

Lavina Hunter Remembers

The Lord . . . took care of everything. All I did was live my best and try to get along with people. And mostly everyone was good to me.

Philadelphia [RNS] — Mrs. Lavina Hunter, a 112-year-old black Catholic in Germantown, reminisced on her birthday about her long and varied life — a life which saw her care for 17 foster children.

She was born to bonded sharecropper parents on a farm near Bowie in Maryland, Feb. 8, 1862, and baptized "Louisa" in the Catholic church of the Assumption. However, one of the priests began calling her "Lavina," and the name stuck.

According to Social Security records, Mrs. Hunter is now the oldest living resident in Pennsylvania, and possibly the United States.

"The Lord deserves the credit, not me," Lavina Hunter said in response to the flurry of attention on her recent birthday.

"He took care of everything. All I did was live my best and try to get along with people. And mostly everyone was good to me."

Sacred Heart Manor in Germantown, where she now lives, sponsored a birthday party for Mrs. Hunter on Feb. 8. A Mass of thanksgiving was followed by a dinner. Guests included her 76-year-old son Wilbur, a foster child John Lucas, and several of her nine grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Lavina Hunter has scattered memories of her early childhood: being frightened by Indians, growing tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes and sweet potatoes on the farm; looking after the livestock ("you had to drive the sheep where you wanted them to go; the cows knew where to go.")

She recalls "pumping" water and carrying it in wooden buckets, "one on my head and one in each hand," to big wooden tubs where the laundry was done. She recalls chopping wood for the kitchen fireplace.

Girls of that era played with dolls made of tree branches and bits of cloth or corn husks. Later, she attended parties where she did the waltz, the "straight dance" and "other nice dances I can't remember the names of."

Lavina Hunter met and married her husband William in Maryland. They had two sons, but one died at the age of three. The Hunters moved to Philadelphia in 1897 and Mrs. Hunter found a job as a cook. She gained a reputation for her delicious sweet potato pie and apple dumplings.

In addition to raising their own son, Wilbur, the Hunters took care of 17 foster children.

This was "mostly during the hard times, when you didn't get any money for taking care of the kids," Mrs. Hunter recalled. "I guess the Lord just provided."

Mrs. Hunter reportedly made medical history when she was 109, by surviving an operation to mend a broken hip. However, maintaining her own home became too strenuous for her, and she became a resident of Sacred Heart Manor.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Some weeks ago, prior to her ninth birthday, our eldest daughter wrote two identical plaintive notes.

The contents:

Dear Grandma: Mommy says I can't have a kids' birthday party this year. My friends' grandmas all live in our town and they always come for their birthdays. I've never had a grandma come to my birthday. Will you come?

Love,

One grandma came a day early and stayed two days. Another grandma came a day late and stayed a week.

The first grandma who has access to a store and car came with the trunk filled with two boxes of treats including the usual bananas, oranges, soft drinks and potato chips plus such delicacies as peanut butter donuts, popping corn, six kinds of candy and two boxes of sugar-coated cereals.

Grandma Number Two traveled by bus and couldn't carry as much. The day after she arrived she asked me to take her to a store to buy an anniversary.

NEW ARCHBISHOP

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul has named Archbishop Jaime L. Sin of Jaro, Sant Elisabetha the Philippines, as Archbishop of Manila. Archbishop Sin, 46, succeeds Cardinal Rufino Santos, who died Sept. 3, 1973.

GAELIC MASS

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — An Irish-language Mass, including Gaelic music by the late Sean O'Riada, will be celebrated at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception here, March 16, under the sponsorship of the Irish American Cultural Institute (IACI).

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card for another son and daughter-in-law.

I went on my own errand and met her back at the car. She had taken the birthday girl and her cousin with her and the two of them were weighted down with two huge grocery bags which held more oranges, chocolate pudding, chocolate ice cream (guess who likes chocolate), pineapple breakfast buns, four kinds of candy, frozen waffles, soft drinks, etc., etc.

Without consulting, both grandmothers obviously were mysteriously given to understand that we feed our children nothing but mush and milk three times a day.

I said nothing. After all, grandmas and great-grandmas are precious creatures.

Who else makes bunny shapes when regular pancakes would do?

Who else would travel round trips totaling 1,000 miles just for a birthday?

Who else makes room in a warm, snug bed for a 4-year-old night hawk?

Who else will play parcheesi, monopoly and bingo ad infinitum?

Who else gives out green valentines with pictures of George Washington on them?

Who else will hold three kids at one time on one scanty lap?

Who else sews on buttons that have been dangling for months?

Who else likes kisses so sticky they stick?

Who else — but grandmas!

Mt. Morris to Close School

Mt. Morris — St. Patrick's School, a fixture in this area for 63 years, will be closed in June.

The parish council made this decision last week on the basis of a parish survey. Of about 500 questionnaires distributed, 230 were returned, with an indication that 150 favored discontinuing the school. Father Robert Kanka reported. The school has 95 pupils this year in kindergarten

through sixth grade, 78 of them village residents.

The pastor said the cost of operating the school this year would amount to \$64,000, approximately \$1,000 per month more than revenues received. The parish has had to borrow \$1,000 and will need to borrow again to continue the school through June, he said. Enrollment 10 years ago was 229, he added.

He explained that the crucial question in the survey dealt with increasing Sunday contributions. Pledges of increases totaled \$86 weekly, against a need for \$300, he said.

The council voted to study the feasibility of hiring a fulltime religious education coordinator next year.

Cenacle Lists Events

A calendar of spiritual events has recently been released by the Cenacle.

Activities slated at fixed times include: Eucharistic Guild, second Thursday of the month at 9 a.m.; St. Raphael's Guild, second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.; Alcoholics Anonymous, Monday afternoons and Tuesday evenings; Eastman School of Music, Latin Mass, March 3 and April 28 at 4 p.m.; days of recollection, 9:30 a.m. — 3:30 p.m., evenings of recollection, 6 — 9:30 p.m. with supper, or 7 — 10 p.m., with supper; twilight recollection, 4:30 — 8:30 p.m. or by appointment.

Other events include: private retreats, usually conducted on weekdays, privately directed; anotation retreats; sisters' retreats and days of recollection; days of recollection and retreats for high school and college students; days of recollection for confirmation groups; days of recollection and retreats for CCD groups and parish council groups.

BLUE ARMY VIGIL

Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty will celebrate and preach at the opening Mass for an all night vigil of prayer Friday, March 1, at 9 p.m. at Holy Rosary Church. The vigil is sponsored by the Blue Army of our Lady of Fatima.

Further activities on the schedule are: Pentecostal retreats, an annual three-day Labor Day retreat, a mid-August five-day retreat, two Cursillos a year, and retreats and days of recollection for ecumenical and protestant groups.

For further information on any of the Cenacle activities, call (716) 271-8755.

Lenten Retreats at the cenacle have been scheduled as follows: March 1-3, Sisters' Retreat, conducted by Father Edward Martin, CM; March 8-10, General Retreat, conducted by Father Bernard Kellogg; March 29-31, General Retreat, conducted by Father Louis Hohman; April 5-7, Palm Sunday Retreat, conducted by a team of Cenacle Sisters.

Also slated is a Workshop on the Modern Church, conducted by a team of Cenacle Sisters, March 15-17.

LENTEN REGULATIONS

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence from meat. All Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence.

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