



Sister Barbara Mary Sanborn, CSJ  
May 19, 1928 - June 13, 2021

Col. Hal Clark Sanborn had followed the news of the rapid development on the West Coast of the United States after World War I. The numerous job openings convinced him to move from his hometown of Chicago IL to the small town of Santa Monica, CA. Not long after his arrival he met Anna Flintsback who had moved with her family from Philadelphia, PA. After a short courtship they were married in St. Monica's Church. Their daughter, Barbara Ann, was born on May 19, 1928. She was a child who surprised her parents with her curiosity and love of life, of all things in nature and especially the sandy beach of the Pacific Ocean. Her father had become the Public Works Commissioner of Santa Monica by the time her brother, George, arrived when she was three.

Two years later her parents separated. Her mother returned with Barbara and George to Philadelphia. Barbara was enrolled for eight years in Ascension Parish School conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia, who also were her teachers during her high school years at Mount St. Joseph Academy in Chestnut Hill. Before she graduated, she had told her parents she wanted to be a sister. Both parents agreed she could make the decision when she was 21. To appease her they gave into her wish to choose a college in California. Without consulting anyone she searched catalogs of colleges conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph. She found Mount St. Mary's!

And what a "find" it was. Although she would be a resident student at the Mount, she could spend time with her father and stepmother in Santa Monica and be near the Pacific Ocean again. Always an inquisitive student, she enjoyed her classes and all aspects of college life, including a Loyola University boyfriend who had a car. She admitted that she thought of marriage but her desire to become a sister always surfaced. Near the end of her sophomore year she confided her desire to be a Sister of St. Joseph to Fr. Joseph Vaughan, S.J. Knowing her well, his first question to her was "What about the boyfriend?" Nevertheless, he convinced the Provincial that Barbara was "worth the gamble." Fortunately, Mother Rosemary took a chance.

On September 15, 1948, Barbara joined a group of 36 young women as they entered the postulate at St. Mary's Academy, Los Angeles, CA. She kept a low profile during the six months of the postulate. On St. Joseph's Day, March 19, 1949, in the chapel of St. Mary's Academy she received the habit and the name Sister Barbara Mary.

It was in the novitiate that she realized she was with a group of women gifted with musical and artistic talents, who not only organized and worked together to finish their usual novitiate assignments, but also offered new ways of doing things. She knew that with them she could share her own unique ideas. There were the usual ups and downs, some serious, some sad, during the two years in preparation for vows. She persevered. Again on St. Joseph's feast March 19, 1951 she made first vows in the chapel of St. Mary's Academy.

Sister Barbara Mary's teaching career began at St. Jarlath's School, Oakland, CA. She taught fifth and eighth grades. She found teaching eighth grade boys quite a challenge. After two years in Oakland, she began her secondary teaching at Bishop Conaty High School, Los Angeles. With her love of classical art, literature and music she knew she was well-suited to "...educating girls as they developed into young women." This was a calling she could "answer with joy." During her years at Conaty she lived at Prague convent with Sisters Patricia Arnold, Eileen Mitchell, Thomas Bernard MacDonnell and Regina Clare Salazar, who always kept her on "the straight and narrow." She had an English/Latin BA from the Mount and a California secondary teaching credential. She claimed it was her Prague community who encouraged her to complete an MA in Education.

She loved teaching at Conaty and had never even thought of teaching in a foreign country, but when the sisters were invited to serve in the new mission in Japan, she volunteered. However, Sister Eva Francis Cereghino was chosen to represent the Los Angeles Province in the first group.

In the summer of 1956, while she was with her reception at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego, for a period of recollection before making final vows, the desire to be a missionary to Japan again overwhelmed her. When the group returned to complete their recollections days at the Provincial House, they were surprised to be asked to prepare the

prayer ceremony for the first group leaving for Japan in a few days. As usual they organized and incorporated as much of Japanese art and music as they could with Sister Barbara Mary adding much joy to the celebration. On August 15, 1956 all made their final vows in the chapel of Mount St. Mary's College.

Sister Barbara Mary returned to Bishop Conaty in September. God is always full of surprises. Within the year, the second request asking for sisters to volunteer for the Japan Mission was received, because plans were being made for the building of a high school in Tsu. This time she was chosen to represent the Los Angeles Province. As soon as the news was announced at Conaty, the Japanese girls decorated her classroom in everything Japanese from art to chopsticks.

On Sunday, August 31, 1958, in the chapel of Mount St. Mary's College Sister Barbara Mary, along with Sister Marianne Patrice of Troy, NY, were blessed in a ceremony officiated by Msgr. Anthony Browsers, who compared the two sisters to the disciples who also were sent two by two by the Lord to teach the Gospel. The next morning all the sisters gathered in the House of Studies parking lot to sing the "Ave Maris Stella" as the two left for the airport.

As soon as Sister Barbara Mary moved into the convent Kyoto, she started studying Japanese at a Japanese language school.

However, in late 1959 she collapsed from carbon monoxide poisoning, which was caused by a gas leak from her stove, and she had to suspend her Japanese language studies. After receiving treatment and recovering from this accident, in April 1960 she was assigned to Tsu to teach English at Saint Joseph Joshi Gakuen upon its opening.

Although at times she was very strict, Sister Barbara Mary was by nature a very kind and cheerful person; and she was always able to create a warm and joyful atmosphere wherever she went.

From the time Sister Barbara Mary was assigned to Tsu as the English teacher, and even after becoming the principal of the school, her passion for teaching English never stopped. Not fully satisfied with the English textbooks that were commonly used at the time, she collaborated with the priests of the Society of Jesus, and together they published their own English textbook called "Progress in English,"

Not only did Sister Barbara Mary teach English to the students, but she also taught evening classes. She taught English conversation to the fathers of the students and built a good relationship with them. She would always tell the fathers, "If you are going out to have some fun, make sure you always invite your wife to go with you."

Sister Barbara Mary was also very musical. When the school was first established, we were searching for a good melody for the school anthem. Sister Barbara Mary suggested we use the melody from Brahms's Symphony No. 1, 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, and the rest is history. Our school anthem is so beautifully unique. It is the pride and joy of Saint Joseph Joshi Gakuen.

She served as the third principal of Saint Joseph Joshi Gakuen from 1968-1977 and afterwards resumed teaching in the English department. For sixteen years Sister Barbara Mary was the President of St. Joseph Joshi Gakuen and, upon retiring from that position, she became the Honorary Dean of the school.

In 2010 Sister Barbara Mary returned to Los Angeles after 52 years of serving the dear neighbor in Japan. May she rest in peace.

*~ Written by Sisters Barbara Dugan, Frances Baker  
with input from Barbara Mary and Madeline Marie Nakatsu.*