



Sharing of Memories of Mary Ann Lenore, BVM

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Nov. 5, 2024

Sister Lynn Winsor, BVM, Phoenix, AZ

I bring condolences and love from St. Francis Xavier Parish, St. Francis Xavier Elementary School and the Xavier BVMs in Phoenix. In the mid-1970s, I had the privilege of living with Ann Lenore at Xavier Convent. When I sent out word of her passing, many emails came back to me with comments about an exceptional woman, an exceptional teacher, and exceptional BVM sister. Here are some of the memories written about Sister Ann Lenore.

Beth Annin *(Read by Sister Lynn Winsor, BVM)*

She was my favorite teacher, hands down. She was a multi-level person with a large presence and matching personality. I was the only person in an eighth grade after-school ceramic class. She could have easily cancelled it, but she didn't, and I was so grateful. I still have my ceramic jack-o'-lantern on my desk. Sister Ann Lenore took us on desert survival training. She taught us to love and respect the desert, its plants and animals. I still have my desert survival handbook, and I use it with my kids.

Mary Mosgrove *(Read by Sister Lynn Winsor, BVM)*

Sister Ann Lenore was an outstanding teacher who put her own curriculum together. In her desert survival unit, we had to build a stable shelter to pass the unit. Yes, it had to stand up, and I couldn't believe it, I passed! Another unit was designed around making and flying kites. We used garbage bags, dowels and string to build them. Of course, we could only pass if it flew. Thank God, mine flew!

When I returned to teach at St. Francis Xavier, she got word of it and immediately called to ask how she could help. She was then living in California. We would gather Campbell Soup can labels for fundraising. She would collect them to help us raise money for our school. The labels would arrive quarterly in a beautiful card showcasing one of her amazing photographs and always included a beautiful handwritten note. She taught us to appreciate the world around us.

Sister Lynn Winsor, BVM, Phoenix, AZ

Yes, Ann Lenore was an environmentalist who appreciated God's beauty and gifts. She told so many others about the value and necessity of taking good care of our earth. At Xavier, we had two big date palm trees. When the dates were starting to ripen, she would get up on a tall ladder and wrap the date stalks in brown paper bags. When she knew they were ready for picking, she would lay each date individually on large screens and cover them with another screen to keep the birds away. When they were ripened, we had hundreds and hundreds of dates to eat all year long. Her baking, her painting, her zest for life, made living at Xavier a real treat. When she moved to Mount Carmel, she was our house pray-er, and sent us weekly Mount Carmel updates with her prayers, covering everything from weather to what was going on with the sisters. I last saw her in October when I was here for a Land Stewardship meeting. We had a good visit, and she said to me, "Lynn, when I was younger, I always said I wanted to live to be 100. But now, I'm not sure that was such a good idea." I loved her attitude. Ann Lenore was a superb teacher, a fantastic mentor and role model, and an inspirational and dedicated BVM. She enabled her students and BVM sisters to pursue their dreams and, in doing so, spread the

joy to thousands more. Ann Lenore, you are more than a teacher. You are an awakener. We are so grateful to have had you in our lives. Thank you, Ann Lenore.

Steven Eifert, Nephew

My aunt was a kind woman who loved teaching. When we spoke over the years, she shared many stories about her teaching career. She really had a passion for making a difference in her students' lives by being a strong person who pushed her students to excel. I also remember how she looked after her own mother (my grandmother) who was a widow for the last 17 years of her life and, like my aunt, lived to the age of 99. I will miss corresponding with Ann Lenore by letters, as I have for many years.

Margaret (Lohmiller) Heringer, Former Student & Former BVM

The following words of Albert Schweitzer could not be more apropos for today. He said, "We have, each of us, cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flames within us." Sister Mary Ann Lenore first and foremost a BVM, a teacher, a desert survivalist, a mentor, a kite maker, a classical movie enthusiast, and an inquisitive one, a bread maker, an encourager, a flower photographer, and a faithful friend.

Fast backward to 1949-1950 at St. Francis Xavier Grade School. Sister Mary Ann Lenore had a large group of third and fourth graders in one room that year. I was one of her fourth graders. While Sister was teaching us, the third graders had work to do silently. One day while she was writing on the blackboard, she suddenly called out quite forcefully, "David, stop talking and get back to your work." We were stunned! How did she see him messing around with her back to us. After much puzzling among our eight- and nine-year-old selves, we didn't figure it out nor did we test it later either. Years later when I retold the story to her, I asked how she knew he wasn't on task. That smile appeared and she said, "Margaret, remember that large picture of the Sacred Heart hanging over the board? The glass was very reflective." Mystery solved.

I believe one of the biggest marks Ann Lenore left on me that year was that she saw me, all of us, each and every one of us, as individuals. She wanted us to do our best. She worked hard for us. She was firm, yet so approachable and fun.

In 1963 as a BVM right out of the Scholasticate, I was assigned to Holy Family in Glendale, Calif. Guess who was there? Ann Lenore was so affirming and often shared her great sense of humor. It was such a joy to be together as BVMs and to once again learn from her about life on the missions. In 1976, Ann Lenore was at our wedding in Phoenix, sharing in our joy and wishing us well.

Some years later while we were on a trip, Mike and I stopped in Dubuque to see if Sister was at Mount Carmel. Sure enough, she was. She lived at Caritas Center, but with no knowledge of who her visitors were, she saw me in the hallway and exclaimed, "Margaret Lohmiller, what are you doing here?" After that we communicated regularly through emails and letters. She shared stories of growing up with her two younger brothers, going to school with Suzanne Stopper who was two years behind her (Their mothers were best friends), her entrance into the BVMs, the places she taught and her love of teaching. In one of her letters, she included six pages of the many questionable ingredients in processed foods and hoped that Mike and I were not eating much of that type of food.

In 2016, I wrote to her about a program we were starting in a parish. We had planned to make, pack, and deliver free lunches to underserved children every weekday during their summer break. The funding would come from our parishioners. In her next letter, I found the first donation for our new venture. This summer we gave out 12,221 lunches.

Ann Lenore also wrote that she followed closely and with great interest the partnering of the BVMs with the Presbyterian Homes & Services. All the while, she showed so much strength while managing her macular degeneration and hearing loss. She found the ups and downs of the [COVID] pandemic a trial for sure. She felt

so isolated. I remember in 2020 when some of the COVID restrictions were finally lifted here at Mount Carmel, she said, "I am free! Alleluia!"

Yes, now she is truly free. I can't put a number on the many gifts to me from Ann Lenore. She herself was the most beautiful gift spanning my entire life. Thank you, Ann Lenore!

Sister Anne Kendall, BVM, Former Student

Sister Mary Ann Lenore taught me in fourth grade at St. Francis Xavier School. As we all know, Sister Mary Ann Lenore was able to have order in her classroom even when she first started teaching. This story takes place at St. Francis Xavier Grade School in 1948. My brother Dan was in Ann Lenore's third and fourth grade classroom. While Ann Lenore was teaching fourth grade, the third grade was busy working. At that time, my brother Dan and his good friend Danny were busy preparing some wax false teeth to fit on the string of the window shade. When they had successfully accomplished attaching the teeth to the string, they let the string bring the teeth up the window where they swung back and forth, entertaining the other students in the class. With a few choice words from Ann Lenore, the situation was taken care of with the wax teeth still swinging.

Sister Roberta Ann White, BVM

I lived with Ann Lenore at Holy Family. Everybody knows she had beautiful photos of roses. She was in charge of the magnificent garden that we had in the back of Holy Family Convent. Gorgeous camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons, and over 70 rose bushes. She belonged to the Descanso Gardens' rose group. She would go every year for the Rose-of-the-Year. She would come home with the Rose-of-the-Year and plant it. I inherited her garden, which was absolutely magnificent, when she left for Mount Carmel.

She was caring for the garden when creatures started coming. One time, we heard a noise downstairs. "Come downstairs. Come downstairs." There was a skunk with three little babies following it in the backyard. She got a cage and kept track of how many skunks and opossums she caught. The animal society came to pick them up and take them up to the mountain and let them loose. One time, they told her, "That's enough. No more." She actually got sprayed a few times. She took very, very good care of our backyard. Many of her beautiful pictures of roses were taken back there. Thank you, Ann Lenore, for your beautiful care of our garden and sharing those beautiful roses with so many people.

Sister Julie O'Neill, BVM

In addition to the loaves mentioned in the eulogy, she made extra special braided loaves for several years that became part of the Eucharistic arrangement in front of the altar every Holy Thursday. It was indeed a sad day when baking became a craft she could no longer do. As she became more frail, the loving care of our Eucharistic ministers who came to her room became so important. She was so grateful for their efforts to break an extremely small part of the host for her to swallow. Thank you to each one of those Eucharistic ministers.

Sister Mary Anne Hoopes, BVM

I spent 36 years in Ghana. Each time I came to Mount Carmel, Ann Lenore would give me some of her beautiful greeting cards. I went back to Ghana. One morning, just after breakfast, I got a phone call from the bishop. He asked me if I would come over to his house. I drove to his house, and he said, "Sit down. I want to discuss something with you." I couldn't imagine what it was. He said to me, "Where do you get those beautiful greeting cards? I have never seen anything like them." In Ghana, they did not make greeting cards. They got them from Europe. Usually, they were about four or five dollars per card. He said to me, "Why don't you sell these cards?" I said, "Well, Bishop, I don't really feel that is my vocation at this point." He was so astonished. Some years later, I went to his house since he was not feeling well. There, on the fireplace, was Ann Lenore's card. If I had had the desire, I could have started a card shop in Ghana. Everyone marveled at Ann Lenore's beautiful cards.

Sister Mary Jean Ferry, BVM

I am Mary Jean Ferry. I am also Peter L. Ferry's granddaughter. That was Ann Lenore's favorite name for me. My grandfather was one of the founding fathers of Glendale, Calif. She loved to always refer to me, "You are Peter L.

Ferry's granddaughter." Just that name gives me strength and helps me to stand taller and be like my grandfather.

Ann Lenore was very involved with the hotel workers in Glendale, Calif. The two of us went to several meetings about walking and protesting for the workers to join a union. Of course, Ann Lenore wasn't able to be jailed, so she pushed me forward and I was the one who ended up in jail overnight. Ann Lenore, we honor your presence today with so many wonderful memories. We thank you for the way you lived your life so fully. We admire you and we love you. I will stay close to you as Peter L. Ferry's granddaughter.

Sister Marilyn Wilson, BVM

I first met Ann Lenore when I went on my first mission at Holy Family HS, in Glendale, Calif. This Kansas girl had not been farther West than Colorado. So, in 1965, at age 22, I headed West imagining Hollywood streets paved with gold. Ann Lenore picked me up from LAX and as we traveled via freeway 405, she pointed out all the hills, mountains and beautiful sites, of course with added stories. As we exited the Golden State 5 onto Colorado Boulevard to Glendale, the flats, my thoughts of Hollywood left. I saw only one car dealer after another all the way to Holy Family Convent. No streets paved with gold.

Ann Lenore, even though I was a high school teacher, was very much a mentor to me as a super elementary school teacher. She was a great support. Her sense of humor and her stories guided me through those early years. I left after three years. Throughout the years I enjoyed her lovely cards with her photographed roses. When I came back to Mount Carmel for visits or meetings, she always had a loaf of bread for me.

Fast forward to 2022. One day Elizabeth, [Avalos], Bette [Gambonini], and I [all still living in California] each received a letter on lined paper with perfect penmanship. Ann Lenore welcomed us to Mount Carmel Bluffs but was concerned that we would have the proper winter attire. She wrote, "I want you to be prepared for Dubuque winters." Then she itemized what we needed: a hat, scarf, earmuffs, sweater, coat, gloves, warm socks and, of course, boots. Remember, we do have mountains in California and are only two hours away from playing in the snow, but we didn't use them often. So, we gathered from the closets the named items, dressed up, and took photos. Each of us sent a separate letter and photo to Ann Lenore to assure her we would be prepared. Dear Ann Lenore, thank you for your concern and care.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

When Ann Leonore was living in Caritas Center and I was working in Support Services, she called me and said, "I have just learned that there is a way to transfer artwork onto postage stamps. Would you help me do that?" She brought one of her famous, beautiful photos and we did all the paperwork, and off it went. Back came sheets of stamps with Ann Lenore's artwork. So, Ann Lenore has been immortalized by the United States Post Office.

Norma Williams, Former Coworker, Fresno, CA

We taught together many years ago at St. Francis Xavier in Phoenix and kept in contact by email, letters, and cards for 40 years. I was so impressed with her innovative ideas for teaching science, specially designing and flying kites and making solar ovens (which worked). Her classroom was always interesting with living things. I didn't like the snakes, though!

Every year there was a volleyball game between students and staff. The students always wanted "The Force" on their side! She took such lovely photographs. I have one, a beautiful yellow rose, in my office. I will look at it and remember her as you all gather in her memory on November 5. Blessings to all who knew and loved her. She touched many lives on this earth.

Father Tom Toale, Former Mount Carmel Chaplain

I will remember Ann Lenore for her baking skills, the smell of which often drifted up to the Chapel when I had early morning Mass.

Nancy (Maria Miguel) Garavito

Sister Mary Anne Lenore was a dear friend for over fifty years. She was loyal, giving of time and many talents, sharing her love of science and nature and her gift of photography with us all. When I was able to visit Mount Carmel, she made the arrangements to park my van outside the barn and would say "welcome home." Can't forget all the delicious goodies she baked and left me for breakfast, snacks, and travels heading home. I cherish the time I was able to visit her a summer ago, we shared memories and laughs. Even though her sight and hearing were compromised she always managed to write her own notes to me. A woman of faith and encouragement, I will miss you, Ann Lenore.

Rhody Shiel, Gilbert, AZ

I found out that Sister Mary Ann Lenore Eifert has recently passed away. My two sisters and I were taught by Sister Ann Lenore as we knew her when we were children in seventh and eighth grades at St. Francis Xavier Grade School in Phoenix, Ariz., in the mid to late 1970s. I was fortunate enough to have Sister for some classes in seventh and eighth grades. She incited my interest in science. I was very hyperactive in grade school and high school and did not have the slightest interest in school generally because I did not see how an education connected one to the world.

That all changed when I was dropped off at college by my father in the 1980s. I soon realized how powerful an education and continually educating oneself is in life. I have very often reflected on my experience with Sister. Teaching derelict children, especially young boys, can very likely be an unforgiving and at times unthankful pursuit. I just wanted to let Sister's colleagues in the BVMs know that not just Sister Ann Lenore, but you all have had many, many positive impacts on people's lives. And my love of continual education has never ceased even now as I close in on 60 years of age. The love of education has enabled me to get a chemical engineering degree and work in water treatment plant design for several years and about 30 years in designing and building electronics for military applications. My wife is a mechanical engineer (recently retired) and we have two grown boys that also went into engineering (4th generation).

I want to thank all the BVMs for their undying work to educate children. It was a tough experience with Sister Ann Lenore, but one that I often looked back on for personal support during rough times in college and my life. Please know that you all make a huge difference in people's lives. And please let Sister Ann Lenore's friends and family know she helped create what I hope I have become: a loving husband (31 yrs and counting), a model father, a loving and faithful brother, a very loving person of our beautiful country, and an unquenchable desire to learn. If there is any good in me in those aspects of my life it was due to the persistence of Sister Ann Lenore at such a critical juncture in my life. You gals are awesome! My love to you all.

Curtis Bruggman, Former Student

I'm sorry to hear of the passing of Sister Ann Lenore. Sister Kathleen [Sinclair] was kind enough to share the news with me and I immediately thought back to when Sister Ann Lenore taught me in eighth grade at St. Francis Grade School, next door to where I work today at Xavier College Preparatory.

She was an amazing teacher. My favorite all-time. Taught me so much. I've always said, if our schools today had disciplinarians like her, they wouldn't be unraveling like they are. She brought a level of discipline that you didn't want to mess with. I have so many stories of how she implemented that discipline that helped shape us into better young people. I know it helped shape me for sure.

We also had a great coach who partnered with Sister Ann Lenore and if any of us athletes stepped out of line with her, he would make us pay. It struck the fear of God in us at the time, but looking back, it was the best thing for us. I only wish we had people like them in our world today. This is also why I love Xavier and the sisters here because they, too, represent and deliver great discipline.

Marian Heintz

Sister Ann Lenore and I were colleagues at Holy Family Grade School in Glendale, Calif., for twenty-six years. We continued to keep in touch when she moved to Dubuque. Her last note (written herself) was dated Aug. 22, 2024. It was no longer the beautiful handwriting seen for years but I can read it and was thrilled that she put such effort into it at the age of 99.

Sister's students remember so much of what they learned from her. My three children had her in the eighth grade in the 1980s. She enhanced the curriculum with her faith-filled example, with kite making/flying, teaching desert survival skills, demonstrating bread making, and so many other things that captured their interest and reinforced skills. Graduates came back to thank her for the English grammar they learned (diagramming sentences) that helped them so much in high school, college, and beyond in their writing.

Sister Ann Lenore was great to work with, joined in faculty activities, and had a great sense of humor. I'm so grateful to have known her. Sister Ann Lenore will remain in my family's prayers and memories.

Gloria Valenzuela, Amado, Ariz.

I am very sad to hear about Sister's passing. I have known her for many years. She taught me in sixth grade at Assumption School in Los Angeles, I believe in 1955, and this friendship lasted a lifetime. We visited many times and once she came for a week to my home in Arizona. She was a mentor and a friend. She became family and always inquired about my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. We were very fortunate to have her in our lives. May you rest in peace, my forever friend.

Michael Paul Argosino, Former Student

I am a student of Sister Mary Ann Lenore Eifert from many years ago. I just received news by mail of beloved Sister Lenore departing to be with our Lord in eternity. In offering profoundest condolences to the community of BVM sisters, I also wish to share some extraordinary memories on behalf of my family, though I will not be able to do so in just a few words.

Sister Lenore was a lifelong friend to my family, a special confidante to my dear departed mother, and one of my greatest mentors in the entire world. She taught at Holy Family Grade School in Glendale, Calif., where she was my main eighth grade teacher and seventh grade grammar teacher (class of 1990). She taught my elder brother John (class of 1986) in a similar capacity. Across every generation, Sister Lenore's reputation preceded her, particularly in her authoritative perfectionism in the strictures of grammar. As you may know, that authoritativeness often manifested in the hushed, quaking, wide-eyed alertness of countless students, myself included, as she quite literally laid down the laws of grammar, woe be to any who dare confuse a gerund with a participle.

Sister Lenore befriended my late parents, Regino and Lily, who were lifelong parishioners at Holy Family Church. She was close and supportive to my father, but with my mother, she shared a bond that rose to a level of twin souls. For decades they were best pen pals and corresponded back and forth on every subject under the sun. My mother was a prolific letter writer, something she was revered for, and we all know of Sister Lenore's legendary devotion to calligraphy. Alas, as both of my parents' health deteriorated over the past decade, that overshadowing reality became a subject of my mother's correspondence with Sister Lenore, in whom my mother found a counselor, confidante, and comforter about caregiving for her husband, while simultaneously battling her own cancer.

My father passed in September 2023, and my mother passed in June of this year, on Father's Day. Until her final months, she continued to exchange letters with Sister Ann Lenore.

Finally, I must highlight the myriad dimensions in which Sister Ann Lenore was an incomparable mentor and even greater friend to me. In seventh and eighth grades, I had the historic honor to represent Holy Family in the Southern California Regional Spelling Bee competition. On both occasions, in 1989 and 1990, I emerged

victorious and earned a spot in the National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC. During my first Spelling Bee run in 1989, my relationship with Sister Ann Lenore transformed into something indescribably wondrous. She opened up an entirely different side that no student at Holy Family had ever witnessed before, a side of emotional jubilation that contrasted so perfectly with her characteristic stoicism of authority and propriety. I will never forget seeing her in the stands at the Regional Spelling Bee, right next to our principal, beloved BVM Sister Mary Remi Caldwell, literally jumping out of her seat and pumping her fists in the air with a raucous roar. She became the biggest cheerleader in a way that no student at Holy Family could ever imagine.

From that day forward, the relationship and mentorship between Sister Ann Lenore and myself transcended into a unique friendship. We bonded and talked shop on so many things, just as she did with my mother through letter writing. When I began studying martial arts in eighth grade, Sister Ann Lenore became fascinated with the subject and shared with me some incredible real-life stories of martial arts in action. A few years after graduating college, I visited with her to consult her expertise on survival training and search and rescue, which she had acquired in the Arizona desert. These topics were, in tandem with English grammar, the subjects for which Sister Lenore was renowned at Holy Family. Particularly unforgettable was her display of snake bite photos on the classroom walls, which became a visual and visceral rite of passage for every student every year. When I asked her about advanced training, her very first question was whether I intended to join the Navy SEALs or Army Rangers.

I will close this not so brief reflection on so many memories by declaring with utmost passion and conviction that Sister Ann Lenore was a woman of towering spiritual stature, moral discipline, pedagogical command, and mastery of detail, combined with a subtly surprising capacity for the warmest affection, undergirded by an immense human empathy, all resulting in truly miraculous friendship. If you are able to share only one brief excerpt from the above reflections with the community of BVM Sisters, I would kindly ask that it be this last declaration about Sister Lenore's character.

Thank you very much for your devoted time and know that the entire Holy Family Parish community will be praying for the beloved departed Sister Ann Lenore in fondness and gratitude.

Nancy McCarthy, BVM

My relationship with Ann Lenore really began with the Gratitude Group started by Meredith Hubanks when she first came to PHS. I'd met Ann Lenore before that through her baked goods, but this group was really a good way to get to know people. We met weekly in Vista and prayed and shared on many topics. However, each week there was a focus on a particular letter of the alphabet (in order). We kept a sort of workbook. Each week we shared the list we had compiled for the letter of the week. Ann Lenore always had the longest list of the most inspiring words I'd ever heard, with an equally inspiring reason for her gratitude. I learned a lot from and about everyone in that group, but Ann Lenore was definitely the most memorable, and I'm still grateful for her.

Katie Devney Mueller

Sister Ann Lenore was my seventh-grade teacher. She was one of the most memorable teachers I ever had. The one thing I look back on is how much she knew about the desert and conservation of our land in Arizona. She was quite brilliant. I'm not sure if we seventh graders totally appreciated that at the time. God bless her.

Diane Wagner

Sister Ann Lenore always baked the best homemade bread and yummiest treats. She had such a warm smile and a kind heart.

Melinda Rodriguez

She was a wonderful person and teacher.

Ellen Dewan

She was an amazing and memorable woman.