaged in life wherever she was.

After her many years of teaching, Albertine decided in 1980 that it was time for a change. Thus began a 28-year ministry in the Holy Cross Health System. Throughout these years, Sister Albertine loved ministering as a hospital chaplain in several hospitals in the West, enriched by her clinical pastoral education training and a sabbatical at the Credo Program at Gonzaga University in Spokane Washington. She spent 17 years in South Bend, Indiana, at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, retiring from there in 2009. During her last illness, when Albertine found herself in the emergency room and then in the ICU at St. Joe's, I was amazed how many doctors and nurses we met along the way recognized her, remembered her ministry there with such fondness, and still missed her caring presence. Jackie Elliot, her good friend from hospital days, remembers that Albertine engaged all kinds of people in rich conversations about spirituality and about issues of their everyday lives. Because she got around in an electric cart, people related easily to her when dealing with their own physical challenges. Albertine was and continues to be a "larger than life" presence for many people there.

After Sister Albertine retired from pastoral care and moved to Saint Mary's, the focus of her life remained ministry. She loved to be and do for others. Issues with her back and her heart—and chronic pain—necessitated her need to get around most often in her motorized cart. Though she occasionally "terrorized" people with her speed, she

meant no harm. She was out and about visiting other sisters and staff, especially sensitive to those who might be going through a difficult time. Though she dealt with chronic pain issues, she was not a complainer and usually met others with her ready smile. She was also very vocal and persistent at resolving issues she thought should be addressed.

She worked tirelessly in the stamp room, which became an important part of her ministry at Saint Mary's. She also helped in the development office, making follow-up calls and writing thank-you notes to donors. She was always available if there was a need she could address, being one of the first to help make masks when the pandemic started.

Many remember how much Albertine loved a good time. Travel, adventure, trips to enjoy beauty, being out and about, connecting with family and friends, rounded out her life in a healthy way. She loved Notre Dame women's basketball games and, when she could, she went hours early to get the best handicap parking place.

Her tight-knit Our Lady Queen of Peace band will miss Albertine at their 67th anniversary celebration of their final profession this month. Albertine had already been busy making plans for this, as she always loved planning their get-togethers and enjoyed planning parties. They remember her loving the hard work of ministry, but even better, loving to play. Sister Albertine was generous in sharing her friends.

She struggled through increasing pain these last months and tried hard not to let it dominate her life or get her down. As in all of her life, Sister Albertine wanted to continue being and doing for others. In the last weeks, Albertine had indicated to many of us that she was ready to go to God. She had given life her all. She lived those familiar words of St. Timothy: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." In the early hours of Thursday, August 5, Sister Albertine slipped away into the waiting arms of her God. Our dear Sister, may you now enjoy forever the freedom and the fullness of this new and everlasting life.