

Death Notice

SISTER MARIA SEVERINA

ND 3991

Helene MEYER



Maria Regina Province, Coesfeld, Germany

Date and Place of Birth:	October 7, 1923	Cologne, Germany
Date and Place of Profession:	August 15, 1951	Mülhausen
Date and Place of Death:	July 25, 2017	Mülhausen, Infirmary
Date and Place of Funeral:	July 31, 2017	Mülhausen, Convent Cemetery

Helene was born in the midst of the world economic crisis when inflation was increasing and unemployment high. Her father, Walter, came from a Jewish family and worked as a master butcher at the slaughterhouse in Cologne. Her mother, Wilhelmine, was a housewife. She lovingly took care of little Leni and her sister, Ruth, two years her junior. In spite of the economic hardships, with creative love the parents succeeded in providing a happy childhood and youth for their two daughters and opened their eyes and hearts to people in need. Deeply rooted in Catholicism and equipped with the humor of the people from Cologne, the children were able to overcome the separation and suffering which were to affect the family.

At an early time, the father, in particular, and also the children felt the hatred of the National Socialists against the Jews, which isolated them more and more. They drew strength from their ties to the church and from the support of their large family. Very reluctantly, the parents separated to protect the mother and the children from anti-Semitism, but Leni did not want to leave her father alone and moved with him into a flat. She stayed by his side until he was deported to a concentration camp. Twenty-five to thirty relatives of her father's family died in concentration camps. Two of her father's brothers managed to flee to South and North America. Sister had close contacts with her relatives in the USA.

Leni was lovingly welcomed by the Sisters of Notre Dame in Cologne. She completed her mandatory year of service with them (*in 1938 the National Socialists obliged all women under the age of twenty-five to spend a year of service "on a farm or in housekeeping"*) and got to know the sisters more closely.

The heavy bombing raids in Cologne forced the sisters and co-workers to flee to Saxony. After the Second World War, Leni completed formation as children's nurse, and on February 1, 1949, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame. At her investment, she received the name Sister Maria Severina.

As children's nurse and after further formation as childcare worker, Sr. M. Severina worked during all her religious life with handicapped children and youth, especially at Heinrich House in Neuwied-Engers and at Vinzenz House in Aachen. In Aachen, she was also local superior and a member of the board from 1992 till the closure of the community in 2007.

Sr. M. Severina's many professional skills, her creativity, and especially her friendliness, her readiness to help, and her humor as well as her deep faith and her love of life affected the young people entrusted to her. Many of them stayed in contact with her into her old age. Her special love was devoted to children whose physical disabilities were caused by the drug Contergan.

Her own painful experiences as a child and a youth made her strong and sensitive to the needs of others. They helped her to remain joyful and thankful in illness and old age and to offer others the gift of a friendly word and a warm smile.

In the early hours of July 25, 2017, the good God called her into her eternal home. We thank her for the witness of her life and for all the good traces she has left behind.