

Sister Valeria served Rodgers Forge school for more than four decades

School Sister of Notre Dame Mary Valeria Wagner is fondly remembered at St. Pius X School in Rodgers Forge, where, from 1973 to 2014, she taught kindergarten, first grade and later ministered as a volunteer.

Sister Valeria died Aug. 20 at Villa Assumpta in Baltimore, at age 93.

An Emmitsburg native, she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Mary in Hagerstown, at its grade school and then its high school. In an obituary prepared by the School Sisters, Sister Valeria was quoted as recalling that “I was thoroughly convinced that this was the order for me.”

She would spend 71 years in the order.

After 11 years teaching second grade at St. Rita’s School in Brooklyn, N.Y., Sister Valeria returned to Baltimore, teaching at Corpus Christi School, 1957-66, and St. Ann School, 1966-73. She then joined the staff of St. Pius X School, where she was a fixture for 41 years.

The concelebrants at her Aug. 30 funeral Mass at Villa Assumpta included one of her former students, Monsignor Richard Hilgartner, the pastor of St. Joseph in Cockeysville.

The friends she made there include Lissa Ruppert, the school’s student services coordinator, who has been on its staff since 1994.

“Sister Valeria was a friend as well as a colleague,” Ruppert told the Review. “She had the most wonderful outlook on life and the world. I gave her haircuts when she lived at St. Pius and treasured the time we spent just talking.

“She was the most caring, gentle, happy person, and she is missed every day. I still almost stop every time I am near the Motherhouse, just to go in and get a hug and a smile. She was amazing to adults and children alike.”

Her ministry included working with the Girl Scouts and Brownies, attending CYO basketball games, and participating in skating and bowling at children's birthday parties. An environmental pioneer, she was named Recycling Educator of the Year.

She also performed as a professional clown, "Waggs," entertaining children and senior citizens.

While in Baltimore, Sister Valeria earned a master's degree in reading from what is now Loyola University Maryland.