

Trabing

Mostly about People

By Wally Trabing



Sister Brigid

She wears a plain gold "wedding" band on her hand, one of a number of reminders that she has vowed to devote her life to poverty.

A life of total giving without expecting a whit of material gain.

Sister Brigid, since late 1959, has been administrator of Sisters hospital, a position which pays normally between \$16,000 and \$18,000 a year.

She receives, like her nine other sisters at the two Dominican hospitals in Santa Cruz, food, shelter, clothing. Any trinkets that may come their way by grateful patients are shared among the sisters.

The three active sisters at Sisters hospital represent more than \$22,000 that is not figured on the non-profit budget.

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Now, the sisters who operate the two hospitals have embarked on a campaign to build a \$5-million hospital to replace the present outdated institutions.

Amid the feverish money-game surroundings, they are saying that people will also give. Give enough to build the hospital. And now they, and their lay helpers, are working on the first million.

The ultra modern, proposed 150-bed hospital will make money only to support itself.

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The sisters will serve in the hospital 24 hours a day—using out their lives for the love of lessening the suffering of those using the hospital—those meaning green, blue, black, yellow, red, mauve, brown, white, grey and bronze people—those who believe in God—those who believe in green apples. Meaning anyone.

How did Sister Brigid become what she is today?

She was Chicago-born—Mary Alice McDonald, sort of a Tom boy who could whack a ball like her two brothers. Her father—a construction engineer.

She graduated from Siena Heights Catholic college in Adrian, Mich., with a BS in social work and a teacher's credential and worked a year in a Chicago juvenile home.

Then, she made a decision inspired by a deep admiration for the sisters who educated her in college. In 1946, when she was 21, she entered a convent, and a year later took the vows of poverty.

With that vow went her name. She was allowed to choose another and became Brigid after a grandmother.

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From 1947 to 1953 she taught in the All Saints Elementary school in Hayward. In the summers she would travel to Santa Cruz to work at the Sisters or Santa Cruz hospitals. Vacation.

Ministering to the sick and wounded became a rewarding satisfaction to Sister Brigid.

She applied for and entered nursing college at the Catholic university in Washington, D.C., and in three years graduated with honors as a registered nurse.

For the next three years she was assigned to the Barry college in Miami, teaching nursing arts.

Then, in 1959 she was sent to Sisters hospital where, after serving as a floor superintendent for a period, she became administrator.

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Sister Brigid is a pleasure. A plumpish form, hidden inside an



Sister Brigid

angular habit, her college cheer-girl face squared by the spotless head piece. Despite her size the largest part of her is her smile.

The sisters live in the hospital and in their habits ("our jeans"); and their days go something like this:

Rise at 5:10 a.m. (6:30 on Saturdays and Sundays), chant their office together, attend mass and spend a half-hour at silent meditation.

Breakfast at 7 a.m. after which the wheels of the day start turning in the 63-employee hospital. Come noon, the sisters meet for dinner, followed by a rosary chapel and prayer and then back to work.

At 5 p.m. comes supper, chapel and night prayer, and at 7 p.m. a bit of recreation—knitting, reading, watching TV.

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By 9 p.m. they start drifting off to bed, but perchance not to dream, for they are on duty 24 hours and there are the restless sick; new cases that come in the night; or perhaps an injured, cursing, sloppy drunk to put to mend. Then comes 5:10 a.m. again.

Seldom do the sisters get to travel about for recreation like you and I.

There are 2500 sisters in the Dominican Order from Adrian and only 19 of these are nurses, most of these in Santa Cruz.

For almost a quarter of a century the Dominican Sisters have, for the love of God and His people, given outstanding medical service to thousands and thousands in this area.

What they are asking for now is a better hospital with a wider variety of life-saving facilities—for you.

They ask nothing except monetary help for yourself.