

SENIOR
FEATURE

Birthday wish fulfilled for 103-year-old

By Elizabeth Johnson
Catholic News Service

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. — Edith Vanderhoof isn't quite sure to what she owes her longevity, but her wish for her 103rd birthday was clear.

"All I wanted for my birthday was to have Mass," Vanderhoof told the *Northwest Indiana Catholic*, newspaper of the Diocese of Gary.

Father Joseph Murphy, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Hammond, celebrated Mass on her Aug. 6 birthday at the Merrillville nursing home where she has lived since April.

Born on a farm outside Springfield, Ill., in 1891, Vanderhoof was one of 12 children. Her family moved to Hammond when she was 16, at a time when the city had wooden sidewalks and cob-

blestone streets. She saw her first automobile there and had her first job at a local department store, earning \$5 a week as a sales clerk.

Baptized as a Methodist, she married a Catholic, Frank Vanderhoof, in 1913. With the encouragement of her mother-in-law and the help of a parish priest, she became a Catholic herself 14 years after her marriage. Her own parents and two siblings also eventually joined the church.

A widow since 1954, Vanderhoof retired from keeping books for a family business 37 years ago. Until she was injured in a fall in April, she lived on her own or with family members.

Although she abandoned the wheelchair she needed immediately after her fall, Vanderhoof still has trouble getting around easily and uses a walker.

At the nursing home, Vanderhoof spends much of her time praying and keeping up with the news.

"I love to know what's happening in the world," she said. "That's what keeps me going."

Vanderhoof isn't quite sure why she has lived so long; none of her relatives lived into their 100s and she has outlived most of her family.

"I never felt old until I was 80," she said. "Then, after I got to be 100, I thought every year would be my last."

Even the Social Security Administration has had a little trouble believing her age. The year she turned 100 she got a call from an employee at the federal agency.

"I believe he thought I had died and someone was taking my check," she said. "I don't think he really believed I could still be alive at 100."

Two bus trips offered through senior center

ROCHESTER — Garson Meyer Senior Center, a division of the Regional Council on Aging, is sponsoring two fall bus trips.

An excursion to the Grand Candlelight Dinner Theater in Milton, Pa., is planned for Wednesday, Sept. 21. The trip will include a visit to a gallery of Norman Rockwell paintings, sit-down lunch and a viewing of the play *Driving Miss Daisy*. Cost is \$46.

On Saturday, Oct. 8, a foliage trip will take place in the Finger Lakes region. Activities will include shopping at Windmill Farm Market, which specializes in Amish and Mennonite goods; a visit to the Glenora Winery on Seneca Lake, and a tour of the Fullgar Farms and Ingersoll Museum. The trip will end with a dinner at Belhurst Castle on Seneca Lake. Cost is \$43.

Senior citizens over the age of 60 are invited to mail their registrations to the Regional Council on Aging, 79 Clinton Ave. N., Rochester, 14604-1471. Registration days will also be held at this address Aug. 11 and Sept. 6-8 from 10 a.m. to noon.

For further details, call 716/454-3224, ext. 102.

St. Ann's Home slates health fair for seniors

ROCHESTER — St. Ann's Home, 1500 Portland Ave., will host its health fair on Thursday, Sept. 22, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

This year's fair features 35 booths offering health information and screenings for seniors. The event will also feature seminars and refreshments. Participants are also encouraged to bring their medications for free evaluations.

Call 716/342-1700, ext. 427 for information.

Louisiana man credits God for passing milestone

By Lawrence Chatagnier
Catholic News Service

THIBODAUX, La. — Oliver Robichaux of Thibodaux is a happy man.

Crediting his Catholic faith for his longevity, Robichaux said he reached his 100th birthday recently because God answered his prayers.

"I asked the Lord to let me live to be 100. I asked him to allow me to live long enough to be able to straighten out my bookkeeping affairs," he told *The Bayou Catholic*, newspaper of the Houma-Thibodaux diocese. "With religion you have something to live for. It gives you something to hang on to."

For him, talking to God is like talking to his father. "During times of temptation, talk to God, tell him you are troubled, and he will help you," Robichaux said, adding, "Remember when he helps you to thank him."

Born in Thibodaux Aug. 14, 1894, he was the second of six children born

to Joseph and Marie Robichaux. His father was the building contractor for the St. Joseph Co-Cathedral in Thibodaux, where Robichaux is a parishioner.

He was deferred from the draft for World War I because of health reasons, but at 25 he went to work in Washington decoding and encoding messages for the State, War and Navy departments.

Later back in Thibodaux, he went into newspapering with his new wife, the former Mabel Taylor. When his wife's father wanted to sell *The Lafourche Comet* weekly newspaper and had no takers the couple bought it.

Robichaux was publisher of the paper for 24 years, having learned journalism from his wife, who had worked for her father. His wife died at age 93 in 1988.

Now in a nursing home, Robichaux still is a correspondent of sorts, using a manual typewriter he bought before

1930. Until recently he would regularly correspond with U.S. Sen. Bennett Johnston and U.S. Rep. Bill Tauzin, both Louisiana Democrats, giving them his views on various political issues. And he keeps track of his own finances.

Reflecting on how the world has changed in his 100 years, Robichaux remembers how when he was a school boy, people traveled on foot or by horse and carriage. Streets were dirt and sidewalks made of wooden planks.

Besides having a different style of transportation people had "a different style of living," he noted. He'd probably advise people to slow down.

"People used to think before doing. Today people do before they think," he said. "It seems that today people are in a hurry. Especially in the cities. People are hurrying from here to there, hurrying to eat, hurrying to work, hurrying to play golf ... Today's world is a nerve-racking rush."

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If you would like more information about joining our community or would like to schedule an appointment and tour, please call 342-1700.

St. Ann's Home, The Heritage and Home Connection
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