

## Mary Cecelia Wheeler, RSCJ

1908-1999

On March 27, 1908, Mary Cecelia Wheeler was born to Nina (Barr) and Ferdinand Wheeler in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The life of the mother and of the child were both at risk, so Mrs. Wheeler insisted that her husband baptize the baby immediately. The danger passed for both of them; Mrs. Wheeler gave birth to six more daughters, and Mary Cecelia lived to be 91 years of age.

Both parents were fervent Catholics, heirs of a tradition of faith in their respective families, who for years, in each generation, had given members to the religious life. Four of Mary Cecelia's sisters became Daughters of Charity.

Mrs. Wheeler had gone to school at Kenwood, and to maintain peace and order among her seven daughters, she introduced many of the practices that were so effective in our schools. Mary C. remembered especially there were lambs approaching the crib at home and in school in preparation for Christmas.

One day, as a child at Maplehurst, Mary C. heard some of the older girls talking about what they wanted to be when they grew up. At each suggestion: mother, teacher, actress, etc. Mary C. said to herself "no, that's not what I want to be." Shortly after, when she was kneeling at Benediction in the chapel, Mary C. said to herself, "there must be 'another thing' I can be." As the monstrance was lifted high by the priest she understood the 'other thing' had to do with God, and she need not worry again about her future.

In 1925, after two years at Maplehurst and eight at Kenwood, she completed her education at the Sacred Heart. Reverend Mother Moran, the Vicar, asked Mary Cecelia to remain at home for a year. She entered the Society on June 11, 1926. Mother Gertrude Bodkin was her Mistress of Novices and much more. Sister Wheeler wrote of this period in her life: "Mother Bodkin became, by far, the most influential person in my life. I was a child when I came to the novitiate, and fortunately she understood me and put up with me." When Mother Bodkin saw Mary C. in Rome during her probation she remarked: "There were times when I wasn't sure you'd make it." To this Mary C. replied: "I wouldn't have except for you!" Sr. Wheeler was professed on July 31, 1935 and returned to the U.S.A. to begin a professed life of dedicated and joyous service to God and the Society she loved so much.

Whatever her initial difficulties, Sr. Wheeler was soon recognized as a gifted teacher and skilled mentor of the many students entrusted to her care. Class Mistress, Surveillante Generale, Mistress of Studies, Mistress General - in each of these positions Mary C. gave evidence of talent and also that special quality described in the Society's Constitutions of 1815: "The religious whose vocation it is to work for the education of youth should have a lively sense of the importance of this work and its effectiveness for the spread of the faith . . . and of true, solid piety." (chapter 3, p. 77) Despite the intense activity of her life, Sister Wheeler studied Theology at Providence College, and Philosophy at the Catholic University of America, from which she received a doctorate. She was of inestimable help when she joined the faculty of Newton College of the Sacred Heart, where she exercised a profound influence, both by the quality of her teaching and her personal interest in and care for the students. In 1967 Sister Wheeler was called to a new and demanding mission. She was named Superior at the Stuart Country Day School in Princeton, NJ. In addition to animating the religious community in the challenging years after Vatican II, she was also asked to manage the School's fundraising activities.

For Sister Wheeler, the year 1973 saw the beginning of her work on the National Archives of the Society, a ministry that brought her great joy. Her life-long love of history and her enthusiasm for the "life story" of the Society made this an ideal ministry for her. Due in part, no doubt, to her enthusiasm for archival work, but also to her ability to bring order out of chaos, she was asked to bring her skill and interest to bear on the International Archives of the Society at the Villa Lante in Rome.

In the late 1980's Mary Cecelia returned to Kenwood where her religious life had begun. Her work in the Doane-Stuart Archives brought her great satisfaction for a few years, but then she retired gracefully and gratefully, always willing to assist the devoted alumnae who succeeded her. For those who lived with her, the detachment and peace with which she laid aside the fruitful ministries of former years, and her marvelous sense of humor were great gifts. She longed to be with her Lord, but she was willing to wait simply and peacefully until it was His time. Like many others, she feared death, but offered that fear itself to God. The quiet death for which she seemed so ready came on December 26, 1999 with her three sisters, Daughters of Charity, praying at her side, with her Sisters in the Society.

Name..... WHEELER, MARY CÉCELIA  
Birth..... March 27, 1908-Pittsburgh, PA  
Parents..... Ferdinand C. Wheeler & Nina Barr  
Nationality..... American  
Next of Kin ..... Mrs. P.V. Dixon  
 320 Decatur Ave.  
 Port Orchard, WA 98366 (Oldest living sister)

Baptism..... April 5, 1908  
Confirmation .....  
Entrance..... June 10, 1926-Kenwood  
Prise d'Habit ..... December 22, 1926-Kenwood  
First Vows ..... January 6, 1929-Kenwood  
Profession..... July 31, 1935-Rome: Via Nomentana  
Studies..... 1-12 Kenwood; B.A. History/Education Manhattanville 1935  
 M.A. Education /English U. of Detroit 1941  
 M.A. Theology Providence Col. 1954  
 Ph.L. Philosophy Catholic U. 1955  
 Ph.D. Philosophy : Catholic U. 1956

Death..... December 26, 1999-Kenwood (91 yrs. 9 mos.)

YEAR	PLACE	EMPLOYMENT	SUPERIOR
1929-1935	Lawrence Ave. Overbrook	Middle School surveillante & teacher Discipline; taught 6,7,8 grades every subject	
1935-1948	Eden Hall Grosse Pointe Noroton Elmhurst	Surveillante general, Teacher Discipline of upper school; taught every academic class except 4th year Latin, French & Math	
1948-1953	Newton A.	Mistress of Studies, Teacher Directed studies & taught 4th Acad,	
1955-1956	Stone R.	Student at C.U. Taught 3rd Academic Got a Ph.L and Ph D Taught at Stone Ridge	
1956-1965	Newton Col.	Professor of theology and Philosophy Was chairman of the philosophy department; taught Scripture, theology, philosophy	
1965-1967	Portsmouth A.	Mistress of Studies & 4th Academic Class etc. Directed academic aspect of school at Portsmouth	
1967-1973	E. Sweeney & Jean Ford	Superior at Princeton Bouche trou and fund raiser, plus what a superior at this period could do!	
1973-1980	I.P.B. & then Central Team in Rome	Archivist organized the national and then the Society Archives	
1980-1981	I.P.B. ST. L.	Travelled around collecting archival material on East Coast	
1981-1987	" Clare Pratt	Assistant archivist - Help national archivist organize our archives	

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1987-1991	Kenwood	Doane Stuart School Archivist
1991-1996	Kenwood	Volunteer Doane Stuart School
1996-1999	Kenwood	Community Service