

Mary Kay Dum, BVM (Meda)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 16, 2017

Nancy Garavito, Friend and former BVM Maria Miguel Federico. (Read by Diane Forster, BVM)

I met Mary Kay 48 years ago. We were both at Xavier convent in Phoenix. I hurt my leg and was in a cast to my waist. Mary Kay was teaching at the Montessori school in downtown Phoenix and I was at the high school. She got off earlier than the other sisters, and would come home to take care of me.

We moved to Carlsbad, Calif., in 1972 where she worked at a Montessori school and I taught science part time at St. Patrick and had the CCD program. In 1974, Father Martin invited us to San Luis Rey Mission in Oceanside and Mary Kay opened the Mission Montessori School from scratch. She was a wonderful teacher and administrator. We liked to travel when we could and took her two nieces, Amy and Laurie, to Hawaii and sisters Patty and Bernice joined us. In the summer, I ran a Youth Camp at the Mission and Mary Kay's nephew Jeff and my nephew Allen came and stayed with us a month and worked as camp assistants. We had a lot of fun with two teenage boys in the house. We drove and visited family in Dallas, San Antonio, Durham and Oklahoma and even made it to New York to watch "Jesus Christ Superstar" on Broadway.

We shared a lot of wonderful times together, as well as tears, but we were always there for one another through the years. Mary Kay visited me in Arizona several times and got to know my pups. She liked to travel in my small RV and we took day trips here and there with pups going too. We went to Whitewater Draw to see the Sandhill cranes and to her first rodeo. When she wasn't able to fly any more, I drove to Mount Carmel to visit her, parking my RV down by the barn. We would walk the dogs around the grounds here; they thought they were at a park. I remember when I asked her, "What room are you in?" she said, "Just go to L." She had a good sense of humor.

I am very grateful that I was able to visit her for a week in August. She kept asking me, "Where are the pups?" With the help of Ann Lenore who brought Mary Kay down to the front of Marian Hall, I was able to bring the pups to her for a visit. She was happy to see them, as they were to see her. Mary Kay, my heart has a hole in it right now but I know you are in a better place and at peace. So I say good-bye, dear friend, until we meet again. Love, Nancy

Sister Mary Jean Ferry, BVM

Friends were extremely important to Mary Kay. I would like to recognize those wonderful BVM friends who supported Mary Kay, especially Ann Lenore who was so good to her, not just here at Mount Carmel, but for years and years. She would walk from her room at one end of the Motherhouse clear over to Marian Hall repeatedly. Of course, there is Gwen Farry, who came from Chicago often, and Jackie Rice, who is here now. I could go on and on; she had so many friends.

A long time ago, Nancy Federico, whose letter you just heard, and of course, Patty Boyd. Patty was her dear, dear friend. That's why Mary Kay came to Mount Carmel; she came to take care of Patty in her dementia. We thank you, Mary Kay, for being a friend to so many of us. You made all of us feel that we were your most important friend.

I would just like to share a short story that tells how those that we lose are very present. When my dad died, I was in grief. Going home in the car, I turned on the radio and the most beautiful song came on—

“Larks Ascending.” I haven’t heard that song for years. Then the other day, I was in my room. I happened to turn on Youtube and there it was. It’s so much about resurrection. So I played “Larks Ascending” to honor Mary Kay. Well, she didn’t ascend far. Mary Kay, you are right here with us right now, so close. We thank you for the wonderful person you still are and the way you remain with us. We love you, Mary Kay.

Sister Roberta White, BVM

The words that come to my mind when I think of Mary Kay are gentle, generous and hospitable. For all of us in southern California, there were many examples of how she offered her little home by the sea in Carlsbad. She organized a beautiful party for Patty Boyd’s 50th jubilee right there on the beach in Carlsbad. The gathering of all our BVMs in southern California was so special. She would call to tell us that she would be gone for this or that meeting, so we could come down to her home by the beach. Often we would drive down for the weekend to spend time there. It was so generous of her. She had that gentle, loving, kindness always about her. We thank you, Mary Kay, for being so generous with all of us.

Sister Alice Dunphy, BVM

Mary Kay and I are in the same set and only separated by a few numbers. When we arrived at Mount Carmel, we were sitting at the table more or less in alphabetical order. Mary Kay ended up next to me, so I got acquainted with her.

We were assigned to St. Anthony dormitory, right across from each other by our feet. Next to us was S.M. Clare Therese Champagne, who died in the fire at Our Lady of the Angels in Chicago. She was a guardian to both of us. I think she thought we were crazy because we wanted to go downstairs late one night. Mary Kay was hungry, and said, “Let’s go down to get some crackers.” I said, “I don’t know where they are.” “We’ll find them,” she said.

Clare spotted us leaving the floor without a senior novice, which was a big no-no. She followed us down there and actually encouraged us to look for the crackers. We did find them. After we each of us had a cracker and were heading upstairs, Clare said, “Don’t you two ever do this again.” We laughed it off, but we never went down again. Mary Kay, I’m sure you remember when we got into trouble over a cracker. Rest in peace, Mary Kay. We miss you.

Sister Mary Ellen Zimmermann, BVM

I am also a set member. All the qualities that people have mentioned are so true of Mary Kay. I was always very comfortable with her. We lived together for a while in Carlsbad. Occasionally, she would save a cookie from the night before and have it for breakfast. We teased her about that. She was always so pleasant. I love her and will miss her very much.

Sister Joellen McCarthy, BVM

I first came to know Mary Kay when she served as a West Regional and I was in leadership. I was so touched by Mary Kay’s capacity to accept people where they were and who they were. She had no sense that she had to shape up someone or change her into someone else. It is a lesson that Mary Kay taught me and I treasure it.

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM

When I first met Mary Kay, I said to her, “Do you realize what a famous person you are in this congregation?” She had a little inkling that she was famous because one of her ancestors was Mother

Cecilia Dougherty. We all know that Mary Kay came from Oklahoma and Mother Cecilia came from Garryowen, Iowa. I wanted to find out the connection between Oklahoma and Garryowen. Mary Kay's family had gone to Oklahoma during the western migration. She had never met a BVM, but she knew about Mother Cecilia and other ancestors in the congregation. When she thought about becoming a religious sister, it never occurred to her to be anyone but a BVM. She didn't know a BVM until she met Alice Dunphy and that set who wanted crackers.

Sister Gwen Farry, BVM, joined in song by Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I had the privilege of being with Mary Kay for six years as we traveled through eight western states and to Guatemala to meet wonderful sisters and see how they were ministering where they were. During that time, Mary Kay celebrated her golden jubilee. We had quite a celebration in Carlsbad. One of the ways we celebrated was with a little song. We would like you to celebrate with us.

Celtic Alleluia

Refrain: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

From Tulsa to Mount Carmel she came.
Meda, head server, she became.
Then off to St. Gert, first grade teacher of great fame.

Then back to Oklahoma,
To Tempe, then Carlsbad and Iowa,
Back to Carlsbad—Montessori and the Mission! (Refrain)

Migrant Head Start on the East Coast,
Florida to Maine was her M.O.
Back to Carlsbad—more Head Start on the West Coast.

Now she travels West area,
Community Council and the C-Board,
LCWR, Region 14 and etcetera. (Refrain)

Thanks to Bill, Mike and Betsy,
Jeanette, Ned, Nola and families,
BVMs, associates and friends. (Refrain)

Sister Carolyn Farrell, BVM

I'm two sets behind Mary Kay and our paths went in different directions. When she returned to Dubuque, she lived in Applewood I. This is another side of Mary Kay's kindness that hasn't surfaced yet. She had real political edge; Democrat that she was. During her very first year here in Dubuque, off we went to Peosta to hear Bill Clinton. Mary Kay so enjoyed that, and of course, I did too. I did the driving since Mary Kay wasn't familiar with the area.

I know that the loss of the great west coast and her ministry was significant to her. Those of us in Applewood tried to bridge the gap. Mary Kay soon became a fine transplant into Iowa. She was into political issues, knowing what was going on, and had very strong thoughts about it. That tied into her

days working for justice back in Florida. With all of Mary Kay's kindness, there was a real strength that supported her justice work.

Sister Ann Lenore Eifert, BVM

When Mary Kay was in Carlsbad, she met a young Hispanic gentleman at the supermarket. He had spent several years walking from Guatemala to Carlsbad. He entered the country, I think illegally at first, but became legal later. He was very good at the market and she got to know him very well. He met a young woman named Elena. Eventually, he wanted to marry her, but he didn't know how to write his name. He contacted Mary Kay to teach him to write his name because he would have to sign the marriage license. Mary Kay has kept in contact with him all these years. There is a cute photo of Alfonzo, Elena and their two boys, who are now in high school, on the picture table.

Lori Kennington, Niece

I am very lucky to have Sister Mary Kay as my aunt, my mother's sister. When I was about 10 or 11, she came to live with us. My mom, Betsy, was taking care of my grandfather. At this point, I was in a standoff with my father about table manners. I did not think that it was particularly important to adhere to any protocol at the table. My dad thought it was very important to learn good manners.

At one meal, we put Aunt Kay on the spot. My dad said, "It's important to have good manners at the table. Right, Kay?" We were both looking at her for backup, because Aunt Kay came with a certain amount of moral authority, as I'm sure you are all aware. At that moment, in her own, quiet, understated way, she said, "Well now, Lori, it's probably a good thing to do things in a nice way, but there really is no right or wrong answer. You just have to have a little flair. If you lift up your pinky, everyone will think you have good manners no matter what you do." I thought that was a remarkable way of bridging the gap between my dad and me. It also said a lot about Aunt Kay. It's the kind of guidance that I have continued to live by because she has been a big influence.

I took away from that exchange that it is important to get along and be obedient to a certain extent, but at the end of the day, you have to have your own principles, your own beliefs and stand up for them, even if it's a little irreverent or lighthearted at times. She was the first labor activist I knew. She was a big influence on me politically. I have become a labor organizer. I am very proud that she has had such an influence on me and that she could bring such joy and irreverence. Even when she was doing things in a proper way, she was doing it with an edge and with flair. I hope I can follow in her footsteps. I know she has been a wonderful sister to all of you, but it's been a joy to watch what a great sister she was to my mom. We are really going to miss her.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

Those of us who were part of the West Region when Gwen Farry and Mary Kay were regionals were blessed to have two very loving and fun-loving women as our leaders. When Mary Kay and Gwen came to the end of their term, we had a fond farewell. They gave thanks to the sisters who had gathered. Not only were they grateful to the sisters, but they were appreciative in acknowledging all of the pets they had met in their six years as regionals. This list included at least 25 different dogs, cats, birds and whatever. They had a great sense of humor and we just loved them for that.