



**Thea Marie Christofferson SL
(formerly Helen Cecille SL)
March 4, 1914 — May 4, 2009**

Thea was born in Mobile, Alabama where she attended the Sisters of Mercy School, St. Joseph's; and finished her junior and senior year at Bishop Toolen. She wanted to go to the novitiate, but her father said "no no!" He wanted her to attend college. Thea enrolled at Webster College to continue her education, and learn more about the Sisters of Loretto.

Mr. Christofferson told her he would have nothing more to do with her if she went to the convent. However, since every other family member supported her desire to become a Sister of Loretto, she entered. He was true to his word: she never saw or heard from her father again. In her 1994 interview with P.J. Manion, Thea said: "I think what I did, entering Loretto, was what I was supposed to do."

Thea (Helen Cecille) was always supposed to be a music teacher, but it did not always happen that way! Her first assignment was St. Mary's Academy in 1933 where she taught grades 1 and 2. In September of 1934, she was sent to Loretto Heights, to teach and study music. After two weeks she received word to help

out “for a week” at Sacred Heart School in Pueblo. She stayed there the rest of the year teaching grades 5 and 6. In 1935, she finally got back to St. Mary’s in Denver to teach music. Her next assignment was the new school, Nativity, in Los Angeles, “to teach music, but possibly have a small grade to help out due to a shortage of teachers.” The “small grade” turned out to be 62 children in grades four and five.

“At last, in 1937”, Thea wrote, “I started the school year doing the same thing after a year’s experience! However, Christmas vacation brought a letter saying I should go to Loretto Academy, Las Cruces, NM to help Sister Joseph Mary, who was 80, with her large piano classes and also teach Shorthand and Typing in the high school! I started teaching piano immediately, but reviewed the business subjects till second semester started.

“On the 17th of August, I received a missive from Sister Louis Marie Kroger, containing a Bull for me to return to Los Angeles to be the music teacher. I stayed there until 1946, and while there, completed my studies to obtain a Music degree at Mount St. Mary’s College.”

In 1946 Thea returned to Loretto Heights College to teach music (again!). She gave innumerable piano lessons to students after school both to those majoring in music and those learning to play for sheer enjoyment. In June of 1947 Thea began studying for an MA in Music at Chicago Musical College. She completed the program in August 1951.

Thea next went to Mary Star of the Sea in Freeport, Texas to teach music. and then in 1959 she was appointed Superior of the community with a reappointment in 1962. Freeport was closed in 1965 and Thea’s new assignment was to Holy Cross School, Deerfield, Illinois to be the music teacher. She remained there until she moved to Denver in 1983.

After only a couple of weeks in Denver, a call came seeking help in the Office of Congregation Relations (later Office of Development). Thea went for an interview with Sister Ann Madeline and quickly began her first day of work which continued into 1995 when Thea finally retired and to her great surprise, at age 80, Thea had to have a pacemaker!

Retirement, real retirement, came in 1995. Thea relaxed and enjoyed life at Denver Center and in 2002 she moved to Loretto Motherhouse Infirmary. Thea always had a smile and friendly welcome for those who visited her.

Thea lived a life filled with her going wherever and whenever she was asked to share her great talent in teaching music and her other talents including highly refined people skills. In her retirement, we will remember her ready smile and her gentle, welcoming personality. God bless you, Thea!

Adapted from an obituary by Katherine Misbauer SL.