



Jane Sweeney SL **October 28, 1918 — January 7, 2010**

Mary Jane Sweeney was a native St. Louisan. A great trial and an immense amount of pain hung over Jane's teen years. As a freshman in high school, an ailment called "tic douloureux" grew worse, and she had to drop out of school without graduating. She wrote, "I was fortunate to have the services of a pioneer St. Louis neurological surgeon, Dr. Roland Klemme, who gave me effective relief by severing the nerves involved, and I was able to take up a normal life again. I was left with a total hearing loss in my right ear, and a slight partial paralysis of the right side of my face. I was 20 years old by this time."

Jane completed a year's training at a business school and accepted a civil service job as a secretary with the federal government in Washington, D.C. in November 1940. After several rapid promotions, she obtained a transfer back to the St. Louis area where she continued working through the World War II years.

In October 1945 entered Loretto taking the name Sister Leontine at reception. Her assigned "office" was clerical work in the registrar's office of Loretto Junior College under the direction of Sister Francisca Engles who arranged for Jane to take a college entrance examination, which she passed. Then she was enrolled in the junior college without having to pick up the high school credits she had never completed.

After making her first vows in 1948, Jane was assigned to teach typing at Loretto Academy on Lafayette in St. Louis. For the next 20 years Jane taught business education classes in several schools from Alabama to Illinois. Like many other Sisters, Jane held several responsible jobs at the same time; she was appointed superior in Bernalillo and in 1964 and became Fourth Councilor and Secretary of the Southern Province.

In a section of her autobiography, Jane wrote: "The most interesting experience I have had occurred between 1971 and 1974 when I joined the Peace Corps and went to Ethiopia to teach business subjects, typing and shorthand, at the Tafari Makonnen Comprehensive Secondary School in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's bustling capital city...I wanted to give a few years in service to the people of a developing country, to try to help in some little way."

Jane taught 28 classes a week with about 30 students in each class. Several afternoons a week, she walked from her home on the school grounds to the Empress Menen Orphanage where she helped by tutoring the older girls in English or holding recreational hours with story telling, informal dramatics and singing. In addition she assisted an orphaned high school student get through school by providing him money for food and living expenses.

After returning from Ethiopia, Jane studied Library Science at Catherine Spalding College in Louisville, Kentucky and then accepted a position as librarian at Loretto in Kansas City, which she held until the summer 1979.

When Jane returned to St. Louis, she lived at the Loretto Center in Webster Groves and worked as assistant librarian at Nerinx Hall High School from 1981 thru 1983. She then spent three years as a secretary in the office of the Provincial Treasurer of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet at their Province House in South St. Louis.

In 1987 Jane noted that she was librarian at the Loretto Center for Learning in St. Louis. She took care of two libraries: the textbooks in the upper floor library and the general student lending library on the lower floor. One afternoon a week, Jane took a group of children and taught them puppet making. She became quite well known in the St. Louis area as a puppeteer.

In the late 1980s into the 90s, Jane worked in the Business Office at the St. Louis Center and took on the role of bookkeeper and finally retired in 2000.

Jane was a woman of varied interests. She closed her autobiography with the following: "Some of the groups whose principles I believe in and to which I belong are: National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, Amnesty International, Handgun Control, Oxfam America, and Puppeteers of America."

Jane moved to the Loretto Motherhouse Infirmary in August 2008, and she died on January 7, 2010 in the 64th year of religious life. Jane donated her body to science.

Jane, thank you for sharing your gifts with so many around the world. God bless you.