

Sketches of My Life
Sister Teresa Costello

Sister of Providence

St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana



Family Roots

My parents rode their bicycles to meet each other at the end of the road and together rode on to church to get married.

My mother was from Kilconell, a small rural village in County Galway, Ireland. My father was from Liscuib, East County Galway, Ireland.

I was born in Liscuib, East County Galway, Ireland. There were ten children in my family. They are wonderful siblings for whom I have always had warm and close feelings.







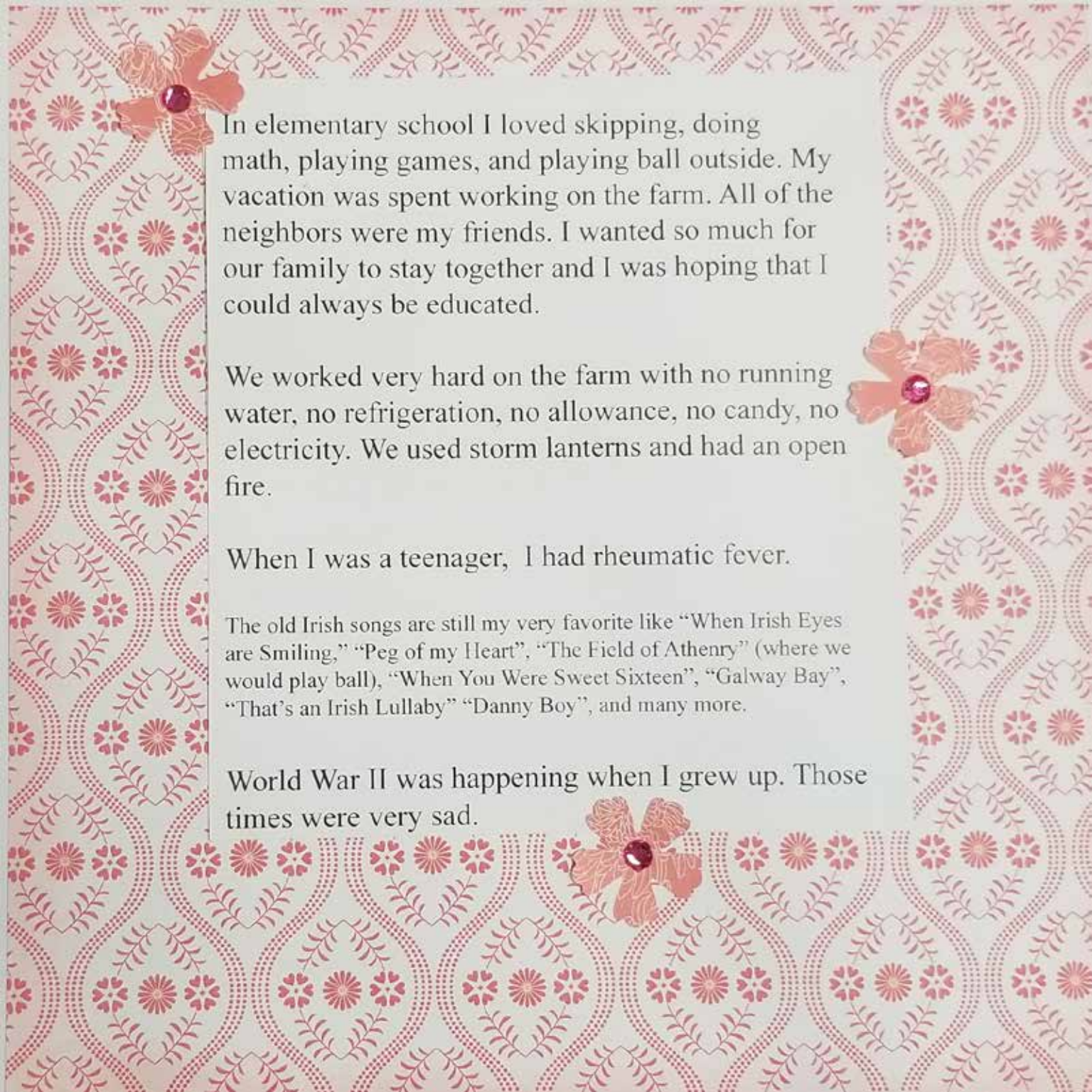
Growing Up

My given name is Theresa Magdalene. (I had difficulty printing the “h” so my older brother changed my name to Teresa without an “h”). One of my favorite memories was when my mother would give what little she could to the “tinkers” as they came begging for flour and eggs.

The Travellers (until recently also called “tinkers” or “gypsies”) often live in ad hoc encampments, in direct contrast to “settled” people in Ireland. They are thought to be descended from a group of nomadic craftsman, with the name “tinker” a reference to the sound of a hammer hitting an anvil.



I was always asking rhetorical questions to my mother. My father would be working in the fields and I would sneak out of the house (to give her a break from me) when I was 3-5 and meet him at the headland where he would cover me with his coat and we would lay looking at the stars. Later when he went to be a US navy man, he told me that even though he was gone, we were looking at God’s same wonderful sky.



In elementary school I loved skipping, doing math, playing games, and playing ball outside. My vacation was spent working on the farm. All of the neighbors were my friends. I wanted so much for our family to stay together and I was hoping that I could always be educated.

We worked very hard on the farm with no running water, no refrigeration, no allowance, no candy, no electricity. We used storm lanterns and had an open fire.

When I was a teenager, I had rheumatic fever.

The old Irish songs are still my very favorite like "When Irish Eyes are Smiling," "Peg of my Heart", "The Field of Athenry" (where we would play ball), "When You Were Sweet Sixteen", "Galway Bay", "That's an Irish Lullaby" "Danny Boy", and many more.

World War II was happening when I grew up. Those times were very sad.

Significant Events

The most important event in my life was my trip to New York City from Ireland when I was 14. The only education available was through 8th. grade. I came by myself and was supposed to land in Boston but somehow I landed in New York City. The first Black person I ever saw helped me use the telephone since we did not have one in Ireland.

I got my first job at Jordan Marsh in Boston.

When I realized I wanted to be a religious sister, I decided on the Sisters of Providence in Indiana. On the long train there, I met Sister Carolyn Glynn who was just joining the Sisters as well. She is still my trusted close friend.

I also trust Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp, Providence Associate, Sheila Donis and my sister, Nancy Townley.

I was so happy to come to the Woods and prepare to be a Sister of Providence. Some of my friends found the living hard but, for me, it was not harsh but quite wonderful.

Taking my first and final vows were memorable times for me.

My sister, Agnes, was in community for some time as well. She continues to be a wonderful friend of mine.

Over my life the loss of my grandparents and parents were quite difficult and these days losing friends brings sorrow coupled with wonderful memories.



Missions and Ministries

Sister Maria Garrity was my sponsor as I entered community. Some of my band members were Sister Carolyn Glynn, Sister Elaine Doucette, Sister Helen Vinton, and Sister Loretto O'Keefe.

My missions included:

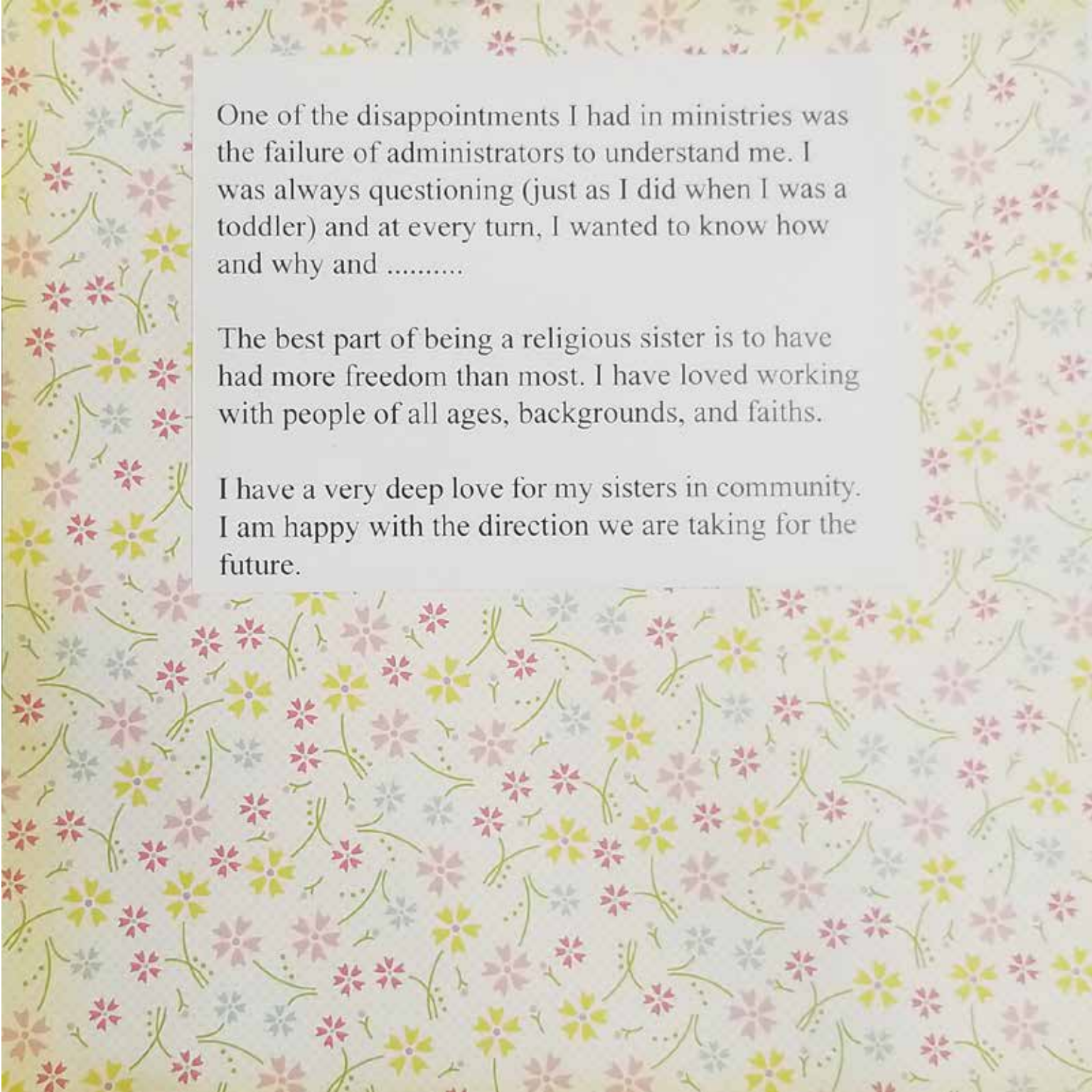
- Teaching

- Divorced Ministry

- Public Housing Management

- Teaching English to Hispanic Families

- Working with the Elderly and Disabled



One of the disappointments I had in ministries was the failure of administrators to understand me. I was always questioning (just as I did when I was a toddler) and at every turn, I wanted to know how and why and

The best part of being a religious sister is to have had more freedom than most. I have loved working with people of all ages, backgrounds, and faiths.

I have a very deep love for my sisters in community. I am happy with the direction we are taking for the future.

Coming Home/Retirement

When I came home to retire, I was 80 years old and found it difficult to leave my ministry with the Hispanic population in Florida. I really miss working with the public.

My health has been fairly good (except for a devastating car accident) until recently when I've been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Although there are difficulties, I have not let it get me down. In fact, I regularly go to Kick Boxing in Terre Haute. It really helps my balance.

The joys of coming home are the freedom to do what I want and what I need to do.

My regular visits to the health care residents include sharing conversation and offering shoulder and hand massage. I tell the sisters that our ministry now is to each other. They rather like that idea.



I have been enjoying water color, massage, reading,
and discussing especially with the Providence
Associate Circle group *and the monthly
Burdgeff Retreat.*

Some of my new friends are Sister Joni Luna,
Sister Suzanne Smith, Sister Kathleen Dede,
Sister Maureen Ann, Sharon Woods, Sister Jeanne
Hagelskamp, Sister Barbara Bluntzer, Sister
Florence Norton, Sister Dorothy Ellen Wolsiffer,
Sister Dawn Tomaszewski and Sheila Donis.

I am grateful to the nursing staff here at the Woods.





Life Lessons

My encouragement to young people is to: be happy, make good choices, and develop a sense of humor.

I was happy to receive a doctorate degree at the age of 60.

I encourage sisters to minister to each other and enjoy each others' company.

I feel closest to God when I awaken in the morning.

Even though I cannot speak Spanish, the people told me that I communicate with the heart.

My message to the world is that some day we will all be one global community.

My favorite prayer is the "Memorare."

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions; but in your mercy,
hear and answer me. Amen.





Young people who are ready to reach out in friendship (like Sister Joni Luna's teen ministry) give me great joy and hope.

When I have struggles, I put them in a box with a lid on top; perhaps one day I will get to them.

The qualities in a best friend are loyalty, humor, honesty, and a listening and loving heart.

My reflections of prayer and spirituality:
I am fully aware of God's presence in me and others.

My words of wisdom are to be just, honest, loyal, kind, and stay open to life and the unfolding suggestions.



THE USS COVINGTON

On the early morning of July 1, 1918 the USS Covington was enroute in a U.S. Navy convoy of eight transports, escorted by seven destroyers, westward across the ocean southward from Brest, France, 43° 24' N, 17° 44' W. Some dark in the United States after heavy rainclouds from ships for fighting on the Western Front. The war was over with great intensity and at once were playing with tactical positions and were prepared for a possible attack on the coast of America. The most notable of these was at 11:15 PM, when a torpedo struck the 12th transport against the port side of the Covington. The explosion, followed by several minutes later, split the ship's forward hull down. The Covington sank the following day.



Thomas Covington, 1918

