



**Sharing of Memories of Margaret M. (Martha Ann) Kasper, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Aug. 10, 2021

**Mary Martens, BVM**

My memories of Margaret date back to the mid-60s when we lived in St. Mary convent in Emmetsburg, Iowa. We were a local community of 10 BVMs teaching grades 1 through 12. Margaret was an elementary teacher and principal when she was appointed superior of the house, an added role, when the congregation was moving beyond having one person "in charge." Her personality and qualities were a good fit, since she was upbeat and energetic. In a rural Iowa convent which included diverse ages and personalities, she was easy to live with. Her manner of dealing with a sometimes-challenging pastor was fair and to-the-point.

In recent years with both of us living in Dubuque, Margaret was a faithful volunteer in the BVM Development Office. My recollections about our years together in Emmetsburg provided a touchstone between us. This became especially helpful as Margaret's mental sharpness began to diminish. I would visit her in the Caritas memory care unit and start up a conversation. "Margaret, remember in Emmetsburg when we used to . . ." And she could respond with comments about our once-familiar mutual experience. It was considered a compliment to say of a BVM, "She is a good community woman." Margaret was one of many good community women I have known and loved. She is now free in God's eternal love.

**Sister Theresa Langfield, Wheaton Franciscan, colleague and friend**

With my Wheaton Franciscan community, I bring condolences to the BVMs and to Margaret's family. My friendship with Margaret began in 1977. I was the executive director of our affordable housing in Denver. Margaret came saying, "Do you think I would have the skills? I've just been a teacher and a principal." I said, "You certainly will!" I hired her on the spot as my coordinator for Francis Heights Care Gardens. It was 528 affordable apartments for senior and families in Denver.

As I interviewed Margaret, I learned that she had taught some of my nieces and nephews at Blessed Sacrament School, where she also served as principal. As Margaret began service as our leasing officer, she moved into one of the apartments at Francis Heights, a 400-apartment high-rise for seniors. She became a neighbor and friend to the residents, including Sister Maggie and me. We had been residents since our 1972 opening.

In 1980, I was elected to our provincial council. I twisted Margaret's arm until she agreed to assume my executive director position. She had demonstrated her leadership skills and her love of the residents. And they loved her too. She was kind and always ready to help anyone in any way.

Yes, as it has been said, her ready laugh was infectious; you could hear it from a distance. She wholeheartedly led and served close to a thousand seniors and family members for eight years. When I would return to Denver from our Wheaton motherhouse, she would say, "Therese, I want to run some things by you." We would work together on behalf of the people.

Margaret, well, I liked to call her Kasper because she'd always chuckle when I called her that. She was Kasper from Casper. She endeared herself to staff members as well as residents and to my family. She was particularly close to

me, to Sister Maggie, my friend and colleague, and to our chaplain Father Declan Madden. Because she was also a Maggie, she became known as Maggie 2 in our environment.

Thanks to her, other BVM sisters visited, worked or volunteered with us in our housing. I remember fondly Sisters Vicki Smurlo and Delia Graham.

May Margaret's hearty laugh now ring out in heaven. May she enjoy her well-deserved rest in union with our loving God and with all who have gone before us.

### **Patty Hardin, niece, daughter of her older sister Joan Hardin**

I first met Aunt Maggie when Mom and Dad took me to Round Lake when I was infant. The next time that I remember meeting her I was about 10. She exited the tunnel at Union Station in Denver in her long black habit and hugged my mom. I thought, that's not right; she's a nun! Then she started hugging each of us! Having been taught by nuns for several years, nuns had been put upon a pedestal; they were different from the rest of us . . . but not Aunt Maggie. I learned from her that nuns were people, too, each with their own unique calling.

I last saw Aunt Maggie two years ago after my mom, her older sister, Joan, died. I don't think she remembered me, but I'll never forget her. She was happy, concerned that the fire alarms were sounding delaying our lunch, and anxious to get back upstairs "to the office, to a job" that didn't really exist. You're with God now, Aunt Maggie. I guess I won't make that next trip to Dubuque to see you one more time.

### **Brigid Mary Hart, BVM**

Margaret welcomed me to my first mission at West Union, Iowa. I had first and second graders in West Union. Margaret had first to fourth graders at St. Peter's in Clermont. She supported me in working with a double grade, but more important she showed me how to live in a small town. No fuss, down-to-earth, practical, and kind. Later in Denver, Margaret supported Deanna Randall when she was opening her Montessori School. In the Denver cluster, we BVMs knew we could count on Margaret. She was working at Francis Heights. If someone was in need, Margaret was there with an open checkbook, a job, or whatever was needed.

### **Marjorie Heidkamp, BVM**

When I remember Martha Ann (Margaret), it is with her head thrown back laughing. In Sioux City's St. Joseph Parish, we first lived in an old school building where we each had half a classroom for a bedroom with mice as frequent visitors in our desks and closets. Then we moved to two small, very small, houses; we slept in one and the other was our chapel and living space. Cold Iowa mornings made getting to chapel an adventure. Eventually, we moved to a beautiful new convent which had its own set of challenges. The point of this is that whatever the circumstances, Margaret jumped in with both feet, made the most of every situation, and often made us laugh when we might not have seen the humor without her sensible take on life. She was a hard worker, well-liked by parishioners and students, and easy to live with. She loved her Wyoming home, the mountains, and her large family.

### **Elizabeth Wirtz, BVM**

Margaret Kasper helped my brother change his life. In 1999, Bob contacted me after an absence of 40 years. He was living in Denver on a small income, and was not well physically or mentally. He wanted to move to a different neighborhood. At this time Margaret was also in Denver, where she worked with senior citizens. I reached out to her and urged my brother to talk to Margaret. He was so impressed with Margaret's kindness and efficiency. Within a few weeks, she had done everything necessary and Bob moved into a lovely building for seniors. Bob and I were always grateful to Margaret for her compassion and graciousness. This move changed his life for the better in so many ways. The first time I saw Margaret after she moved to the Gables I thanked her and told her that story. I'm sure that she didn't remember, but she had listened intently. Then she responded, "Well, yes, and you will always be welcome here."

**Janet Desmond, BVM**

In the 1980s, Margaret was executive director of Francis Heights, a Wheaton Franciscan apartment high-rise for seniors in Denver, Colo. At the time I was unemployed and Margaret offered me a part-time job painting walls in lobbies of the 16-story building. For me, it was a blessing, very different from teaching. I moved into part-time leasing also and stayed at Francis Heights for four years.

Margaret lived at Francis Heights and walked briskly around the building, checking up on all areas plus visiting with residents. She offered apartments to BVMs Delia Graham and Marie Canfield when they moved to Denver. Margaret was always cheerful when greeting residents, staff, and visitors.

I am forever grateful to Margaret for her outlook, enthusiasm, and generosity. I see her walking the halls of heaven greeting Mary Frances Clarke, old friends, and her large Kasper family.