



Jeanne d'Arc Schleicher SL
December 20, 1917 – November 23, 2008

Sister Jeanne d'Arc was born in St. Louis on December 20, 1917. When she was interviewed by Patricia Jean Manion SL in 1998, Jeanne spoke fondly of the "wonderful family life she experienced." She said: "We were very close and devoted to each other, and loved to do things together. All I can remember are the good things about my family even with struggles and all."

Bernice graduated from St. Elizabeth Academy and then from Webster College with a B.S. in Chemistry. On July 20, 1939 Bernice wrote to Mother Mary Linus: "Very Reverend Mother, It has been my intention to enter the convent but I have waited to finish college so that I might consider the matter more maturely. I wish to hereby make a formal application to enter with the class in October." And so she did.

Her first assignment was to St. Mary's Academy where she taught chemistry, biology, algebra and geometry for the next five years. In 1947-48 Jeanne d'Arc attended Catholic University in Washington, D.C. to earn an M.S. in biology. The plan was for her to return to Catholic U. for her doctorate, but there was such a shortage of science teachers at the time, that she was asked to teach at Holy Family in Denver before returning to CU in 1953 to complete her Doctorate in Biology.

Jeanne d'Arc commented: "I continued teaching at the Heights in the science program. We had a very good science program, plus an equally good nursing program, which required very good biology courses. We also had an honors program begun by Sister Edwin Mary McBride. I was the science representative

on that five faculty member committee. It was very interesting because it gave one such a wide avenue of cultural education. I continued teaching at the Heights until 1983. By then, I was at the verge of retirement. I took a Sabbatical in 1983, moved out to Loretto Center, and in 1984 began tutoring at Rhodes Tutoring Center. I have never let go of education.”

National Science Foundations Programs were a major curriculum innovation in the 1960’s. Sister Jeanne d’Arc directed a number of NSF biology programs with the goal of improving science education. Always ready for an adventure, Jeanne d’Arc traveled to India three times in order to assist in helping run a biology institute. She was also one of the first Lorettoes to use a personal computer – a TRS-80 in the 80s. Remember those?

Jeanne d’Arc attended a marine biology institute at Beachford on the east coast. “There is nothing in the whole wide world like being able to go out in the ocean and see tidal pools and get a few specimens. The whole ecology of the ocean and its importance demands that one have a marine institute if you are ever going to be a good biologist. In California I attended Stanford’s biology institute. Having been in both the Atlantic and Pacific institutes was one of the greatest educational experiences I ever had.”

And here is an experience that few have probably had. While participating in a Duke University marine biology institute she, of course, was the only one in class in a habit. She said: “the bottom half of my habit skirt got so wet it weighed me down, and suddenly I stepped off into the abyss! My institute companions sought to pull me in. They must have felt like they were rescuing a beached whale! The habit was no garment to be wearing in that situation, but my classmates were awfully sweet and revered what I stood for.”

At the end of her interview, Jeanne d’Arc said: “It’s been a good life, and as I look back it’s like a mosaic: in a way some things didn’t match, but in another way it makes a perfectly wonderful memory.

Jeanne moved to the Loretto Motherhouse Infirmary in September 1999. She continued her tutoring work in high school and college math. Among her students was Charles Morley, former head of Environmental Services at Nerinx, with whom she worked in order that he could finish his college degree. Jeanne was invited to attend his graduation from Campbellsville University, a happy day for both of them.

After a long illness, Jeanne d’Arc died peacefully on Sunday, November 23, 2008. God bless you, Jeanne. We will remember your passion for science, for teaching, and for life!

Adapted from an obit prepared by Kate Misbauer SL