

*Sister Frances Loretta Berger, BVM*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, June 26, 2014*

**Faith Smith, Niece**

I went to Mundelein College. The reason I was able to go there is because Aunt Frances worked there. My parents wouldn't have been able to afford college so I owe her that. I met my husband while I was in college so I owe her that. After I graduated, I lived in the city and worked down at Rush and we would go out to dinner. Aunt Frances knew all these different eclectic restaurants. We would go to Chinatown for dim dum. We would go to Greektown for lamb chops and flaming cheese and Italians places and the Magic Pan for crêpes. I never had a crepe in my life; it was phenomenal. So I owe her my weight! She truly gave me a love of good eating.

**Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM**

The reading that we just heard from Pedro Arrupe, SJ, is very significant. I think that falling in love has been Frances Loretta's life story. I came to know Frances Loretta when she made the transition from Chicago to Dubuque. My first introduction was when she flew into the office to say, "I've got to have a job! I can't just sit in my room. I've got to have a job!" So with that I talked to her for a while to find out a little more about Frances Loretta and what her hobbies and loves were.

As many of you know, the library was her life. I can honestly say that for us here at Mount Carmel, she brought the library to life. Her wide range of reading and ability to share the newest and the latest of any periodical, book, magazine, whatever, was on the tip of Frances Loretta's tongue. She was wonderful at the ministry. As many of you also know, she was a marvelous candy maker and we were the recipients of that wonderful talent on any big feast days or celebrations that we had. Even though she had lots of elves later on to give her a helping hand, she was right in there making sure we had homemade fudge to enjoy. It wasn't just one piece per person. We are a large house, but there was plenty there for two or three so you could take a couple back to your room with you. Frances Loretta, thank you for showing us how to really fall in love.

**Sister Dolores Kramer, BVM**

What I remember about Frances Loretta is that she was a superb librarian at Mundelein College and here at Mount Carmel. I think there is a story that none of you really know. Several years ago when we renovated the Motherhouse, the residents were scattered all over town, to Hotel Julien and to various convents. About the time we arrived at the convent at Sinsinawa Mound, Frances Loretta was among us. The librarian in charge, who had also been a very good librarian, was no longer available. Frances Loretta slipped in behind the scene somehow and was very, very helpful for the sister who followed because that sister felt somewhat inadequate. Frances Loretta helped in so many ways—weeding out books, ordering new ones, and doing all the difficult tasks that go with being a librarian. I tell you this because Frances Loretta was so self-effacing, so generous, so hard-working, so kind, it seemed to be her style to be that way. She was a tremendous help to the Dominican sisters.

**Sister Eileen Healy, BVM**

I'll pick up from there. When the sisters were coming home from Sinsinawa, the Dominicans asked me if Frances Loretta could please stay, would we just please leave her there? The one thing I specially remember was the undoing of the library when we were beginning relocation. If you were one of the BVMs or associates who were *allowed* to help, consider yourself *really* chosen. Most people just took whatever help we gave them. Frances Loretta was very specific about who would be willing to follow her directions. I was impressed. We took every single book off of the shelves. They were boxed according to number. They were stored in perfect order. When we came home again, it didn't take much time at all to have the library back in running order. I was always so impressed with her ability to see that it was done correctly and that it would not be a difficult task when we returned.

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

I'm building on the previous stories of libraries. Moving back to when Mundelein joined Loyola, we were there together and I watched Frances Loretta adjust to that change as she was shepherding the LRC and then the Sullivan Center Library, which suddenly changed to the Science Library. It was a re-ordering of books. What I always marveled about Frances Loretta was that there was no external grumbling. If she was muttering, she muttered to herself. She did what was important for the cause. The reading talks about dedicated service and I witnessed that until she was no longer able to continue. One little note about fudge for those from Mundelein. She always made fudge for the Jesuits on July 31, the feast of St. Ignatius.

### **Sister Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM**

This is a little different spin on Frances as a librarian. She was also a detective. She could find books listed in the card catalogue that had not been taken out in fifteen years and were consequently relegated to some remote spot. She could find books that were miss-shelved. I told the students in my classes, "Listen, if you have difficulty finding something on the shelves or it's not there, go to Sister Loretta and she'll find it for you." And she did. Some of my students became gurus to their fellow students; they knew the secret.

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

I am wondering if you know that Frances Loretta helped to build the new library in Ghana, West Africa. In 2009, we were in the process of trying to raise money to build a library in Kumasi. Frances Loretta came into an inheritance, so she went to Mary Ann Zollmann, who was president, to talk to her about the money. We are so grateful that Mary Ann asked Frances if she would like to donate that money to help build the library in Ghana. And Frances said yes and that was a wonderful boost to our morale and to making that library a reality. Today that library serves hundreds of children. On behalf of all of them, I thank you.

### **Sister Dolores McHugh, BVM**

I have known Frances Loretta since March 1952. I was missioned at Presentation in Chicago and she was teaching kindergarten, 50 students in the morning and 50 students in the afternoon. One of our sisters who taught 7th and 8th grade had a heart attack. So my first assignment was kindergarten, 50 in the morning and 50 in the afternoon. If she could do, I felt I could do it. We lived together there for 3 1/2 years. There were about 28 sisters at Presentation at that time and 1,100 children. I have seen her often at meetings and gatherings and we always have a little conversation. In her last days here, I had the pleasure of talking to her as she got closer to heaven. She was just part of my life.

### **Sister Margaret Mear, BVM**

From 1966 to 1968, as a Scholastic, I worked for her in the library at Mundelein College. When she found out I was an art major, she started to teach me how to repair books. I never ever got a compliment from her. She would take a book I had fixed, look at it and go, "Hum." But I knew I was doing a good job because the books she gave me were in greater and greater disrepair to the point they were in pieces. Finally at the end of my "career," I actually got to fix some books that came from the rare book room.

### **Sister Therese Jacobs, BVM**

I didn't know Frances until she came to Mount Carmel. I was one of the chosen also. She was making candy. You had to be somebody who could take directions, follow the recipe, stay to the end, get it panned out, and then bring it downstairs for storage. She was very particular, but also very generous. She would say, "Do you want to taste that one or this one?" Of course, I tasted them all! She was wonderful to be with. I also knew she was in the library. I remember being here once and I needed to order two or three books. "Oh, I can do that," she said. She was wonderful.

### **Sister Patricia Donahoe, BVM**

I'm a librarian. I owe my career to her because she tipped me off to an opening for my first job. I am grateful forever to her. I can only build on the stories that have gone before me about her professionalism in library science. I want to point out that when she was in Chicago, she developed the education library for the education department which was part of Mundelein's Learning Resource Center. We were known to have had one of the best collections in children's literature in the Chicago area. That was thanks to Frances. She was also an officer, the treasurer for many years, of the Children's Reading Round Table. She helped to select important authors in children's literature and bring them to the area and present awards to them.

One thing I don't want to miss is to build on the story of her helping students. At Mundelein we had a student who thought that college was her last chance to party until her final semester when she realized she was in jeopardy. She went to Frances, not to her advisor, but to Frances who helped her through the process of writing her final term paper—finding the books, note taking, file cards, bibliography, the whole bit. On graduation day, the library was open but quiet for those who were still finishing projects. The graduates emerged from the auditorium and were congratulating themselves and jumping for joy when I could see one graduate come running across the campus, gown flying behind her, tear up the library steps two at a time, burst into the library and throw her arms around Sister Frances Loretta, crying happily, "Oh, Sister, thank you, thank you, thank you! I could never have done it without you!" That's why Frances worked so hard for the students.

### **Sister Katherine Keating, BVM**

I was only here a month and I was asked to take Frances to get shoes. I didn't know where I was going, but we got there. Well, almost not, because when I told Frances we were going to get new shoes, she said, "Oh, I don't know anything about that." I said, "Well, I'll meet you at the front door." When I got there, I saw Frances going down the hall with the nurse. I said, "Nurse, where are you going with Frances? I'm supposed to take her for shoes." Well, it was the wrong Frances. I had Frances Dolan. Once that was straightened out and the shoes were bought, it was time for lunch. I said, "Do you know any place for lunch?" Somebody said she knew all the places to go.

Sure enough, right next door there was a place and it was lovely. She must have been there before. So that was my introduction to Frances.

### **Sherry Jacobs, Coordinator of Health Care Services**

Several years ago I went into Wright Hall to visit with some of the sisters and have some meetings. Frances Loretta was staying there a few days as well. I was asked if I could give Frances Loretta a ride back to Mount Carmel. I said, "Sure." When we got into the van, she said to me, "Now, Sherry, you keep going on this." It was that goofy road where people triple park, Devon. "You keep going on this road, really far. I know how to get onto the interstate." I said, "OK, Frances Loretta. I'm not used to driving in Chicago, so go ahead."

Well, she started talking to me about her delightful family. I feel like I know all of you. She was pointing out where her nieces lived, who lived here and there, and we were driving and driving. It was quite a while and I thought, "This doesn't seem right." So I said, "Frances Loretta, you remember you are supposed to tell me when to turn." She looked out the window and said, "Hmm. I think we might have missed it. But you keep going. I can figure out how to get on Interstate 90." Sure enough she did. I don't always get to spend three or four hours at a time with a sister. She talked about her family, and not about being a librarian or making fudge, but about who she was as a person. It really touched me. I lost both of my parents when they were young and both sets of my grandparents when they were very young. For me to be in the van with her for all of those hours, it was almost like me and *my* Aunt Frances Loretta. She was a dear, dear woman and she taught me a lot in those hours driving back from Chicago.

### **Sister Carol Frances Jegen, BVM**

I could say an awful lot about what Frances did to encourage me when I was in the ministry of writing articles and books. It would take a long time to say all the ways she did that, but it was very beautiful and I'll always be grateful to her.

### **Sister Dorothy Dwight, BVM**

I want to piggyback on what Sherry said. Frances loved her family. She remembered her nieces and nephews every birthday, first communion, graduation. She loved her family. She had a challenge of establishing relationships, but if you were a friend of hers, you were blessed indeed and very fortunate. She was very loyal and generous.

I have one library story, but first I want to thank Carol Marie for wisely inviting her to take responsibility for this library because that was her lifeline. I don't think she would have lived to almost age 96 except for that. But one little trick that she used to play. She kept an eye out for books that she knew particular sisters would like. She delighted to let a sister know as soon as the book came in. Before it was accessioned, she would let them have it because she knew they were waiting for it. In a way, she took pleasure in beating her own system.

She loved to clean; Kathleen Sinclair and I benefited from that. I liked to cook and do grocery shopping. If you have lived in Chicago, you know that I got the better end of the deal. She also loved sports, especially Notre Dame football. However, if the score was close, she would be in the dining room and I would hear her scream. The first time it happened, I thought she had fallen and hurt herself. But she screamed bloody murder because whoever Notre Dame was playing had gotten a touchdown. So she would have to leave the television set and go to her room

because she knew if she stayed, they would lose. I don't know if she prayed in her room, but she did leave the room. I'm grateful to Frances for so many, many things, especially her devotion.

**Joan, Niece**

She was a great lady for us. We have similar stories with our families. She would always talk with us on a one-to-one basis. She always made you feel important. "How are *you* doing?" I come from a family of 12, but yet she managed to take the time. "Come over here and sit next to me and let's have a talk." She would give her opinion, not in a stern way, but you knew it was Aunt Frances's opinion. She was just a great lady and she made us all feel important. We love her and we are going to miss her very much.