

BY MICHAEL R. HASKINS

# Places

## IN THE HEART

*Alcalá Park isn't really a big enough place to get lost in, but it does have its secret spots for those times when you need to get away from it all. As these four members of the USD community demonstrate, solitude is more a state of mind than a location. Some of their private niches are tucked away, and some are in plain view, but they all hold special meaning for their unofficial owners.*

## A SENSE OF WONDER

Although Sister Helen McHugh has many favorite places on campus, she has no trouble selecting the site that means the most to her. Every day, when Sister McHugh comes to noon Mass in Founders Chapel, she recalls the wonder she felt the first time she entered the chapel and saw the altar.

"It was a warm August night, and the scent of jasmine was in the air as I crossed Founders Patio," recalls Sister McHugh, professor emeritus of English, who taught at the College for Women and USD from 1965 to 1984. "When I walked into the chapel, the lights were shining on the altar, and I thought it one of the most stunning sights I had ever seen."

Even today, Sister McHugh marvels when she speaks of the beauty of the main altar in the university chapel. As she notes its significant features — from the interlocking circles, the symbol of the Trinity, at the top and, below, the seal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, her own order and the College for Women's founding order, to the 12 figures representing the apostles surrounding the crucifixion scene — Sister McHugh sees the altar, and the chapel itself, as a compendium of salvation history. The chapel is, she says,

"a marvelous teaching tool that, in a way, represents the mission of the university.

"Mother Rosalie Hill, the College for Women founder, held that wise educators attract with the beautiful and then draw attention to the good and the true," says Sister McHugh. "She believed that beauty quiets and civilizes and is a great introduction to learning, which of course in the liberal arts tradition never stops."

Sister McHugh, who taught for more than four years at Sacred Heart University in Tokyo after retiring from USD, has fond memories of students who were ready for learning. Although she taught upper division and graduate students for the most part, some of her favorite recollections are from freshman English classes, where the Socratic method was in honor. "Discussions were vivid and lively," she remembers, and says they often resembled a debate.

There is no debate, however, when it comes to the meaning that Sister McHugh's favorite USD place holds for her.

"Every time I go into Founders Chapel, I think of Mother Hill and what she wanted to create here," she says. "She conceived a vision, a great ennobling vision, and we are the richer for it."