BOOKLET OF MEMORIES
August 5, 2012
Memories

Reunion Celebrating a Racine Dominican Legacy
1862-2012

What is it that draws you back to the Racine Dominicans?

&

How has your connection with the Racine Dominicans impacted your life?
I have many fond memories of my time with our Racine Dominicans and subsequent visits with my sisters. I look back and am thankful for the spirituality in my life and attribute my ministry work to the direction and education received while in Racine.

Thank you.
Sheila (Dorcey) Webb

I am drawn to the Racine Dominicans because they educated me from 1st to 9th grades. They were always warm and nurturing. My time in the community was wonderful. I made so many new friends from different cultures, was introduced to some wonderful food, lived in a totally different part of the United States and received a wonderful education. I will always be thankful for these things.

My connection with the Racine Dominicans has strengthened my faith and spirituality. I am definitely a better person for having been a member of the Community. It opened my eyes and I saw the world in a much different light. I will always treasure the people I met and the experiences I had.

Florence (Escudero) Romero

The spirituality fostered in me by the Racine Dominicans—beginning with my teachers at Holy Angels Catholic Grade School and continuing through aspirancy, postulancy and novitiate with the Racine Dominicans—has been a powerful, rich resource which God has been pleased to bless and deepen over the years.

I am truly grateful for the good things received through the Order—and that includes some precious friendships lasting over 50 years! I am looking forward to this celebration with you all!

Janice (Kozlowski) Dietz

In answer to the question of how the Order has impacted my life. It started me on my spiritual journey that has continued to this day and grows richer year by year. I am forever grateful.

Pat (Winkler) Preissner

I cannot imagine Racine without Racine Dominicans. I met Jeanne Kimler shortly after arriving in Racine in 1969 while attending Mass at Dominican College. You have all been a part of my life ever since. Five of you were staff members when I joined St. Patrick in 1970, and I lived with 8 of you there from 1973-75 in the associate program. You have been founding and active members of CASC (Central American Solidarity Coalition), Racine Coalition for Justice and Peace, Racine Interfaith Coalition, HOPES Center, San Juan Diego School, and Eco-Justice Center, organizations where I have been connected in one way or another. You spawned awesome ministries at Women’s Resource, Bethany, HALO, and more.

You went to war zones in Central America in the 80’s and more recently to Iraq and Palestine to bring back truth to the rest of us. You have been a voice of reason and justice in both church and country gone mad with power. And, since we are neighbors, we often walk on your grounds and beach. Many thanks for the gift you have been to this community over the years, and many blessings on your continued journey.

Connie (Hohlfeld) Molbeck

The Racine Dominicans have been very influential in my life. They have provided me an education, spiritual development and support, the courage to think for myself about faith and good works. I am grateful for the friends I have made because of time spent as a Dominican.

Lois Servais
What draws me back to the Racine Dominicans are the good memories I had at the 125th reunion. My connection with the Racine Dominicans certainly prepared me for a successful teaching career. But more importantly, their influence planted seeds of “awareness” to the needs of the world and to my local community in particular.

Barb Wojtas

How the Dominicans impacted my life
1. They were the only instructors I had from grade one, through high school and then college.
2. One summer they sent me to assist at a nursing home. After leaving the Convent, I took a full-time job there as Activity Director (Appleton Extended Care Center).
3. While on that job, I was approached by an aide who invited me to meet her brother-in-law, a widower with six children. After over a year, we married.
4. When the youngest child started school, a friend (who was my assistant) had connections to Fox Valley Technical College suggested that I apply for a position there.
5. The MA in Spanish (for which I thank the Racine Dominicans) landed me the job, wherein I helped some Hispanic students and many others toward their goals.
6. After 18 years at “The Tech,” I retired. With our combined incomes we were able to retire comfortably.
7. Now, twenty years later, we are living in Water Oak Community, Lady Lake, Florida. We have many friends and much to do. So much to be thankful for!

Rosemary (Bislew) Verhagen

Having taken “the road less traveled” to the Racine Dominicans back in 1960 has made all the difference in my life. Thanks to those amazing women who founded the community and those who have guided its development throughout the years, we were the recipients of:

-----an outstanding education from dedicated, talented teachers,
-----strong, generous role-models of compassion and integrity,
-----and superior examples of the ability to adapt to change while living the gospel in today’s world.

Thank you for all you have done and are still doing.
This is what drew me to the Racine Dominicans and still draws me back.

Leone Held

What keeps me coming back: the love and hospitality I receive from my Sisters. Sometimes people are surprised that I still regard Siena as my home. How has this connection impacted my life? The spiritual and intellectual foundation we received in formation has marked me as a Dominican no matter where I practice my ministry. I continue to value it and pass it on to those who come to me for direction. What a gift that has been!

Jeanne Hill

Written in peace on desert sand

What draws me back-----memories and many classmates. I’m grateful to many beautiful Sisters!

Blessings,
Karen (Paulbicke) Gutmair

So sorry I will not be able to attend the celebration. Know that I will be with you in spirit. The Racine Dominicans impacted my life from a very young age. My ideals, values and sense of the world were all guided through the women at Racine. I will be forever grateful for the spirit and vision of this community.

Sue (Hubing) Hamm
I like to come back to Siena Center for many reasons:
1. I still feel connected. I have classmates in the community and friends.

2. I love the beautiful chapel and grounds.

3. Racine is my hometown, and though I don’t have relatives there, I love to see the familiar places where I grew up.

4. Last, but not least, I love, love, love Lake Michigan, and Detroit is pretty far from the lake.

Michaela (Hunt) Terrell

The Racine Dominicans have been and will always be the roots and foundation of my adult life. The values, love and support received from them have put meaning and spirituality in my life. The education I received enabled me to spend 37 years teaching hundreds of children. Now retired, I have found ways to help the community I live in. I will always be grateful for the years spent as a Racine Dominican.

And yes, I also have a special fondness for the name Benjamin. I am excited to return on August 5th.

Fran (Duchac) Fountain

In response to the questions, I would say I reconnected with the Dominicans after writing the book noted below. Sister Kathleen is kind enough to carry it in your bookstore.

In response to the second question, I would have to say my time in the Order impacted my life significantly. After teaching in grade schools, nursery school and MATC, I got a job teaching in the theology department of Pius XI High School and did that for 23 years until retiring in June of ’07. Last July, I started writing stories about the Bible for my grandson. They eventually turned into God’s Wonderful Plan. Without teaching theology I would not have written the book. Writing a book was never part of my plan. Someone said we live life forward and understand it backward. To that I say “Amen”! August 5th will be a wonderful celebration for all.

Blessings, Karen (Schwochert) Streich

What draws me back to the Racine Dominicans is the love I have carried in my heart, in my memories for what was my family for many years. It was in the community that I received a good education enabling me to become a teacher. I owe much of my spiritual formation to an ever progressive openness by the leadership to change while remaining grounded in the Dominican values of truth, action, and prayer. Forever I am grateful for the strong, wise and loving women who were my mentors and models. I look forward to joining in the 150th celebration of a remarkable community.

Judy (Hayes) Lynch

I believe that lives are analogous to books which are often comprised of many chapters. Some chapters are long, some short. Some may be almost self-contained. Some threads run through all the chapters with significant differences in various chapters. Many threads run through only a portion of the chapters, again playing different roles. Several chapters of my life took place in the Racine Dominican Community. Later chapters built on those and threads of friendship that were spun in them carry through to the later chapters. That continuum of life draws me back to connect with those who remain as Racine Dominicans and to join in the 150th anniversary celebration.

Colleen Theusch

Congratulations to all on your 150 years! Many years and many miles away, my thoughts return to the Sisters of St. Dominic. It has been my good fortune to have been educated by many in your community. These highly educated women instilled a love of learning which time and miles cannot take from me. The Sisters have made a difference in my life. I have heartfelt gratitude for them. Thanks for all that you do. Although I am unable to attend the celebration, I will be with you in spirit.

Mary (Maier) Moretti
I congratulate the Community on the occasion of its Sesquicentennial and look forward to the Reunion event for former members on August 5, 2012. I also wish to thank the Community for its constant hospitality and desire to keep in touch with everyone who has been a part of its rich history.

It seems like the Racine Dominicans have been part of my life forever. As a little girl I remember frequent family visits with my aunt Sister Cleta Freiburger. Special family travels included trips to St. Mary’s in Janesville, the Music School in Racine and Holy Angels Convent in Milwaukee. Sister Cleta and the Sisters always treated my family with such love and kindness. Sister Cleta’s home visits were also special events for everyone in our extended family. My spiritual formation, educational opportunities and Christian mission assignments were gifts beyond measure. Persons I met and served with have continued to be important influences and friends to this day. A part of me will always, gratefully, be rooted with the Racine Dominicans. Praise God for His constant love and blessings.

With affection and gratitude,
Sarah (Freiburger) Kidd

My connection to the Racine Dominicans goes back to 1963 when I became an aspirant. Through that connection, I made wonderful friends that helped to shape my values over all of these years, and even though difficult at times, I tried to impart them to my children. I learned that when you have a job to do, it is your responsibility to do the best job you can do. I have strived to make that a key part of my work ethic in caring for children as a pediatric RN. While my time in Racine was relatively short (only 3 years,) and the reason I left was only because of family illness which eventually led to death, I never stopped thinking of the wonderful sisters and friends I left behind. I never found out what happened to everyone until about 2 years ago when one of my friends and former aspirants, contacted me on Facebook. Without that contact I may have never heard anything more about the wonderful work that the Sisters are doing in the Racine community, and far off places around the world. I feel blessed for the time that I spent there, the things I learned, and the friends I made. As it turned out, life-long lessons can be learned in a relatively short span of time.

Looking forward to the celebration,
Francine (David) Pasek

What draws me back to the Racine Dominicans?
The thing that draws me back is the opportunity to see some of the terrific friends I made during the eight years of training I had with the Racine Dominicans. Even though God has called me elsewhere to serve Him, in my heart, I still feel a part of the Racine Dominican family.

“To teach is to touch a life forever.” (even music, a total gift from God)
Sincerely, Marilyn Schmit

I have good memories from the past reunions and visits with the Racine Dominicans. Ever since I was a member of the community, I have had a continuous journey in spirit with the Racine Dominicans. Praise God for His constant love and blessings.

With affection and gratitude,
Rita (Heiser) Sherrer

Congratulations on your 150th year anniversary! I celebrate with all of you the beautiful spirit of this community in service to needs of all individuals no matter what kind. I have watched you change to stay relevant and meaningful as people and the Church changed in the past forty-some years and so applaud you for that. That openness has influenced my own spirituality which you nurtured for twelve years. I cannot tell you how grateful I remain for the early influence you exerted on me and from which I still draw courage to continually move forward in staying close to those spiritual roots.
I regret not being able to join you physically for the celebration on August 5th due to prior family obligations and the distance and money needed to travel. I will be with you in spirit. There will be so many I would love to see and catch up with, and I trust the gathering will be charged with energy and excitement. I send my good wishes for all who attend and for those who are in any way a part of the Racine Dominican family.

May you continue to flourish and be the inspiration for dedication to Christ’s mandate to love. I remain aware of you in prayer and meditation at the start of each day. God bless you all.

Sincerely,
Kathryn (Mills) Golightly

What is it that draws me back to the Racine Dominicans?

I would not say there is something that draws me back to the Racine Dominicans as Racine Dominicans have never left me. Their love, their leadership, their true concern, their laughter, their support, and their oneness in the spirit of God have kept me connected for over 50 years. I meet them in different towns, cities, states, and I am always proud to claim “I know them.”

How has your connection with the Racine Dominicans impacted your life?

As a student the Racine Dominicans went above and beyond, to work not only with me but with each individual that they had contact with, developing each person to be the best that they could be. I always want to stay close to them in the spirit and let them know that they influenced me all through my life, especially keeping me close to God. They led not only by word but by example way beyond the classrooms.

As a friend they stood by and supported not only me but each individual in their choice of life, through the rough times, and celebrated their achievements. I have lost many of my friends in the Order from this earth, but believe they are in heaven still pulling for me, and all the people they had contact with. Racine Dominicans will always be in my heart.

Blessed and Happy Anniversary!

God bless you all.

Rhoda Kalscheur

The commitment of the Racine Dominicans to social justice issues in the Racine Community has attracted me to my relationship with the Racine Dominicans—a commitment that was nurtured during my years with them and renewed especially through Sr. Brenda Walsh who served with me on the San Juan Diego Middle School’s Board of Directors and with Sr. Lois Aceto and Sr. Alice Rademacher who have been involved at the John XXIII Educational Center. My teaching experience at St. Benedict’s also reaffirmed by belief that all children, regardless of racial, religious, or socio-economic backgrounds, have the potential to become life-long learners and leaders in society when they are surrounded by caring and supportive teachers.

Throughout my professional career as a teacher, principal, Professor at Ohio State University’s College of Education, and, my current role as Volunteer Director of the John XXIII Educational Center, my philosophy of quality education for all God’s children has been influenced and inspired by the rich heritage of the Racine Dominicans, who originally reached out to the immigrants at St. Patrick’s School and who realized the importance of education as the foundation for creating a world of peace, love and justice. The excellent teacher preparation I received at Dominican College has impacted significantly on my commitment to a life-time career in education, especially the courses taught by Sr. Theodore who focused on the development of the total person.

The mission of the Racine Dominicans, “committed to truth and compelled to justice,” is rooted in the mission of John XXIII Educational Center that reaches out to God’s neediest children and their families who are primarily immigrants living in poverty. Given the support of the Racine Dominicans, both through their prayers and as generous financial donors, they too share in carrying out the mission of John XXIII Educational Center—a mission that is reflected in the 150 years of the Racine Dominicans who fostered a life of hope, success and happiness among the thousands of people they served in the Racine community.

Shirley F. Heck
This word ‘Racine’ means Root. Although born in Kenosha, I grew up in Racine. My roots are forever in Racine.

Fortunately, I grew up having parents who were deeply rooted in their faith. My family made many sacrifices for the Church and the Church always came first. My dad would kneel by his bed every night and pray the Rosary. My mother was always involved in the religious education of children. They set a fine example for their children.

Although the public school was but a block away, there was never a question that we would attend the Catholic School. St. Lucy’s did not have a school at that time, so we walked to Holy Name about 12 blocks away. Rain or snow, we always arrived on time.

It was a big sacrifice for us Bany kids to attend St. Catherine’s. My mother got a job and we made it. Those years will always be treasured.

I still remember the Communion prayer that Sr. Gregory taught us in second grade. I say it to this day. And she instilled in us the importance of our First Holy Communion. I still remember that day—April 30th.

I know that I am a better person today because of my parents and the Racine Dominicans. My husband became a Catholic shortly before my son made his First Holy Communion. In fact, they both made their First Communions together. It is very humbling to me that I may have been a very small part in his conversation.

I have been blest and I strive to be a blessing to others.

With deepest gratitude,
Mary (Bany) Toth

What draws me back to the Racine Dominicans? I made many friends while in the community from 1946 until 1972 therefore I wish to renew those friendships at different times and this anniversary celebration seems to be such an occasion. I find that during my stay I am able to find peace and tranquility which is difficult to find in our busy and worried world today.

How has my connection with the Racine Dominican impacted my life? Having been connected with the Racine Dominicans since an early age of 14, I have learned to develop many qualities in my life such as discipline, to have quiet meditative time for renewing myself spiritually and physically. Learning to live with others who come from various backgrounds. To care more for the spiritual things in my life and less for the material things. To be ready to help the poor and others who may need help spiritually or materially. Also never be afraid to tell the truth even when it may be difficult.

I look forward to this visit because I have not been back to Siena Center since 2001.

Love and prayers,
Betty L Mazzoline

I was a member of the Racine Dominicans from September, 1964 through February, 1968. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1971 with an undergraduate degree in social work. In June, 2000 I received my master’s in social work degree from the University of Hawaii. My husband, Michael, and I married in October, 1972 and moved to Hilo, Hawaii in February, 1979. Prior to my retirement in July, 2009 I worked for twenty-one years as a Child Protection Services (CPS) social worker for the State of Hawaii.

What is it that draws me back to the Racine Dominicans?

I made several lasting friendships while a member of the community—Sister Stephanie Seversin was a bridesmaid in my wedding—and I have frequently visited the motherhouse to see these friends, especially during the past twelve years. In addition to visiting, I have had many opportunities to sit out on the jetties for prayer and reflection time—it was on these jetties that I was able to hear the Lord talk to me during the winter of ’67-’68 and help me to gain the courage to “leave the convent.” I will forever be grateful to the community for allowing me the time to make that decision and then affirming the decision with their love and blessings.
How has my connection with the Racine Dominicans impacted my life?

During the time I lived “among” you, I began to learn what gospel justice was and was able to begin to live it. Through the years, I have continued to walk “with” you as I’ve tried, like you, to live gospel justice in my daily life. Working as a social worker for almost forty years in various jobs and many environments, my commitment to gospel justice has been frequently tested. By the examples of various community members, I have been able to recommit, in small ways, to continue the journey to practice gospel justice in my life.

I rejoice in the good works that have been brought to fruition in the Racine Dominican Community during the past 150 years and I look forward to continuing the journey with you in the future as I try to live out the legacy which the community has given me.

Aloha,
Margaret Van Handel Bartelt

The Racine Dominicans have touched my life in a very special way starting when I was 6 years old and I greatly appreciate the wonderful influence they had on my life. Some day I will write a book about that.

Sincerely yours,
Gladys Strauss-Peterson

Congratulations to the Racine Dominican Community on your Sesquicentennial Celebration! Fond greetings to all the Sisters living, and prayers for the deceased, who touched my life during my years with you. I never forget you. I’m sure my values reflect those of my parents and my Racine heritage, too. Those were formative years and stay life-long in us. I spent 41 years in teaching and elementary administration. Until a year ago this past April, I served others as an office manager for 20 years at Ryan Funeral Home in DePere. I’ve worked as a volunteer at St. Vincent Hospital in Green Bay for many years and still do. A busy and rewarding life.

I’m unable to join you on August 5th, but you will be in my thoughts and prayers. God bless you all. Sister Pat McCormick often shares news about the Dominican Family and I enjoy that so much.

Fondly,
Joan Klister

What is it that draws you back to the Racine Dominicans?

How was your connection with the Racine Dominicans impacted your life?

In order to adequately answer these two questions, I need to give a brief explanation of my personal story with the Racine Dominicans. I first became acquainted with the Racine Dominicans when I was a freshman at Nativity High School in Detroit, Michigan in September of 1961. After participating in a vocations awareness talk during my junior year, I was inspired to enter the Racine Dominican community as an aspirant for my senior year in high school. I felt compelled to begin my preparation for what I believed was my vocation as a religious sister as soon as possible. I was willing and eager to complete my senior year at Saint Catherine’s in Racine, Wisconsin.

My experiences as a senior aspirant were invaluable in so many ways—academically, spiritually, socially, and physically. All of these experiences helped me become a better-rounded individual and helped me grow in my faith development. I couldn’t have asked for a better preparation academically at St. Catherine’s High School with such excellent teachers and in such wonderful facilities. Spiritually, I enjoyed daily Mass, devotional prayers, spiritual reading, church studies, and opportunities for service to others. The communal bond that was created among the aspirants was especially heartwarming. Socially and physically the aspirants participated in a variety of activities—singing at hootenannies, participating in the choir, acting in plays, swimming, ice skating, gymnastics, art, and music. Of course, the aspirants also interacted on a daily basis with the co-ed students at St. Catherine’s High School.

It is important to point out that my involvement with the Racine Dominicans coincided with Vatican II. That time in the Church was one of great change. I consider myself fortunate to have been a part of such an important and memorable period in the Church. It was a challenge for all Catholics at the time just to absorb and take in all
the changes in the life of the Catholic Church. They were changes that affected all aspects of Church life—especially in the Mass and the Sacraments. As a result, the changes eventually trickled down into religious communities as well.

In the fall of 1965, after graduating from Saint Catherine’s High School, I entered the community as a postulant. It was an exciting time to be a part of the Racine Dominican community because the work on the new motherhouse was just about done. Even though the finishing touches for the new quarters for postulants and novices weren’t quite done, we moved into the new motherhouse at 5635 Erie Street.

I remember that my postulant class of 1965 was one of the biggest classes in recent years. There were so many exciting things happening—becoming a postulant, moving into the new convent, attending Dominican College as a freshman, and learning more about the changes that came with Vatican II and the impact it would have on my formation as a Racine Dominican Sister.

As a postulant, I enjoyed many opportunities to become a better person. I enjoyed the academic aspects of my education at Dominican College as a college freshman. We were not isolated from the secular world as postulants. Dominican College was a co-educational college and part of our formation focused on being of service to the local community of the city of Racine, Wisconsin. I think the Racine Dominicans were more progressive than many other religious communities at the time. In trying to determine what the mission of the Post-Vatican II Church was for religious women, part of our formation was the blending of the spiritual and the secular. Our spiritual practices intensified in addition to daily Mass and frequent reception of the sacraments, praying the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, retreats, spiritual reading, and study of the Vatican II documents.

Another very important aspect of our formation was to build up a group of young women from diverse backgrounds into a community of postulants. The key word there is “community.” Through participation in a myriad of experiences, we formed relationships with other young women who shared a common goal: to be a member of the Racine Dominican religious community. The friendships and relationships we forged then were deep and satisfying. We were able to connect with another human being on a personal and spiritual level and encourage each other on our individual paths to spiritual growth. Our desire was to grow closer to God and to find our niche in the Racine Dominican community and the Catholic Church as well.

In the summer of 1966, our remaining group of postulants was received into the Dominican order as novices. It was not the traditional canonical novitiate of the past. During the summer, we participated in many different Christian service projects to use our talents and abilities to build up the body of Christ in the neighboring communities. Our academic pursuits at Dominican College were put on hold during canonical novitiate and we focused more on the spiritual side of our formation.

Although my time with the Racine Dominicans ended on October 4, 1966, I am forever grateful for the wealth of experiences I gained while a member of the Racine Dominican community. Departures and farewells are sometimes a necessary but painful stage of growth. In hindsight, we can look back and see how God’s providence was at hand even though we didn’t know it at the time.

After leaving the Racine Dominicans, I graduated from a Catholic university, the University of Detroit in Detroit, Michigan in 1970. My life-long vocation had always been to be a teacher—whether as a nun or a lay person. I spent the next 41 years as a Catholic elementary school teacher and retired as a full-time teacher in June of 2011. However, God wasn’t quite done with my affiliation with Catholic religious education and faith formation. This past year, I have served as the Religious Education Section Head Coordinator at the Catholic Parish I retired from—Our Lady of Sorrows. The personal satisfaction I derive from sharing my faith and love of God and the Church is a special blessing.

On this occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Racine Dominican Community, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to all members past and present. I have always respected the Racine Dominicans for many reasons: your intelligence, vision, and way of blending the spiritual and the secular. You were liberated women long before it became a popular movement. You were an important step in my faith formation. I will be forever grateful to the Racine Dominicans for providing me with a spiritual foundation in the Dominican way of life and for exposing me to the plethora of opportunities to grow in my spirituality and Catholic faith. I will always treasure my time and memories with the Racine Dominicans. Thank you for touching my life in more ways than you can imagine.

May Saint Dominic always be near you and bless you with peace and joy each day of the year.

Sincerely,

Grace Papa
I am unable to attend the Community Reunion this time. I will be thinking about all the fun and get-togethers with all our friends and classmates. Give them my love. I have many fond memories of all my years as a Dominican Sister. You ask what draws me back to the Racine Dominicans and how my connection with the Racine Dominicans has impacted my life.

To me they were the best years of my life. I feel like I had “family” that I could always count on. I learned the real meaning of love, especially the love of our heavenly Father and how to be a real Christian, to be a good wife and mother and to be an example to others. I learned many valuable lessons, too many to mention.

I remember the funny mischief we got into as young postulants and novices. As postulants we would all prepare for Sunday by ironing our clothes, taking showers, etc. and the “angels” in our group would gather the robes of the Sisters in the shower and tie knots in the robes. What a surprise when the Sisters got out of the showers. As novices we had to be Sisters with “decorum.” One day during study, I needed to go to the attic to retrieve something from the trunk. Suddenly, I heard a noise and flopping around. It was a bat. I hollered and ran as fast as I could down the stairs and yelled to everyone, “There’s a bat in the house.” Sister Eunice seemed upset with me and said, “Young lady, go up the stairs and come down with some “decorum.” My classmates had a good laugh. As a full-fledged junior professed Sister, I was fashionably late for chapel in the morning. I believe I did more venias than anyone. I now would not be able to get up from the floor.

I will say a special prayer for all the Sisters on August 5th.
Mary Ann (Lopez) Garcia
Future Home