

*Sister Catherine McHugh, BVM (St. Thoma)*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, Sept. 15, 2014*

### **Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM**

I met Katie McHugh nearly 70 years ago when I was a boarder at Immaculate Conception Academy and Katie taught at St. Anthony ES in Davenport, Iowa. The sisters who taught at St. Anthony lived at ICA. They walked six blocks down the hill to St. Anthony every morning and six blocks up the hill every evening no matter the weather. Katie was the moderator of the boarders' evening study halls. She was a proctor in the dormitory for the girls. Katie said to me that she was always grateful that I entered the convent because she got a home visit. The summer that I entered, the sister that was preparing my trunk had to go to Jameson's Religious Goods store in Chicago. She asked that Katie would go with her so Katie could visit her mother and father. So Katie has always been very grateful to me. But I also have been very grateful to Katie. We went through St. Ambrose College together; we went through Marquette University together; we went through Vatican II together. And even though our experiences were often very different, we always checked in with one another. Katie is very much a part of my BVM roots. For that, I will always be very grateful to Katie.

### **Sister Mary M. O'Connor, BVM**

I was also at ICA. When it was time to make up my mind to enter the community, the sister that was helping me asked Katie to go with her to Chicago to Jameson's. When they got there the door was locked; the store was closed for the day. The poor sister said, "Oh my goodness. We better leave and make arrangements." Katie said, "Don't worry. We'll go home. I'll tell my parents and they will call them to come down and open the store." So she's a part of my life also.

### **Sister Anita Therese Hayes, BVM**

My years go back like Kitty's, although probably a few more. Katie and I were studying at St. Ambrose College in Davenport and living at ICA. We spent many days walking from ICA up to St. Ambrose. We had wonderful times. Katie and I at that time taught in the primary grades, so every summer we would bring all our patterns we used in the classroom to ICA so we could exchange. We had some wonderful times together.

We went to workshops together; we shared a lot. The workshop that was always well remembered by Katie was the kindergarten one at DePaul. We stayed at Holy Name for the summer and had to take the bus up to DePaul. We had a wonderful superior at Holy Name. Every day when we'd get back we would be late for dinner. So she said to Katie, "Why don't you just stop in at your folks'." That was a memorable vacation. Katie always remembered it. Of course, her parents were just delighted to have her.

Katie and I have remained friends for many, many years. We've shared a lot and we could always pick up every time we saw each other. So Katie, keep on. I have many, many memories and the memories will always live with me.

### **Peg Schneider, Niece**

From those generous sharings about Katie, you know what family meant to her. I'm Katie's oldest niece and her godchild. A lot of times people say that 13 is an unlucky number. I think luck is a superficial term when I think of Cack (Katie). My mom, Margaret Schneider, and Katie were 13 years apart. My aunt Cack and I were 13 years apart. My brother Matthew and I were 13 years apart. So it's not just a lucky number; it's a gift and a privilege.

When I think about my mom and Aunt Cack, I realize how so alike they were. When mom died, I was thinking about Henry David Thoreau's statement about living the essentials of life. If we come to that point in our life when we've died and not lived that, we certainly are disadvantaged. That's not what Henry said, but that was the meaning. (Cack would say, "You don't need notes.") We know that our mom lived the essentials; she was most herself. And that's Katie. Everybody in this room that loves her has their stories about how she was most truthful to herself. The many times when she could go the length, it was always on behalf of someone else, some good that Katie saw.

My family's privilege was coming here these last five years and seeing the magnificent care that my aunt was given. I used to say, "Cack, this is a five star place." For her with nursing home reform, she could always recognize all the things that were given to her. I went up to her room today to see the staff to thank them; so many could say that she really knew them. She was most herself, as was my mom, and faithful to that. And she was faithful to her family. That's who my mom was. That's who Cack was. I'm glad she got to Draper Street as often as she orchestrated.

And she was faithful to her faith and the most beautiful way she continued to process that deeper place in her life and who God was for her. She has left us as her family, and probably for you as well, a legacy of how we live the gifts God's given us. My mom knew exactly when it was time to go home. Cack knew five years ago that she should come home here; this was home for her. Then last week, she knew she was ready for her next home. We are grateful to all of you who are here to celebrate her life. We will miss her, but in generosity we have to surrender her to a God who gave her grace to be faithful to who she was.

### **Sister Kathleen Conway, BVM** (Read by Sister Joellen McCarthy, BVM)

When Katie was working for Illinois Citizens for Better Care, she gave a lot of tips about how to stay safe on the streets. One piece of advice she gave was "If a burglar grabbed your purse, let him have it. Better to lose your purse than your life." Then one day, Katie was climbing the stairs to visit one of the senior citizens when a man lunged for her purse, and Katie ran after him.

### **Sister Joellen McCarthy, BVM**

There are so many stories in my own life, but one came to me yesterday. When I was working in Nicaragua, Katie and Carolyn Farrell came down to spend some time with us. Unfortunately, Katie turned her ankle and had to stay back at the house when we were going down to the

plaza to see Fidel Castro. It bothered her so much that she was this close to seeing Fidel Castro and missed the opportunity.

### **Sister Carolyn Farrell, BVM**

As Peg said, there are so many stories about Katie that can be shared. I have two. Katie was a very dear and close friend of mine. It all began years ago in the late 1950s when I was going to Clarke College for summer school; we were the last set before the Scholastics. I wrote to my dear friend Maggie McGinn in Memphis who was going to St. Ambrose. I said to Maggie, trying to encourage her and also being sorry that she wasn't going to Clarke where I was, "They're a good group. They're kind of young at heart and they mean well." Of course the group was only about ten years older than we were. Katie McHugh was incensed. She thought it was a terrible insult that I would call her "young at heart." Anyway, Katie goes on to be superior at St. Pat and I go on with my career in teaching. I thought, "Please, God, may I never go there." Happily I didn't. Katie was principal in Dubuque later on and then there was a pause of about six years and then I was principal.

When I got into community governance, there was Katie. A long relationship began there as we worked through the intricacies of BVM government. In the 1980s, we were regionals together. In 1983 and 1984, as Joellen said, we were going to go to South America to visit Quito and Guayaquil and Nicaragua. Well, that was my first trip out of the country and I was a little nervous. Neither one of us could speak much Spanish. I said to Katie, "Katie, I'm afraid." She said, "Oh, Carolyn! For God's sake, you can be murdered and raped in Chicago." So, I quite took it to heart and never said "Boo" about being afraid again.

Later in life, I'm happy to report that I did go out of the country a variety of times to distant places. Every time I would get on the plane I thought, "Oh, Carolyn! You can be murdered and raped in Chicago." And in a sense, Katie was with me. And that's the way Katie was; she told the way it was. Sometimes it brought you up short, but she had your best at heart. Katie was thinking of others. She doggedly worked through the McHugh place for years before it ever came to be. Katie, I'll really miss you. You knew how to do it a day at a time. For that I'm grateful.

### **Sister Marie Fitzpatrick, BVM**

I've known Katie since 1939 when we both entered St. Mary HS as freshmen. Katie was a very entertaining person whom we've heard very much about. We entered together and through the years have had conversations and visits with each other. I knew that Catherine loved St. Mary. In the last six months, St. Mary was having their alumnae luncheon which Catherine had attended many times. I was able to go; I was on the board there for a long time. The luncheon proved to be outstanding and one of the most outstanding parts was the talk that Teri Hadro gave, especially to the young and not-so-young alumnae. I knew how much Catherine valued all that St. Mary was so got a copy of the talk and typed it up and went over to visit her. I read the speech to her and then said, "I want you to have it to read it yourself because I think it's pretty profound." So she did that and some days later returned a folder to me with it and with it a little phrase, "Thank you so much for your great consideration. I loved it."

**Colleen Hurley, relative of Sister Mary DeCock (Donatus)**

I am related to Sister Mary DeCock (Donatus). I am married to John Hurley and an extended part of the Hurley family. I got to know Cack, as they called her, many years ago through Sister Donatus. As years went on and I got to know both of them much better, a little bit from their trips to Des Moines, but a lot from when they moved from Sheridan in Chicago to their brownstone condo. I had the privilege of spending several weeks with them as they went through their move and downsizing. I also got to know Ed Joyce. Katie called and said, "You've got to come into Chicago and help us host this board for the senior housing project." So I got to meet all the board members that she worked with for ten or more years; it was a long process. I was privileged to go with her on many occasions when they were picking out windows and other things for the architect. I just got bits and pieces over a lot of years.

Katie was a role model for me as a woman. My mother passed away when I was twenty-seven and John's mom, who was Sister Helen Hurley's sister-in-law, became my role model. I'm out of role models now. I'm 68 and Katie brought me the rest of the way on how important faith and family was to her, very important, and a sense of humor and never giving up. Peg called me two weeks ago and said Katie wasn't doing as well. Thank you for that phone call. I just got in my car and came up. She was so tickled to see me and I was so tickled to see her. She showed off for a few hours like you can when you're really not well but you have company. I told her that I loved her and good-bye. I, too, am so grateful for the care that she's had. This is just a phenomenal place to have your health and your senior years all taken care of with faith as the number one thing. It has been a pleasure all the years and time I have gotten to come here.

**Sister Ann Kathleen McDonnell, BVM**

I never lived with Katie or taught at the same school with her, but my life really became important with Katie in 1985 when I became involved with the Intercommunity Network. It was Katie who was such a prime mover at that time. She was the one who was so concerned about so many of the religious. The convents were disintegrating in a sense and they were looking for places. It was Katie who had the idea that there should be something. There's so much history since 1985 that I wouldn't even begin to go into it.

I was reminiscing with David, who is president of the board, of all the pieces that we went through. There is a statement that was read today that said leaders are initiators, they are enablers and they are inspirers. I couldn't help but think that was Katie's role and so much a part of her life. I always think of a puzzle and trying to put the pieces together. You are trying to get those pieces in and sometimes it gets frustrating. I know those frustrating days with Katie when that project took its course. There were great days and we were happy and excited that something was going to happen. Then there would come a day when it all seemed to get wiped away.

Yet, that spirit remained in Katie, although there were times when she would begin to get a little nervous and think that maybe this isn't the time. But then people come into your life; they are part of those puzzle pieces. Monsignor Hardeman, God rest his soul, was a real piece of the

push to not give up. Ed's name was mentioned; he became another one of the pushers. It was Katie's way of affecting people that made you want to be part of something no matter how many hard days there were. I had the privilege of always picking her up when we went to the meetings and we would look for places for this building that had this dream attached to it. I learned so much from Katie; she was kind of a mentor. One of the things was what a writer she really was. She wrote notes like no one I had ever met. One of the people who got to know her very well was Mayor Daley. He was very supportive. I am grateful for all the mentoring that she did along the way. We will miss her.

### **Ed Joyce**

Hearing all these great stories about Katie reminds me of what you would expect from an Irish woman. They are used to pushing the Irish men. Ann Kathleen mentioned Rich Daley. He was very much influenced by his mother, by his sisters and by women and Katie McHugh was one of those women. She kept writing him notes about what needed to be done and it was done, very quietly, but it was done. I had the pleasure of working with Katie since the late 1980s. I never met a woman who was so able to bear what had to be done. If we needed an architect, she found one. If we needed a manager, she found one. So she always brought to the table what we needed and never really gave up until it was done. Thank you for being friends with Katie and I am happy to say I was one too.

**Sister Marion Murphy, BVM**

I am one of those persons who is blessed to be living in the Catherine McHugh Senior Apartments at the corner of Roosevelt and Loomis in Chicago. We have such a wonderful community there. We have nineteen sisters of five different communities, five Christian Brothers, a Trinitarian brother and of the remaining 68 units, wonderful lay women and men; just a wonderful community there. I think all of us will be forever grateful for her persistence, her faith, her vision and all that was involved in bringing it to reality.

**Sister Ann Harrington, BVM**

Since we are talking about housing, Katie and Mary DeCock moved to Arthur Street in the apartment below us before she came here to Dubuque. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience to get to know Katie and Mary on the day to day. I will always be grateful for that. Katie was a treasure; she can't be duplicated.

**Sister Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM**

What Ann forgot to mention in her remarks was that Katie McHugh was our pray-er for several years. For those who are not familiar with that term, the sisters here on this campus are assigned to be interveners on behalf of a certain BVM or BVM community. Having heard some of the things that are being said about Katie, we have a different perspective of what Katie is going to expect of us. We are grateful for her prayerful support and she was very conscience of that when we visited.