

Finding Treasures

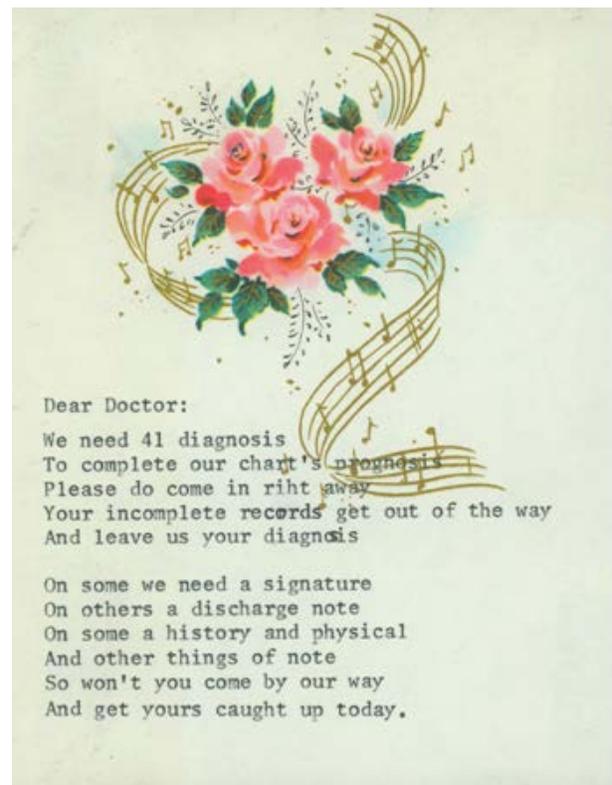
Because of the attention I have given to special projects this year, I have not had the joy of “discoveries” as often as I had previously. But the discoveries are there in the archives boxes, just waiting to be found. Here is a sampling of recent discoveries.

Sr. Julie Walsh reminded me recently of the good works of many of our women and she made special mention of Sr. DeChantal Huber. Thank you for the reminder, Sr. Julie. Sr. DeChantal was known for her hard work, dedication and ingenuity wherever she was asked to serve and whatever she was asked to do. In addition to her legendary work in laundry areas of many of our hospitals, Sr. DeChantal served as a baker, cook, food service manager, seamstress and local superior. In her eulogy for Sr. DeChantal, Sr. Thomas Kolba remembered her as “energetic”, having “great zeal”, and possessing “great faith in God and in herself.” Sr. Thomas referred to Sr. DeChantal as a mentor because of her “straight forward honesty” which had an influence on Sr. Thomas.

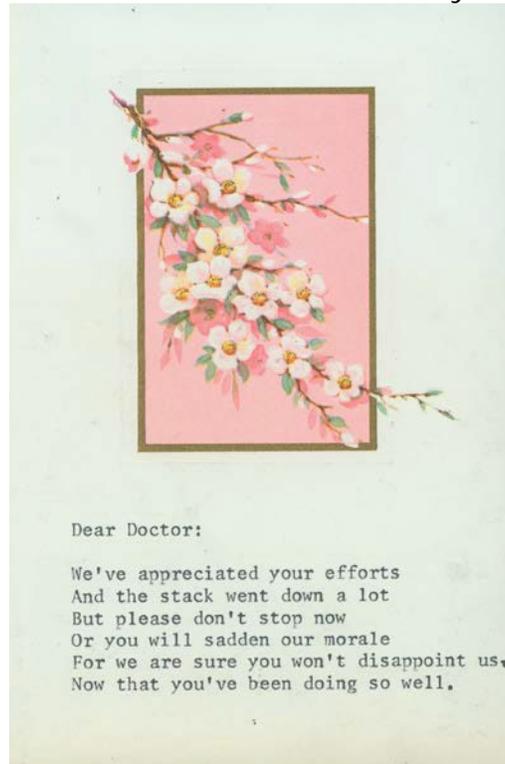


Sr. DeChantal was noted for having exceptional relationships with her staff. She took up their cause and strove to improve the conditions of her employees. Sr. DeChantal would educate herself about the safest, labor-saving equipment available for laundry areas, her special domain. DeChantal would be asked to go to one of our hospitals for the purpose of organizing or re-organizing a laundry. According to Sr. Thomas, "Sr. DeChantal was ingenious in convincing her superiors that she needed that equipment for her workers, and she got it..., whether it was in the budget or not." She was an active member of the National Association of Institutional Linen Management at the local, state, and national levels. Sr. DeChantal spoke at the association's conventions and wrote for their national publication. In 1988, Sr. DeChantal received an award from the National Association and was given a "life long honorary membership in the Association in appreciation for her contributions to the organization." I have included photographs of Sr. DeChantal with a fellow-worker as they empty a dryer in 1959. The other photograph of Sr. DeChantal is more recent and may be the way many of you remember her.

In going through files for photographs of our deceased Jubilarians recently, I did find a treasure in the file of Sr. Germaine Knopf. Sr. Germaine was a certified Records Librarian and she worked at St. Francis Hospital in Waterloo for 21 years. As I looked for pictures of Sr. Germaine, I came across a collection of short poems written by her. Upon closer inspection, I discovered the poems were written to remind physicians of a timeless and unpleasant task; the task of completing their medical records. Undoubtedly, the poems came about as Sr. Germaine tried to find the delicate balance between getting the doctors to complete the records and taking the risk of annoying the very customers she was trying to entice. It seems that Sr. Germaine creatively achieved that balance as evidenced by the poems written by doctors in response to her requests! What a treat!



Sr. Germaine would occasionally add stickers or part of a card to make the request even more appealing. Most of the collection of poems is from the 1960s. I hope you will enjoy a sampling of these as much as I did. Thank you, Sr. Germaine!



Finally, I wanted to let you know about a recent serendipitous connection. Sr. Catherine and Sr. Timothy were informing me of the history of a few of our large statues. They told me the statue of the Blessed Mother in front of the original Marianjoy building was from St. Anthony's Hospital (Grand and Chippewa). Srs. Catherine and Timothy thought the statue had been donated by Sr. Hyacinth's family but could not be certain. Within a week or two of this discussion, I received an e-mail from Mrs. Marie Onesi, an 81 year old woman who had been viewing our website. She was Sr. Hyacinth's niece! She was requesting information on her father's sister for a family genealogy. I answered Mrs. Onesi's request about Sr. Hyacinth and told her that Sr. Hyacinth remains in very high regard among our Sisters who knew and worked with her. I also mentioned the synchronicity of her contact and inquired to see if she knew of the origin of the Blessed Mother statue. Mrs. Onesi was able to confirm with other family members that the Blessed Mother was donated by Sr. Hyacinth's nephew (Mrs. Onesi's oldest brother), Jack and his wife, Mary. I could not have dreamed of this connection. If any of you would like to drop a note to Mrs. Onesi, please let me know. I am sure she would cherish any memories of her dear aunt, Sr. Hyacinth.

Now, seriously, don't you wish you were an archivist?!