

Memories of St. Ann's Orphanage

By Doris Roy Michaud

Introduction

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I haven't been back to St Ann's since I graduated 8th grade in 1956. I would speak about it on occasion with family and friends but have not thought about it in a long time.

What made me think about it now? I was watching TV, and something made think about looking on the internet for info about St. Ann's, and guess what? I saw the book about, "The Ghost of St. Ann's Past. "So, I would like to share my experiences for the years of 1954, 1955 & 1956.

I was at St. Ann's Orphanage because my mom and dad separated. My mom had to move back to Waterbury, Connecticut to live with her mother. My 3 brothers and I were not able to live with them. My dad stayed in Portland Maine. There was a family that my mother knew in Waterbury named Gagnon whose boys also went to St. Ann's Orphanage so that is how she knew about it. Mr. Gagnon was kind in bringing my mom to see me and my brother Arthur when he visited his sons.

Staircase:

As I am reading the book "The Ghosts of St. Ann's Past", on page 11, 1st paragraph I could visualize the entry door and the staircase going up two floors. When we would walk up the stairs, we stayed to the right against the wall. When coming down we stayed by the banister. To this day, that is still how I want to flow with the traffic. As I think about the staircase, I have had reoccurring dreams about a beautiful, large staircase. I wonder if it is connected.

Duties:

I was considered an "Older Girl", and as such, my duties were to help in the laundry room, sort the eggs for packaging at the farm (pg. 29) and what I was most proud of was, to clean the quarters for Farther Alfred. These were my basic chores. When there were fund raisers such as Bingo, I would also help there.

I am trying hard to remember the Sister's name that I worked with. She oversaw maintenance and the children were afraid of her because she looked so stern. But she was my idol and so good to me. Maybe, because I was a hard worker and still am.

Mealtime:

The one thing I remember, is a donut pudding that was made when there were leftovers. Till this day, I still talk about it whenever someone makes bread pudding. The plain cake donut is still my favorite. After the children were done eating, they would bring their dishes to the counter at the front of the room and the Big Girls would wash them in a dish pan, and then they would bring them back to the table to their place. **(I hope I remember this correctly).**

Punishments:

I recall a couple of times when I thought I was in big trouble. Once was in the winter when a couple of us kids wanted to slide down the hill in a toboggin. There were a lot of ruts and we hit headfirst, and someone got hurt. I was the "big girl" in charge. Another time I was on the swings and someone was fooling around by letting a swing go back and forth behind my back, it hit me and knocked me off. For these two instances I don't remember if I got punished. The most memorable time is when I was practicing for a play of Snow White with Leona Beauregard. She and I were best friends, she was playing Snow White, and I was Prince Charming. We got into a disagreement and I told her, (with an attitude) I wasn't going to do the play. She told Sister Labossierer so, then I was taken out of it and couldn't do any more shows. (LOL)

So, the worst punishment! Being sent to Sister (I wish I remembered her name) who was so beautiful and kind that when children were sent to her for discipline, left in tears for having disappointed her.

Bedtime:

Where I slept was in the last row near the windows and because of that our beds were made head to foot under the bed spread for sleeping. Then on top of the spread the pillow was at the head of the bed. Reason being, for the cold near the windows.

Falling asleep wasn't difficult for me, because the Sisters said the Rosery every night and I would fall asleep responding.

Holidays:

I do not recall spending Christmas at St. Ann's. Maybe my brother Arthur and I went home to Connecticut for them. But I do remember, on my birthday, that I received some paint by number oil paintings and a **special** paint brush from Sister Labossierer. Also, a rosery that I still have. Even though that was just a small gift, I am sure she knew how much I valued it. I continued to do paintings until 1972, and every time I used that paint brush, I thought of St. Ann's.

I thank God for sending me there! (pg. 82)

Families: (PG. 102)

I was very fortunate to have a wonderful Beauregard family to visit with in Worcester. My friend Leona would bring my brother Arthur and I to stay with them on occasion. Mr. Beauregard work at a bakery and I remember him making the most delicious apple pie. They also were the most talented and played different instruments as well as singing and dancing. Leona was a star in a lot of the shows we would perform for the community. She and I remained friends after we left St Ann's for a few years, but I lost touch and I do miss her. She was one of my only true friends in life.

Dancing around the Pole: (Pg.131)

I remember the ceremony at the Grotto for Our Lady of Lourdes. We were so excited, and I see in the picture (Pg. 132) that some of the Older Girls were wearing their uniforms as a Child of Mary. I was a Child of Mary and do remember wearing a blue sash with a medal. I do not recall what the idea for the sash meant, but we wore it for any Religious activity. I did not see any mention of it in the book, and if I remember correctly not every Girl was one. **I think we had to earn that privilege.**

Smile: By Nat King Cole, (Pg.123)

One of the songs in my lifetime that I would recall, and not knowing why until I read the book.

Being French: (Pg. 106)

My parents were both Born in Canada. My Dad was sent to Maine and my Mom's family moved to Waterbury CT. I was a French speaking child until I went to school in Portland Maine. Therein I learnt English and eventually began to speak only English. So, when I went to St. Anns the Sisters expected me to say my prayers in French. I will never forget, when I had to recite the Act of Contrition, Sister Labossierer was so upset with me that I didn't know it in French. I do not recall exactly what happened, but I might have had to learn it in French. I think because I went to Catholic schools as a child I knew what the Sisters expected and knew how to behave. That might be why I feel that my time at the Orphanage was not so unhappy? And maybe being older when I arrived there also.

Showers (PG.104)

It may seem strange to take a shower with a garment on, but with a group of children bathing, at the same time, it was the coolest thing. The Sisters instilled in us a sense of respect, which is missing in this day! Because of that experience I always dress in proper clothing.

Side by Side: (Pg. 137)

My brother, Arthur Roy. I think he was 6 years old in 1954. There are various photos of him (Pg.139) in the book and throughout the Face Book Story. I am certain that he was there with Joe and his sister Rosalie. It is so wonderful to have these pictures of him, because he is no longer with us and I miss him dearly!

Summertime (Pg. 142)

For me it was very enjoyable because, I was not able to go home for the summer as most of the other children. In the summer it was a more relaxed time for the Sisters and children, with a smaller group. I was a "Big Girl", so I could go to basketball games at Assumption Collage and Holly Cross Collage. There we were introduced to Mr. Bob Cousy of the Boston Celtics. When I went to Leona's house, we went roller skating and dances. I recall at least one time going to a big Amusement park. Also playing soft ball, games and picnicking across the street in the field, playing Jacks on the back porches (I forgot about that until I read the book). Walking to the little store where I bought my favorite candy bars, Babe Ruth or Heath bars.

It's Time to Say Good Night: (Pg. 167)

Thinking of it now, I can hear the TV show The Twilight Zone (Pg.138). Also, Sister Labossierer would let the Older Girls stay up to watch Bishop Sheen in the recreation room. We were not allowed to make a sound when he was speaking, He was so memorizing!

I graduated 8th grade from Ascension Grammar school in 1956. There are pictures of graduates of other years at the Bishops house, but the one of my year is missing. I have one, but only at the school. Bishop Wright would have the graduates come over to his residence, having dinner, and a gift of \$25 in a bank book.

But for me, the most gratifying was a corsage of Gardenias, which has been my favorite flower ever since.

I am so grateful for the book, "The Ghosts of St. Ann's Past;". It gave me the opportunity to recall my time there and to share with my sons and their families some of my experiences in life.