



Remembering

Sister Annette Bower, CSJ

May 18, 1933 - November 19, 2020

In the early hours of the morning of May 18, 1933, Clara and John Bower welcomed a little girl to their family and named her Barbara. She was their third child. Her brothers, Jack and Donald, loved her from the very beginning and she brought much joy to her family who lived in Rochester, New York. She grew up a happy child, who loved to play and get into trouble with her brothers. Her mother who was a teacher, instilled in her the love of learning. Barbara liked to tell stories about living near the lake, swimming in the summers and walking knee deep in the snow. From a very early age, she loved nature and the outdoors, and she helped her mother tend their garden at home. When her father, John, died of cancer when she was a young girl she drew even closer to her mother and brothers.

Barbara attended St. Thomas Grammar School and Our Lady of Mercy for the first two years of high school. Her mother's health was deteriorating, and the doctor said she would not survive another harsh winter in New York. Her oldest brother, Jack, was in the military and was living in Los Angeles, so it was decided they would move there.

Barbara enrolled at St. Mary's Academy for her junior year. At the end of that year she told her mother she wanted to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph. Her mother was not happy! But Barbara, with her determined spirit, announced to her mother that she would enter the following year anyway against her permission when she was 18, so she might as well give her blessing now. Her mother's main concern was that Barbara might not be able to go to college. The superior assured her mother that Barbara would receive a college education. We now know that Barbara went on to earn a doctorate and many academic awards.

On September 15, 1951, Barbara entered the Sisters of St. Joseph at St. Mary's Academy. She received the habit on March 19, 1952, and was given the religious name Sister Cecile Annette. First vows followed on March 19, 1954 and she pronounced her final vows on August 15, 1959.

In 1960, Sister received her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Mount St. Mary's College. This degree was followed by a Master's in Science degree in Cell Biology in 1967 from Creighton University. Further studies at the University of Arizona in Neuroendocrinology awarded her a Ph.D in 1972. For a number of summers after receiving her doctorate, she went back to the University of Arizona in Tucson on a National Science Foundation Grant, to do Post-doctoral research.. Her love of the desert and its unique beauty, became very much part of her during these years.

Sister Annette served wherever she was needed. She taught in schools in Los Angeles and Tucson, and at St. Mary's Academy in Inglewood, before being missioned to Mount St. Mary's College, where she spent the next 42 years; the first two years as an instructor and the next 40 years as Chair of the Biological Sciences Department. She was also Director of Special Research Projects and a grant writer for the National Institute of Health and the Keck Foundation.

As a consultant to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, she made several trips there on a regular basis. As involved as she was with higher education, she also served on the Board of Carondelet High School and later on the Board of Carondelet Health Network in Tucson, first as a Board Member for 4 years and then as Board Chair for 6 years. She looked forward to her monthly trips to Tucson which helped her re-connect with the beauty of her beloved Sonoran Desert. She was well loved by all.

Sister Annette possessed an extraordinary gift for obtaining grants. She was insightful in her long range planning. She applied to HEW and received a one million dollar grant to develop undergraduate programs in the Human Services and Aging at the Mount. Her grant writing inspired programs that matched Mount students with the top minds in science around

the country. In 1991, Sister began a program at the Mount for high ability minority students. This program, which offered the opportunity for students to experience and excel in the field of science, was funded by a five-year grant of 2.5 million dollars from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. This research training grant was re-awarded every five years from 1991 to 2006, amounting to over 10 million dollars. These monies fueled one of Annette's passions which was to increase the number of women in the fields of science and medicine.

Annette enjoyed a stellar reputation as an educator. She had a formidable intellect and genius for transmitting complex ideas into easily understood language.

Sister received many honors, awards and national recognitions; too many to innumerate here. In 1998, she was chosen for the Accomplished Professor Award at the Mount. Numerous publications of hers appeared in professional journals on research topics. These recognitions resulted in her being cited in the World's Who's Who of Women in Education. Perhaps the honor she most prized was the Creighton University Alumni Merit Award given in 1983. At that time she said, "The professors at Creighton were demanding, yet warm, and gave us the feeling they expected us to excel. I find that I use this today in my teaching, where there's a need to reassure as well as demand. And in watching my students, many of whom are young women going on to careers in medicine or science, there's an excitement as they start to realize they have something to offer the world. They learn that their commitment does not end with themselves."

In 2006, when Sister announced her retirement, a \$30,000 Sister Annette Bower Endowed Scholarship for students in biological sciences was established by Mount St. Mary's College. After she retired, Sister volunteered at St. Mary's Academy and, as alumnae director, reorganized the Alumnae Association. As a wonderful organizer, administrator, and leader, she set the Association on firm footing for the future.

Annette was very close to her large family most of whom lived in New Mexico and enjoyed visiting them especially for the holidays. She would meticulously decide what gifts would bring joy to each one and used her artistic sense to select or to make them. Her brother, Jack and his wife Kay, had 4 children, and her brother, Don and his wife Regina, had seven. The family grew as each of those children have had their own families which now is in the fourth generation. To the family she was lovingly known as "num", a nickname from the little ones who could not pronounce "nun". One of her favorite things to do while on home visit, was to help her brother Jack attend to his famous beef-steak tomatoes. When she returned to Los Angeles, she would put the tips she acquired to good use in her own tomato patches.

After residing for some years in Oceanside, Sister's health began to change. In June 2017, she became a member of Holy Family Community at Carondelet Center. Her struggle to maintain mobility and independence was visible and valiant. Although she tried to adapt to her new reality, it was difficult for her. She continued to stay in touch with some of her students, close friends and family but her spark was diminishing daily. With St. Paul, we can now say: " You have run the race , you have fought a good fight and you have kept the faith". Thank you for showing us the importance of also taking time to "smell the roses. "

May God and those you loved, who have gone before you, now welcome you to Paradise.

*~ Written by Sisters Frances Baker, Maureen Evelyn Brown
and Irma Odabashian*