

Alcalá Park

a person who cared deeply



Sr. Aimee Rossi, RSCJ

Sr. Rossi: An important part of USD history passes on

Whether she was raising money for music scholarships or counseling students seeking advice during her more than two decades on campus, Sr. Aimee Rossi, RSCJ, touched USD in a way that will always remain a part of the university's legacy.

So it was with a special sense of loss that the USD community mourned Sr. Rossi's death June 27. She was 93.

Sr. Rossi served as academic dean of the College for Women from the college's opening in 1952 until 1967. In 1967, she was named dean emeritus, a post in which she served another seven years.

Under her leadership, the College for Women established various academic disciplines, secured all the necessary educational accreditations and began to establish its reputation as a center of learning and culture.

But Sr. Rossi was much more than the stereotypical administrator buried in paper behind a big desk. Those who knew her say she was a person who cared deeply about individuals and one who was as willing to wash dishes in the cafeteria as she was to address more complex matters facing the college.

Sr. Helen Lorch, RSCJ, '59, '65, assistant professor of history, who was a student during Sr. Rossi's years on campus, remembers her well. "Sometimes at dinner (in the cafeteria), here was this busy administrator, and she would get up from the table and do the dishes."

A native of San Francisco, Sr. Rossi was one of 10 children in her family. Her father, an Italian immigrant, started the Italian Swiss Colony Vineyards at Asti, Calif. Her mother was French, the daughter of Justianian Claire, who bought Santa Cruz Island as a private summer resort for his own

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family.

International wine merchants often visited the Rossi home, exposing the children to culture from around the world. The 10 children were required to speak French at dinner every night for a week, and to speak Italian at dinner every night the next week.

In a 1972 interview, Sr. Rossi recalled her decision to join the Sacred Heart order.

"It had been a perfect day at home, with warmth and love and great happiness. But when I went to my room that night the conviction came to me that there was something in life even better than that which I knew at home."

She joined the religious order of the Sacred Heart in 1918. Later she earned bachelor and master's degrees from Loyola University of Chicago and a doctorate from Stanford.

A citation presented to Sr. Rossi in 1972, when she was awarded an honorary doctorate from USD, reads, in part: "Her efforts on behalf of scholarships for music students and for development of the music department are legendary. Her counsel is sought out on matters of vital importance to education by students, faculty and administrators. Her ready and eager response to such impositions on her time and talent is without parallel."

Music was one of Sr. Rossi's special loves. She learned to play the piano at an early age, and was well known during her campus years as a tireless worker for the music department.

In 1971, an annual spring concert was created and named in her honor. Funds raised by the concert, which is still held each spring, provide financial aid to musically gifted students.

Survivors include three sisters, a brother and several nieces and nephews.