

Sister Rose Mack: From Caregiver to Parental Figure

In retirement, Sister Rose stepped into the role of a lifetime

Sister Rose Mack's remarkable life story, told in the Spring 2025 issue of the School Sisters of St. Francis's *Alive* magazine, includes Sister's unusual calling to become an infant caregiver when she was 68 years old. You can read the full article on our website's Publication page:

<https://www.sssf.org/SSSF/Media-Room/Publications.htm>

Answering an ad she saw in her parish bulletin was the first step in Sister Rose's four-decade labor of love with Kristi Buchman.

"From the very beginning, Rosie became an important part of our family," Kristi recalls. "As a baby and toddler, she cared for me at home. As my mom got sicker, she cared for her as well. And she always had dinner on the table when dad got home from work."

Sister Rose would walk Kristi to and from preschool, often spoiling her with a stop at the park's vending machine for a grape pop. But Kristi remembers that "life with Rosie wasn't all fun and games as a spoiled girl. Neither of us remembers what I did to deserve it, but she once chased me around our house with a wooden spoon threatening to spank me. I think I laughed the whole time, and I'm certain she could've caught me if she really wanted to, but she always did her best to keep me out of trouble. She also insists that my mom gave her permission to spank me when I deserved it!"

In the early years of caring for Kristi, Sister Rose shared an apartment with Sister Eva Heck and lived in a house with other sisters. When asked about their reactions to a retirement-age sister caring for a toddler, Sister Rose smiled and said, "They never said anything to me!"

Sleepovers with Sister Rose and Sister Eva were a frequent joy for Kristi. "The three would stay up past bedtime, watching movies, playing games, creating crafts, and eating plenty of junk food."

After Sister Eva passed away, Sister Rose moved into an apartment next to Kristi's house, becoming her next-door neighbor. Sister Rose made breakfast every morning and walked Kristi to her grade school, even though the school was just across the street and most parents simply watched from the door. She continued this morning routine through Kristi's high school years, driving her to school every day. This daily gesture reflects Sister Rose's boundless heart and unwavering love for those she cares about. "Sister Rose promised my mom that she would take care of me for as long as she could," Kristi said. "And for nearly 40 years, she has taken that promise to heart."

After Kristi graduated high school and moved away for college, Sister Rose continued to help Kristi's dad with housekeeping until she retired at age 92 and moved to Campbellsport, Wisconsin. Kristi now lives in Indianapolis, Indiana, where she works as a paralegal, but the distance between Kristi and Sister Rose has not weakened their bond. Their connection remains as strong as ever, and they continue to be an essential part of each other's lives, learning from one another as they journey through life.

Kristi recalls buying Sister Rose her first laptop and teaching her how to use Gmail, Skype, and Facebook. In return, Sister Rose taught Kristi how to cook, bake, and guided her through making her

first Thanksgiving dinner. Kristi remembers spending seven hours on the phone with Sister Rose, learning all the ins and outs of roasting her first turkey. Even now, they continue to share new experiences and learn from each other.

Reflecting on their special bond, Kristi says, “Rosie has been a constant, loving, and beautiful part of my life. As much as I can’t fathom what it’s like to celebrate 90 years as a sister, a life without Rosie would be even less imaginable to me.”