

*Sister Jane Reehorst, BVM*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 15, 2013*

**Susan Marie Marcella Reehorst Bean, Niece** (Read by Janet Mahmundy)

I have one word that describes my Aunt Jane—virtuous. My childhood memories are nothing but laughter combined with my constant admiring wonder about who Aunt Jane was in the Lord. I followed her around like a lost puppy and clung to her like my favorite blanket. I wanted her all to myself. She was so patient with me and at times tolerated me because I smothered her! She shared my room on all the visits. I can still hear her giggle in her sleep then fall out of bed. It was hilarious! Aunt Jane came to see us in the summer or winter and sometimes both, if we were lucky that year. Aunt Jane had such a sweet tooth that it would get her and I both in trouble, but it was fun. Even the family dogs loved Aunt Jane and knew she was special. I would cry when she had to go home. If I had my way, she would live with us forever.

Teen years were a struggle for me. I know Aunt Jane's prayers were effectual and never ceasing over my life. Aunt Jane never judged me regarding my worst choices, but instead encouraged and demonstrated the true "Grace of God." I was with Aunt Jane on her first visit to the publisher for her book. I was honored that she asked me to drive her there. Her books are life changing. I am so proud of the work that the Lord did through Aunt Jane and her books. She had motive through her writings and that was to speak the Peace of Christ when you center in His presence. She created these books to touch children of all ages, because we are all children of God.

Later in life I struggled with horrible self-inflicted suffering. Aunt Jane stood with me through those storms as well. Even though she had her own struggles, she set herself aside for me, demonstrating God's love and mercy. Her prayers were clearly heard. Aunt Jane was more than just my Auntie; she was my friend, my mentor in Christ, and I will love her and miss her until we meet again. Thank you all for taking care of Aunt Jane all this time. You all hold a special place in my heart for what you did to keep her happy and comfortable. Please know the Holy Spirit inspired me to write years ago. The poem I have included is one that Aunt Jane loved. It's called "Heaven Is Real."

#### Heaven is Real

In God's Word there is truth and beauty.  
Seek and you shall find what Heaven is.  
Close your eyes and let your heart ponder.  
Come to know where love prevails.  
Angels on high singing and praising,  
beautiful music unto the Lord.  
Flowers as well join in the chorus,  
a fragrance so awesome, nothing compares.  
Streets of gold, brilliant with purity,  
pearly gates that welcome you there.  
Surrounding walls of God's precious gems,

shimmering stones unheard of elsewhere.  
Never is there nightfall, nor sun from above,  
abounding with God's light, peace and love.  
Glory illuminates beyond what man cannot retain,  
available to all who live not in vain.  
A new Jerusalem all Heaven and earth anew,  
a glorified body, no anguish or pain.  
Forever you will be joyous in your heart, forever  
you will be with Christ and not apart.  
Once you are there, all else will fall away, never having to  
call upon the Comforter, for He is there to stay.  
Heaven is where treasures are laid up for those who love Him  
knowing the Lord holds a place for His children someday.  
Embrace that Heaven is Real as we will all  
stand before Him some day and it will be glorious!

### **Sister Virginia Hughes, BVM**

Such a beautiful insight into Jane that we just heard! I'm happy to be able to follow up on it by speaking. I'm very joyful to have been a part of Jane's professional life. The style of Jane's writing was brought forth in the poem at the end. The style of her writing is what I'll talk about a little bit because I am joyful to have joined many in this group who were part of that phase in Jane's life. She was well-prepared in her ability to speak from the soul, from the heart, and from the mind. Her style broke away from the Q & A style of the Baltimore catechism to the kinetic style of writing which would involve everything: soul, mind, heart and certainly the powers of the imagination.

That's why we have such good homilies in our liturgies here, because the first requirement is that the truth we are getting to is based upon our human experience and then associated with scripture. That's largely Jane's style in her books which are geared toward a broad audience starting with parents, especially at home, and then broadening all the way up to higher education. Her books are very useful certainly with catechists. Catechists use her books, whether in parochial schools or in the religious education programs in the parishes. They like them so well that they adopt that type of contemplative prayer for themselves when they have a retreat or reflection day.

Jane was always open to accepting an invitation to visit religious education classes in the parochial school or in the parish. She had audio visuals; in that day they were film strips. She would involve the children in telling the story. This prayer service today is an example of catechesis. We had the scripture and the reading. When we went into this style in religious education programs, some people thought, "What's that story? Is that religion?" Well, it sure is! That's the way we teach the doctrines of faith today so that they are understandable. There's not a lot of dogma, etc. We don't have a whole row of children standing up and reciting catechism answers. Jane certainly evangelized for a variety of audiences and got the doctrines across very well.

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

I would like to pick up on what Virginia had to say. It deals with a call that I received about two years ago now. Sorry to say, I don't recall if it was Australia or New Zealand. It was a priest from one of the parishes there trying to make some of Jane's work available to his teaching personnel. He was having a problem because it was out of print. He wanted to know if he could speak with Jane and get permission to have it republished, and he would assume the cost, so that he could use the materials with his instructors. I took the information down. Knowing that Jane was not able to respond to his request, it was sent to leadership to deal with. Now, I know there was communication back and forth between Kate and the priest. I don't know what the follow-up was as to whether he was able to get permission to have it republished and whether he assumed the cost or not. But speaking about evangelization, it did go farther than the United States.

### **Sister Mary Kay Dum, BVM**

Those of us who were in Jane's set would all remember her sense of humor. I would like to point out something today that I realized. Because Jane was non-communicative for so long, maybe a lot of people didn't know her. But she was very, very grateful to the BVM community. I remember when she was on the fourth floor of Caritas Center and she was eating breakfast. I was up there and she called me over and said to me, "Do you have any money?" I had been her regional, but I really wasn't carrying any money around. I said, "No, Jane. Why? What are you worried about?" She said, "Well, I would like to have some money." "Why?" "Because these people are so good up here. I haven't even paid for my meals. I haven't even tipped the waiters. I feel like I should do that." I said, "Well, you've already done it." She said, "No, I didn't." I said, "Yes, you did. When you were working in the parishes, you were selling your books, didn't you send that money in?" She said, "Yes." "Well, that's what it was for; everything is paid for now." She said, "That's a wonderful idea! Who ever thought of that idea?" She held her sense of humor for a long, long time and we appreciate Jane for that.

### **Sister Annamarie Kane, BVM**

I have long thought that Jane was probably the most spiritual woman I ever knew. From that I learned that spiritual people sometimes do things that you might wonder about. They have senses of humor that mix quite well with their love of their God.

I met Jane back in 1969 when sisters were going to Clarke summer school to finish their degrees because Clarke had the master's program by then. She and four others arrived for the summer in 1968. I came in 1969 because I didn't need as many credits. Jane and I had many fun times together. There was a sister who was a principal/superior at her school. I cannot remember her name, but she had a car and she did not drive. One week she said to me, "If you drive me to Cedar Rapids for the weekend, you can take the car and go any place you want." So Jane and I delivered her to Cedar Rapids and then we went to Sumner, Iowa, where I had a fun aunt and uncle living. They showed us a good time. Actually, I think we did that twice that summer – drop sister off and then we went back and picked her up at the end of the weekend. One of the things we got into in Sumner was a wedding dance. That was a lot of fun. We were newly out of the habit and people were happy to dance with us.

Jane went to California for a long time. In those days we really didn't communicate with people if they weren't close by. When she came to Wright Hall, we picked up again like we had never been apart. We had many good times again. One of my favorite is when she came over to help

me decorate my Christmas tree. I always had a real Christmas tree back then. I just can't say enough about what a great friend she was if you knew her really, really well. She told me so many wonderful stories and that's why I understood what was going on inside of her. Of course, I admire her artwork and her books. She had a lot of talent, yet she was this quiet, unassuming person much of the time.

### **Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM**

When I was in Ghana and trying to prepare children for the Sacraments, there were very few catechetical materials available. I was absolutely delighted that when I went into the library at the Centre for Spiritual Renewal, there on the shelf were Jane's books for teaching meditation to children. So, thank you, for having your work spread across the ocean.

### **Sister Mary Agnes O'Connor, BVM**

I had the privilege of living with Jane Reehorst at the Immaculate Conception convent and school in Monrovia, California, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Everything that has been spoken so far, I would have to say yes, right. I saw Jane as a person who was an artist, a contemplative, a writer, a person of deep compassion. She loved the aging, retired Loretto sisters with whom we lived. She reached out to the children in either a small group or a class. She would try out some of her writing to see how they would react. She just was a delight and brought joy and happiness to our home there. On a personal note, I would have to say I didn't know Jane at all until she came to live at Immaculate Conception. I came to find out that her mother and father were treated by my dad who was a doctor. I knew nothing about that until I went way back into the recesses of my brain. I think I remember dad talking to mother about first the husband and then the wife got cancer. Talk about coincidences. The joy, the blessing, the privilege to live with Jane.

### **Sister Anne Buckley, BVM**

I lived with Jane on my first mission. I was just there the last two months of the school year. I went from student teaching seventh grade to Monday morning teaching first grade. I was their fourth teacher. It could have been a very difficult time except for Jane. She and I went for a walk one day. It was just glorious in Kansas City. We walked and talked and walked and talked. We got in trouble for that because I guess we were out too long. She was going to show me her May altar one day, but a little boy got sick so I couldn't go. So that night right after prayers, we went down. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. We really got in trouble then because we were supposed to study. She was always fun and she was probably one of the most spiritual persons I ever met. Many years later when I was teaching in the inner city, I used the blue book for meditations which is for middle grades. If I had to go to the door, the children were so absorbed in that prayer that it was just wonderful. Other places where I was if you'd say, "Close your eyes," they would sneak around with their eyeballs. But after listening to Jane's meditation, they were so absorbed in it. Afterwards, they would journal and they could have gone on and on and on with what ideas she had offered as topics. She really gave a great, great gift to young people and I would say to me too. Thanks, Jane.

### **Sister Brigid Mary Hart, BVM**

Not to forget Jane's Colorado days, what I remember about Jane is being kind of an old shoe in the sense of a wisdom person who knew what she was about. It didn't really matter about the rest of us. She was a lot of fun when we gathered as a group. I also remember her faithfulness to the seniors at Good Shepherd. She really ministered in love to those people. I'm sure her sense of quietness and her meditations were shared there too.

## **Sister Alice Caulfield, BVM**

I have the privilege of reading her brother John's memories of his sister. He wrote a letter to us.

### **John Reehorst, Brother**

Dearest Sisters, I want to thank all of the sisters and the BVM order for allowing Sister Jane to share in your ministry. You have been her special family for so many wonderful and caring years. She was a loving and thoughtful daughter for Mom and Dad and a supporting and joyful sister for her brothers, Richard and myself. After Mom died at the age of 50, Jane immediately took over for Dad, two brothers and Laddy, our seventeen-year-old collie. Eventually, things changed: Richard went to Ohio, married and had a family; Jane worked as a secretary and was to be married to a fine young man, but cancelled her engagement and followed, after many prayers, her desire to become a BVM sister. The dog, Laddy, died and I was called into the Korean War and Dad died soon after. It was a loving family. I thank God that Sister Jane had all of you as her next family. I could go on and on about her adventures as a BVM sister. In general, she loved teaching and the students. She even inspired me to become a teacher for over forty years. She loved so many things: art projects, writing her meditation books in my backyard, the dogs and puppies, humor and fun, which was part of her loving character, but most of all, the love of Jesus, her spouse, and the BVM sisters and new family. I end this with one of Sister Jane's meditations inspired for the younger generation, but which could possibly apply to all of us during our endeavors on earth.

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and relax. You're in a place we will call the "vestibule of Heaven." The first thing you begin to feel is the weightlessness, the burden of ordinary living being lifted from you. Feel this weight leaving you. Experience that. Now feel the peace of knowing that it is great to just be who you are - no more excuses, no more guilt for just being you. Begin to experience the hominess, a sense of belonging. This is where you are meant to be eventually. Slowly, a peace begins to fill your whole being. Let this peace flow through you. A felling of joy now begins to come over you, like one big happy smile all through you. Stay with this for a moment. Enjoy.

Someone is coming toward you. It's Peter. Maybe he really is this gatekeeper we joke about. He embraces you with a welcome hug. His eyes shine with the joy of seeing you. "Welcome home!" he tells you. "Come," he says and he takes you by the hand. "There are many waiting to see you, especially a certain few." He leads you to Mary, Jesus' mother. Mary sees you and her arms come to greet you. Go into her arms. Listen to her joyous words of welcome. Feel her mother's love, unconditional love, as it flows through you. Others are now gathering around you. Experience their love and acceptance and their welcoming joy. There is someone very special who waits for you to turn and recognize him -yes, your friend Jesus. He laughs, speaks your name, and holds open his arms to you. Run into Jesus' welcoming arms, the arms of love, the arms of Jesus. Go ahead, express yourself the way you always wanted to when you were happy. Don't hold back or be embarrassed; you are totally accepted here for the unique person you are. Feel the warmth of Jesus' love and peace fill you, the protection of his whole being united to yours. How could you ever doubt again Jesus' love for you? What an experience! Isn't it great to be here?

More people of God gather around you. They all seem to want to share with you. Someone comes forward, smiles, pats your shoulder and says, "We understand. We have also struggled. Do you recognize him?" It's Joseph, the father of Jesus. Another person comes up excitedly, almost shouting, "Keep running that race! Don't give up! We're betting on you!" Yes, it's Paul. He still has that same personality you have often read or heard about. Then someone says, "It all has to do with love." It has to be John, the beloved disciple of Jesus because he always preached about love. He smiles at you. Yes, it is John. A young woman comes to you, places her hand on your arm, smiles and says, "Call on me sometimes. I would love to help you." It's St. Therese called the Little Flower. So many beautiful people opening themselves up to you, so willing to help. In fact, look around. Everyone is happy to see you, welcoming you, encouraging you. There is no selfish reason here for reaching out to you. They really care, are asking questions about your life, your hobbies, your friends. Jesus takes your hand in his, smiles, and tells you, "Remember, I am always with you. My strength is with you. My life on earth was all for you. Will you believe this?" What would you like to say to Jesus, to the saints? I will give you this time to be with them.

Again Sister Janie and the delightful and incredible order of BVM sisters have been an enduring blessing to our small family. God bless you all. With love and hugs, John, Carole, Michael and Susan.

**Sister Alice Caulfield, BVM**

I would say to John and his family, in the name of all of us, how grateful we are that John shared his memory of his loving sister.

**Sister Mary O'Connor, BVM**

When our prayer life began to change, we had the privilege in Cedar Rapids of meeting one of the monks from the Trappists Monastery to guide us in a different type of prayer. Later on, I made a couple retreats at the Trappists Monastery and Jane came shortly after when I was leaving. There were big smiles on the monks' faces when she would come because they knew she had joy and the spirit of God within her that would also help them.