

“Her Story”

CWL London Diocese
100th Anniversary Edition
(1920–2020)



*A Collection of
“My Story” Testimonials
from the Catholic
Women’s League of the
Diocese of London*

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A note from Compassionate Community Care:

These stories were gathered in-person, by phone, and online from past and present members of the Catholic Women's League (CWL) of the Diocese of London, Ontario, Canada. The women share the special intricacies of their lives: wisdom, jokes, and memories both as members of the CWL and as individuals.

In honour of the CWL's 100th Anniversary, this special edition was gathered and printed to thank the women for their dedication and service to, and support of, both Compassionate Community Care (CCC) and the greater London Diocese community.

The women featured here are many, their stories varied; some are short and sweet, others longer and more comprehensive. All are courageous, kind, and grace-filled accounts of women who have a desire to serve and leave something to be remembered by.

Thank you, CWL of London for your time, love, and care.

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Christian Family Life touches the lives of everyone; marriage and family, sanctity of life, vocations, youth, seniors and disabled.

Early in 2020, our diocese began working with Compassionate Community Care (CCC) stressing the importance of keeping in touch with our members in their homes, and retirement or extended care homes. One of the biggest issues facing some of our most vulnerable today is isolation, loneliness and depression.

The pandemic might have slowed us down but we haven't given up!

CCC received government funding to publish a book of our members' stories for our 100th anniversary of the Catholic Women's League of the London Diocese. Members have been asked to share their stories for our councils' histories and for our book to be published.

With restrictions being lifted, we can once again visit the retirement and extended care homes. Collecting our seniors' stories gives them the opportunity to share their experiences and memories with us. It is their legacy for our councils' history and for their families'.

These stories are heartwarming and inspiring. Some members have shared their journeys from childhood up to their CWL days. Others have shared their history with the league. It's been a wonderful experience travelling along with all of you, being "Catholic and living it".

Mary Ann Horne-White, Christian Family Life Speech 2022

Alice Helwig

I was born in a farming community in Bruce County. I was one of nine children, born second. Both of my parents were Catholic and they came from religious families. We attended Sacred Heart Church in Mildmay, Ontario. We were always active in church activities.

My introduction to the Catholic Women's League was at the age of 14, when my mother would bring me to their meetings once a month. The meetings were held in the homes of the CWL members. I moved to London [Ontario] in 1953 to work and became a member of St. Martin Church. My children attended St. Martin Catholic School. In 1972, CWL members who were fellow parents and parishioners of St. Martin's suggested I join the St. Martin CWL. We had a membership of over 180, and were a very active council.

My first executive role in the CWL was Treasurer. I was able to succeed in this role with the help of other CWL members, especially Eva Mitchell. Eva was President of St. Martin CWL and became my mentor, as well as my friend. Father Spencer was Spiritual Advisor of St. Martin's CWL at the time and he encouraged my participation in the CWL. I was blessed over the years to have wonderful mentors, including Sheila Howard and Nancy Campbell.

After my term as Treasurer, I assisted our CWL executive committee as Parish Life Convenor and contributed to our council by attending parish council meetings and reporting on League activities and projects, encouraging communication and cooperation with other parish groups, and assisting the executive with other duties as required. I feel blessed that our CWL community has always supported each other and been a very cooperative group.

I enjoyed assisting my CWL group and took on many responsibilities. The skills I gained from my work in the restaurant business often came in handy. From 1974 on, I was the coordinator of all funeral receptions at St. Martin's Church on behalf of the CWL. We provided a reception after the service, in conjunction with the family's wishes.

The CWL has also provided receptions for First Communion, Confirmation, wedding anniversaries and birthdays at St. Martin's Parish. Also, we were always involved in RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) receptions at St. Peter's Basilica. In 1975, the CWL Provincial convention was held in London, and I welcomed the opportunity to assist. My role was to organize, set up, and host a hospitality room. The hospitality room was a place for

convention participants to relax and refresh. A continental breakfast was provided, including coffee, tea, cold drinks, fruit, and baked goods. We also served a cold lunch of sandwiches, cheese, fruit and veggie trays and desserts. I performed the same role at the Provincial conventions held in London in 1986 and 2002.

London CWL councils also hosted two National conventions, in 1987 and 2004. I was responsible for the hospitality room for these conventions as well. In 2004, we served over 300 meals at breakfast and lunch for the three days of the main convention. The National, Provincial and Diocesan conventions were an amazing experience for me. I was fortunate to be able to attend the two National conventions held in London, four Provincial conventions held in the London area, and almost all Diocesan conventions.

Attending the conventions provided an excellent opportunity to meet other CWL members, hear about what was happening in other communities, and reconnect with friends. Nineteen-eighty-seven was the 75th Anniversary of St. Martin's Church. As well as assisting with parish celebrations, CWL members gathered recipes and created an Anniversary Cookbook. Proceeds from the cookbook were used to repair the stained glass window at the front of the church.

In 1987, I received my CWL Maple Leaf Award. The maple leaf service pin was introduced in 1971 for members who have served the League in an exceptional or meritorious manner and performed outstanding League service. The award was presented to me at our June dinner meeting. Father Clare Coleman was our Spiritual Advisor at that time. I was very involved with the 50th, 60th, 70th, and 80th anniversaries of our St. Martin of Tours CWL. We celebrated these anniversaries with our church community by hosting receptions and highlighting the work of the CWL. The 50th anniversary was especially memorable. We held a brunch after Mass, but it was at St. Martin School because the church hall was being renovated.

CWL councils in London worked together and assisted at various community events. One of these events was at the Citizenship Court. When people became Canadian Citizens, they attended Citizenship Court at the London Courthouse, and after the ceremony they were able to enjoy a welcome party. Goodies, coffee and cold drinks were served. I organized these receptions for many years.

Another collaborative venture was Christmas Dinner for the Blind. London CWL councils joined together to provide a full roast turkey dinner for over

200 participants. The CWL Fall Copper Carnival Bazaar at St. Martin's Church has been an important social event and fundraiser for our CWL council. The bazaar features baked goods, kid's corner, hot lunch, draws, crafts, gifts, plants, white elephant and penny tables. This event involves many members of our CWL council. I have helped with the bazaar almost every year it has occurred and was mainly in the lunch room or craft centre.

As a CWL member, I have been active in our local parish. I was a Commentator and Eucharistic Minister for many years at St. Martin Parish, and a Eucharistic Minister at nursing homes. At the nursing homes I bring Communion to our Catholic community who are unable to attend the Mass at church. Also, I have assisted at monthly Masses at the nursing homes for many years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has restricted almost all of my CWL activities since March 2019. I continue my CWL sisterhood with the great friends I have made in this organization by phoning them or sending cards.

Ana Rosa Oliveira

St. Mary's, Tillsonburg

When did you start taking part in church activities? Twenty years ago. I was first introduced when I helped with the Christmas Bazaar, then I joined the next year.

Were your parents involved in the church? No.

Was there an event or fundraiser that was especially memorable for you? The Christmas Bazaar was the best that I have done. Every year that we host the Bazaar we make more money than the previous year. The first Bazaar we helped with we made \$500. Last year, before COVID (2019) we had a Bazaar there was more than \$6000 raised just from our table. There are three of us: Maria, Bulbina, and I work together to prepare everything for our table. We make canned green beans, peppers, pickled eggs, and we sell squash cut in smaller pieces, full vegetables (parsley, garlic, kale), over ten varieties of jams (pumpkin, strawberry, rhubarb, blueberry, gooseberry, pear, etc.) and more.

We also prepare three to four different varieties of wood in bundles to decorate urns, these are beautiful pieces to help decorate homes for the holidays. We add pine, cedar, and other green elements to mix into the bundles.

We make all different decorative pots, grape vine decorations. I have a picture of us in rain suits collecting items from the garden. We collect the items for the Christmas Bazaar during the year, throughout the year, from all over.

How has the CWL affected your life? (Relationships, faith, etc.) The CWL has been a positive part of my life, I've met more people, spend time with my family, etc. We have meetings every week, there are over 200 members in our Council. My sons are in the Knights of Columbus. My nieces used to be involved here but then they moved away.

The other thing I liked was that we have an event in November, an auction sale when people bring and sell everything. We make a few puddings for sale, and they are very popular. This is a lot of fun and the money we raise is for the poor in third world countries.



Andrea Morse

Corpus Christi, Windsor

Andrea and Stan Morse moved to South Windsor in 1950 and were parents of seven children. They belonged to Christ the King Parish and were very active in parish life. Andrea and Stan joined the Christian Family Movement being the lead couple.

Andrea belonged to the CWL of Christ the King where she served as Treasurer, and then a term as President. The members enjoyed afternoon teas and card parties at that time, with short meetings included.

Andrea was involved in the Girl Guides of Canada out of Christ the King and went on to be a Commissioner for the Windsor area. Along with volunteering for the Cancer Society and Windsor Regional Hospital, Andrea also did patterning for children with disabilities at Paulin Memorial Church. She was also President of the Assumption Mother's Club.

Andrea and Stan were Wagon Masters of the Coachmen Motor Homes and travelled North America and Mexico. They spent many winters in their Florida home where Andrea contributed much to her parish church. She especially enjoyed bringing Communion to fellow parishioners who were unable to attend church due to illness, etc.

After Stan's death, Andrea moved to Kensington Court Retirement Home and continued to go to Florida for a few more winters. She resided at Kensington for 22 years, where she was a "Welcomer" and knitted baby hats for newborns. She actively participated in Rosary recitations, on-site Masses/prayer services and faith-based discussion groups provided at the "Court" by parish staff (St. Gabriel's, then Corpus Christi), and the on-site priest.

Andrea was a busy lady and an inspiration to many! She passed away on August 9th, 2021 in her 100th year, just short of turning 101 in November.

Angie Papineau

Our Lady of the Atonement Council, Windsor

As told to Caroline Ngui

Angie has been a CWL member for 40 years. “I became a member because my Mom was a CWL member at St. John’s Church (Woodslee, Ontario). As a teenager I helped at their fundraising events and [developed a] devotion to Our Blessed Mother. Leo and I married in 1959 and I joined the CWL immediately at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Essex. I was asked by the priest and one of the CWL ladies to become President shortly after”.

The family moved to Emeryville and for 20 years but there was no CWL council at the church. Angie tried to re-open their council but there was no interest. She would have had 60 years of service if there was a CWL in Emeryville.

When the family moved to Windsor she was disappointed that there was [also] no CWL council at the Parish of the Atonement. Eventually she met up with Anna Koehl who also was very interested in forming a CWL there. In late 1992 they approached Fr. Damian MacPherson, pastor at the time, and sought permission to explore the possibility of a council, which he supported whole heartily. She arranged for an information meeting for interested women from the parish with members of the London Diocesan Council on January 25th, 1993. Thirty-nine women attended that meeting, they heard the information, liked what they heard, signed on the dotted line and became our Charter members of the brand new council here. And so our Council was born.

Angie guided the CWL as the first President from 1993 to 1995, then again from 1998 to 2001. When she served as Past President she was always ready to support and give valuable advice to the incoming executive members. She was Spiritual Chairperson on our executive from 2004 to 2013. She also served on the London Diocesan Council for two years as the Windsor Regional Representative.

The spirituality of the CWL attracted Angie to become a member and that has always been her focus—planning retreats, reflection days, special ceremonies, and preparing prayers for our monthly meetings. She continues to this day to submit spiritual material to be included in the fall and spring Atonement CWL newsletters.

Angie has been a very active supporter of all our programs and activities over the years. She continues to maintain the Book of Life (a record of our deceased members), My Story 2 and Spiritual Advisors, our archives, photobooks and scrapbooks for more than 25 years.

She proudly wears her CWL pin every day of her life. She is a wonderful friend, mentor and faithful sister to all our members.

Many years ago, our Council awarded the Maple Leaf Service award to Angie for exceptional service to the CWL for at least ten years. In 2018, at the 25th anniversary celebration of our Council, we recognized Angie with the prestigious CWL National Bellelle Guerin Award for her dedication to the CWL as she worked tirelessly in our parish and diocese to keep the vision, faith and dream of Bellelle Guerin alive and thriving in our community for over 25 years.

Angie has many fond memories of CWL events and programs over the years. She says, "Our 25th Anniversary at Our Lady of the Atonement in June 2018 was very memorable. Also, our fall fundraisers were always joyous as we worked together to make them better each year. They were a time of laughter, socializing and the foundation of everlasting relationships." These words are the very essence of the Catholic Women's League of Canada values and mandate.

Antonette Lane

Date and location of birth: March 9, 1943, in Stoutenburg, The Netherlands. Immigrated to Canada on April 2, 1953. Lived near St. Mary's, Ontario for six months, then bought a farm in Seaforth, Ontario.

Date joined CWL: 1964

Were you born and raised Catholic? Yes.

Early religious memories:

Each day started with morning prayers. We always said a prayer of blessing before and after each meal. After supper the whole family knelt around the supper table and said the Rosary. If we had company, they joined in.

We knelt at our bedside with Mom and said our night prayers before we were tucked in. We often went to Mass in the morning before school, always to Sunday Mass and often to Benediction on Sunday afternoon.

Father's name: Gerald Van den Hengel.

Mother's name: Mary Van den Hengel-Boersen

Number of siblings: Ten—five brothers and five sisters.

Order of birth: Antonette was number six, "that middle child".

Father's occupation: Farmer

Mother's occupation: Homemaker

Fond family memories:

- Christmas celebrations: Dad played the mouth harmonica; he would play and we would all sing.
- St. Nicholas' visit on December 5th.
- Playing cards or board games as a family.
- Going for car rides and always stopping for an ice cream before we came home.
- Singing while we were driving, always being encouraged by Dad, "Sing, girls, sing!"
- Having friends over and dancing to our records in the kitchen.

Hardships in childhood:

Being immigrants, money was tight. Living on a farm meant lots of hard work and we were all expected to help out. We all helped in the fields: haying, pulling weeds from fields of growing crops, harvesting and threshing grains, picking cucumbers, helping Mom weed and harvest her huge garden, canning vegetables and fruits to sustain us for the winter.

Also, going to a new school, in a new country, when we could not speak or read the language was difficult, especially in the first six months. We had an advantage over other students, however, as we were all quite advanced in arithmetic, and because of this, even though our English was poor, we were not held back at the end of our first school term. It was difficult to make friends during this time and we stuck pretty close together as a family during recesses.

As time progressed we did make friends and were not so dependent on each other for company. One happy event that occurred yearly during the '50s was the Delaware Picnic. It was an event for the Dutch population of southwestern Ontario. Most of the attendees were new immigrants like we were. The day would start with an open air Mass celebrated by one of the priests of the Sacred Heart, who ran a seminary in Delaware and on whose grounds the picnic took place. Everyone would bring lots of food and drinks, and many games and activities occurred during the afternoon. Most families would have to leave in good time, because, like us, they were farmers and needed to go home to milk cows and do other farm chores.

Family traditions:

Christmas was always richly celebrated by our family. We each probably only received one gift, but we learned very early in life that family was much more important than presents. As soon as we were old enough, we were allowed to go to Midnight Mass and when we returned home, Mom would have a feast of homemade raisin bread, cheese, cookies, squares, cake and pie. Although turkey is not traditionally Dutch, we soon were eating full turkey dinners with all the trimmings for our main meal.

For New Year's Mom would always make "oliebollen," a deep-fried delicacy [doughnut].

Easter always began by attending all Holy Week services, then Easter Vigil services followed by lots of delicious home baking. For Easter, we also often had an Easter egg hunt in the yard or orchard, searching for hard-boiled eggs.

Schooling:

Getting an education for all of us was very important to my Dad. After Grade 13 at Seaforth District High School, I went to Teachers' College in Stratford for one year and obtained my teaching qualifications. My first teaching position was at St. Joseph's School in Clinton, Ontario, where I taught Junior Grade 1, Grade 1 and 2 with 42 children in my class. Clinton was close to home so I was able to get a ride back and forth to home every day. I taught there for two years, starting in 1962.

Married life:

On August 15, 1964, I married John Lane at St. James' Roman Catholic Church in Seaforth. At that time, John was a barber in St. Thomas. John Lyons was the chairman of the Catholic School Board in St. Thomas and was one of John's customers. He invited me to come to St. Thomas for a meeting and I was hired to teach at St. Michael's School in St. Thomas. I taught Grade 1 and 2 at St. Michael's until 1969, when I was assigned to become a remedial reading teacher at St. Michael's and St. Raphael's Schools.

In these years I started to attend Western University at evening, summer and intercession classes to obtain a BA, which I achieved in 1978. As well as classes at Western, I also obtained a number of Department of Education courses to increase my skills at teaching reading and especially to be knowledgeable about special education, for those students struggling with learning.

In 1975, Monsignor Morrison School was completed and I taught Special Education there until 1982 when I had the opportunity become the Special Education Consultant for the Elgin County Roman Catholic Schools, a position I held until I retired in 1997. At that time, the Board became part of the London District Catholic School Board. I did work for the London Board, on a part-time basis, administering psychometric tests to children in Elgin County, until 2000.

Proudest achievement:

My proudest achievement was when John and I became parents to Andrew Gerard Francis Lane on May 14, 1980. We had longed to have a child for 16 years and finally it became a reality. We were overjoyed and continue to delight in his accomplishments. Because Andrew attended the schools where I worked, it was easy to be involved in his activities. Andrew enjoyed sports, especially hockey and basketball. Both John and I greatly enjoyed

attending practices, games, and tournaments. By now, my siblings' families were ever increasing and we had many a family gathering.

One vacation we enjoyed on a yearly basis for many years was spending the first week in July at Lac Manitou in Québec, north of Ottawa, at my brother's cottage. My brother would join us as would my sister, her husband and their two children. We often went back to Ottawa for the glorious July 1st celebrations, with their amazing fireworks displays. We have happy memories of weeks spent swimming, fishing, canoeing, badminton tournaments, board games, card games and lots of "smarties".

John, Andrew and I took one long vacation while Andrew was young and that was to Vancouver Island. My brother lived in Calgary and we visited with him on the way. We took in many of the attractions along the way, and Andrew was at the age where we could not by-pass Drumheller to see the dinosaurs.

Activities:

During my working years, I did not have time for being involved in community work. I did, however, from the time I was 13, sing in the church choir, an activity I still engage in and am thrilled to be able to go back to now that most of the pandemic restrictions have lifted.

Since I've retired, I've been more active in CWL and church activities. For ten years I was on the team which taught the RCIA Program. As well, I taught the Rosary to primary children at Morrison School for ten years. I was involved in organizing and planning the World Day of Prayer in the city for many years. I've become very active in CWL activities, serving two terms as President. Along with Pat Calvert, we organized many successful garage sales and Christmas bazaars. I've worked with "the pie ladies" and served refreshments for the "Right to Life" Life Chain.

I have been an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, taking Communion to Catholic residents at Extendicare in Port Stanley on the first Sunday of the month for over 40 years. Sadly, I have been unable to do this for the past two years. After retirement, I have enjoyed some wonderful vacations. I was able to visit Egypt with a friend. John and I have been to Florida a number of times, to Cuba three times and have taken amazing trips to California, Italy, Paris, the east coast of Canada as well as the east coast of the United States. A few years ago, we went on a pilgrimage to visit the shrines in Québec, a wonderful experience! The trip of a lifetime occurred seven years ago when John, Andrew and I along with ten other family members, went back to the

Netherlands and I was able to show John and Andrew where I was born, the church where I was Baptized and where I went to school. Since I still have many cousins in The Netherlands, we had a huge gathering of family with whom to be acquainted and re-acquainted. We also explored many sights and venues of the country. Fabulous!

Family and friends:

Having a large family brings so many blessings! Our family of Mom, Dad, and 11 kids has grown to approximately 200 people. All 11 of us are still living and reasonably healthy. We range in age from 86 to 68. Unfortunately, two brothers-in-law have passed away. We try to get together with the whole extended family at a summer gathering once a year, but of course that has not been possible the last two years. There are always so many relatives to catch up with and new babies to admire. We do get together with my siblings and their spouses twice a year and were very fortunate to be able to do that last October.

I have good friends in many circles—a Sunday morning breakfast group, choir, teachers, board office, CWL, and neighbours. One friend, Lois, remains a constant. I met her when I started Grade 6 after moving to Seaforth in 1953 and she has been my forever friend since. I have also been friends with Ann for over 45 years. She is now in a nursing home and it has been difficult to stay in touch, but her daughter does connect us by phone and we have seen each other over Zoom [video conferencing].

My faith journey:

As discussed previously, family prayer was very prominent during my childhood. Once I was away from home, prayer was still very important to me, but not as regular as it was while living at my parents' home. We have always prayed before meals and bedtime prayers have always been part of our lives. As John also came from a Catholic home, Sunday Mass was not considered optional and we have relished going to various churches and services on our journeys. We especially appreciated the many gorgeous Basilicas and churches which we visited in Italy, particularly in Rome. Throughout my working life, and after my retirement, I have tried to go to a weekday Mass at least once a week.

Today, my prayer life is still simple. I am signed on to a number of online prayer groups each morning including the Formed.org website which is provided through our parish, and read the daily Mass readings and the reflections provided in, "The Word Among Us".

When the pandemic struck, John and I started to follow a TV Mass on a daily basis, followed by the Angelus and the Rosary. It has become a calming, comforting every day routine in our lives. Bedtime prayers are still important to us.

My hopes and dreams:

As John and I are aging, we hope to still have many happy, healthy, years together. We have lived in our home for 52 years, and have seen many changes happening around us. Yet, we dream that we will be here for many more years. We thoroughly enjoy our gardens in the summer, and John is always happy to cut the grass on his rider mower.

We also have hopes for our son, who is still single. We pray he will find the love of his life, so he will be able to carry on our legacy. We have lived a blessed life and are very grateful for all the wonderful memories we have created and enjoyed throughout our lives.

Barbara Dobson

CWL member since 1954

Barbara was born in Windsor on January 17, 1932, to Joseph and Florence (Schooley) LaDouceur. Her father was raised on a farm in Vankleek Hill, outside Ottawa. Her mother's family came from Keighley, Yorkshire, England. Her parents met at a dance in Toronto. Both loved to dance. In fact, her father was asked by the Arthur Murray Studios to teach dancing. Joseph and Florence married and lived in the Windsor area. Her father worked at Ford as a mechanic. He died at 37 years of age leaving behind his wife and seven children. Her mother was fortunate to be hired by Bell Canada as a switchboard operator to support the family. The family owned a small farm outside Windsor and were able to grow some of their food.

Barbara was 11 years old when her father died. She had two brothers and four sisters. She called herself the middle deprived child because of her position in the family. Barbara went to Blessed Sacrament School and was a member of Blessed Sacrament Church. She made her first Communion at St. Anne Church, was Confirmed at Blessed Sacrament and married her husband, William, at St. Theresa Church in 1950 at the age of 18. She had met William at Tamblyn Drugs [drugstore] where she worked and he was a regular customer.

She is the proud mother of seven boys: Bill, Joe, David, Ricky, Tim, Rob and Steve. Bill and Ricky have passed away. Barbara is blessed with ten grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. All her boys are well educated, making Barbara very proud of their achievements. Barbara went to school at St. Francis but was unable to finish Grade 9. However, in her mid 40's, she went to St. Clair College to complete her high school education. As well, in 1973 at 42 years of age, she learned to drive a stick shift.

Growing up, she and her siblings had chores they were responsible for. She and her sisters had to do the dishes. One sister washed, one sister dried and Barbara put the dishes away. To make the chore more pleasant they would sing as they did the dishes. Another responsibility was to babysit her siblings. On weekends, they loved to go dancing. Her surviving siblings are her oldest brother, 93 years old and her baby sister, who is 80. Barbara just celebrated her 90th birthday.

Shortly after they were married, her husband went to school in London, Ontario. They lived in London for four years while he completed his

education. While living in London, she met a neighbour who was Catholic. Most of her other neighbours were Protestant. This lady encouraged Barbara to join the CWL at Blessed Sacrament Church. Her involvement was minimal as she was busy raising her family but it did give her a connection to the parish.

Upon their return to Windsor, William went to Wayne to obtain a Master's degree. Upon graduation, he was employed as a microbiologist working for Parke Davis in Detroit, which later became Warner Lambert. He worked for the company for 27 years. During this time, he was asked to start a fermentation plant in Portugal. What was to be a one-year stint turned into three and a half years. Barbara and William lived outside Lisbon in Carvalhas. Her boys were grown up and on their own by this time. Upon their return, William was diagnosed with cancer and given six months to live. Due to Barbara's nursing and care he lived for a year. Barbara has been a widow now for 30 years.

In addition to being a caregiver for her husband, she also took care of her mother and her sister Eileen. This was after her husband had passed. Her mother lived with her for three to four years. So you can see if someone needed care, Barbara was there to provide it.

Barbara worked as a waitress at Menard's Tavern for 22 years. It was well known for its fish especially the frog legs. Now it has been renamed but still operates as an eatery.

Barbara was very modest when she was interviewed, saying that her life was not interesting. Fortunately, her son Steve dropped in and was able to provide more information. He described his mother as a go-getter, "Let's get things done." She was very handy at completing jobs whether it was electrical, plumbing, etc. Obviously, she got tired of waiting for others to complete the work. He also stated she "tells it as it is."

Ten years ago, Barbara went to Hawaii with her daughter-in-law. While there, she went on a helicopter ride. What a wonderful experience! The only other vacation other than visiting family in Sudbury, French River or Penetanguishene was a trip with her husband to the Bahamas in 1970. Because of the size of the family and other factors, they installed a pool in the backyard for the enjoyment of the family. She still lives by herself in the house she moved into in 1958.

As her family grew up, Barbara became more active in the church and the CWL. At St. Thomas the Apostle parish, she sang in the choir, made banners

for the church and made sure there were flowers on the altar. She was President of the CWL at St. Thomas and a member until the church closed. She then became a member of St. John Vianney CWL. It was just starting up again, so Barbara became the first President. She is a valued member. At one time, she had started a stitching group. They met at Barbara's house to quilt and sew and of course to socialize.

These are only some of the highlights of Barbara's life. [The interviewer] enjoyed the trip down memory lane with Barbara.



Barbara at her 90th
birthday party



Barbara with four of her sons

Betty Mitchell

My father was a barber, my mother a nurse. I do not have any siblings.

My parents were religious. We attended St. Martin of Tours parish.

I started taking part in church activities in 1967. I joined the Catholic Women's League in 1953. I joined to meet and make friends. I was President twice, Regional Rep and Treasurer.

Being a member of the CWL has made my faith stronger. It has given me a sense of belonging

Betty Scherer

Corpus Christi, Windsor

My name is Betty Scherer. I am 91 years old and a 60 plus year member of the CWL. I am a first born Canadian of emigrated parents from Rumania, of German descent. I married my husband Adam in 1951. We were blessed with four daughters, Theresa, Sharon, Elizabeth, and Susan. I started to take part in church activities once my girls were a little older, joining the gallery and funeral choirs, which I continue today.

While visiting my neighbour, I met a past president of Christ the King Catholic Women's League named Marion Hodgson. She asked if I would like to become a member of the CWL. I joined and have been a member since that time. I was elected Vice President in 1975 and served one year, was President for a term of two years, then Past President for two years.

I went on to become the Windsor Regional Chairperson, which at that time was called Windsor Central Committee President.

The London Diocesan Council encouraged me to run for office. To my surprise, I was elected First Vice President for a term of two years, as no one else had run for that position on the executive. I continued as Chairperson, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary for six more years on the Diocesan Executive. The last diocesan election I went out for, there were several women running for the position of First Vice President on the first ballot. No person was elected by majority. The election committee decided to choose one of the persons running, and gave the position to Theresa Loebach.

I continued my work with the Christ the King CWL, and also turned my energy to volunteering on the Hotel Dieu Hospital Auxiliary. I was so pleased to find many of the volunteers were CWL members, including Rose Vallance and Mary Elias from Christ the King.

With the amalgamation of the three parishes; Christ the King, St. Gabriel's, and St. Martin de Porres, all with their own CWL's, the women who made the transfer to one CWL for Corpus Christi have to be admired for their work to accomplish the task. Co-operation, willingness to change, and love of the CWL were great to witness.

Being with the CWL has enriched my life with friendships I have made, and has made my faith stronger. I have enjoyed reading the League Magazine and finding out what the National Executive and other Provinces have been

doing. I thoroughly enjoy reading the Corpus Christi CWL Newsletters.

When COVID-19 set in, many changes had to be made at all levels of the league. Once again the league came through, and today we are slowly getting back to our normal ways.

The CWL will always be a part of my life. As I cannot be as active as I would like and do not drive, it is good to keep in touch. Remember the senior members of your CWL and give them a call at least once a year. It is good to be remembered. God, bless all the hard working members of the Corpus Christi CWL. May they continue the work of the league.

I feel all women have a special place in the CWL, and the CWL has a special place for each member.

I end with one of my favorite quotes I would start my talks with, "What you are is a gift from God. What you do is your gift to God".

With many thanks,

Betty Scherer

Beverly Barrette

St. Simon and St. Jude, Belle River, Ontario

I was born to Raymond Strong and Stephanie (Renaud) on August 9th, 1939 at Hotel Dieu hospital in Windsor Ontario. I lived on the family farm in Belle River where my dad grew up. Dad worked at Ford and farmed our 60 acres. Mom did all the cooking and cleaning with Mimi's help [grandmother]. She also sewed all of our clothes, milked the cows and raised pigs and chickens for eating and eggs. My sister Ellen is six years younger so we did not have much in common growing up but became close in our married life. We did play ball but I would get upset because she could never catch the ball.

I can remember things being a bit tight when Ford went on strike in 1946. However, nothing changed in our day-to-day life living on the farm.

We were a very religious family. Every night, right after dinner we said the Rosary even if we had company or boyfriends over. We attended church every Sunday and every church function. My father was for the conservative party and held meetings in our home. Mom voted as dad did. Dad was a member of the Knights of Columbus; he was on the Rochester Council and was heavily involved with the community. Mom was in the Catholic Women's League and worked the funerals and socials, baking and cooking.

Every year we had the Strong's family reunion on our farm. New Year's Day was the big family gathering on my mom's side; she was one of 13 children. My grandfather on my mother's side could not speak English. Therefore, my father and grandfather never spoke to each other, so they got along quite well.

I grew up in a two-story farmhouse where I shared a bedroom with my sister. We used chamber pails that I had to keep clean. Our bathroom was put in just before I got married. Mom was constantly scrubbing and whitewashing the outhouse. Since my Mimi lived with us, she helped Mom with the cooking and cleaning. My job was to collect the eggs. I hated it because I was afraid the chickens would peck at me. I also helped clean up after dinner and with the baking for special occasions like Christmas. My mother taught me to sew.

Every weekend Dad would take us to the Belle River pier and we would get ice cream. My favorite was chocolate and still is. At Christmas we decorated the tree, and put up the crèche. Mimi would give us knitted stockings to

hang and in the morning they would be filled with socks, underwear and other things needed for school. Mimi always helped us to write our letter to Santa. My grandfather died when I was six, and all I can remember of him is his mustache and him being very quiet.

I loved grade school, with twenty kids in one room. It was right across from our home and I would go home for lunch every day. Even though I was known for talking too much I did very well. The teacher disciplined us by making us write out initials on the blackboard. My initials were B.S. and all the kids would laugh. I hated math but loved to write stories. One of my teachers lived in London and boarded at our house during the school week. She was like a big sister to me. One teacher would take us to the back room and give us the strap if we misbehaved. I remember one birthday having the class over for a birthday dinner. After school, we played ball, worked in the garden and picked whatever was in season. Dad called all the school board meetings and mom was our school custodian. My best friend Annette lived just down the road and we spent a lot of time at each other's house enjoying dinners and sleepovers. We stood up at each other's weddings. I had a pen pal in high school who lived in Germany. His name was Hans. In his last letter, he asked me to pray for him, as he wasn't feeling well. I later received a letter from his friend that he had passed. I kept his letters for many years. My first date was with my friend's brother at the age of 15. I had to be home before 11:00. I was involved with the young Christian students. A nun would send me to retreats; she thought I would become a nun. I got my driver's licence in Comber when I was 17. I went through a stop sign but he passed me anyway. Before then mom would drive us, without a license, to Moy Ave in Windsor and we would walk downtown to do our shopping.

I always wanted to be a nurse growing up. After Grade 12, I ended up going to Toronto for an eight-week teaching course. I taught in Chatham from September to Christmas and knew teaching was not for me. I went back to school for typing and shorthand and I graduated with the rest of my class.

My first job was at Conklin Lumber yard in Belle River where I worked for 30 years with only a one-week maternity leave.

My girlfriend's brother had just broken up with his girlfriend and was looking for a date. Edward was quite the opposite of me; he was the quiet one and he let me do all of the talking. We shared the same faith and family values. My parents loved Edward from the first time he walked through our door. We were married 18 years before his first heart attack. He was 46. He had two open-heart surgeries in three years. My mom was in a nursing

home and I visited her every day. On February 12, 1996, I came home from visiting Mom and he was lying peacefully on the couch. I can still see him. We lived in the old schoolhouse across from the farm that Dad had renovated, we stayed there for six years. Later in life, Edward drew up the plans for our new home and we built it on the family farm in 1968. We both continued to work. Our daughter Elaine had a lot of friends and she was involved in many school and church activities. She always wanted to be a social worker and did end up becoming one.

I loved my vacation to Ireland with my daughter and son-in-law. It was my son-in-law's heritage. We spent our time checking cemeteries for relatives' names. I also went to Rome with the church. Just the idea of being in Rome moved me in a way I can't describe. I have fond memories of all the Florida vacations and all the family picnics in Leamington.

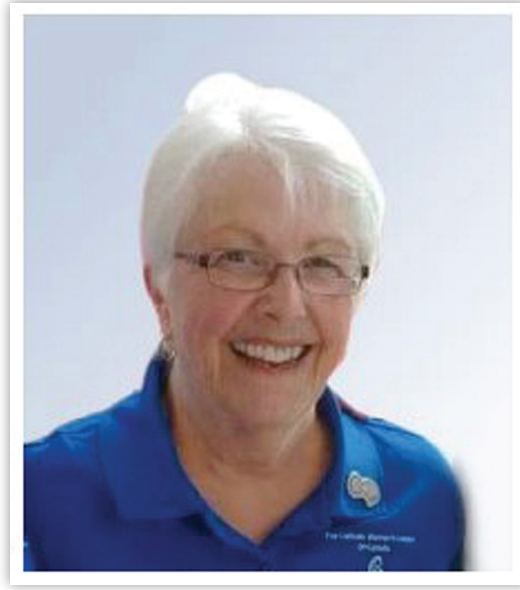
I have been a member of the CWL for 65 years; I enjoy the sisterhood. Every year I would take a week's vacation to help with our bazaar. [We] made crafts, pies and memories. I also belong to the Mission Card Club, the K CELLS, on the Bereavement committee at St. Simon and St. Jude, St. Vincent de Paul and 30 years with Meals on Wheels.

In 2013, I received the shocking diagnosis of lung cancer. I had the lower left lobe of my lung removed. I was so nervous as they wheeled me into the operating room. I was holding onto my Rosary, but the nurse had to take it away. I put myself into God's hands and inner peace came over me, then I knew everything would be okay. My tests now show all is okay but I do find myself out of breath very easily. My deep Christian faith keeps me going.

I have three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. I am now living in town enjoying my family, friends and daily Mass. I hope to continue enjoying good health, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren.

Dianne Kehoe

Submitted by K. Meyer



Dianne was born in Toronto. She lived with her parents and younger brother. After high school, Dianne started working for Prudential Insurance in downtown Toronto. She had several different positions within Prudential. In April 1967, she met Jim on a blind date. When Jim's career brought him to London, Ontario in September, they decided to move up their wedding date. They were married that December when she was 24.

Dianne's mother was an agnostic and her father United. Neither of them went to church. Jim was Catholic and attended Mass regularly. Dianne started going to Mass with him and felt she had found what was missing in her life. While Jim was working in London, she attended Marriage Prep at St. Michael's Cathedral in downtown Toronto. They were married at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church on December 2, 1967. Dianne felt that the Catholic faith was a good fit for her but she did not convert right away.

Within a week of being married, Jim and Dianne began married life in the townhome he had rented. Their first daughter, Michelle, was born ten months later. Eventually Dianne met with Fr. Stan McGuire at St. John the Divine. She was received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil.

Dianne and Jim had two more daughters, Kristen and Jennifer. Dianne enjoyed hosting meals and became a great cook. She even managed to prepare a full Christmas dinner on the Christmas Day Kristen was born.

When the girls were in school, Dianne returned to work part time. In the summer of 1984, she started working at the London Diocese Chancery office.

She feels that through her work, she got to see the human side of the Church and it enhanced her faith. She took Canon Law courses that helped her better understand her job and her faith. She worked in different areas of the Chancery including secretary for Fr. Jim Williams and Fr. Tony Daniels. She was an early adopter of computers and was soon teaching others throughout the diocese.

After an impressive career at the Chancery, Dianne retired in 2004. They awarded her a Papal Honour, the Benemerenti Medal. This is a medal awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for long and exceptional service to the Catholic Church.

When Dianne retired, she started her CWL journey. She relished being aligned with the strong, intelligent, faith-filled women that work together to deepen their faith, to affect change (social justice) where needed and to serve not only the poor but also the community at large. She expanded her knowledge about the CWL by attending conventions, education days and regional fall days. She read all the information on the National and Provincial websites. She is a strong believer in the importance of information. As members, we should know our history and our many accomplishments.

The St. John the Divine CWL had had some strong leaders but soon after Dianne joined, there was no one to step forward to lead. Fr. Rob recruited Dianne and Mary Anne Grenier to co-chair. It was a partnership that would last for years. Together they started the Crafty Ladies to support the Christmas Bazaar and reorganized the funeral lunches after the Board of Health stopped allowing homemade food to be served. Craft shows at Cherryhill Mall, strawberry socials, catered lunches and prayer quilts are all initiatives that Dianne helped organize. Dianne served three separate two-year terms as Council President. She had many other roles including Secretary, Past President and Organization Convenor. Recently she served 12 consecutive years on the St. John the Divine Council Executive. She has organized registrations for the Diocesan and Provincial Conventions. She has served as Secretary and presently holds the position of Chair of the London Region CWL, which is part of the Diocesan network.

Over the years, the Conventions have been an opportunity for ladies of the CWL sisterhood to come together. For many like Dianne, they are a way to come together with like-minded women and share faith and support. This has been consistent over the long history of the CWL.



Through Dianne's story, we see how the sharing of talents helps to make the CWL strong. From her career, she brings her organizational, communication and technology skills. She brings her strong faith from her experience at the Chancery. She also brings her love of hosting and cooking and her talents as a crafter. She loves the Sisterhood and knows the members of the Council at all levels. She is a strong supporter of the advocacy efforts of the CWL and is proud of the impact that the CWL has had influencing government policy. Dianne has retired from leadership positions at the parish level but she continues to support the Council's efforts.

Doreen Brosseau

St. Francis Xavier CWL, Tilbury, Ontario.

My Catholic Women's League (CWL) Journey

My mother was an active member of the CWL at St. Clement's Parish in McGregor and was a great inspiration to me.

In 1960 at a Sunday Mass they announced that the CWL would be collecting dues at their Annual May Tea the following Thursday. My neighbour invited me to go to the Tea with her; I did and joined the League that day.

For the next eighteen years, I was busy raising a family and working in an office in Wheatley, unable to attend the afternoon meetings. When I went to part time work a friend, Eva Thibeault, invited me to go to a CWL meeting with her not knowing elections were being held. I was nominated and elected to position of Recording Secretary!! As time when on I was fortunate enough to hold every position on that council except Treasurer. I was then asked by Lillian Mousseau to be First Chairperson for the Kent Deanery!!

What a way to make friends and enjoy yourself, to help at their many activities, such as the May Tea, visiting the nursing and rest homes, card parties, etc.

I now reside at Hudson Manor Retirement Residence and am able to continue to service our Council in a small way by being a member of the calling committee, trimming stamps for the missions, and doing my best to be liaison for the CWL here at the Manor.

Because of my involvement with the League, I also took part in several other ministries of St. Francis Xavier Parish, making many precious friends along the way. I am truly grateful for my 62 years of membership in the CWL and encourage every woman to join.

Sincerely, Doreen



Dorothy (Dora) Margaret Theresa Telfer (nee Di Carlo)

Member of the Catholic Women's League for more than 65 years, Dora joined in 1948 at Blessed Sacrament Church on Oxford Street in London, Ontario. Her story was submitted by Lori Loreta Alexander, who interviewed Dora's daughter, Judy McIntyre in honor of her mom.

Dora was born in Montréal on December 19, 1920. Her parents are Anthony and Mary Di Carlo. Her sister's names by birth order are Elizabeth "Betty", Rosalie "Rose", Violet, Helena "Lena", and Florence "Flo". Dora is second to the youngest. They are a very close family, and Dora loves to visit them all together. She also has all contacts of her aunts, uncles and cousins in Montréal. Dora would say, "Home is where love is." Every visit seems like having a reunion.

Dora went to St. Anthony's elementary school. They walked to school every day; she completed up to Grade 8 and above. Her family are very religious and they all go to church every Sunday morning.

Dora's grandparents had a grocery store, so after school and on weekends, she helped at the store. Her mother died young, when Dora was only 12 years old. Her father worked at the Courthouse as a Court Interpreter.

Dora went on her first date with chaperon around the age of 20. She worked at the Five and Dime store as Floor Walker then as Supervisor. She also worked part-time at Metropolitan and at Christmas time at the post office.

Dora has two best friends, Adelaide and Stella. They spent most of their time together skiing on holidays and swimming.

Dora spent her money on trips and skiing. She never drove; she did not pursue post-secondary education either in college or university.

Dora met her husband through her sister Elizabeth. Elizabeth sent cigarettes to a soldier named Tom who had a brother named Bob. (Tom became Elizabeth's husband.) The soldiers wrote back to Elizabeth to thank her; this started great friendships for both sisters and brothers. After the war, Tom lived in London and Dora and family still live in Montréal. When Tom visited Elizabeth in Montréal he took his brother (Bob) Robert Edwin Telfer with him. Feelings were mutual and Bob became Dora's husband. Two sisters married two brothers.

Bob worked at CN Rail; Dora did not work. They moved to London 1948 then had four girls: Doreen, Judy, Susan and Rosalie and raised a nephew named Richard. They lived in the Oxford/Linwood area in London for 50 years.

Dora loved to work for the church. She always went to church and Bob always took her where she wanted to go. She loved sewing and she made drapes for the school windows. On one of her trips to Montréal, Dora met Bishop Sherlock on the train and they became good friends.

She joined the CWL in 1948, at Blessed Sacrament on Oxford Street. Bob built the confessional at the church. Dora has been very active at church and in the CWL, helping to make sandwiches at funeral luncheons, cooking cabbage rolls, helping with the banquet, at bingos, and other games like euchre. She enjoyed doing anything she could to help and was very happy to do so.

Dora was awarded the CWL Service Pin for 60 years at Mary Immaculate Parish. She is also very active with the St. Vincent the Paul in Mary Immaculate Parish and the Mission Store.

She loves to sew, make dresses, carve leather, and decorate cakes and often cooked different food every night. Some of her special foods are spaghetti, lasagna, (really any pasta) and fish.

There were family traditions around the holidays. They would attend Midnight Mass at Christmas and afterwards wake up the kids to open gifts and then back to bed. Greetings were shared at Christmas and on New Year's Eve there was an open house for friends and neighbors. At Easter, Dora always made new clothes for the kids to wear. Birthdays were always celebrated.

Dora loves to visit her extended family. She has had the privilege to travel seven times a year because her husband Bob has a CN privileged pass. She travelled a lot, going to Europe, Switzerland, France, Germany and Holland and all over Ontario, Chicago, and to Disney World.

Some of the family's activities included camping all over Ontario and Sunday drives for sightseeing. Then in later years, the family bought a cottage in Goderich, Ontario.

Dora taught her children that family sticks together and to be helpful to other people. The most important thing is to keep your family together.

Dora is proud of her family and of what she accomplished as a dressmaker. She was still sewing until 95 years of age.

Edythe Badgley



Phone interview conducted by Mary Lyons (daughter) on Sunday, March 13, 2022 at 10:30 a.m.

Date of birth: January 20, 1936.

I was born in Drumheller, Alberta and, like most families during the war years, we had very little. I came from a family of eight. Life was hard and my parents struggled greatly.

Growing up, I cleaned and babysat while going to school with everything I made going to the family. Though my parents didn't practise, I chose to attend church when I became a teenager. It was here that Fr. Lynett guided me to a spiritual life. It provided me with great comfort and support during those years.

In those days, you didn't have dates. You usually saw each other as part of a group. I first met my husband (Norman) while he was doing his paper route and I was going to an appointment to do a lady's hair first thing in the morning.

We would eventually marry and lived in a variety of places such as Vancouver, Thunder Bay, Hamilton, Scarborough, Burlington and then, finally, London.

Married life brought much joy as I watched the children grow up, laugh and play with each other; they always had so much fun together. Being a mother of eight is one of the greatest accomplishments in my life.

Though we didn't have much, we would spend our time together as a family: enjoying regular walks, treat nights every Friday with popcorn and Kool-Aid along with our Sunday night devotion. We tried to raise our kids to be honest and empathetic and to always love God. After the death of my first husband, I married Tom who was always there for us until his passing.

Joining CWL was wonderful for me as it provided much guidance, support and friendship. Though I learned knitting, sewing and baking through CWL, it was the warmth and closeness of everyone that meant the most to me through good times and bad. I have had CWL friendships that lasted 70 years. It is terrific to see how [the CWL] continue to change with the times and to focus on the social issues that are important today.



Sr. Elaine Cole C.S.J.

Parents and Family

When and where were you born? I was born in Strathroy, Ontario on May 4, 1935.

What are the names of your parents? My parents are Jonathan Roy Cole and Phyllis Marjorie Cole (McAtee).

What did your parents do for a living? My father was a butcher and took great pride in making the most out of a side of beef. He made excellent sausage. My mother loved mathematics and worked in accounting before she was married and then did the bookkeeping for my father's meat shop.

How many siblings do you have? What are their names? Who were you closest too? I have five siblings, Anthony Germain (Gerry) is the oldest, Janet Valerie, David Roy, Rosemary Phyllis, and Susan Lorraine (Lorie Sue).

Where are you in the birth order? I am the second oldest.

Did you play with your siblings? What kind of games did you play? We played in our playroom in the basement. I liked to play school. We played "church". Outside we played tag, hide-and-seek, kick-the-can. We put on plays in the garage. As we grew older, we played (ping-pong) table tennis.

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? My early years coincided with the Second World War. My parents often recalled God's goodness when they put their last bill in the collection plate praying my dad would get a job. I remember using the cardboard cereal box to line my shoes that had a hole in the sole. Mother recalled a time when she had only three diapers for my sister Janet—one in the drawer, one on the baby, and one drying on the clothesline.

Were your parents religious? If so, how was religion observed in the home? We tried to observe the nine First Fridays and the First Saturdays. My parents encouraged Sunday Benediction, devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Help, Stations of the Cross—there was no television.

What were your parent's political beliefs? I think they often canceled each other's votes.

What organizations or clubs were they involved in? My father was active in getting St. Micheal's school built in 1940. He was also a member of the Holy Names Society. My mother was a member of the lady's group at church and was instrumental in getting the Catholic Women's League started in the Parish in the early 1950's.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? My mother's parents moved from Stratford to Leamington around 1948—Martina (Brewer) and Leander McAtee. My grandmother taught me how to use an electric sewing machine and was an excellent seamstress.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? If so, how often did this happen? Weddings and funerals were the main gatherings we attended.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? I remember living in four different houses while growing up. The last house has five bedrooms. My sister Janet and I always shared a bed and a bedroom. The room was big enough that we could move the furniture every now and then.

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your siblings' duties? We had weekend cleaning chores (dusting and vacuuming) and got an allowance. This enabled us to go to the movies on Saturday afternoon.

What skills did you learn? Who taught you? I learned how to cook leftovers for our evening meals because my mother would be involved with CWL. I watched my dad cook breakfast after Sunday Mass.

What activities did your family do together? During Fr. Peyton's Rosary Crusade my family committed to saying the family Rosary. In our early years we would picnic and swim at one of the many beaches on Lake Erie.

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood? My favorite Sunday meal was roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy, and peas.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays? The older members of the family went to Midnight Mass followed by food. Pre-Vatican times required fasting from midnight. We always ate Christmas dinner, etc. as a family.

Early Schooling

What was your elementary school like? St. Michael's school was built beside the church in 1940. The basement was unfinished and held girls and boys washrooms, the main floor had four rooms with coatrooms attached, there was an office, and workroom for teachers. The nuns lived in the convent next door.

Did you enjoy going to school as a child? Were there things about school that you didn't like? Looking back, I rarely remember speaking—children were seen and not heard. Memory work was important.

What was your favorite subject? My favorite subjects were English, singing, and art. I liked it when the teacher read to us after lunch e.g. Anne of Green Gables and Con of the Misty Mountain.

Did you have a favorite teacher? Why were they your favorite? Sister Baptista was my favorite teacher in Grade 7 and 8. She founded the parent teacher association at the school which had a big influence on how discipline was carried out which became more just.

What was discipline like at your school? It was very strict with harsh consequences for those who disobeyed. Corporal punishment (the strap) was the norm.

Were you ever teased or bullied at school? No.

Childhood Friends and Interests

What did you do after school and on weekends? I walked home from school. There were no after school activities in elementary school.

Who were your childhood friends? Children who lived in the neighborhood.

Did you have a best friend? What was their name? What did you do when you spent time together? Yes, my best friend was Shirley. We played with our dolls and rode our bicycles. My best friend at school was Clara DePelsmacker. Also Veronica Cambell when she moved to Leamington.

Do you have a pen-pal? If so, where are they from? No.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I did not know what I wanted to be. I did not want to be a nun.

Teenage Years

Did you have any additional responsibilities or chores as a teenager? I babysat and had housekeeping chores at home.

How old were you when you went on your first date? Did your parents have any rules about dating? Double dating was the most common way of dating in my early teens. I cannot remember my first date.

Did you belong to any clubs/teams? If so, what were they? In high school, I was a member of the gamma club, the majorettes, cheerleaders, and glee club (junior and senior). Also, I played basketball, volleyball, and table tennis. I was treasurer of the teen club in Leamington which organized a dance every Saturday night in the Shotten Hall.

Did you have a part-time job? Did you enjoy it? Why? I was a clerk at the Metropolitan store on the weekends. I enjoyed having a job, but knew I did not want that job to be my life's work.

How did you spend the money you made? I opened a bank account. The money was mostly spent on myself and on buying gifts.

How old were you when you got your driver's license? I think I was 17 or 18. Cars only had the standard stick shift drive at the time. My test consisted of driving around about six blocks making all right hand turns by signaling with my arm out the window (there were no signal lights on cars in those days).

Did your relationship with your parents change during this time? Although I had my license, I rarely drove. My seeming independence did not make much of a difference in my relationship with my parents.

Adult: Further Education

Did you get any post-secondary education (college or university)? After entering the Convent in 1956, I picked up high school academic subjects I

needed to go onto university.

Which school(s) did you go to? Why did you decide to go to that school?

I went to Mount St. Joseph Academy, the University of Western Ontario (London), Brescia College, Aquinas College in Grand Rapids (MA Religious Education), the University of Alberta (postgraduate in Geology and Biology) and Gonzaga University in Spokane Washington (Focus on Leadership).

What did you study? Science and religion.

Church, Political, and Other Involvements

Did you belong to a church? My community and I have always belonged to a parish.

What kind of church-related activities have you been involved with? What was it like? Did you enjoy it? In my teen years I was a member of the Sodality of Mary. I made five retreats at the Holy Family Retreat House before entering the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. For as long as I can remember I have been involved in music ministry in whatever parish I dwelt.

Extracurricular Activities

Have you ever traveled? Did you travel often? In 1992, I traveled to El Salvador with Salvade to test the Peace Accord. In 1993, on sabbatical I traveled on pilgrimage to Greece and the Holy Land. In 2001, I traveled to the place of origin of the Sisters of St. Joseph in France. In 2006, I went on the Golden Jubilee year pilgrimage to Italy.

What is one of your biggest accomplishments in life and/or something you are most proud of doing? I have always desired to be where God wanted me to be, doing what God wanted me to do.

Elizabeth (Sharon) Barron

The story always begins at home. My story of faith development has been a lifelong journey of growth. From early childhood, my family always attended Mass together. My mother, Edna Bingham, a lifelong member of the Diocesan CWL, was a reader in our home parish of St. John the Baptist, in Amherstburg, Ontario, for many years. It was from her extensive involvement in the parish CWL that I learned about, and came to love, the Catholic Women's League and what it represents. Mom coordinated large fashion shows as fundraisers and served on the executive at various levels. She was President at St. John the Baptist and then moved up to the Diocesan Council where she held many positions until her term as President from 1978 to 1980. When our parish CWL disbanded, she continued as a member at St. Anthony of Padua parish in nearby Harrow, where she eventually received her 60 year pin!

My family played an integral role in the establishment of an auxiliary mission parish to St. John the Baptist Church called Malden Mission Parish. Our first Mass was celebrated by Fr. Vincent Thompson in the gymnasium of St. Theresa School in Malden Centre on Christmas Eve 1975 with approximately 500 people attending. The Mission flourished, and eventually, the parish bought the Malden Methodist Church, lovingly known as The Little White Church, at the end of Howard Avenue. The Mission was renamed St. Theresa of the Little Flower Chapel. This vibrant faith community was in existence from February 18, 1979 until June 25, 1995. My own family were blessed to be very active on many levels in Chapel life. My husband, Richard, was a reader and Eucharistic Minister, my son coordinated the altar servers, and my daughter and I sang in the choir. We were also involved in many fundraising activities such as breakfasts, bingos and may I say, a very successful Flea Market!

In addition, during this time, I served on St. John the Baptist Parish Council, acted as Chair for St. Theresa Chapel committee and served as a member of St. John's liturgy committee. In all these endeavors, I believe Christ was guiding me to serve those in my community and fostering growth in my life and spiritual journey. St. John the Baptist Parish CWL reorganized and became quite active again in 2013. Once again, I felt blessed to be part of this group. A highlight was one of our many High Teas where a group of members, dressed as nuns, entertained 125 guests with rousing renditions of fabulous songs from Whoopi Goldberg's movie, "Sister Act". Our choir director was Fr. Donato Lwiyanto. It was quite a hit with the crowd as all

our other entertainment choices have proven to be. I was blessed to serve as President of our parish league in 2017-2018. Membership in the CWL has enhanced my personal and spiritual life. After many years of working in our family business, it has been uplifting to socialize with a wonderful group of women from our parish. I feel a real friendship with the members. Praying together, attending meetings and conventions, working together on fundraising projects, which in turn, allow us to benefit others... all these build a sisterhood that is so uplifting!

I have missed that sisterhood greatly through the pandemic, but the faith that has been built over the years, through program such as ALPHA, a true community building series which I attended, and parish Zoom presentations through COVID, have encouraged me to continue to build on that firm foundation, and I truly feel that online attendance at daily Mass, following the Bible in a Year podcast and daily Rosary, have allowed me to grow deeper in my prayer life, in spite of COVID. For, "every cloud has a silver lining" doesn't it?

I know my mom, my mentor, would be very proud of me!

We, the members of the CWL of St. John the Baptist Parish, Amherstburg, share this sentiment! We consider ourselves blessed to have Sharon as an integral part of our CWL and we are proud to share her life story with you!

Francien Arts

Parents and Family

When and where were you born? I was born in Zeeland, North Brabant, Holland on March 19, 1930.

What are the names of your parents? Harry and Helena Vanderburgt

Where was your family originally from? My family was always in the same place, on the same farm in Zeeland, Holland.

What did your parents do for a living? My parents were farmers—mixed farming, animals and vegetables. They took vegetables to market to sell on Monday mornings. Children always helped out on the farm.

How many siblings do you have? What are their names? Who were you closest too? There were seven children. I have two older sisters, one older brother and three younger brothers. Their names are Anna, Casey, Teresa, (Francien), Frank, Joe and Bill. I was closest with Teresa and Frank. I did everything with Teresa.

Did you play with your siblings? What kind of games did you play? We skipped and played outside. We had lots of cousins on the same street so we played with them too.

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? I grew up during the war; I was nine years old when the war started and 15 when it ended. My family was established on the farm prior to the war; had a hired hand to help and someone to help in the house so I feel that my family was well off although money was tight during the war. We had to feed the soldiers and butchered our own pig—this was only allowed once a year. Farmers were more well off than city people because we could grow our own food. Later in the war, German soldiers occupied our front room, front entrance and the hallways upstairs [including] between the family's bedrooms. My parents ensured that there were locks on the bedroom doors to protect the children from the soldiers. My parents took in a girl whose family was struggling.

Were your parents religious? If so, how was religion observed in the home? My mother was very religious, Dad also but not as much. When I was young, I went to an all-girls school at the convent (three doors from home); we attended Mass every morning.

What were your parent's political beliefs? Their political beliefs were never really talked about.

What organizations or clubs were they involved in? Dad belonged to the church band (he was a drummer), also a farmers organization. My mother was always a homemaker.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? My grandfather lived with us and I was very close to him. Cousins from my mother's side lived on our street. Cousins on Father's side lived further away, we visited them once a year. My family immigrated to Canada in 1948 to avoid my oldest brother going to war in Indonesia. My grandfather didn't come to Canada, since he had a heart condition so couldn't pass the medical to travel. I was very close to Grandfather and this made me sad to leave him behind.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? If so, how often did this happen? Family reunions on both sides were held yearly in Canada until the pandemic started. We always looked forward to both my husband Leo's and my family reunions. Initially these were held on my parents' family farm outside of Wyoming. Later on, siblings posted at their homes; we did potluck, everyone brought something. When we are all together there are 60 to 70 people.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? In Holland on the farm we had a four bedroom house. In Canada, we spent two years in Alberta on a sugar beet farm; we lived in a "beet workers" house. It was a tiny house with a wood stove. I remember ice on the blankets when we woke up. There was no running water, laundry was on a washboard, those were hard times. Then we moved to Lambton County, sponsored by Fr. Doublestein. My mother met him in Holland when their home was occupied by Canadian soldiers. We landed in Halifax, then went to Minto, New Brunswick. I worked as a nanny/housekeeper for a family to earn some money for the family. In the first home in Lambton, there was no indoor plumbing, it had four bedrooms upstairs, one downstairs on the farm. We were poor, but didn't know it. We were happy. We were survivors. The front porch was my special place in the house.

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your siblings' duties? I was responsible for dishes, cleaning, I was a part of everything; we always had to help. Saturday was cleaning day; we raked the yard every Saturday; cleaned windows every week.

In Canada on Saturdays I cleaned house while my parents shopped, polished shoes; the girls did indoor work, boys the outside work.

What skills did you learn? Who taught you? I went to all-girls school. We had partners for sewing, learned embroidery and crocheting; all girls groups were seen by the sisters (nuns) every Sunday. I still love to crochet and quilt. I sewed clothes for the kids, and made my own wedding dress. Later, I used my wedding dress to make first communion dresses for my daughters. I love all crafts and am always doing some kind of handiwork.

What activities did your family do together? We prayed the Rosary every night; went to church, did chores together, there was always work to do on the farm.

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood? I remember “stampot,” mashed potatoes with kale and smoked sausage. Soup is a favorite food, for example chicken noodle with fresh vegetables. I don't like foods mixed together, no casseroles.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays? Christmas was a big celebration. Christmas in Holland is a religious celebration. St. Cornelius, patron of our parish, is always a big celebration.

Early Schooling

What was your elementary school like? I had good grades. There were two years of kindergarten; I started school late because I was anemic and sickly as a child. The school was run by the nuns whose residence (convent) was attached to the school. I finished school at 14 years (Grade 8), then had to go to work. I really wanted to continue going to school; I loved learning and meeting up with friends.

Were there things about school that you didn't like? Near the end of the war, the boys' school got occupied, so we shared the girls' school. Both went half days. I got into mischief as a child.

What was your favorite subject? My favorites were math, reading, and home economics. I loved school; I love to read still, with book in hand, not online.

Did you have a favorite teacher? Why were they your favorite? We were taught by the nuns; I do not remember having a favorite.

What was discipline like at your school? They were very strict; we had to follow the rules and if you got in trouble at school you were in trouble at home; my mom was the disciplinarian.

Were you ever teased or bullied at school? No, we all got along. I loved going to school.

Childhood Friends and Interests

What did you do after school and on weekends? When I was young I did wool spinning. We had sheep and made the wool into yarn. I helped out in the fields, there was lots of hand picking of vegetables. Sometimes I helped to milk cows, but mostly this was my brother's responsibility. I scrubbed floors, did the dishes—water had to be heated—and polished doorknobs.

Who were your childhood friends? My best friend was Annie Willemse-Vanhlyk. We are still lifelong friends who travel together.

What did you do when you spent time together? The only time to play was on Sundays, and only for a few hours because I always worked. I remember skipping Benediction to watch the boys play soccer, and got caught often. I joined the basketball team, traveling to nearby towns to play; Annie was also on the team. I was mischievous as a child.

Do you have a pen-pal? I did not.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a nurse, to look after people in need. When my husband got sick after four months of marriage, I looked after him. I also took care of him when he had cancer years later. I worked as a nurse's aide for a period of time early in my marriage, but had to quit due to lack of transportation. I loved working with the patients. I wish I had pursued a career in nursing, but circumstances and finances prevented it.

Teenage Years

Did you have any additional responsibilities or chores as a teenager? I always helped with the dishes, some cooking. I always worked and helped out at home. We made all our own clothes with the yarn spun from our sheep.

How old were you when you went on your first date? Did your parents have any rules about dating? I went on my first date when I was 21 with Leo, before that we went out with a group of friends. My mother was very strict and I lied to get out of the house. When I was being brought home from a date and pulling into the driveway, the porch light would come on within a few minutes. I was usually home by 11:30 p.m. I went to dances.

Did you belong to any clubs/ teams? If so, what were they? I belonged to TOPS.

Did you have a part-time job? I worked as a nurse's aide at St. Joseph's.

How did you spend the money you made? I spent money the Dutch way. As a young person, when you earned money, you turned it over to your parents. Leo worked on a farm for \$45 a month and turned it all over to his parents.

How old were you when you got your driver's license? When I was around 38 or 39 I took driver's education. I failed the driver's test on the first attempt. I always drove a tractor on the farm.

Did your relationship with your parents change during this time? I talked back to my mother only once; we always had very good communication, very respectful. My father never let the children speak back to their mother, but on this occasion, he didn't interfere.

Adult: Further Education

Did you get any post-secondary education (college or university)? I attended school until Grade 8 in Holland. I was 14 years old, this was normal at the time.

Formation of Significant Relationship

How did you meet your spouse/partner? Leo says he saw me at church, Holy Rosary in Wyoming, and went to my home at the farm a few days later and invited me to the dance on Saturday. Dances were supervised by Dutch priests from Delaware. Leo was attracted to me immediately. We "clicked" from the beginning, "love at first sight". We will celebrate our 68th anniversary in May.

Why did you decide to marry? Marriage was the normal next step. We met in 1952 and were married in 1954. We were engaged for two to three months. I sewed my own wedding dress. We first lived in a basement apartment at Sacred Heart Convent in London. I helped out the nuns and visiting priests; we lived there until the spring of 1956.

What was the most difficult thing about married life? What was the most satisfying? There was nothing difficult about being married. The most satisfying is to have someone there to share things with, do things with, communicate with, especially when you are sick. As I said, Leo was sick early in our marriage. I had kidney surgery. Leo had colon cancer, a difficult situation.

Employment

Who earned the money to support your household? We lived on a farm and both worked on it to support the household. I was always the money manager. We had 3000 chickens for eggs. We grew tomatoes and green beans, and supplied Dominion stores with produce.

What was difficult about your job? What did you like about it? Farming is hard work, money was tight but the income was steady. We worked as a family on the farm, all the girls helped out, we always had fresh vegetables, eggs, and meat, there was always lots of food to eat. We were self-sufficient.

Children

How many children do you have? We have five daughters: Helen (1955), Leona (1958), Debbie (1960), Roxanne (1961), and Donna (1966).

What were they like when they were young? They were good girls, they played well together.

What activities did your family do together? Wherever Leo and I went, the girls came along: tobogganing, skating. Leo took them as I didn't like the cold. We went roller skating and swimming. I learned to swim as an adult in order to swim with the girls.

What family traditions did you have? Christmas was always a big celebration and so were birthdays; this still continues.

What values did you try to raise your children with? We wanted them to be themselves, have high standards, and do well in school.

What forms of discipline did you use and why? We had high standards. Most of the discipline was done by myself, if Leo was brought in for a situation the girls were upset, they didn't want to disappoint him.

Extracurricular Activities

Have you ever traveled? Did you travel often? Our daughter Leona lived on Vancouver Island and we traveled there many times. Leo's sister also lived in British Columbia. We travelled to California by car, the Canadian way. We went back to Holland only once in 1980. We traveled to Florida during the winter. We were involved in Shuffleboard and won seniors games locally and went to the Canadian championships in Ottawa. We went to the International competition in California and played against other countries.

What was your favorite place that you visited? What was the happiest/ funniest/ saddest memory from that trip? My favorite was Florida. We would get up and go to the pool and met friends in the afternoon for shuffleboard. Every Saturday there was a dance, there was always something to do and we met lots of great people. We played lots of shuffleboard and really enjoyed the competition.

What is one of your biggest accomplishments in life and/or something you are most proud of doing? I did the best I could raising my family and was always there for my husband. They always reflect on how lucky they are.

When did you start taking part in church activities? We always attended church services, my mother had a deep faith. My grandfather was very involved. My father was part of the church ceremonial band; he was the drummer. Sacred Heart convent in London was Leo's first job, which allowed them to get married.

Special events in church: The annual St. Cornelius pilgrimage was a big day/celebration. Leo and I were involved in fundraising for the building of St. Michael's Church. We sold calendar lottery and introduced pie making as a fundraiser for the church. The CWL continued to hold pie making workshops as a fundraiser. I was a silent member originally in London then two nuns, Sr. Anges and Sr. Immaculate, invited me to join. When we moved to Woodstock, I joined there. We moved to Seaforth, a mostly Irish community, where they voted me in as Recording Secretary. I was reluctant as I was schooled in Holland and was concerned about being Recording Secretary but felt welcomed and supported.

History of CWL Membership: I have been a member for 66 years: in London at the Sacred Heart Convent, now Mount Saint Joseph, then in Woodstock at St. Rita's, in Seaforth at St. Columbus. Then I was a member at Sacred Heart in Sarnia and St. Michael's in Bright's Grove. I have always been an active volunteer.

What do you like about being a member of the CWL? Being a member of St. Michael's CWL, I enjoyed meeting new friends, attending meetings when I was/am able, contributing to bazaars and other fundraising efforts.

Gerarda (Gerda) Kabel



I was born in my parent's home on November 3, 1927 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. My mother Maria, Magdalena worked hard and knew a lot about the church. My father was Edwardus, Franciscus a lovable man who spent much of his lifetime in a sanatorium for mental illness. He was in Heiloo (the Netherlands) and had a strong belief in God.

I had one sister, Hendrika, Leonerda, Maria who was born on October 31, 1925 and died on April 1, 2020. My mother had three miscarriages (all boys). As a family, we attended family reunions especially at Christmas and Easter. I was raised in Amsterdam and attended Holy Heart School. My best friend at school was Thea.

My first job was as a cleaning lady. I enjoyed this work as I like everything to be clean and in a tidy fashion. I like talking to people and enjoy their company.

As a young woman, I travelled to Limburg and to St. Gerard Majella, a Pilgrim's Place in Witten, Holland. While there, I prayed for a friend named Hank who suffered from multiple sclerosis. I will never forget that place.

I met Chris through an ad in the local newspaper. We were married on October 26, 1954 at the Catholic church, Our Lady of Heaven, in Heemstede, Holland. We had to live in my mom's place, which was very small, because

there was already a severe housing shortage. We had three children in quick succession, two sons, John and Ed and one daughter, Mary.

My husband and I and our children emigrated from Holland to Canada in 1960. I didn't have much free time as I had three children. In 1962 my son, Gerry, was born.

I started taking part in church activities at St. Martin of Tours Parish on Duchess St. in London. I liked to bake and make cookies for the bake table and knit items for the craft table at the bazaar. Everybody loved it when I showed up for events or fundraisers. I have lots of good memories of these times in my life!! I loved Father Spenser and Father Hunter.

When Chris and I lived in London, we camped in the Pinery [Provincial Park] on weekends and bought a rundown cottage. Chris renovated the cottage with the help of the children. Although the renovations weren't finished, we moved to Grand Bend permanently. Chris passed away in 1998. Five months after he died, when I was at the cemetery bringing flowers to the grave, a widower named Dawson was bringing flowers to his wife's grave as well. From that day on, we went for a cup of tea together and became close friends. I have travelled to Limburg and to Witten to visit St. Gerard Majella's Pilgrim's Place.

I now belong to Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Grand Bend. I did know Father Beck very well. I have a great affection for my current pastor and the two associate pastors.

I am now a member of the Catholic Women's League at Immaculate Heart of Mary Council because I have a very strong faith in God. The CWL has made my life. Relationships!!! Faith!!! It is very worthwhile especially in Grand Bend. I am a Silent Member as I am 94 years old. I am happy to attend meetings whenever possible. The ladies are all loving and very hard workers. I know Maureen, Dianne and Joan among others.

My advice to a young person is: Look after yourself! Help people as much as you can! Praying is The Way! Pray! Pray! Especially pray the Rosary and then pray some more. That is probably the only way to get rid of the pandemic (COVID-19). Be truthful and don't lie as it may come back to haunt you! Help your parents and grandparents if you can.



Gina Alevato

Parents and Family

When and where were you born? I was born in April 1927, in Pietrafitta Italy.

What are the names of your parents? Theresina and Francesco Sisca, came to Canada in September 1958.

Where was your family originally from? Both families are from Pietrafitta which is in the south of Italy.

What did your parents do for a living? My father was a furniture maker. My mother looked after the family.

How many siblings do you have? What are their names? Where are you in the birth order? Gina, John, Mari, Mario. I was nine years old when I came to Canada with my parents. Mom had lost three children, one girl and twins.

Did you play with your sibling(s)? No, I didn't play with my brothers. My youngest brother is 23 years younger than me.

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? In Italy, made furniture for potatoes and vegetables. During the war, it was worse.

Were your parents religious? If so, how was religion observed in the home?
Yes, we went to church.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? My father had four brothers; they moved after they got married. My mother had two brothers who were in Canada. Grandparents on both sides lived in Pietrafitta, approximate population 2000.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? If so, how often did this happen?
Weddings would last up to a week. Christmas was also a time to reunite with family.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? One room with everything, animals were in the cellar.

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your sibling's duties? Washing the dishes, cleaning.

What skills did you learn (e.g. cooking, carpentry or crafts)? Who taught you? I learned to cook on top of coals. There was not a lot of food but we always had something to eat! My dad made a seat beside him on the bicycle and I rode in a basket behind.

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood?
Cuchia, boiled meat with greens. At Christmas time, we made a cake with walnuts, pecans, and all kind of fruits, soaked raisins in liquor, orange rind. It was rolled up like a jellyroll, baked and then honey was poured over after it came out of the oven. This tradition carries on today with this year being an exception.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays e.g. Christmas, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving or birthdays? All the special occasions were celebrated together. For example, at Christmas, everyone walked to Midnight Mass. We got together to make wine, sausage, sauce, everything.

Early Schooling

What was your elementary school like? I stayed with my grandmother to go to school. It was too far away to go back home. I was the first grandchild on both sides of the family.

Did you enjoy going to school as a child? Yes.

Childhood Friends and Interests

What did you do after school and on weekends? We played hopscotch and

with a ball against the wall.

Who were your childhood friends? Going between home and my grandmother's did not afford any opportunity to make friends.

Did you have a best friend? What was their name? What did you do when you spent time together? As a teenager, my friend was Anna Maria. We went on walks. I went to the convent to learn how to embroider.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I loved to sew.

Teenage Years

Did you have additional responsibilities or chores as a teenager? I sewed for other people and assisted my mother at home. I did an apprenticeship.

How old were you when you went on your first date? I was not allowed to date.

Did you have a part-time job? Did you enjoy it? There were no jobs available. On my own, I did alternations and repairs. When I came to Canada, I worked half-days for a high-end dress store.

How did you spend the money you made? The money all went back to the family.

Adulthood: Further Education

Did you get any post-secondary education (college or university)? With the nuns at the convent, I did an apprenticeship where I was taught how to make patterns, sew and embroider. I made clothes; with four girls helping and being taught at the same time.

Formation of Significant Relationships

How did you meet your spouse? We were both from Italy, a small village. Our families knew each other. He was 11 years older. Before I came to Canada, he wrote letters to me, twice a day sometimes with pictures. He was a policeman in Italy. He sent me the fare to come to Canada by boat, to Halifax in the summertime, then took the train to Chatham. We met here in Canada, in Wallaceburg. We were married on September 6, 1952. We built a house in 1973. Jo retired and we moved to London in 1992.

What attracted you to him? He was a good person, he knew my family and the family knew him. He came from a good family. In that time, many women were getting married by proxy before coming to Canada but I didn't

want to do that, I wanted to keep my options open and if I didn't want to stay I could return home.

Why did you decide to marry? Once I arrived, I was fine with being here and didn't want to return [to Italy]. I knew his family, who were already here. They treated me as one of the family. I was a dressmaker and it was bad luck to make my own wedding dress so my dress was made here. I made my wedding dress into Luisa's First Communion dress.

What was the most difficult think about married life? What was the most satisfying? I couldn't speak English. Jo went to night school to learn English as soon as he arrived in Canada. The family was the most satisfying. We came to London for our honeymoon and went to the Western Fair.

Who earned the money to support your household? In Italy, my husband was a policeman. Ran the movie theatre. My husband worked in the glasshouse before doing repairs/alterations. When the children were in school, worked in couple factories. In 1971 opened a pizzeria and the family all participated. Everything was done by hand. It was very popular, people called to order for their way home. A local taxicab driver "Louie" would do delivery, I paid \$0.25 and then customer paid the rest depending on the distance. We delivered to Port Lambton, Chatham and Sombra, as well as in town. It was located next to a bakery and after the owner of the bakery saw me mixing the dough he shared the large mixer with me. The mixer was placed on a stretcher-like hand held platform and went between the two businesses. When the pizzeria opened, we had one fridge and one stove to do all the cooking, then little by little started purchasing equipment to make things easier. My daughters called their brother, "Mozzarella Muscle" because all the cheese was shredded by hand. We couldn't get green peppers in the winter so we bought in bulk in the summer and froze them, mushrooms were purchased in the can. We had to put all the [pizza] boxes together. We would give pizza to the fire department and the police department on Christmas Eve. It was so busy we had two telephones. The pizzeria was open for nine years; everyone loved the pizza.

How many children do you have? I have three children: Jimmy, Susan, and Maria Luisa. Jimmy was the oldest, into music: guitar and drums. He was the biggest supporter in starting the business at the age of 16. His first car was a Studebaker. Maria Luisa was the quiet one, a reader, studious. She would do her homework and read at the counter. She would pick up her schoolbooks in August and have them read before September. If Maria Luisa had a day off from work, I knew exactly where she was and what she

was doing, by the customers coming into the pizzeria. At school, the nuns called her Maria but friends and family called her Luisa. Susan the youngest, she had chores, and couldn't do anything until she was done. I have six grandchildren: four girls and two boys as well as six great-grandchildren: four girls, two boys.

What were they like when they were young? They were very good children, we never had a problem, they were very polite. When I went to work in the factory, the children would clean, do the dishes, laundry and ironing. Sunday was a day to go to church, cook, and go for a drive.

What activities did your family do together? On Sunday, we would go for a drive and treat everyone to ice cream. We would go to the beach with my father's brother's family. We took up three tables with all kinds of food, chicken, pasta and cutlets, and after we ate, we had to wait before going swimming. It is hard to believe that it all fit in our car!

What family traditions did you have? In 1977 our family went to Italy (except Jimmy, who was married and on honeymoon). This was the first time back. We went back to the village where our parents were from. The pizzeria was closed for three weeks and Wallaceburg was in an uproar.

What values did you try to raise your children with? We taught them to respect their elders, to treat everyone the same, and [to take care of] each other. To say, "Good morning." To be honest and work hard (good work ethic), that family is everything.

What forms of discipline did you use? When Jimmy was very young, he got a pat on the bum.

Extracurricular Activities

Have you ever travelled? Did you travel often? We went on little trips within Canada (Ontario/Québec). We went back to Italy three times. I went on day trips with the CWL.

What was your favourite place that you visited? What was the happiest/funniest/saddest memory from that trip? Venice, Rome and Morano. I enjoyed the seafood, glass blowing and night life.

What is one of your biggest accomplishments in life and/or something you are most proud of doing? I am proud of my family and my husband's family. We never had an abundance of things, I made clothes and we were the best-dressed family. We never had to go to bed hungry, there was always something to eat.

CWL Questions

When did you start taking part in Church activities? [When we moved to London, at St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica.

Were your parents involved in the Church? We went to Mass. In Wallaceburg, we went to Our Lady of Help.

Was there any events or fundraisers that was most memorable to you? The CWL Christmas Bazaar at St. Peter's.

When did you join the CWL? In 1961.

How has the CWL affected your life? Relationships? Faith? The CWL has given me enjoyment, friendships, and a greater interest in faith.

Which parish were/are you a part of? St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica.

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? If so what was your role? I assist with the bazaar, funeral lunches and providing donations of baked goods.

Why did you join the CWL? It started when the children were in school. There was a funeral and I was asked to make a cake for the luncheon.

Helena (Ila) Joris (nee Van Massenhoven)

Member of the Catholic Women's League in Watford, Ontario.

Ila Van Massenhoven was born in June of 1949 in Turnout, Belgium. She was the third child of five born to Albert Van Massenhoven and Maria Bayens. Her father was a tram conductor and her mother was a homemaker in Belgium.

In 1952 when Ila was three years old the family immigrated to Canada by boat, the "Grote Beer" and landed at Halifax Nova Scotia Pier 21. They then travelled to London Ontario by train where they were met by "Onkel Jan," Albert's older brother. It was a long train ride for brother August (eight years old), sisters Reinelda, almost six, and Margareta, four months old. Brother Joe was born four years later. After about six weeks, they purchased a farm about one-and-a-half miles from Bornish, a small hamlet between Parkhill and Strathroy, Ontario. Communicating with her siblings, Ila as a middle child, often felt she was left out or somewhat forgotten when things were discussed but they were a close loving family.

Along with many other newly arrived immigrants from Europe, they became part of the St. Columba Catholic Church and Bornish S.S. #10 School community. The tiny one room schoolhouse in Bornish closed in 1959 and became amalgamated with Sacred Heart School in Parkhill. There Ila was taught by the Ursuline Sisters. She particularly remembers the influence of Mother Rachel. She was a kind and fair teacher and for a time, Ila thought she too might become a nun just like her. Ila was a good student who actually began her education early at the age of five. At fifteen, after completing Grade 10 at North Middlesex District High School, she left school with the hopes of going to hairdressing school. One had to be sixteen to enroll in beauty school so for the time being she found a job at St. Joseph's Hospital in London where her older sister Reinelda already worked. Ila worked there in the Formula Room making baby formula for the newborns and in the Diet Kitchen making gastric tube feedings from scratch.

After being at this job only about six months, Ila's mother took ill and Ila was needed at home to help on the farm with barn work, milking cows, feeding pigs and all field work with Dad. She ended up working on the farm until she got married, her hairdressing dream set aside. During slow times on the farm, Ila often did odd jobs at the Sacred Heart Rectory where her family attended church regularly and she was a member of the choir.

Ila's parents always had expectations of their children. They were required to do their share of work on the farm and in the house. When the work was done, they were allowed to go out with friends on weekends but there was always a curfew. Ila respected these rules and never got into too much trouble. She remembers once being grounded for six weeks for breaking curfew but never did it again because she realized how much her mother worried and paced when one of her older siblings stayed out too late. Ila fondly recalls her mother's advice to her when she started dating, "Look for a good Catholic young man and if you are of same nationality, it will save a lot of stress later" and then she would add with a smile that her mother always told her it was also "just as easy to love a rich boy as a poor one". Of course, it is hard to remember all these things when you're "in love". The gathering place for the area young people in the 60's was the dance hall in Arkona on Sunday nights. The Catholic Youth Club (CYC) sponsored those dances and other activities.

At seventeen, Ila met her future husband at that club. A hardworking, practical young man with a great sense of humour is how Ila described Anthony Joris, the son of Godfried and Wilhelmina Joris. He was Catholic and came from a large family of 12 children. Ila and Tony were married in 1970.

The young couple took up housekeeping in a rented farmhouse not far from the home of Tony's parents, just east of Watford. Tony worked for a local construction company and Ila took a job at the nearby Androck Wireworks. Within five years, they had two sons, Stephen and John, and had purchased and moved onto the hog farm of Tony's parents. Soon a daughter Julie was added to the family. Ila thrived as a mother and devoted herself to her children. Always having a big heart, she and her husband also took in foster children for ten years and raised them alongside their own. Some of these children, long since adults with children of their own, still keep in touch.

The family regularly attended church at Our Lady Help of Christians in Watford and the children went to school at St. Peter Canisius, also in Watford. Tony's mother enjoyed the monthly CWL meetings at their church but she could not drive. When she asked her new daughter-in-law to drive and accompany her, Ila was happy to do so. Within the first year, Ila was elected Secretary.

Life was busy. As the family grew, they worked together. Tony worked on the farm. Ila was at home with the children where she earned a little extra income by growing cucumbers and selling eggs. Ila and Tony's second

son John was born with intellectual and communications deficiencies and required around the clock support and supervision. As he grew, Ila was always his fiercest defender and champion for his care and education. She was also always keen to keep developing new skills so she would take night courses sewing, bookkeeping, upholstery, cake decorating and such. Together as a family, they enjoyed many summer trips to Northern Ontario, fishing weekends and winter trips to Florida. They have five grandchildren: Sam, Luke, Jacob, Noah and Lydia.

Church life has always filled a big space in Ila's life. From attending with her family as a child, to joining the CWL at sixteen, to being involved with reader ministry, a parish council member and pastoral care as an adult. For many years, Ila decorated the church weekly with her homegrown flowers. She was very influenced by her mother who always was an active CWL member and President several times through the years when members rotated hosting meetings in their own homes. It was natural for her older sister Reinelda to follow in those footsteps and then in turn, Ila also. Later because Ila and Reinelda settled to raise their families in the same community and attend the same church, together they have been able all these years to be integral to life of the CWL in Watford.

After her initial stint as Secretary in those early years, Ila has almost always held a position on the executive serving in every capacity but treasurer which she prefers not to do. Ila has served as President three different terms, 1997-1998 (40th anniversary), 2007-2008 (their 50th anniversary), and 2017-2018 (60th CWL anniversary). In 1997, the year she began her first Presidency, she attended the Diocesan Convention for the first time. She recalls being immediately struck by the joy and purpose of all those ladies coming together. The desire to serve and grow in the faith that she felt during that first convention stayed with her and she has gone on to attend almost every convention since, usually with her sister Reinelda.

Ila has been instrumental in implementing many of the activities and works of the Watford League such as prayers and honour guards at funerals, coordinating funeral lunches, gifts for newlyweds and children receiving Sacraments, and a very successful annual Christmas Dinner, Penny Sale and Skit Night. Ila, along with her daughter Julie whom she brought into the League with her when she turned sixteen, have become somewhat famous for their hilarious antics on the stage. The annual skit night is a passion of Ila's and she spends a huge amount of time in its organization every year. During Ila's Presidency in 1997-1998 she was largely responsible for growing

her League's membership numbers to a record high of 208. In 2007, she was awarded the Maple Leaf Pin for her dedication.

Ila's life has had some difficult times. The challenges have made her the strong, passionate woman she is today. She feels God had a purpose in giving her John, a son with a disability. It led her to be a member of the Lambton County Developmental Services (LCDS) residential committee when the first group home in Thedford was established. Years later, she developed a weekly Friendship Group program for adults with mentally developed disabilities that she ran for ten years. It also inspired her daughter Julie to choose a career path working with the mentally challenged.

In 2017, her eldest son Stephen became seriously ill. He needed kidney and liver transplants but many complications delayed this from happening. Ila was at his bedside for months helping him and praying for a miracle. Sometimes God's will is not our own and sadly, Steve passed away with his mom and family at his side at the age of 46, leaving two young sons behind.

During all of life's difficult days, Ila has never pulled away from God. Her family and faith are her cornerstones. Her children and grandchildren, her pride and joy and greatest accomplishment.

Lastly, she wanted to leave this thought: Smile and say, "Thank you" to young and old, it makes a person feel they made a difference and that what they said or did was valued and appreciated. Always say, "Thank you!"

Jeanne Lauzon

St. Simon and St. Jude CWL Belle River, Ontario

I was born at home, on February 17th, 1948. My father's family was from LaSalle Ontario; my mother was born and raised in Tecumseh Ontario. My mother was a housekeeper and an awesome mom. She taught me that family was everything. She had faith that we would make good choices and her home was always open to everyone. Her homemade chocolate cake was her claim to fame and whenever I saw old friends, it was the first thing they remembered. My dad had various jobs, but retired as a school custodian. He was a carpenter by trade. He taught me how to help others at an early age. Dad was always happy to help anyone in need with a smile on his face and a happy heart.

I have an older sister named Beverley, an older brother Ken and a much younger sister Louise. We are all close and get together often. I am the "middle" child!! As children, we did not hang out a lot, as there was quite an age difference. We went on family day trips. My dad loved to take us to Walpole Island. I still have pictures of us on the ferry. He also loved to go to Powasson where his dad had built cottages. My siblings and I became much closer as we married and had families. We had a modest home and my brother still lives across the driveway.

Holidays were always fun. If we really wanted to know what we were getting for Christmas, all we had to do was look in the Sears catalog to find the circled items. Birthdays were always celebrated with chocolate cake and we always had a new outfit for Mass at Easter.

I was raised in a Catholic home. My family did not pray the Rosary, say grace or even say bedtime prayers. We attended Mass every Sunday and I attended St. Antoine School in Tecumseh. My parents lived their faith, they were kind, compassionate and caring people who taught us respect and gratitude.

My faith journey really began at school. I was taught by wonderful religious and lay teachers. I looked up to them as they seemed so happy in their faith. I received my Sacraments and listened intently during religion classes. One nun, Mere Julie, had a profound impact on me. She taught about Jesus with such devotion and made Him seem like such a wonderful man, the kind I would like to have as a friend. I remember thinking how great it would have been to sit at His feet and listen to His sermons. I was always in awe of His miracles and saddened by His passion and death. His teachings were

so simple to me, love God, and love your neighbor. To this day if someone asks, “If you could meet anyone, who would it be?” My answer, without hesitation, would be Jesus.

I loved everything about school! I had so many awesome teachers, it is hard to pick a favorite. Things were pretty strict at school. I remember passing out straws at lunchtime in Grade one. I made the big mistake of taking one for myself to take home for lunch. Mere St. Marc grabbed my ear and made me kneel by her desk. I haven’t taken a bubble gum without asking, to this day!

My life has been blessed in so many ways. I had wonderful neighborhood girlfriends. We played school, ice skated on ponds and played hide and seek. I met my very best friend when I joined Girl Guides. Jo-Ann helped me pass Grade 12 chemistry, she was so smart. She later went into nursing. We are still best friends to this day, sharing godchildren and the trials and good times together.

I do not remember having too many chores growing up. Mom was home, so she took care of the house. Doing dishes was probably the big chore, I really was blessed!

I had my first date in senior high school. He was a guitar player in a band. My parents really liked him and trusted us when we were dating. I think they knew I would never do anything to embarrass or disappoint them. The stairway light would flash off and on if our goodbyes were too long!

My first part-time job was at the convent in Tecumseh. I helped Mother Barbara in the kitchen. I remember seeing her once without her veil, I felt terrible! She taught me to clean floors and polish everything until it shined. I loved her! I also babysat and later worked at Green Giant. I paid my tuition at St. Anne’s High School. I also smuggled clothes from Detroit for school!

When I miraculously passed my Grade 13 math departmental, I enrolled at the University of Windsor in the Physical Education program. I thought I would like to coach sports. I could go on with many great stories about that experience (I had never seen a balance beam or parallel bars, and my only swimming experience was in my friend’s pool)!

Needless to say, I got my non-Phys-Ed credits and decided to go to Teacher’s College. I spent 25 wonderful years teaching and I miss the kids to this day!

I met my husband, still the man of my dreams after 52 years, while working at Green Giant. Those were the best years! The first time I saw him, my heart

melted, I thought he was the most handsome man on earth. We dated on and off for three years, but eventually I knew he was the one. It turned out he was as devoted and kind as he was good looking, and he really loved his family, especially his mom. My mom always said if a man loves his mother, he will love his wife. Turns out she was right!

We both worked the first five years we were married, then I stayed home for the next ten years to be with my girls. I did some supply teaching during those years, but Don often worked seven days a week so I could stay home. He is still my best friend who has supported me in all that I do.

I have four beautiful daughters who make me proud every day. I felt like I needed a striped shirt and a whistle when they were growing up as I was always the referee! I ran a pretty tight ship and from the time they were old enough to understand, they knew when Mom said “No” no meant no! Today they are best friends which brings me great comfort. I have three wonderful grandchildren, Aidan, Chase and Sloane. They bring so much joy to my life!

We took a summer trip every year, Niagara Falls, Toronto Zoo, Marine land, Disney and one great trip out west, our favorite!

I think the most important thing I have taught them is compassion. They are very generous and caring girls. Like so many of our children, they don't go to church anymore. It saddened me that they did not share my love of community and parish family. I continued to put this in God's hands, as I always did, and prayed they would get back to their roots of faith. They saw our involvement in the CWL, the Goodfellows, Meals on Wheels and they realized how important it is to give back.

Don and I have traveled quite a bit. We have been to Italy twice, once on a bus tour, once on a Mediterranean cruise. The bus trip was the best as we saw so much of the countryside and spent more time at the Vatican. We even got to see Pope Francis from the balcony! We saw so many beautiful churches and met so many great people.

My biggest accomplishment is my family. They are my life and my source of strength. My daughters have become my friends and my husband is my greatest source of love and understanding.

One of the things I am most proud of is my involvement with the Catholic Women's League. When I moved to Belle River, I asked the secretary at the school how I could get involved in the community. La Vaughn took me to my first CWL meeting! (I took her to the meeting when I received my 40 year

pin). I met the most wonderful group of ladies at that meeting. Soon after, I started my family. I went from no children for five years to four children over the next five years. I had my own preschool! These ladies became my lifeline. They were so supportive and so welcoming. I soon became hyper-involved and on the executive. We had a riot!

Over the years, we added so many things to the bazaar. We held craft workshops, made chocolate, decorated cakes, made egg rolls, meat and fruit pies and so many other things. The bazaar changed over the years with vendors, an amazing Penny Table, gently used purses and scarves and of course the ever popular meat pies! It was a great fundraiser and the community and surrounding areas looked forward to it every year. So many sisters, so much fun!

When I asked some of the ladies if they would like to start a Mission Card Club they jumped at the idea. We still play cards after 44 years. We held a fall card party and raised so much money for the missions. I remained friends with a member, my sweet Irene, who recently passed away at 93 years young.

I later became President of our council. I had wonderful ladies who were ready to tackle any crazy idea I came up with. I chaired the CWL committee for our first Parish Directory to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St. Simon and St. Jude parish. Father Duchene was so surprised when 90 ladies turned out to help on the phone committee. I learned so many things through my involvement. When I retired, I was recycled and took on the president's position again. Things sure did change while I was away working and finishing my degree. Meetings were much more formal and the younger ladies were really on top of everything League-related. I am glad they were patient while I adjusted to the new reality.

As a rookie president, I attended my first convention with my mentor Pat Preston. As we walked into the Canterbury Inn in Sarnia with our rosaries and Bibles, we met ladies from Comber who invited us for drinks! We had a blast! The next convention I went to was in Chatham. This is where I heard the diocesan president, Edna Bingham, speak. She was amazing, and I knew I would be a CWL member forever! I attended a Provincial convention and in 2019 the National convention with my friend Brenda from Calgary.

We were like two teenagers at a rock concert. I sat with the Calgary ladies and met their Provincial President Judy Look. We listened to wonderful speakers and attended beautiful Masses. We took pictures with then

National President Ann Gorman and current President Fran Lucas. I was so proud and happy to see Marie-Therese Lamphier receive her Life Membership. You don't really know the League until you attend a convention at some level, such talented and dedicated women.

In 2019, I spread my wings and accepted the position of Regional Chair for Essex, just as COVID-19 took us all by surprise. I was so proud to represent these ladies at the Diocesan executive. I learned so much and my computer and online skills improved greatly, thanks to the patient ladies on the executive. They are such kind, caring and dedicated women.

As I continued my journey with the league, I spent a lot of time reaching out to our senior members and spent lots of time learning their stories. The CWL has had a great impact on my life and I am so grateful for the many memories and friendships I have made along the way.

As my retirement years continue, I am still blessed with my wonderful husband and family. We have had a few health scares, but we prayed with family and friends through it all. I count my blessings every day and I am ever grateful to God.

Judith (Judy) Anne Bandura

Parents and Family

When and where were you born? I was born in Timmins, Ontario on April 10, 1938.

What are the names of your parents? John and Margaret Jones.

Where was your family originally from? My dad was from Whales and Mom was from Sarnia. They met in Sarnia.

What did your parents do for a living? Dad was a Polysar in Sarnia and Mom was a homemaker.

How many siblings do you have? What are their names? Who were you closest too? My sibling's names are Norine, Marge, Rick, and Glyn. I was closest to Marge, but we were a very close family.

Where are you in the birth order? I am the oldest child.

Did you play with your siblings? What kind of games did you play? We played baseball and board games with the kids on the street.

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? We were comfortable for the time we lived in. We were grateful for whatever we had, especially because it was during the Depression.

Were your parents religious? If so, how was religion observed in the home? Dad was a convert and mom was very active. They did not go to church a lot, but I did. I could walk there.

What were your parent's political beliefs? They did not say.

What organizations or clubs were they involved in? Dad was a Founding Member of Polysar Glee Club and "Santa" for Polysar (his work) and Mom was a member of the Catholic Women's League. Mom helped at the Knights of Columbus Hall with meals, Glee Club pianist for practicing at home, and bridge group.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? Dad had 12 siblings which we saw lots of. Mom had only one brother, but was not close with him.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? If so, how often did this happen? Yes, my grandmother “Mom Jones” had family reunions at Canatara Park. All the kids, grandkids, and great grandkids were there; it happened twice.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? The first house was on Water Street. We all grew up on Samuel Street in Sarnia. It was a small house with three bedrooms for five kids plus Mom and Dad. Mom and Dad had one bedroom, my two sisters had a room, and I was with my twin brothers in a room with no closet and a curtain for the door. When we moved to Conrad, I got my own bedroom!

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your siblings’ duties? I would keep our room clean and do chores. My siblings had to do the same, but not all siblings did it.

What skills did you learn? Who taught you? Mom taught me how to cook and Dad taught me to sing. I could join Glee Club when I was 16 and was there for 38 years.

What activities did your family do together? We went on car rides and visited family, but no trips.

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood? We had a roast every Sunday. Mom always made a special desert, pies, cakes, and butter tarts. There was always a birthday cake.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays? At Christmas, we had a stocking with an orange or apple, some clothing, and one gift.

Early Schooling

What was your elementary school like? I went to school at St. Joseph’s in Sarnia. It was a big brick building right beside the church.

Did you enjoy going to school as a child? Were there things about school that you didn’t like? Yes, I liked school.

What was your favorite subject? Spelling and reading.

Did you have a favorite teacher? Why were they your favorite? Yes!! Sister Rosary was really kind (a sweetheart) and Sister Maureen who got me involved in music.

What was discipline like at your school? You had to get down on your knees to get the strap because the nun was really short. I was told that if I got the strap at school, I got it at home. Some had to stand in the corner.

Were you ever teased or bullied at school? I was bullied by a bigger girl. She would chase lots of people around (not just me) and sit on us in the snow. I met her years later and she acted like I was her best friend in school.

Childhood Friends and Interests

What did you do after school and on weekends? I did homework, played outside, board games, and stayed after school for music.

Who were your childhood friends? Mary Lou and Marlene Smith. Marlene and I are still good friends today and our husbands got along really well.

Did you have a best friend? What was their name? What did you do when you spent time together? Marlene (Pettite) Smith and I have been best friends for 60 years. We got together with friends with kids our own age and once a month we went to the park for a picnic.

Do you have a pen-pal? No.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to get married and be a mom.

Teenage Years

Did you have any additional responsibilities or chores as a teenager? I had to babysit.

How old were you when you went on your first date? Did your parents have any rules about dating? I was about 17. Mom and Dad didn't really have any rules, I was a good kid.

Did you belong to any clubs/ teams? If so, what were they? I belonged to the Regis Club which was a Catholic social group where a lot of people met their spouses. I also belonged to the Polysar Glee Club and was very active in St. Benedict's Catholic Women's League.

Did you have a part-time job? Did you enjoy it? Why? I didn't have a part-time job until after high school, then a full time job at Polysar as a secretary.

How did you spend the money you made? I gave my mom a small amount of room and board and helped out where I could.

How old were you when you got your driver's license? I was 16.

Did your relationship with your parents change during this time? We actually become closer over the years.

Adult: Further Education

Did you get any post-secondary education (college or university)? No.

Which school(s) did you go to? Why did you decide to go to that school?
I went to St. Joseph's in Sarnia and St. Pat's in Sarnia; it was my parents decision.

Formation of Significant Relationships

How did you meet your spouse? I met Frank in the "Our Lady of Mercy" choir, we both started at the Catholic Regis Club. We dated for one year and got married in 1959.

What attracted you to him? He was a very kind, humble person with great manners. Opposites attract, he was quiet, I wasn't.

Why did you decide to marry? I loved him. He was so good to me. He asked my dad for my hand in marriage, my mom and I had to go into the den so they could be private. We had common goals, to get married, and have a family.

What was the most difficult thing about married life? What was the most satisfying? The most difficult was his traveling and being away from home. He would forget my birthday gift. The funniest thing was that I would get my gift and tell him it was from him and he was delighted and I was always happy with what I got.

Employment

Who earned the money to support your household? My husband did.

Children

Do you have children? I have four, three girls and one boy.

What were they like when they were young? They were good kids, Karen was the "monkey" of the family.

What activities did your family do together? We would go away to lodge as a family for a week or two and holiday resorts in Ontario (all family). Each family had a cottage and we ate together. We attended kids' sports/ activities.

What family traditions did you have? We would sing "Grace" at all family special occasions. We celebrate holiday meals together (usually 22 of us) and everybody contributes. Each family has their own birthday celebrations but

I am at them all.

What values did you try to raise your children with? We taught them to be honest and kind. To speak nicely about people and be there for each other.

What forms of discipline did you use and why? Not too much.

Church, Political, and Other Involvements: Specifics, reasons for, and passions behind

Did you belong to a church or synagogue? St. Benedict's Catholic Church in Sarnia.

What kind of church-related activities have you been involved with? What was it like? Did you enjoy it? CWL: A charter member at St. Benedict's. I was the Organization Convener, President for two terms, Past President, Bazaar Convener a lot—I loved it and still do! I started the Folk Choir at St. Ben's then I joined the "main choir". I was Eucharistic Minister, helped with First Communion prep, RCIA, Marriage prep, Core and Encore, and Cursillo.

Extracurricular Activities: Volunteering, social, philanthropic, arts, athletics, etc.

Have you ever traveled? Did you travel often? When Frank was away on business, the company paid my expenses (and babysitting cost) so I could spend time with him. We went on seven cruises—I loved them. We stayed at all-inclusive resorts. We went on trips to Toronto to see shows and eat out. I have gone on a yearly trip to Las Vegas with friends.

What was your favorite place that you visited? What was the happiest/funniest/saddest memory from that trip? My favourite were the Mediterranean and Hawaiian cruises. We had a great time and built a lot of memories. It was funny—they tried to teach us the hula dance and we went to a luau.

What is one of your biggest accomplishments in life and/or something you are most proud of doing? I am most proud of my children, they are so kind and caring. My grandchildren are great, caring, and giving people. I have a relationship with them, they will do anything for me.

CWL Questions

When did you start taking part in Church activities? I started singing at funerals and weddings when I was about 16. The priests were always calling me to sing and I got paid \$5.

Were your parents involved in the Church? No.

Were there any events or fundraisers that were most memorable to you? Fundraisers: church bazaars, turkey pie workshops, CWL raffles, “dunk tank” at the church (I got dunked!)

How did you join the CWL? I joined in 1959, when the church was built.

How has the CWL affected your life? Relationships? Faith? The CWL made my faith stronger. I am more of a “praying member” now but I am as involved as I can be. I made life-long, “very good” friends. I felt valued and valued my friends very much.

Which parish were/are you apart of? St. Benedict’s in Sarnia.

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? If so, what was your role? I was two terms as President, two terms as Past President, two years Organization Convener, and Bazaar Convener “many” times. I started turkey pot pie fundraisers, was Raffle Convener.

Why did you join the CWL? I joined the CWL because I wanted to be an active part of my CWL faith community. I loved it and still do!

A very special event was when I received my 60 year pin from Bishop Fabbro. I was so proud that I asked him if I could give him a hug and he said “yes”. My family were quite shocked. One of them said, “Oh Mom!”

Judy Delaney



Judy Delaney is a Londoner. She was born, grew up and raised her family here. She lived with her parents, grandparents and younger brother in North East London. She left school and went to work at 17 contributing to the family household. It was the beginning of a long career in the insurance industry. Growing up her parents did not practice any faith but her grandmother took her to the Pilgrim United Church on Hamilton Road. Judy feels that “she always had religion in her.” As a teenager, she started going to an Anglican Church where she was Baptized and Confirmed.

Judy met her husband D’Arcy when she was just 16. They were married at St. Peter’s Cathedral when she was 19. At that point she became Catholic. They later joined Mary Immaculate Parish and were part of the parish for 40 years. While raising their three children and working part time, Judy became active in the CWL. It was a way for her to become involved in her church and meet others. She worked her way through many positions on the Council executive and eventually became Vice President then President of the Mary Immaculate CWL Council from 1985 to 1987. She was also their Bazaar Convenor and a member of their Parish Council. Judy participated in many CWL conventions and made many long-time friends in the CWL Sisterhood. She took a lead position for the Provincial Convention as the Transportation Convenor.

In 2002, Judy and D'Arcy retired and moved to St. John the Divine Parish. At first Judy, although still a member, was not involved in the Council there. Her friend convinced her to reengage. She started as Membership Convenor for about six years. She later became the CWL representative for Birthright and the CWL representative on the Parish Council. She offered valuable insights at the Executive team meetings for many years.

In 2018, Judy was honoured with the Maple Leaf Pin. This pin is for those who have served the League in an exceptional or meritorious manner. Judy has been a member of the CWL for almost 50 years, from the time she was a young busy mother into her 80's. Most of those years she has actively participated and had many leadership roles. To say that she has been an "active" CWL member would be an understatement. Although she stepped down from leadership roles in the CWL in 2021, she will continue to volunteer to help prepare the funeral lunches and maintain her involvement with Birthright.

Judy has had a significant impact on the Mary Immaculate and St. John the Divine CWL Councils.

Juliette (Julie) Harrison

I was born Juliette Drouin, December 18, 1936 in North Bay, Ontario. My parents were Jeanne Larivee and Louis Drouin. My mother came from Bonfield, Ontario, outside of North Bay, and my father came from Mason, Québec.

My father had two jobs. He worked as a “car man” for the Ontario Northland Railroad (ONR) and played the organ in our local Catholic church. My mother was a “stay at home” mom until she was in her 60’s. She then opened a women’s shop.

I was born fifth in a family of eight children. I had two brothers, Victor and Louis, and five sisters, Lorraine, Jeannine, Mary Ann, Claudette and Simone. I was somewhat like the middle child. My sisters Lorraine, “Toots,” and Jeannine, were my closest siblings. In our free time we all played many games outside together.

Although we did not think of ourselves that way, we were a poor family so money was always tight and clothes were always hand-me-downs. My mom sewed most of our clothes.

My father played the organ in the French church that was a mile away. Since we had no car, we had to walk to church and only those old enough were able to go with him. Mom stayed home with the younger children and was not able to attend church until they were older. Later, a church was built right across the road from us, making it much easier to attend Mass, especially for my mother.

Although they enjoyed the company of many relatives that lived close by and the adults played cards, they worked hard so there was no time for joining any types of organization or clubs. As the family grew, we still continued to stay in touch, but it was difficult to have a family reunion until my mother’s 80th birthday, when we all tried to meet in North Bay.

We grew up in a loving but crowded home with three bedrooms. My parents had a room, the two boys had one and we six girls had to share. We girls also had to do the inside housework like dusting, polishing floors and washing the dishes. The boys seemed to have less chores and more time to play outside.

I enjoyed going to school and Math was my favourite subject. Until Grade 8, I attended a French school and in Secondary School, I took Advanced French for one year, then continued with the regular curriculum.

We did not have organized programs the way schools have now but I did enjoy playing volleyball, basketball and bowling. My friends were from school and the neighbourhood and, along with my siblings, we played together after school or on the weekend. There were three of us girls, however, who were special to one another because we really trusted each other and had a close relationship.

After graduating, I was expected to get a job and contribute to the family income. At that time, I began to date and the main rule that my parents had was that he be Catholic. I worked many jobs over the years: baby-sitting, retail work in stores, as a waitress and as a dental assistant until Fr. Boyd asked me to join the Pastoral team at St. John the Divine. My jobs were always people-oriented as I enjoyed working with others. The money that I earned I spent on clothes, as having new clothes of my own was certainly a treat. In my 20's I got my drivers' licence which gave me more independence and responsibility.

In my early 20's, I met my husband Dale at the skating rink. We met through mutual friends, good people. I was attracted to Dale because of his gentle manner and the way that we were very similar both in our mindset and values. Even though he was not Catholic, which changed later, I felt that Dale was the one and only. We completed each other. When he became Catholic, we drew even closer. Dale and I were married on June 18, 1960 and will celebrate our 62nd wedding anniversary this year (2022).

Like every married couple, we have had our up's and down's but our love for each other, our faith, and sharing with friends have carried us through good times and bad.

Although I was able to take some short maternity leaves along the way, we shared in supporting our household and we also shared in the very difficult job of raising four children, two girls and two boys. We were strict parents but they were also good children.

We took them to Mass and did our best to teach them Christian values which would serve them through their lives. We now have eight grandchildren, four boys and four girls. The oldest is now 32 so they have grown into eight loveable adults.

Our family has become very spread out across North America. In early years, we used to travel out west to the Saskatchewan area where Dale has much family or back to the North Bay area where most of my family lives. We were able to have a family reunion there for my mother's 80th birthday but it has been difficult to continue with those over the years.

Our own children and grandchildren have to come to London to visit us now so that is usually in small numbers which is fine. Life for us has always been about family and so our best travel memories are probably those of attending weddings of our grandchildren, celebrations of love and family.

The most significant job that I had outside of my family was that of Pastoral Minister at St. John the Divine. Dale and I were involved in many programs at the Christian Renewal Centre and my training for this job really flowed from those programs and both formal and informal learning situations. Much was often learned in sharing through group sessions and with the support of both the Ursulines and the Sisters of St. Joseph especially Sister Loretta Manzara. Through her (and them) I was also encouraged to spend a week with her at Notre Dame University, a wonderful educational experience. It was certainly an eye-opener for me as I rubbed shoulders with talented and faith-filled people.

The then Father Jack Boyd was another mentor to me at that time and both encouraged and supported me in this work. It was hard work but very rewarding and I especially enjoyed my teaching of the RCIA journey. At first it was difficult for those both in the congregation and in church work to accept me in that position so I did have to prove myself. However, I did and received a great deal of encouragement from many areas.

The Christian Renewal Centre, our parishioners and my Spiritual Director gave me much support as well.

My association with the Catholic Women's League began 46 years ago. On my road to becoming a Pastoral Minister and during my years in that job, I was involved with many church activities and tried to be supportive of as many of them as I could, including the CWL.

I can certainly count many CWL members as both colleagues and friends and encourage every woman in the church to become a member of the CWL. One should become aware of the numerous ways that the CWL has been involved in Canada's laws and institutions, their commitment to social justice and the many organizations that the CWL supports. Depending on a

woman's age and/or work or family commitments, it is not always possible to attend meetings but there is usually some way to be involved, even in a very small way.

We are fortunate to have so many good women in our CWL at St. John the Divine and, when each gives a little, a lot can be accomplished. I am grateful that I can continue to support them and for their support of me.



Lena Mazan

Lena was born on January 13, 1924. Her family moved to Canada in Dover Township near Chatham, Ontario when she was just an infant. Her parents were sharecroppers with a local farmer. When Lena was growing up, she enjoyed playing with her four siblings. One of her favourite activities was sliding on the ice in the wintertime! The family attended church regularly. Lena attended a French school, but unfortunately, she had to quit half way through Grade 6, as the family needed her help on the farm to help with the income. While her two older sisters stayed in the house doing chores, Lena worked out in the fields. She was a very hard worker, although she did enjoy school.

Lena met the love of her life, Steve Mazan at a dance at the Belgian Dutch Club in Chatham. They were married on April 19, 1955, when she was 31 years of age. She always said that she started raising a family later in life, but it did not matter, as her three children “kept her young”! Their children’s names are Janet, John and Rose Marie. They had a lot of fun growing up, as Lena and Steve provided a good home environment, keeping up with family traditions such as Santa Claus at Christmas, and family reunions every year. The two most important values that they instilled in their children were living a life of faith and hard work. They had a farm near the village of Highgate, and grew various crops like red beets, cucumbers, tomatoes and even strawberries that they sold to the village store in Highgate. They also raised chickens, pigs and cows, so they were busy while raising their family.

To save money, Lena sewed her three children's clothes until they were in their teenage years.

Lena felt a longing to be with other women, as she was busy working on the farm. To remedy this, she joined the CWL in 1960. She worked hard as a CWL member helping out in any way that she could. The women in the League were a very vibrant part of the parish. They hosted garden parties for the parish family, which were well attended. Lena was involved in making crafts and she organized many members to make cabbage rolls for the annual bazaar. She baked, and organized and served at funerals, weddings and even quilted to help fundraise for the CWL!

Lena was very involved in the church and in the community. She volunteered at the Canadian Red Cross Blood Clinic for many years. Lena was also head of the Red Cross Society. She made many quilts with the Red Cross members to raise funds for the Red Cross. Lena also volunteered for Neighbourhood Watch, and held executive positions at the Belgian Dutch Canadian Club. She was an active member of the Highgate Women's Institute. As an additional way of spending time with her children and their interests, Lena was a 4-H leader for many years. Lena received her Maple Leaf Service Pin in 1988 for her many contributions to the CWL and the community.

Lena was always busy serving others. She was dependable. She always encouraged others to help out, getting the younger members of our parish family to join the Catholic Women's League. Work was second nature to her, and Lena never expected any recognition. She was very humble. All that she did was a labour of love. Lena served God with all of her heart and soul. Her love for the Catholic Women's League was apparent, as she was active into her late eighties, having received her 60-year pin in 2019. She worked for the CWL until she was no longer able! Lena passed away on Sunday, September 19, 2021. She was an inspiration to all members in our CWL Council.

Marie Anne Murphy

Marie Anne was born in the wee hours of the morning on August 12, 1934, in the family home on the corner of Belleperch and Riverside Dr. in the town of Riverside, Ontario to Lawrence and Rose (Roehler) Levesque. Their home was one block from St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church so it was not very far for her grandparents who are also her godparents to take her that same day to be Baptized.

Three hundred and sixty-four days after Marie Anne was born, her mother had twins Jeanette and Laurette and 11 months after that her sister Marie was born. Their family home that her father built was at “Stop 26” on Riverside Dr. in the Town of Riverside. After dinner every day it was their practice to pray the Rosary and every Sunday morning, they attended Mass at St. Anne’s Catholic Church in Tecumseh. Marie Anne, being the oldest, would help get her little siblings dressed and ready to go.

For her first school year, Marie Anne went to a bilingual, one-room schoolhouse in Stoney Point where they lived at the time. Because of this, she had knowledge from all eight grades. This was revealed at St. Theresa’s, a two-room school, so they put her in Grade 3. Of course, the fact that Marie Anne loved school and Mrs. Maisoneve being “the best teacher”, helped too.

The Lawrence Levesque children had lots of fun playing marbles, clay or glass, baseball and card games. Swimming in Lake St. Clair in the summer and ice-skating on the ditches in the winter. Marie Anne, by nine years old, caught on to playing adult card games from watching her parents and aunts and uncles too.

But this was not the only thing that the family did when they got together; singing and dancing was loud and boisterous and Marie Anne knew all the words. She always seemed to have a song in her head. She sang at school, church, with family and friends. Marie Anne’s singing was so good that by ten years old she was singing in the choir at St. Anne’s Church and at birthday parties and other gatherings.

Every summer, Francis Soulliere, Marie Anne’s grandfather on her mother’s side loved to gather his family for a reunion. Because they were such a big group with 13 and 14 children in each individual family, it took Mic Mac Park in Windsor to accommodate them. Of course, every family brought food and Marie Anne’s mother would bring her famous German potato salad. There would be music and singing, potato sack races and a horseshoe tournament

and Marie Anne was always glad to give a hand taking care of the children.

In the winter, the whole family would gather around the radio listening to the “fights,” the boxing matches, and they knew all the fighters. Music also came out of that radio and in Marie Anne’s teen years she had her favorites to sing along with: Ma Perkins, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Hank Snow and as she got older, Hank Williams. Of course playing cards was still a big pastime with the usual game now being euchre and sometimes poker. She went to St. Cecile High and then St. Joseph High School. She was a waitress at the Riverside Grill to help pay for her school supplies. It was not until she graduated from high school that she got a real job. She was a cab dispatcher for Riverside Taxi. Her second job was at Talley Ho Distributing Co counting the money out of the music boxes in the diners (the ones you could dance to).

On March 17th 1951, she just happened to be in her front yard when a taxi pulled up across the street. Then she saw him! That gorgeous red hair! “I have to meet him,” she thought. The woman that moved in across the street was his mother and Larry was coming home from London Ontario. He was the fifth child of ten. So all those people coming and going were this woman’s family.

On their first encounter, Marie Anne remembers that she was wearing a yellow dress with a purple flower on it and her long, extremely blonde hair was flowing in the wind. He observed this. On their first date, Larry bought ice cream cones at Silverwood’s Parlour and they went to Pillette Park on Riverside Drive and talked and talked and talked.

Marie Anne graduated from high school that spring of 1951; she was 17 years old.

Larry Murphy and Marie Anne fell desperately in love and, being a good Catholic girl, their only option was to get married. On August 31st, 1954 at the age of 20, she and Larry were married. Their early-morning wedding was officiated by Fr. Edgar Robert and was celebrated at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church in Riverside. The reception was at the Golden House and the aunts brought the dinner in. Their honeymoon was two-and-a-half days long and then they had to go back to work.

They had rented an apartment at 1127 Wellington St. on the west side of Windsor. Although Marie Anne had lots of house duties growing up, her mother had done all the cooking so she had to teach herself how to cook; and she did a good job.

Marie Anne worked shift work, days and afternoons at Motor Products as a glasscutter for car windows. Larry was working one block away at Duplate Glass doing the same thing; also shift work. She was allowed to work until she was six months pregnant and then because she did not plan to continue working, they moved to Riverdale in Riverside.

On August 8, 1955, Annie was born; now began Marie Anne's life at home raising their own children. When Coleen (1957) and Peggy Lynn (1958) were born they had already moved to Tecumseh on William Street and they belonged to St. Anne's Parish. Fr. Paquette was her favorite Priest.

They decided that they wanted to raise their children in the country, where they could have lots of land for them to play on. They found 594 County Road 2, just West of Belle River. The property held a big old farmhouse, a barn, a garage, another very old building, and a lot of trees.

Marie Anne had saved the baby bonus money for a down payment. The realtor told Larry that they still could not afford to buy the farm, but the farmhouse was divided into three apartments so they were able to rent the upstairs to another couple her sister and Larry's brother.

The farm was theirs in 1959. Their plan was to raise chickens for food and eggs to help feed the children. Their neighbour, who was growing cucumbers for pickles offered to get them a pickles contract so they could buy a washer and dryer. The next year she did the same to buy a freezer. That started the vegetable-growing business with Larry in charge and the kids helping.

Baby Mathew arrived in 1960 and his little sister Mary Frances in 1962. They were both Baptized in St. Simon and St. Jude Church in Belle River.

With Larry working full time and the vegetable business, in no time, Larry and Marie Anne paid off the mortgage and their own children could move upstairs.

For over 45 years, they sold vegetables at their stand on the corner of County Road 2 and the third concession of Rochester Township. "You name it we grew it," she says...asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, sweet corn, potatoes, squash, peppers, tomatoes, and onions. Eight acres of beautiful vegetables. Everyone worked on the farm, young or old. There were lessons to be learned, team work and responsibility...even though the kids did not always like to help they needed to pay for their clothes and school supplies.

Marie Anne and Larry's kids loved to play outside in the back yard in a little

bush they named China. Inside in winter, they played Monopoly, UNO and Clue (board and card games) that occupied their spare time.

When they came home from church on Sunday, everybody had a job; setting the table, making a whole lot of toast, putting jams on the table and Larry always cooked the eggs. They taught their children to be truthful and to be kind to people especially those with disabilities and to be respectful of older people. If they needed to be punished it was “Go to your room,” for a certain length of time, “and be prepared to apologize” if they were wrong.

When the children were young, Marie Anne would take them to the Parish picnics. She found that the women who worked the picnic were very nice and generous so she and Larry began to help with the picnics every year.

Duplicate closed in 1972 and Larry was out of work. “Oh God, what are we going to do?” Leave it in Jesus’ hands.

At 38 years old, Marie Anne went back to work and Larry was a full-time farmer. First Marie Anne worked at Judrick’s where they made connecting rods for race cars. In 1973, she went to Conklin Lumber. In 1981, Marie Anne was hired by General Motors Trim. She was 47 years old. “Why would you hire me?” was her question to the management. “No babies, no weekend parties or Monday morning hangovers,” so she worked 4,747 days without missing a day until retirement and she has the plaque to prove it! The kids got jobs off the farm as well, at Betty and Norm’s pizzeria in Belle River to help pay for clothing and school supplies. Larry eventually got a job at Navistar in Chatham for 14 years until it closed.

Marie Anne joined the choir at St. Simon and St. Jude Parish in 1972 and it got to be a very famous affair. They even made a record. From the loft she saw some of her friends as CWL members parade out of Church at funerals and was impressed at how they honored their dead and how they took care of their members so she joined the Catholic Woman’s League.

She worked many years with the other women putting on a fashion show until they were not able to do them anymore. Then they turned to a bazaar and making meat pies and butter tarts to help make the bazaar a success. It was lots of work and lots of fun.

Even in their early retirement years, they did not slow down. They put the vegetable stand on the honour system so they could still be in the fields during the day and Marie Anne continued to help with the CWL bazaar.

She joined the “fun band” (and it is just that). It is comprised of musical

parishioners from St. Simon and St. Jude who have fun playing their instruments and singing their songs at all the nursing homes in the area. It is just the thing that Marie Anne likes to do, make people laugh and feel good. They cannot wait to get back to performing for the older folks.

In August 2016, she was diagnosed with colon cancer and needed surgery. In December 2016, she was operated on for a brain tumor. It was benign but she still needed surgery to put a shunt into the side of her head. She rang the gong at the Windsor Cancer Centre and was declared cancer free. It did not take her long to get back, hoeing in the fields.

One thing that she is really proud of is the fact that at 38 years old she could learn the house building business. She learned about the lumber, the plumbing, the kitchen cabinets, carpeting, and paints. At Conklin Lumber, she was able to fill the orders of the contractors that were building Fountain Bleu area homes in Windsor.

Now, they grow the vegetables that they need and buy their chicken and eggs from the store. She and Larry want to stay on their farm until they say they want to leave.

Considering that they have the support of their children and that the house is a very homey place full of memories, I do not blame them.



Marie-Theresa Lamphier

Life Member, member of the CWL since 1992

Marie-Theresa was born on September 25, 1948 at the side of the road on the way to Hotel Dieu Hospital. Obviously, she was in a hurry to arrive. Her parents are Elizabeth and Ernest Masse. She grew up on a farm on the Rochester Townline. Marie-Theresa has three brothers and two sisters. She is number five.

She attended St. Charles School, St. Joachim until the family moved to the city. She then attended Holy Rosary School for Grade 8 and went on to Walkerville for high school.

She went to university, graduating with a Masters in Business Administration. Her working career started at the Provincial Bank at Drouillard and Whelpton where she was employed for eight years. From there she went to work for Chrysler Canada for 30 years where she held various office positions. Upon her retirement from Chrysler, she worked part-time as a bookkeeper for Casey's and Eastside Mario.

When asked about memories of her childhood, she talked about her father's love of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, her parents would send the children to bed at their usual time so they could wrap the presents. Then her father

would ring a bell at midnight to wake all the kids to come and open their Christmas presents. What excitement to be able to open your gifts early! She also remembers the Masse family always entertaining the family at Halloween.

On the farm, there were two houses. The family lived in the small house but later moved to the bigger house. One day as her mother was cooking rice, she knocked over the pot, severely burning her ankle. After that, her father took over the cooking. According to Marie-Theresa he made the best chop suey.

Mary Jane Quenneville has been a friend for over 60 years. They would bike to each other's houses to play. At Mary Jane's they would often pick cucumbers. She has a scar to remind her of Mary Jane because Mary Jane's dog bit Marie-Theresa on the leg.

Marie-Theresa met her future husband Larry while in high school. They were married in 1969 at Holy Rosary Church. They lived on Giles Avenue until they purchased their first home on Whitney Avenue. Over the years, they moved and had several homes until six years ago they moved to Katella Avenue in Windsor. Marie-Theresa and Larry have three children. Her daughters Nicole and Lisa each have a girl and a boy and her son Jeffrey is single. She adores her grandchildren.

In 2007, Marie-Theresa enrolled in the Pastoral Ministers Course at the Seminary in London. At the same time, her husband Larry was in the Diaconate program. Upon completing her CPM certification, she worked for five years as a pastoral minister in Chatham at St. Joseph's and St. Ursula's parishes.

Marie-Theresa's involvement with the CWL started in 1992. When Fr. John Comisky was pastor at St. Gregory the Great Parish, he encouraged the women to form a CWL council. She is a charter member of this Council. During her time with St. Gregory's CWL, she held many offices, starting as Treasurer. She was also Regional Chair for Essex. From there, she has continued her involvement, running for and being elected to several positions on the Diocesan Council. She was Diocesan President from 2014 to 2016. While on the Diocesan Council, the Council members were asked to choose someone to pray for to become a saint. She chose to pray for Blessed Oscar Romero. The following year he was named a saint.

She has been active on the Provincial Council. She was Chair of Communications from 2017 to 2019. She has also served on many

committees at the Provincial level. She has been re-elected Treasurer. She has attended many Diocesan, Provincial and National Conventions. Part of her role was to gather information on convention planning and fundraising activities.

Marie-Theresa stated that COVID-19 certainly disrupted life as we knew it. There was no physical contact, no in-person meetings, retreats, etc. She feels good to once again be able to meet face-to-face and to share.

In 2019, Marie-Theresa became a Life Member of the CWL, a well-deserved honour. We, at St. John Vianney, are pleased to have her as part of our Council. She has much knowledge and history with the CWL that she can share with us.

Marion Catherine Larke Fuerth



Marion Catherine Larke was born at St. Joseph's Hospital on March 28, 1927, weighing in at 8 lbs. She was the oldest daughter of Edgar Larke and Theresa Pfeifer. She was Baptized at St. Joseph's in Chatham with her older cousin Madeline Gerber as Godmother and her Uncle Burt Larke as Godfather. She was a shy child and liked the comfort of the familiar. When her Mom went in to give birth to her sister, she was left with Aunt Clara Gerber. After crying all night, she was happier when they took her to Uncle Burt, whom she saw regularly at the farm. Seventy years later her older Gerber cousins still remembered the ruckus she made!

She has fond memories of two special uncles from her youth. Her godfather, Uncle Burt Larke, would always let her tag after him around the farm, where Father did not have the patience. Besides that, he often had a jersey milk candy bar in his pocket for her! Her other favourite was Uncle Joe Pfeifer whom she spent time with when she went to visit her Gramma Pfeiffer. He was always carving wooden pieces and creating wooden mystery puzzles.

Easter vacation she would go to the Pfeifer farm with her mom and sister, Peewee. During summer vacations, Marion would go and stay for a time with Aunt Clara Gerber, when they lived in Eagle, to visit her cousin and friend Rita Gerber. Her Uncle George's girls from Detroit would be staying just down the road at her grammas.

Marion attended the local schoolhouse for Grades 1-8 and walked every day with Mickey Waddick from just up the road. There were not any girls nearby in the neighbourhood so she and Peewee spent a lot of time playing with the three Waddick boys, Mickey, George and Jimmy. The five of them would build playhouses out of cement



Ruth, Marion, Peewee and Grace at Aunt Clara Gerbers



blocks and boards to while away the summer hours. As she grew older their mother, Grace Waddick Dillion became her mentor and friend. She spent many hours in her kitchen visiting and this friendship continued until Grace's passing in 1998.

Catholic children from the rural areas had to go into Chatham to receive their training at St. Joseph's School for First Communion and Confirmation. They had to attend regular school classes and take their religious training for a week. Marion lived with her Aunt Clara Gerber on both occasions so developed a close friendships with her cousins.

Marion started CCI in Chatham at the age of 12, as she had skipped Grade 7. Her dad drove her Monday morning and picked her up Friday afternoon and she boarded during the week at a cost of \$4.00. She then transferred to The Pines for Grade 10, and boarded with Herb and Nora Thompson, on Elizabeth Street, becoming friends with their children Malcolm and Ruth. Mac was good in math and would help Marion with her homework. There was a four-month period of time when money was short and she lived with the Dr. Bodendistel family, working for her board.

Following graduation from Grade 12, she was still too young for nursing so her dad encouraged her to take a business course at CVS. Mrs. Thompson, a former teacher, encouraged her to take a summer course at Normal School in London, as there was a shortage of teachers because of the war. She roomed with Sophia Teddie Gillier during one summer course. Her first position was at St. Anthony's Separate School 1946 to 1947, the same school she and her father had attended as children. She taught there one year before she started on her career in nursing at St. Joseph's Hospital in Chatham. She loved the classes but not working on the floor. She did not mind the blood but she did not have the confidence to carry out some of the procedures. She left after six months, despite the cajoling from the nuns.

Marion returned to teaching, getting a temporary certificate and taught at Fort Erie for four months. She returned home to do her Grade 13 and to go to Normal School to get her permanent certificate.

She next taught at the Indian Burial School in Anderdon Township and lived



Teaching in Anderdon

with the Norman French family on the waterfront in Amherstburg. She made fast friends with the French's. "Paw" gave her away at her wedding. Their son Marvin and his wife Doris were lifelong friends of Marion and Bob.

One weekend when she was home, she needed a ride back to Essex County. It happened that a young man from Woodslee was visiting his Aunt Grace Waddick, who lived across the road. It was arranged that Bob Fuerth would drive her home and so the courtship began.

Marion taught for two years until she married Bob at St. Joseph's in Chatham. They moved into a brick two-storey farmhouse at Lot 18 Conc. 3, Maidstone. The 77-acre farm, which had originally belonged to George Market, had a dairy barn, chicken shed and other typical outbuildings. The following year the provincial government expropriated 15 acres through their property for the 401, which was constructed in the late 1950's. In 1959, they built an addition, doubling it in size and in the 1960's added in-door plumbing. Many of the farmwomen along the "German line" cooked with wood, but Marion insisted on an electric stove.

Bob started his dairy herd with three cows and gradually expanded it over the years. The milking process changed from hand milking, to machine to pipelines. In the early years they took the 100 lb cans out to the road in a cart for Jimmy Lemire to pick up for Purity Dairy. They then installed an



Marion and Bob
August 1950

electric milk cooler and eventually a bulk tank that rapidly chilled the milk. Stevenson Transport came with the milk trucks to haul the milk to Twin Pines Dairy. When their oldest son, Rick, came home from university to farm, there were about 20 cows. They expanded the herd, buying quota and adding to the barn. They continued to milk cows until 1992 when the herd of 35 Holsteins was sold to an Amish farmer from Ohio.

Bob cash-cropped land with his older brother John, sharing equipment and labour for many years until he went into partnership with his son. He also worked with his Uncle Bill doing bush work, as there was still land to be cleared. A machine storage shed and workshop was built on the farm in 1978, as a better work area for maintaining and building their own equipment.

They had seven children, so life was busy at home for Marion. She is a wonderful cook and was always trying new recipes. She was a “clipper” with files of articles on diverse topics and scrapbooks of local newspaper information. She did not have much time to sew when the children were small, so her widowed mother would come for a week every year to make clothes. There was always mending to do on jeans and overalls, thanks to her accident-prone husband! As the children grew more independent she did find more time for sewing, having learned from her mother as well as taking classes, especially “Stretch and Sew”. It was a quicker technique for sewing using stretchy fabrics. She made lots of t-shirts and shorts for her younger children and later for the families in Guatemala.



Marion with her first three children, born a year apart.



Celebrating 50 years

She was a charter member of the Good Luck Women's Institute in 1952, which met in member's homes around North Woodlsee. Her "clipping" habits served her well as historian for the WI Tweedsmuir history book. The group finally folded in 1992, but over the years, she took many life skills courses with the group and maintained lasting friendships.

In the 70's she convinced Bob to take up square dancing. It was not his forte and then he had a heart attack so that put that social activity aside. They both enjoyed euchre and occasionally played bridge with Marg and Norb Loebach.

They were able to get away from the farm once Rick started farming with them and their first trip was to Florida in 1974 when they stayed with their daughter-in-law's family, Henry and Evelyn Gibson. Vacation was not really a word in Bob's vocabulary so Marion was shocked when he suggested a farm tour to New Orleans and Texas. After Bob's heart attack in 1976 she insisted that they start taking regular vacations and would get a cottage somewhere in the southwest of Ontario for a week or so. They did have other tour trips including another farm tour to Belgium, France and Germany as well as a trip to Israel to see the Holy Land and ancient historical sites.

Marion's faith is very much a part of her life. As a child, she went to Mass in Chatham at St. Joseph's but lived too far away to participate in church-

related activities. She joined the CWL shortly after she was married and received her 70-year pin in 2023. She took many leadership courses during her involvement in the organization. She was involved in the local council and often held the education convenor position, including being part of a pilot project at the school for special needs children. She remembers being part of the group when they prepared the meal for the Ordination celebration for Fr. Larry Mousseau, a cousin of her husband. She also recalls all the card parties that they held at the parish hall. They were fun and they made money! She credits the CWL with giving her the opportunity to meet new people and to be involved with her community.

Over the years both her and Bob were active at St. John's Parish as a greeter. They both attended prayer groups and Bible studies.

Bob had heart issues from 1976 on but he never gave up farming. He had surgery in June 2004 and never recovered. Following Mass at St. John's Woodslee he was laid to rest in the adjoining cemetery. Marion stayed on the farm for another year but truly wanted to live in town. She moved to a split-level house in Essex in September 2005 and never regretted it. She made many new friends at the Senior's Club where she played pepper and went to fitness class as well as through Holy Name Church. She was part of a group that attended weekday Mass followed by coffee. It was not a wise idea just to drop in to see her because you were not likely to find her at home. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren kept her busy. Her strong Pfeifer genes kept her healthy. Despite a healthy diet, she struggled to keep close to 100 lbs.

As she looks back on over 95 years, she thinks she was blessed to be able to attend school past Grade 8. She realizes now how difficult finances were in the 1930's during the Great Depression. She is grateful for all the time her dad took from his farming to drive her back and forth to Chatham, especially when he did not like to drive. Another blessing is the fact that she has boarded with



Louise, Sheila, Theresa, Doug, Rick, and Bert with Marion, Bob and Betty sitting

eight families from a period of three weeks to several years, giving her a wide variety of life experiences and many lasting friends.

In the winter of 2019, she gave up driving due to macular degeneration, but managed to stay active. She often walked from her home to church. Her eyes continued to deteriorate and she found it difficult to see dials for cooking so she decided it was time to move to a retirement home. In February 2022, she moved to Seasons in Belle River. She celebrated her 95th birthday in March. Unfortunately, she fell in early May and fractured her hip. She now shuffles along with a walker and continues to have sight loss. She is frustrated by impairments but still feisty and always ready for an adventure. She remains a wonderful role model of faith and positivity.



Marion in 2012

Mary Barnes

St. James' Catholic Women's League, Seaforth, Ontario

I was married in 1974 and joined St. James' CWL Council in Seaforth with a complimentary membership. We moved to Dublin, Ontario in 1976 and I joined St. Patrick's CWL; I became President in Dublin around 1981.

We moved back to Seaforth in 1983 and I rejoined St. James' Council. I became President in Seaforth for the first time in 1996. The Christopher Leadership Course, (abbreviated version) was being offered and I took it in order to feel comfortable in this position. I was elected President for the second time a few years later and then for the third time in 2019.

As a teenager, I would participate in various CWL Christmas bazaar's usually in the tea room, waiting tables etc. The Christmas bazaar became a thing of the past and the council moved on to raffles; selling tickets with money prizes and grocery baskets.

Because we do not have a hall, we held the bazaar in the parish school.

I have held a few positions other than President in our council, Treasurer at one point as well as nominations for elected positions. At the regional level, I was Treasurer as I was attending the regional meetings as the designate for our council.

I attended Diocesan Conventions at various times over the years as well, in Sarnia, Chatham, London, Windsor, Woodstock, and Stratford with gaps in between. I helped at the Stratford conventions at the registration table, prior to becoming Regional Chairperson.

In 2017 while attending a Fall Regional at Precious Blood in Exeter, I put my name forward to be Huron Perth Regional Chairperson assuming the position in April 2018. Being a Regional Chairperson has given me great satisfaction and insight into the workings of the Executive at the Diocesan level. I had looked forward to attending the Diocesan, Provincial and National Conventions during the CWL 100th Anniversary year in 2020 but alas, these were all held virtually. Attending virtually did afford me insight into these levels. I participated at the resolutions dialogue at the 2019 Convention, a very interesting session. I have co-presented a Legislation workshop with Denise Lalonde Morris, 2nd Vice and Legislation Chairperson.

During my time as Regional Chairperson and sitting at the Diocesan Executive table, I have met many dedicated women empowered to keep the Catholic Women's League alive and well in the London Diocese.

Sincerely,

Mary Barnes

Sister Mary Boere C.S.J.

A note from Maureen Bedek, who submitted Sister Mary's story:

I have had the pleasure of meeting Sister Mary in 1995 when I was a young mother of three volunteering on the Parent Council at Monsignor Morrison Catholic School in St. Thomas. Over 28 years later, she never ceases to amaze me. Here is her story.

Sister Mary was born on September 5, 1937, in Hekendorp Holland to Jack Boere and Mary Miltenburg. She was the eighth child having 12 siblings in total. She grew up on a farm during the war and remembers having to walk five kilometers to school and having the Minister of the village come Tuesday and Thursday to help with reading and math. She remembers playing with her brothers, biking freely in the neighbourhood vicinity after scouting that it was safe to do so since it was wartime.

She recalls her faith journey in this way: "My faith journey began when I was baptised, probably even before I was born. Faith life was nurtured in the family setting with Morning and Evening Prayer, and weekly attendance at Eucharist. Prayer was the heartbeat of family life, especially noticed during wartime (1940-1945) and with the decision-making in moving to Canada in 1952. The groundwork for dependency on God was being laid. It was modelled in the family, and I believe God worked in each of my siblings in different ways." "As a child growing up, I was spiritually sensitive; learning the answers to Catechism questions was never a problem."

Sister Mary recalls being checked to see if she knew answers to questions such as, "Why did God create you?" Her response: "God created us to serve Him in this life and to be happy with Him forever." She also remembers in Grade 3 that she wanted to be a Sister so she could be of service in the Church and the community. But she did not share that with anybody.

So how did her faith journey develop? Sister Mary responded, "During my elementary education it was rote prayers, and it seems that prayer consisted mainly of requests. The faith was caught by living lives which were based on the Commandments. The Commandments made sense if you wanted to live according to 'serve God with your heart.'" She describes the defining moment when she was searching for a Religious Community which would give her the opportunity to serve God with all her heart.

What family traditions did you have at Christmas and birthdays? Christmas breakfast after Midnight Mass was the tradition. Birthdays had to be special and celebrated on the day, not deferred until another time. “We as a family still adhere to that tradition except during COVID.”

What was your schooling like? I started at age four attending Montessori—elementary school. There were some interruptions due to German occupation. There was also an interruption when I was in Grade 9 as we immigrated to Canada in 1952.

Can you share some defining moments in your life? In 1955, I insisted that I was going to go back to Holland to enter the Franciscan Sisters. My parents objected. I kept quietly searching for options in Canada. In the spring of 1955, I announced to my parents and family that I had an interview in London with the Sisters of St. Joseph and entered on July 3, 1955.

Over the years, her prayer life developed from always requesting to living in gratitude for the gift of God in her life and for the many blessings she experiences each day. She describes her dream in this way, “My dream is to continue to be involved with people and assure them that God loves them no matter what their circumstances. We just have to open up to our loving Creator’s love and entrust everything, our weaknesses and our strengths and as we take the final step into eternity, we are in the fullness of life praising our God for eternity.”

Sister Mary joined the CWL in 1986 and is still an active member through her acts of service, modeling kindness and words of wisdom. Thank you Sister Mary for all you do and have done for those you serve.

Mary Kenlyn Bryant

Corpus Christi CWL, Windsor, Ontario

I was born in 1942, second in line in a large family with four sisters and two brothers. We were raised in the outskirts of Essex, Ontario by faithful Catholic parents who said the Rosary every night well into their 90s, making us say it with them too.

I enjoyed growing up attending St. Clement's Church. Much to my mother's horror, I wore red socks to my Confirmation. Being the shortest, I was right there in the front row for everyone to see. My older sister and I were also part of the Sodality group of teenage girls, wearing veils and light blue capes, instilling us with good values and devotion to Mary.

I married in 1966, celebrating 56 years together in 2022. My early working life was initially spent at home being a wife and mother to a son and daughter. Life was not without its ups and downs—family tragedies and illnesses all left their marks, and I have the misfortune of life-long back pain. I constantly have to readjust my lifestyle and learn “balance,” physically and mentally. Faith, family and friends, forever staples in my life, all aid throughout this process.

I completed my education at the Hotel Dieu School of Nursing and became a Registered Nurse (RN) in 1964, complete with a cap and cape (navy blue this time). In 1980, I returned for an RN Refresher Course and re-began my career at Hotel Dieu. While working, I had the privilege of mentoring new staff nurses to our unit and found I rather liked educating them. This led to me also being an instructor in the nursing program at our local college beginning in 1990 until officially retiring from nursing in 2005. This aspect of my calling enabled me to take on more leadership roles in other areas of my life as well, including my faith.

In my early-married years, I was an active volunteer within the parish of Saint Gabriel's, later renamed Corpus Christi, Windsor. I participated in Bible study, taught religion classes, later RCIA, and more recently Eucharistic Ministry. With my mother and two sisters already members in another parish, I joined the CWL in 1986 (our Patroness is Our Lady of Good Counsel). Initially I kept a low profile, e.g. telephone committee and baking, as working shifts as an RN prevented me from attending meetings.

After retirement, participating fully in the CWL introduced me to a Recording Secretary position, followed by Community Life, Resolutions and Legislation. During the latter, I co-authored a resolution along with a Good Shepherd CWL member, and found this to be a great learning and empowering experience. I currently serve in the Co-Chairing Organization. Chairing committees, along with the assistance of “faith-like women,” gives me personal satisfaction and helps me to grow spiritually. I also continue to be involved in our parish (Social Justice Committee, and rep. for Development and Peace), enabling me to incorporate many of our projects into the CWL positions held at that time.

Along with my faith, I enjoy music, piano, tai chi, reading, entertaining, birding, and walking in nature. I also continue to volunteer when and where needed, and give some credit to my children who influenced me greatly in being of service. “COVID time” has kept me especially busy utilizing my sewing skills, addressing the needs of the community and local charities with masks, fidget pads for those with Alzheimer’s, baby blankets for the women’s shelter, Dignity Robes for hospital patients receiving radiation treatments, and capes (yes, again, but every colour you can imagine!)—superhero capes for children suffering from life-threatening illnesses. My CWL sisters and others have always been very supportive of whatever I was undertaking, including raising money for beds and continuing education for children at an orphanage in Kenya where my daughter was volunteering.

I am grateful to be part of the CWL, which has provided me with an enduring community of belonging, support, purpose and growth. My membership in the CWL continues to be a truly positive, uplifting and rewarding experience.

Sincerely, Mary Kenlyn Bryant

Mary Parent

St. Simon and St. Jude, Belle River, Ontario.

I was born at home, on February 16th, 1927 in Hammond, Ontario east of Ottawa. My parents, Sylvio Belanger and Meriza (Gelineau), were thrilled to have a little girl after six boys. So many people were happy for my dad, as he really wanted a daughter. I had twelve siblings: Leo, Aurele, Romilard, Albert, Roger, Gaetan, Laurier, Agathe and Ernest. Seven other children died at birth. My real name was Aurore, but everyone called me Mary. I was very close to all my siblings and loved each one. I was seven years older than my only sister. My dad had a cheese factory and Mom made babies!

As children, we played homemade games, as money was scarce for most people in those days. We played with pie plates and spoons in the sand. Tires and wheels, big and small, were our toys. We were always ready for a game of baseball and playing catch. Card games were a great way to pass the time.

There were no “rich” people where I grew up. Dad was a very proud man who refused “relief” money. He would drive forty miles into the bush with his Model T to clear land in the winter. He would come home every three weeks. We always had food to eat. We had a big garden in a rented field. Mom canned a lot. She worked hard doing laundry with an old washing machine. The boys always helped her with the laundry. When my dad was away, she worked in the cheese factory. They were very good parents.

My family was very religious. We went to church every Sunday and observed religious holidays. We recited the Rosary kneeling behind chairs; I often fell asleep during the litanies.

My dad was good friends with Wilfred Laurier and Mackenzie King. There was a picture of Wilfred Laurier in the kitchen. Dad attended some political meetings, but we did not discuss politics as a family.

My mom was a Catholic Women’s League member. She was unable to be very active, as she did not drive. She had a lovely voice and always wanted to be in the church choir.

I remember very little about my grandparents. I knew my mother’s parents the most. My grandmother was a very large woman; I can still see her in her long skirts and boots. We had little to no contact with my father’s family. Aunts, uncles and cousins would sometimes visit on Sundays. New Year’s Eve parties were held at our house. After my dad’s death, the siblings

decided to start family reunions. These reunions continued every year until COVID in 2020. The aunts and uncles took turns organizing the fun and games and the food.

We lived in a modest house. There were three bedrooms upstairs and one very large bedroom downstairs along with a big kitchen. I shared a bedroom with my sister, one dresser, a big mirror and a crucifix over our bed. We always felt like Jesus was watching us. My brothers turned the big downstairs bedroom into a living room for my mom. They bought the materials and the furniture. I was happy to buy the new curtains for my mom. The kitchen was the gathering place. Mom would get upset when my brothers would sit with their legs outstretched. We often gathered after ice-skating to warm up and have a snack.

We all had duties around the house. I had the job of emptying the chamber pails. I did not like it at all. I especially hated it when the farmers saw me doing it. We did dishes, floors and helped with cooking. There was a big dishpan on the table and water would always run down our elbows. Everybody pitched in. We helped in the cheese factory too. We brought in wood and piled it up for the house and the factory.

I learned to cook, sew and knit. During the war, we knitted stocking legs for the soldiers. We would send them away to the IODE (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire) and they would finish the feet.

As a family, we played baseball in the summer and skated on the rink my brothers would make in the field. We skated from October to Easter!

My mom was a very good cook, but I was not a very good eater! I loved to eat bologna. Mom cooked meat, potatoes and lots of vegetables. We ate a lot of different puddings. She made coconut pie with lots of coconut, not like the pies you buy today! Lunch was often bread, butter and molasses.

My family was not big on traditions. I went trick-or-treating on Halloween. New Year's Day was always special. My dad would take the boys and bless them. I remember how he always cried when he did this.

I attended a one-room public school with a big box stove in the middle. We always started the day with the Our Father. Grades 1 to 8 were all taught together. I had a twenty-minute walk to school and we got out late. My family cleaned the school and lit the fire before class. School was O.K. I liked math but I did not like history. I was sorry that I did not pay closer attention during history classes when I started to travel later in life. I liked most of

my teachers except for one. I remember she made a comment that French girls were ugly. She was really a bigot. She would strap the children and then make them stay after school to tell her they loved her. I remember her telling me to tell her I loved her and I said, "All right if you say so!" There were mean kids at school, but they were not called bullies then. One kid pulled my scapular and broke my glasses.

My earliest childhood friends were my neighbors Carmen and Bertha. Bertha always came over with her little sister. At school, Norma and Jean were my friends. We spent most of our time just talking.

I did not date during high school, but I did attend a social with a boy from across the street and his family. My parents did not have rules, as there were really no boys around to date.

I graduated from high school and wanted to be a nurse. I moved to Ottawa where I started my first job. I was a receptionist in a doctor's office. I did bookwork and got the patients ready to see the doctor.

I met my husband, Ray, while I was working in Ottawa. I was sitting with a friend when two soldiers stopped to talk to us. They asked us out to dinner where we talked and enjoyed the conversation. I was attracted to Ray because he was handsome and was a great conversationalist. Ray stayed in Ottawa for two months, then was transferred to British Columbia. We sent letters back and forth and on his last furlough, we got engaged. He went off to Halifax to go overseas. When he got there, they announced that the war had ended!

We were married on July 2nd, 1946 and moved to Stoney Point, Ontario. I continued my education after I was married. I attended business school and took a CNA (Certified Nurses Assistant) course. I worked for thirteen years at Cedar Springs Hospital for the mentally challenged. Ray was a welder and truck mechanic by trade and owned a business selling David Brown tractors and farm equipment. In 1972, he sold the business and we moved to Belle River, Ontario, where Ray went back to work as a mechanic and welder. I got my driver's license when I was 26.

I held various jobs for several years, when I saw an ad asking for Bus Tour Guides for Mae's Travel. I was a natural for this job! I loved being with people, I wanted to travel and I was always a very organized person. I was trained on the job and after one day, I was thrust into the job by surprise. When I arrived for training, there was no one there to train me. The bus driver had told Mae that I did not need any more training! So I nervously

welcomed everyone and the rest is history. I did this for 30 years and retired when I was 84 years old. Ray and I enjoyed our trips and the work was so much fun. We traveled to Spain, Africa, Switzerland, Israel, England and so many other countries.

Ray and I were blessed with three wonderful children, Maurice, Pauline and Ron. They were very quiet and well-behaved children. We went on Sunday trips for ice cream, visited family in Ottawa and camped on weekends. One of their favorite treats was the Easter cake I made with colored filling. We always instilled the values of honesty and good manners. They were taught that you do not always have to win and to be a good sport. Managing money was important to us along with cleanliness and a good first impression. Discipline was not much of an issue as they were always respectful. We were blessed with four wonderful grandchildren.

I was always very involved in parish life. We attended Mass on Sundays and holidays. I was very active in my Catholic Women's League council. I organized activities for the meetings. I invited several guest speakers who spoke about Alcoholics Anonymous, drugs, making a will, being an organ donor and planning funerals. We also invited guests to do demonstrations on flower arranging and caring for plants. I was a long-time member of the Mission Card Club. We organized big card parties and donated so much money to the missions.

The most fun I had with the CWL was at bazaar time. I helped organize workshops to make pinecone wreaths and carpet wall hangings. I remember being asked to wear an elf costume for Santa. I refused to put my legs into tights, but what a laugh I had with my bazaar co-convenor. Together we helped to make the annual CWL bazaar a community event that still raises so much money for local charities.

Mary Ann Fathers

Community Life Chairperson, Good Shepherd CWL, Tecumseh, Ontario

My first memories of the CWL were how my mother, Helen Slavik and a number of women at St. Cyril and St. Methodius Slovak Parish in Windsor, Ontario created a village for me and the youth in our parish community. They instilled in us an appreciation for the Slovak culture and a real sense of belonging.

These dedicated women through engaging us in Christmas concerts and participating in annual strawberry socials, summer picnics and talent shows helped us to appreciate both their work and love for the church.

We learned that it was of great importance to them to pass on the Slovak culture and it left me with wonderful memories. Today, I am a member of Good Shepherd CWL, previously St. Gregory the Great in Tecumseh, Ontario.

It was largely due to the fond memories I had growing up that I was more than happy to join and participate in the many activities carried out by our council. The CWL calls its members to grow in faith and to witness the love of God through their ministry and service. As members, we are also asked to promote Catholic values and charitable work. Being a member of Good Shepherd CWL I can affirm our dedication to helping those in need in both Windsor and Essex County. Many of these needs have centred around delivering food to local food banks and agencies. We have often tried to answer many of the specific needs of our community. We have provided hats, mitts, socks, and scarves to The Salvation Army for many years. Our Lady of Good Counsel worked through us for years as we extended support to Haiti.

We have never forgotten our seniors, of which I am especially proud. Over the years, the CWL provided lunch for the seniors in our parish after the bi-annual healing Mass held in the parish. Visiting the elderly, bringing flowers at Christmas, and going out Christmas carolling has brought joy to many.

Faith sharing, education and caring have made my years as a member of Good Shepherd CWL truly rewarding. I would be remiss not to mention how the work carried out by our organization has been known to influence even the politics of this great nation.

Memories abound as I try to highlight 25 plus years that I have been a member of Good Shepherd CWL. I believe it is important to mention the

many socials we have shared with one another and the friendships we have made. Although COVID has made having our meetings and providing for those in need a little more difficult we have tried to be innovative in continuing our work as CWL members.

In closing, I would like to personally thank Audrey Rychel for introducing and encouraging me to accept the call of Our Lady of Good Council and becoming a member of Good Shepherd Catholic Women's League.

Helen Slavik was my mother. She died on March 2, 2016.

Sincerely, Mary Ann Fathers



Mary Ann Horne-White

Corpus Christi, Windsor

In 1999, I decided to be part of the Catholic Women's League, going to meetings with my mother-in-law once a month. I became a member of St. Martin de Porres' Council in September that year, and four months later became part of their executive, taking the corresponding secretary position.

At the Convention in 2000, I had a chance to attend the Mass and banquet with two other women. We drove from Windsor to Chatham (an hour away), to attend. I remember being amazed by the number of women attending the Mass.

The singing in the church and the spirituality was awe-inspiring! I decided right there to continue being a part of the CWL. At the banquet, I met the National President and other women from all over the diocese.

When parishes started the amalgamation process, St. Martin de Porres and Christ the King Parishes were among the first to go through the process. When our CWL councils amalgamated, we continued with two presidents, one from each council as co-presidents. This worked until we amalgamated with another parish and the church changed its name to incorporate the three churches. We had an election and I became the first President of Corpus Christi CWL in 2006.

I continued on the executive in various positions until 2014 when I thought it was time to get off the executive. The President of the London Diocesan Executive asked me to take the Windsor Regional Chair when the Chairperson was sick and could not continue. I “discerned” for a week and a half very carefully and decided to take the position. I must say God has been with me on my journey with the CWL.

From 2014 to 2018, I was the Windsor Regional Chairperson. It was a wonderful experience. I worked with the London Diocesan Executive and brought the directives and shared information to the presidents and members in Windsor. When the provincial convention was held in Stratford (July 2016), our Diocesan Executive and volunteers were on the planning committee. It was very exciting to be a part of the team at the provincial convention.

At the London Diocesan Convention in April 2018, I let my name stand for the elections, and was appointed Community Life Chairperson for the London Diocese.

Twenty-nineteen was a busy year for Community Life. We collected 18,000 pairs of socks for an “Out of the Cold” incentive that came from Ontario Provincial Council. The socks were donated to those in need all across the London Diocese. Our convention was held in Windsor that year, so our planning committee was very busy with that. On July 30th, our members stood in solidarity at “ONroutes” on the 401 highway against human trafficking with Kelly Franklin, Director of Farmtown Canada. It was exciting to see us all there in solidarity. One of our past Diocesan Spiritual Advisors Fr. Matt George was at the West Lorne ONroute with our members.

In January 2020, Alex Schadenberg spoke on Compassionate Community Care at all of our regional meetings. He stressed the importance of keeping in touch with our members in their homes/retirement homes/extended care. When COVID hit, we had to forgo our plans to do that. Meanwhile, our elections were cancelled all across Canada until 2021.

In January 2021, a team on the diocesan executive worked with Alex to put on a Zoom (video conferencing platform) information meeting about Compassionate Community Care and “My Story” for our members. Again, COVID curtailed our plans for a while. In April 2021, we had our first CWL Annual Meeting of Members on Zoom instead of our annual convention. I let my name stand again at our elections, this time for another chairperson position. I was appointed Christian Family Life.

Through the years, my eyes have been opened to certain social justice issues that we have the ability to change and make a difference in our diocese and Canada. I have spent time with women gathered in prayer and solidarity.

I met one of my friends over twenty years ago at a CWL meeting. We connected right away and she has been my mentor. When I had doubts in myself, she has always been there to support me. I have learned about policies and procedures from her, and so many other things. Along the way, I have met so many women that I have grown with as a person and a league member.

My husband has been very supportive and encouraging on my journey with the Catholic Women's League. He has volunteered and been a part of my team through it all.

Friendships have been forged that will last a lifetime. We have shared our time at regional days, retreats, conventions, and special occasions together. We are sisters in the League and continue to grow on our journey for God and Canada. I am very proud to be a member of the Catholic Women's League.

Sincerely, Mary Ann Horne-White

Mary Anne Masse

I was born in St. Joseph's, Ontario on June 4, 1933. I lived with my parents Celima (Ducharme) and Leon Bedard, five brothers and four sisters as well as my Meme (grandma). My father was a farmer. We lived in a small log house until I was ten years old, then we moved to the big farmhouse on the same property. In the little log cabin, there was no electricity or running water. An oil lamp was our light.

Since I was the youngest child, I did not have any special chores other than taking care of Meme while others worked in the field. Our family was very religious, attending Mass every Sunday as well as saying the Rosary as a family every night. I attended school in a two-room schoolhouse. Living in the country, we did not have the opportunities to join clubs or belong to a team. Our main purpose was to help our parents on the farm.

I left home at 16 and worked in London at Jarmain Cleaners for two years then I worked at Penmans for a few years. I met my husband on a blind date. He was one of 21 children and a very kind person. I was married at age 20 but still continued to work for a couple years. We have five children; my husband worked two jobs so I could stay home with our children.

I became a member of the CWL at St. Martin's Catholic Church then transferred to St. John the Divine. I have always been supportive of the League's fundraising activities as well as a spiritual member for over 65 years.

Mary Anne Roberts

Corpus Christi CWL, Windsor, Ontario

I was born on June 16, 1937 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Chatham, Ontario to Marie (Blonde) and Gerald Gleeson. My mother was of French/German descent, Dad of Irish descent. I have two older brothers, Vincent and John, and two younger sisters, Eleanor and Karen. My dad was a farmer and Mom was an office manager who never worked outside the home after marriage. Two of Dad's ancestors were each given a 50-acre parcel of uncleared land. These parcels of land were side by side and Dad was farming both. Farming was much more physical then than it is today. Over the years, implements have changed, becoming very technical and capable of doing more than one task. Dad would be amazed to see the huge machine his sons and grandsons use today.

Growing up we played many of the games still played today—hide and seek, and many forms of tag. There was always a swing in the strong, sturdy oak tree close to the house. There was a large ditch alongside the buildings that was usually frozen from November to March. We could not get home fast enough from the mile and a half walk to put on our skates and skate until dark. After dinner, it was time for homework or to play board games like snakes and ladders, Parcheesi, or checkers. Chinese checkers was Dad's favourite and he usually won. We kids thought sometimes he played to let one of us win. After dinner, another important never-to-be-forgotten activity was the family Rosary. We did not live in a Catholic community but all our neighbours knew we prayed this every evening. If a neighbour came by to visit or borrow something, he or she would wait outside or inside until we were finished.

Religion and education were very important. Every year there was a liturgical service called Forty Hours Devotion and a mission every few years. Both began with Mass at six in the morning, and we were there. My brother Vincent was an altar server, and the church depended on him for that early Mass and Benediction in the evening.

Our schooling began in a one-room schoolhouse with all eight grades. Most years, a grade would be missing. Probably there were 25 students in total. The highlight of the year was the Christmas concert. Each school would have one. There were four or five schools in all, another Catholic school across the road from the church—a bigger school than ours—a two room

building with four grades in each room. These concerts consisted of choral singing, play-acting, recitation of poetry and a visit from Santa to end the evening. The teachers made certain that each school had its own night so we could see what the others were doing. The two Catholic schools always had a Christmas pageant.

We attended the public high school in Tilbury. For five years, we rode the big yellow bus every morning and afternoon. We did not have the choice of classes offered to today's student. My favourite subjects were the languages—French, Latin, and English. I enjoyed English literature, meeting Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, John Milton, and many more. Latin helped with understanding English. History was another love, especially ancient history. The last period of the day was called extra-curricular, but much different than today. It did involve sport teams and track and field, also glee club, drama, cheer leading and chess.

Life in St. Patrick's Church community was not just religion. Every summer our parish and each neighbouring parish had a chicken dinner. It was a lot of work for all age groups. I began with wrapping silverware in a paper napkin around seven years old, and went on from there—scraping plates, drying dishes, waiting on guests, and cleaning the tables and resetting them.

The guests included former parishioners, extended families and neighbours. They came from the local community, also from Windsor, Detroit, London and places in between. All the food was homemade and excellent; the biggest hit was the pies. It was a big success and well worth the work of the day before, the day, and the day after. It was a great social gathering. The next Sunday, another parish would be doing the same and many of the same people would be there.

Family life on the farm was fantastic although we did not always think that growing up. We did many things together because the neighbours were not nearby. There was one family quite close with children our age. They went to the nearby public school but often we would walk together most of the way, then separate for the last bit, going home after school we walked most of the way together.

Our life was a simple one. We were not an affluent family but neither were we poor. We ate well, plain simple meals of plenty. We dressed well, often wearing hand-me-downs from older cousins and homemade clothes. Mother's sewing machine was always in motion. I did not ever hear my parents talk about any difficulties making a payment.

Mom was a very social person. She belonged to the Altar Society (a precursor to the CWL) and to the Women's Institute. She felt it was important to socialize with our non-Catholic neighbours as well as our own kind. She was very active in both organizations. She worked both federal and provincial elections as much for the social aspect as the monetary. I think there was a hidden need to show us the importance of an election. Politics were talked about very little except to stress privilege and duty to vote.

Dad did not have the need for social interaction Mom had, so did not belong to any fraternal organization. I am a bit like my dad in this. I joined the CWL many years ago because I thought I should. I became a dues paying member because I realized I could not be mother, wife, teacher and active member of the CWL, one of those had to go.

My family is breaking up. It is the mid-fifties and high school is almost finished. Both brothers are finished, and Vincent is enrolled in studies at St. Peter's Seminary. John has completed three years of high school and been convinced to go to a new agricultural school in Ridgetown, he knows he wants to farm. My turn, I have decided I want to teach. In September 1955, I begin Teachers' College in London. I remember being afraid—no brother to encourage me or help if I lose my way. Well I did it—those first few lessons when we observed, then went back and taught that same class. My first assignment was an autumn art lesson. A short time later it was teaching half a day in a school in Windsor, I think it was Grade 4. Then it was out to another school and another...about six in all. One time it was to the one-room school I had gone to as a child.

Then it was spring. School boards were coming to interview and sign up teachers for September. I signed up with the Sandwich West Catholic School Board which is now included in Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board. Over the summer, I received a notice that I would be at St. Gabriel School, a brand new school. Then a group involved in the building went on strike. September came and the school was not finished. That was solved by St. Gabriel sharing the building of our closest neighbour, Christ the King School. Christ the King used the building in the morning and we used it in the afternoon. In mid-to-late November, our building was ready.

We moved in to St. Gabriel's and started using our own rooms on December 1, but with only part of our class. Our school was built to relieve the overcrowding at Christ the King and at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The children from Our Lady of Mount Carmel would join us in January.

Each child had his or her own desk, sitting in rows quietly. The church depended on the school to prepare the children for the Sacraments—First Communion, Reconciliation and Confirmation. That went on for the next three years.

Then it was 1960. In late May of that year, the schoolboard approached me about a move to a neighbouring school, St. Hubert.

It was also a memorable year in my family. In May, Vincent was ordained a Priest for the London Diocese. In July, Sam and I were married. In September, Karen entered the Ursuline Order. In October, John and Jean were married. In December, Eleanor took her first vows as an Ursuline Sister.

While all these events were going on, a new house was being built for my parents on the home place. John and Jean would take over the big house where we had grown up.

A new life had begun for each of us to meld with the old. Sam and I were in our first home, an apartment in the downtown area. The building was old and well cared for.

I was given a new grade in St. Hubert School, Grade 3. It was rather disconcerting trying to handle a new grade with a new life situation. Near the end of the school year, I began to think I was pregnant. Over the summer holidays, I came to know that this was for sure. In September I went back to the classroom. I was fortunate that my pregnancy was not complicated. I resigned at the end of November and Kevin Joseph was born on January 30, 1962. He was a healthy, beautiful baby. I was a nervous wreck. How was I ever going to manage? He did become colicky. Sam and I would take turns walking the floor. Kevin was much better with Sam however; Sam had to go to work. In hindsight, I can believe the doctor, the nurse, and some friends, that I was the cause. If I would relax, the baby would too.

During this time, we were looking at real estate. We bought the house we presently live in in May 1962. Another son was born on March 2, 1964. We named him Brendan Matthew. I felt I knew the baby business a little, and handled it much better in his first few months. The boys were followed by two daughters. Karen Marie was born on September 12, 1966 and Monique Anne on August 12, 1969. We were blessed with four healthy children. They had disagreements but were usually able to resolve them quickly. A few fisticuffs between the boys, shouting matches and name-calling between a boy and a girl did happen. A relationship between one of these and a person

outside the family brought a great deal of tension and discord to the family. Much prayer helped to end that, and I think made for a stronger faith for our family members.

Three of our children entered the teaching profession. Both boys taught for many years and then moved into administration. Monique is teaching at the primary level and has no desire to become an administrator. Karen works in a large office often being required to train newcomers.

I was home with the children from late 1961 to 1970. I began teaching again in January 1970. During the sixties, there was much talk about changes in education, so I was apprehensive about returning to the classroom. Many of the changes were cosmetic; some rooms used tables and chairs instead of desks, others arranged desks in little groups, and sometimes we sat on the floor as a larger group. The changes in education involved making material taught more meaningfully, especially in Math and more interesting in Language. This second bout had me back at St. Gabriel School. I was there until I retired in June 1996. Sam retired in March of the following year.

Most of our retirement years were spent with family. We did some traveling including two cruises and a trip to Ireland for me with my sister and two other women. During these years, there were many changes in the family. Both my parents passed away, Mom in 1986 and Dad in 1990. All four children married and began their own families. Kevin and Pat have three daughters, Brendan and Sandy have two daughters, Karen and Marc have two sons, Monique and Sam have a son and two daughters. All live and work in Windsor-Essex. My husband Sam passed away very suddenly on October 25, 2020.

As retirement was approaching, I decided it was time I became active in the Catholic Women's League and in the community. In September of 1996, I went to my first CWL meeting. It was an election year. A committee had been formed to persuade members to let their names stand to form a new executive. I was asked to let my name stand for President Elect. My response was...maybe next time. They did not forget—two years later, I took the position. I moved on to President and served two terms. With the closing of parishes, organizations closed also. I was involved in those closings. Three parishes became one. I am still very active in the spiritual aspect and the events we host—pasta dinner, fashion show, and many more.

In the community, I ushered at two local theaters, volunteered with Heart and Stroke and the Cancer Society. I sew with a group making Dignity

Robes for breast cancer patients needing radiation. It has not been as busy these past several months because of the pandemic. I am not sure if these organizations will resume when normalcy returns or if I will become a part of them again.

Mary Ellen Ouellette

Corpus Christi, Windsor

I was born in Windsor. My parents were Anne and Floyd King. Our family lived at 934 Church Street for seven years. I attended the Ursuline Academy and then St. Clair School.

At age eight, we moved to South Windsor at 2823 Dominion Boulevard (it was a real boulevard at the time). I attended Notre Dame de Bon Secours School, which is now Christ the King. I was a Brownie at the time. One special thing I remember is winning first prize at a Hobby Show for my peanut butter cookies. We used to have a May Day Parade. One year I was on the float in my Brownie uniform. My mom was dressed as the Blessed Virgin holding the Baby Jesus. Later I became a Girl Guide and had Rita Ouellette (a CWL member) as my Girl Guide Captain.

I attended St. Mary's Academy (which has since been torn down). I did a lot of roller skating using sunshine roller skates that needed a key to tighten them up. I bicycled to piano lessons. I used to attend Sock Hops especially at Southwood School where I met my husband Jim.

During high school, I worked at Gordner's Pharmacy on Dougall Avenue thinking I would like to be a pharmacist until an opportunity to be a teacher came along. I went to Teachers' College in London and enjoyed teaching in Windsor and Sudbury.

While teaching in Windsor, a student heard that my dog was hit by a bus. He brought me a tiny puppy. I called it "Honey" because of its colour.

I got married in Windsor to Jim Ouellette on July 20th, 1963. After a honeymoon in the Pocono Mountains, we moved to Sudbury. We had two beautiful little girls, Lei Ann and Christine. While teaching, one of the teachers and our husbands met and we have been good friends since (Denise and Ken Warren).

I had wonderful parents who were a good example. They encouraged me in everything I did. I made my First Communion at St. Alphonsus Church and my Confirmation at Christ the King Church, where I also got married. We went to Mass every Sunday. Like my mother, I became a member of the Catholic Women's League, but I was not too active at first. I mostly did crafts for their bazaars every year. When we moved to Dominion, my mom started at the CWL as President at Christ the King for the term of 1951 to 1953.

When we moved to the Netherlands, our daughters were two and four years old. They learned to speak Dutch quickly (me not so much). While there, we had our son Michael. We were blessed with three healthy children. Most of our Dutch friends have passed away but our children still keep in touch with their children on Facebook (a social media platform). We even attended funerals that way.

We returned from Europe and moved to North Bay. I became a Tupperware Consultant and then Manager. Jim and I bought the distributorship in the northern area and called it Evergreen Party Sales. One great highlight during that time was being the top distributors in Western, Eastern and Central Canada. We won a magnificent trip to Europe, traveling in England, France and Switzerland. We met with top distributors all over the world. During my time with Tupperware I met a special person, Linda Innes, and we are friends to this day.

I have a wonderful brother named Floyd and a sister, Margaret Ann. We travelled from Europe to be in my brother's wedding party, and my sister came to Holland to be Michael's Godmother for his Baptism. We attended a Dutch Church and we did not understand everything, but Catholic practices are the same all over the world, so we managed.

We retired in 1998 and moved back to Windsor to be with my mom. I had five great years with her. My mom brought me to the CWL meeting where Christ the King member Irene Chartrand asked me to help at the bazaar. Then Anna Renaud got me involved in doing Crafts Weekly for the bazaar. Eventually I became Corresponding Secretary.

Four generations of our family were at the meeting to see Mom receive her 50 year pin (Mom, myself, Lei Ann and Alexandra).

As a fundraiser, I oversaw several fashion shows with my friend Linda. We showed her fashions with our CWL members modeling. At first, we had students from Christ the King serving coffee and tea. Then we had our husbands serving; dressed in dark pants and white shirts. The red ties worn by the men were made by Irene Chartrand.

When Christ the King and St. Martin de Porres CWL councils amalgamated, I became Co-President with Mary Ann Horne-White. After two years, we amalgamated again with St. Gabriel's, and the three parish councils were re-named Corpus Christi Catholic Women's League. During this time, I enjoyed attending several conventions.

At one of our fashion shows, I was so surprised to be presented with the Maple Leaf Service Pin for my years of service in the CWL. I was very humbled as it takes the helping hands of all members to make our events the success they are.

At 82 years old, I am still enjoying being part of the CWL.

Maureen Franze

Parents Information

What did your parents do for a living? My parents were divorced when my brothers and I were quite young. I believe my father was a shopkeeper and my mother was shop assistant.

How many siblings did you have? I had one brother five years younger than me.

Were your parents religious? What parish did you attend? I was born and raised in England, immigrating to Canada in 1960 at the invitation of the Canadian government who needed jobs filled! I had a job to come to with the Imperial Bank of Canada, a week after I arrived. We were Anglican but not regular churchgoers before I came here.

What relatives did you know growing up? Did you attend family reunions? My mother had eight siblings, all married and with children. I visited them regularly, we always have reunions and parties, I loved them all so much and kept in touch with them from Canada until they died, having just a few cousins left now.

Personal Involvement

When did you start taking part in church activities? I began bringing my three children to St. Martin of Tours parish in the early 70's having been married in 1965 by Monsignor Flannery. I became Catholic in 1979; I joined the choir and the CWL that year. I felt "at home" in the church from the beginning. It gave me my faith, the Rosary and the belonging. It made me who I am today!

Were there any events or fundraisers that were memorable to you? The parish bazaars were always the highlight of the year for me and the children, especially my son Joe who had cerebral palsy. He was a great favourite of the St. Martin family, who loved everyone, so we enjoyed all the events through the years, until Joe passed in 2006, as all were done with so much love.

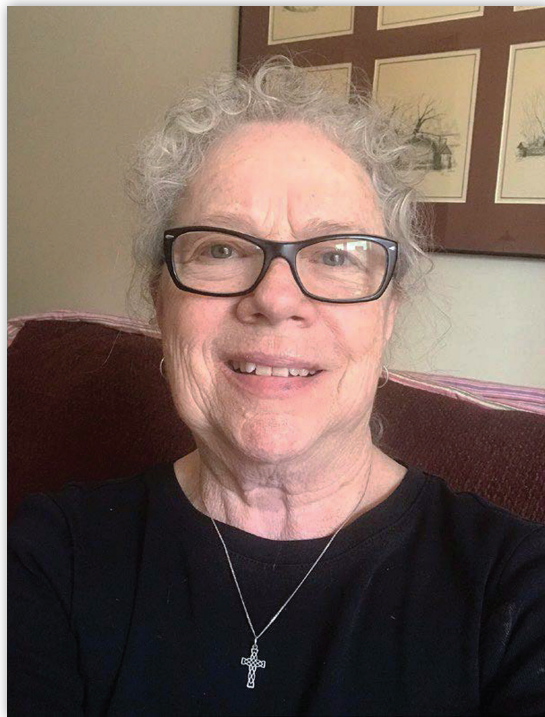
When and where did you join the CWL? I joined the council at St. Martin of Tours in 1979 but I did attend Sunday Mass in the early 70's, and met all the members. What an amazing group.

The first CWL meeting was very different for me, never having an experience like it before. I recall it was very interesting and how enthusiastic everyone was to volunteer and take charge of so many things, the charity extended to so many and there was never a shortage of volunteers when needed.

Why did you join the CWL? I was very happy and content attending St. Martin's Church and meeting so many wonderful people. I picked up a CWL brochure and read about it, got information from the women and I was in, and very rewarding it was too! Many of the members have passed on so the group is much smaller now, with none of today's generation coming forward to carry things on, but the members we do have are the elite!

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? I became President for 12 years in a capacity that was quite different. Working full-time and being Joe's caregiver, I had exceptional help from the president-elect sharing many duties as we had no-one to replace the previous president, and then as our terms came to an end, there was still the same problem, so the two of us continued on the understanding and help we received was second to none.

How has the CWL affected your life? Relationships? Faith? In all three, I can say, without hesitation, that it has enriched my life from the beginning, a little at a time. I have been able to contribute "bits and pieces here and there," even though shingles and a heart attack have now limited my participation, but the memories will sustain me for the rest of my days.



Michelle Lemon

I was late getting involved with the Catholic Women's League. We lived in a rural area and as far as I know my mother was not a CWL member. She baked for their bazaars and assisted with funeral lunches but did not attend meetings.

Because of my personal circumstances, I did not become a member of the CWL until 1992. I became a member at St. Martin of Tours Parish. I was invited to attend a meeting by my great friend Lynn Adams. She was involved in the CWL and thought I would enjoy their meetings and sisterhood.

I was captivated at that first meeting. I met women who were feisty, fiery and opinionated, just like my mother. My first thought was, "I can find a spot in here." I became a paying member and worked my way through all executive positions, from Secretary to President. I assisted with CWL activities at the parish level and with conventions for the Diocesan CWL.

I also spent some time with the CWL Central Committee, as Secretary to Gwen Lamoureux. We were on a Provincial Convention Committee together and worked with amazing women to have a successful event. It was empowering working with the dedicated, hard-working women that were part of this process.

My time on the Central Committee provided an opportunity to experience the different levels of the Catholic Women's League—from our local Council, through the Diocesan, Provincial and National CWL Councils. It was great to hear the sage women speakers at these Page 2 of 4 levels and at conferences—they made it easy to get fired up about pertinent issues.

I enjoyed my work in all the positions I had, but my favourite role was Organization. This position looks after membership, and requires a person with organizational skills, which suited my personality. During my time as the Organization Chair, we had approximately 100 members and I got to know all of them. I would interact with members in the parish, for events, updating their contact information, and reminding them to pay their membership dues.

After the organization role, it seemed to be a natural progression to the president role. I loved every minute as President of the local CWL council. As President, you oversee all the activities of the council, plan local meetings, and keep up to date on the Diocesan, Provincial and National CWL.

I left the president position when I retired and moved to the east coast. When I arrived there, I joined Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. I transferred my CWL membership and went to my first meeting. I sat down not knowing a soul and was quickly introduced to the nitty gritty of things. Their Spiritual Advisor (Priest) wanted the CWL members to wear a CWL smock during funeral luncheons. This would be advertising for the CWL and make them easily identifiable if anyone needed some help. One member closed her notes noisily, commented loudly that she did not agree, and then got up and left the meeting. In the end, the smocks were worn!

I must mention that in my experience, the role of Spiritual Advisor to the CWL was very different in this community. They attended all CWL meetings and sat at the head table beside the president. The Page 3 of 4 CWL members had a great rapport with their Priest, and often deferred to them regarding church activities and how the money they raised was used.

In five years at Our Lady of Lourdes CWL, I went from member to the Executive level as Secretary for two years, and then President-elect for two years. In the Maritimes, the province is so small that everyone attends when there is a diocesan event or meeting. The Diocesan CWL covers a huge geographic area. In my CWL roles, I was able to travel to all parts of the province, attending meetings and conventions up to the regional level.

Membership in the local CWL council is high within the parish, as almost every woman would join. We encouraged young women to join by attending their wedding, giving her a gift of CWL membership for one year, and inviting her to come to a CWL meeting. Recruiting at this stage seemed natural, as these women were moving into married life and CWL membership was just part of this transition.

There was a lot of commitment and dedication in the local CWL. One incident that highlights this came up at our bazaar. We made takeout dinners consisting of a chicken burger, potato salad, coleslaw, bun, and carrot cake. One member offered to make carrot cake and was told she must use a particular recipe. She indicated she had a good recipe for carrot cake but was told in no uncertain tone that she would use the recipe indicated or would not make the cake!

After several years down east, I came back to London and St. Martin of Tours CWL. Again, I transferred my membership and started all over here. Soon I took on the role of our local Council President. I enjoyed resuming the duties of President and getting to know our members. Our church community had expanded to include many Page 4 of 4 Spanish families and it was great to see them embrace the CWL with memberships and/or assistance with events.

As President, I felt strongly that a two-year term in the role is good, and another two- year term may be acceptable, depending on the needs of the council, but a succession plan is necessary. This role can be demanding, but the best thing about a succession plan is that another person gets a chance to learn more about the role, the local council and the other levels and activities of our sisters in the CWL.

My CWL activities were related to my work, as I was our parish housekeeper and cook for ten years. I also worked as the Parish Secretary for five years. During that time period, I was a lector, and Eucharistic Minister at Mass and also at our hospital, the London Health Sciences Centre.

I am retired now and make myself available for consult of CWL Policy and Procedure, sit on the Executive Committee as Education and Health Chair for the second term, and Co- Chair of our annual bazaar. I am happy to serve.

I can honestly say that I love the CWL; it has given me sisterhood, companionship, support, personal growth and many wonderful women I have been blessed to meet and work with.

Molly Harris (mother) and Janet Oliver (daughter)

When and where were you born? Molly was born on March 22, 1919 in Chatham-Kent, England. Her daughter Janet was born on March 13, 1948 in Guildford, Surrey England.

What are the names of your parents? Molly's parents were Lillian Maude and Thomas Herbert Widdowfield. Janet's parents were Kenneth Geoffrey and Eileen Molly Harris.

Where was your family originally from? Molly's family was from Northern England, Janet's from Southern England.

What did your parents do for a living? Molly's dad worked for the railway. Her mom was in service (maid) for a doctor. Janet's dad was in the Navy until Janet born and then was with Southern Gas. Janet's mom was PA to the chief designer of Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE). (Also mentioned: print librarian for Solotron and clerical offices with civil service.)

How many siblings do you have? What are their names? Who were you closest to? Molly has two sisters, Doreen and Vera. She was closest to Doreen who was a bit of a daredevil; not afraid to tell a lie and get caught in it. Janet has no siblings.

Where are in birth order? Molly is the eldest, two years older than Doreen and ten years older than Vera.

Did you play with your sibling(s)? What kinds of games did you play? Molly mainly remembers skipping to silly sayings. They would kick a tin can around the street as they didn't have toys like kids today. Her father was out of work for a long time due to the Depression. Janet loved to read with a flashlight under the covers when she should have been sleeping.

What were you family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? Molly's family was poor (the Depression) but the kids didn't know it. They didn't want things because there was no opportunity to have them. The children were sheltered from knowing how poor they were. They had no indoor plumbing. Janet grew up with no excess, but never did without. Janet was not aware of this as she had nothing to compare it with; she had love and security and was never afraid.

Were your parents religious? If so, how was religion observed in the home? Molly's mother was religious. She went to church three times on a Sunday. Molly does not remember her father going to church. Church of England, convert to Catholicism around 1999 or 2000 at St. Michael's in Bright's Grove. Janet came to Canada (Edmonton, Alberta) in 1974; 11 homes in 14 years. Convert in 1984 or 1985; in Alberta the Catholic school was public, therefore all her friends were Catholic; became involved, impressed with the joyful celebration. RCIA in Bright's Grove (husband transferred to work to Sarnia); 20 years as Pastoral Minister at St. Michael's.

What were your parents' political beliefs? Molly's dad was strong Labour—PM was Clement Attlee. Her mom was not particularly political. Labour was for the poor and Conservative was for the rich. Molly was mostly Labour. Janet's dad was Conservative.

What organizations or clubs were you involved in? Molly was not involved in any organizations or clubs, her parents were not either. Janet's mother belonged to the CWL when she moved to the Sarnia-Lambton Area. Molly worked from the time Janet was 11 years old.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? Berti (Auntie Annie) was special to Molly and Molly was special to her. Her uncle was deaf. Doreen (Molly's sister) was a disciplinarian. Janet grew up with cousins (Vera and Doreen's children) who lived on the same street. Janet was a tomboy because her cousins were boys. She is closest to Vera's youngest daughter now.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? If so, how often did this happen? Molly's family did not have reunions but got together for holidays like Christmas and birthdays. Janet has two sons and four grandchildren. There are 11 of them, including Molly.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? The house Molly grew up in was a three-up, two-down row house (three bedrooms up and two rooms down, a lounge and front room). The kitchen was separate. She shared a bedroom with her sisters. The house Janet grew up in was large, divided into two homes. There was a winter bedroom and a summer bedroom. It was a lovely house with a long garden; her father tended all the gardens. She loved her summer bedroom. There was lots of space with two reception rooms downstairs. She remembers putting up lots of posters in her room. Moved when she was 16 (after high school)—she went and got a job. She was grateful for the education she received in England. She went to university in her 40's.

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your sibling's duties? Molly had to get coal for the fire from down in the cellar. She didn't like going down to the cellar because it was cold, dark and scary. She doesn't remember doing the dishes. Doreen would do chores if it was worth her while. Vera was spoiled and had no responsibilities. Janet was responsible for doing the dishes, keeping her room tidy, feeding her bunny (her father helped with this, which probably kept bunny alive).

What skills did you learn (e.g. cooking, carpentry, or crafts)? Who taught you? Molly learned how to knit, crochet and sew from her mother. She sewed the sailor's collars—very precise—11 stitches to the inch. Molly's mother was a very skilled crocheter. Molly enjoys gardening. Janet learned how to use a hammer, a wood planer and a crosscut saw with her father. Janet does not like gardening; she likes embroidery. She does crafts, sews, knits and crochets, all skills learned from Molly. Janet works with a pattern, Molly does not.

What activities did your family do together? Molly played all sports: hurdles, high jump, and races. She was a cricket fan and went to games with her husband, test matches between England and Australia. She played tennis with her father; she was a runner. She went to the seaside once a year by bus with Sunday school. Janet played field hockey. She learned to hate cricket because she had to go along with her parents. She also played netball, high jump, tennis, did swimming and diving. As a little girl, she jumped off the high diving board (and got banned for it). Janet's husband was a rugby player.

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood? Molly remembers trifle and strawberry jam with big strawberries. She loves "afters" (dessert). Janet remembers Yorkshire pudding. You ate what you were given. She loved vegetables because she grew them with her father. She never knew salad like we have it here in Canada.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays? E.g. Christmas, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving or birthdays. Molly's family always celebrated Christmas and birthdays, everything was homemade. There were so many traditions. There was beef, lamb, and pork on Christmas. She always loved it the next day. On New Year's Eve, first footing—tall, dark-haired man. Like her mom, Janet's memories center on Christmas, hanging a pillowcase at the end of her bed because, goodness knows, a stocking just wasn't going to cut it! The adults in the family bought gifts for all the children so the pillowcase was groaning by the time THEE morning came. She can still

remember the excitement and the disappointments. She had one Auntie who bought the most bizarre things: orange gloves, green socks, purple shirts! Her dad was a shift worker who, because of transfers, didn't get a full Christmas off for 21 years, but because they lived in a company house which was on the grounds where he worked, he was always able to pop in and share precious moments with them. She remembers how Molly had baked for days and all the goodies were spread out on the sideboard—it was definitely a time of celebration and indulgence that made it memorable.

Elementary School Life

Molly remembers going to a fairly large school and they did not wear a school uniform. She would walk to school both ways and remembers the very steep hill on the way there. Since she so often ran like the wind to her favourite Auntie's afterwards (forbidden by her mother), she can only surmise that the downhill journey assisted her speed! For the most part, she enjoyed school. She loved sports from both the competitive aspect and camaraderie with other like-minded children. Academically, she really liked mathematics and that would stand her in good stead as she ultimately entered the work force. Her favourite teacher was Miss. Norman and she remembers always calling her Lovely Miss. Norman when talking about her to [Molly's] parents. She was kind and opened the window for Molly to look out. That may seem like an odd thing to remember but she now believes that Miss. Norman knew that she was claustrophobic from a young age. When her youngest sister was born (ten years her junior), Lovely Miss. Norman came to the house to visit the baby—Molly was so proud! Discipline, as she remembers, was strong—or was she just badly behaved?! The children were to respect their elders at all times and while Molly was often told that she talked too much, she does not remember suffering any physical consequences such as the strap or the cane. She was not teased or bullied.

Janet attended South Farnborough Hants infants school which was mixed boys and girls in class but they were segregated in the playground. In England at the time, dinner was eaten at noon and provided at school. Janet was so nervous at being separated from her mother that [Molly] eventually took on the role of dinner lady supervisor so Janet would eat. Having spent her entire adult life on a diet, perhaps that was not such a good thing! Janet wore a school uniform from the time she was five and she remembers getting into such dreadful trouble because she innocently colored in the silver embroidery on the badge on the pocket of her blazer. Unknown to her at the time, it had been a real financial stretch for her parents to provide

her with all the uniform requirements so they must have been devastated at such wanton destruction; she grew to be more comfortable with school in general but she would not say that she was motivated to be a star student. They were seated in straight rows with no thought of discussion groups or carpet time—she does not think they were actively encouraged to talk to each other at all. Discipline was strict and the ruler and cane ruled. Her favourite teacher was Mr. James. He was young and kind and enthusiastic about teaching. Doubtless, we teased each other but she was not bullied at school. At the time in England all children who were 11 or 12 sat an exam called the 11+, the results of which determined the type of secondary education you received. Since she passed the exam, she attended Aldershot County High School for Girls.

Childhood Friends and Interests

As the eldest in the family, Molly had jobs to do at home on weekends—for extra income, her mother took on the role of sewing sailor's collars for their uniforms. It was exacting work—they had a gauge that they used to ensure all the stitches were the same size and there had to be 11 stitches to the inch exactly. To her dying day, her sister's needlework could be measured at 11 stitches to the inch! Her best friend at school was Winifred Spittie and they shared a love of sport. There must have been an occasion when they got into trouble because when her mother came to the school for an Open Day, written on the board was, "Molly Widdowfield and Winifred Spittie did not play the game." Molly's mother was mortified so whatever Molly had done to deserve being written up on the board at school, she received a further tongue lashing at home! She is not sure whether this manifested itself in elementary school but she only ever remembers wanting to be a florist.

As an elementary student, Janet's weekends and after-school hours were mainly spent with her cousins and a few school friends. They had a cat, a rabbit and chickens that she took care of with her dad. There were woods beyond the wall at the end of their garden and she would climb the wall, jump down the other side and run through to her friend Lorene's house. They were happy in each other's company and whiled away many hours collecting acorns and conkers and just being kids. She does not think she had a clue what she wanted to be when she grew up at that stage!

Teenage Years

Molly left school at about 14½ years old and did not go on to high school so, for all intents and purposes, her teenage years were cut short compared

to youngsters of today. Although she really felt called to be a florist, her mother had other ideas and she went to shorthand and typing training instead. Between her mother and her grandmother, who lived with them, she was considered far too young to “date” and therefore did not. She did have a crush on a young lad but she was not allowed to spend any time with him because he was Roman Catholic and her family was Church of England. She remembers standing outside the Roman Catholic church listening to the chanting and loving every minute of it. She could not possibly have known that life would eventually take her further into this church than she could possibly imagine. There really was not time or opportunity for her to belong to clubs or teams etc. Leaving school at such a young age moved her into the world of adults far earlier than would be considered ideal today. Her father was out of work for many years during the Depression and each day when he came home her mother would ask, “Any luck today, Tom?” and he would shake his head. He did all sorts to keep a roof over his family including one stint on a whaler. That was such unbelievably hard work that her mom said they would starve before she ever let him do that again. Then came the day when she asked the perennial question and he just stood there with a grin on his face. He had found employment with the railway and a new chapter was to unfold in their lives. He was to wear his Southern Railway pin proudly for the rest of his all too short life (he died at 57). They would have to move from all they had ever known to Ash, a small village in Surrey. Her dad would be so proud to know that she still has his railway pin and it will be passed on to her great grandson along with an explanation of its significance and the change it brought to all their lives. She was now 16 and got her first job as a cashier with F.W. Woolworth’s in Guildford (in Surrey). This was the beginning of a glimmer of independence for her and she relished it wholeheartedly. She has never driven a car.

Janet was an only child and they lived in a fairly isolated place so it was natural for her to help both her mom and dad with various things. She is transported back to her childhood immediately whenever she shucks fresh peas because that was a job her mom and her always did together sitting companionably on the back door step. Likewise, when she buys runner (pole) beans because she tended those with her dad. She loved to wash the dishes—there were no automatic dishwashers back then—because she played in the soapsuds blowing big bubbles. She remembers being in awe of her mom who seemed to be able to dry the cutlery at a phenomenal rate, holding a great handful and drying and distributing them as she went. Janet thought she was magic! Oh yes, there were rules about dating—it wasn’t

approved off! She joined the youth club of the local Methodist church mostly for an opportunity to meet some nice boys! She did not have a paying job until she left high school at 16 so she had to rely on the pocket money her parents gave her each week. That came with rules too—her dad had her save part of it every week and put into a post office savings account which existed in those days. This was good training she believes—her dad was a, “Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves” chap. She wanted high-heeled shoes desperately but her parents thought she was too young and refused to buy them for her. Molly said that if she wanted them, she had to buy them herself, never for one moment thinking Janet would. Molly lived to regret those words because Janet saved and saved and got those silly shoes. [Janet] did not get her driver’s license until after she was married. Her relationship with her parents never changed, it was built on respect; she loved them both and would have been horrified to disappoint them. Girls at high school would sometimes say, “I hate my mother” and Janet never understood such words.

Adulthood: Further Education

Molly was most definitely a product of “on the job” training for all the roles she has fulfilled, a graduate of Life Experience in the flesh!

Janet completed high school—she could not wait to leave and had no desire to continue her education beyond it. So, isn’t it ironic, if not laughable, that she went to university in her 40’s! She attended Assumption University in Windsor and studied Pastoral Ministry. She was terrified to be in those hallowed halls of learning and had to steel herself against the panic she felt at the beginning of each semester, learning to trust that the syllabus would be covered and she would be able to cope with the assignments. Yes, she graduated, no, she didn’t have student debt and she was already employed. It was a wonderful experience that combined learning with personal growth and she treasures the memories of her time there.

Formation of Significant Relationships

Molly was 16, Ken was 18 and he popped his head up out of a freshly dug grave and said, “Boo!!” I bet you were not expecting that one—as she certainly was not expecting his arrival in her life that way! She was on her way to work, running through the cemetery on her way to the railway station. Ken was working for the local council and that day had been assigned to dig a grave; the rest is history. To be honest, she had seen him previously in their local church—he was a choirboy and a bell ringer and

had a very cheeky face, which she had noticed. He joined the Navy shortly thereafter and their lives revolved around letters. Cell phones and all our other forms of instant communication were way off in the future at this point. There are all sorts of stories about Molly's cheeky sailor boy but he was then and remained forever the love of her life. World War II intervened in a most impactful way, as you may imagine.

Ken was away on regular duties in the Mediterranean when the war was declared. By then they had become engaged to be married but the planned event would not take place for several years. Ken and Molly did not see each other for four years until he came home on two weeks leave in July 1941 and they were married on a day so hot that the tar melted onto the bottom of her wedding dress as they crossed the road to the village hall where the reception was to take place. They went to the seaside town of Torquay for their honeymoon and Molly cherishes the few photos of the young couple sitting on deck chairs in the sand. Without question, this was a difficult beginning to any marriage—long absences, uncertain times, fragility of life all around them—Molly at home and Ken on board ship. His battleship was torpedoed and became the first British warship to sail into New York Harbour for repairs. Molly has a copy of a New York newspaper printed on the day Ken's ship arrived—all visible names had been covered to obscure its identity and maintain an air of secrecy. The hole in the ship was large enough to hold a double decker bus yet, though personal belongings were lost at sea, miraculously nobody perished. Ken was to be there long enough for him to go ashore and be hired by a company which made thick wire coat hangers. While he was away helping to keep [everyone in the homeland] safe, they were hunkering down in air raid shelters at the first sound of the sirens, making do with few basics and appreciating every breath of fresh air. They learned to endure rationing and came out of the whole experience with a greater appreciation for what is really important in life—love, respect, and togetherness. They were lucky that their lives stretched ahead of them and they dreamed of setting up a home together and having children.

Janet's first job was at the Esso Refinery in Fawley. Her dad was transferred immediately after she finished high school so she left behind everything that was familiar including friends and family. Esso had a social club for employees and that is where she met Colin. He was an Instrumentation apprentice; she was in the computer room and good grief he had a car! That made her dad immediately suspicious and Colin got the third degree! They dated for a year, were engaged for two and married ten days after her 20th birthday. The wedding reception was held at the Esso Social Club where

they had first met. Probably the most difficult thing about their married life has been the separation from her parents because [Janet and Colin] moved so often—three times in six months at one point plus the fact that they did not just move within England, they made themselves almost completely inaccessible by moving to Los Angeles, back to England then immigrating to Canada. Having said that—probably the most satisfying, outside of having two great children, was that they saw and enjoyed all the places they did during those years. They came to Sarnia on a temporary assignment 39 years ago!

Employment

When the war was over, Ken was transferred to the naval town of Portland so Molly gave up her job at that time, making him the sole earner. She became a happy housewife and used her time to sew, bake and climb—oh those hills, as steep as you can imagine but so pretty. Portland is known for its lovely stone, a white limestone base. Much of London, England is built with Portland stone, such is its beauty and durability. Though it has been excavated for many years, if the rate of extraction remains the same as it is now there is still 1000 years left!

Janet and her husband both earned money to support their household. They were married for seven years before they had the boys during which time, they both worked for Esso—Colin as Project Engineer and Janet in the computer departments. After their youngest was born, she began a new career with Mary Kay Cosmetics, which she left after they moved to Sarnia. And then the church beckoned and she spent 20 years as the Pastoral Minister for St. Michael's Church in Brights Grove. There are difficulties with every job—even as a lowly mail girl when she first started at Esso you learn how to cope with people who are simply not having a good day. As a director with Mary Kay, she had a whole unit of people to foster and life in the church meant dealing with tragedy as well as happiness. However, the good always outweighed the challenges. She believes in the goodness of people and generally is able to find it.

Children

Molly has one daughter, Janet, with whom she has lived since Ken died in 2004. Janet and her husband Colin take great care of Molly—she is a lucky lady. Janet was the little girl Molly always wanted. She was not a girly girl in any way. She had a wonderful relationship with her dad and they were always working on something together in the shed at the bottom of the

garden or harvesting the vegetables that Ken grew. Molly worried that Janet would be lonely because she was to be their only child but she assures Molly that was never the case. Over the years, they took a succession of her friends with them when they went on holidays and she had her cousins to grow up with. Although a traditional housewife in many senses, Molly was a bit ahead of her time in some ways, she firmly believed that a child should not be palmed off with “Because I said so” as a response to any request or question but rather, given a plausible reason why or why not. Janet learned that they had expectations for her behaviour with others and that there were consequences for poor choices. However, she also learned that they were reasonable, sane parents who had her best interests at heart. At least that is what Molly hopes she learned! As a result, discipline took the form of rational dialogue rather than outburst and recrimination.

Janet always says she had nobody of whom to be jealous so there was no need to kick up a fuss!

Janet has two boys, both born in Edmonton, Alberta. My, they were cute and she loved having them around. Now, as parents themselves, they start to tell her some of the things they got up to as kids and she just hold up her hands and says, “I’m not old enough to know!” They had a tent trailer and regularly camped in the Rockies even encountering bears on many occasions. They had that trailer for years, even moving it from out west to Sarnia. They tried to raise their boys with values that would stand them in good stead as they matured—respect for others being paramount. Absolutely no lies would be tolerated—they knew they would be in less trouble with the truth than a fabrication of any kind. That being said, she has no doubt there was much they did not know! Once when they were teenagers, Janet decided they should have a theme for each week of Lent. The one she remembers most was politeness week—they had to be polite to each other for a whole week—you’d think she had asked them to fly to the moon! Is it so hard to say, “Good morning” but there they were—tousle headed, sleepy teenage boys incapable of a full sentence at that hour! They tried always to make the punishment fit the crime—forget grounding them—harder on the parents than the kids!

Church, Political and Other Involvement

Molly has always belonged to a church. In her youth, the Church of England was very much a part of her life and as children they were made to attend three times on a Sunday: Morning Service, Sunday School and Evensong. She is sure there were times when they would rather have been doing

something else; however, her mother was not to be crossed! It was the same for Ken, she learned later on with the addition of him being in the choir. Nobody in his or her right mind would ever have suggested that she sing! There was an annual church trip by train to Margate where they spent the day at the seaside. It was a family day that was probably as much work as pleasure for her mom since they took their food with them but such is the insularity of youth that they never gave that aspect a passing thought. She could not have known back then that her husband and her would ultimately choose to become Roman Catholics through the RCIA process which was led by their daughter. Perhaps it was a harbinger of things to come when she stood outside listening to the chanting all those years ago.

Church attendance did not figure much in Janet's childhood. There were no buses on a Sunday morning, no family car and it was way too far to walk but there was a full assembly with prayers and hymns every morning of her schooldays in both elementary and high school. As an adult, she will be forever grateful to the United Church of Canada because they gently deferred the christening of their son until they decided if they wanted to be members of the church. It made her stop and think what she was asking for and what she was prepared to do about the promises she would be making on behalf of her child. In essence, she had to grow up spiritually and find her own path. That journey led her to the Roman Catholic Church and RCIA and she has never looked back. They decided to be part of St. Michael's from its inception and were present at the new school when Bishop Sherlock announced that they would have a Priest in their own right. She could never have dreamed how important the people of this faith community were to become.

Extracurricular Activities

Molly moved from her place of birth to Ash, Portland, Farnborough, Milton Keynes, Bicester and Swindon in England before taking the momentous decision to emigrate to Canada when they were retired. She travelled to Holland for a wonderful three-day trip with Janet which created the most marvelous memories. Then she and Colin started moving around with Colin's job—they had 11 homes in 14 years and got to see them all—in England, Los Angeles, Edmonton, Calgary and Sarnia. From all of the above it is difficult to choose a favourite—the gardens at Keukenhof were magnificent, Yosemite National Park in winter was breath taking, coloured cabbages at the entrance gates to Disneyland were surprising, the Rockies are awe-inspiring but for the florist buried within her she would have to pick

the flowers in Holland. Her greatest accomplishment in life is producing a daughter who continues to care for her and loving her husband, children and grandchildren. She is the proud mother of one daughter, the grateful mother-in-law of one son-in-law, the thrilled Nan of two grandsons and the fun Gigi of one great grandson and three great granddaughters. She will be 103 in four weeks time and every moment is precious.

Janet [and Colin] travelled extensively and often, both for pleasure and to move homes. They have been both blessed and privileged to have shared their travels with fine people along the way. In her experience, there is beauty to be found everywhere and it would be impossible to choose between the flowers, redwoods, history, beaches or mountains. She is a firm believer in, “Bloom where you are planted!” She loves and is proud of her family—both boys are happily married and her daughters-in-law have her heart. Their children are her everything and who would possibly have thought that her mom would still be here, with her wisdom and life experience to share. Arching over all of this is faith—where would they be without it.

CWL Questions

When did you start taking part in Church activities? Molly has been taking part in church activities all her life. Janet started taking part in earnest when they moved to Sarnia.

Were your parents involved in the Church? Molly’s mother was. Janet’s parents were involved.

Was there any events or fundraisers that were most memorable to you? RCIA was a particularly profound journey into the Roman Catholic Church that Ken and Molly adopted after they moved to Sarnia. They met so many caring people including their sponsors, catechists, Priests, fellow candidates for acceptance and parishioners who welcomed them with open arms. Building St. Michael’s was memorable for Janet. [Also:] talent nights, calendar raffles, fashion shows, and pledge drives.

When did you join the CWL? After RCIA was completed, Molly’s first year of membership was a gift and she has never looked back. Janet joined at the very beginning when the council was first formed.

How has the CWL affected your life? Relationships? Faith? Molly says that the CWL is filled with women who truly care about the welfare of others—the charities they support, the willingness of members to take on leadership

roles, the ideals of the League, the ongoing development of faith and the sheer quality of the relationships and friendships formed among members.

The CWL is pivotal in Janet's faith journey. The women of the CWL are caring, compassionate, committed, and constant companions on the journey. They are inspirational and amazing. For seven years, the executive went to the retreat house at Oxley and every year was a privilege. Lives changed from year to year but the support of those sisters gathered in love was ever-present. They held each other through loss and grief, rejoiced in the birth of grandchildren and supported each other through tough times, all the while holding each woman's story as sacred.

Which parish were/are you a part of? Molly is a member of St. Michael's Parish in Brights Grove, Ontario. Janet of St. Michael's in Brights Grove.

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? If so what was your role? Molly did not have a role other than membership and attendance at CWL functions. Janet moved from member to Spiritual Advisor.

Why did you join the CWL? Initially Molly joined because it was a gift but a gift that has kept on giving to this day and one that she treasures in her heart. Janet joined to be part of an organization rooted in faith with like-minded women and to be supportive of the foundation of a chapter in our new church.

Priscilla Yellowage

In October of 1977, my father died of a massive heart attack at the age of 75 and I was very upset by this shocking news. I spoke with Father Janisse at our parish, St. Benedict's, Sarnia, and he encouraged that I join the CWL which I did at their November general meeting. I had been donating items for their annual bazaar and bake sales but did not feel the need to become a member. Their monthly meetings began with Mass followed by Rosary and then we went to the hall for refreshments and meeting plus most months we had a guest speaker. Father Padelt attended most of our meetings. The following April at elections, I was nominated as Recording Secretary. Our executive meetings were held on the first Tuesday of the month and our general meetings on the second Tuesday. The following year, Father Padelt asked me to run for President. I was very nervous and questioned the very informative weekly bulletin notices which he told me that he composed. Two years later, I was asked by Father Laragh to chair the Sarnia Central Committee which involved a London Diocesan convention in Sarnia. I also convened St. Benedict's bazaar, which was a very huge endeavour. We had turkey pie workshops during the day and my friend and I would pick up Sister Mary Diane Cahill's mother, Helen, so that she did not have to walk as she loved to be part of this great family. I also served six years on the London Diocesan council as Treasurer and Community Life convenor. My time on this executive introduced me to the many wonderful charities as well as to the wonderful volunteer work going on in our diocese.

In 1987, we moved to Brights Grove where Father Jim Higgins had begun fundraising to build the new St. Michael's Church. Our CWL was formed, with the help of Sheila Howard of London, in January of 1988 and we had three women who ran for President. Since we had no church, we had weekday Masses in Father Jim's basement and weekend Masses in St. Michael's school gym. Our monthly CWL meetings were held in the library at St. Michael's school. We had three quarters of the women of the parish as members of our CWL and we were very happy to help with most of the fundraisers for our new church. About seventeen years later, I was asked by Father Iheanyi to be President. We also began our meetings, both executive and general, with Mass and Rosary and often had a guest speaker. Our CWL helped with the First Friday Masses at Sumac Nursing Home and I soon volunteered at the home reciting the Rosary with the residents once a week as well as other activities including becoming a Eucharistic Minister. Women of our CWL also volunteered at the Inn of the Good Shepherd cooking and serving one meal every month.

A highlight of both parishes in the Sarnia area was that members were always offered a ride to our meetings, etc. CWL articles in our bulletins both educated our members as well as were a welcoming for new members.

After 41 years in the Sarnia/Brights Grove area, we decided to move to Chatham to be nearer to our youngest daughter and closer to our oldest daughter and her family, as well as my two sisters, brother and their families. Since we moved close to Blessed Sacrament Church, I joined their CWL. I served as President as well as have remained on the executive for the past 15¹/₂ years with a committee position as well as hospitality.

We have a very vibrant CWL council and have always had full executives. Especially during the COVID pandemic, we have kept in touch with our members with our monthly, very informative newsletter as well as birthday phone calls and cards are sent to our members regularly.

I thank God for my 45 years in the CWL because my faith has grown and I have been very happy to be volunteering at church as well as at nursing and retirement homes. One week after we moved here, I began the weekly recitation of the Rosary at Meadow Park nursing home which had to end for me at the beginning of COVID but the activity leader has continued this throughout. Belonging to the CWL has been a great blessing.



Reinelda Leyten (nee Van Massenhoven)

Watford Catholic Women's League

Reinelda was born in Belgium in 1946 to Albert Van Massenhoven (1911-1998) from Arendonk Belgium and Maria Bayens (1919-1993) who was born in Baarle Nassau, the Netherlands. In 1952, Reinelda immigrated to Canada with her parents and her older brother August (Gus) and her two younger sisters, Ila and Margaret. They crossed the Atlantic on the S.S. Grote Beer and were processed in Halifax at Pier 21. They continued on by train to London, Ontario and arrived in the town of Parkhill where Albert's brother had settled with his family a few years prior. Shortly after arriving, they purchased a farm in West Williams Township. Four years later a younger brother, Joseph, was born.

The family attended St. Columba Church in the hamlet of Bornish and later Sacred Heart Church in Parkhill. Many Dutch and Belgian immigrants had arrived in the early 50s in this area and the Van Massenhovens felt very welcomed. Reinelda who would turn six and August who was eight, started their English education in the one room schoolhouse S.S.S. #10 just north of St. Columba Church in Bornish. When she was in Grade 6, the school amalgamated with Sacred Heart School in Parkhill and students were bussed there. Sacred Heart School was run by the Ursuline Sisters and the building was across the road from the church and convent.

Reinelda had the usual farm and household chores and she felt the need to be a good example to her younger siblings. As a teenager, she attended the Triangle Dance Club on Ann Street in London. She did some babysitting, helped new mothers and worked in tobacco. She got her driver's license at age 16 and her mother also had her driver's license. Some immigrant women were stuck at home if they did not feel brave enough or did not know the language well enough. Soon Reinelda was working at St. Joseph's Hospital in the kitchen. All the money she and her siblings earned was pooled to provide for the whole family.

The Bornish CWL Charter #71 was established in 1921 and was still going strong when Maria Van Massenhoven joined the league. The meetings were held in member's homes. This was how young girls were exposed to the League and were offered memberships as they reached the age of 16. For Reinelda, that was in 1962.

Reinelda did not meet her husband at the Triangle Dance Club but while working in tobacco. Peter Leyten was born in 1942 to Frank and Anna Leyten from the Netherlands.

His family immigrated to Parkhill in 1953 when he was 11 and then moved for a while to Nova Scotia when he was 17 but they did not stay long and returned to Parkhill three years later. With nine siblings and he being the second oldest he was eager to start on his own and worked in tobacco where he met Reinelda.

Reinelda's parents did not allow her to marry until she was 21 and so shortly after her birthday, they married on October 28th, 1967. Pete was 25 and had a farm in Hungry Hollow and they attended Sacred Heart Church in Parkhill. In 1973, Reinelda was the

CWL President there and would not complete her term as her family moved to a dairy farm south of Watford on Churchill Line. Reinelda would work for a short time at Androck Wireworks until they started a family. They raised three sons, Francis, Jeff and Jamie. Watford, having a strong minor hockey league and being the home of Silver Stick, the Leytens kept busy at the arena in the winter and with baseball in the summer. Reinelda took a term as Secretary-Treasurer for the Watford Minor Hockey Association.

It is amazing to learn that the whole family took a three-week vacation with their boys to their native Belgium. They were fortunate to have in the neighbourhood two experienced farm boys to milk the cows while they were gone.

When the boys were all in school, Reinelda started driving a school bus and would continue for over 35 years. She loved that job and when they quit the dairy and worked only cash crop she encouraged Pete to drive occasionally too so that he would not get bored. This enabled them to take time off to visit both their parents in Florida a few weeks of the winter and they continued that tradition even after their parents were gone.

Reinelda got involved right away at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish and the Watford CWL serving as President in 1999 and again ten years later in 2009. Her involvement is not only in the League as she has been for many years a Eucharist Minister, Reader, has served on the Parish Council and is on the Pastoral Committee ministering to the seniors in Quality Care Nursing Home and Brookside Retirement Home conducting church services.

In 2008 at the 50th Anniversary of the Watford CWL Reinelda was surprised with the Maple Leaf Pin bestowed to deserving members. The Watford CWL give gifts for the Sacraments and Reinelda has been the go-to person for ordering any items needed like rosaries for the Communicants, dove pins for Confirmation and crosses for newlyweds. This has been a big commitment for many years. She has proudly stood as a CWL Honour Guard for funerals of the deceased CWL members in the parish.

Reinelda can only remember a few times that she could not attend the Diocesan CWL Conventions. She has been to most of them over the years enjoying the speakers and discussions and fellowship with other members from other leagues. These meetings and most of all the local meetings at Our Lady Help of Christians parish hall has fostered lasting friendships with young and old CWL women.

One of the most accomplished activities has been her participation as an actor in the Watford CWL Annual Dinner and Skit Night held for over 40 year for the local women of the Watford area from all denominations. She is a fine actor be it a man or woman she is portraying to bring out humour and laughter and she has taken turns being the M.C. for the popular fundraiser.

Although Reinelda has no daughters, she is proud of her three daughters-in-law who maintain their memberships. Pete and Reinelda have four granddaughters and four grandsons. She hopes as she is in her 60th year of membership that her dedication has inspired her granddaughters and others to continue supporting the Catholic Women's League.

Rose Vallance

Corpus Christi, Windsor Region

I came to Windsor after getting married in Brownsburg, Québec on May 21, 1955! We took a week to come to Windsor where my husband Bill's home was. We visited New York and Niagara Falls on the way. I took a short English course at Lowe Vocational on Giles Boulevard. My first church was Saint Clare on Tecumseh Road for two years.

We moved into our new home on Radisson Ave on the first day of Lent, 1957, so I went to Ash Wednesday Mass at Christ the King Church for the first time. It was suggested to me that it would be a good Idea for me to join the CWL because, "You'll get to know about the nice ladies in the parish," so I joined the league and that was over 42 years ago!

In 1982, I was asked to submit my name for CWL President! My answer was "no" as, "there are too many good ladies who could do a better job than I can." The next day I received a phone call from Monsignor Mugan who said, "I know what the CWL want you to do and I know you can do it." I said there are "too many ladies who can do a better job than I can." He said, "I know you can do it, I will be responsible if it does not work well." How could I say no to that? I was President from 1982 to 1985 and Treasurer for ten years (no one would agree to take it over after two years!) By the way, when I became President the former President gave me one page of instructions and a yellow notepad and that was pretty much it!!

Thank you, Monsignor Mugan for pushing me in the right direction!

Sincerely, Rose Vallance

A note from Rose's daughter:

Mom passed away on November 28, 2020. She was also a Communion Minister for decades at Christ the King Church and continued until age 94 at Corpus Christi when she moved to Ottawa in August 2020. Mom also volunteered at several hospitals logging in over 50,000 volunteer hours. Rose epitomized to her family and those who knew her the spirit of volunteerism and selflessness and we miss her endlessly.

Rosella Pinsonneault

Rivest, St. Pierre, Le Boeuf

I was born on October 23, 1924. Because of no vehicles and the nearest hospital was in Windsor, Ontario, my mother had me at home. Doctor Millen was the General Practitioner for everyone in the area at that time.

My father's name was Joseph Rivest, and my mother was Leah Quenneville. My father was from St. Joachim then moved to Staples, Ontario, whose descendants came from France in 1340, then came down to Québec, where they migrated to South Woodlee, Ontario because of farmland availability to make a better life for their families. My mother came from Stoney Pointe, Ontario, whose descendants came from France down to Québec, then migrated to Ontario because of farmland availability.

My father once moved to South Woodlee, Ontario, was a farmer who grew his own crops and raised animals such as cattle, pigs, horses, chickens, turkeys, and ducks for his own use and sold extras at the market to support his family.

My mother helped my father with farm work and animals, as well as raising her children and keeping house, canning all her food and meat for the winter and sewed all of the clothing for the family.

I had eight siblings: Felix, Aurele, Theodore, Imelda, Bridgette, George, Clarence and Annisette (Syd). I am the seventh child, or third youngest, and third daughter. Yes, I played with my two younger brothers, Clarence and Syd.

We did not have modern toys, but we did play catch the ball, swing on swings, skipping ropes and skated on the pond in winter. We were not rich at all! Whatever we had, we had to work very hard for. Since we were farmers, we raised cattle, horses, pigs, chickens, geese, turkeys, eggs, and the farm crops were wheat, oats, corn and hay.

If we had needs or wants, then we would have to sell cattle, chickens, eggs and/or pigs to get the money to purchase sugar, flour, shoes, boots and other clothing material, or any essentials needed at the time.

Most of our clothes were made by hand, and then handed down from one to the other to be worn over and over again. My grandmother would give my mother her old dresses or coats, and my mother would take them apart and

make us clothes to wear. We thought they were new to us, so we enjoyed wearing them. We only wore knitted stockings. They were warm, but very itchy. We never asked for anything when we were young, we understood that there was no extra money for unnecessary things.

My parents were religious. We always prayed before and after each meal together as a family before we were allowed to eat. We also said the Rosary on our knees, after supper, before we even cleared the table. Sunday Mass was a must and never missed. One would have to be deathly ill to miss going to Mass.

My parents were not politically involved; however, they obeyed and followed the rules of the Township and especially of the Church. Both my father and mother were not able to be involved in any clubs or organizations. They still had a horse and buggy and those things were usually held in the evenings.

Our father's relatives would come over since they lived closest to us, and they had younger children our ages to play with. My mother's relatives were older and lived further away. The family reunions had not started yet when I was a girl, not until I was married with children in the 1950's.

When my father purchased our home, it was already 20 years old. It was made of brick and had lots of rooms. There were six bedrooms upstairs, one bedroom downstairs and a very large parlor. The kitchen was huge with a big wood stove. We had a long kitchen table, chairs for each one of us; they were big solid wooden chairs. My bedroom had a nice cozy bed. When I was very young, my mattress was made out of corn husks and straw. When we went to bed at night, we heard lots of crunching before settling into the mattress. Later on, we kept all of the chicken, geese and turkey feathers and made the mattress covers with cotton flour and sugar bags. We would dry the feathers in the sun, and then stuff the handmade mattresses. When we went to bed, our bodies sank down to the bottom of the mattress. Because I was the youngest daughter, I only had to share my bedroom with my one sister for a short time before she went away to work. My bedroom was small with a little dresser. I even had a medium-sized closet shared with the adjoining bedroom.

One of my duties was to clean all the globes from the oil lamps. I would fold clothes from the clotheslines. The table had to be set at every meal, and cleared after, and then dishes had to be washed, dried, and put away in cupboards. My mother did most of the baking and cooking with my eldest sisters. I would help make butter and buttermilk with our cow's milk and

cream. We would pick strawberries in the spring and canned fruit from our fruit trees, and canned our garden vegetables.

The beds had to be made every day. Mother mainly did the laundry while we were at school. The younger kids would gather the eggs daily and feed the chickens. When my father and brothers butchered a cow or pig, I, along with my sisters and mother would can the meat, since we did not have fridges or freezers. My brothers helped my father with crops and farm work. They would chop wood for the cook stove and milk the cows daily. Whatever we grew or raised, we ate!

At springtime, my father and brothers would shear our sheep's wool and the girls would sit on the porch and remove the burs and any dirt out of the wool and bag it in plastic bags. We would then take the bags of wool to the train station in South Woodslee and ship it to Montréal. There, they would make wool blankets with the wool. We would ask for either white or gray blankets. When this was finished, they would return the blankets back to us by train and we would pick them up at the Post Office in South Woodslee. Then we would send them a cheque for their great work, and we enjoyed the newly made wool blankets on our beds to keep us warm in winter.

My mother taught me how to can meat, fruit and vegetables. She also taught me how to make jams and pickles with our fruit and vegetables. She taught me how to make chicken and sliders, our home-baked breads, stews, soups, roasts, and potatoes. We only purchased sugar, flour and yeast. And of course, shoes and boots.

My mother taught me how to make quilts, and to crochet and knit. We made all of our doilies and decorated tea towels and pillowcases. We used cross-stitch in many of our clothes. We sewed all of our clothes. Nothing was wasted; it was too expensive to purchase. The older siblings would play cards, while the younger ones watched and learned.

We prayed together, ate together, and recited the Rosary together daily!

I remember well the fresh home baked breads from the oven. Homemade soups, and the canned fruit and pies were also superb! At Christmas, we would make popcorn balls and string popcorn for decorations. We would bake Christmas cakes and cookies and make sugar pies with freshly made breads and pickles. We would have turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy and carrots.

Once we had a car, we would go to Christmas Mass at midnight and then go home and straight to bed. On Christmas morning, we would open our few gifts, which consisted of handmade dresses, knitted socks, mittens, scarves, and the boys would have handmade shirts and pants. When I was five years old, I received my first baby doll, and the boys had farm toys. No relatives came over on Christmas Day, only the older siblings with their families.

On Thanksgiving, if a Mass was said we would attend. Nothing else was done. On birthdays, most of the time we would have a cake with no candles, and never gifts.

We had a two-room school. One was for the juniors and the other for senior kids. We were taught by the nuns. School started at 9 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m.

We walked three miles each way to get to school and back, so we could go to the Catholic School. We had two outhouses, one for the girls and the other for the boys. I disliked having to go outside in the winter to use them. The school was heated with a gas stove. It would get so hot in the winter, that once we were running around the stove and my little friend got too close to the stove and her dress started on fire, and it burnt and so did she. We all watched while she perished to her death! I still remember that awful dreadful day.

I enjoyed going to school, but NOT walking to and from school every day! I found school difficult. Our parents did not help us or guide us with homework like they do in today's age. The main thing to do after school were our chores! Playing was almost sinful.

Religion was my favorite subject because I did not have to learn the Catechism by heart, only my prayers. I certainly did have a favorite teacher. Her name was Sister Elaine. She would walk with me after school on her way home to the convent in North Woodslee and we would talk. Sister was so kind, gentle, and caring. She treated me with respect and did the same with the other kids. I made a promise to myself that if I ever had a daughter, I would name her Elaine, and my wish came true! In those days, the strap was used, especially on the boys who misbehaved. Sometimes we were sent home to deal with our parents, and the most common one was to write lines. I never got into trouble. I never wanted to disobey the nuns because I had much respect for each and every one of them. I was never bullied, nor did I ever witness anyone else be bullied. We looked out for each other rather than make fun of anyone. We were all in the same boat, we wore similar

clothes, we ate similar food and we all walked to school and had strict parents.

After school, we had chores to do before and after supper, and there was never a time to play with friends. Our cousins were mainly our friends. There was always help needed in the kitchen with cooking, baking, setting the table and clearing it, washing dishes, beds to make and floors to clean. We would have to take the clothes off the clothesline and fold them. In the winter, after everyone was in bed, we would make a clothesline in the kitchen and parlor and hang the frozen clothes on them to finish drying during the night. Early in the morning before anyone got up, we would take the clothes off the lines and fold them quickly and put them away. No one knew what went on when they got up!

I must not forget all the outside work with the animals, chickens and gardening. My two younger brothers were my best friends! Unfortunately, I lost both of them several years ago. I miss them so much.

There was one friend I really got along very well with, and her name was Eileen Tracey. She would always listen and we talked about what we wanted to be when we got out of school. Sometimes we talked during recess, about other kids that were funny and made us laugh in class. We would act silly at times and giggled about boys.

I always wanted to be a nun just like Sister Elaine. As a teenager, most of my siblings were married and gone away from home, leaving me with much more chores to do. Still the same work, just more upon my shoulders. We also made soap from the pig's fat and head cheese with the pig's head meat. We made blood sausage with the cattle's blood. Not much was wasted. We cooked the heart, liver, kidneys and whatever else we could.

In those days, girls got married at a young age. I was 17 years old when I went on my first date. I was to be home by 11 p.m., no later. The boy needed to be Catholic, and come from a hardworking and good, respectable family. There were no clubs or sports at that time, especially if we were from the county, there was no time for fun activities like sports. Only the kids from town could participate because of easy accessibility.

On weekends, I worked for elderly women who needed help with cleaning their homes, making their beds and helping with baking and cooking. I would also help with their spring and fall cleaning. I was paid to do this, and I really enjoyed helping the women. On Friday nights after school, I would take the train that stopped in South Woodslee and that is how I would travel

to these ladies' homes, or I would have to walk a few miles to get there, depending on where they lived. Then on Sunday night, I would go back home.

Also, on weekends in the summertime, the tomato factories would hire teenage kids to take over while the married women could be home on weekends and be with their families and get caught up with their housework.

I always enjoyed getting paid for my hard work. That was a wonderful reward. I remember once I had earned enough money, I finally got to buy my first dress and I felt like I was a princess wearing it!

When my first husband was killed by a fallen tree at 36 years of age, I had no choice but to learn how to drive our car. I was 33 years old and I had five young children, and we lived in the county, so I could not depend on anyone to drive me anywhere. I quickly learned how to drive a car, and I finally gave up my driver's license at 93 years of age.

My parents were older when I was a teenager, and they were overprotective and thought I was too young to do the things I wanted, and they expected me to take care of them.

Even though I would have wanted to go further with education, I was fortunate enough to finish Grade 8. Because there was no means of transportation, I only went to grade school at St. John the Evangelist in North Woodslee, Ontario. In grade school, we studied Math, English, History, Geography, Science, and Catechism.

My eldest sister lived on the same road as my husband. Sometimes on Friday nights we would go visit each other's homes, since we knew the family. Whoever knew how would play the violin, guitar and harmonica, while the women would dance. Sometimes, we would even be able to square dance. I would help my sister make sandwiches and serve them to the guests. My [future] husband had eyes on me, and we soon fell in love.

My husband was from a well-known, good hard working family. He was gentle, kind and ever so handsome. He was very polite and considerate with me and others. He respected everyone. And he was Catholic and French. At that time because of the war, age did not matter when considering marriage. My husband was established. He had bought his dad's farm, with a big farmhouse on it. He had a stable life to offer me. Since he had a farm, he was exempted from going to war. Nothing was easy, especially just starting off,

during the Depression and war. We had to make due with whatever we could get from family and our crops, hoping that the weather would cooperate. We had to wait for crop harvest to sell, and get paid, to be able to purchase groceries and clothing and any other essentials that we needed to get.

With the money made from crops, we were then able to purchase our cattle, pigs and chickens. We would milk the cows and ship the milk out, and that was another way to make money each month. I thought I was the luckiest woman with a home, farmland, a loving husband, and I soon started having a family. What more could a wife ever dream of?

For the first thirteen years, my husband earned the money from our farmland and animals. During the wintertime, he worked for the gas company and he also worked for the Municipal Elections. He sat on the Catholic School Board. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus. We were very close to his parents and his siblings. There were lots of children in each family.

I did not work out while raising my children. However, nothing was automatic. Everything had to be made from scratch. We did not have hydro when we were first married. The house was cold in winters and so hot during summer.

When my husband died, I was lost and confused and had very little money. Two of my sisters-in-law had a set of triplets and needed help with chores. They both had ten other children besides the triplets. I would go over once my children went to school and help with whatever needed to be done. I would sew clothes for the older children. To get paid, my brothers-in-law would give me part of their beef and pigs when they butchered. Sometimes they would give me fruit from their fruit trees to can.

I gave birth to eight live children, seven boys and one daughter. I raised two stepsons from my second husband. Having stepchildren, everyone got along quite well. Living on a farm helped occupy them with taking care of the animals and the crops. The boys also got to help me out in the housework on a rainy day or during winter. They were all protective of their one and only sister.

During summer, we would sometimes go to the lake and have picnics. We also visited relatives on weekends. The boys would play baseball in the field next to the house.

On Sundays, we would invite our married brothers and sisters and their families for Sunday dinners. The grownups would play cards while the children played outdoors. We celebrated all holidays with our children in thanksgiving for what we had. Sunday morning Mass was a must with our entire family.

Once family reunions started, we attended them yearly on all sides of our families.

I hoped I taught my children to have pride in what they accomplished. I hoped they used kindness and honesty with anyone they met. Politeness and caring and loving were a must with family values. They had to sit on a chair and think of what they could have done to prevent the situation they got themselves in. Other times, they got to help me with housework, especially the beddings on their bunk beds which were quite a challenge.

I was ALWAYS a Catholic and proud of it. I belonged to St. John the Evangelist, North Woodslee when I was a child, then once I was married I belonged to St. Simon and St. Jude in Belle River, Ontario, and still do to this day. I really enjoyed our CWL yearly bazaars, helping before, during and after. K-Celles, I enjoyed their outings with other councils, and their bazaars.

I enjoyed going to the Knights of Columbus' banquets with our friends, and I enjoyed working in the kitchen with my women friends. I was part of the Good Neighbor Club with their bazaars and activities.

I helped organize and run the Fiddler's Contest when it was active. I helped with fundraisers for the new arena in the 1960's. My second husband and friends went to Hawaii. My husband and I took our three youngest boys to California to visit his brother and family. My third husband and I spent the winters in Florida. We visited family in Québec, Montréal, and Vancouver. I went to Alaska with my daughter and her friend and mother, and had a lovely time. My favorite vacation was going to Hawaii with my friends. We had so much fun and so much laughter. I even had Don Ho sing on the stage with me. The saddest was the thought of having to go back home and have all this fun finished! However, being a wife and mother and grandmother has always been my best and most memorable time in my life. Raising my family of nine sons and one daughter and being a supportive, loving wife to my three wonderful husbands have been my biggest accomplishments, especially seeing all of my children grow into wonderful adults, living good Christian lives and respecting others.

Now I watch my grandchildren and great grandchildren live their lives which are very different from mine as a child and adulthood. I thank God every day for my health, and to still be here today to enjoy, and to have me live my life to the fullest. Today at 97 years young, I look back and I would do it all over again. It was worth it all!

God Bless, Rosella Pinsonneault

Sheila Aguiar

The Bombay CWL started in 1964 at the Eucharistic Congress; I joined this organization in 1972. The CWL is very active in India.

In 1974, the six parishes in Banda, my hometown, started a fairly large task, Project 1. In Project 1, the CWL and the AICUFF, a youth group, worked in the slums; we organized talks with the women folk and the AICUFF took charge of schooling and education. With the help of the CWL, the people were taught to save money and bank accounts were started. We also appointed a doctor who would visit them once a month and tend to their needs. Sometimes, in emergencies, we women rushed them to doctors or hospitals. Every two months we had a social evening with games, food, and fun; sometimes this was a movie, this created a close interaction with slum dwellers over the years.

Project 2: With the help of a member who was a nun, we organized prison visits and held an Easter Mass on their premises.

Project 3: At Christmas we entertained Mother Teresa's destitute homes, the youth brought their musical instruments, and the women their voices and smiles. This cheered and motivated the residents in a big way.

Project 4: In the early 1980's many of our Bombay youth were marrying outside the community. Cardinal Pimenta approached our CWL to pray and come up with some solution to this problem. So we did some brainstorming. The outcome was a huge "Getting to know you" social for youth. This was a roaring success and resulted in several Catholic marriages. The parents were ever grateful to us women. Other parishes in Bombay followed suit.

Project 5: In the early 1980's The National planned an International conference in Bangalore, and we invited Mother Teresa. The Conference was attended by foreigners from Canada, Spain, Portugal, England, Ireland, Scotland, Africa, and some other countries (my memory fails me). But I remember four African ladies had brought their drums along and played for us. One of them, a highly qualified lawyer, gave us a talk on women's independence; she encouraged us, even though we had families, to forge ahead and pursue our education. She said it all called for organizing skills. We in Bombay had several committees as most flights landed in Bombay, we arranged accommodation for these delegates and entertained them with some village members performing a local dance, in a five-star hotel. After two days, they flew to Bangalore. Mother Teresa was so delighted to

sit down to tea and chat with each one of us individually. She invited us to Calcutta, where many of us did go.

Project 6: This was our one huge project.

In India, we have the caste system. This is even worse than slavery; the Adivasi's are considered outcasts. They build thatched huts on the periphery of a village and they are not allowed to mix, talk or ride a bus with the villagers, or fill water (jugs) at the same tap. So we started a grain bank for 62 Adivasi families; we purchased 6200 kg of rice and built a shed in their village to store the grain. Every month four women travelled two hours both ways by bus to distribute and mingle with them. In this project, many of our husbands assisted in a big way, along with a Jesuit Priest. Eventually we even started a poultry farm with them, while they taught us some tips on gardening.

Project 7: Fundraising.

In all our projects there were heavy expenses, we spoke in several churches at Sunday Mass about our project and stood outside the church with boxes. We once bought a movie at a theatre, then printed a fat brochure with advertisements from various business houses that we sold at the doors, here we made a jackpot.

We organized inter-religious meetings with Priests and Ministers from Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Parsee. Here we often got school children to perform. These meetings were often very well attended.

Once a year the Don Bosco School invited us to cook a picnic lunch for the over 100 boys, mainly orphans. That was an opportunity to exhibit our culinary skills.

At Christmas and Women's Day we organized big functions. Once a year we had a picnic with all the Bombay units.

Our Bandra unit worked humbly with dedication and unity. Of course we had our differences but with well organized, teamwork it was soon sorted out. We were like one big happy family. For National Conferences we often travelled by train, sometimes even twenty together. That was always something to look forward to. On the spiritual side, we had retreats, meditation prayer groups often led by Priests or nuns, or one or two of our well-qualified members.

Therese (Terry) Brewster

What did you parents do for a living? My father was an electrician, my mother a bookkeeper.

How many siblings did you have? I have two siblings.

Where were you in the birth order? I am the youngest.

What parish did you attend? We went to St. Mary's (London).

What other relatives did you know growing up? We were in touch with aunts and uncles.

Did you attend family reunions, or parties? Yes.

When did you start taking part in church activities? I started taking part in church activities in grade school.

Were there any events or fund raisers that were memorable for you? The Kopper Karnival Penny Table was memorable. My first Convention opened my eyes. One-thousand dollars was raised. I remember, "25 tickets for 25 cents".

When and where did you join the CWL? I joined the CWL at St. Martin of Tours (London) 64 years ago.

Tell us about your first meeting. I was surprised to learn how involved the CWL was in the church and the city.

Why did you join the CWL? I joined to be involved in my parish and to learn about the CWL.

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? I collected stamps for the Mission. I was Early Historian. I assisted in providing lunch and Mass in nursing homes, jointly hosted CWL card and conversation parties, assisted in providing reception lunches for church funerals.

How has the CWL effected your life? Relationships? Faith? It has helped me to be aware of the need or support for others.



Valerie Cox

Submitted by Veronica Cox in honour of her late mother, Valerie Cox (April 1, 1926 - December 30, 2021).

Valerie was born in Lowce, Poland, in 1926 and emigrated to Saskatchewan in 1929 along with her mom and brother Eugene. Her father Nicholas had previously emigrated to Canada to homestead in Saskatchewan in May 1927. They sailed on the steamship Empress of Scotland along with many others who came to Canada at that time to make a new life. Marla, our Granny, talked about the boat ride to Canada from Europe. She was so sick the entire way and was terrified that little Valerie and toddler Eugene would fall over the side of the ship. She had no energy to chase after them so she tied them to her apron strings to keep them safe on the voyage. It must have been so tough and we were always impressed with their strength.

They homesteaded in Choiceland, Saskatchewan and Maria and Nicholas had two more girls. Valerie loved her two younger sisters, Stella and Mary, who left us several years ago. Mary, the youngest, looked up to her big sister Valerie and often spoke to her own children about how strong her eldest sister was, raising six children and working and sacrificing so much in her life. The sisters bonded over games of Scrabble and the sharing of good food and shared memories of the farm in Choiceland. It is wonderful to think of

the three sisters together again, laughing and sharing the creativity and love that they clearly have in common.

At the age of 18, Valerie joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps in Regina and was eventually stationed at Wolseley Barracks in London, Ontario. After World War I ended in 1945, she settled in Toronto to study dress design. She decided to return to London to join her parents and sisters who had moved from Saskatchewan (Eugene had joined the Navy). She worked at Lawson and Jones as a graphic designer. She met and married Owen Cox (d. 2005) and they had six children.

Valerie was a creative and artistic woman, an accomplished cook, baker, sewer, knitter and decorator. In her 40's, she completed her education in Business Administration at Fanshawe College. She also learned carpentry and furniture refinishing. She could always be found painting walls, stripping a floor or a door, tiling a bathroom and working on many other projects. She knitted baby clothes for all of us and made lovely sweaters, scarves and hats for us when we were adults. She made wedding cakes, wedding dresses and many clothing articles for herself. Her crafts would often be on display at the Catholic Women's League Annual Christmas Bazaar.

Mom worked many years for the Federal Government and retired at the age of 67. She continued to be involved in many projects and clubs and was always involved with her church and St. Peter's Catholic Women's League. Mom was a woman of great faith and she shared her love of God with all who knew her. If you had a problem, and talked to her about it, she always said, "I'll pray for you. All will be well." She is very close to the Blessed Virgin Mary and often could be heard imploring Mary's help for her children and friends. She constantly reminded us that the Blessed Mother would lead us to her Son Jesus. I recall the times she took all of us to Mass at St. Peter's as children. There was no talking, no running around, we had to sit quietly and participate in the Latin Mass.

In 2015, Mom became aware that her heart was not working as it should and was diagnosed with heart failure. She found it more difficult to care for her garden and home so she sold her house and moved to Picton Street in downtown London. There, she joined an exercise/dance class at age 90—the instructor referred to Mom as a "ray of sunshine that walked into the room" and would joke, "Girls, try to keep up with Valerie"! She also went for long walks, played Scrabble and did countless crossword puzzles (a hobby she shared with her brother Eugene).

In 2019, she was admitted to hospital again and it was recommended that she undergo an aortic implant which she received in March 2020. As it was during the beginning of the pandemic lockdown, she realized that she had a lot of work to do to stay healthy.

We walked every day, twice a day. In November of 2020, she fell and broke her shoulder. She could no longer hold onto the walker for her daily walks and her heart began to fail again. She spent the entire summer of 2021 going back and forth to the hospital. Finally, she had enough and asked to remain in her home if nothing else could be done to cure her. The St. Joseph's Hospice Palliative Care Outreach Team was contacted and all was set into motion for her care. She was so happy to be in her own home, in her LA-Z-BOY lounging chair with her family around her and her crossword puzzles and books, her prayers and Rosary and her TV channel tuned to EWTN. Family members took turns masking up and visiting her the last several months and we took many photographs and shared many happy memories. Her brother Eugene visited and on December 30th he phoned her and I held the phone to her ear and he said, "I love you" to her. Her niece Margaret (Mary's oldest daughter) came to visit her and Mom recognized her and spoke to her. She was lucid until the very end and just quietly went to sleep.

In the early morning hours of December 28, she had a message for me and one of the nurses—she woke up from a sleep and said in a strong voice, "You have to have the patience of Job!" and promptly went back to sleep. I was amused and got the Bible and started reading Job. The day shift nurse was told the same thing and we marvelled at the significance of those words. I believe Mom was trying to tell us that even in these very difficult times, we have to have the patience of Job because we are truly living in a time of trial. Thus, we included a reading from Job at her funeral.

Mom, you sacrificed so much for your family, so strong, so understanding, so loving. You are beautiful inside and out! Mom, thank you for sharing your love and sacrifice with us. Thank you for sharing your faith in God and teaching us His Ways. Thank you for raising us to have respect for life at all stages from conception to natural death. By your life, you taught us how to be strong and remain humble and trusting in the Sight of God. Thank you for holding us up when we were weak and pointing us towards leaning on Almighty God. We love you and pray that you rest in His Perpetual Light forever.

Always in our hearts and minds, kochamy cie (we love you).

CWL Questions

When did you start taking part in Church activities? Val started taking part in Church activities in her 40's. In 1966, she was active in St. Justin's Parish assisting and sponsoring RCIA candidates.

Were your parents involved in the Church? Yes, Val's parents were quite involved with the Church, they were involved with the building of Our Lady of Czestochowa on Hill Street in London, Ontario.

Was there any events or fundraisers that was most memorable to you? The annual Christmas Bazaar and Lenten lunches.

When did you join the CWL? In 2008.

How has the CWL affected your life? Relationships? Faith? Val developed friendships and long-lasting relationships. She shared her faith with everyone, experienced the strength of prayer and was supported through her life's journey.

Which parish were/are you a part of? St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica.

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? If so what was your role? She was called upon as a volunteer to assist and attend activities and events and provided donations when requested.

Why did you join the CWL? Val started out by volunteering at the Christmas Bazaar; the atmosphere of the women made her want to be a part of the CWL.

Her favourite Saints are Faustina, Therese of Lisieux, Pope Paul II, and Andre Bessette.



Valerie Grant

Parents and Family

When and where were you born? I was born on November 1, 1952 in London, Ontario.

What are the names of your parents? My father's name is Owen Joseph Cox. My mother's name is Valerie Veronica Cox (nee Walczak).

Where was your family originally from? Poland, Wales, and Ireland.

What did your parents do for a living? Mom worked for the Canadian Women's Army Corps (WWII), as Graphic Designer, Dress Designer, Homemaker, and employee of Service Canada. My father was Captain of a cruise boat, Carpenter, and built houses.

How many siblings do you have? I have five, two brothers and three sisters. Their names are Geoff, Bob, Elizabeth, Angela, and Teresa.

Who were you closest to? Teresa and Geoff were closest in age to me. We hung around together, the "Three Musketeers".

Where are you in the birth order? First.

Did you play with your sibling(s)? Yes, we played baseball, Barbie Dolls, Hide

and Go Seek, Tag, Simon Says, board games of all kinds, we would dress up in Mom's and Dad's old clothes, play on playground equipment, went skating, played hockey, and card games.

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? Money was scarce in our home. We were considered among the poor. St Vincent de Paul and Salvation Army often provided food baskets and brought toys at Christmas. We did without but Mom was able to sew clothes for us. My grandfather (a cobbler) made shoes. I do not think we really understood that we were poor.

Were your parents religious? Roman Catholic. The Rosary was said each day, and we said Grace Before Meals. We prayed Morning Offering and said prayers at bedtime. We had lots of holy objects, pictures, statues and sacramentals.

What were your parents' political beliefs? They were Conservative.

What organizations or clubs were they involved in? Mom was a member of the CWL, she was on church bazaar committees. Dad golfed and went scuba diving.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? Mom's two sisters, and her brother as well as Mom's father, mother and cousins. I met a few of Dad's brothers. They live in Ontario.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? If so, how often did this happen? Yes, we attended family reunions every four to five years.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? We lived in mostly apartments in part of an old home. We lived in town houses until I was married. My room was mostly shared with siblings. I had my own room just before I got married. It was very small but neat and clean.

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your sibling's duties? My duties were ironing, washing dishes, making beds, and dusting. The boys helped with watering the lawn and cutting the grass, looking after pets. We all participated in cooking and baking.

What skills did you learn (e.g. cooking, carpentry or crafts)? Who taught you? Mom taught me to cook, sew, make crafts, knit, crochet, cross-stich, paint, create art, furniture refinishing, gardening, and baking. Dad taught me carpentry, building, sailing, how to play card games, to fish, and golf.

What activities did your family do together? We went on picnics, going to the beach, visit relatives, go on walks in parks, to Mass, weddings, funerals, Confirmations and Baptisms.

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood? I remember pierogis, cabbage rolls, fudge, chocolate cake, and sauerkraut.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays? At Christmas, we went to Midnight Mass when we were old enough to stay up late. At Thanksgiving we prayed a special family prayer. On birthdays, Mom always baked us a special cake; sometimes we had surprise parties.

Early Schooling

What was your elementary school like? St. Peter's was my school. My time there was very bad. The teacher I had was abusive. By Grade 3, I had a better teacher. We moved and switched to St. Sebastian's where my teachers were great. The students were cliquey and got into trouble. We were taunted for being Polish. One time, they tied my brother to a tree in the woods and left him there.

Did you enjoy going to school as a kid? Were there things about school that you didn't like? I loved learning, reading, etc. The social part of school was a nightmare. Corporal punishment was used on us, even if we did not do anything to deserve it. Kids were mean to immigrants and those with disabilities.

What was your favourite subject? Geography.

Did you have a favourite teacher? Why were they your favourite? I was shy and afraid of teachers/authority, probably because of abuse in early childhood education. My Grade 5 teacher sort of drew me out and helped me to value my gifts and God's place for me in the world.

What was discipline like at your school? It was abusive.

Were you ever teased or bullied at school? Yes, all the time.

Childhood Friends and Interests

What did you do after school and on weekends? We did homework, helped Mom with chores, and played with friends and siblings.

Who were your childhood friends? My friends were Donna, Iris, Dianne, Susanne, Sandy, Karen, Cathy, and my siblings.

Did you have a best friend? What was their name? What did you do when you spent time together? My best friend was Donna. We played board games and she taught me to swim and drive.

Did you have a pen-pal? If so, where were they from? Susanne, my school chum, moved to Toronto. We have been pen pals for 58 years. I had a pen-pal from Poland who was my grandmother's great niece but we lost touch when she moved to Switzerland.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a dancer, first. Then an actress, then a home decorator. My biggest dream was to be a marine biologist and a mom.

Teenage Years

Did you have additional responsibilities or chores as a teenager? Some but they were equally shared with my siblings.

How old were you when you went on your first date? Did your parents have any rules about dating? I was 15 years old, we went to a Turnabout Dance. I had to be home by curfew, there was no drinking/drugs/smoking, and I had to remain chaste.

Did you belong to any clubs/teams? If so, what were they? I belonged to the YWCA swim team and the gymnastics team.

Did you have a part-time job? Did you enjoy it? Why? I had a few summer jobs washing dishes and doing cleanup in restaurants, filing in an office. I did not like the work.

How did you spend the money you made? I saved up for school clothes.

How old were you when you got your driver's license? I was 18.

Did your relationship with your parents change during this time? My dad was not around. Mom had some real challenges raising teenagers. I started my first job at age 18 right out of high school. I contributed to room and board which gave me a sense of independence.

Adulthood: Further Education

Did you get any post-secondary education (college or university)? No, I did not get any post-secondary education.

Church, Political and Other Involvement

Did you belong to a church? Yes.

What kind of church-related activities have you been involved with? What was it like? Did you enjoy it? I have been involved with the CWL and RCIA. Yes, I enjoyed being a part of both, and anywhere I was needed.

Have you ever travelled? Yes, but not often.

What is one of your biggest accomplishments in life and/or something you are most proud of doing? Caring for Mom.

CWL Questions

When did you start taking part in Church activities? Val started taking part in Church activities in her 40's. In 1993 she was active in St. Justin's parish assisting and sponsoring RCIA candidates for 5 years.

Were your parents involved in the Church? Yes, Val's parents attended mass and Mom had more involvement.

Was there any events or fundraisers that was most memorable to you? Annual Christmas Bazaar and Lenten lunches. In 2016 organized a CWL "Women of Mercy", retreat for the women of St Peter's parish. Guest speaker: Sr. Kathleen O'Keefe.

When did you join the CWL? In 2011.

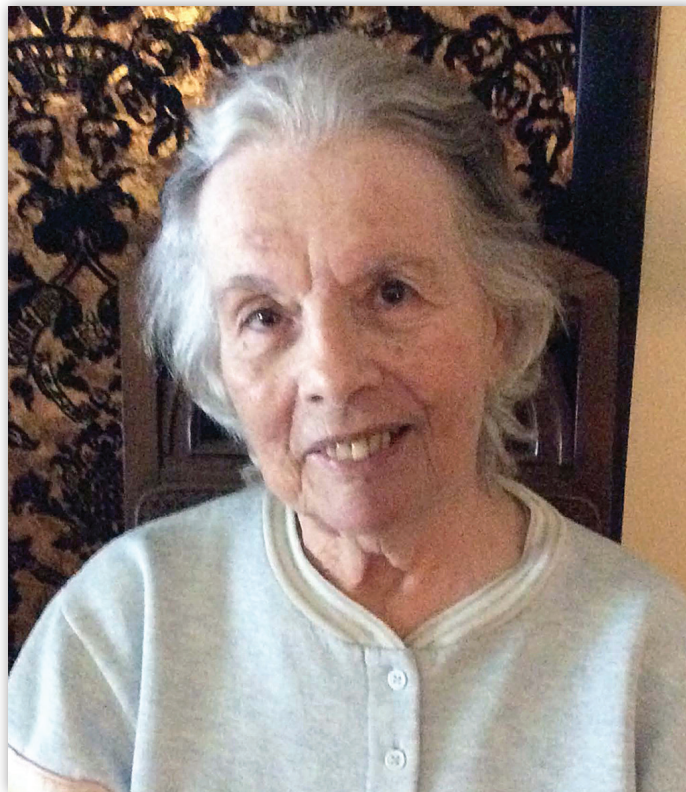
How has the CWL affected your life? Relationships? Faith? Developed many friendships, grown spiritually and feel supported by my CWL sisters.

Which parish were/are you a part of? St Peter's Cathedral Basilica

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? If so what was your role? Part of the Executive Spiritual Development Chairperson. Also assisted at the bazaars, luncheons, and other events.

Why did you join the CWL? Was working at the time but started out by volunteering at the Christmas bazaar and decided to join.

Favourite Saints – Mother Mary of course, St Theresa of Lisieux, Our Lady of Guadeloupe, Our Lady of Czestochowa and St. Joseph.



Victoria (Vickie) Dawson

CWL member since 1949

Victoria was born on May 25, 1931 at Hotel Dieu Hospital. Her parents were Raymond Lesperance and Mary (Iler) Lesperance. Her mother was an American citizen living in Windsor. Vickie was the fourth of eight siblings. There were four girls and four boys. Two of her siblings are still alive. The family lived in one of the big houses on Riverside Drive near George Avenue. Many of these houses were owned by Americans and rented out. Vickie and her family were fortunate to be able to rent one of these houses.

Vickie attended Holy Rosary School for her grade school education and St. Joseph's School for her high school education. Holy Rosary was a bilingual school and she was registered in the French section. Her Meme (grandmother) Lesperance lived to be 110 years old and spoke only French. The family attended Holy Rosary Church where Vickie received her Sacraments.

During her school years, she chummed around with a group of girls from school. One of these girls, Pauline LaFrance, was her best friend. The girls went to teen dances as a group. This is where Vickie met her husband. He

was a great dancer and in much demand as a partner. She was still a young teenager and she and Hardie did not date until much later.

Much of her family time during her growing years was spent with her American relatives. They would go there to visit or the cousins would come to Leamington. Her parents owned a cottage in Leamington where the families spent many summers together.

Meme Lesperance was very strict. She did not allow any alcohol in her house except on New Year's Day. Meme loved to cook for the family. The family would beg her to sing for them which she did reluctantly. At the end of the day all alcohol had to be disposed of—there was no saving any for another day.

Vickie had always wanted to be a nun from a very young age. She and her friend Pauline decided to enter together. Pauline was not accepted so Vickie said she would not stay since her friend was not staying. Her father went to London to pick up the girls and bring them home. As soon as she arrived at home and told her mother what had happened, her mother signed her up in the CWL. Vickie was 18.

Hardie and Vickie were married on November 10, 1951. Hardie converted to Catholicism. They were blessed with six children: Bruce, Tom, Ken, Anne Marie, Paul and Dave. Two of her boys are deceased. She has three grandchildren. Her granddaughter is soon to be married. Hardie worked for Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. Vickie was hired by Bell Canada at the age of 18 where she worked her way up to a supervisor. Her cousin got the job for her. She was employed by Bell until her retirement.

Shortly after their marriage, Vickie and Hardie purchased property to build their marital home. They owned the property for ten years before they had enough money to build the house. Chuck Mady was their builder. Vickie still lives in their original marital home. Hardie passed away in 2016.

Vickie was active within her church as a lector, Eucharistic Minister and singing in the choir. In the community, she was President and organizer of the Red Coats. This group acted as ambassadors at various charity events and conventions for the city of Windsor.

As a couple Vickie and Hardie enjoyed playing cards. They belonged to a card club at church, playing euchre on a regular basis.

Virginia Brothers

Good Shepherd CWL

Hi everyone! My name is Virginia and I have been a member of the CWL since 2005. I first became involved when the CWL held a draw for new members. I ended up being the lucky winner of the prize which was a nativity scene, which I still cherish to this day. Denise Masse reached out to me to talk about the CWL and, in her usual congenial manner, she warmly invited me to join, which I did and the rest is history.

Over the years, along with other CWL members, I have participated in a variety of events which have ranged from prayerful and heart-felt to all-out fun. One of my favourite and most memorable events is our Annual Christmas Auction where a couple of members dress up as elves and present each auction item in a hilarious manner which always gets lots of laughs. Also, I have been able to bid on and take home some great auction deals, which is just the icing on the cake.

Another memorable activity is participating in the annual World Day of Prayer, where several churches get together to pray for and raise funds for different countries in the world. As part of this day, our CWL members would sometimes take the lead in decorating the church hall to honour the country for which we are praying and raising money. I have particularly enjoyed the creative way in which we try to represent the country being spotlighted. I think it is both a thoughtful and respectful tribute to the people living in different parts of the world.

As part of the CWL, I have also been the lead for Spiritual Development for many years and more recently the head for Family Life. I have had the distinction of being asked to talk at the funeral of a fellow CWL member, Mary Mason. Other events that I have had the pleasure of participating in include luncheons, bake sales, pro-life walks, retreats, and monthly meetings, which are now virtual [during the COVID pandemic] and meeting by computer has been a real learning curve for me.

These are some of the fond memories that I have had as a member of the CWL for the past 16 years. I hope to continue to make new friendships and memories, as well as maybe win a few more auction items, in the coming years.

Wilhelmina (Willi) Kole

When and where were you born? I was born at St. Joseph's Hospital in Sarnia, Ontario on September 19, 1947.

What are the names of your parents? My parents are Madeline and Bill Wessing. Madeline remarried Claude Gelinias.

Where was your family originally from? My father came from the Netherlands (Holland) when he was 13. My mother was from Bluewater Highway (farm, Hwy 21) near Zurich which was formerly St. Joseph's. My stepfather Claude was from near Zurich.

What did your parents do for a living? My mom was a homemaker, my dad worked at a power plant. My stepdad owned a garage/gas station.

How many siblings do you have? What are their names? Who were you closest to? I have three siblings: Marie, Connie and Pat. I was closest to Pat. Marie and Connie were born pre-war, myself and Patsy, post-war. I have 14 step-siblings, 13 are still alive as of 2022. My mother was very brave. The youngest was only three when she married Claude. Their names are Mary Fran, Joe, Anne, Caroline, Willian, Gloria, Peter, Tom, Leo, David, Cathy, Jane, Brenda, and Beth.

Where are you in the birth order? I am the youngest of my four full-siblings. We were all grown and out of the house when Mom remarried. When she remarried there were ten still at home. By the end of the first year, there were only four left for Mom to raise.

Did you play with your siblings? What kinds of games did you play? Yes, we played board games, hopscotch and dolls. I played outside with our friends.

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember a time when money was tight? Did you ever have to do without things you wanted or needed? We were not poor but we did not have a lot. To have and meet costs, a room was rented out. We had what we needed, not always what we wanted.

Were your parents religious? If so, how was religion observed in the home? My parents were very religious, Roman Catholic. After my dad came back from the war, he went to Mass at St. Joseph's Hospital at 6:30 a.m. During Lent, we all had to go with him before school.

What were your parents' political beliefs? They were Liberals.

What organizations or clubs were they involved in? My mom was a member of the Catholic Women's League. Mom was President at every church she was ever at: St. Peter's and St. Benedict's in Sarnia, St. Michael's in London and St. Boniface in Zurich. Dad was a fourth degree Knight of Columbus.

What other relatives did you have contact with growing up? We were in contact with all our aunts, uncles and extended family. We only had contact with one grandparent as the others passed before I was born.

Did you ever attend a family reunion? We mostly just got together at funerals.

Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like? The house I grew up in was a small two-story wartime house. In my room, we had all four sisters in two beds. I slept with my sister Connie.

What were your duties around the house as a child? What were your siblings' duties? We all did chores.

What skills did you learn, (e.g. cooking, carpentry or crafts)? Who taught you? Mom taught me to keep a clean and tidy house.

What activities did your family do together? We went to church. We did not go too far because we did not have a car. We played cards—had to learn how to play euchre!

Are there any special foods that you remember from your childhood? I remember Mom's apple pies, tourtières and fantastic butter tarts. There were "tricorn buns" for the bazaar; we only got to eat one before they went to the church. We always had a big family dinner on Sundays. After my sisters got married, they came too.

Were there any family traditions around the holidays? On Christmas, we always went to Midnight Mass. We got to open one present after Mass and one in the morning.

Early Schooling

What was your elementary school like? I went to St. Peter's in Sarnia, then St. Helens; both are gone now. The nuns were very scary. In Grade 1, my teacher carried around a strap which she hit people with. In Grade 2, I was hit on the hand with a ruler to stop me from writing with my left hand. My dad found out and he went to school and put a stop to that punishment.

What was your favorite subject? My favorite subject was math.

Did you have a favorite teacher? Why were they your favorite? My favorite teacher was in Grade 12 at the Mount in London. Her name was Sister Baptista who taught history. She had also been my father's teacher when he first came from Holland. History was my best mark, 80%, because she made it so interesting.

What was discipline like at your school? In Grade 1, the strap was used. In Grade 2, as I mentioned, I was hit on the hand with a ruler for writing with my left hand. I was really a good kid in school.

Were you ever teased or bullied at school? I was teased because of my weight. Most kids were skinny and I was not.

What did you do after schooling on weekends? We played.

Who were your childhood friends? My friend in Grades 2 and 3 was Pat Daamen.

Did you ever have a best friend? What was their name? What did you do when you spent time together? As adults, Pat and I reconnected and she became my best friend, my "Soul Sister". We shared our faith and belonged to the CWL and Secular Franciscans. We sewed together, made things for the bazaar and laughed a lot.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a nurse.

Teenage Years

Did you have additional responsibilities or chores as a teenager? Not really.

How old were you when you went on your first date? Did your parents have any rules about dating? I was probably 18 when I went on my first date. I was out of the house by then.

Did you belong to any clubs/teams? I did not belong to any clubs or teams.

Did you have a part-time job? I did not.

How old were you when you got your driver's license? I was 24 when I got my driver's license.

Did your relationship with your parents change during this time? We were always really close.

Adulthood: Further Education

Did you get any post-secondary education (college or university)? Yes, I went

to nursing school at St. Joseph's Hospital in London. It was a three-year course. For the last year, we were on the hospital floors all the time. We got lots of experience and they paid us.

Which school(s) did you go to? Why did you decide to go to that school? St. Joseph's Hospital Nursing School was close and it was Catholic. My dad was sick with cancer and I wanted to be close to home. He died while I was in nursing school. I took further courses at Windsor University, again, because it was so close.

Did you have student debt? No, I did not.

After you graduated, did you get a job in your preferred field? How long did it take to find employment? Yes, I got a job right away at St. Joseph's Hospital. After Mom remarried, I came back to St. Joseph's in Sarnia to be near my sisters.

Formation of Significant Relationships

How did you meet your spouse? I met Pieter at Guildwood Inn in Sarnia which was a bar and dance hall. He asked me to dance and that was that. He was really good looking, a tall, thin man. After our second date he told me he was separated, which you can imagine was a problem. But things worked out for us and we have been happily married for 50 years. I was supported by my mother in the decision.

What attracted you to him? We was kind, very handsome, and honest.

Why did you decide to marry? I married him because I loved him. We tried the Marriage Tribunal but it was very invasive. He always supported me in my Catholic faith and everything I did in the church. When we were able to get married in the Church, we had our marriage blessed.

What was the most difficult thing about married life? What was the most satisfying? Everything about married life is good. We deal with things together and support each other. Raising a family together was very satisfying.

Employment

Who earned the money to support your household? We both earned money. I worked as a nurse, Pieter as a stationary engineer at Ontario Hydro.

What was difficult about your job? What did you like about it? The scheduling was difficult, shift work. I did not like missing special occasions because of it.

How many children do you have if any? I have two children, one girl and one boy.

What were they like when they were young? My son was very chatty. The rest of us were not good until after breakfast and coffee!

What activities did your family do together? We went on trips, to lodges. There were baseball and soccer games for the kids.

What family traditions did you have? Usually we get together for holidays and special occasions.

What values did you try to raise your children with? We raised them to be honest and kind.

What forms of discipline did you use and why? We mostly used grounding.

Church, Political and Other Involvement

Did you belong to a church? As an adult, I belonged to St. Benedict's in Sarnia.

What kind of church-related activities have you been involved with? What was it like? Did you enjoy it? As a member of St. Benedict's CWL, I was President twice, Spiritual Convener, Education/Health, bazaar and raffle convener. Lector at church, Eucharistic Minister, and usher during COVID. I have been Secular Franciscans Formation Director, Interim Minister (like the president), Cursillo, on my Cursillo weekend; loved/love all of it. My mom's name was on the songbook. I convened the World Days of Prayer in 2019 and 2020.

Extracurricular Activities

Have you ever traveled? Did you travel often? We traveled a lot, on cruises to Alaska, the Caribbean, a European river cruise. I have been to every province except Newfoundland.

What was your favorite place that you visited? What was the happiest/funniest/saddest memory from that trip? All "great" memories!

What is one of your biggest accomplishments in life and/or something you are most proud of doing? I am most proud of my children and grandchildren. My grandchildren are the "light of my life". I am very proud of how I have grown in my faith journey. I am very proud of a marriage that has lasted 50 years.

CWL Questions

When did you start taking part in Church activities? I started as a child to help Mom with the bazaar at St. Peter's in Sarnia.

Were your parents involved in the church? My parents were very involved in the church and I have carried on that tradition.

Were there any events or fundraisers that were most memorable to you? All the bazaars were memorable. It was wonderful to be on the planning committee for St. Benedict's Church and St. Benedict's CWL 50th Anniversary.

When did you join the CWL? 1976 is when I joined.

How has the CWL effected your life? Relationships? Faith? The women have become my friends, they have supported me during difficult times and I hope to have been a support for them.

Which parish were/are you a part of? I was part of St. Joseph's in Crunna from 1976 to 1986, then I joined St. Benedict's in Sarnia.

Did you have a specific role in the CWL? If so what was your role? In the CWL, I started off at St. Benedict's as a member, then part of the executive, then President, Past President, Spiritual Convener, Education/Health Convener, Bazaar Convener. At Sarnia Regional Committee, I was Chairperson, Secretary, and Convention Convener in 2016. At the London Diocesan Council, I was Spiritual Convener, Recording Secretary, and First Vice Resolutions Chair.

Why did you join the CWL? I joined St. Benedict's CWL because I was new to the parish and I wanted to meet other women. I also had the example of my mother. St. Benedict's was one of the parishes in which she was very active. In fact, she was the second President of St. Benedict's CWL after it received its chart in 1959 and some of the older women had been my mother's friends. I have a picture of my mom serving tea at a church celebration. Two of those members in the picture are still members today. Great memories!

“Having the opportunity to interview two members of my CWL council was an absolute privilege for me. It was so heartwarming to hear their stories. One lady is 103 years young and the other 92. The stories were so inspiring as both ladies have lived life well. It was such an honour to be invited into their homes, especially as we were still dealing with COVID restrictions. I consider myself to be truly blessed to have had this experience.”

Nelly Kelders, CWL Regional Chair,
St. Michael's CWL, Bright's Grove, Ontario