

Sister Carolita McMahon, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, March 13, 2015

Sister Mary Kelliher, BVM

I was eating in Marian Hall for about a month and Carolita was my table partner. There was nary a word out of her, but she had the quality of mindfulness in what she was doing. The bread was deliberately laid out and made to form an open face sandwich and very carefully plotted and cut in fours. Everything was like a ceremony as she prepared the food and ate. It was a revelation: me wolfing down my food and she being so mindful of what she was doing. Her clothing protector seldom needed to be changed. A Zen quality, recollection, mindfulness, that was Carolita.

Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM

I was impressed by the psalm response and the reading on stillness, for I visited Carolita regularly for about the last three years. I always found her in her room perfectly still, seemingly very happy, sitting very erect in a straight chair. She always gave me a nice greeting. One day I thought I better tell her who I was and she said, "Oh, I know who you are." Sometimes we didn't have much to talk about so she asked, "Do you want me to sing you a song?" She sang a very beautiful children's song with absolutely perfect enunciation because I didn't miss a word and perfect tone. So after that, if she didn't offer, I would always ask her. So every time I visited her in the last six weeks I asked her for a song and it was perfectly sung. It was such a joy. She always had such a beautiful smile while she sang a song. Sometimes I would meet her in Wellness. There she would be tossing the ball quite actively with the attendant. Sometimes the attendant really had to reach for it because she really gave it a good thrust. I heard it at the table so I don't know the truth of this, but supposedly she was quite the athlete, a basketball player. So maybe that's why it was a real job to keep up with her ball.

Sister Joan Newhart, BVM

I'm about to give a slightly different interpretation of "be still." I believe Carolita and Marguerite Neumann never missed the crossword puzzle done in the Community Room. Apparently they were both very good at crossword puzzles. Eventually they were told to "be still" and to please raise their hands if they wished to answer.

Sister Catherine Dominick, BVM

Every time we walked on the third floor corridor, you could see Carolita sitting in her chair just singing with nobody around. You could hear her singing constantly. It was so beautiful to hear her sing that I would purposefully go that way just to hear her.

Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM

I'm going to pick up on the singing part because I think Carolita's heart was always singing a song. Very often when you would go by, it was not only the voice but the tapping of the foot to the beat of the song. She was very much a person who entered into all kinds of different activities that were provided. That beautiful smile was never missing. She was right there to help out and she enjoyed the different games that were available. She was just a delight to know. When they had some performers coming in, she would actually direct with her hand. She was a very joyful person to be around even though quite quiet. Like Mary said, that Zen quality that she had was very evident.

Beth McMahon, Niece-in-law

My husband John is Sister Carolita's nephew, but like most men, he was not much at writing or getting involved with a lot of family things. So I used to write letters and I would get the most beautiful letters back from her and I still have them. I can remember when our sons played soccer. The one year she said in her letter that we brought Christ into soccer. It touched my heart. Excuse my tears. I've always said I could not be in a Resurrection Choir because I cannot keep from crying at wakes and funerals.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

I can remember so many times walking down the hallway and noticing a beautiful painting and going up to it to see who the artist was. I was very surprised to see Carolita's name on many paintings around the house. One of the last times I visited her, I thanked her for the beautiful paintings. I told her that every time I saw one of hers, I would say a prayer for her.

Sister Mary Crimmin, BVM

I will pick up on the singing part of Carolita's life because both of us liked to sing. So when I visited her, I didn't ask her to sing for me, but I said, "What shall we sing?" So we sang together. She wrote some of those little ditties that she sang. I don't know how many of you heard it, but the one about Rover she sang often. So whatever happens in the next life for us, I hope she is able to meet her Rover.

Sister Paul Francis Bailey, BVM

I am going to tell a rather mundane story about Carolita because I think it is so demonstrative of the preciseness with which she did everything. I was absolutely amazed at the breakfast table. She was given two slices of toast, some peanut butter and an egg. I was under the impression that Carolita could not see so I was amazed as she put the slices down and began spreading the peanut butter from corner to corner and very precisely covering every inch of that slice of toast. Then she proceeded to do the same thing with the other slice of toast. Next she put jelly on each one with the same precision. She took the hard-boiled egg, sliced it into equal portions and then placed them to perfectly fit on the slices of toast. Finally, she put the slices together making sure each corner was where it belonged and proceeded to slice the toast. I was absolutely amazed. It does take away from the singing, but the singing must have been in her heart as she did it.

Sister Brigid Mary Hart, BVM

I had the privilege of writing for Carolita for the last couple of years. Because I was doing that, I would find myself in Wellness when she was in Wellness and sometimes I got a love song sung to me besides songs about Rover and Frenchy. She always had that twinkle in her eye and a smile on her face. I was privileged to be with her a few hours before she died. Sara and I were reminding her of a song and she was still smiling. I think she will be smiling and dancing and greeting us when it's our turn.

Sister Virginia Crilly, BVM

About a week or two ago, one of the aides brought her little girl in and it was the little girl's first birthday. Carolita proceeded to sing "Happy Birthday" to the little one. She knew the little one's name, Bridget, who just beamed all over and loved having the song sung just for her.