

SISTER HILARY - GREY NUN FAREWELL MESSAGE/1978

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Narrator: Sister Hilary. Dr. Bob Johnson is also heard.
Date: May 15, 1978
Place: American Legion Hall, Kodiak, Alaska
Contents: Goodbye for Testimonial Banquet for the Grey
Nuns

SH: Kind Friends and Gentle Hearts:

I do not know whether or not that is a correct quotation. Something niggling at the base of my brain tells me it is not, but nevertheless, it is the way I feel. And since this little talk, and I promise you it will be short, is not entirely a happy one, I'm going to let that stand. How to say goodbye gracefully, I don't know. I think goodbyes are a little like dying, just a little. A part of us dies every time we say it, finally. And this is particularly an unhappy one.

Thirty-four years ago, we came to Kodiak, really almost in a comic state of mind, because no one of us knew what we were going to meet. We didn't know whether we would meet wild animals in the streets or a civilized community. We were rather happy to find that the latter was the rule. But the other would have been interesting, too, at least temporarily. I do recall that on the second day of our stay in Kodiak--we were living for a week in a large house that I think has since been demolished, overlooking a field--and when we looked out the kitchen window the next morning to see what kind of a

view we would have, we looked deep into the eyes of a gentle brown-eyed cow. And she looked so surprised and so curious that we almost let her in. That was our introduction to Kodiak. However, subsequent days, weeks, and years were much more interesting than that and proved to be very, very fruitful in many ways, not in all the ways we might have liked perhaps, but we did, I think, accomplish something that will remain in the form of a new hospital.

The work was tremendous. The contracting of the proper people to get the grants that we were supposed to be entitled to, all of that follow-up work, meant hours and hours of time, thought, travel, labor, until finally the hospital was an accomplished fact. We hope that it will stand for many years and that sometimes, just sometimes, our friends will look at it and remember. Then we did establish a school which we also hope will remain and endure--not forever, nothing lasts forever except Heaven, and, well, I guess any child will tell you that school is not Heaven.

However, this is supposed to be a farewell letter. And I want you to know that the Grey Nuns feel that none of this could have been accomplished--I have said "nothing," you note--of the care of the sick, but none of it could have been done without the unfailing support--

spiritual, moral, and physical, plus financial, of course--of many friends in Kodiak and the area surrounding it. And to our own friends from our own homes, our own home parishes particularly, [who] gave us a great deal of support from the beginning and encouraged and helped us along. For all of this, we are most grateful. And we leave Kodiak with a great sense of loss, but a feeling that something has been achieved that was not there before we came. I hope our successors will enjoy it as much as we did, will come to love the place. The scenery, of course, is unsurpassed. That we all agreed to without exception. But the contacts that we made with people in the town, people at the Base, and now, I suppose with the Coast Guard personnel, all of these changes having been made since I left there. All of these would have been impossible had we not had the support of these people, too. And, indeed, the Navy was a great help to us in emergencies and in many ways. And for all of this we are grateful.

And so, the time has come when goodbyes must be said. It is not a pretty word, except in its original meaning. So I leave you with that wish: God be with you, now and always, and please do spare a thought occasionally to the Grey Nuns of the Sacred heart. Thank you. Thank you all beginning with November 11, 1944, and

continuing down to this day. May you be richly rewarded for your kindness and generosity towards the sisters.

Sincerely yours,

Sister St. Hilary

Dear Dr. Bob:

I hope this hasn't been too long. I could have made it shorter, I suppose, but I had to be a little bit pleasant, too, even though this is a sad occasion. So, what probably should I say? I wish I could have been with you. And I probably would have if I'd pressed the point, but I am afraid I never could stand it. I don't think I remembered to tell you that Father Talbot was here a few weeks ago for an overnight visit. I enjoyed seeing him very much and we did a lot of reminiscing, so thank you for asking me to do this little tape. And please remember me to your family and your mother and any inquiring friends. So many changes have taken place, I do not know who is still there. But I hope there are some who will remember the past. So goodbye now, and if you are ever East, as far as New York, and do not come down to Yardley, I shall haunt you, and I mean it. So goodbye, Doctor, and thank you for all your many kindnesses to me personally and to all the sisters. God bless you all.

Sister Hilary

Doctor Bob Johnson: That was Sister Hilary, Ladies and Gentlemen. She is, I think, eighty-six years of age. She spent twenty-five long years here and will be remembered by all of those who knew her. And you, Sister Hilary, I would like to say "Thank you for the taped letter." It wasn't too long. It was just right. And now that you've listened to this tape, you are aware that there are people here who remember you as well as each of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart who will have served here. And, as Sister Hilary has said, saying goodbye is like a little death, but it also has its little immortality. And, as you have said, Sister Josephine, that little immortality is represented in the minds of the Grey Nuns as the memory of Kodiak which will remain with you for the rest of your lives. And I would like to say to you in turn, that the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart have achieved a little immortality with those of us who live in Kodiak for as long as we live. And as long as there is a Kodiak, it will be a matter of record. And so, Sister Josephine, Sister Julia Lanigan, Sister Margaret Barnhardt, Sister Margaret Turner, and all the Sisters when they hear this tape, we wish you good luck. Bon voyage! May your future challenges be good ones and

may God bless you.

And now I have an unfortunate confession to make. I regret that your Toastmaster has cut off both ends of this tape. I neglected to start the tape in time to catch Reverend Wesley Powell's Invocation. And, unfortunately, I forgot to turn the tape back on after we switched tapes and I also missed the Benediction which was performed by Father Irwin bates. What can I say? Aside from that, it has been a memorable program. It's been one I enjoyed and I would like to say sincerely to each of you that I hope you enjoy it and I hope it will give you a memory that you will treasure as we treasure the memory of each of you. God bless you every one.

END TAPE