

Sister Mary Pat Haley, BVM (St. Thomas)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, June 3, 2015

Sister Susan Rink, BVM

I am one of Mary Pat's closest friends. Mary Pat and I met in the fall of 1969. We both started doctoral work at Northwestern University and shared a car to get to classes for almost three years. When we received our degrees, we both served at Mundelein College—Mary Pat as teacher and administrator and I as an administrator. We worked well together for 10 years after which I left Mundelein and academia; Mary Pat stayed. Our friendship, however, continued. You are going to hear many wonderful and some funny stories about Mary Pat, so let me be brief. Mary Pat fostered relationships with family, community, friends, students, God. With all she did in her busy life, she made time to journal regularly, made a 30-day retreat, located and met with a spiritual director, and enjoyed retreats and days of reflection in prayer. She seemed to have her life all together. You may see signs posted around here that say she was a Woman of Courage. She was indeed. But she was also a woman of creativity and vision, a woman of caring, a woman of action, a woman with a joyful heart, and much, much more. Thank you, Mary Pat, for everything.

Sister Joyce Cox, BVM (email read by Sister Susan Rink, BVM)

My remembrance of Mary Pat will remain with me in my thought and prayer. Mary Pat was so inclusive and appreciative of others in both serious and enjoyable situations. Having been on committees with her over the years, I entered into those meetings with a sense that all will be well and we will come together and make decisions together. I so loved the spark of insight and creatively she so often shared. I remember the last time I enjoyed dinner with Mary Pat, Mary Alma Sullivan, and Ann Harrington at their Chicago home. Laughter and story after story graced the evening. That remembrance will continue to touch my life with fond gratitude.

Janet Haley Nissly, Sister

I am proudly the youngest of the girls. I will be short. This has to do with Mary Pat when she was in the novitiate. I was about nine and my brother four, when we went up to see her in 1952. Eisenhower had won the election and I went around putting "I like Ike" buttons on all the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At that time the sisters wore the box headdress. My brother was into toy soldiers. He took his toy soldiers and lined them up on Mary Pat's headdress. Then he would take her long rosary and wrap it around the park bench so she couldn't get up.

Tom Giesen, Nephew

I am the eldest of Mary Pat's nieces and nephews. I am a TV producer in Denver, Colo. I wanted to tell you that all of my cousins came from Florida, Minneapolis and Denver. It is quite a tribute to Mary Pat that everybody came. We didn't call each other, we didn't know we were going to do that, but there we all were at my folks' house last night. You should know that I am a crier; I cry at the *Today Show* every day. Friday night I knew that MP had gone into hospice care. I am a writer by trade and I felt a need to write a tribute to her while she was still alive. I sat down at my dining room table and I wrote my memories of her. I in no way ever thought that I would be reading them to this room. They were really meant for my friends, basically a very long Facebook post. I

know we are supposed to be brief, but my mother is now the matriarch of the family and she said I had to read the whole thing.

While she is still alive—and I am afraid that is a short while—I want to pay tribute to my aunt Sister Mary Pat Haley. My mom’s oldest sister moved to hospice care this week and her time on earth is now measured in days and weeks, not months and years. Mom says that MP is getting great care in the place where she retired a few months ago—the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Motherhouse in Dubuque, Iowa, just a few miles from my parents’ house. Mary Pat has been a nun since the early 1960s, maybe the 1950s. So many of us have images of sisters that we got from George Carlin monologues or Death Cab for Cutie songs. Even after 12 years of Catholic school and dozens of nuns as teachers, most of them terrific, my image of a nun is Mary Pat. She loved to laugh. In recent years she liked to hear about my kids. She loved a good cocktail.

Mary Pat is a retired communications professor from Loyola University Chicago, formerly Mundelein College. She loved movies and books and pop culture. We used to debate who would win the Oscars and about the meaning of a certain scene in *Witness*. Because of my profession and hers, she always asked me what I was doing and seemed to understand the answer better than any other relative. She lived in a typical Chicago apartment with two tremendous roommates for decades, I think. Other people’s aunts have spouses and kids; we had San (Ann Harrington) and Mary Alma (Sullivan). They are definitely a part of our family. While she would never say it, I think it must have been hard to be a nun. If I remember the family stories, when she entered the sisterhood, the young women were sequestered from their families for many months or years. These were 18-year-old girls who dedicated themselves to service and poverty for a lifetime. Only in later, more progressive times were they allowed to interact with the general public or even their friends and family. In the 1970s, many of Mary Pat’s contemporaries, other nuns and lots of priests, left their service, got married, moved on. That had to be trying. I’m sure Mary Pat could have lived a more comfortable life as a secular professor. I’m sure it’s hard to stay the course when your friends and contemporaries pick a new path, but this was her life, her faith, her dedication. While I can be a doubting Thomas, I have great respect for people who dedicate their lives to a passion and a faith.

Her health has failed her in the last few years. Mind and body have given away to illness and challenge. She’s about 30 years older than I am and I’m going to keep the 50-something Mary in my heart. She seemed old to me then; I was 20 and she was *my* age. She was as great a conversationalist as I can think of. She was academically challenging. She was a great woman. I wish her comfort in her next few days and weeks. And when she is done here in Dubuque, in the Midwest, and here on this earth, I wish her great joy in heaven where I guarantee she will challenge and entertain and be cherished.

Marianne Littau, Friend and Former BVM

I am a longtime friend of Mary Pat. We got to know each other 47 years ago in 1968 when 12 BVMs from Mundelein elected to move into smaller communities. There were two apartments of us both on Pratt. Kateri O’Shea, Mary Pat and I were part of one of those two groups. We remained fast friends all these years. You may have heard Mary Pat talk about “The Group.” The Group is Kateri, myself, Jean O’Keefe, Judy Farmer, Connie Knapp, Ann Harrington, Tina Stretch,

Mary Alma Sullivan, Mary Pat, Kathy Conway and Pat Bombard. We've celebrated Thanksgivings and many wonderful, loving occasions together. MP, we've often said that Kateri, you and I were the faithful remnant. Now we will try to be your faithful remnant.

Judy Haley Giesen, Sister

When I was married I changed my middle name Ann to Haley; that's how proud I am of my family. I have a fun story and then a passionate story. Mary Pat was at St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines, Iowa, Class of 1951. She and some of her friends were going to go off to the convent and Mom and Dad knew about it and were not happy—not miserably unhappy, but cautiously unhappy because it was their first daughter. Mary Pat said, "I'm going to tell Father about my vocation." So Mom and Dad said, "OK, we'll go over and talk to Father Walker about Mary Pat's vocation." So they went over. Father was sitting behind the desk and the three of them were sitting in front of him. Mary Pat said she wanted to be a sister, a BVM like those who taught her. Father said, "Oh, Mary Pat, that is just wonderful! You will be a Bride of Christ!" My father, Pat Haley, who many of you here had an opportunity to meet, said, "And we're here to delay the wedding." That was my father Pat Haley.

Mary Pat delayed the wedding for one year, went to St. Mary the Woods College and loved it, came home and went to Mount Carmel.

Speaking for the whole family and for my friends who have gone on the journey with me, I have raved and raved and raved about the care that Mary Pat got at Mount Carmel. Everybody from the people that greet you, the receptionist called me by name, the sisters all knew me—"Judy's here"—the CNAs, 4th floor, 1st floor, all her floors in Caritas and Marian Hall, the nurses, the directors, the care conferences open and transparent, the hugs, the beautiful, beautiful way with great dignity that they treated my sister. When I talk to my friends, they agree that if we ever need this kind of assistance in our lives—in independent living, assisted living, skilled living—we want to come to Mount Carmel. Now I think that could be arranged. Now I'm the matriarch, they say (which gives me great stress) and we will never forget you sisters. I don't know how much I can hang around here, but I know when I come in I will get that beautiful, hospitable greeting, "Hi, Judy! Glad to see you." Thank you, sisters! Thank you, staff; the staff is fabulous. Thank you!

Jean O'Keefe, Friend

I don't really have a story to tell, but Tom's remarks made me think of this. Mary Pat could cry at the drop of a hat. But the other thing she could do was laugh. When she laughed, she would giggle and she would cry. The tears would run down her face and she wouldn't even be able to talk because she was laughing so hard. I love Mary Pat and will love her forever. One thing she didn't do that I'm sorry about: I asked her to write my eulogy because she was so phenomenal at telling people's lives. She didn't write it yet. We are grateful for her nevertheless.

Sister Kathleen Conway, BVM

I want to follow up on Jean's comment about how Mary Pat liked to laugh. Mary Pat, Mary Alma Sullivan, Ann Harrington and I were driving from Chicago to California one summer and we passed through all the Midwestern states seeing farm after farm after farm and silos. For some reason we started characterizing the silos; it gave us something to do on that long ride. At one point, we saw three silos: one was a large silo, one was a medium silo and one was a small silo. And Mary Pat said, "Oh, there is Daddy and Mommy and Baby Mitzzy." She laughed at her own joke. She doubled over and she had tears coming down from her eyes. Her laugh was so infectious. So every time we passed a silo, we went, "There's Daddy and Mommy and . . ."

Terry Haley, Nephew

My memories of Mary Pat aren't really of Sister Mary Pat, they are of MP. Most of my memories don't relate to the church; they relate to Cubs games, taking the El train for the first time with my dad and my brother, her laugh, Mary Pat and my father dominating me and all of my friends in Trivial Pursuit because of their insane intelligence and the dated fashion of the game. Frankly, the biggest reference to the church would be when I would tell people that I actually have a nun in my family. My friends would question that greatly because of my own behavior.

But as I flew down yesterday, having several Jack Daniels on the plane, I actually started thinking about what Mary Pat means to me. To me, she actually is the church. My most fond memory of one of the most important moments of my life is my wedding. My wife is baptized but she has an Indian heritage which we wanted in our wedding. We had a joint Christian-Indian wedding but we couldn't do that at the church. Mary Pat did the blessing. To me, that was the most important moment of my wedding—having her be the church present on such a special day. When I look at my faith, she was what an accepting church, a loving church, should be. She actually commented how she thought the wedding was beautiful versus being something that was off-kilter. When I question and think about my faith, I just reference MP.

Sister Helen Maher Garvey, BVM

When the Set of 1952 entered Mount Carmel, we were assigned to tables alphabetically. I was fortunate to be at the table of Garvey, Haley, Healy, Healy and Heidkamp. It sounds like a law firm. Because we were not sufficiently developed in social skills, our postulant mistress assigned our table, not any other table, to give a presentation on charm. We got together to work on it. I remember that Eileen Healy's part was "Charm in Table Manners." I can't remember what Mary Pat's theme was, but we worked all week. On Sunday night at 7 p.m., we sat at this table in front of our peers to talk about charm and to instruct them about charm. I was the first one up and I started by saying, "Charm in letter writing." The place just exploded. As Midwesterners, they didn't know the correct pronunciation of "charhm." So we erupted in laughter; we couldn't contain ourselves. Mary Pat was laughing harder than anyone. Our postulant mistress said, "That will be the end of the panel." So the congregation was deprived of our great insight on charm.

Mike Haley, Brother

I am Mike Haley, the mean little brother. I am very grateful to family members who have already spoken because, quite frankly, they told all the best stories and have taken the pressure off of me. That's absolutely outstanding. I do want to chain on one thing and that's about the cousins. I don't know whether you are aware of this and I don't think this was actually said. This was the first time in 25 years that all the cousins have been together. There is only one person who could have done that, and that would be MP.

She had to have a bit of training to deal with cousins in particular at our house—Mary Pat, my wife Nancy, me and three boys. This was an interesting experience for all concerned other than the fact that we schooled everyone on Trivial Pursuit, as Terry referenced. She was getting used to dealing with a household of teenage boys and all their friends. Mary Pat was a very nice person; she brought up an entire refrigerator filled with good healthy fruit. She said, "The boys aren't eating the fruit." Nancy said, "Yeah, that's because it has not been taken off the stems, peeled and put

into a bowl.” “They’re that lazy? They will not eat the fruit unless that happens?” Nancy said, “Yeah, that’s pretty much the story.” So Mary Pat went to the refrigerator, got the fruit off the stem, peeled it, put it there. Gone in 15 seconds, I would wager.

But the thing I will remember the most was when one of my sons came down the next day and said, “Is everything OK?” I said, “What do you mean?” “MP’s room. The bed’s neat and made.” I said, “Yeah, she makes her bed. Try it sometime.” Mary Pat was remarkable as evidenced by all you people here. I am so proud that she was my sister. We were talking about Facebook a while back and I was just in awe of Tom Giesen’s post. I wrote that I couldn’t do that, but the thing I take pride in is that I know a saint—my sister.

Sister Patricia Bombard, BVM

I knew Mary Pat pretty much since I came out of the novitiate went to Chicago and worked at Mundelein. That was around 30 years ago, so it's a long journey. I've been trying to figure out how to tell this story. It was Helen Garvey's story that gave me the word; I was really searching for a word about this. As you know, in recent months, it was difficult to communicate with Mary Pat. I went to visit Mary Pat one time recently when I was here in Dubuque. I don't recall the occasion, but for some reason I had on a suit coat and a scarf; I don't dress like that very often. It was an outfit; it's always nice when it comes together. So I went up to visit with Mary Pat. We did our little communication and then it was time for Mass. The aide came, grabbed the wheelchair and was rolling Mary Pat into the little chapel on her floor so she could take part in the Mass. She was being rolled away when all of the sudden she turned around and she said, "Nice outfit." Charm, I think she got the charm thing.

Sister Mary Fran McLaughlin, BVM

I had the privilege to accompany Mary Pat on a mutual sabbatical. In February 2007, Mary Pat and I left Chicago to live in Leuven, Belgium, for three or four months. We had an absolutely fantastic time together. We explored Europe every weekend. We pretended like we were studying and we actually did take classes for a while during the week. On the weekends, we saw all kinds of things. It was a wonderful experience that I will never forget. Of course, Mary Pat was very upfront in that experience; we had so much fun together. We lived at the North American College which was a seminary during our time. On Sunday night we would be walking back after we had explored Amsterdam or London or Paris or Budapest, you name it. I would say to her, "Where are we going to go next week?" And she'd say, "Give me a minute to think."

Sister Margaret Mary Cosgrove, BVM

I first met Mary Pat when I entered the congregation. For a very short time, we had a novitiate in California – Guadalupe College – and it was a very small community and was only open for about three-and-a-half years. So those of us who were there got to be very close. Mary Pat was one of our teachers. I think it was a happy time of her life because there wasn't the pressure on the novices, the postulant and the faculty as there was here because there was no tradition out there; we made our own and Mary Pat was part of that. When we've had reunions, Mary Pat was always part of that so we will miss her as we remember her fondly.

Janet Haley Nissly, Sister

Speaking of Mary Pat living in California, my father used to say, "Join the nuns and see the world."

Sister Bertha Fox, BVM

In 1964, I was one of the four teachers sent out to Guadalupe College for its opening. Mary Pat was the acting academic dean. We four faculty members had a great time. That's when I learned how infectious Mary Pat's laugh was. For just one year she was academic dean. I don't know whether it was because we had such a good time running the place for the first year, but the next year we had a different academic dean.

Sister Patricia Fitzgerald, BVM

I'm part of the Set of 1952. Many people have mentioned Mary Pat's laugh. What I remember, although Marianne Littau mentioned that she wiggled when she laughed, but I used to love when she giggled. It was so inviting, so infectious. Of course, it turned into laughter after a while. She was wonderful.

Kateri O'Shea, Former BVM

I met Mary Pat for the first time when I came here in 1954. Mary Pat was an exulted senior novice and I was just a postulant. I knew her from her gracious smile and her brilliance, but I didn't really get to know her until I went to Mundelein. I taught with her for many, many years there and also at Loyola. I had the great privilege of being in that first group that lived together on Pratt and also on Farwell, in a small wonderful community. I remember so fondly the nights Mary Pat and I were at the dining room table and she was correcting papers and essays and I was studying medieval Spanish literature to try to make it interesting to my students. One of the things that made me laugh was when she took to the title of this one work I taught - *The Book of Good Love, El Libro de Buen Amor*. She loved the sound of that since she always was a wordsmith herself. She latched on to it. Many times, even the first time we came to visit her here, she'd say, "*Libro de Buen Amor*." I want to also comment on her generosity. My dear friend, Tina, would come to visit when I roomed with Mary Pat on Pratt. Just quietly she would say, "Take the bed. It's yours for the weekend." She was always very generous and quiet about it. I will always be grateful for that as well as having known her.

Eileen Haley Schellhammer, Sister

I am the middle sister. Jim and I were married about 50 years ago, 50 years ago in three weeks. Mary Pat could not attend the wedding because nuns could not attend weddings in those days. She was in Iowa City so the day after our wedding in Des Moines we went to visit her in the parlor of the convent. Shortly after that, probably the next year when I was working as an admissions officer at Mundelein and Mary Pat was just assigned to Mundelein, it was the weekend that you were going off the headress. Jim met Mary Pat the first time in the convent in full garb, the next time in our apartment. I was giving her a perm; she had one of Jim's old shirts on and drinking a Jack Daniels.

Sister Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM

I was in the novitiate just behind Mary Pat. We, Ann Harrington, Mary Pat and myself, loved together in East Rogers Park in excess of thirty years. Not only that, we were colleagues at Mundelein. I had the good fortune to not only work in the same department as Mary Pat, but in the same general area of expertise. I'm not going to say any more because most of you have said it. The only thing I would have to say would be almost inexpressible, and I think Ann Harrington would say the same; it was what Mary Pat was in our household for thirty plus years. I have a message for Mary Pat, for all of us.

Death Is Nothing At all
By Henry Scott Holland

Death is nothing at all.
I have only slipped away to the next room.
I am I and you are you.
Whatever we were to each other,
That, we still are.

Call me by my old familiar name.
Speak to me in the easy way
which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.

Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me. Pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word
that it always was.
Let it be spoken without effect.
Without the trace of a shadow on it.

Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same that it ever was.
There is absolute unbroken continuity.

Why should I be out of mind
because I am out of sight?

I am but waiting for you.
For an interval.
Somewhere. Very near.
Just around the corner.

All is well.

Nothing is past; nothing is lost.
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting
when we meet again!