

Sister Carol Hoverman, a Sister of St. Francis, is pictured in this undated photo. She died Oct. 3 at age 80. Sister Hoverman was the first woman to be named editor of The Witness, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, and had been in religious life for 63 years. (CNS/The Witness)

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Sr. Carol Hoverman, a Sister of St. Francis, who was at the forefront of Catholic communications for over three decades, died Oct. 3. She was 80 and had been in religious life for 63 years.

Hoverman was the first director of communications in the history of the Archdiocese of Dubuque and the first woman to be editor of The Witness, the official archdiocesan publication. She also distinguished herself in the fields of video production and music. Hoverman retired in late 2014 from her archdiocesan position.

In a 2015 interview, she described her time in communications ministry as an "unfolding journey."

"I would say the whole 34 years were a wonderful adventure," she said. "It was a wonderful time because the church was just waking up to the potential of media evangelization. I treasure the relationships with diocesan staff, communication directors and editors in Iowa and nationwide. I just never could have imagined how God would guide my life in this direction."

In recent years, Hoverman continued her work in music ministry at the linked parishes of St. Patrick and the Cathedral of St. Raphael in Dubuque. A funeral Mass is scheduled for Oct. 7.

A member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Most Holy Family of Dubuque, Hoverman was born in Alta Vista, Iowa, in 1938. She heard the call of her vocation early in life, inspired by the example of the sisters who taught her in elementary school. She entered her congregation in 1956; was received with the name Sr. Mary Angela Merici in 1957 and made her final vows in 1962.

An accomplished pianist, Hoverman began her focus on communications after working as a music teacher for many years. She first taught at Sacred Heart School in Melrose Park, Illinois, until 1969 and then at St. Mary’s School in Dubuque from 1969 to 1982. During that time, she began nurturing an interest in photography and writing. She eventually enrolled in a class on video sponsored by a local cable company.

Archbishop James Byrne asked her to begin working part-time for the Dubuque Archdiocese in 1980. In 1982, she became the full-time director of communications. From 1982 to 1985, she produced segments for "Real to Real," a faith based weekly TV series that was a collaborative effort of the archdiocese and the Iowa dioceses of Davenport, Des Moines and Sioux City and the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska.

Hoverman assisted in directing the filming of the installation of Archbishop Daniel W. Kucera in 1984. The event was broadcast live to a statewide TV audience. She was involved in many other video projects.

During this period, Hovermanl also contributed to The Witness. In late 2001, Archbishop Jerome Hanus, offered Carol the position of editor. She filled the roles of director of communications and editor from that time forward. She also continued to serve in music ministry.

Carol took particular pride in featuring the people of the archdiocese engaged in positive efforts, including stories on women in the church. Under her tenure, the newspaper did many series on vocations and discernment.

Carol also had to deal with some difficult stories such as the sex abuse scandals that shook Dubuque and many other dioceses in the early to mid-2000s and the Postville, Iowa, immigration raid of 2008, which garnered national attention.

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