Mary Hasbrouck kept a box. It was an Abdallah’s Banquet Chocolate Assortment candy box. With the candies long gone, Mary began to keep another assortment, this assortment grew to include newspaper clippings, correspondence, her own writings of people she had met over nearly 86 years of life.

In that box is a booklet, LIFESCAPE, a reflection Mary wrote about her mother Mary Magdalen Woodley Hasbrouck. Mary wrote that her mother was the “core and heart” of family life. Her mother called Mary, “Glory,” perhaps because Mary was such a wonderful surprise being the youngest, and perhaps unexpected, eighth child, being born on Oct. 29, 1934.

The memoir also included memories of her father, Egbert J. Hasbrouck. Of her beloved father, Mary said, so often, “I love my Daddy!” She said her Dad was a good chef, “a very good chef.”

The booklet LIFESCAPE, and the stories it contains, can be summarized in Mary’s own loving words: “Truly, life is an entanglement, shafts of life, unfolding blossoms, births, a cosmic history interwoven with heartache, loss, war, and death.”

As Mary’s life evolved, those words would characterize her life. Mary left her family home in Marshall, Minnesota, to attend the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. Upon completion of her freshman year, she decided the time was right to join the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet on the campus adjoining the college.

While she pursued under-graduate and graduate degrees, Mary kept a clear focus on what she could do for others and that included being a teacher, principal, adult religious educator, pastoral associate, assistant province director, to identify just a few positions. Wrapped within these years is a myriad of life experiences that included travel and on-going education in politics and economics, scripture, CSJ spirituality, creation spirituality. The focus of her life-study was always to find ways to better relate to her “dear neighbors.”

Mary lived a very active life and was often found, during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, in the front line of demonstrations against the Viet Nam War and racial injustice, nor was she hesitant to speak boldly for church reform and renewal. She always supported people fleeing from addiction, looking for a home, needing work – anyone needing someone to care about and love them.

And so it was that in 1969 that Mary and her beloved CSJ friend Patrice Neuberger moved from the convent adjoining Ascension School, where they were co-principals, into a home on Fremont Avenue in a nearby Minneapolis neighborhood. Mary and Patrice convinced CSJ
leadership to buy the home, desperately in need of repair, for $4000. The neighborhood was changing dramatically with white people moving out and minority groups moving in. Through it all, Mary and Patrice said good-bye to some people and then warmly welcomed their new neighbors, including politicians whose voting records Mary and Patrice always tried to influence. They made so many life-long friends, from so many racial and cultural backgrounds.

Others wanted to welcome Mary and Patrice into their homes or parishes. And so it was that Mary and Patrice joined parishes other than Ascension – St. Philip’s, St. Olaf’s, St Joan of Arc – sometimes they were “just” parishioners, and at other times Mary was invited to help educate those interested in the Catholic Church. For Mary, her conversations and instructions focused clearly on the Gospel call to love one another. That was the heart of her faith and that is the gift she shared with and helped develop in others.

Mary and Patrice continued to live on Fremont Avenue where neighbors and strangers were often invited in for prayer and a simple meal. With Patrice’s death in 2011, home life changed dramatically for Mary, yet she continued to live on Fremont until 2016 when she decided home-upkeep was getting to be just a bit too challenging. She moved to an apartment in Carondelet Village where her Minneapolis neighbors and friends continued to visit her, along with CSJs and new neighbors living at Carondelet Village.

Wherever Mary was throughout her life, she always had a story to tell – a story that captivated her friends, spun, in Mary’s own somewhat monotone way, yet so engaging voice. There are probably six or seven Hasbrouck generations that thrived on these stories, Mary’s political commentaries, and, her encouragement to pursue a spiritual life. Mary was always the “Great Aunt.”

Going back to LIFESCAPE, Mary’s words about her mother perfectly portray her own life: “...she is found not only in memory, but wherever beauty brightens the day, a playful sun, a tree in blossom, an act of kindness.”

Offered by Mary’s grand-niece, Danielle Hasbrouck:

Mary will never really be gone. Our lives aren't just our own; I would not be the person I am now if it weren't for Mary. Since I am living, a little light of Mary still lives. We don't even know how many little lights and flames of Mary are burning all over the world. I don't know if there is an afterlife in which her spirit can see me, but I know I will see her spirit in every kind thing I do, for my whole life.

Mary is preceded in death by her parents; sister Lorraine; brothers Ed, Tom, Joe, Bert, Al, and Bill Hasbrouck. She is survived by sister-in-law Barb (Tom) Hasbrouck; many nieces and nephews; grandnieces and grandnephews; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Friday, September 27, 2019, 11:00 AM, in Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel, 1884 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, with Visitation at 10:00 AM preceding Mass. Burial at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights, MN.

Sister Mary, rest in love and peace.