



Sharing of Memories of Mary Judine Bruch, BVM

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Georgeann Quinlan, BVM

Judine and I lived about 10 minutes apart from each other in Wheat Ridge, Colo., a suburb of Denver, for many years. She was very gracious, gentle, well-dressed, multi-talented, humorous, and spiritual. Because she is so well known as an artist, I will capitalize on some of her other talents which you may not know about.

Judine did energy work professionally out of her apartment. It was called "Body Alignment." I had many sessions on a table in her home. She was in touch with the Spirit World. I did a program about angels, inviting people to share miracles which happened in their lives. Judine was very supportive, helping with questions and ideas. It was as if she was in tune with the world of Spirit. The Cosmos was a part of her interests, also.

Another interest Judine showed was in blessing peoples' homes with sage. Some might call it "cleansing of evil spirits." We in Region One had an assembly in Las Vegas at a casino years ago. A couple was to be married and called off the wedding so we got a huge ballroom for free in a casino! Judine blessed it with sage before we used it. Atmosphere was important to Judine who used candles, incense, and flowers.

A special memory I have was when I was visiting her on the memory care floor about two years ago. I'm not sure she knew me until I mentioned that I did the Angel Program. That worked! Sometime later I went to visit with Mary Martens on fourth floor. Mary was walking with someone ahead of Judine and me. When we came to the exit, I started to say "Goodbye." Judine turned to me and made an "aura" over my head and shoulders! That meant so much to me: a gift from my spiritual friend.

There were other occasions when I took her to the doctor for the macular degeneration shots in her eye. Judine also counseled people with marriage problems. She was very generous with her time and energy work with Sheila Doherty's mother. There are so many other stories which could be told. I am deeply grateful for the place Judine had in my life. Now she is on the other side which she was transitioning to for so many years. She introduced me to a person who has been my intuitive counselor for 23 years. In reflecting on my experience of Judine in my life, I realized that she has had an important effect on me. Bless her and us all.

Susan Ehler, niece

How very fortunate and blessed to have had Sister Judine, our Aunt Ursula, in my life all these many years. She was the younger sister to my mother, Virginia, the oldest of the five (living) siblings. My first memories of her were in the early 1960s when our family was living outside of Sacramento and we would do family day car trips to see her in the San Francisco convent. My sister and I would have white knuckles while Dad drove those steep hills before finally arriving to their convent.

It was always a big deal to have an aunt as a nun in our Catholic family growing up, and we always loved her visits over the years. She was such a spiritual and unique generous person of many talents. Back when my parents were having tough times she would always bring her positive soothing energy with a touch of humor to make life seem not so bleak. We were forever grateful for those many visits. She has been an outstanding artist throughout her years and has shared her paintings and artwork with many. Later on she would chuckle to my sister and me about

having to downsize her collection before moving her belongings into the Sisters of Charity. I will really miss that sweet laugh of hers. Thank you to the Sisters of Charity for all their continued loving care towards her in her final years.

George Gale, nephew

Somehow a combination of gentleness and strength, a genuine force for good in the world, Sister Mary Judine Bruch, our Dear Aunt Ursula, brought peace and joy to all she encountered in this world. May she enjoy an eternity of her own peace and joy in the next world—she deserves it!

Judine Lux, niece

Life, as we get older, is full of memories of simpler times, but when we string them all together, it is like watching a movie that contains all of our beloved and favorite actors. These characters, and they were all indeed characters, are the magical aunts and uncles and cousins who have graced my life with their presence and love.

My memories of Sister Judine date all the way back to my very earliest recollections when I was four or five years old. In our early years, she was Sister Judine to all of us, but in our later years most of us were calling her Aunt Ursula. With the exception of one visit during Christmas, she would mostly visit yearly during late July or early August. It is always easy for me to remember the time frame of her arrival because in the 1960s, none of the family homes had central air conditioning. Midwest summers could be brutal, and because our family had the smallest number of people in our household, she typically stayed with us during those early years. I delighted in this because her brother and my dad, Walter, would *finally* drag out the window units for their bedroom and mine. She typically brought another nun home with her in the early years and, though this meant I would have to give up my room, I did so rather gleefully since I would be the beneficiary of air conditioning in my room the rest of the summer.

When we were still little kids, she would always bring little toys and gadgets home with her for the nieces and nephews. I recollect one year that she had sheriff badges that she handed out to all of us from her Mary Poppins-like bag. She always seemed like the Pied Piper and we were always eager to please her so that we could continue to be allowed to stay in the room and listen to her stories. It was so neat to actually have an aunt that was a real live nun and I happened to be named after her. Her yearly visits always lasted seven to 10 days, which never seemed long enough. I can easily recollect taking her to the train station and I always ended up crying all the way home. The void that was left after her departure always felt unbearable to me.

I always longed for her arrival. She blew in like a breath of fresh air, always full of life and willing to share stories of her very interesting life. I still remember the year that she brought Sister Susan. We were so blessed to get to meet her friends.

Over the years, we celebrated her many accomplishments including her PhD. Many of the nieces and nephews have her beautiful artwork on display in their homes. Her move from Denver, Colo., caused her to downsize her collection considerably. Her friends, family and the Motherhouse all house her handiwork.

My cousin, Terri Templeman, and I drove Louise, Theresa, and my mom, Thelma, to Dubuque to see Aunt Ursula about 10 years ago. We ate all of our meals in the Caritas dining room with the exception of a lunch we all shared together in town. It was so wonderful for us to be able to see where she was living and to get to meet the many wonderful women with whom she lived. They were all so gracious. A particularly poignant memory came via a comment from one of the sisters. She shared that they mostly met the family after the death of the sister and that it was so wonderful to get to meet us during a happy time. I have thought of that statement many times. Ursula gave us the proverbial “Grand Tour” of the Motherhouse and grounds overlooking the mighty Mississippi and of the cemetery where her remains will be buried.

Our dear, sweet Aunt Ursula grew and expanded her knowledge in divorce counseling, gained a PhD, learned Reiki, painted and did so many challenging things. She was such a wonderful role model to all of us. It seems that my brother, John, and daughter, Kristen, have both followed her path by learning Reiki. She was always open to God's direction and never stopped growing.

Her presence was always like a calming and cool breeze on a hot, sultry day. We cherish our memories of her and the time she carved out of her schedule to spend with our large, boisterous, and sometimes crazy family over all of the years. We will never forget you, Aunt Ursula, and will always love you. We look forward to that glorious day that we all meet again!

P.S. Our hearts are filled with gratitude to all of you wonderful women who have cared for Sister Judine over these last years and the love you have shown in preparing her Celebration of Life service. Thank you so much!

Mary Louise Rees Lyerla, niece

Sister Judine made a big impression on me and my siblings as children. She came to visit with other sisters who were always quiet and loving. The sisters came with games and ideas for us, knowing there were so many nieces and nephews. I have the First Communion missals that she gave to my brother, Peter, who died at the age of 14, and to me. I cherish them both.

I last saw Sister a very few years ago when I came to Mount Carmel to visit when on a trip to Galena. I had a tour of the grounds and the cemetery. She was so proud to tell me the story of the order and pointed out many of the sisters and their stories. I asked if she wanted to take a drive and she was anxious to go on a little excursion. We were excited to go into the city and I didn't know my way at all. And I know that Sister was nearly blind. She was able to direct me, "turn right here and left there and into the parking lot." Right to the restaurant where we could order a drink and chat. That tickled me that she could direct us easily. I don't think she really knew who I was, even at that point. She knew I was family. But we so enjoyed just talking and laughing and being out and about. She was a pretty and smart and engaging woman.

Emily Rees-Wilson, niece

Sister Judine came to visit us on Cleveland and the rains came in torrents. Her Volkswagen started floating in the street where the water was over the curb. She was not upset; still had that unforgettable smile and calmness. She was so cool! I had not seen her in a long time but I thought of her quite often, feeling a quiet pride that she was in our family.

Once when we went to visit Uncle Walter and Aunt Thelma, I was very young and I didn't want to leave the car. I was simply afraid of older people. So my cousin Johnny and my brother Mark came out and told me the barking dog down the street would come and bite me if I did not go into the house. So Aunt Ursula came out and took me into the house and cared for me.

I too have a work of her art and I am so grateful. When I think of Sister I know there is hope.

Barb Kamlet, friend

I met Judine over 35 years ago when I attended the divorce recovery course that she co-facilitated. Later I became a small group facilitator with those groups and began to know her through that.

Years later, I saw her for counseling and I will be forever grateful for her consistent love, compassion, and wisdom that took me through some really dark times. I think it is in large part because of Judine that I became a psychotherapist and it is absolutely because of her role modeling that I carry her with me in the way I work with my clients.

Unconventional as it might be, we became friends and she gifted my life by her presence in countless ways. I was blessed to have co-facilitated a weekend retreat on personal mission with Judine and another friend and am grateful to still have pictures and memories from that weekend. My family was honored to have Judine and that same friend give the dinner blessing at my youngest daughter's wedding.

Judine loved her painting and I feel so lucky to have some of her art in my home. When she was still seeing clients in her office, she had a brown bear sitting in the corner and sometimes I would borrow it when I went on retreat. She and I named it "Bear" and after she moved to the Motherhouse, she sent Bear to me and he is still with me.

I will always remember Judine's generosity of spirit, something she showed in a way that few other people have. Her love, compassion, and wisdom will continue to inform who I am as a therapist and who I am as a human being. My sincere condolences to Judine's family and the BVMs. May her memory be a blessing.

Barbara Rude, niece, from the Gundlach family

Every year, for over five decades, late summer signaled a time of reunion for the Bruch family, initiated by the arrival of Sister Judine for her yearly visit home. The week revolved around get-togethers with Ursula and her brother and sisters. Her visits led to many lively and spirited conversations and culminated in the annual family reunion, held for many years in the local neighborhood park. Aunt Ursula's visit to her home of birth created an opportunity for the family to return home. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins were reunited. Current sweethearts were introduced to the extended family, new babies were on exhibit for all to admire and lavish with affection, old hurts had an opportunity to heal, memories were created and shared, and relationships were built and strengthened. At the center of these reunions, the heart of the reason for the reunions, was Aunt Ursula. A tiny, calm, spiritual presence who, although she lived far from her family and birthplace, nevertheless had a tremendous impact on keeping the heart and soul of our extended family connected. Sister Judine had many talents; teacher, artist, healer, woman of God. As Aunt Ursula returns home for the final time, may we all keep alive one of her greatest gifts—the heart and soul that she brought to our family.

Terri Templeman, niece

Sister Judine's visits especially in the early years, 1950s and 1960s, were always a treasure trove of Bruch family history and memories. Aunts and uncles pontificating on religion, politics, and history; and many cousins running around in the Gundlach house. My mom, Theresa, was the second youngest of the Bruch girls. Family reunions over the years were always more special when Aunt Ursula was back home.

When my dad, Bob, was facing dark days Sister came to be with him bringing her unique healing touch that we all could see really lifted his spirit. She was always all about sharing her gifts in a way that related to each individual.

I was fortunate to visit her at the BVM Motherhouse on a trip with mom, Aunt Thelma, Aunt Louise, and cousin Judine, probably around 2009. In getting to see her at her home with all of her sisters, there was no question that she would be cared for and loved for the rest of her journey. Aunt Ursula, we love you.

Ursula and Mike Jostedt family

We have many special memories of Sister Judine from her wonderful paintings hanging in our home which make us reflect on her quiet loving nature. We always enjoyed her visits, calls, and letters—with the same feelings. Sister/Aunt Ursula will remain in our thoughts. She was an inspiring presence to us and our children, Katie and Michael.

Gwen Farry, BVM

Judine was known for her beautiful art, much of which we have enjoyed as we walk the corridors here at Mount Carmel. However, she was also gifted in healing arts. The first time I met Judine was at the 1996 first gathering of the combined Regions 1 and 2, known as the West Region. It included members living in nine western states and

Guatemala. We met in a central place, a hotel in Las Vegas, where Helen Thompson led us in several creative activities to help us get to know one another—matching pictures from the directory with names, sharing sacred places, etc. In order to get to our meeting room we had to pass through the casino on the first floor amid clanging slot machines and cigarette smoke. Judine arrived early each session and blessed each corner of our meeting room with essential oils.

A personal memory of Judine happened while I was a rehab patient at Marian Hall 10 years ago. She arrived at my room with a Maxine doll which she placed on the dresser. You could not look at Maxine's face without smiling. Then, each evening, she massaged my legs with essential oils. I will never forget her kindness, which only enhanced the wonderful care at Marian Hall.

Stephanie Squibb, niece, Swami Vasudevyananda

Sister Judine was a calming and loving influence for me. In contemplating my relationship with her in these past few days, I realize she was a listener. She once gave me a book by John O'Donahue called *Eternal Echoes*. It speaks to that necessary quality of vulnerability and trust in listening and being heard. It says, "When you really tell how and who you are, you offer your listener a key to the temple of your life. When we listen, we take in the voice of the other." I can't imagine a greater gift than being completely heard by another person. She will be missed.

Comments from Karen Conover, BVM made to Diane Forster, BVM

Karen approached Judine to read her mail to her. Judine seemed unresponsive, but an aide began speaking to Judine loudly and energetically, even teasing her. She began to smile, a smile that got bigger and bigger. The aides said Judine loved to sit in front of the TV with music on. She would tap her foot and raise her hand as if conducting the music. If you called Judine "beautiful," she would smile from ear to ear. She would reach out her hand to touch the person's arm when she sensed that someone had acknowledged her and called her "beautiful." Judine was a great joy to the staff. They were amazed at how alive she seemed. She was grateful when someone put her glasses on her, even though her eyes were closed much of the time. When the residents were brought in for the first COVID vaccine, it was wonderful to see Judine wheeled in with wide-open, beautiful eyes taking in the whole scene!

Sister Roberta Anne White, BVM

Judine was my second principal at Cardinal Spellman School at Offutt Air Force Base, in Bellevue, Neb., in the late 1960s. She was so helpful to me. Also, while I was getting my master's degree in the summers, she gave me a semester off, January until June, to finish my MA at Fordham University. I'm so grateful to her for that time to finish. She started becoming interested in painting while she was principal at Spellman. Her art work is exceptional and I'm so glad to see some in the new spaces at Mount Carmel Bluffs!