Reflections for Sr. Rosina Ann Schock  
Wake Service, October 5th, 2014

A month before the attack on Pearl Harbor (November 5th, 1941), Rosina Ann(e) was born to Albert and Othilia Schock on a farm near McLean, NE. She was the first of 8 children. Because a railroad went through this property, after 2 years, the family moved north to a farm near Pleasant Valley west of Hartington. It was here that her remaining siblings were born, Betty, Irvin, Evelyn, Agnes (Sr. Celine), Margaret, Roman, and Norma (6 girls and 2 boys).

From the beginning, Rosina Anne enjoyed being outdoors with her father and with the animals. She followed her father wherever he went. She was a great farmhand. She brought cows home for milking and she was delighted when she was old enough to learn how to milk. She would sneak out to the barn first thing in the morning or evening see how many cows she could get milked before her parents showed up.

Although school was always difficult for Rosina Ann, she liked math and she loved classical music. She writes, “Even though the teacher did not teach music, we always began the day with listening to records of great composers.” Rosina Ann attributes her for music to this practice during grade school.

From early on, Rosina Ann liked to bake. We can all attest to this. Around here, she was famous for her gooseberry pies. For years, she would host afternoon coffees in the patio featuring her delicious pies.

When she was 9, her paternal grandparents began to live with them during the summer. This brought great joy to Rosina. But the joy was short-lived. Her Grandma
Schock died the following spring. Rosina writes, “This was very hard for me as she was my favorite grandmother and I was her favorite grandchild. I never did quite figure out why. When I found out that she had died, I must have cried bucket of tears. To help console me, I was allowed to attend the funeral (my first).”

Although her parents did not talk much about God, their lives showed that they were people of faith. The children went to catechism classes every Saturday, and the family went to Mass every Sunday. On holy days, they went to Mass first thing in the morning, even though this made the children late for school. They were the only Catholic family in the school at the time. Rosina Ann credits her openness to people of other faiths to her time there.

Prior to her coming to the Yankton Benedictines, Rosina Ann was exposed to a variety of religious orders of sisters. Rosina Ann writes “All of these probably had an influence on my desire to become a sister. (But), I can’t recall any one occasion that was the decisive moment (for me). No doubt, having Sr. Mary Ann Oberembt, who taught the 4 upper grades, helped me discern the place I would go.”

On August 26, 1955, at the age of 13, Rosina travelled the 20 miles north to Sacred Heart Convent to begin her life as a Benedictine Sister. On the day her parents brought her to the convent, as they were leaving to return to the farm, knowing her love of the cows and milking, her father remarked, “Should I bring you a cow to milk?”

In 1959, Rosina Ann became a novice. As a novice, she worked in the garden, the milk cellar, and the coif room. She writes, “Working in the milk cellar was a real test of my vocation. We were still making butter (here at the monastery at that time). I did not like milk or butter. Even at home, I avoided them…” She continues, “I was the last
novice to make butter.”

In 1964, Rosina Ann made her final vows. This was a significant year for the Schock Family. That same year, Grandma Hofmaier died, Irvin went into the Service, and Betty and Pete (Kleinschmit) were married. This past summer, Rosina Ann was so very grateful to be able to attend the Golden Wedding Anniversary celebration for Betty and Pete. She knew this would be her last family gathering.

For more than 22 years (summer 1960 – fall 1983), Sister Rosina Ann taught the lower grades in elementary schools in Sioux Falls and Vermillion, SD; in Pueblo, CO; and in St. Paul, Lincoln, and York, NE. Her love of the outdoors carried over into recess duties. Many elementary teachers dread recess duty, but not Rosina Ann. She was always delighted to be outside with the children.

Rosina comments on her time in Pueblo, CO… “Seeing the dust blow across the playground gave me a taste of what the dust storms of the 1930s must have been (like). Many times we needed to dust the table before we could set it.”

Of her time in St. Paul, NE, in 1973, she writes: “Here, I learned to drive a car. That was a blessing in disguise as later I was able to see my father more often in his last month of life.” It was a wish of her father that all of his daughters be able to drive a car. In the spring of that year, “Early Easter Sunday morning, the family was called to the hospital. Surround by the family, her father died around 7:30 that morning. The next day, Sr. Celine pronounced her final vows. This was a time of both great sadness and profound joy for the Schock Family. Almost 22 years later to the day, Rosina Ann was blessed to be able to be her mother during her final days.
“During the (school-year of 1981-82) in York,” she writes, “I was more tired and had more colds. With a bigger class and some more challenging students and the change of mission, I thought these were the causes of my tiredness. However, the next summer, during my physical check-up, I had an elevated blood count indicating some liver problems. My liver biopsy was sent to Mayo and…I was diagnosed with PBC (Primary Biliary Cirrhosis).

In July of 1984, Rosina Ann celebrated her silver jubilee with Srs. Paulette Larsen, Kathleen Hickenbotham, and Laurentia Ghey and just over 6 months later, on the evening of March 18th, 1985, between the feasts of St. Patrick and St. Joseph, “I was whisked over to the Methodist hospital to prepare for surgery that evening.” Rosina was in the hospital for the next 5 months. Each month, something happened that postponed her dismissal. One of the doctors said, “You are on a train ride and you must go where the train takes you.” When Rosina was finally dismissed, she writes, “I did not stop at the transplant house as many of the others did.” She went straight home. “I was so happy to be back with my own Benedictine Sisters.”

After the liver transplant, Rosina no longer found herself in the classroom. She volunteered in the Monastery Print Shop and Adult Day at Sacred Heart Hospital. From 1991-1995, she assisted in Pastoral Care at St. Michael’s in Tyndall. From 1991-2012, Rosina Ann provided pastoral care in our Monastery Care Center.

For years after her transplant, Sister Rosina Ann would return to Rochester for regular checkups. In July, 2010, the 25th anniversary of her transplant, Rosina attended the transplant Picnic in Rochester. She writes, “My main purpose (for attending) was to be an encouragement to other liver transplant people.” Although she never boasted
about it, she was treated like a celebrity every time she returned to Mayo Clinic. When we would tease her about it, she would just smile.

After Sister was no longer able to do Pastoral Care for our Sisters in the Care Center, she became noticeably more relaxed and playful. She liked to tease and be teased. Rosina had a delightful sense of humor.

Sister Rosina Ann has been a member of the Marty House Group for the past several years. During this time, on countless occasions, we were treated to her cooking and her baking (she writes, “I was always interested in trying new recipes.”). We have a tradition in Marty House to play cards in the evenings during the week. She was given the nickname, Sr. Zero, because of her uncanny luck and skill at cards. Recently, on Sunday evenings, some of us get together to play Mexican Train. It was always a joy when Rosina felt up to coming over after Sunday dinner to play with us.

In the past year or so, Rosina’s energy was waning, but, she did what she could. At Marty House: she would take the old newspapers and our card-game score sheets over to recycling. She would also empty the trash in the waste baskets at the house and take it to the garbage room.

She loved being outdoors to the end. To renew her spirit, she would to sit outside in the sun or shade (depending on the weather) and read. Two Sundays ago, I took her outside and the two of just sat quietly together. To keep up her strength, she went for regular walks as long as she could. She loved it when we Marty House Sisters would join her in her room in the Care Center for Compline.

On Saturday evenings, after our group meal together, we always do group lectio together (i.e., we share how the Gospel reading for Sunday speaks to us). I was always
edified by Sr. Rosina Ann’s comments. Over the years, her comments were simple and short, but always inspiring. It was evident that she was women who lived each day with death before her eyes. It was also apparent that she had a deep spirituality and was preparing daily for her passing into eternal life.

A few of weeks ago, the last time Rosina Ann joined us at Marty House on a Saturday evening, she asked each one of us to forgive her for anything she might have done to hurt us. One in the group asked Rosina, “Why are you asking for our forgiveness?” Rosina Ann responded very calmly, “I am getting ready to die.”

As Sr. Rosina anticipated the end to her earthly life, she anticipated the joys of eternal life: being with her parents, her favorite, Grandma Schock, and meeting the person who gave her the liver that extended her life by almost 30 years.

In her autobiography she writes, “I have a plaque which reads, ‘Please, be patient, God isn’t finished with me yet.’” Perhaps God is finished with you now, Rosina Ann, but I know that I’m not and I suspect that others might feel the same. I would guess that you have a bit more influence now, and I for one, plan to stay in touch and to keep you busy.