



Sharing of Memories of Norma Evans, BVM (Adelaide)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Feb. 27, 2024

Sister Marguerite Murphy, BVM

I first met Norma in the late 1960s when I lived and taught with her at Saint Bernard Elementary in Los Angeles. Norma was always pleasant, enjoyable, and was one of the kindest individuals I have had the privilege to know. Norma worked hard to prepare her lessons, correct her papers, and join the sisters at the convent. Our parents respected Norma because she was such a positive person.

Our second year was the year that had high points and low points for Norma. First the high: one of the students had a German Shephard female that had pups. We BVMs decided that we would help them out and welcome one of the pups at the convent. So, we chose a light brown pup and named him Kris. Norma was thrilled. It was like home at the farm to have the dog around. She spoiled that dog with so much affection. She would check on him, straighten his bed. She would feed him treats and tuck him into his bed at night after she blessed him. I was quite surprised when I found out that Norma had taught Kris to love having a fresh orange sectioned off and hand fed to him. She would share an orange with Kris every day.

The low point of the year for Norma was that she developed narcolepsy and although she had treatment for this from the doctor, she decided that she needed to leave the classroom for the sake of the children. At thirty-seven years old, this was an enormous adjustment, but Norma, in her gracious way, accepted it and began life with many adaptations. Norma never lost her balance in life. She was so steady and such an example of acceptance. May you enjoy heaven, my sister!

Anonymous

When I first met Norma at Mount Carmel Bluffs, she asked if I could replace her prayer book - the one the BVMs had been given in their novitiate in days gone by. I managed to find her a copy, and after that, I rarely saw her that she did not ask if I would pray one of the litanies with her. The responses were still automatic for her, and the prayers seemed to soothe her. When we finished, she would inevitably launch into a story or two, and she definitely had her favorites.

I heard all sorts of stories about her family's particular style of farm living, but there is one she repeated that stands out for me. It is of the men who would jump off the train near their home and march onto the property. This would have been during the Great Depression, and during World War II as well. She said her dad had left standing orders that there was always to be food on hand for them, and that when they had eaten, he would find them some small bit of work to do so that they were not tempted to just sit around afterwards. It is clear that this practical generosity had a big impact on Norma. That she was still telling this story eighty-some years later is evidence of this. She seemed proud of what her family did - when someone was in need, they helped. Thanks for the stories, Norma!

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM, Set of 1948

Norma and I entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1948. She was a Kansas farm girl, and I was an Iowa farm girl. So, we felt we had much in common without having to express it. However, I could never compete with her brilliantly, beautifully, polished fingernails. Norma also had a good sense of humor. She often talked about her missions at St. John the Baptist in Peosta [Iowa] and at St. Mary in Waucoma [Iowa]. She was surrounded by farms and taught children who came from those farms.

During Norma's retirement years here at Mount Carmel, I taught a BVM history class for over 20 years and Norma never missed a class. She sat in a front desk near my desk and slept through most of the class. However, if I mentioned Kansas, Wichita or Mount Carmel Academy, Norma immediately woke up and had something to say to the class about these subjects. Norma had a phenomenal memory. She could rattle off the community numbers in our set until her last days.

During my last visit with Norma, I knew that she and God were very comfortable together. Rest in peace, Norma.

Sister Mary Martens, BVM

I was in Southern California where I met Mary Ann Evans. It was much later in life when I met Norma. It is the little things that came through the eulogy and with Kitty's lovely reflection, that I got more insight to the person of Norma. I knew her best during the lockdown at Mount Carmel during the COVID pandemic. There was a group of us BVMs from the Circle Apartments who volunteered not to go anywhere other than our own apartments so that we could come to Marian Hall and serve the sisters each in her own room which they could not leave. The experience of months of bringing individual meals to the sisters on the second floor of Marian Hall is where I met Norma.

It's true that she did not have much to say. Neither did I. We had shields over our faces and gloves on our hands. Everything would be brought and set on the sister's tray. Norma never refused or asked for less of anything as some sisters did as they were aging. She enjoyed the meals as much as she enjoyed the rest of life.

About the nails, that fashion touch, even as she was growing older remained a part of her enjoyment of life.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I worked in Support Services for the last eight to ten years. Norma asked if I could obtain holy cards with the famous image of the two children crossing the bridge led by the guardian angel. I was able to do that. She liked to send them with all her cards and letters. I can never think of that image without remembering Norma and her love of children.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

I want to follow-up on Norma's beautiful fingernail polish. Not only did she have beautiful fingernail polish, but she also had beautiful hands, long fingers. A couple of months ago, I was commenting on her beautiful hands, and she said, "They are also hard-working hands." She went on to talking about milking the cows. I imagine as a farm girl, she learned how to bake bread. She was assigned to the bake house as a novice. Whoever the sister in charge was, she said, "Norma, you are the best novice baker I've ever had." She knew how to knead the bread. Norma was very proud of that.

Norma was also very proud of her set members. She shared that Martha Ryder was the most intelligent member of their set. Yet, Martha never ever considered herself any better than her other set members. She knew everything about the stars and the constellations. Norma said, "I hope that someday there will be a comet named after Martha Ryder! "

Sister Bernadette McManigal, BVM

Many years ago, at a summer class at Clarke College, I was in the same class with Norma. It was a philosophy class. Not only was it fairly difficult, but the professor had a very distinctive Germanic accent. You not only had to understand the content; you had to understand his language. Periodically, he would say, "I'm going to call on someone." Invariably, he called, "Sister Mary A-da-lay-dee." She was a trooper. She would get up and respond as best she could. So, Norma, you responded to the calls – the call when your name was mispronounced (and you didn't correct it) and the call of service throughout a long life. You are quite an example and quite a trooper.

Sister Judy Callahan, BVM

We often say, "I wish I had known that all this time. This is such an interesting person with such interesting experiences, and we discover them at the funeral." I have not known Norma for more than a few months now. It has been a pleasure to get to know her. Also being a farm girl with some of the same kinds of stories and early childhood, I could identify with her. I do challenge the line in the eulogy that says, "*let* her milk the cows." It was, "*will* milk the cows."

Norma was playful even though she was quiet. She began hospice just a few weeks ago. The day the hospice nurse first came, she asked me to point out where Norma was. She was in the dining room with this on her head. [Judy puts on a headband with two fuzzy antennae.] That's Norma. There she is. Norma was engaged with whatever was going on in a quiet way. She didn't hear it all. She didn't see it all. But she was there. She is a good example of how you live life to the fullest to the end – engaged.

I want to give a shoutout to the staff in Gables who worked with Norma. At the care conference, there was such tenderness, such alertness, such sensitivity to the individuality of Norma and what were her strengths and what were her needs. She needed a lot; she needed help with everything. Those people were there and were so kind. Even in all the games that Activities played, Norma was engaged and did the best that she could. So, Norma, you taught me, and hopefully all of us, how to live our lives to the fullest with whatever skills or abilities we still have, to be engaged. Thank you, Norma.

Sister Joellen McCarthy, BVM

In the past months of working with Arabella at some point the working group agreed to visit BVMs who were not able to respond online to a survey from Arabella. Norma was one of the people that I contacted. She was most engaged to let me know her thoughts and feelings about the issues explored by the Arabella tool. I was touched by her willingness to be involved and her delight in having a way to participate in the process.

Jolene Clauer, BVM Associate & Mount Carmel Bluffs Life Enrichment Department

I have been working in Activities here at Mount Carmel for almost 22 years. I knew Norma from almost the day she came. I was one of the people who gave her those pretty fingernails. While giving her a manicure, she would always tell stories about the farm and the hobos. She always laughed and said, "Mama always made them a better plate of food than what we had." I knew all the stories about the dog coming to let Mama know the hobos were there and the uncle who had a fish hatchery and the

algae that went to outer space in one of the space missions. Norma always came to our sing-a-longs on Friday nights and all our sing-along we have had in our new building. I always sang the Kansas state song "Home on the Range." We would sing a lot of hymns too. We sang "In the Garden" quite a few times. Once, years ago, Norma said, "Would you sing that at my funeral." So here I am to sing "In the Garden" for Norma.

In the Garden
By C. Austin Miles

I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses

Refrain:
And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

He speaks and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing

Alexis, Great Niece

I have been coming here since I was a newborn. I remember we would come up here every Thanksgiving for dinner with my great aunt. It was always a blast to hear all the family stories. The family farm is still going strong to this day. May she rest in peace.

Sister Joanne Lucid, BVM

I was one of Norma's past companions. One time the nurse tried to schedule a return appointment with a doctor for Norma on a Tuesday. Norma said, "No, I can't go then." The nurse was perplexed. She came out with Norma and asked me to explain why Norma could not come back to see her doctor on Tuesday. I talked with Norma who said, "That's Kitty Lawlor's class. I can't see the doctor then."

Another time Norma had to have a procedure done. I recall how difficult this was for the doctor. I admired Norma as she dealt with all this pain without a word. What I saw that day was her patience and acceptance. My admiration was so high that I asked if she would like to get coffee and a treat at the coffee bar. She wanted this and seemed to appreciate this very much.

I always told her how pretty her painted nails were and together we admired the fine work of Dawn making her feel more beautiful.

Sister Terese Shinnery, BVM

At the time of the Motherhouse renovation, I came to Dubuque to help the sisters relocate. I was asked to help Norma move into a room in the BVM Center. During the move, I discovered that Norma had a stack of already addressed stamped birthday cards to be sent to family members at the appropriate time. That was a lovely glimpse into Norma's care for and connection to her family.

Lisa Wiegand, Former Mount Carmel Aide

I met Sister Norma when she lived at the Motherhouse. I was a CNA. I participated in the craft fair selling my pies. Sister Norma loved them. One time, she returned my pie pan with a note that said, "Refill please." After sister moved into the new building, I was helping her get settled for a nap and I said, "I'll see you tomorrow." She said, "Hey, bring me some of your homemade cookies or pies." She always asked me when my son Joshua was coming to play the cello again. I will miss Sister Norma. I enjoyed our chats and hearing about her days on the farm. She was an amazing person.

Sister Carol Spiegel, BVM

When I was living at Gables, Norma taught me a lesson. Because she often sat in a relaxed position with her eyes closed, I assumed she was not paying attention to what was going on. One day, the January birthdays were being celebrated in the Guest Dining Room, and Norma was the only celebrant present. After the candles were lit and "Happy Birthday" was sung, Norma sang the complete response, "I thank you, I do" and then made her wish. An important reminder to me to check out my assumptions about appearances. Thank you, Norma.

Sarah Greer Bush, BVM Associate.

Every Tuesday morning in Gables when we gather in the Eliza Kelly Chapel to pray the Rosary, Norma has always been present. In fact, I have come to think of Norma as our faithful anchor- completing our semicircle of prayer, sitting in her preferred place right next to the Tabernacle. A good place to be.

Sister Ann Credidio, BVM

My memory of Norma Evans is when I had knee surgery and was sent to Marian Hall for about a week. Norma's room was across the hall so every morning I would stop in to say hello. I enjoyed our short visits. When I transferred to a room in Caritas, my goal was to walk to her room and say, "Hi, neighbor!", to which she would respond with a huge smile!

Sister Ann Cronin, BVM

I lived with Norma's sister Mary Ann in Burbank. She was definitely a farm girl all of her life. She and her sister were two of the kindest people I've ever known. Neither of them ever lost their Kansas drawl.

Sister Mary Nolan, BVM

Last Tuesday I had the privilege of bringing Communion to the Sisters in Gables. Many were sitting in a semicircle in the Eliza Kelly Chapel waiting. As I approach Norma her head was lowered so I touched her hand and said: "Jesus is here." She opened her eyes, and looked up and I said, "The Body of Christ" and she said, "Amen." As I placed the host in her hand and she put it in her mouth, I saw a slight smile come across her lips. As I was leaving Gables on the way back to the chapel, I remembered a short poem that I had memorized in fourth grade.

The face of Joseph is the face of peace.
Peace is the mark on all his hands have done
Out in his shop, beyond the gentle murmur of
Mary talking to her little Son.

"Where do you go in silence?"
I might have asked him.
Perhaps he did not see me, did not hear me until. . .
I came up close and touched his garment.

Then peace would blossom into courtesy.

(author unknown)

Sister Susan Effinger, BVM (Told by Sister Helen Gourlay, BVM)

When Sue Effinger was at Marian Hall a couple years ago, she sometimes was in the same crossword puzzle group with Norma. Sue says Norma was humorous and usually the first to come up with the right word for the crossword puzzle question.

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

I had the opportunity on several days to have lunch with Norma. On one of her birthdays, a nephew sent money for her favorite meal – McDonald's. She looked absolutely glowing!