

space left by the beds, and she had brought in flowers and introduced „activity“ and exercises of practical life. When she came in with us it looked as if sunshine had come into a dark room, all the children’s faces lit up and they greeted us smilingly.

What a contrast with the apathetic, sad, crying children we had seen in other wards. When the mobile children were busy, as if it was a valuable gift she brought in an item of sensorial material to a child relegated in bed and left what she had shown on a wide tray across his lap so that the child could work by himself. Laughter and joy had entered into the life of these children in spite of their illness, but the trouble was that Nancy had disrupted the routine of the hospital and she was asked to leave when the head doctor — an understanding woman — was pensioned and a new head was appointed. Discipline and hospital routine was necessary.

But the nuns of Sion Hill had understood the value of her work and when some time later we heard of her again, she was directing a newly established class for „disturbed“ and crippled children. It was a congregation of children of different ages who suffered from various physical, behavioural ailments.

And there Nancy flourished, she was often hit by some of them, but in general all of them began to work and change in their behaviour. Self-reliance, self-control and above all joy had entered their lives and Nancy’s! Her immense patience and understanding the children’s troubled souls enhanced her native sense of humour with which she delighted all of us when we met at International Conferences or Congresses and recounted some of her experiences.

We had asked her to go and do a work-shop in Israel, she had accepted with joy, but death caught her before she could go.

Good-bye dear friend, you had endeared all of us and you have become now our unforgettable Nancy.

Mario M. Montessori

*

NANCY JORDAN (1908 - 1978).

June 6th, 1978, was a sad day for many people, children and adults alike, especially in and around Dublin, because early on that Saturday morning, Our Lady’s day, Miss Jordan died. Much could be said about her and many people will be ready and anxious to record their admiration for and impressions of Nancy in further editions of *Communications*. Mr. Montessori has already done so elsewhere in this issue and space here only permits of a very short biographical note from Dublin and an outline of her work with children and students in Ireland.

It is intended later on to trace the origin and development of her work in the area of Special Education in Ireland and give an account of how the Irish Training Course and its graduates came to be involved in — and officially recognized for — work with handicapped and deprived children in this country. Hopefully, this future article will show Miss Jordan’s great dedication to the welfare of children and to the guidance and training of students.

Miss Jordan once said she was associated with children „almost from my cradle“. So it is not surprising that one of her earliest positions as an adult was that of governess to a family in Rome. This was in the 1930's. When she also took the Course. One day during the exams of a course in London, Dr. Montessori — being keenly interested in the students — came along to examine some of them herself. Miss Jordan was the only one in that particular group who spoke Italian and so the inevitable happened! This incident probably marked the beginning of the friendship between these two women who were so alike in so many ways. On various occasions Miss Jordan was able to translate more exactly certain things that Dr. Montessori wanted to be sure were understood fully by her audience!

After her training Miss Jordan worked privately for a few years. Then she was employed in a small Children's Hospital in Dublin. Here under conditions that would daunt even the best of directresses, she did great work for the young patients, the majority of whom were long-term ones and confined to bed. Some years later certain changes were made in the hospital and it was at this stage (early 1960's) that Miss Jordan came to *Sion Hill* on a more full-time basis and at the invitation of Sister M. Jerome. Previous to that she had taken classes with the students, mainly for Practical Life and Sensorial. She had also begun — in a limited way — what was to become known as the *Benincasa course in Special Education*, but more of that in a future *Communications* and also about *Benincasa School*.

Miss Jordan worked in *Sion Hill* up to a few months before her death. Her great courage, infective optimism and generous good humour sustained her throughout her last illness. She was just seventy when she died.

Ar d'heis Dé go raibh a h-anam.

* * *