



Sharing of Memories of Betty (Florence Therese) Bowen, BVM

Sharing of Memories, Nov. 19, 2020

Carol DiCarlo Devers, former set member *(Read by Judith Callahan, BVM)*

I am so sorry to hear of Betty's passing away. She was a lovely person, always smiling and so kind.

Judy Moberly Mayotte, former set member *(Read by Judith Callahan, BVM)*

Do you remember at our last set gathering Betty telling the story of arrival at Mount Carmel? It was late at night and all of our set were already in bed. When Betty was shown to her alcove, she insisted that she see her good friend before she went to sleep. The novice who was with her finally convinced her that she would see her friend first thing in the morning. So began her beautiful journey as a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May God's love surround her in welcoming her home.

Kathy Redpath Beal, former set member *(Read by Judith Callahan, BVM)*

I can just picture Betty as a postulant and novice. She said one time that she remembered her mother's face when she prayed. Transfixed in a way but truly memorable to Betty.

Birdie Rossow McElroy, former set member *(Read by Judith Callahan, BVM)*

Yes, dear Betty will be missed. I look back at those early years with such joy and nostalgia. I am always grateful that I was in such accepting company.

Margaret Lohmiller Herringer, former set member *(Read by Judith Callahan, BVM)*

She was such a dear person. I remember that smile of hers – even after all these years!

Joan Leland Spittler, former set member *(Read by Judith Callahan, BVM)*

I have many fond memories of her and was so sorry to hear of her death. As a cat/dog person, I sympathize with her pain at the loss of her cats.

Judith Callahan, BVM

The characteristic that stands out the most to me is Betty's sense of humor; it was incredible. She was downright funny! She could take a glass of orange juice and make you laugh about it. She could find an incongruence in every situation. We were quite close in the novitiate and she got me through those years by just being able to laugh at funny, silly things. Afterwards, we went our separate ways in ministries and geographical locations. I lost track of her for quite a long time, but our relationship renewed when we went on the Ireland trip. We spent so much time of our visits just laughing and reminiscing. Her humor was incredible and delightful. "Her bark was worse than her bite." Sometimes her humor would be taken the wrong way and someone might feel offended. But you had to know Betty's heart and that she was a loving, caring person underneath. Betty stands tall as she was tall in our minds and our hearts. We will remember her for many years to come. We'll see you soon, Betty. We are on our way. It's not goodbye; it's see you later, "Hasta luego," dear friend.

Scott Bowen, nephew

Betty meant a lot to me. I always loved that she had the same birthday as my oldest son Sam. It was a nice connection. When I think back on Betty's life and the impact she had on me, two things stand out the most. Like

you mentioned, Judith, her sense of humor was a big part of our relationship, as was her selflessness. When I was about 10 years old, I traveled by train with my sister Holly and my grandma to visit her in Chicago. We would go all the way across the country to go visit her. I remember that the whole time I was there, she would get me going by telling me these crazy scary stories. At one point she had me convinced that John Wayne Gacy was her next-door neighbor and he had been cementing his driveway while we were there. Years later, I remember telling my dad about some of these. He just laughed and said, "You know she is just making that stuff up, right?" So I think she figured out early on that I was an easy target. She would always play these little practical jokes on me and get such delight out of it. Every time she spoke she was always ready with a joke, even during times when her health was not good.

There was also this incredible kindness and selflessness to her. When I was 17, I had a pretty major surgery and had to stay in the hospital for about a week. Betty came and stayed with me in that horrible, cold hospital room and help me through the recovery. Again, it was her humor and kindness. We would stay up late every night and talk about everything—life, family—sharing lots of laughs and taking those important first steps toward recovery. That was just a small part of how she gave her time for others. She showed that throughout her career as a nurse and throughout her life through the countless ways that she served others. She was just an amazing woman who dedicated her life to helping others. I am incredibly grateful that I was on the receiving end of her giving so many times during my life. I really miss her.

Holly Williams, niece

Aunt Betty was a beloved aunt to me, as are all three of my aunts. Betty was special because she brought joy and laughter wherever she went. Betty was the oldest of the three children of Ralph and Florence Bowen. My dad will share how Betty wanted a sister and called him Luella Marie and not the Jim that he was. Thankfully, Betty did get a sister later when Theresa came along. Although both Jim and Terri would tell you that Betty could be quite bossy growing up, but that's just what big sisters do, right?

Betty did sort of get a version of Luella when she gained my mom Lucille when mom married Betty's brother. The name was close enough and they became good friends. Betty treated my mom like another sister. When my mom turned 40, I remember Betty came and made the celebration one of celebrating going over the hill. I can remember shopping the Hallmark store in the mall for some special decorations. She had a way to make special time even more special.

Her visits were some of the highlights of my years growing up. She loved her two nephews and me as her only niece. We seem to hold a special place in her heart. The many volumes of *Highlight* magazines sent to my house and to my cousins came from her. Even when I didn't know how to communicate well on the phone, during our calls, she made the situation light and laughable by sending me a "I Don't Know a Word," since that was my answer to her many questions. I kept it on my bulletin board for many years and hopefully improved in my communications skills over the years with her.

Betty was compassionate and caring. When she worked as a NICU nurse, I remember visiting the hospital during a visit and seeing drug addicted babies she had been caring for. It was such an impactful visit. I'm sure she made every shift she worked enjoyable. I know a whole lot of love went into her work.

Betty was always willing to make hard things into laughable memories, like when she helped dig out a stump in the new road we were creating on our camping property. It was exhausting, hard work, yet she persevered through the dirt and the sweat of a full day. I'm sure when she visited again, she had to be sure that stump digging was not on the agenda.

Aunt Betty always had a way to make days more special. My birthday was close to Christmas, but she always made each one unique. I don't think she enjoyed shopping in stores as much as she enjoyed shopping the QVC channel. She often sent a unique gift she found on there. On Christmas she sent me caroler figurines that played

music and had the name of the street by where they were singing with a placard called "Holly Street." She seemed to delight in finding stuff that had our names on it because it was a personal gift. She was thoughtful; I might have gotten my love of gift giving from her.

Another birthday she made quite memorable was my 15th. I got to travel by plane for the first time by myself. We rode the L train into downtown Chicago one day and visited the beautifully decorated Marshall Field's. It was the largest department store I had ever seen and it looked like something out of a movie. We shopped that day with gorgeous Christmas décor everywhere. Then I got the surprise that we had reservations to eat there with the biggest, tallest Christmas tree I had ever seen; it was several stories high. Since we were celebrating my birthday, she bought me a desert at the end and started singing. A long line of people were waiting to get in and they started to sing to me as well, which was embarrassing and also amazing at the same time. Another scene pulled from the movie. Somehow she managed to pull off making a special day even more special. She added a sparkle to any event.

Lest you think my aunt was somehow perfect, I will say that my aunt was quite mischievous. One time my brother, cousin, and I traveled by train from Colorado to Chicago with my grandma when I was a young elementary child. My brother was told to watch out for our grandma, his little sister, and his little cousin. I will never forget standing in the station waiting for my aunt. We hadn't seen her yet, but she played upon the intimidation of these small city travelers going to the big city. Unbeknownst to us, she asked a very big and tall man to go pick up our bags. My brother's eyes became as big as saucers when this man boldly walked up, whisked those bags up in his muscular arms, and took off out the door. My brother must have thought he had already failed in his duties; we had already been robbed in Chicago having only step foot in the Windy City moments before. My aunt came around the corner with a big Cheshire grin on her face and began laughing. She thought it was such a great joke. Never mind that it probably almost gave her mom a heart attack. The man was a porter nicknamed Hightop and he must have enjoyed being part of the prank too.

Most of the time, it was Betty visiting us regularly in the summers, getting out of the big city to come back to her smaller, childhood city. Her arrival was always anticipated for many reasons. One was hearing the many stories of her travel there. After taking several shuttles, a taxi, and a flight, she always seemed to have some story that would almost make us laugh or cry with the absurdity of people that she met and the situations she would find herself in along her journey. She had a way of making a stranger feel like a longtime friend. As she told us the details about the family, travel situations, etc., of the person she sat by as part of her journey.

When my husband and I traveled back after spending years as missionaries in the country of Lithuania, Betty and Pat met us for our Chicago layover and made us laugh as they were decked out in head scarves and looking like Russian babushkas. We made many trips over the years up to Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, which was a short daytrip from our house. Aunt Betty wasn't fond of heights. She always made me chuckle with her reaction to the drop-off views down the mountainside as we road along. I think she would ask my dad if the breaks were OK during the drive through the mountains. He would assure her they were. Our favorite stop was in Estes Park to get saltwater taffy; we had to get the best taffy around.

She even showed love to my husband and welcomed him to my family with humor. When my brother got married a few months after me, my mom made food for the rehearsal dinner. A big bowl of her homemade bean salad was one of the items. My aunt and husband were unpacking the car. When they opened the trunk, those beans, half empty, flew out and onto the ground of the Colorado Rockies. My husband felt horrible, but salvaged the bowl with what didn't fall out. My aunt saved his reputation as the new son-in-law and told my mom when she asked, "What happened to the beans?" She said, "Altitude must have shrunk them."

I would be remiss to not mention Betty's lifelong friend Pat. They were housemates for 30+ years. We never thought of Betty without Pat so much so that my then five-year-old son made up a special song about them while we were on vacation with them. They were both tickled that this grandnephew would make up a song just about them. They

were such fun together and people you wanted to be around, even to make funny songs about. Our family send condolences to Pat as we know that Betty was like family to her as well.

Aunt Betty found being a great aunt fun as well and kids were a joy to her. She loved to hear about their antics and their childhood funnies. She shared a birthday with her first grandnephew and she was proud of that fact. It seemed fitting since birthdays were big deal to her. We enjoyed Hawaii with her a few times and much more than ocean shores Washington vacations where we all froze. We playfully named the place Open Sores from the biting wind that caused all of us to buy hoodie sweatshirts in the summer.

It is hard to say goodbye and have someone like Betty, who we love, leave us. Our hearts are troubled. It reminds me how the disciples felt in John Chapters 13 & 14 in the Bible. Jesus had just had the Last Supper with his disciples and laid out how he would die on the cross to take the penalty for their sins and the sins of the world. He told them that he would be leaving them and they were troubled. In Chapter 14, he tells them not to be troubled because he was giving them a promise. He was going to prepare a way for them to join him again. Thomas was still troubled as he didn't know the way. Jesus told Thomas, for all of us to know as well, that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except through Jesus. He would make that way for Thomas and for us. Philip came along with his own question. Jesus assured him that if they have known Him then they have known the Father. He said that the Father is in Him and He is in the Father. He was telling them that they are both on e. Later He promised to send the third part of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—because he didn't want to leave them as orphans. The disciples' job is not to be troubled or worried or to do something in the situation. It was to believe in Jesus and His words and that He could accomplish His promise to them. Jesus wants to leave them peace for believing. We see that believing in Jesus is the only way that we can have peace in this world as there is much tribulation. Jesus kept talking to the disciples to help them understand. Later at the end of John 16, Jesus told them that he said all these things that they may have peace and not be overtaken by the tribulation in the world. He told them to take heart as He had overcome the world. These words and chapters are great promises and assurance for us today. Betty would want all of us to believe in Jesus who died for us and wants to give us forgiveness and peace. These are words of comfort if we trust in Jesus Christ.

Jim Bowen, brother

I have so many wonderful memories of my sister Betty. When I was born she was so disappointed since she wanted a baby sister. She had a name picked out, Luella Marie. She would dress me as a little girl. When I was about two, I told her that I was not Luella Marie. "I am a boy." She said I broke her heart. Another memory is when we took her to Mount Carmel and we were all crying, I hauled off and hit her in the arm. She said, "Why did you do that?" I said, "Once you're a nun I won't be allowed to hit you." After that, every time she came to visit, she would hit me on the arm. I would ask her if she was still a nun and say, "Well, I guess I can't hit you back." She will certainly be missed. Her loving little brother, Jim (aka Luella Marie).

Pat Nooney, BVM

My longtime friend, Betty Bowen, and I entered the community two years apart, eventually meeting at Marian Hall as nurse aides. After LPN training in different cities and many years, we met again in the northern suburbs of Chicago. Over the years we traveled together visiting family all over the United States. We also loved the European trips. Betty's family adopted me and mine did the same for her.

We worshipped and volunteered at St. Mary in Evanston. After adopting cats, we started the annual October animal blessing, which still continues today. The people wore masks this year! We loved stage plays both professional and not so professional. Ethnic foods were experienced and enjoyed. Our very good friends, Tim Angell and Mary Ellen Tamasy, knew the authentic places. Cluster meals on Arthur were also enjoyed. Overall there were good days and not so good days, but that's friendship and friendship is such a special gift! Rest in peace, Betty!

Tim Angell, friend

Betty was a beloved friend for my wife and me. Along with her good friend, Pat Nooney, she would often come over to our house and enjoy good food, a good cocktail or beer, and playing with our cats, probably because she and Pat had their own. We loved her sense of humor, and we relished her stories of growing up in the Great Plains, her decades in health care ministry, and her and Pat's time at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Evanston Ill., where we met them decades ago.

We felt Betty was one of my aunts. She was wise, passionate, witty, and committed to the Gospel. I know her fellow parishioners at St. Mary's saw her not only as a BVM community member, but as an equal and as a friend. She made a difference in my life, my wife's life, and so many others at the parish, at her workplace at St. Francis' Hospital in Evanston, and in her BVM community of faith.

We will miss her and we ask her for prayers now as she's in the Kingdom for all eternity, along with her family members and her pets.

Eileen Healy, BVM

When I was taking sisters into Chicago for funerals, Betty was working at Wright Hall. I went in one time with a sister who had many health issues and beginning dementia. Betty met us at the front desk and told me she would take care of the sister. She truly did! She took care of her health needs but also made her feel safe and welcome. She also made me feel safe and welcome. I have never forgotten her kindness to both of us.

Blake W. Folden, Colonel (retired), United States Air Force, Nurse Corps

Although we were not directly related, I considered (and called her) Aunt Betty. She was a jewel! What I'll never forget about Betty was the love for others she carried not only in her heart, but in her actions. Betty truly exhibited the fruits of the spirit in her professional and private life. Her ministry to and empathy for the poor, the sick and the injured was unwavering. Her ability to build relationships with diverse individuals and groups was amazing. She was a devoted friend to those who knew her best. My impression is that she carried the love and caring of the Blessed Virgin Mary splendidly, and was an exceptional disciple of Jesus.

I'll never forget Betty's lovely smile and laughter. She was humble, but lived life big, with a joy that brought the best out of the many people with whom she interacted. She was a servant who became the hands and feet of Jesus in amazing ways. While I miss her already, I look forward to our heavenly reunion that will one day take place!

Dianne Fox

I am so sad and devastated to learn of Sister Betty's passing. She was a long, long time St. Mary (Evanston) parishioner, staff member, and a dear friend to me. My only consolation is knowing that she now has back her quick wit and loving touch. She's able to share that with all those who have gone before her (including her beloved kitties!).

Linda Miles

I always looked forward to seeing Betty when she came to Montana most summers with my Aunt Pat (*Pat Nooney, BVM*). I was excited to hear her tell stories of their previous travels and adventures throughout the year. Betty's wit and dry sense of humor always brought smiles and laughter. I will miss her but am comforted knowing she is at peace.

Helen Gourlay, BVM

My favorite memory of Betty goes back many years to our time in the novitiate. Betty was a very good friend of one of our set, Bea White. Betty and Bea both entered from Colorado. Bea had polio when she was young and had a built up shoe, thus making walking slow for her. In the novitiate, we did lots of walking: to the front gate, to the Sacred Heart statue, down the Pine Walk, over the fields. Betty *always* walked with Bea so the two of them, often

with a few others, would always be the last ones to arrive wherever we were headed. On our arrival, there was Betty with Bea—a constant attentive presence and companion to her. That strong memory stays with me till this day.

Irene Lukefahr, BVM

I first met Betty Bowen at the O'Hare Airport in Chicago. My sister Kathy and I were flying from San Francisco to Chicago on our way to Dubuque. Betty and her housemate Pat Nooney, BVM responded to an email I had sent asking for a ride to Dubuque. They also had a request of their own. They had a second car which needed to get to Dubuque and asked if we could do them a favor and drive the car to Dubuque. It seemed a win-win situation for all of us.

Soon after landing at O'Hare, we spotted Betty and Pat, exchanged hugs, and then walked to the parking lot. Pat handed me the car keys and we were soon on our way to Dubuque. I remember saying to my sister, "Aren't we lucky? How many people can simply ask for a ride and then be given car keys?" Once again, I experienced the *charity* of the congregation, this time through the kindness of Betty and Pat.

Diane Forster, BVM

In 2007, there was the BVM pilgrimage to Ireland to visit places important to BVM history and other religious sites. I was with Betty and Pat often during that week. I so enjoyed and appreciated meeting them and that time of sharing that we had during that week.

Monica Seelman, BVM

When our set entered on Aug. 2, 1958, Betty arrived late at night. Being the last to enter, she had the highest community number. The first week at Mount Carmel we spent sewing our community numbers which the novices the year before had embroidered on all our clothes. Then before reception those who had higher numbers had to fill in the numbers of those who had left, rip off the old numbers and renumber all their clothes. Betty was one of the "chosen." Of course, we all felt for those with this onerous task and pitched in to help. Betty enjoyed telling that story!

After profession, Betty went to school and earned her LPN degree. She worked many years at Marian Hall. When we could choose where we lived and worked, Betty moved to the Chicago area. Encouraged by her friends, she earned her RN degree and was a valued employee of St. Francis Hospital.

Betty loved cats. Often during the years she would email snapshots of her cat displaying some sort of goofy cat behavior. When her beloved cat died, she grieved its death for a long time.