



Robert Leona Edelen SL
August 7, 1913 — February 4, 2010

Mary Leona Edelen was born in Bardstown, Kentucky.

From 1920-1929 Mary Leona attended the Sister's of Charity of Nazareth School in Bardstown. Her mother, who graduated from Bethlehem Academy, St. John's, Kentucky, had great love for the Sisters of Loretto. She wanted Mary Leona to study at Bethlehem. After a year there 1929-1930, Mary Leona decided that God was calling her to the Sisters of Loretto. She entered the novitiate early and completed her high school education through Loretto High School in Louisville, Kentucky.

On October 8, 1930, Mr. and Mrs. Edelen drove Mary Leona to the Loretto Motherhouse where she was met by her aunt, Sister Theophila. On April 25, 1931, Mary Leona became a novice and took the name "Robert Leona" in honor of her parents. To her surprise, her father sang the "Ave Maria" on that occasion as well as the celebrations of her first and final vows. She was assigned to St. Benedict Elementary in Louisville in 1933 where she taught until 1939. Her next assignment was St. James in Elizabethtown, KY.

In the years of 1942 through 1963, Robert Leona taught outside of Kentucky first at Mount Carmel in St. Louis, Missouri for one year. Then, in 1943, thinking that she had tuberculosis she went to St. Mary's Academy in Denver, to be cured. However, she had no sign of tuberculosis, and she taught 1st and 2nd grade music, and lived with twelve high school boarders.

In 1946 Robert Leona went to Blessed Sacrament in Denver and then to St. Pius in St. Louis where she happily taught 5th grade and music until 1954. Next she went to California for several years in Los Angeles and Monrovia.

She spent 1956-1960 at Sacred Heart School in St. Louis, teaching the fifth grade and working with the choir, then St. Patrick in East St. Louis, Illinois There, she was Assistant Principal, taught seventh grade, and worked with the choir.

Robert Leona spent 1964-65 back at St. Benedict's in Louisville teaching seventh grade and choir. From 1965-1968 Sister was at Guardian Angel in Louisville where she taught 40 eighth grade boys. This was followed by a year teaching another class of eighth graders at St. Jerome's in Fairdale, Kentucky.

A big change in location took place when she was sent to Fort Collins, Colorado where from 1969-1973 she taught grades sixth, seven and eight at St. Joseph School. In 1973 Robert Leona was back at Blessed Sacrament School in Denver teaching, as she said, "my grandchildren."

After two years of teaching computer classes, having taught music, choir and nearly every grade in elementary schools for a total of 53 years, and being 71, Robert Leona returned to Loretto Motherhouse. It was July 3, 1986, and she was pleasantly surprised when Louise Udovick said: "You are an answer to prayer! We haven't anyone to play the "Star Spangled Banner in the courtyard for the Fourth of July celebration." Robert Leona noted in her autobiography: "How nice to be wanted!"

Robert Leona formed a small band for the Sisters. They played "Songs of Yesteryears" on Thursday evenings. They also played on special occasions as well as for feast days. They were joined in their music making by 94-year-old Mrs. Ward, the mother of Sister Mary Charles.

Robert Leona moved to the Infirmary in 1992. She continued working with the band and community service until 1996.

On Sunday, April 23, 2006, Robert Leona celebrated her Diamond Jubilee with family, friends and Loretto Community members.

Sister Robert Leona, we are grateful for your 53, yes 53, years of teaching and making music a part of all of those children's lives. And then your years of making music happen at the Motherhouse. God bless you!