

The Powerhouse Press

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February of 2010 will be a month that the majority of us will never forget. You will all have your own special remembrances – unexpected holidays, scary trips to the store for supplies, extra time to read that book you received for Christmas, making dangerous treks to the doctor, admiring that beautiful but frightening snow scenery, maybe even cleaning out those bureau drawers. But here at Camilla, we are unanimous in identifying our most treasured memory of those history-making snow storms: the amazing selflessness of our lay and religious staff in willingly (and, yes, joyously) sacrificing time, previously planned activities, and **much-needed sleep** to care for our sister-patients. I won't even attempt to mention names, for I'm sure to omit someone, but the sheer numbers of those struggling to get here from Pacis or from their homes, reporting early, staying late, shoveling snow, removing fallen branches, toiling so hard to thaw frozen pipes, racing from room to room to check on patients, around-the-clock availability, delivering meals on wheels, collecting trays, filling in for those who just couldn't make the trip – all of this and much more - simply blew our minds. We shouldn't have been surprised, of course, for we've come to expect the loving care our staff offers us – but this help was surely “above and beyond the call of duty.” They never stopped, and nothing deterred them. Like the proverbial mailman, “neither sleet nor snow” nor aching feet, sore backs, or utter exhaustion kept them from their jobs – and from assisting with other people's jobs, as well. They worked double shifts (and, in many cases, triple shifts) with more than forty people staying overnight at any one time. And they helped, not only the sister-patients, but one another as well, cleaning off cars, jumping dead batteries, driving fellow workers back and forth to Pacis, to the station, or to the bus stop. The list is endless, and never, **never** will we, their beneficiaries, be able to thank them adequately. We are so grateful, dear friends. At some point in the future, the department stores will probably be selling tee shirts and sweat shirts with the printed message: *I survived the 2010 snow storms*. Special shirts should be made for us with the proud boast: *Camilla survived the 2010 snow storms, thanks to our beloved staff!* Our grateful prayers will follow them throughout their lives.

We celebrated the February birthdays on Friday, the 26th. There was a bumper crop this month, with 30 sisters being honored: Sisters Mary Richard, Magdalena, Philippine, Marie Immaculee, Ann Katherine, Ann Bernadette, Cyril, Gregoria, Cephas, Margaret Gerner, Edwin, Virgo, Seraphine, Charlene, Joseph Maureen, Presentation, Loretta Mary, Marie St. William, Koreen Marie, Mary Christopher, Marian David, Maria Patris, Loretta Dinda, Regina Fidelis, Ruthanne Croley, Marie Elaine, Peggy McMahon, Stanislaus, Rosemary Maguire, and Hugh Margaret. Among the group were **six** sets of twins (the same date, but not, of course, the same year!), one set of quadruplets (all born on the 16th), and one Valentine (Joseph Maureen). As usual, we all had a great time at the party, and the celebrants actually seemed to enjoy being a year older!

We know you've been eagerly waiting to learn the identity of the winner of the Super Bowl Raffle. Other than those who voted for the New Orleans Saints (and, therefore, “won back” the dollar they had paid for their chance), there was only one *real* winner, Noreida Santiago, a popular and hard-working staff member in Camilla's laundry. Although in past years, the prize money was often divided among a number of lucky winners, the 2010 entire “pot” went to Noreida, who left work that day \$129.00 richer! In a conversation with this fortunate lady, we learned that winning is not something new to her; she was ecstatic, but not really surprised, for she has won more than a few prizes in her lifetime. Our attempts to unearth some secret formula failed completely. According to Noreida, the numbers 27-17 “just jumped into my head.” She was closer to the actual score than any of the other participants, and the entire household rejoiced in her good fortune.

Most of you have already learned of our “epidemic.” Much to our surprise, the bug (or whatever) first settled in on the fourth floor, made its way in a rather orderly fashion across the front, then across the back, and just when it seemed to have disappeared, it randomly sought out five or six new victims along the middle hall. The bug seemed to be more selective once it reached the second and third floors, not spending much time there. It was some time before we could wave a fond farewell to this persistent pest, but finally it bowed out of our lives. None of us is eager to meet up with that annoying visitor soon again!

Your convents have probably already received the letter and bookmark announcing the year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of Camilla Hall. You know that we will love to have you join us for as many activities as you can possibly fit into your social calendar. Throughout the years, your support of and love for Camilla have far surpassed that of any other group, and your presence will certainly enhance for us the joy of those events you attend. Later this month, we will be mailing the invitations to the Opening Mass on June 5th. Because of the obvious space limitations, we cannot assure you of a seat in chapel. Even though we are restricting invitations to priests and IHM’s, the chapel will still not accommodate the number we would like. So – you guessed it! We’re going to ask that “family hold back.” You are most welcome to attend the event, but we may have to ask you to participate in the Mass via TV in the community room, upstairs solariums, or sisters’ rooms. First choice for seating in the body of the chapel will be given to the priests and to the sisters living in Camilla and Pacis. We are depending on you to appreciate our predicament. The only other solution is to have you “hang from the rafters,” and that, somehow, does not seem appropriate! Thank you, in advance, Sisters, for your usual gracious understanding. (Incidentally, since we will be serving refreshments after the Mass, when you return your response card, please indicate the number of sisters from your convent who will be attending.)

During February, when we weren’t looking out the window at the lovely white blankets that cloaked our trees, many of us were glued to the TV, gasping at the breathtaking antics of the Olympic skiers, skateboarders, figure-skaters, hockey players, and all those other athletes who performed such magic on snow and ice. Were we jealous? Surely! These professionals moved in a world unknown to most of us who considered ourselves experts when, as children, we could navigate our sleds safely down a small, sloping hill at the end of town. And were we proud? Of course! During those days of the Olympics, we cheered our hearts out for the glorious United States!

February was also the month in which something new was added to the weekly schedule of many of the sisters. Each Wednesday evening at 6:15, a group gathers in the second-floor chapel gallery for choir practice! This is one of the many ways in which we are preparing for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of Camilla Hall – specifically, for the Mass on June 5th. Perhaps you’re muttering to yourselves, “I didn’t know we had that many trained singers in Camilla.” Well, you’re right. We don’t. But, somehow or other, under the magic touch of Sister Regina Cecilia and Sister Loretta Therese and the “buttressing” of the so-so voices with the half dozen or so truly magnificent vocalists, we’re surprising even ourselves! Once this choir makes its debut, we’ll probably be deluged with requests for public appearances!

One of the highlights of the month was a presentation by Sister Donna Marie Kelley, IHM entitled *Good Grief: Growing through Loss as Women Religious*. As most of you know, Sister Donna is a member of the Graduate Psychology Department at Immaculata University, and her talk to us was based on the research done for her doctoral dissertation. In her remarks, Donna focused on the loss of a loved one through death, and the grieving which follows such a loss. Her points of discussion included the length of the grieving process, social support, the personality of the griever, and the role played by spirituality. Sister had a captive audience since there was not a sister present who was unable to relate personally to Donna’s topic. Her material was presented with a combination of professionalism and compassion, both of which her audience truly appreciated. The questions posed by some of the sisters following the talk were a clear indication of their understanding of this sensitive topic and their gratitude for the help they received.

It will be SPRING when you receive the next issue of *The Powerhouse Press!!!*