NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Annette Funicello, original Mouseketeer, dies at 70

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Apr. 9, 2013 NCR Today

Annette Funicello, arguably the most famous Disney Mousketeer of all, died Monday in Los Angeles from complications from multiple sclerosis.

Funicello was born in 1942 in Utica, N.Y., to Italian-American parents. She moved to Southern California with her family at age 4. She sang, danced and modeled and was discovered at the age of 12 by Walt Disney when he saw her perform. He invited her to audition for his new television show for children, "The Mickey Mouse Club."

When the show debuted, I was 4 years old, and my family was living in San Diego. My parents could never afford to take us kids to Disneyland, but we had the Mouseketeer hats and would put them on and gather around the television whenever the show was on. I remember the excitement! And I remember Annette Funicello through her singing and her film career, especially "The Shaggy Dog [1]" and the "Beach Party [2]" movies -- though my mother wouldn't let me see them.

Annette Funicello was diagnosed with MS in 1987 but kept it secret until 1992, when the condition became obvious. For many years, she has been one of my "saints" since I, too, have MS. Her courage and cheerfulness in dealing with the mystery of this disease continue to inspire me. Annette, a Catholic, told *People* magazine [3] about her diagnosis and living with MS in 1992, as well as what her faith meant to her while living with MS:

> "I'm a Catholic, and I've always been a religious person, and having MS reminds me that there's a higher power up there who knows what HE's doing. MS has brought my family closer together, if that's possible."

Annette leaves behind three children, three grandchildren and her second husband, Glen Holt. (Her first marriage to Jack Gilardi ended in divorce in 1981.)

Annette founded the Annette Funicello Research Fund for Neurological Diseases in 1999. I just tried to access the website [4], but it is on overload.

For more on Annette Funicello's life, as well as her songs, records and films, here's *The New York Times*' obituary [5].

Source URL (retrieved on *09/01/2015 - 11:47*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/annette-funicello-original-mouseketeer-dies-70

Links:
[1] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0053271/?ref_=sr_2
[2] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056860/
[3] http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20108427,00.html
[4] http://annetteconnection.com/
[5] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/09/movies/annette-funicello-mouseketeer-dies-at-

70.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0