

Sister Celebrates Century in Style

By Kylene Kamensky

The year Sr. René Parman was born, Agatha Christie published her debut novel, KDKA in Pittsburgh began broadcasting as the first commercial radio station, and the 19th amendment to the US Constitution had just been ratified, giving women the right to vote.

When she entered the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in 1939, the trees in the front yard were smaller, the buildings on campus fewer, and everyone still wore habits. There have been many changes in the 81 years Sr. René has been a member of the HM Congregation, but she has always served with faith and purpose.

On September 21, Villa resident sisters gathered to honor Sr. René for the occasion of her 100th birthday with a socially distanced celebration in the conference center. Sr. Toby Lardie, Pastoral Leader, offered a blessing, stories and memories were shared, and Sr. René was presented with an indoor putting green and an outdoor three-hole course to keep her golf game sharp. She was also surprised earlier

in the day by her golf league friends who had organized a car parade and brought gifts and cupcakes to mark the event.

“I was just told to go outside for a surprise,” Sr. René said of the car parade. “I don’t think I’ve ever had a nicer surprise in my whole life.”

I had the chance to speak with Sr. René and here is what she had to say as she celebrates this amazing milestone.

How did you decide to enter religious life?

Well, I went to Lourdes Academy [in Cleveland], and I was impressed by the [HM] sisters and the way they treated each other, their contact with each other. They



Sr. René dons a special headband and celebration sash for a special birthday!

seemed to be very happy, joyful, and very accommodating to each other. I went to a different grade school and one year of high school with a different order of sisters and I loved those sisters. I got my vocation in the fourth grade with those sisters. It wasn’t until I got to Lourdes that I appreciated the reverence for each other and the spirit that they [the HMs] had, which was a very joyful spirit and they cooperated with each other. I saw nice rapport between those sisters that I hadn’t seen. I came back to the idea that I wanted to be a sister with what I saw there. So, I would say it was the example of the sisters at Lourdes.

How did your family feel about your decision?

My family was very happy with me, especially my mother and father. My grandmother thought I was too young. Her words of wisdom were “I think you should stay and work for a year and get a little bit



Sr. René Parman (center) with her class and the director of novices in 1941.



Sr. René's golf league friends greet her after they organized a car parade to surprise her on her birthday.

more grown up—a little bit more idea of the world.” But I knew if I stayed, I wouldn’t have [entered the community], and I think my mother knew it. So, I said no, I didn’t want to stay I wanted to go now. Although, the temptation was there just like my grandmother said. There was a project at East Ohio Gas that some of the girls from Lourdes were hired to do work on, and the man that had hired us was very impressed with the Lourdes girls. At the end of this time, which was about from maybe the end of school (June) to maybe December, I was one of the ones he asked to stay on [at the company]—there was my temptation. It would have been nice to earn your own living. And I thought no, if I do that I will never. I will forget about it. I will get lost in my own independence. My grandmother thought I should take it. My mother said, whatever you want, it’s up to you. But they were very happy.

Do you have a favorite birthday or birthday memory?

Now we were in times of recession, and I don’t remember having many big birthdays as a child. We just didn’t do that. The money

wasn’t there. But we were not poor, we were just like everybody else. This is probably the biggest one I’ve had. It’s lasted three days or so and it’s still going on!

How do you stay busy?

Are you kidding? There’s always more to do than I possibly want. I do my own room, except for the bathroom. I’m cleaning. I do my own sweeping, Hoovering, and I do the dusting. And I do my own washing and my own ironing. There is always something to do. I have very few times in which I can sit down and say, gee, I’m bored—doesn’t



Sr. René shows off her form on the new indoor putting green she received at her party.

happen. I guess I’m pretty good at keeping myself busy. Up until I came here, I worked in the Finance Office. Even when I moved here, I still worked in Finance. It was cut down to once a week, but I did work in there every week until last year. And then I golf twice a week. I started playing when I was still in the habit. My sisters would want to go golfing and they would take me with them—outfitted me and so forth—so maybe twice a year when I went home to visit. I certainly was older when I started. I’ve been with my league for 35 years.

Are you reflecting on anything as you turn 100?

I reflect on it and think how fortunate I am to have what I have. How blessed I am to have what I have. Even walking around. I can still walk. I can still play golf—with help. I can’t see my ball, but others help me. So yes, I reflect on that I have nothing to complain about. Absolutely nothing. I’m very much blessed.



Sr. René gets the lay of the land on the new outdoor three-hole course that was put together for her to enjoy.