

Jeneanne Niggemeier

Jeneanne Niggemeier attended both Saint Peter Grade School and Saint Peter High School, where she graduated in 1955. Her husband, Joe, also attended both schools and graduated in 1952. She and Joe were married for 56 years until he passed away on December 23, 2015.

Memories of Ancestors and Relatives

She and Joe both had great great grandparents and grandparents that were married at Saint Peter. Her grandparents, Joe and Josephine Ohrmann, were married in 1893. Her grandmother wore a typical wedding outfit with the straight dress, big hat, and nice white buckled shoes.

Joe's parents were Celeste and Doris, and he had two sisters. Jeneanne's parents were Harry and Theresa Ohrman. (See World War II section as to why the spelling is different.) Her mom and dad, their six children, and Jeneanne's grandma and uncle all lived in the same house. Her grandfather had passed away when her dad was 17, leaving her grandmother and four children at home.

Jeneanne's youngest brother, Jimmy, had Down's. Jeneanne described Jimmy as the "glue that held the family together". He started at Saint Peter Grade School but then after a year he went to a school for special needs students, Saint Mary's. This school was started by Father Behrman's brother, also Father Behrman. Monsignor Hampe continued it. Jimmy boarded there for three years and came home every weekend. He made his First Communion and Confirmation. He loved going there. He then worked at Boone's Center, a work place for people with developmental disabilities. Jeneanne's parents started Boone's Center, which was near A&W. Jimmy made candles. He passed away in 1953.

Jeneanne has memories from her dad and uncle, who were both in the Young Men's Drama Club. It met in the school basement where there were two bowling alleys. Her dad bowled twice per week. The Young Men's Drama Club eventually added girls because there weren't many plays just for boys. Different priests led the drama club for many years. Father Christian Winkelmann was the spiritual director for 15 years. In 1922, members showed appreciation by giving him a new Model T.

Jeneanne's dad did much volunteer work. He was in charge of the 100th anniversary pageant. Jeneanne has the 25th, 50th, and 100th anniversary books. Her dad was one of the original men to go on the

White House Retreat. It was on Labor Day weekend then. She also has the Drama Club programs from 1926-1956.

Unfortunately, three parishioners passed away in World War I. They were Edward Amsinger, Oliver Aloysius Buse, and Stephen Hembrook.

World War II

She wasn't in school yet, but she remembers World War II. Jeneanne remembers how fearful and scared everyone was on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941. Her family would sit by the big radio and listen to Fireside Chats by FDR (President Franklin Delano Roosevelt). There was no TV. At that time, people also got news at the movie theater. Before the start of a movie, there would be a newsreel.

The United States was desperate for soldiers. Even though her uncle was older, he trained at Jefferson Barracks. Her family had a flag in the window with a star indicating that a soldier lived there.

People were sometimes fearful of people with German heritage that lived in the United States. The name "Ohrman" used to be spelled "Ohrmann". The second "n" was dropped to be less German. Other people did the same with their names.

Jeneanne remembers rationing during World War II. Each child received a book that they filled up with stamps they purchased. Rationing books were issued semiannually or annually and were based upon the number of people that lived in the house. Shoes required one or two stamps. If no stamps were available for shoes, they put cardboard from cereal boxes in their shoes. She remembers that food, shoes, tires, gas, butter, and sugar were rationed.

Her dad worked as a mailman for six days a week. He received extra rations for gas and tires because of being a mailman. He had a rural route in Orchard Farm, Portage, and Boschert. Some people on the route would give him meat and lard.

Both Grade School and High School Days at Saint Peter

Jeneanne started at Saint Peter Grade School in 1943 during World War II. She studied American History and Government, European History, and American Geography. Twice a week, Monsignor Strauss or one

of the other two priests would teach Bible History. Jeneanne attended daily Mass, both in grade school and high school. At that time, people did not eat between midnight and Mass if they wanted to receive Communion. The high school kids would buy food to eat after Mass from the Locust Hill Dairy on Second. It was a long black building across from the parking lot. Three doughnuts were a dime and orange juice was a nickel.

The grade school had lunch and recess from 11:30 to 12:45. Jeneanne's lunch, which she ate at school, was packed in a paper bag or wax paper from an old loaf of bread. Girls had a little area for recess but they made up many games. They jumped rope, played tag, made fun with steps, bounced hard rubber balls off the brick wall, did various stunts with the balls, and generally ran and played. Recess was over when the big bell rang, which was an honor for a student to ring. Students then lined up to go back into school.

Jeneanne lived at 1711 Tompkins, 1.25 miles away. Various neighbors gave her a ride to school, one in an old Model T, which she described as embarrassing to be seen in. She walked home. Joe lived at Second and Tecumseh and walked to school, past Saint Charles Borromeo in order to go to Saint Peter, the German church.

Jeneanne was in Girl Scouts, along with many other girls. Her mom actually started the Girl Scouts in Saint Charles. She enjoyed hiking, camping, and backyard camping. They even had fundraisers to go to the Admiral on the Mississippi riverfront.

Jeneanne made her First Communion in second grade. She remembers the details of her First Communion. The children went on the altar past the Communion rail, made their vows, and went back to their pews. At Communion, the children lined up two by two onto the altar past the Communion rail again. She wore a pretty white dress and boys wore black. Patterns were given to the moms to make the dresses.

The children received the book, Adoremus, at their First Communion. It included all the litanies, the Way of the Cross, 40 hour devotions, and hymns. Jeneanne's book was well worn from all the use.

She remembers being "scared to death" making her First Confession. In third grade she made her Confirmation at night with Cardinal Glennon. The bishop confirmed three grades per year.

Jeneanne remembers 40 hours devotion. Each class had their own hour, even on Saturday. They could only come as a family at the opening and closing. She remembers Confession before First Friday. She

remembers nine day Christmas Novenas with her whole family. Acolytes carried red lanterns and the boys in the Choristers did chants.

There used to be Corpus Christi processions that started inside the church. Saint Joseph's altar was beautifully decorated with the monstrance on it. At that time there was a Married and Single Lady's Sodality. The single ladies helped with decorations. The high school band marched to the Knights of Columbus hall. People prayed the rosary.

There was a procession for Pentecost Monday. The procession started at the church, went to Main Street, Clark, Fifth, Randolph, and Blanchette Park. There was a school picnic with a band. Women cooked lunch.

Jeneanne graduated from Saint Peter High School, one of the last classes there. She was always taught by nuns, except for physical education. Priests taught religion twice per week. That started changing for Saint Peter Grade School when Jeneanne was in high school. Marcella Boerding graduated in 1954 and three months later began teaching second grade. She got her degree while she was teaching. Her younger sister, Mildred, also got a teaching degree. She worked in the school cafeteria.

She had biology in her sophomore year. When the boys misbehaved in the biology lab by turning on the gas in the lab, that stopped the biology lab.

Jeneanne's classes were held in many different buildings due to space limitations. Home Ec was in the basement of the grade school and band was in the old convent.

Kids could go home for lunch or go to a restaurant. Many kids went to the confectionary on Third and Clay (now First Capitol). They could get hamburgers. Pio's used to be the Continental Restaurant.

Jeneanne played basketball. It was actually unusual for girls to play basketball on a team then; girls in public schools didn't play. The basketball team played against girls in private girls. Father Robert Kraus and Father Charles Ruff drove the old school bus. It was challenging to drive across the old bridge where there was a sharp turn. The girls' basketball team played by the "girls' rules". They played half court. The girls wore a one piece body suit with a skirt to the knees. They wore bloomers underneath.

The boys played basketball at Saint Charles High. Band members, who had to get their own rides to the games, played at every basketball and baseball game in their full dress uniform. The band uniforms

were purchased by the school and the blue and white uniforms were made of heavy material. Girls were in skirts with nylons and boys wore slacks. They both wore jackets and hats. Jeneanne still remembers the high school song.

Jeneanne loved music and sang in the choir in grade school and the Glee Club for all four years of high school. Two nuns were always in the choir loft when children sang at a Mass. Seventh and eighth grade students sang at funerals and at the 8:00 Mass on Sunday. High schoolers sang at the High Mass in Latin. In high school, she played trumpet in the band. Sister Ambrose was the teacher of both the band and Glee Club, and the organist at church. There were band concerts, musicals, and operettas. She was “scared to death” when she had a singing role in an operetta. In her senior play, Little Dog Laughed, she had the lead role.

Jeneanne remembers the 100th year anniversary of Saint Peter parish. Her dad was in charge of the pageant, and every grade had a scene. The Archbishop came for Mass and former priests came.

Jeneanne was blessed to take an Archdiocese sponsored train trip to Washington DC and New York. She had worked to earn the money after school at Moe’s Grill. Sister Sabina was the chaperone. It was extra special for her because she turned 18 in New York.

She remembers that Archbishop Ritter integrated the Catholic schools when she was a freshman. This was highly unusual at that time; public schools were not integrated. There were two black children at Saint Peter High School that benefitted from this.

High school kids enjoyed being at Blanchette Park. There were dances in the park and band concerts. Girls wore dresses. Boys played baseball every Friday night. In the summer on Tuesdays and Thursdays, there was a free swim.

She described her high school years as fun and enjoyable, small but with many opportunities. There were 44 students split between two classrooms.

Adulthood

Joe was stationed in Korea and Japan after the Korean War. They met at a party after he got home and it was love at first sight. They were married nine months later on October 24, 1959 with the Blessed

Sacrament exposed. Their wedding actually turned cold; there was blowing and snowing. Jeneanne stated that winters were harsher growing up.

Joe worked at ACF as a draftsman and then a project engineer. Jeneanne was a home maker. She had four babies in five years. Julie Pryor and Edie Hollander are parishioners here; Paul and Cindy are parishioners at Saint Theodore in Flint Hill and Saint Mary Magdalene in Brentwood, respectively.

All four children went to Saint Peter Grade School and then to Duchesne. While her children were at Saint Peter, an addition was built here. There were many students in each grade but two classrooms per grade. Although there were three priests, they did not teach religion. The children were mainly taught by nuns but there were three or four lay people. Marcella Boerding taught all her children, including instructing them about Confession and First Communion. The children made their First Communion in first grade. Unlike Jeneanne, they didn't up onto the altar but just to the Communion rail.

Volunteering was ingrained in all four children. All of them married people from Duschene. She and Joe were gratified for their investment in Catholic schools.

Jeneanne and Joe set the example by volunteering very much. Jeneanne was in the Married Ladies' Sodality. People joined and paid. If someone passed away, the family got money. They used to go to Mass monthly as a body. They carried a banner and placed it in the hole in the pew.

Jeneanne sang in the choir, directed the choir, was a Girl Scout leader, and read to children at school. Jeneanne was on the school board for two terms. The school board consisted of the principal, pastor, several men, and two women. She and Louise Crowe became RCIA coordinators when Father Don Carey called them and asked them to organize it, which they did for about 12 years.

Joe retired at 60. He volunteered at fish fries. He ushered and always wore a suit and tie. He was part of the Thursday Men's Maintenance Group. The group does many maintenance jobs around church and has saved the church much money. The men needed to install brighter lights in church. They had to go up in the choir, then the bell loft, and walk across the ceiling. The men pulled the lights up and changed the bulbs.

Jeneanne enjoyed many aspects of how the Catholic faith was celebrated prior to Vatican II. She missed the Communion rail, which was taken down right after Vatican II. She missed the pomp and ceremony. However, she was glad to eat before Mass.

There used to be four Masses on Sunday: 6:30, 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00. Church was packed. People used to stand at Midnight Mass. There were three confessionals. One confessional was taken away when the chapel was added. It was right where the walkway is now.

Throughout the years, Jeneanne and Joe were at the church very much. She described it as a community with good friends here.