

Sister Elaine Wojcik, BVM (St. Lillian)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, March 22, 2017

Sister Ernestina Molinari, BVM

Elaine and I have been friends for 62 years. We met in 1954 when we were missioned at Annunciation. As our friendship developed in those early days, we came to the conclusion that we did not agree on certain things like religion, education, politics. However, we also discovered we were alike in many ways. We loved and were attached to our families. We loved teaching the young kids at Annunciation. We also liked to have a good time. Whenever it was possible, we were each other's companion on home visits. I got very close to her family because my family also played poker all the time in between Italian courses on feast days. When Elaine came to San Francisco, she fit right into my family because she could take all the kidding and the jolly times we had at weddings, baptisms and so forth.

We loved to create different things for our students. She had second grade while I had fifth, but we agreed to have our rooms homey and cheery. Elaine decided that she had to do something to the desks in her room. She went to the principal S.M. St. William Welsh, who loved the young sisters, and we loved her. She asked permission if we could varnish two desks. Oh, yes, of course. We soon knew that we needed help. Elaine got her father and some others to come after school and on Saturdays to help us finish sanding and varnishing her desks. We went and got St. William. She came and said, "Oh, my! I thought I gave permission for *two* desks." Elaine said, "We wanted to surprise you." St. William looked at me and said, "And the answer is *no*." I said, "I don't know what the question is." "Yes, you do. You want to do your desks and the answer is *no*." Elaine said, "I'll help her." St. William repeated, "And the answer is *no*." All three of us in chorus said the "no."

Elaine really loved the opportunity to tease and to show her love for people and to have a good time. When she came to California, my family always went up to the river on the weekends. We were on vacation so we could stay up there and walk down to the river and work on our tans. She didn't particularly want to travel abroad. We decided that we would meet at Las Vegas. Her mother used to come with us and plant herself in front of the dime slot machine and was there until we dragged her away. One night her mother went to bed while we went to see some of the shows. At that time, they were at a very, very low price. On the way back to our rooms, we saw this tall woman with a red hat, a slinking red dress and red shoes standing at the curb. Before I knew it, Elaine was rushing over to talk to her. I went over and said in her ear, "Make it short." In my practical mind, if a police car came along, the three of us would have to find somebody to bail us out. However, it shows how Elaine loved people. She would talk with anyone and was very helpful. Elaine, thank you for 63 years of being my friend. We'll meet again someday.

Sister Suzanne Effinger, BVM (Frances Carol), Set Member

I have to say thanks too. We were special friends. I spent many happy weekends with her. We have heard what a carefree, happy person she was and how much she loved a good time. I

dearly loved her and spent good times with her. Thanks, Elaine, for all of your friendship and your many years of service and dedication.

Sister Therese Frelø, BVM (Ann Carmelle), Set Member

Besides being a member of her set, I had the opportunity, along with Joan Stritesky, to live across the street from Elaine in Melrose Park, Ill., for 12 years. We saw a great deal of Elaine's giftedness, but if I were to pick something out about Elaine, I would say I was always impressed with her faithfulness—her faithfulness, first of all, to her mother. For over 20 years, she took care of her mother patiently, lovingly. Besides that, she did the same thing with her family who was very important to her. She babysat all the nephews and nieces. Of course, friends were very important. I look around and see many people who were her friends. Joan and I, as I have said, lived across the street from her. Many times, she would call us because her mother had fallen. We would run over and help her pick up her mother. I want to thank Elaine for sharing so much of herself with us and for the giftedness she brought. Also, thank you Elaine, for dying so graciously, lovingly and quietly in your sleep.

Sister Mary O'Connor, BVM (Bertille), Set Member

I lived with Elaine at Our Lady of Angels in Chicago when the many changes in our prayer life were beginning. She was trying very hard to include all of us in different types of prayer. She would even take the newspaper and pick something out and we would pray about the situation. When she came to Mount Carmel, I would come over to her room in the evening and she and I would watch "Wheel of Fortune." Her main advice to me was "Don't gain a lot of weight." However, when I would be ready to leave, she'd say, "Have a piece of candy." She was friendly in many ways. I appreciated her comments and her joyfulness.

Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM (Magdaletta)

I loved several things about this woman. One of them was that she enjoyed the neighborly contact we had. Often, Therese Frelø, Elaine and I would be across the alley from each other chewing the fat, sharing the latest, and telling what we were having for dinner. She liked Polish dishes, although I'm Bohemian, but anything was special because she usually ate alone.

Sometimes with caring for her mother, there was only food for one, and you know which one did not eat. She would call over to our house. This one time I answered and she said, "I need help. I can't lift my mother. I can't put her into bed anymore." I said, "I'll be right over." As I started to go, Therese said, "Go on without me and I'll catch up." I knew what "catch up" meant. I got over there and Elaine said, "Would you help me help her up?" We lifted her. It was almost like the story of the Pieta, the Blessed Mother holding on. That's what she was doing to her mother until help came. She did this so many times. This time she said, "Where's Therese?" "She's coming. She doesn't go anywhere without her bottle." Elaine said, "What did you say?" I said, "She doesn't go anywhere without her bottle."

In the door walks Therese with the jug of water she carried with her all the time. Elaine misinterpreted the comment. All we did was laugh. Even with the sorrowful lifting of her mother into the bed, she picked up the humor immediately. She was a very gracious person. If

she came over and asked, "What's for dinner," we knew she needed a brief getaway and someone had come over to spend an hour or two with her mother. I knew the people who came to be with her mother while Elaine broke away for a while. Elaine, you broke away. Now you're there and your mother is there and all your sisters. I know you're having a good time. Thanks for all the love you gave us.