

Sister Jean Monica Lanahan, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, June 5, 2015

Sister Joan Newhart, BVM

Jean Monica told me long ago that when she was Rosemary Lanahan, a sociology major at Mundelein College in Chicago, that she was also on the staff of the newspaper. As I understand it, she wrote a column called "Skyscrapings." It was the latest news that could be delivered. Sister Madelena Thornton, who was in charge of the newspaper, gave Rosemary the name of "Scoop" Lanahan. Having recalled all the scoops over the years, the last couple of days I have been imagining Jean talking to us saying, "Wait 'til I tell ya!"

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM

I got to really know Jean Monica when Adele and she were the administrators at the Motherhouse. We celebrated the Centennial of the Motherhouse in 1992 and she was great to work with. She was enthusiastic, so creative, and had a "let's go for it" attitude for the ideas presented.

We decided to redo the parlors and library into heritage rooms so we could display the history of the congregation. We hired a designer, an Adrian Dominican, who had the same tastes Jean did. However, Jean left the final perfect touch on each room. We invited the neighbors and the people from Dubuque for tours and for the historical programs we put on each month of the Centennial year. We had guest speakers, poetry readings and for one program we even had a group of sisters who did a dance to the song, *The Earth is Our Mother*. Jean was Miss Hospitality through it all.

Helen Garvey, the BVM president at the time, gave us the go ahead on all this. After it was all over she said, "When it was suggested we celebrate the Motherhouse Centennial I envisioned a tea on a Sunday afternoon; \$125,000 later, I realized I was wrong." The Heritage Rooms are a fitting memorial for Sister Jean Monica Lanahan, BVM.

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM

I know many of us could share hundreds of stories of warmth and love and gratitude relative to our friendship with Jean Monica because to be a friend of hers was a true privilege. I shared this story with some of you.

The days that death was rapidly approaching for Jean, I was in with her the morning that she knew she was going to see Dr. Ries and probably a decision was going to be made about hospice care. When I left her in the morning, I said, "I'll be back in the afternoon. Do let me know what Dr. Ries says." So I faithfully returned in the afternoon and said, "Jean, what did you and Dr. Ries decide?" I expected the answer to be "I'm going to enter into hospice," but no, that's not what she said. Instead she said, "Dr. Ries said that I would not be able to return to my room in Caritas Center. I will have to stay here in Marian Hall. I am already trying to think of ways to brighten up this room, to decorate it, to make it more hospitable, to warm it up, because I want people to feel very welcomed when they come to see me."

I thought, “Oh my heavens, is that ever Jean—the person who taught us how to see the beauty in everything, how to bring life and warmth and truly a sense of freedom because people could be safe and comfortable and have a sense of beauty when they entered into their room.”

Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM

I am in Jean Monica’s set. Jean was special all along; she was older and wiser than some of us young people. Jean was always at the donut meeting—breakfast on the first Saturday of the month when we had donuts. I think she only missed one time. She was a greeter and was enthusiastic about everything that was there, donuts of every kind. She was welcoming her set like we just got together. I think I’ll always remember Jean smiling and saying “How are you?” to each one as they came to the table. I hope she does that when we come to heaven too.

Sister Rosemary Shaughnessy, BVM

Kitty Lawlor invited me to come from Chicago where I had grown up and worked all my life. She wanted me to come to Dubuque. I said, “Dubuque?” And she said, “Yes.” So I came and I worked in the Secretary’s Office. I was an assistant. The Circle Apartments were built, so Jean, who I knew only by reputation, said to me, “Would you like to live with me?” I was so impressed that she asked me to come and live with her. We had wonderful, wonderful years over in the circle with our neighbors. I’ll always have great memories of Jean and the fun we had over there. We really had great parties.

Sister Diane O’Donnell, BVM

We all know that Jean’s name was Rosemary. We used to call her Ritzy Rosie because she always looked like she was going out to lunch with a bunch of dignitaries, and it was only us. Anyway, Jean was missioned at The Immaculata four times; we couldn’t get along without her. She happened to be there when we had to close the school so she volunteered to stay around to help us empty the building. One day she came to school in this lovely pink skirt and a beautiful white blouse. I said, “Jeannie, where are you going today?” She said, “Oh, don’t you remember? This is the day we are going to clean out all the science labs and I’m going to help Joan Newhart wash all the vials and the test tubes.” I said, “Jeannie, go home and get your jeans on.” She said, “I don’t own a pair.” So that’s only *one* Ritzy Rosie story.

Sheila Dempsey Emge

I met Sister Jean Monica when we both taught at Our Lady of Peace in St. Paul. In 1969, we left for Chicago. Sister went back to The Immaculata and to assist her brother who was dying. I returned to South Bend and there she began a different relationship with my family.

There are two things that are very special about our relationship. One is Christmas Eve. She would always send a box and inside the box were individual gifts. My husband and my daughter and I were the recipients. She would also, as my family grew, send a gift for my son-in-law and for my two grandchildren Hannah and Regan. We will miss those Christmas gifts.

You all know what a fashion plate Jean was; she loved to shop. When she came to South Bend, we would go to Marshall Fields or Macy’s. When I came to visit her here, Younkers was always a place

we needed to stop. But there was another place too. She always looked beautiful and she would always show me her recent purchases. "Jean, it's beautiful . . . It's a lovely jacket . . . It's a beautiful top . . . It's a lovely coat . . . Where did you get it?" "From the Mall in the Hall." In this past week, I have met some beautiful women very beautifully dressed. I would say, "Sister, that is lovely. Where did you get it?" "I got it from the Mall in the Hall and it even had tags on it."

I guess I'll have to stop there on my way home. I would like to share a short reflection that I read at a recent funeral of a friend. It is from a Carmelite monastery in Waterford, Ireland. I think we can hear Jean Monica speaking to all of us.

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

Call me by my old familiar name.
Speak to me in the easy way
which you always did.

Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me. Pray for me.
Let my name be spoken without effect.

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 your mind
because I am out of your 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,
Only better, infinitely happier and forever.
We will all be together with Christ.

Sister Kathleen Spurlin, BVM

There are two things that come to mind when I think of Jean Monica. I always think of her ready smile and I think of her as the matriarch of our set. She was a gracious person to be around. We thank God for the gift she has been to each of us.

Sister Eileen Healy, BVM

Jean Monica taught sociology during the summers at Clarke for the master's program. I had her for sociology of education. Clarke was not air conditioned in the 1960s. We were out in the hall during the break to get some air and to let the room air out. The bunch of us was having a great time out there. She came to the door and said, "You have the "social" part down. Now come in and get the "ology" part.

Sister Susan Rink, BVM

I have two things to share. As a senior novice, Jean was the infirmarian. I don't know if she knew anything about health issues, but I suspect that there were many imaginary illnesses, especially among the postulants, so that they could go and hear Jean's soothing voice and experience her beautiful smile. That was something quite a contrast from those usually in charge.

My second comment is a follow-up on Rosemary Shaughnessy's. Building 3 in the Circle Apartments was Jean's last home before moving to Mount Carmel. We had four two-bedroom apartments. The eight of us were a real community. We celebrated birthdays, feast days, all special events together and we entertained each other's families. Marguerite Neumann and Eugena Sullivan were on one end; Jean Monica, Rosemary Shaughnessy, then Jeanine Moran and myself, and finally Kitty Lawlor and Adele Henneberry at the other end.

One of the most fun things that we used to do happened in the summer. Jean Monica and Rosemary purchased a table with one of those huge umbrellas and they parked it on our patio. Every afternoon, unless it was raining, all of us would bring a beverage and whatever snacks we happened to have and sit out there and enjoy one another. As I think about it, this was, as I said, a community. Now Jean has joined Marguerite and Jeanine in that same community that's starting up there in heaven. I'm sure that they gave her a greeting as well as all the many loved ones that met her. I think Jean received and will continue to receive a huge welcome in her new home.

Sister Carolyn Farrell, BVM

This is my unique memory of Jean Monica. It goes back to the 1970s when we were in heavy duty community meetings. I believe we must have been in either Chicago or Milwaukee. Ellenine Goldthwaite and I were driving home when we decided to stop along the way and have an overnight at some motel. This was in the early days when we were getting away from it all.

We went into this motel to just stay overnight and then continue on our way to Dubuque. As we were walking down the corridor, there was a pool. There was Jean Monica swimming on her back in the pool. I was stunned because I thought we were doing the great getaway. That's always my memory of Jean. I always looked at her with admiration because I thought she was older than me and there she was in that pool, out there escaping herself. It is Jean's free spirit that I remember and enjoyed and am grateful for.

Patricia Fitzgerald, Cousin

Ever since I can remember, Jean Monica has been there for me. One of the high points in my life was getting married and she couldn't be there. It was very disturbing. We were married July 2, 1960, and somehow or other she arranged to be at Mundelein College. We got married at St. Ignatius in Rogers Park. Well, I thought it was great! Instead of doing other things after the ceremony, we went to Mundelein. I knew where to go although I wasn't allowed in that area as a student, but that day it was OK; she was there then.

When we began to have children, she couldn't be a godmother because of the rules. So we kept having children and waiting for the church to change. Finally, we had a daughter whom we called Rosemary. It came to be that our oldest daughter Margaret Ann got to be of a certain age and was invited to Immaculata for a weekend. Jean Monica made sure that the gym was open, that the candy dishes were filled and a classroom was ready for Margaret Ann to write on the board while Jean sat at a desk writing her lesson plans. Then she invited each of our sons so they got to go to a convent for a weekend which is amazing and wonderful; they will never forget it.

Sister Joan Newhart, BVM

Several years ago, four BVMs went on a little vacation to Door County, Wis. We were relaxing in front of the cabin where we were staying. Someone called to our attention that three of us, Terese Shinnars, Regina Qualls and I, had our noses stuck in books. Jean did not. She was writing notes to people as fast as she could write them. Here's my next prediction: I don't know how she'll do it, but don't be surprised if you get a note thanking you for coming to her funeral.

Sister C Jean Hayen, BVM

In 1988 when Jean Monica was the administrator at Mt. Carmel and I at Visitation, she was part of the original group that founded what we call the Round Table which sponsored and started the intercongregational days among the communities of the area. She had wonderful input and was a wonderful support.

Sister Mary Ellen Zimmermann, BVM

The last time I heard Jean Monica speak she was lying in bed and her voice was getting weaker. She held my hand and called me by name. After a while she said, "Thank you so much for stopping by." That was the last thing I remember her saying to me.

Sister Susan Effinger, BVM

I haven't heard anybody say anything about Jean Monica's cooking ability. I have a recipe in my collection with her name on it. It is one of my favorite recipes; I make it often. I will always remember Jean Monica when I make that recipe.