

Beginnings of the Latin American District

Mother Georgianne's Visit to Chile

The Northeastern Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, 2005

Chile Lindo 1962 - 1973

Kay O'Connell, SSND

An incident involving the new general council that was elected at the first session of the 13th General Chapter in Rome in 1968 will round out this summary account of SSND in Chile during the 60s. For the *Recuerdos de Chile* in 1989, Mother M. Georgianne Segner wrote this of a very significant event of 1969 that was to become a strong bond among all the School Sisters on the South American continent.

In late October 1969, Sister M. Loretto Gies, General Councilor from Canada, and I were welcomed on a cold evening at the airport in Santiago, Chile by the SSND community of San Ignacio and St. George College. I immediately had a feeling of "coming home..." During my trips to Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, I developed a bad cold with fever. Since I was unable to break it, it was decided to fly on to Chile and there see a doctor who then ordered bed rest. . . .

I recall one of our unique experiences. When we flew from Brazil to Paraguay, we traveled with S. Margarida Martins who was going to her mission in Francisco Beltrão. When the plane landed at Iguazu Falls, at the junction of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, there were two groups of SSND awaiting us - one group for S. Margarida, the other for S. Loretto and me. Neither group had ever seen the other before, nor had they any idea all were SSND. This was an enlightening encounter for each group to realize that the re were SSNDs in neighboring countries.

As S. Loretto and I shared this experience in Chile, our dialogue led us to the idea of forming an SSND SOUTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE for the purpose of sharing experiences, and of collaboration among all SSND efforts for the sisters in both South and Central America. The sisters in Chile were so excited and immediately offered to host the first [one] if the idea materialized. So it came to pass that the FIRST MEETING was held in Chile from January 24 – February 1, 1971. Sister Mary Luke Baldwin, General Councilor from Milwaukee, was the official representative of the General Council. This was the beginning of an effort for UNITY, which in time developed to include all Latin American countries. I am delighted that this conference still meets today.ⁱ

It was typical of "Mother G." that her impulse was to foster face-to-face encounters so that sisters would become accustomed to dialoguing about common interests.

ⁱ *Recuerdos de Chile*, March 1989, Number 3, p. 3.