



## **Sharing of Memories of Patricia L. Fitzgerald, BVM**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Aug. 20, 2024

### **Sister Bernadette McManigal, BVM, Set of 1952**

In 1952 when we entered Mount Carmel is when I first met Pat. She entered from Arizona and talked about the desert and mountains, the plants and animals. I was enthralled because I came from Chicago where we called a vacant lot, the prairie. Later I knew Pat as the one who could be counted on to do the hard work, the hidden jobs. For those novice plays, Pat built the staging. Not a starring role up in front but the backbone, one who makes things possible. To me, that was Pat. An artist, dancer, a person who revered creation and one who deeply loved her family, friends, the BVM community and her God. I am grateful that I was able to re-connect with Pat these last few years. Thank you, Pat, for the blessing you have been.

### **Margaret Fitzgerald, Sister-in-law.**

I married Sr. Pat's brother, Kenneth Fitzgerald, 51 years ago. I met Pat in 1972, a year or so after Ken and I started dating. Ken was always talking about how Pat used to beat up on him as they were growing up. Pat was 2½ years older than Ken, she grew big and developed early while Ken stayed very small and slender. He was 5 ft 1 in when he graduated St Mary's high school at the age of 18. He grew a foot the next year.

Ken said Pat was his protector out on the streets but bullied him mercilessly at home. Ken said he and Pat would terrorize their older, by nine years, sister, Jean, who would be left at home to babysit and clean the house while their mother went shopping. They apparently felt duty bound to lock their poor older sister out of the house and destroy the inside. I believe the adage "while the cat's away the mice will play" fits well here.

Jean was a girlie girl who seemed never to cause her parents any trouble. Pat's parents had been trying for years to have another baby and were on the cusp of adopting when Pat showed up wild, full of "piss & vinegar" willing to get dirty, roughhouse around, run everywhere and do anything. Ken followed shortly after Pat arrived and their mother was at a loss on how to control these two wildcats who were always moving, into mischief and at each other endlessly.

Ken said his mother was convinced that Pat was going to the devil. Life to her was to be experienced. She was class president, dated a lot, sports and outdoor enthusiast, quick to rise to any teasing, especially from her dad who took great enjoyment on getting a rise out of Pat, take on any challenge and, according to Ken, beat up on him. So, when Pat dropped the bomb at the dinner table one night during her senior year that she was going to enter the convent, Ken said he broke out laughing hilariously and told her "You won't last." He was convinced she was joking.

After Pat left for the convent, during Ken's first year out of high school he grew one foot! So, when Pat came home for the first time, he greeted her standing 6 ft 2 in tall, about 140 lbs. At the door, he told her, "Take off that habit so I can beat you up!" Of course, Pat just told him, "You can't hit a nun." Every time the two of them, Pat and Ken, got together it was tease, tease, tease, and more teasing. The years dropped away, and they were teenagers again trying to one up each other whenever possible. I had to stay out of the way! Finally, my lasting memory of Pat. I first met her in August of 1972, at Lake Powell in Arizona. She and Joanne Mullee were traveling together and would spend a week tent camping and house boating with us - Ken, myself

and our five young kids. I was really impressed that Ken's sister was a nun. I grew up in southern California. We went to a very liberal protestant church. But, right across the street was the Catholic church. I was in awe of the nuns in their habits and priests in their black suits and white collars. One *whispered* in their presence, seen and not heard was the thing. So, when Ken saw Pat standing on the dock as we were coming back from an afternoon of skiing, he said to me "There's Pat." I said, "Where?" He pointed. There she and Joanne stood in Bermuda shorts, t-shirts, and a beer in their hands. Another childhood image shattered! However, I came to know Pat and love her as a sister of my heart.

### **Sister Mary Gene Kinney, BVM**

I was part of the group that moved into Oak Park. We found the house. Pat, Joanne Mullee and Sheila Fleming were a big part of remodeling it. We had a contractor for what they couldn't do. That house would never have the memories it has if it were not for Pat and Sheila.

I have two short stories. First, Pat was many, many things. Her photos certainly give a sample. Pat was a quiet, solid person who you would want around in an emergency. In Oak Park, both Lettie Close and I had a cat. My cat used to go in and out of my bedroom window. I had a second-floor room with a tree right outside. That was one of his favorite ways to come in and go out. One Sunday afternoon, the cat went out. Since he was usually only a few minutes or so, I left the window open. I left the room about 10 minutes. When I came back, I saw the largest cat I had ever seen go out the window! Then I realized it was a raccoon! I ran over and slammed the window shut. I turned around only to see two more raccoons in my closet. So, of course, I ran out of the room screaming, "Pat!" Pat had a great love of nature and a love of animals. Pat came up. We now have one raccoon outside staring in at his two buddies, and the two buddies wanting to get out but are far away from the window. Pat said to me, "Why did you close the window?" She went down a got a broom and with the broom she opened the window. She made lots of noise and waved the broom around. The two raccoons found the window and went out.

The other story I want to tell is Lettie Close's memory of Pat's lightheartedness and her love of fun. One year on the Fourth of July, Pat had a couple of cap guns that she had confiscated from her students and caps. Pat and Letty went out in the backyard of Oak Park and joined the shooting and created some smoke with their cap guns. Pat, I thank you for making the Oak Park house possible, all the memories those of us who lived there have, your quiet, steadfast love, and your wonderful playfulness and humor.

### **Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM**

I am happy to have this wonderful privilege to share a few memories of Pat when the two of us were teachers at St. Eulalia Elementary School in Maywood, Ill., in the late 1980s. Pat was the art teacher at St. Eulalia's and worked with all grades at that time. Her creative energy and easy-going sense of humor made her a teacher that the young and older students would gravitate to whether it was during the actual class period, the lunch time or those times before or after school when students would stay around to chat with her.

During our time as teachers, I started the kindergarten program and Pat provided various art projects for the kindergarten morning and afternoon groups. We also teamed up as coaches for girls' volleyball teams. Pat worked with the varsity group, and I worked with junior varsity. Pat's energy and love of sports was contagious. She made sure they worked hard and played hard. She excelled at getting the best out of the players whether it was practice or the real game in play.

My fondest memory of Pat was the result of a time in the faculty room after a meeting and she offered a wild idea that I might be interested in checking out – a backpacking retreat in the Colorado Rockies. The timing could not have been better for me, a city girl who had never camped in her life, as I was ready for a new adventure. I did check out what was needed to prepare for this adventure and sent in all the necessary paperwork knowing that the retreat would be led by an experienced Jesuit camper, skier and naturalist along with a Jesuit brother. When I received confirmation that I was accepted for this early summer event, this was when the preparation got to be serious. Gear had to be acquired, walking every day to build up strength,

learning how to carry 40 lbs. on one's back and knowing that we would leave the pristine beauty of this trip in the same way we found it. Taking everything in and bringing everything out.

Some of the lessons learned I have treasured to this very day, thanks to you, Pat. They are the beauty of this experience. Mass as the sun is receding in a carpet of wildflowers and the sound of a coyote in the distance, mint juleps thanks to the snow covering on the mountain slope and a fellow retreatant who had the necessary ingredients, the crystal clear streams that quenched our thirst and the miles we covered from day to day to reach our next camp, each evening under the stars, sharing stories with the other 15 men and women who made up our retreat group. This was a gifted time for me that has changed me and how nature opened a whole other place of wonder and God-ness that to this day brings me to a solemn bow of Thanks. Because of you, I am blessed. You have your wings to spread over us in the days to come. May your joy touch each of us. May your peace shower this world as you did each of us.

### **Sister Colleen McGinnity, BVM**

Pat and I lived together on Taylor Street in Oak Park with four other BVMs and two cats, Jigs and KC. The cats belonged to Letty and Mary Gene. One week during a summer, everyone in the house was away except for Pat and me. Letty and Mary Gene had asked us to take care of the cats, which just meant providing food and fresh water each day. The cats were able to go outside. Jigs went out through a window while KC preferred the door. The window opened onto the porch roof near a large tree branch that the cat could jump onto and then go prowl the neighborhood. KC was more refined and didn't like that kind of life.

This was Monday. Wednesday morning Pat and I were talking and realized that neither of us had seen KC since early Tuesday morning. We started searching the house. The house had lots of nooks and crannies. We searched the area and talked to the neighbors. Pat made signs describing the cat and we placed them all over the neighborhood with our phone number. We started calling the animal shelters near us, but no gray cat had been brought in. We asked around the neighborhood, but no one had seen a gray cat. We called a woman who had given one of the cats to Letty and Mary Gene and she came over to help us look for KC in the house where the cat might be hiding out. KC wasn't in the house.

By Thursday we were really upset and knew we would have to call Letty and Mary Gene that night. We didn't want them walking into the house expecting to see both cats. They were both upset but were glad we had been looking. Very early the next morning, the day Letty and Mary Gene were coming home, while Pat was still in bed, she was awakened by something walking on her bed! It was KC! He never told us where he had been for three days, but he was very hungry and thirsty. We think he had probably wandered into someone's garage for a nap and gotten locked in for a few days. His disappearance and re-appearance remain one of the great mysteries of the universe.

### **Sister Catherine Dunn, BVM**

Pat and I went to high school together at Xavier in Phoenix. There were only 21 in our class, so we knew each other quite well. When I learned that she was going to enter and she learned that I was going to enter, we made an agreement to travel together on the train from Phoenix to Chicago, stay at The Immaculata for a couple of days and then go to Dubuque.

When I told my mother and father that I wanted to enter, they both told me that they would disown me if I did. The truth of the matter is that my father dropped his sanctions on me, but my mother never did for 47 years. That's beside the point except that I was a wreck getting on the train. My mother and father were not in the house when I left that morning, and they were not at the train station to see me off. So, when I got on the train, as you might expect, I was a mess. Pat's dad was a pharmacist. He had fixed a package of things that would help her if she got sick on the train. Guess who got the medicine! She fed it to me all the way to Chicago. To this day, I have no idea what she gave me, except that she was dear and caring. Forever I will love you, Pat. Thank you for being in my life.

### **Sister Marge Sannasardo, BVM**

I lived with Pat after the raccoon story. We lived together in Oak Park, that wonderful, beautiful home that was so graciously purchased by the community with those five sisters who pioneered the adventure. The house was a wonderful, wonderful experience of community. We shared many beautiful times.

I can remember Pat in her quiet presence. She alluded to peace for me. She was an outdoor person. I called her teasingly the "nature girl." She biked. She walked. She loved reading. She was most prayerful. Our house prayed together twice a week. I can remember Pat with her beautiful expressions of creation, the beauty of God, the wonder of God, the awe of God, and the divine energy of God. It was always a beautiful prayer. As I think of Pat now, I remember her spirit, her presence, and her wonderful gentle way of living and loving. She is with us in her spirit of peace.

### **Sister Eileen Healy, BVM**

Many years ago, we had a congregational meeting at Clarke. One afternoon, there was a session on the lawn behind Mary Josita Hall. Pat was leading the conversation and demonstration of Universal Dance. One section was on the spirituality involved in the dance of Indigenous Peoples. Her words touched me and influenced the way I taught our country's treatment of our Indigenous People to my grade school students from then on. A short time ago, I thanked Pat for the presentation and told her of its influence on me and my teaching. She had no memory of it. I find that interesting. It made me aware of the times we interacted with people and did not know the impact of what we had said. Thank you, Pat.

### **Sister Marjorie Heidkamp, BVM**

In September of 1952, we had been here about two weeks. We were just getting used to the long skirts and the silence. Pat and I were assigned to pour water before dinner in St. Joseph Hall, which was the refractory. Of course, we were doing it in silence the best we could – she on one side of the dining room and I on the other. Every day I would hear music. I thought, "It can't be a radio," and kept pouring the water. One day I said to Pat, "Do you hear that music?" Pat said, "Oh, that's me. I sing Christmas songs whenever I get homesick." She must have been homesick a lot. There were a lot of Christmas songs!

The other thing I remember about her was her quiet, straight-forward way of meeting life. She invited me one time to come to a church in Oak Park to help understand the Dances of Universal Peace. The year she came to our assembly to talk about it, someone thought, "Wouldn't it be good to end the assembly with the Dance of Universal Peace?" Well, it was not good. I will never forget her perplexed look. I think we were not yet a Circle of Friends because this line of Universal Peace spread all over the place and then people started giggling. It just never got to be Universal Peace. It was chaotic. I remember her face and then her shrugging. It was just the way it was going to be. She was a beautiful woman and a good friend.

### **Sister Rose Mary Meyer, BVM**

Pat belonged to a wonderful women's group in Oak Park. Pat asked me to share the history of the labyrinth with them. Pat appreciated the group, and the members appreciated her.

The celebrated Irish writer John O'Donohue was facilitating a retreat experience with the labyrinth at the cathedral in Chartres, France, where the original labyrinth was built. Pat and I attended and lived in student housing in the shadow of the cathedral. We both were so excited about walking the original labyrinth.

Pat offered wonderful massages. She lessened her charge for those who found the full price a challenge. She was a very gifted masseuse.

### **Sister Ann Credidio, BVM**

In 1991, Pat shared her special talent, during my final vow ceremony in Chicago, with her Dance for Universal Peace! Almost EVERYONE rose up and danced! I shall ALWAYS treasure that special memory! Rest In Peace, Pat, as you continue your Dances for Universal Peace in Heaven!

### **Sister Susan Coler, BVM**

The attached photo is a small, tall basket that Pat wove, and I have had in my workspace for decades. The speckled feathers speak of joy to me, and I think of Pat with delight when I look at it. Be forever joyful, Pat.



### **Suzie Wright, BVM Associate**

In 2021, Pat was asked to create a wire wreath to be displayed in the Cosmic Advent video series. The lovely loops and swirls of the golden hued metal brought to mind the spirals we so often talk about, the elliptical natural world and a sense of interconnectivity. In so many ways, this simple yet complex piece of art represents Pat to me. I am glad it still is on display on a table in the Nazareth Meeting Room here at Mount Carmel Bluffs. I am thankful to have known her.

### **Sister Marcella O'Rourke, BVM**

I will miss Pat. Pat was a true and faithful fan of the Notre Dame football team. We kept each other aware of the time of the season's games. I miss the person of Pat.

### **Sheila Fleming, Former BVM**

It was the summer of 1964. I had just finished the Scholasticate and was assigned to St. Anne in Santa Ana, Calif. That was a big leap since I had only lived in Iowa and Illinois. I was one of the first to arrive and was a little worried that everyone was going to be "really old," like in their thirties. I had just spent the last five years with a large group of women many of whom were my age. I was fussing with something in the kitchen when suddenly two people came bursting through the back door, chatting and laughing. I looked up and behold there were two BVMs who had been to Laguna Beach for the day - Pat Fitzgerald and Veronica Petrovich Cook (Berenice). They were super friendly and eager to share their day at the beach. Naturally I felt so relieved. Maybe they were "old," but they were full of life and enthusiasm. I lived with Veronica for a year or so and then four years later was missioned in Kansas City where Pat and I were reintroduced. Both women became dear friends of mine and for that I am so grateful.

When I was talking to another friend, she mentioned all the things that filled Pat's life and made her quite unique. Pat and I lived together for many years, various locations and communities and these were a few of the "hats" she wore: artist, teacher, weaver, potter, hiker, runner, traveler, art teacher in high school as well as grade schools, volunteer in preschool at St. Malachy's (a few blocks from the United Center in Chicago), and a member of the Dancers of Universal Peace.

### **Judith Kubish**

I have known Pat for over thirty years, sharing the Dances of Universal Peace with her and being mentored and friended in living those dances. Pat loved the Dances and the vision for inclusion and unity they promote. She was devoted to the Aramaic teachings of Yeshua and the beauty, creativity, healing, and affirmation of life and love they instill. It was a great blessing to sing with her, move in the dance circle with her, be reminded by her to "stop talking and Dance!", and laugh and cry with her in the journey of life.

A poignant aspect of the Dances occurs when, after singing and moving to the sacred phrases for a while, the leader calls the dance to be done "on the breath." Sometimes with musical accompaniment, sometimes in complete silence, the dance continues with the words held inside, expressed simply by the movement and breathing.

Pat's life and love are now "on the breath" of sacred Unity from which she originally came and to which she is gone. Thankfully, we still know her life and love on and in that same breath. What a gift and blessing!

One last mention: Pat often expressed her gratitude for the care she received here with the community. Thank you to all of you for that care. The Dances of Universal Peace community holds you and walks with you in this ripe moment of releasing our beloved sister and being united in a new way in love. Thank you.

**Elaine Johnson**

Happy memories dancing with Pat who was a leader of Dances of Universal Peace and learning from her how to be courageous. She had profound insights and shared them. She was creative and fun and always pushed on the boundaries into wider perspectives.

**Sister Catherine "Kitty" Ornellas, BVM**

My memory of Pat was that she was always pleasant. She gave no clue about her illness--always laughing, always a fun person with me. I called her "the crab" because she walked backward with her walker. Her voice will echo in my head, "Kitty, you are too much!" She has been a good friend and will be missed.

**Mary Ann Ludwig**

I believe Sister Pat taught with us at St. Mary Center for Learning. She was a great artist and a wonderful person to know.