

Her Love for the Poor

Loretta Z. Greene

Editors note: This issue of Past Forward focuses on Providence Regina House and Sister Mary Regina Bomber, foundress of this ministry, in honor of its 50th anniversary.

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I did not personally know Sister Mary Regina Bomber but her tragic and untimely death was the first religious community grieving I encountered when I began working in Providence Archives two weeks later. Some events remain in your memory because of their impact and circumstances. Sister Mary Regina's death holds one of those places. As the sisters and the Seattle community mourned, I learned about Sister Mary Regina's ministry, which has become her legacy. September 18th was a sunny autumn morning when Sister Mary Regina was struck by a car, the driver blinded by the bright morning sun. It was not a day that allowed a ministry to die but perpetuated it and soon honored an individual. Sister Beatrice LaFramboise accepted the director position at the House; she had earlier expressed a desire to assist in the ministry but never had the chance. At the same time it was decided to change the ministry's name from House of the Poor to Providence Regina House as a tribute to the work of Sister Mary Regina.

Sister Mary Regina's personality was reflected in the House of the Poor and it continues today at Providence

Regina House. When I asked several sisters to describe Mary Regina the words they used show the compassion of Emilie Gamelin: love for the poor, gentle, kind, ever willing to help, generous. She was matter-of-fact and had an innate way of sensing someone's need and seeing this need fulfilled, quietly and without show. When she worked in the kitchen at

the program, to the decorations, to the refreshments. The celebration captured the joy of Regina House and the strong sense of community and respect that has developed between the people served and the volunteers, staff and benefactors – traits exhibited by Sister Mary Regina on a daily basis. Sister Mary Regina loved children and her spirit was surrounded



Invitation to the September 15, 2013 dinner celebration in honor of the 50 years of service Providence Regina House has provided to those in need.

Mount St. Vincent she shared kindnesses with the novices, bringing them cool treats on hot days working in the laundry. At the House of the Poor, she discerned a family's need, and provided. Whether in the kitchen with novices or managing operations at the House, she was consistent in giving directions and confident that they would be carried through.

On September 15, Providence Regina House celebrated its 50th anniversary. Respectful simplicity guided the day from

by them that day. It could be seen in the historic images of Mary Regina selecting clothes for a shy tyke, in contemporary images of playful youngsters around Regina House, and in the eyes of children who performed traditional Latino dances that day, a highlight of the celebration. The legacy of Sister Mary Regina's 'one-woman war on poverty' continues today through the efforts of all, who, like her, show love, gentleness, kindness and generosity to those in need.



SP Spotlight: Mary Regina Bomber

*Emily Hughes Dominick
Associate Archivist*

When she took on the charity services at Providence Hospital (Seattle) in 1963, Sister Mary Regina Bomber was provided with a storeroom from which to work. Armed with determination and a passion for helping people, what had been an informal program became a year-round, full-time job. It didn't take long for her to outgrow the space she was provided as she collected clothing, household



Name in Religion:
Mary Regina
Given Name:
Mary Agnes
Number in Religion:
3140
Date of Birth:
1900
Entrance to Novitiate:
1924
First Profession:
1925
Date of Death:
1984

was bought for the cause. The location moved, but the work remained the same.

The work of the Emilie Gamelin Department of the hospital included collecting and organizing food donations and dividing large amounts into smaller portions to provide to several families; tending to the backyard vegetable garden which provided extra food for donation; and washing, mending, ironing and sorting clothing. Sister Mary Regina also made a point of making unannounced home visits to all of the families she served. She liked to know exactly what they needed and when they needed it.

The Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays were the busiest times of the year and always required a special effort. Sister Mary Regina and volunteers put together hundreds of baskets of

food collected throughout the year to be distributed to those in need. At Christmas time she collected toys, gifts, and candy along with the usual food and clothing so that the children and families could have a special day of opening presents.

Prior to earning her moniker as a "one-woman war on poverty," Sister Mary Regina had a nearly thirty year career in the kitchens of Providence Hospital in Oakland and Mount St. Vincent in Seattle. Just before asking to take over the Emilie Gamelin Department of Providence Hospital, Sister Mary Regina was missioned as Sacristan--a job she also had carried out in Oakland.

Only weeks after Sister Mary Regina had celebrated her 60th jubilee as a Sister of Providence, she was on her way to Mass on a Tuesday morning when she was struck by a car while crossing the street. She was gravely wounded and never regained consciousness. Her life ended later that day but her legacy continues even today through the works of Providence Regina House--renamed in her honor shortly after her death in 1984.



As soon as I give it out, it comes back in. That's what Providence means. Yes, Divine Providence takes care of me.

-Sister Mary Regina



Sr. Mary Regina Bomber with children looking at clothing at the Mother Emilie Gamelin Department, 1968

items, and food for the needy in the neighborhood. The work grew and her space within the hospital doubled, then tripled. Soon it became necessary to find more space outside of the hospital walls. A house nearby

Picturing Providence

Peter F. Schmid

A column highlighting archival materials that provide visual documentation of the Sisters of Providence.

Ministries such as Providence Regina House, which provide the most direct assistance to the poor and vulnerable in our communities, simply cannot function without the hard work of dedicated volunteers. While we cannot honor every volunteer in these pages, this issue's Picturing Providence is dedicated to all those, named and unnamed, who over the years have selflessly continued the work of Sister Mary Regina.



Sister Judy Johnson, CSJP, director of Regina House from 1990 to 2001, packs bags of food with volunteer John Gosthnian in the new space at Providence Medical Center, 1991

John Gosthnian began volunteering at Regina House in 1991, assisting when Sr. Judy was away, loading and unloading donated food, directing the recycling program and doing general handiwork. Whenever heavy snow prevented bus and car travel, John, who lived in the neighborhood, made it in.



Students unloading baked goods on food bank day at Regina House, 1989

Students from area schools make up an important part of the Regina House volunteer workforce. Students organize donation drives in their schools, help prepare and deliver food, and experience first-hand the needs of the poor in their community. Some students from low-income families worked at Regina House through the Seattle Public School District Work Training Program.



At left, Sister Bea LaFramboise, SP, director of Regina House from 1984 to 1990, holds baked goods made by Irina Mospanko, Christmas 1989

Irina and her husband, Timofey, were refugees from the Ukraine, and, like many of the volunteers, had relied on Regina House for subsistence before becoming two of its most dedicated volunteers. Irina walked two miles to Regina House twice a week to help sort food and clothing, clean, and whatever else needed to be done. She was a member of the Ukrainian-Greek parish, and helped the pastor distribute potatoes, onions and fish to newly-arrived immigrant families. In 1995, Irina received a Mission Award from Providence Medical Center in recognition of her devoted support of Regina House.



From left, Sr. Judy Johnson, CSJP, Sue Emery, Irina Mospanko, and an unidentified volunteer with donated canned fruit in the Regina House kitchen, 1996

Sue Emery was a volunteer until she joined the staff as associate director in 1991; in addition to running Regina House when the director was away, she was very adept at promoting the ministry via the airwaves and in print. While Sr. Judy was on a retreat in 1992, Sue got a public service spot on KOMO radio asking for donations for baby baskets for new mothers. This inspired KOMO TV's Brook Sanford to feature Sue and the baby baskets on his "People Helper" program. Always reaching out and finding new ways to network with other community assistance programs, Sue also expanded a working relationship with SeaMar Community Health Center.

Fund Raising Cornucopia

Sister Mary Regina Bomber spent her entire career dealing with



food--first in the kitchens of hospitals and later as she gathered and distributed food through the Mother Emilie Gamelin Department of Providence Hospital in Seattle (which later became Providence Regina House). In the preface of her "Harvest of Recipes," pictured here, she writes that it had long been a dream of her's to put together a cook book. She compiled the book in 1966 and sold copies for \$2.00; the proceeds went toward her work with the poor.

Sister Mary Regina gathered recipes from friends

and celebrities alike. Notable entries include an apple pie from First Lady of the United States Lady Bird Johnson (see recipe at right), ceviche from Kathryn Grant Crosby (wife to Bing Crosby), and "Ranch-Style Frijoles" from Peggy Goldwater (wife to Barry Goldwater).

Local restaurants also donated recipes to the cause.

APPLE PIE

6 Winesap apples	juice of 1 lemon
1 cup sugar	2 tbsp. flour
1 stick of butter	

Dice apples in pastry shell. Sprinkle with sugar and flour that have been mixed. Add lemon juice and dot with 3/4 of the butter. Put on top of pastry shell and sprinkle with sugar and dot with remaining butter. Bake in 350° oven about 1 hour or until brown.

PASTRY SHELL

1 cup flour	3 tbsp. cold water
2 tbsp. shortening	1 tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt	

Mrs. Lyndon B. (LadyBird)Johnson

There are several entries from local Seattle institutions including Ruby Chow's Restaurant, Trader Vic's, and the Space Needle Restaurant.

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Past Forward is published three times annually by Archives staff. Editing and design by Emily Hughes Dominick.

Postage