

MARIAN RESIDENCE

1104 Toluca Avenue
ALLIANCE, NEBRASKA 69301
November 28, 1983

Dear Sisters

On the morning of November twenty-first, Sister Lucina left us. She had not been well the day before. That morning she had her breakfast in bed; the nurse had just taken her tray when Sister apparently had a massive heart attack, died at once, and fell to the floor. The Sisters and our pastor were immediately called to pray at her bedside.

Severa Elisabeth Wagner was born September 1, 1902, in Sharpsburg, Pennsylvania. Her parents, Sylvester Wagner and Catherine Glauber, had four daughters and three sons; only one, the oldest daughter, survives. They must have had a strongly Catholic home atmosphere shown by the fact that two sons became Franciscan priests and Severa, a graduate of Sacred Heart Academy in Buffalo, New York, entered the novitiate at Stella Niagara in 1920. She made her vows in 1923 and taught at St. Ann's, Buffalo, New York and Sacred Heart, Columbus, Ohio, for a few years. Those who knew her say that she was very intelligent and had great artistic talent, but teaching was difficult for her. As the mental illness, which was to shadow her the rest of her days grew worse, teaching became impossible. She received treatment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and in 1933 was brought to St. Joseph's Hospital in Alliance, Nebraska, to hide from the world in a little room near the chapel, as a patient, for fifty years.

Sister Lucina's mental condition varied; sometimes she was more calm, but even in her most disturbed moments she seemed to be attracted to the chapel. She was also physically ill at times. A few years ago, her condition improved; she was taken out to the main floor for baths, and began to attend mass regularly and receive Holy Communion. The handshake of peace at Mass seemed to please her, and she willingly shook hands with anyone within reach.

On March 31 of this year, Sister Lucina was moved down to the Sisters' Care Unit on first floor where she seemed to adjust remarkably to living with the other retired Sisters. It was surprising to those who had known her for many years to see her, clad in pajamas eating at the table, being present at the community prayers, and seeming to understand what was going on.

On April 27, we had a quiet jubilee celebration in the chapel. Dressed in a new habit and veil, wearing the customary corsage, and escorted by Sister Ruth, who also came here in 1933, Sister Lucina went through the celebration with remarkable aplomb.

Because of bad weather and roads, none of the Sisters from out of town were able to attend Sr. Lucina's funeral on November 23. Our two priests concelebrated the Mass of the Resurrection. Our pastor, Father Francis Curran, quoted from "Profiles of Courage," and expressed his opinion that Sister was a woman of courage who had suffered much in the years of her sheltered life. The readings and hymns of the Mass could be expressed in the opening words of the Communion Hymn: "Take, Lord, receive, all my liberty . . ." She was laid to rest in Calvary Cemetery with 77 of her Sisters, 66 of whom died since she came here.

The Sisters at Marian Residence