

## Sister Anita Kolles, '52

Winning sixth place at the Minnesota State Spelling Bee was the beginning of a path that led Anita Kolles to Good Counsel Academy, joining the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and becoming a life-long educator. Anita was taught by the SSNDs during grade school at St. Albert Catholic School in Albertville, MN. In her eighth grade year, she won the Spelling Contest in her school, township, and Wright County before advancing to the State Spelling Bee where she won 6th place out of 175 contestants. Mother Annunciata, the Superior of the Mankato SSND province, heard of this through the Sisters teaching in Albertville and sent a congratulatory letter and a gift and suggested that she come to Good Counsel Academy for high school.

Good Counsel Academy was her home for four years and some friendships made there continue to this day. Anita loved life as a boarder, especially the dorm life in which the limits set for boarders were frequently tested, but breaking the rules was part of growing up in a boarding school. Anita recalled an incident that exemplifies her spirit as a boarder: "The Senior Class Play was called Cinderella of Loreland. Sister Honora indicated to me that there was no need for me to try out for a part. She had the perfect part for me and so I became Ashes, Cinderella's sassy talking cat, who saved her from many mishaps."

Anita's admiration for the Sisters who were her teachers made her want to be like them, so on August 28, 1952, she joined the SSNDs. The preparation time and training before taking religious vows included a year as a postulant and a year as a novice. She took college courses toward a degree in Elementary Education during this time. After taking her first vows, she was sent to Albertus Hall in St. Paul and attended St. Catherine's College. Earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education and History took longer than the typical four years of college because the practice at that time was for Sisters to begin teaching after about two years of college and to finish the degree by attending summer school for several years. Sister Anita went on to obtain a Master's degree as a Reading Specialist with a minor in psychology from Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee. Teaching reading had always been a favorite subject of Sister Anita's and she thought that this degree would help in teaching all subjects. Once again, this required attending several years of summer school.

Her teaching career included teaching assignments at eight elementary schools: St. Mark's, Shakopee (7 yrs.); St. John's, Winona (6 yrs.); St. Agnes, St. Paul (1 yr.); St. Matthew's, St. Paul (8 yrs.); St. Casimir's, St. Paul (5 yrs.); St. Jerome, Maplewood (1 yr.); St. Timothy, Maple Lake (4 yrs.); and St. Martin's, Rogers (10 yrs.). For 25 of these years, she taught primary grades. Sister

GCA  
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Anita also served as a principal in Northeast Minneapolis where ten parishes consolidated their schools into one system known as Northeast Regional Catholic. Ten years were spent there as principal, but she always taught reading or some other class in addition to being a principal. Consolidating ten parishes was an ambitious endeavor; they tried to incorporate the ideas and traditions of all the schools and also created new traditions. Sister served as a principal at St. Casimir's and at St. Timothy's in addition to teaching.

One of her joys in teaching second grade students was preparing them for First Communion. It always became the focal point of the school year. Another fond memory began when she was teaching at St. Agnes and took her class to her family farm for a field

trip. Some children had never seen a cow up close, and no one had seen a feed grinder grind corn and wheat into mash. They saw the milk truck pick up the milk from their bulk tank and transfer it to the truck. The field trip included a ride on the hay wagon throughout the countryside. Sister Anita and her family continued to provide this field trip experience for her classes in the other schools in her teaching journey.

Her final move was to St. Martin's in Rogers, MN, place of her birth. She loved teaching her third grade students. They performed the Living Stations every year, recited the Christmas Gospel of St. Luke for prayer services, did their rendition of the poem "Casey at the Bat" several times, learned to spell Mentkiewicz and Pierzinski as challenge words and played ball using her family's bat at games. The students sang the National Anthem at a Twins game every year, and once Sister Anita was privileged to throw out the first pitch. This seems so fitting since a big part of her growing up on the farm in Albertville was playing ball from spring until fall with the one glove, one bat and ball they possessed.

For the past ten years, Sister Anita has lived at Good Counsel Hill and continued to teach in her so-called retirement. She is in her 10th year at Loyola Catholic School (located on Good Counsel Hill), where she is a volunteer tutor every school day and frequently fills in as a substitute teacher. Sister Anita also helps serve lunch weekly at Loyola. In addition, she taught primary school children at the Learning Center at Good Counsel Hill for eight years. As she stated, "Teaching is what I need to do." Sister Anita also has time for a special outreach – volunteering at the ECHO Food Shelf in Mankato every Thursday afternoon.

Sister Anita is truly a fitting GCA Alumna Educator. In her summary of her career she said, "This fall I will begin my 63rd year of teaching. Every morning on my way to school I say, 'I am transforming the world through education – one vowel at a time.' It is what I profess, what I do, and what I love doing!"