

Sister Mary Jean Dorcy

Born Frances Emma Dorcy in 1914, she is revered by the entire family. Her legacy of unique, beautiful works of art will ensure her lasting memory.

It was in the height of the depression. Frances Dorcy, the youngest of nine children, was graduating from high school. She showed such great promise that her brothers and sisters gathered her tuition for the University of Washington. During her freshman year there Frances worked for her room and board at a Dominican School. The sisters impressed her so much that she chose to join their order at the close of the school year. Her family was stunned. They tried to change her mind even up to the last minutes she was packing in that summer of 1931. What if she didn't like it and couldn't get out? So great was their concern they insisted on a code word for "help". Frances said, as she stuffed some scissors she was swiping from her mother and which scissors had fascinated her since she was 2 years old, into her sewing basket, "O.K. if I say 'black handled scissors', come and get me." She nearly used the code. Finding a niche in convent life eluded Sister Mary Jean, the name she was given when she entered the convent. Cooking, nursing, bookkeeping and gardening proved not to be her forte. Almost in jest she was given an Austrian paper cutting to copy. The results were astounding. Mary Jean's talent had been discovered with the aid of the black handled scissors.

Sister Mary Jean went on to earn both undergraduate and graduate degrees in art. By the 1940's she was one of America's leading paper cutters. She was a well known author and had one best seller, *The Shepherd's Tartan*. She treasured the reviews from that book. During 20 years she researched and published *St. Dominic's Family*, about more than 300 famous Dominicans. She wrote, illustrated and published 18 children's books which were translated into several languages including Chinese. Her art was published in Japan, Sweden, Holland, Ireland, France, Italy, Thailand and even Africa. Her cuttings have been displayed in both the Vatican and the Smithsonian.

She worked with the Tulalip Indians for a while and also was stationed in San Leandro, California before her decision to volunteer for Latin American missions. Sister Mary Jean spent the late 1960's in Mexico staffing an orphanage. Her final paper cuttings were a set of six Mexican children's designs published exclusively for the home's use.

In later years arthritis prevented her from holding scissors; but still, from a portfolio of over three thousand silhouettes, her inspired art continues to touch people world wide. Her personal Hallmark is the name Dorcy in script with a pair of black handled scissors above the *orcy* part of Dorcy.



Sister Mary Jean Dorcy

The Descendants of John Dorcy, Civil War Soldier

Sister Mary Jean spent her last years severely handicapped and bed-ridden in her community's convent in Assumption Parish in Seattle. She never lost her wit and with nimble mind, she continued to create. Using a lap board with pencil attached, she worked on her 23rd book, embroidery, letter writing, etc. She was a gracious and delightful hostess to everyone who visited her and told us wonderful stories.

Sister Mary Jean died in Seattle in 1988 and is buried in Calvary Cemetery.

