

# Mary Hall started national 'block rosary' effort

By Robert Delaney

Of The Michigan Catholic

LINCOLN PARK — A group still meets once a week at Mary Hall's house to say the rosary, even though the woman who gained national attention in the 1940s and '50s for promoting the idea of the "block rosary" died June 23 at the age of 81.

Gabriel Hall, of Riverview, remembers

growing up in that house when it would be full of people saying the rosary every Wednesday night.

"We've changed it to Thursday mornings at 10 o'clock, but my brothers and sisters and I still attend," Hall told The Michigan Catholic on Monday.

He can remember coming home after school to the house on Morris Street to help

his mother make rosaries for the missions or going with her to rosary gatherings in other people's homes.

"Sometimes we'd drive as far as Flint, and sometimes there would be such large groups of people they would meet in a hall," Hall recounted.

And he can remember listening to the radio and hearing Bishop Fulton J. Sheen talking about his mother on the late bishop's nation-wide program.

"Ever since my mother died, I've been getting calls from all over the country from people who remember her," Hall said. "A number of them have urged us to turn my mother's house into a shrine to the Blessed Mother and continue the rosary there. It's something we're considering."

The remarkable events that led Mary Hall to devote her life to promoting the adoration of the Blessed Virgin began during World War II, when a young Mary Dietrich — as she then was — became worried about her brothers.

"In 1944, one of her brothers was killed at Anzio, and she hadn't heard from any of her other four brothers in about a month. Two were in the Marines, one was in the Army and the other was in the Navy, and they all were in the South Pacific," Gabriel Hall said.

Then came news that the battle of Iwo Jima was in progress, and that it was one of the bloodiest of the war — and that the unit in which one of her brothers was serving was leading the assault.

Consumed with the idea that she must do something to save her brothers, she began fervently praying the rosary.

"At about a quarter to three in the afternoon one day, my mother received a visit from the Blessed Mother. My mother had been praying so long for her brothers' safety, and Our lady said that, if she would persuade other people to pray the rosary, She would protect her brothers," Gabriel Hall recounted.



Mary Hall

"My mother was very frightened, so she talked with a priest. He convinced her it was a real visitation, and she went back home and began to carry out the instructions. From 1944 on, my mother devoted her whole life to the Blessed Mother."

Thus began what turned into a national campaign to promote weekly rosary groups — and all four brothers made it home from the war.

The idea of the "block rosary" was that as many people as were willing in a neighborhood — a whole city block, if possible — should meet once a week at a different home to say the rosary together.

Gabriel Hall described his mother as "one of the most humble, most charitable people you've ever known. 'My father or one of us would give her a gift, and she would almost always give it away to someone she thought needed it more. She always said her reward in life was not here on earth, but would be elsewhere.'"

Her involvement in "block rosaries" continued until the end, not only with the weekly meetings at her Lincoln Park home but also with a group at the King Haven retirement home on King Road in Riverview.

Mary Hall was for most of her life a member of Lincoln Park's St. Henry Parish. In her later years, she attended Holy Family Parish in downtown Detroit.

"She was a very devout follower of the Latin Mass — the Tridentine Mass," Gabriel Hall said. "We had her funeral at my parish, St. Joseph's in Trenton, June 26, and Fr. Leonard Wallace said the Latin Tridentine Mass for her."

Mary Hall was preceded in death by her husband, Marion Wade Hall Sr., in 1966, but she is survived by her six children, including — besides Gabriel — sons, Marion Jr. of Grosse Ile, John of Riverview and Dominic of Trenton; daughters, Mary Elizabeth Haupt of Taylor and Rosemary Noe of Ontario, Calif.; brothers Dominic Dietrich of Sterling Heights, Louis Dietrich of Garden City, and Stephen Dietrich of Florida; and sisters, Stephanie Ballard of Detroit and Josephine Spuck of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

THE MICHIGAN CATHOLIC, August 2, 1991—