

*Sister Eva Sheehan, BVM*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, April 6, 2016*

**Sister Vicki Smurlo, BVM**

I loved Eva. She had that twinkle in her eye with a smile that could bring laughter to my heart, and I always had certitude that she was sincerely interested in what I was about—both when I lived with her at Holy Family and when she came here. I sent her notes monthly, and visited her when I got to Dubuque, and consistently captured that feeling that she loved me. We at Holy Redeemer convent in Montrose, Calif., were blessed with her as our "pray-er." Happily, she is now one more BVM saint in heaven still doing that spiritual ministry for us!

**Chuck Gard, Former Associate Priest, Holy Family, Glendale, Ariz.**

(Read by Sister Vicki Smurlo, BVM)

Very sad day for Eva groupies and the BVM community, but happy for her! I'm sure she was ready to move on. Yes, another saint in heaven! She was adored by the kids at Holy Family Grade School in Glendale, Calif., because of her sense of humor and passion for life! I always enjoyed going into her classroom and can still picture when she would make faces at me as I passed by her classroom windows on Lomita Ave. I don't know what she did prior to Holy Family, but I'm sure she was loved everywhere she was assigned! Many fond memories of Eva, she always made me laugh and reminded me not to take life too seriously. I am grateful to have shared a few years with her in ministry and always felt her prayers after I left Holy Family. Like Monsignor Lirette, you knew if you were on her good side or not. She was very honest about what she thought of you! God bless Eva Sheehan and her many years of faithful service to the church and BVM community. She was one of a kind. I miss her already.

**Patty Lazzaretto, Niece**

As a young child I had the great fortune of having my dear grandmother Mary Clifford as my roommate from the ripe age of 7 years in 1956 to her death in August 1972, 16 years. We were "best buds." Oh, the stories I heard!

I remember asking why Auntie Eva looked different from the other aunts. Grandma explained that Auntie Eva was her niece and that when she was very young her father had died. She wasn't a well child and was sent to the United States from Ireland to San Francisco to live with her aunts. She had stayed with one of the other aunts, but my grandfather Patrick Clifford didn't like the arrangement and said to his wife Mary Sheehan Clifford, "That's enough. What is another one added to the eight we have?" So it came to be Auntie Eva lived at 42 Harper St. in San Francisco until she entered the BVMs at the age of 20.

There had been some moments that the Clifford girls had "their noses bent out of shape." Their father put things to rest when he told them that "we wanted Eva, but had to take you." All was quiet and no more rivalry. She was accepted into the Clifford fold and became just another sibling.

Auntie Eva, alias Auntie Beaver (Little Eva), had a charming way about her. She also had mischief in her eyes and a contagious laugh. Her "wee" little voice was delightful to listen to as she read with great expression storybooks that we had at the house. Since my parents inherited the family home and became the caretakers of my mother Mary Clifford Kotlanger's parents, Patrick and Mary Clifford, 42 Harper St. family home was where all the aunts would congregate for visitation. That was always such a highlight in our lives. We had grand times with each one. Auntie Eva was small and just sort of fit the

role of a perfect playmate—scurrying around us in the basement playing tag, playing with our dolls, backyard fun in the sun, playing and walking the neighbor's dogs Junie and Taffy. Oh, she loved dogs, thus her collection of stuffed animals since she couldn't have a real one. She was also a card shark and taught us many card games.

Every birthday or feast day one could always find a tastefully picked card sent for the occasion. At Christmas a box full of personally selected gifts would arrive to our delight. As we grew older, Auntie had words of wisdom she imparted to us individually. She wasn't a person to hold a grudge. She would say, "In ten minutes, it will all be forgotten. Forgive and forget." She had many friends that adored her and kept in contact with her all these years. She was loyal as the day is long. Her kindergartners found a loving teacher, not only teaching them but ministering in her gentle way when they fell or were being bullied. Auntie Eva was a wonderful teacher of the "wee little people," as she called her students. Teaching kindergarten was her forte.

When she retired she prepared herself by taking classes on retiring. She had a good perspective on what retiring would mean to her. Retiring wasn't going to the Motherhouse to sew trivets, but to continue on with classes opening new doors to knowledge. We knew that when she went back to reside at the Motherhouse that we would no longer see her for Christmas visits. My brother, Father Michael Kotlanger, SJ, who died this past October, and I kept in contact with letters every month and phone calls. When correspondence from her stopped, I figured that something was wrong. So Sister Julie O'Neill and Sister Mary McCauley became our email couriers and we would get feedback from them. Sister Karen Conover, on her visits to Mount Carmel, would take pictures and make recordings of her saying hello.

Thank you, Auntie Eva, for your unconditional love and friendship. Now you have joined the rest of the Clifford and Sheehan clan. Keep rooting for us all and be there to welcome your "little sister" Margaret Clifford Kotlanger when the Lord calls her home. Love always.

#### **Sister Joan Opatts, BVM**

I would first like to relay a message from former BVM S.M. Arlene, now Marguerite Karnick. She has quite a wonderful story and history with Sister Eva. Marguerite was sent out to teach the year we were professed, March 1956. She was sent to Casper, Wyo., to teach first grade. Eva never left Marguerite. She was with her morning, noon and night telling her the best way to teach the little ones. Marguerite to this day is so grateful to her. They have kept in contact all these years. Marguerite and I were talking on the phone the other day when I called her about Eva's death. She said she could not come, but asked me to relay this message to all of you and to thank Eva with all her heart. Marguerite loves you, Eva, and thanks you for all you did for her.

I, myself, would like to relay my relationship with Eva. It goes way back when she was able to walk quite comfortably with her walker and she did not need oxygen. She and I got together over taking pictures. I was her "professional" photographer and she was the boss. We went every place in this house, especially turrets because she loved the scenic view from the turrets. She would purchase disposable cameras and then tell me exactly what she wanted. Many times she was in the pictures herself because this was her way of showing her friends that she really wore the gifts that they sent her, like a blouse or a sweater. I knew when she called me on the phone that someone had just sent her something and here we go with pictures. It was fun. She would be standing or sitting however we planned it and would say to me, "Now, Joan, do you have the background right? Do you have the Mississippi River? Do you have the trees?" I would assure her I did. I had lots of fun with Eva. And about dogs, she would tell me the

story about every one of the dog pictures that she had on her closet doors. I love you, Eva, and I thank you for all the fun times we had together. Now you are seeing all the beautiful scenery in heaven.

#### **Sister Therese Fox, BVM**

I have numerous stories about Eva. The last material I had on the back of my wheelchair had pictures of dogs. Every time I would park right next to Eva, she would go “Woof-woof, woof-woof, woof-woof.” When Eva was twenty years old, her family already had three daughters who were BVMs and one other daughter who belonged to another community and a son who was a priest. Eva was asking to enter the BVMs. Her father had to take a day off work because he had to get to the bank and get the money. His boss said to him, “What’s this for?” He said, “Eva wants to go to Mount Carmel.” His boss replied, “What are you doing? Are you running a factory for nuns?” Her father said, “No, no. I just have another one who doesn’t want to work.”

#### **Sister Mary M. O’Connor, BVM**

I knew Eva from when we were in Hawaii. They had a very nice convent that was near the Chaminade school. My parents wanted to come to visit. I asked the superior there if my parents could stop at their convent first because it would be closer to where I was at summer school. They did a beautiful job of welcoming my parents. Eva, of course, was the funniest. My father was a little nervous and he pulled out a cigarette and lit it. Eva ran and got an ashtray and put it on the table near my father. When they brought my parents to another room, my father would still have his cigarette and Eva would be running behind him with the ashtray. She was always there to take care of any ashes that would happen to fall. I always appreciated their hospitality and she was classic taking care of his cigarette.

#### **Sister JoAnn O’Connell, BVM**

I lived with Eva in Kansas City. I taught at O’Hara and she was at St. John Francis Regis. In those days, we were able to go home for the holidays and most in the house were from Kansas City. The house emptied out at Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas; we had celebrations before. The three of us, Lurana Cranny, Eva and I, got very close; we were the only ones staying around there at those times.

Secondly, everybody has talked about dogs. When I was leaving O’Hara to move to Utah, the sister I was replacing came from Utah to Kansas City with her dog. At that time the kindergarten classroom was in the basement of the convent. We devised a way so that Eva could have the dog. I never asked her this, but I think she probably stayed overnight in the basement with that dog because we never heard a peep out of that dog. I’m sure she took it out when it needed to be taken out. I always visited Eva when I came to Mount Carmel and had a card picked out with a dog on it for her birthday on Tuesday. I know that she’s up there thinking “Oh well, you had to tell that story.” God bless you, Eva. We’ll be together some other day.

#### **Sister Karen Conover, BVM**

The last day Eva was with us, she was to be anointed. I went up to her room where there were several other sisters gathered waiting for the end of Mass in this chapel and for Fr. Barta to come. Julie kindly motioned that I should stand next to her bed. I wanted to lean over and kiss her, but there was too much stuff. So I just kissed my hand and touched her and said, “This is from Margaret (Eva’s sister) and this is from Patty (her niece) and this is from Mary Ann (Patty’s sister) and this is from me.” Then I sat down and about two minutes later came this little “Thank you.”

Later that day before I went home, I went up to her room. She was comfortable, but it was clear the Lord was coming soon. No one else was there at that moment, so I sat and sang to her; she always

wanted me to sing to her. That was a real privilege. Associate Marilyn Highlander-Pool had a great love for Eva and would make a regular trip here every April to mark Eva's birthday. She's so sad that she could not be here, but I know that she is watching on videostream. On behalf of Marilyn, I want to say she loves you, Eva. Thank you for your wonderful, wonderful smile and your gracious, gracious way of always saying thank you.

#### **Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM**

Associate Marilyn Heinz had the fortune to have Eva as her first grade teacher at the Cathedral. Marilyn called last night very much regretting that she and two other classmates could not come today. Personally, I think it was probably one of Eva's last meals in Marian Hall. I was going to her table and as always Eva had this wonderful smile on her face. She was so happy. She showed me the rosary she had in her pocket and said, "This is Dorita's rosary." I said, "Oh, Eva, Dorita is praying with you right now." She just gave that wonderful, beautiful smile. Can you imagine the stories that Dorita and Eva are telling? Wow! (S.M. Dorita Clifford, BVM, was Eva's cousin/sister.)

#### **Sister Mary McCauley, BVM**

It was my joy and distinct privilege to offer two services to Eva—one as her letter writer and also as a transport for her to the Roberta Kuhn classes. Concerning the letter writing, believe me, she had a very long list for Christmas cards. Periodically I would suggest that maybe we could omit one or two, but we were not permitted to omit any because she had a story for every single person. This was evident to me. I didn't know who they were, but the great connection she kept with her students and many of their parents was great. Eva really loved all people, both the young and the elderly. She also liked to ask me, "Is there any money in the card?" She really appreciated when I was able to send over a little bit of money to the retirement fund. She liked the card, but wanted to know "is there any money." I always enjoyed that and the opportunity to communicate with the people who remembered her.

My other service was taking her to Kitty Lawlor's class. I'll tell you, that Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock was very important. I would arrive at the door, all the aides knew what to do, and Eva would look at them and say, "I'm going to class." She was absolutely delighted. And then there was the routine. We had to be at the very first table. We had to open the black case and pull out the yellow folder. We had to get the ruler and the pen. Then she was all set up. To all external appearances, she immediately went to sleep. To my amazement though, as I was bringing her back to her room, she would comment on some of Kitty's tales. I just want you to be careful when you think someone is asleep. They really are hearing everything that you say, Kitty. It was a joy to have a special connection with Eva.

#### **Sister Roberta White, BVM**

I had the privilege of living with Eva for three years in Glendale, Calif., before she retired to Mount Carmel. As Mary McCauley mentioned, she not only related to the wee ones, but to the parents. I have a special story from a teacher, Maria Talavera, computer lab. She taught the whole time when Eva was teaching there. Two of her children had Eva in kindergarten. When her father retired, he came to help at the school on the grounds and as an aide. He especially loved the little children so he would help Eva quite often in the kindergarten. She started the kindergarten at Holy Family and she also started the pre-K.

Nobody knew this, but Maria said that for five years, the two of them became buddies and would run off to the coffeehouse and have French vanilla coffee every day after school. As I told this story to those at Holy Family, they said, "We didn't know that." She had a special

relationship with the parents. Maria's two children sent an email about how special Eva was in their lives.

When Sister Mary Jean Ferry and I were on Kauai one time, Eva asked us to stop and see the parents of a student she had taught there. They were just thrilled to have some connection again with the BVMs. She was a very special person. That smile and twinkle in her eye caught everybody's heart deeply. Thank you, Eva, for all of your prayers—she was our pray-er at Holy Family and Holy Redeemer—and for that special smile and twinkle.

**Sister Catherine Dominick, BVM**

When Eva would come into our dining room here, she would have her smile on her face and wave to everybody down the aisle and say hello until she got to her place.

**Sister Therese Fox, BVM**

I often spoke about Eva to my family. In recent times, my younger brother wanted to ask me about her but couldn't remember her name. He said, "The one you always call 'little.'"

**Sister Brigid Mary Hart, BVM**

I knew Eva when she was in Casper, Wyo., and I was in Boulder, Co., because we were both teaching first grade. She's the kind of person that you felt you always knew, always had present. When I came back here, I was writing for Carolita McMahan, BVM. We had missed her birthday the first year that I was writing.

Eva came to help me have a little party for Carolita to get Carolita to respond more. Of course, Eva knew all the songs. She knew all the words and could get Carolita going which really was a delightful scene to see Eva and Carolita. When I think of the age of Eva, I remember that Carolita was 98 too when she went to God. Thank you, Eva, for your delightful life and for the cheer you brought to others and song too.