



Press Release

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St. Cecilia Academy mourns the loss of the first St. Cecilia Girl

St. Cecilia Academy's first St. Cecilia Girl, Helen Werrbach, passed away this week. She left behind her a legacy at the Academy, which now considers the St. Cecilia Girl award to be the highest honor given out to a graduating senior each spring.

At St. Cecilia Academy's 75th anniversary commencement in 1935 a new award was handed out to recognize the girl who embodied the spirit of the Academy, it was the "Ideal St. Cecilia Girl" designation. The first recipient of that award was Helen Werrbach.

Ms. Werrbach attended St. Cecilia Academy during the 1930's. She lived with her family in East Nashville, where she and her siblings attended Holy Name elementary school. Her sister Sue Ann Werrbach Peffen also attended SCA and graduated in 1951. After graduation in 1935, Ms. Werrbach attended business school and then landed a job working for the state treasury department. She worked there for 40 years. She lived for many years after her retirement in the Cloister at St. Henry and was a faithful member of St. Henry Church Parish.

In an interview for the school's alumnae magazine in 2009, Ms. Werrbach looked back on her time at the Academy: "In my class at St. Cecilia there were 14 girls," she recalled. "It was a great place to be. I remember Sister Dominica was a wonderful teacher. And Sr. Mary Agnes was a great teacher; everybody loved her. It was just fun and we had a good time together."

Ms. Werrbach said in the interview that she could still remember the sound of the sisters walking down the hall, their rosary beads clinking softly. When she was at St. Cecilia, Ms. Werrbach said she rode the Nashville street car near where the Farmer's Market is now. She also remembers the uniform she wore: a boy's shirt and a pleated blue skirt with, of course, saddle oxfords. Ms. Werrbach returned to St. Cecilia Academy in May of 2010 as an honored guest during the 150th anniversary celebration.

St. Cecilia Academy is Nashville's oldest private high school founded in 1860 by the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation. The Academy has been named to the Top 50 best Catholic high schools in the U.S. list five times since 2004. Ninety-one percent of the Class of 2011 earned college scholarship offers totaling \$7.2 million. The 56 seniors in the Class of 2011 will attend 41 different colleges in 19 states. #