

Story of the "Little Nun"

In 1963-1964, my parents both worked and needed day care for me, then an only child. At that time, there was a girls' school at the "Marcotte Home" (now "D'Youville Pavilion"), managed by the Grey Nuns. For about a year and a half, I attended that school during the week, and being three-four years old, was one of the youngest there. My parents would drop me off on Sunday nights and pick me up on Friday afternoons. None of us recall it being an orphanage as is referenced on notes to the picture online, but that is possible.

My father's mother, Yvonne Bergeron Garant (a resident of Little Canada, on Oxford Street), was a very talented seamstress, knitter and crocheter. She could look at something and then just make it. One day, she decided she would make me a nun's habit, an exact replica of the habits worn by the Grey Nuns who took care of me. My father was a part-time professional photographer and took photographs on weekends for Roger Bisson (Bisson Studios), so my grandmother asked him to take a picture of some of the nuns for my grandmother to have while she sewed. She asked the nuns for some scrap materials from the habits they sewed for themselves. Then she drew a pattern my size, and created an exact scaled-down replica of the nuns' habits using their materials. My parents found a small band for my finger and a crucifix to wear around my neck, which completed the "look."

I recall feeling the material was "itchy" when my grandmother was fitting the outfit on me, and I recall her making me stand still on a stool while she pinned the pieces on me. I also remember my modeling debut, the "unveiling" so-to-speak, of the finished product. I was traumatized by the mob attention I received when my parents took me to Marcotte Home to show everyone. I remember being overwhelmed by the attention even by all these girls and the nuns that I saw almost every day.

My father recalls that as we were going into the building, some nuns who were leaving chapel saw me going by, and surrounded me to admire my grandmother's handiwork. A priest came out of the chapel and apparently thought that a nun had fainted or was on her knees and the other nuns were trying to help her. He was shocked to see me, a 3 year old "nun."

I remember that as the girls swarmed me in the main room, several of them asked me "will you be MY little 'Sister?'"

I left the Marcotte Home early the following year. My father's new job took us to Biddeford so we moved, and I went to school there.

The picture you have is a copy of the one my father, Germain Garant, took at my grandmother's apartment in Little Canada. He gave a copy of the picture to the nuns. We can only imagine how the picture ended up in the collection.

I still have the nun's habit and attach some pictures of it.

Felicia Garant
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