



Wake Stories of Clementine Kuhle, BVM (Lioba)

Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 14, 2018

Marian Highlander-Pool, BVM Associate & Former Novice *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

Clem was such a character! She taught me how to fold sheets. Every Monday, when I was a postulant, was laundry day. It was a novice duty, but a few times the postulants went down to help out - and I loved it. Not only was it warm in there, but being around Clem was so much fun. She tried to be "strict," but she was so funny. Every time I fold sheets now, I can't help saying "corner to corner." Honestly, I say that to myself every time, and I always think of Clem and those fun Mondays in the laundry. On almost every visit to Mt Carmel, I always knew where I could find her - reading the paper near the Caritas dining room. I loved hearing her stories about her days at St. Paul's. She would always talk about how much she loved Red Spillane, Rita Jane (Red's daughter), and the fun times she had when she visited them in San Francisco.

Barb Duslak & Christa, Friends *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

I just wanted to say, that I was honored to have known and befriended Sr. Clementine Kuhle. She taught my son Mark not only how to read, but also to enjoy reading. It was known throughout the parish that her class, if they finished all their work, would get to listen to the opening Cubs game every year, every class. The last time my friend Christa and I visited Sister Clementine was last July. She was starting to transition to her next assignment. May she find greater health, greater wisdom and greater happiness. Thank you for giving her such good care. She is loved.

Trudy Schneider, Mundelein Class of 1970 *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

Sister Clementine and I taught side by side together at St. Gertrude for 20 years. I taught first grade and she taught second. Sister Clem just was a wonderful person. She was a kind and loving person. In all the years we taught together, I never heard a cross word out of her. We were a very close faculty and we all enjoyed each other's company, especially Clem. Of all things, there was a group of us having lunch together yesterday when we heard she had just passed away. It seemed unbelievable. We all loved her. Most of all, Clem was just fun - and how she loved the Cubs! God bless you, Sister Clementine. You are with the angels. Much love, Trudy and my husband Gene.

Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM

I came to know Clem when I came to Mount Carmel to work. She thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to go to our summer home, The Spiders, in Haywood in the Wisconsin north woods. She always claimed the back bedroom on the first floor, which had two sides of windows that looked out to the lake and an exit to a tiny porch. Often our first job was to make sure the hammock was hung. That's where you would find Clem. She was wonderful to be with and was an old shoe. She had a great time with all of us. However, during one of our trips, she was on that little porch. When we had not seen her for a while, we did come checking. There was Clem; she had fallen out of the hammock. Sad to say, that was the last of her trips to The Spiders. Yet, she never complained about not being able to go. When Father Jim came to anoint her, he went up to Clem, spoke to her and she lit up because he was her connection to The Spiders.

Sister Eileen A Healy, BVM

Clem taught me in second grade. It was her first full year of teaching, 1940-41. A couple of things happened that year including the beginning of World War II. Being in San Francisco and sitting in the last row of desks looking toward the hills, I always thought airplanes were going to come over. One war story. We practiced air raids during which we got to run home. There wasn't "duck and cover." We were running home to get away from school. I never knew if we were supposed to go back when the all clear sounded, because we never did. When I met Clem while I was working at Mount Carmel, I said, "We never went back to school." She said, "Oh, the teachers were so happy." I also remember learning phonics; she was a very good phonics teacher. It's the only time I remember having phonics in grade school. That doesn't mean I wasn't taught it; it means I don't remember it. Clem also taught us religion. She insisted – and later claimed she had never said it – that you had to be baptized to get to heaven. My friend Shirley and I went home and asked my mother if she had baptized Rover, our dog. My mom laughed at us, just as you just did. Well, we went out on back porch and we took water. Clem taught us the right words and we had the right intention. I assure you that there is one dog in heaven - Rover Healy has been baptized.

Sister Margaret Sannasardo, BVM

There are some people who just bring a smile to your face when you think about them. She was one of them. I taught with Clem when she was Lioba at Immaculate Conception parish in Butte, Mont. I was a very young sister teaching first grade while she taught second grade. Many times, we had so much fun together. So many times, she raised me up when I needed to be raised up. She was just a doll.

Sister Donard Collins, BVM

I met Clem when I was working at the Motherhouse. When you saw Clem, usually Mary Eaton, BVM, was with her because they were such good friends. When we had a new driver, Tex Dement they were going to orientate him to the transportation routine at Mount Carmel. Mary and Clem often disagreed on many things, but Tex seemed to have persevered. Clem loved the people of St. Gertrude's and, as we heard in the eulogy, the people of St. Gertrude's loved Clem. She was going back to give talks for the Religious Retirement Fund. It was hard to get some of our sisters to go out and do that, but Clem did it graciously and with love.

Sister Veronica Higgins, BVM

Sister Lioba was the monitor of the laundry. Periodically, we would be doing sports down by the grotto, sometimes baseball, sometimes volleyball. It happened that she could throw a ball that flew the distance between the steps next to the Novitiate and the laundry area. I thought, "Oh my goodness! She's probably not someone to reckon with." Over the years, her smile, gentleness, flexibility and gracious love would win all those she met.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

First, I'm speaking on behalf of one of our healthcare staff who met me upstairs on second floor this morning and said she was so grateful the sun was out and shining today for Clem. She remarked to me with a big smile, "Oh my! Sister Clem was such fun! We had such great times together!"

Speaking for myself, when I was living in San Francisco and working at St. Paul's parish during the 1980s and early 1990s, Red Spillane, who later became an Associate, and his family were very faithful and wonderful members of the parish. We always knew that Red knew more BVMs than most of us, including Sister Clem. He spoke of her often. It's actually through him that I got to know her. I was so please that among the wonderful pictures right inside the chapel entrance, there is a photo of Red Spillane and Clem. I know that makes his daughter Rita, who is probably watching this via video stream, very happy.

Sister Ann Cronin, BVM

Clem and my family had a rather rocky start in San Francisco. My brother was a villain and he was in her first grade class. We used to talk about how Johnny had a terrible time with his first grade teacher. Fast forward, I

entered the BVM community and guess where I landed as a novice – the laundry. The minute I walked in the door, she said to me, “Cronin. San Francisco. Are you related to Johnny?” I thought, “Oh God, here it comes.” She said, “I remember Johnny.” She remembered good things and we got along really well. What I remember most about laundry Monday was that all the other Novices got to go to breakfast while the two of us had to go down to the laundry to get things ready for the others. One of my jobs was to make starch in a big cauldron. I had to put little cakes of Vano starch into that cauldron to make a starch solution for a sister at the Generalate, I think Sister Mary Laurette Tiernan who worked in food service. She was going blind and, for some reason, her aprons needed to be stiff and a board. Her aprons were washed, put in this cauldron of starch and put onto the press. If they did not stand up by themselves, we had to start all over again. We always had a good time down there. Monday laundry was always fun because when everybody else was folding sheets, the two of us got to go up and eat breakfast and then bring down laundry lunch for the rest.

Sister Elizabeth Olsen, BVM

One of the photos in the back is of Clem’s second grade in Butte when she had my brother. Jim is sitting in the front row. He always idolized her. When he was in the Navy, he was at the Great Lakes Naval Station. Clem took him out and showed him parts of Chicago. She was always very much a part of our lives; my family really loved her. One time she had a layover in Billings, Mont., so my non-Catholic cousins were feeling her rosary, fingering through the pleats, and checking out what a habit was. It was quite an interesting experience for all of them. When I entered in 1960, Clem and her brother Richard came to the train to meet all of us; there were eight of us from Montana. Richard had a four-door car and all eight of us fit in it. It was a day of recollection because it was July 31st. Clem took us to Clarke College for the day since everybody else was in retreat. I knew nothing about the Midwest or the BVM schools here. I don’t remember hearing of Mother Clarke before I entered. Clem was filling us in on all of it. When we had gotten off the train, she gave us a warm welcome. One of the conductors was going to give me a bottle. I was running down the tracks yelling, “Mr. Gates, Mr. Gates, you forgot to give us the bottle.” I kept it in my trunk after he gave it to me. At one point, Clem introduced me to my novice director, but that didn’t mean anything to me so I passed up Sister Mary Leo (Mary L. Hogan) almost like a dirty shirt. When I got the bottle, I was very happy. It’s very interesting how many postulants would go to my trunk to try to find the bottle. We had a great time. It was the year that President Kennedy was elected. When my folks came through Dubuque on their way to Washington, D.C. for the inauguration, I gave them the bottle. A woman who was with my folks was crying; she was so happy to be here. When I pulled the bottle out of my slip pocket, she had such big eyes. Clem wanted me to give it to Richard, but I knew Richard didn’t need my bottle so I wouldn’t give it to him. I gave him some of my cigarettes; I had a lot of those left. Clem was always a giant in the eyes of many Butte people, but especially in my family.

Lauren Mahun, Nurse Aide, Mount Carmel

I had the privilege of taking care of Clem for the three years that I have worked here. When we originally met, she lived on third floor of Marian Hall. I really appreciated the eulogy because it summed up the best parts of her personality during the time that I knew her. She taught me how to fold towels. I did it wrong at first. She said, “That’s not right. You have to fold it so it can hang off the bar.” I will never forget that. When she moved to the fourth floor of Caritas Center, I didn’t get to see her for a few months. When I finally got to work up there and see her again after that long time, she said, “I remember you. We’re friends. We used to work in laundry together.” She was always such a tease, joking with us upstairs all the time. When I turned 21, I told her, “It’s the first time that I get to go to the casino to gamble. Do you have any tips?” She would talk all the time about how she would go to the “library.” When she would go to the “library,” she was going to the casino. I was so lucky; when I would go there, I would always win. I remember the last time I won. I won \$800 and I donated to my favorite place – The Spiders. We joked about the win a few times and then forgot about it. Then came my 22nd birthday and I told her, “My birthday is coming up in a week. I can’t decide what I want to do.” She looked right at me and said, “You told me we were going to the casino.” I always appreciated taking care of Clem. She was such a joy. I really loved my time with her here.

Sue Bergfeld, Great Niece

Sister Clementine was my great aunt; her brother Richard was my grandfather. She and Sister Georgeann Sieb would come to our house from Chicago about three times a year. My dad was famous for his fresh catfish from the Mississippi and a beer batter he used to make them. She and Sister Georgeann always came to have supper with us. You could always plan on them spending about four or five hours just conversing. We were always a little afraid because we never knew with my dad what would come out of his mouth. There we were sitting with a couple of nuns and saying, "Dad, be careful what you are saying." They took it with a grain of salt. We would come to Mount Carmel and take Clem outside to watch the fireworks on the Fourth of July, my family and I, sometimes with the kids. Even my kids remembered her when I told them that she had passed. I would see her once in a while when she was taking those trips to the "library." I would be at the "library." One time that I saw her, I gave her some money and said, "Here, Sister, go have a little fun on me." She said, "Oh, this is good. Now I won't feel so bad about losing so much." The next time I was down there, she was going out the door as I was coming in. I gave her a big hug and talked with her for a few minutes. I said, "Here, Sister, have some fun." She said, "Well, I guess it's not closing time for the library yet." She turned around and went back in. I will always remember her as the funny one of the family. People have said that she told it like it was. I've been told that's how I am like that side of my family. She was my idol. However, I never did get used to calling her Clem. She was Sister Clementine to me. She corrected me, "Everybody here calls me Clem." I said, "Everybody calls me Sue, but I let you call me Suzie, so I will call you Sister Clementine."

Sister Patricia Robinson, BVM

I lived with Lioba, Margaret Sannasardo and Jane Rogers in Butte. Lioba was our source of common sense and often our protector. One night, we had an earthquake in Butte. I didn't know what was happening; I thought I was on a Tilt 'n Whirl. I got up and there was Clem, standing in the doorway with a sheet over her head and her brown eyes sticking out, saying, "It's an earthquake." She was the first person to tell me what an earthquake was so I could recognize one.

Mary Burgmeier, Cousin

I am Clem's first cousin; our mothers were sisters. When I was very young, her sister Dolores came to live with us, and Clem went to live with the Deutmeyers after their father died. We had fun with Clem. We lived on Grandview and had four boys and four girls. She loved to come and see the children. She would take the four children bowling. They always enjoyed that. We had a cottage at Frentress Lake. She came every year with another sister and joined us down there. She loved the river. She loved looking at the boats. She loved to come down. We had fun with her. She loved to play horseshoes with the men, and she would beat them too. I wish now that I would have come up to see her more, but you know how that goes. We have eight children who live all over the country so we are often away visiting.

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

I have an old letter with no date sent by Father Bill Kenneally, the pastor at St. Gertrude, during many of Clem's years there. There are excerpts from that letter that long to be read this morning. He wrote, "You were a big part of St. Gertrude and the school. You were a great neighbor and always had a great spirit, which you have not lost in your retirement. I hope I can do the same. I know that as health becomes more and more of a problem, it is harder and harder to keep your spirit up, but you have done it and that gives one hope." Then he speaks about his years as pastor of St. Gertrude: "I always tried to give the BVM credit, but I probably didn't give them enough praise. They had a tremendous influence on the parish."

As sisters needed to leave St. Gertrude, Clem was the only remaining in the convent. He wrote this about her moving: "Your move to the apartment was the best solution. I thank you for doing that so graciously. I have always loved it when you visited after having moved to Dubuque. It was great seeing how well-loved you are in Dubuque."

When he retired, he sent this to her: "It is somewhat scary, this new part of my life. I hope I can do it as graciously as you have. You are a wonderful example of someone who has given her life joyously for others. That is a key element – joy. Anyone who knows you gets the deep impression that you are filled with joy. Anyway, thanks for all you have said and done and for teaching the kids Bingo and for starting the Pilgrims and Indians Thanksgiving Pageant, which I loved and which I hope they will continue to do. Gratefully, Bill Kenneally."