

Sister Charlotte Ann Esch, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, Dec. 4, 2015

Sister Ernestina Molinari, BVM

I first met Charlotte Ann in the early 1990s when we were teaching in Hawaii. She was always kind, quiet, generous and private. But she would open up with her beautiful smile to those with whom she felt at ease. She loved the outdoors, animals and gardening. She was a very talented woman. In Hawaii, we would walk along the seashore and collect seashells which she would form into exquisite figurines. This didn't last too long because arthritis began to affect her fingers. But she could still do gardening which she also loved.

When she returned to the mainland, she was missioned at Holy Redeemer Parish in San Francisco, which was the parish in which my parents lived. On weekends when I was visiting them, I would get in contact with Charlotte and see what she had been up to. One of the things that she had gotten into was frame making and repairing which she was very good at.

Of course, her gardening continued to be very prominent in her life. She had joined a prayer group in the parish and made a lot of friends who, when they retired, needed help in their gardens. She generously offered to be their gardener. Of course, we know she loved animals and as a child she had her own pony. We would go on long, long walks in San Francisco, up and down the hills. Somehow we would end up at the zoo which she loved. We were at the San Francisco Zoo before and after the renovations.

But where she really liked to go was Vallejo, Calif., where there was a marine world with dolphin shows. There was also a section set off where other animals could roam around freely. I enjoyed all of it except when the lions came out. Even though they were on a leash, I viewed them from a distance. Not so with Charlotte Ann; she'd walk right up to the guard who was holding the leash and asked if she could pet the lion. The guard agreed, so down she sat and, believe it or not, the lion just plopped down at her feet. I don't know who enjoyed the petting more—Charlotte or the lion.

In 1985, when I went home to take care of my dad, I again got in contact with Charlotte. I don't think that she missed a day visiting. My dad was bedridden, but he could look out the window to where we once had a very healthy vegetable section. Charlotte turned it into a flower garden. One day in the spring or early summer when the flowers were really in bloom, she came in and said to my dad, "How do you like the flowers?" "Oh," he said, "very much, but you know you can't eat them."

In 1987, Charlotte moved from Most Holy Redeemer to Wright Hall in Chicago. I visited her there when I came in for meetings. She knew Chicago by this time so we went to the museums and, of course, Brookfield Zoo. Eventually both of us came here to Mount Carmel. Charlotte, thank you for making me part of your life, for being so generous, loving and a great friend. God bless you!

Sister Mary A. Healey, BVM

When I went to Wright Hall to be treasurer at the beginning of August 1987, I was directed to learn how to use a computer so that in the beginning of September I could do the Wright Hall account on the computer. It included entering all the names and addresses to whom I might have to write checks. It was an awful lot of work, but I knew the sooner I got it all done, the better it would be.

In the meantime, I had to do the regular August work—do the payroll, pay the bills, process the Medicare claims, and, of course, take the books that my predecessor had kept in a big ledger and prepare the annual report. I went to Michaelita Kelly, who was the assistant administrator there and told her I needed help. She could see that. I was a little disappointed that she didn't send me a helper right away, but apparently

she went through some process of discernment before she settled on Charlotte Ann. It was like a marriage made in heaven; she was the ideal assistant to the point that she was tall enough to file things in the top drawer of my four-drawer file cabinet.

We worked together about 13 years and we worked together beautifully. However, I did not realize when I got her as a fellow worker, that I was also getting somebody I could play with. I have a talent for finding free entertainment, of which there is a lot available in Chicago if you know where to look. Charlotte would go any place, any time. We went to concerts, plays, movies, art fairs, fireworks, parades. We had a wonderful time on the weekends. I remember them now when I'm not moving around as fast as I did then.

Sister Marie Corr, BVM

I grew up in Missoula, Mont. In 1941, at the age of six, I entered St. Anthony School which was staffed by the BVMs. Who was my first grade teacher? None other than Charlotte Ann. I fell in *love* with her! She had me in her second grade too. I don't know if that was because I was slow or fast. Again, I was so pleased and at that point decided that I wanted to be a BVM just like her. For the next 74 years, Charlotte and I kept in touch, back and forth, on and off, and here I am. Thank you, Charlotte, for that wonderful support.

Sister Therese Jacobs, BVM

I happened to be in Hawaii at the same time Charlotte was there. As you, Marie, have said, you loved her; the children loved Charlotte Ann. She was so gentle and so always present and always smiling. One other thing I want to mention is that she lived with Mary LaStant. When Charlotte first came to Kauai, Hawaii, she lived over at Holy Cross while Mary and I lived at St. Catherine. A few years later, she came to our school and we were happy to get her. I remember just a couple of weeks ago when Mary died and finally went to heaven, that I met Mary Healey in the hall and she said, "Now get busy with Mary and tell her Charlotte is ready and waiting." So we have been ready and waiting to celebrate the life of Charlotte. Thank you, Charlotte.

Sister Catherine Dominick, BVM

When Charlotte was at Wright Hall, she had the most beautiful rose garden that ever grew. Then we had the renovation and the workmen said, "You'll never get roses growing here again." Guess what, Charlotte got roses growing there in the same spot again.