



# LOVE'S LABOUR'S GAINED:

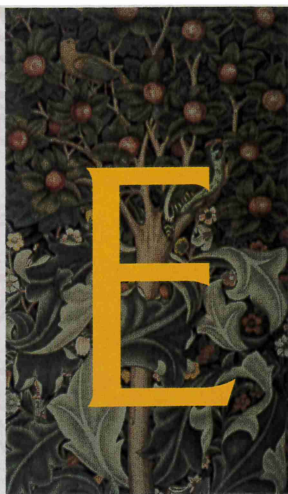
SISTER SALLY M. FURAY DEVOTES A LIFETIME TO USD

After devoting 44 years to teaching and administrative work at the San Diego College for Women and USD, Sister Sally M. Furay, R.S.C.J., is retiring. The academic vice president and provost is, however, by no means leaving. Her spirit remains indelibly woven into the fabric of USD and will undoubtedly continue to shape the university she loves so completely.



BY JILL WAGNER '91





Elizabeth “DeDe” (Fiorino) Ruff ’63 can recall several pieces of sage advice she learned in her undergraduate years at the San Diego College for Women. Some she used when deciding which dinner invitations to accept from eligible young men. Other bits of wisdom led Ruff to graduate school and continue to guide her in the extensive charitable

work she does in the Washington, D.C., area. All of it was spoken by Sister Sally Furay, R.S.C.J.

Mother Furay, as she was known to the College for Women students, was an English professor, class counselor and, most important to many of the graduates who still seek her advice, a friend. Mother Furay deftly sprinkled counseling sessions with humor and always knew just what to say.

Ruff echoes Sister Furay’s words, “never refuse a blind date,” with a hearty laugh and great sense of appreciation. She and her husband are celebrating 30 years of marriage in July after meeting on a blind date. In fact, Ruff believed so wholly in the advice, she set up a date for her older sister, Mary (Fiorino) Orradre ’61, who also is celebrating 30 years with a blind date-turned-husband.

But it’s another Mother Furay saying that spoke to countless young women at a level some are just now beginning to understand. “Don’t ever lose your self respect,” she would say. “Don’t ever try to become anything but who you are.”

## Serving God By Serving Others

Whether it was in a classroom lecturing on Jonathan Swift or William Shakespeare, in Shiley (then Camino) Theatre directing the annual Christmas pageant or in the dorm room of one



Family members joined Sister Furay at a campus celebration to honor her distinguished career at USD.

of her students reading *U.S. News and World Report*, Sister Furay was teaching. From the moment she turned 18 and heard her calling to join the Society of the Sacred Heart, Sister Furay knew herself to be an educator.

She took practical steps to better her ability to teach young students, including earning a B.A. in English from Duchesne College in her hometown of Omaha, Neb. Sister Furay graduated with a master’s degree in English from the San Francisco College for Women just before traveling to Rome to profess her final vows in 1952. A few months later, she found herself in Southern California teaching English at a young liberal arts college, the San Diego College for Women. Always searching for ways to better serve the Society of the Sacred Heart and the students attending its college, Sister Furay returned to her studies in 1953 to earn a Ph.D. in English literature from Stanford University.

By the late 1950s, when Ruff met her freshman class counselor, Sister Furay had proved a gifted and fair-minded leader who was a perfect candidate for administrative work as well as teaching. She gained experience with personnel and curriculum issues as chair of the English department and in 1967 was named academic dean.

Maureen (Pecht) King ’64 marvels at Sister Furay’s ability to teach by example and “do everything she told us to do.” Not the least of which was the strong urging to give back to the community, King says. Sister Furay’s community was the college on the hill and, after wrestling with a tricky personnel issue, she began to understand another way to serve the college and her society.

In the mid-1960s, Sister Furay recalls, she represented the administration in 30 hours of hearings about a faculty dismissal case. Lawyers did not argue the issues in this particular hearing, but the college had its attorney nearby for consultation. Sister Furay, as chair of the English department and an assistant dean, worked closely with the counselor.

“I discovered what I was being told by the lawyer was very good California labor law, but showed a real lack of understanding about higher education,” Sister Furay says. “Then I became academic dean in 1967 and that same thing struck me. When we asked for legal advice, they didn’t know anything about higher education and we didn’t know enough about the law to ask the right questions of the lawyers. A year later, I decided I’d go to evening law school because we needed somebody who knew both.”

Sister Furay says she never intended to take the California Bar exam or practice law, but rather to use the legal education to guide her work as an administrator and one of the architects of the merger between the College for Women, College for Men and School of Law.

“When I graduated in 1972, everybody — and I mean everybody — said, ‘You should take the bar because you’ll be able to do more,’” she recalls. “And you get to the stage where you think one thing and everybody else thinks another and you’ve either got to be arrogant enough to say, ‘Everybody’s out of step but me,’ or you say, ‘I’m wrong.’ So I took the bar, and they were so right.”

## Values Are Caught, Not Taught

When she was named provost of the University of San Diego in 1972, and academic vice president soon after that, Sister Furay was immediately in a position to use her legal skills to shape the academic affairs of the university. She was, after all, an educator who remained constantly focused on the students and the ideals of Mother Rosalie Hill, founder of the College for Women, who wanted to create a center for the intellectual and moral education of young people.

“Mother Hill used to say — and this is one of the most profound philosophies of education I’ve ever heard — there are three things that are significant in life: beauty, truth and goodness,” Sister Furay says. “But the only one that attracts on sight is beauty. If beauty attracts people, they will come and find the truth and have goodness communicated to them by the kind of people we have around here.”

Mother Hill took care of the first ideal in the triad when she chose Spanish Renaissance architecture for Camino and

Founders halls, and put equal emphasis on interior design and exterior landscaping to complete the feel of Alcalá Park. As for truth and goodness, ask anyone on campus, whether they’ve worked there six months or six years, and they will say Sister Furay is clearly the strength behind the spirit that guides USD today.

“Her life is probably the closest thing to a total integration of a person’s professional life, spiritual life and personal life as I’ve ever seen,” says Author E. Hughes, president emeritus of USD. “She has an absolute commitment to the institution.”

In her 44-year career, and particularly in the past 24 years she has served as provost, Sister Furay helped students seek truth by continually adding to the pool of knowledge available to them. Whether it’s adding books to the shelves of Copley Library, introducing a new master’s program or opening the Philip Y. Hahn School of Nursing, Sister Furay works tirelessly to improve the academic offerings of the university.

But a university is more than books and programs. Ultimately, the spirit of a place is communicated by the people working there. Sister Furay is legendary for her ability to first discern the right type of person for a particular position, and then instill in that new employee a keen understanding of the university’s mission.

Very often in the first interview with candidates for jobs ranging from professors to deans to high-ranking administrators,

Sister Furay will speak about the goals of a values-oriented, Catholic university. But subsequently, the people who work with her learn purely by example.

“You don’t know Sally is teaching you, you just get it,” says Darlene Shiley, a member of the USD board of trustees since 1990. “She infuses a spirit in you by performance. I never feel I’m being instructed by Sally but I learn from her. I hear things from her and it probably is teaching in a certain sense, but it’s never ponderous. You just feel it.”

## “The Wind Beneath Our Wings”

While her spirit infuses every corner of the campus, more tangible evidence of Sister Furay’s work stretches from West Point Field to the Alcalá Vista apartments. As second in command of the 180-acre campus, Sister Furay has spent more than two decades alongside the president and board of trustees, guiding the development of new buildings and new programs.

Ed Starkey, head librarian at Copley Library, credits Sister Furay with consistently providing funds to acquire 8,000 to 10,000 new books each year. While some university libraries struggle with fluctuating figures, since the merger and the combination of two libraries into one, Copley has seen steady growth in its book acquisition budget.

The number of books isn’t the only figure growing with each passing year. As the University of San Diego matures, student enrollment continues to increase, due no doubt in large part to the improved class offerings. One program that has brought national recognition and a stream of talented students to

the university is the master of fine arts in dramatic arts, a joint program with the Old Globe Theatre.

Sister Furay’s love for the theater makes the success of the M.F.A. program all the more sweet. When the Society of the Sacred Heart ended its life as a cloistered community, Sister Furay eagerly followed her own dictum to serve the larger community. One of her favorite roles has been working with the Old Globe’s board of directors. While serving as president of that board in the mid-1980s, Sister Furay reopened discussions



In April, Sister Furay received the Author E. Hughes Career Achievement Award. The award honors alumni who have attained outstanding success in their career fields.



about starting a degree program that had been initiated several years earlier by theater administrators Craig Noel, Jack O'Brien and Tom Hall. The combination of her knowledge of academia and the Globe officials' expertise in theater helped pull a program together that graduated its first class in 1989. Sister Furay calls it one of her dreams come true.

Another dream was fulfilled in 1989 when the Manchester Family Child Development Center opened for business. Sister Furay, who calls herself a feminist after discovering, among other discouraging statistics on gender inequalities, that the United States is one of the worst countries in the world for its family policies and child care provisions, says she began immediately talking about opening a day care facility on campus. Because the university first had to provide additional student housing, classrooms and faculty offices, the child care center went on the back burner. Sister Furay never let the idea fade completely, though, and like the M.F.A. program, she reopened discussions when the time was right.

The number of projects bearing Sister Furay's unmistakable imprint is almost inconceivable. The position as provost dictates that everything of an academic nature be approved by her, but Sister Furay does more than rubber stamp the projects proposed by the deans and faculty working for her. Besides being a tough boss who requires that all sides of an issue are carefully examined before moving forward, Sister Furay is a generous and genuine supporter of the programs she's helped create.

Bob Fellmeth worked closely with Sister Furay in developing the law school's Center for Public Interest Law, and speaks reverently of the support she continues to give the center. In the business of legal advocacy, controversial subjects are often tackled by the CPIL lawyers, Fellmeth explains, but Sister Furay is never one to back away.

"Nothing replaces the knowledge that the leaders of your institution value what you do," Fellmeth says. "She's the wind beneath our wings."

## Following God's Will

Betsy Winters, associate dean of arts and sciences and Sister Furay's sister, says it was clear at an early age that her older sibling had a talent for instruction. As they walked to school together in Omaha, Betsy recalls listening intently as Sally spoke about various components of their family's faith.

"I still to this day have a very firm command of the mysteries of the rosary," Winters says.

Interestingly, Sister Furay confesses to being less than enthusiastic when she first heard the calling to join a religious community, but says, "If God wants you to do something, you do it."

Since then, through a varied career that she began as a teacher in a cloistered religious community and finishes four decades later as a university vice president who has traveled to



Sister Furay and USD President Emeritus Author E. Hughes at the Author E. Hughes Career Achievement Awards dinner.

such faraway places as Korea, Egypt, Austria and Uruguay, Sister Furay has remained singularly focused on God's will and whom God meant her to be. Her capacity for work astounds colleagues who know USD's sophistication is due in large part to its provost. And her innate ability to teach, whether in a classroom or in her office speaking one-to-one, continues to influence everyone she meets.

Sister Furay's work as provost may be finished but her spirit remains indelibly woven into the fabric of USD. Cynthia Villis, dean of academic services, realized the scope of her boss's influence soon after arriving nine years ago. Sally Furay is the person who has given a voice and personality to the institution, Villis says. "She brought the university to life."

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# Devoted to Society

Sister Sally Marguerite Furay, R.S.C.J., begins each day by attending Mass in the Immaculata. It's not required, but after living 52 years within the Society of the Sacred Heart, a religious order that Sister Furay describes as deeply prayerful, it's as much a part of her day as going to the office.

In a professional life that takes USD's provost from meetings with the university deans to policy task force gatherings with faculty members to one-on-one consultations with students, the morning devotion adds an element of calm to Sister Furay's schedule. The Society remains a steadying influence for Sister Furay, whose work on behalf of USD and the larger higher education community takes her around the globe.

When she returns from board meetings at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., where she is a trustee, or from gatherings in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Sister Furay returns to the "family" that has loved and supported her for 44 years in San Diego. Before that, members of the Society taught Sister Furay in high school and exhibited qualities that drew the 18-year-old Omaha, Neb., native to join the religious order after her first year of college.

"I saw qualities in other Religious of the Sacred Heart, the ones I knew in high school and college, for which I have deep admiration," Sister Furay says. "The most fundamental of those qualities were love and generosity."

Sister Furay brought those same qualities to the College for Women and the University of San Diego, as a teacher and administrator. And when the Society ended its life as a cloistered order in the late 1960s, Sister Furay carried the spirit boldly into the world as a religious of the Sacred Heart, an expert on higher education administration and an attorney. Her responsibilities for overseeing the academic life of the university, and the full calendar that accompanies those responsibilities, have never deterred Sister Furay from also contributing time to the governance of the Society.

A three-year stint on a national task force of R.S.C.J.s ended in 1981 after the group designed a "one province" structure to bring together the smaller provinces of the United States as one group. Meanwhile, back on campus, Sister Furay was working with university officials and the federal government to establish an NROTC program at Alcalá Park. Soon after, she spent the summer of 1982 in Rome as a delegate to the general chapter of the Society.

She used her training as an attorney to handle legal matters for the Society, including revising the legal structure of its elementary and secondary schools on the West Coast. In 1988, Sister Furay was selected moderator for the Society's general chapter and attended an intensive foreign language course at Dartmouth to brush up on her French. When she returned to USD, the provost eagerly introduced the intensive program to foreign language faculty and encouraged them to consider switching to an oral-based education.

A quick glance at the extensive list of her professional work reveals activities that come together in the fashion of a patchwork quilt. Now, 24 years after being named provost, the quilt tells the story of Sister Furay and her devotion to teaching young people, to establishing the University of San Diego as a renowned institution of higher learning, and to living the spirit of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Sister Furay renews the strength of that spirit each morning in a pew just to the right of the altar. It's her time to stop being a teacher and sit again as a student.

"All human beings can learn a lot from being alone with God," Sister Furay says.

