

OBITUARY

Sister Hilary Ross, D.C.

1894-1982



The death occurred November 30, 1982 in Wakayama, Japan, of Sister Hilary Ross, Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and noted Carville biochemist. Sister Hilary came to Carville in 1922 and was appointed Pharmacist. In 1927 she assumed the newly created position of Biochemist and held it until her retirement in 1960. And it was for her work as a biochemist that the talented nun earned worldwide acclaim. Because of her interest in blood chemistry and immunological problems, one of her first projects was an investigation of the calcium and phosphorus metabolism and their relation to bone changes. It was the first of 43 blood chemistry and immunologic studies reported in the medical literature. Little wonder she came to be recognized as one of the eminent pioneers in the field of Hansen's disease (HD).

During clinical trials of the sulfones at Carville in the early 1940s, Sister Hilary was relied on to conduct the various tests so essential for the correct evaluation of any new anti-HD drug. Her performance was exemplary. Dr. John R. Trautman, Carville's director, considers her clinical and laboratory work "monumental." The gifted Daughter of Charity is credited with conducting brilliant investigations of the changes which take place when the Hansen bacillus enters the body, and was an acknowledged authority on absorption and excretion of sulfones in blood and tissues. Because of the importance of her research findings Sister Hilary was seen as a major contributor to the better understanding we now have of all aspects of HD.

In 1958 Sister Hilary received the Damien-Dutton Award "for outstanding sci-

entific contributions as well as a lifetime of personal service and devotion on behalf of Hansen's disease patients." Her photographic exhibit on sulfone therapy won her a silver medal in 1947 at the Convention of the American Leprosy Association. On her retirement she was presented by the United States Public Health Service with a scroll. The citation read:

"On the occasion of her retirement from the Public Health Service Hospital, Carville, Louisiana, and in recognition and appreciation of her 37 years of faithful service, her outstanding contribution to the care and welfare of patients with leprosy, and her dedicated effort in the development and communication of scientific knowledge concerning this disease."

As the time for her retirement drew near Sister Hilary volunteered for work at a rehabilitation center for crippled children the Daughters of Charity were setting up in Wakayama, Japan. Her request was granted and in August of 1960 she bade farewell to Carville and departed for Japan.

The final paragraph of a farewell article (*My 37 Years at Carville*) Sister Hilary wrote for the STAR reads as follows:

"In leaving Carville I leave behind a host of friends who have been loyal to me over the 37 years. These have been most happy years. The patients have been most generous and cooperative in research projects and it is to them that I owe whatever I have accomplished during my years of service. I shall miss Carville but it will be ever in my thoughts and prayers. Though the ocean will divide us and me no more you see, remember your dear friend Sister Hilary will always be thinking of you."

—THE STAR