



Sarah Berneice (Neicy) Williams
October 5, 1917 – April 9, 2010

Sarah Berneice Jones, born in Wetumka, Oklahoma, grew up in Springfield, Missouri. Berneice says in her autobiography, "I met Tom the summer I graduated. We dated two years before our marriage in 1938. I had been raised in the Methodist faith so after meeting Tom, who was a Catholic, I decided to take "instructions" and was baptized one week before our wedding.

"Our daughter Patricia was born a year later in 1939. She started school at St. Agnes in 1945. Thus our introduction to the Sisters of Loretto and our journey with the Loretto Community. Little did I dream at this time that our daughter would be a Sister of Loretto and I would be seeking co-membership years later.... Over the years, the Sisters and co-members have become our family and friends."

Berneice was active in the altar society at St. Agnes Parish and also did volunteer work at the school as well as at St. John's Hospital. She says, "Another interest of sorts is to lend a helping hand during election years. I enjoy working for and following the Democratic campaigns." Martha also recalls that Neicy was a loyal Democrat!

Her husband, Tom, died in 1978 after a brief illness. They enjoyed three years of retirement before his death.

Loretto Assemblies were a very important time for Berneice. She attended the Assemblies held in El Paso, St. Louis and Kentucky. She says, "These have been very special times for me, time to renew old friendships (I know many SLs) and times to just learn from you and share in your vision of the future and the Loretto Community."

Neicy so appreciated her friendship with Loretto members. In her autobiography she recalls, "After Patricia left home, the Sisters here in Springfield took us under their wing and made us a part of the Loretto family, such a blessing as we missed our daughter. If Tom was alive, he too would probably be asking for co-membership, as he made a remark once that he felt he had many daughters--all Loretto!"

One of those Loretto members who has known Berneice since Pat was eight years old is Marian McAvoy. Their friendship was deepened through the years and Berneice opened her home to Marian and her sister Helen Reid during the illness and death of their mother and their sister, Dorothy. Three generations of the McAvoy family attended Neicy's co-membership celebration in 1993 expressing their love and gratitude.

Neicy spent winters with Pat in El Paso and became close to the community there. When Pat left Loretto Academy she moved to Springfield to be near her mother. The two of them often traveled to St. Louis for various community gatherings and enjoyed their "Loretto" weekends in the Ozarks. Martha Alderson recalls that Neicy and Pat came for several years to the Ozarks when a group of 11-20 Loretto members plus a few relatives went there regularly for a weekend twice a year. Neicy was a great joy — playing cards, telling stories, showing intense interest in what everyone was doing.

She was in hospice and died peaceful in her sleep on April 9, 2010.

Thank you, Neicy, for sharing your daughter with Loretto as well as sharing your life as a co-member for 17 years.