

Reflections for Sister Martin Mergen's wake- August 19, 2010 by S. Pierre Roberts OSB

Duane Marie Mergen was born on a farm in Moody County on September 22, 1937. That "Grain of Wheat" fell into very fertile soil and multiplied a hundred fold. As Sister Martin she continued to bear fruit, sharing her graces and talents with all she encountered, worked with and lived with.

Sister and her fellow Novices were the last members to live in the old convent building. Their classes were held in what was later the print shop where S. Leonarda , their Novice Mistress, and they vied with jack-hammers as construction on the new building began. Sister Martin writes in her recollections that "sleeping conditions were crowded as the Novices and Junior Sisters shared O'Gorman Hall. At least they had their own bunk beds. The Quarters were close; so much so that the Novices had to be most careful in their timing for early morning dressing lest they slipped into another's habit. She recalls climbing out the window of the old Novitiate and sitting on the lean-to that connected that building with the priest house. We can only suspect that it was in order to capture the solitude so necessary to the aspiring and potentially contemplative religious. One wonders if these early beginnings have contributed to making S. Martin such a very adaptable religious.

Perhaps her childhood experiences on the farm, running all kinds of equipment, milking, and doing other chores is the basis for the tremendous energy those of us who worked with her experienced and enjoyed. It was always hard to keep up with Martin. A ten minute nap and off she went! We all remember her involvement in Oktoberfest and Alumni Phonothons. Yes most of us were conned into helping in many different ways and were always rewarded with a smile and a big "Thank You". Sister's amiability carried many a staff and student through hard tasks. You just had to do it because Martin asked you to and encouraged you to continue and you knew she would be right there with you.

That Grain of Wheat that fell into good ground resulted in many years of service to Sacred Heart Monastery, Mount Marty College, the City of Yankton and the Diocese of Sioux Falls. It even saw action in the many, many haircuts she gave the Sisters, (myself included) over the years, in food prepared and placed on the table for unexpected but most welcome guests, and in the making of crafts of many kinds, among other things.

Sister Martin's list of involvements runs the gamut: Workshops on Admissions and Retention. Student Development In-services, Management Skills Workshops, Pastoral Counseling, College Planning, Hospital Boards, South Dakota College Personnel Association, Madonna Board, Sacred Heart Monastery Council and many, many others.

Her advice to new and returning students on one occasion was: "You will find the fast pace of college exciting, challenging, and demanding of your time and energy. Without doubt you

will be busy and need to plan your time well.” “College is a many colored opportunity. Paint your college days brilliant colors.”

Thank you S. Martin for painting your life among us with brilliant colors: colors of the REDS OF COMPASSION, GREENS OF GROWTH, BLUES OF HOPE AND YELLOWS OF SUNSHINE. Now you can Rest in Peace.