

Barbara Marie Wisniewski was born in Chicago on October 20, 1934. We would later come to know her by the name she chose to honor her mother (Clara) and her only sibling (Joan) and with a last name the family shortened.

Barbara attended Chicago Catholic schools: St. Kevin elementary school and then St. Frances de Sales high school where she was taught by Joliet Franciscans. After graduating in 1952, she entered the Joliet community from her parish, St. Josephat. She expressed gratitude for her high school teachers, especially Sr. Marie Schramko and Sr. Cyrinus Flaska whose Franciscan spirit inspired and drew her. "Being called to be a Franciscan was special to me," she later wrote.

Ever afterward known as Sr. Joan Clare Wisner, "Joanie" embarked on furthering her education. She received a BA in education in 1963 from the College of St. Francis in Joliet and an MA in administration from DePaul University in Chicago in 1974. Always seeking to update her education and stay abreast of new ideas, she continued to attend workshops and conferences across the country. She received professional input from Aquinas Institute of Theology in Dubuque, Iowa, College Misericordia in Pennsylvania, Weber Center in Michigan, and Notre Dame in Indiana (some examples).

Meanwhile, as she was growing in knowledge, Sr. Joan Clare was also imparting it. She spent her first twelve years in ministry as an elementary school teacher. From 1967 to 1975, she was an elementary school principal. She served in Wheaton, Chicago, Teutopolis, Romeoville and Joliet, Illinois, and in Ashland and Columbus, Ohio. "I really enjoyed these years," she said. "At St. Andrew's in Romeoville, I worked with students to form a



club called 'Dare to Be Different.' At one point we raised funds for a trip to Washington, D.C." Ever mindful of her experiences at the Capital, and always in touch with the needs of current times, Joan Clare's final words as she was dying on October 14, 2026, were "I'm going to be praying for our country."

Joan Clare's next ministry, after 1975, was when she brought her organizational and counseling skills to the Motherhouse in Joliet where she became the coordinator and administrator until 2003. It was during that long stretch of time that so many members of the community experienced Joan Clare as a kind, compassionate, helpful person. Her expertise extended from driving to dealing with people. "She had the ability to talk with anyone who needed assistance and was there to help no matter what the job was," said a sister who observed and experienced her gift for servant leadership.

In 1992, Sr. Joan Clare took on the additional responsibility for being the Guardian Angel Home Building and Grounds Administrator, where she directed and supervised day-to-day activities related to the care and operation of the facility and the safety of everyone in and around GAH. One sister described how she was an expert in helping the workmen figure out how to repair something. Sister Joan Clare said that although she had loved teaching, her happiest moments came from caring

for the Motherhouse, Guardian Angel Home, and the community's two vacation houses on the Fox and Kankakee Rivers. She also said, "I consider myself a mover," because she assisted so many sisters who had to leave their residences. At the Motherhouse, she received sisters from St. Francis Academy and the University of St. Francis. From the Motherhouse, she moved them to Guardian Angel Home. While maintaining buildings and grounds, she felt humbled by personal contact with sisters and staff at these facilities. She saw working with our sisters as a blessing. "Their life-changing decisions brought us closer to God together," she said.

One of Joan Clare's dearest friends at the Motherhouse was our community's artist laureate, Sr. Kay Francis Berger. As Motherhouse Resident Coordinator, Joan Clare's primary focus was the sisters, and her job description said she was "To set the tone and spirit of the Motherhouse as a Franciscan home as well as a place of Franciscan hospitality." The creation of the "Canticle Art Studio" certainly fulfilled that focus, and Joan Clare became a protector and promoter of all the artwork that emerged from Kay Francis' talented hands and heart. Joan Clare's Franciscan spirituality emerged from "Francis and Clare showing me how to love and be compassionate." She shared their love of nature and praising God for all things. She felt a special concern for those treated unjustly. Daily Eucharist and the book of Franciscan morning and evening prayers helped her stay focused.

One of the most challenging responsibilities Sr. Joan Clare ever faced was having to close the Motherhouse. She said there were so many emotions! Over one hundred people helped. "So many hearts were shaken", she said, "but with the grace of God, all was accomplished." Sisters and Associates who helped could attest to the fact that the "grace of God" included Joan

Clare's tremendous organizational skills as she directed the collection and disbursement of each room's contents all while riding through the halls on a golf cart.

Sr. Joan Clare's administration responsibilities for Guardian Angel Home ended with her retirement in 2010. From 2011 to 2026, she continued to look after and care for others wherever she lived. The "mover" herself became one who had to move often...from the Franciscan Village in Joliet to Our Lady of Angels until it closed; from there to StoryPoint in Romeoville, then to Heritage Woods in Minooka and finally to St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville. Wherever she went, she remained available and connected to other residents, making people feel important and at home.

Dear Joan Clare, to you who found meaning in being with people and who always enjoyed a good party, we wish you a very happy 92nd birthday celebration this day in heaven! We join with your prayers for our country, and we wish you all peace and good in the presence of God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia Letter written by Sr. Karen Berry

Sister Joan Clare Wisner, OSF

October 20, 1934 — October 14, 2026

Born:	October 20, 1934 — October 14, 2026
Mother:	Clara Wilbrot
Postulancy:	September 2, 1952
Novitiate:	August 13, 1953
First Profession:	August 12, 1955
Final Profession:	August 13, 1958
Entered New Life:	October 14, 2026

Ministry History

1955-1956	Teacher: Grade 4, St. Mary, Columbus, Ohio
1956-1957	Teacher: Grade 5, Sacred Heart-Englewood, Chicago, Illinois
1957-1959	Teacher: Grade 4, Ss. Peter and Paul, Chicago
1959-1965	Teacher: Grades 4, 5, 6, 8, St. Paul the Apostle, Joliet, Illinois
1965-1967	Teacher: Grade 8, St. Andrew, Romeoville, Illinois
1967-1968	Superior/Principal/Teacher: Grade 8, St. Mark, Wheaton, Illinois
1968-1969	Superior/Principal/Teacher: Grade 8, St. Edward, Ashland, Ohio
1969-1971	Teacher: Grades 7, 8, St. Andrew, Romeoville
1971-1972	Principal: St. Andrew, Romeoville
1972-1973	Part-time: St. Andrew, Romeoville
1973-1974	Principal: Mary Help of Christians, Green Creek, Illinois, Sacred Heart, Lillyville, Illinois
1974-1975	Principal: St. Joseph, Joliet, Illinois
1975-1977	Coordinator (Local): Motherhouse, Joliet
1977-1979	Administrator: Motherhouse, Joliet
1979-1983	Co-Administrator: Motherhouse, Joliet
1983-1985	Administrator: Motherhouse, Joliet
1985-1992	Co-Administrator: Motherhouse, Joliet
1992-1996	Administrator: Motherhouse, Vacation Houses, Guardian Angel Home Building and Grounds
1996-2003	Administrator/Building and Grounds: Motherhouse, Vacation House, Guardian Angel
2003-2010	Building and Grounds Administrator: Guardian Angel Home, Joliet
2010-2011	In Transition
2011-2021	Volunteer: Joliet
2021-2023	Ministry of Service and Presence: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
2023-2024	Ministry of Presence and Prayer: StoryPoint, Romeoville, Illinois
2024-2025	Ministry of Presence and Prayer: Heritage Woods, Minooka, Illinois
2025-2026	Ministry of Presence and Prayer: St. Patrick's Residence, Naperville, Illinois

Inurnment:	Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
Predeceased by:	Her mother, Clara Wilbrot, her sister Joan, brother-in-law Joseph, and niece Janet Hedrick, Mount Prospect, Illinois,
Survived by:	Her nephew Thomas Hedrick (Dawn), Palatine, Illinois, her niece Pat Hedrick, many friends, gracious colleagues and many Joliet Franciscans

Rest in Peace, Joan Clare!