

**Agnes** – Margaret to her family - How can we talk about someone who was such a character and, until recently, full of energy and always ready to chat. It is hard to express Agnes in words- or in sign language. We have heard about her dedication to the deaf community, her love for each one and her desire to keep communicating with all her friends.

Some of you here will have known Agnes as a fellow pupil in Seafield or as a novice in Ferrybank – and have many memories of her sense of fun. I'm sure her family have lots of stories about her too. I want to say something about her time in Barrow-in-Furness and her work in the RSHM Province. From 1956- 1983 she was in Barrow, in St. Mary's school and St. Pius X, as a teacher and headmistress. Christine Roberts, one of her past pupils, said, "When I was at school, she was the new, energetic young nun and she brought a breath of fresh air to the place". Her energy wasn't limited to the schools – it reached out to parents and people in the parishes, including visits to families and organising functions.

One lady from Barrow has written about her enthusiasm and commitment for the summer camps, for children in the Lake district, unable to attend catholic schools. There were RE lessons in the morning and in the afternoon swimming, treasure hunts and games. Her memory is of Agnes playing Rounders and taking full part – her veil flying behind her as she scored her rounder! Then, after the children went to bed, they would play cards. She says too that she made a big impression on the children from St. Pius X school, when she went on a school trip wearing her Liverpool scarf. She adds that Agnes never lost her love for children.

When Eleanor and I went to Barrow in 1969 to do laundry and cook for the community- I have to say an unfortunate move for the community – we would meet Agnes in the kitchen, where she would come and eat sausages rather than sit down for a formal meal. She always had plenty of energy for all the things she was committed to and especially for anyone in need. I have memories of long walks with Agnes on a Sunday afternoon (she was always a great walker.) She wanted to show us everything of interest in the surrounding area. Agnes helped me with a piece of work for college by letting me use the log book from St Mary's school, which went back to when our sisters first went there – about a hundred years ago. I remember too, going with her to the youth club and to

visit the lady with 9 cats, who lived at the bottom of the drive and also to see families in difficulty and a woman who was deaf and blind. I marvelled at how she communicated with her.

When Patrice and I came to Noddfa (Penmaenmawr), Agnes was one of the first to visit – bringing groups of deaf adults – her friends -along with John and Dorothy. We had great fun- playing bingo and trying to communicate. One afternoon we had a visit from a lady who had lived in Penmaenmawr all her life and she was saying how they used to have a regular Garden Fete when the Owen Owens lived there and when Agnes heard that she said ‘You’ll have to start that again. We’ll do the bottle stall for you’ – a typical spontaneous, generous response. And for many years, they were faithful to their promise and we are very grateful for that support.

Agnes was a member of the Provincial Council for our Congregation for 6 years- at the time when she was living in Preston and still in ministry with the hearing impaired. Rosemary Lenehan, who was Provincial at the time, is very sorry she can’t be here. She has written, ‘For 6 years, Agnes was very much part of my life. She was such a generous person, always ready to help others. I recall all the driving she did all over the province, always having the car loaded with good things. (At that stage she got the nickname Edwina Stobart!) Rosemary also talks about her time in Barrow when she was the first Sister to teach in St. Aloysius Secondary school (up till then the sisters taught in the primary schools and ‘The convent’ (Our Lady’s). She says, ‘Agnes supported me all the way through that experience’ and she goes on, ‘All in all my memories of Agnes come with great gratitude and I would love to attend her funeral. I cannot do so, but will be with you all in spirit’.

Agnes also spent time in Africa, in the Zambezi region, doing some teaching and developing a library in Chinhoyi. When she came back, she was very tired and had to cut down on her activities. After that she moved to Seafield and was nearer to her family. But then there was the pain of having to give up driving, and then her move into Arrowsmith House. It was sad to see Agnes, the great reader and lover of books, not being able to read and not talking as much. In Arrowsmith she was very much loved for her good humour, her wonderful smile and the ‘look’ when she was questioning, as if she didn’t quite approve. She is dearly missed by the sisters and staff who were so good to her and we thank the carers and staff for their loving attention to Agnes.