



Sharing of Memories of Vivian C. Wilson, BVM (Lauren)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, June 28, 2022

Kathy Bavaro

I shared an office for four years with “Vivi” at Mundelein College when we worked together in admissions and recruitment for the Weekend College program. My introverted self-learned much from “my mentor” who shared many tips on networking at many professional events. Of course, those who knew her were familiar with her ability to connect with everyone! Through her encouragement I learned to toss away the shyness I experienced and instead look at each new relationship as an adventure.

As many would agree, I loved Vivian’s stories whether about Wyoming, learning how to cook with tofu, the ins and outs of Mundelein’s faculty and student culture, or her reminiscing of the most memorable times we had in the Admissions office! I’ll miss laughing with her about the humorous times we shared.

As I reflect on the impact of Vivian’s friendship on my life, what stands out is her ever fervent belief in and search for justice in this world. Although I already shared similar values with her, she taught me so much more. And her teachings included mirroring compassion and deep interest in people. With that came the ability to deeply listen to those who “landed” in front of her. She made people feel valued. That is a gift not many people have or use.

Her name always has and always will bring a smile to my face. Vivian’s feisty, playful, and friendly energy will still hold a special place in my heart. In your honor, Vivi, I will intentionally not give up the fight for justice in this world, remembering especially those who are marginalized. And while I do that, in your name, I’ll remember to have fun! Until we meet again, dear friend, you are in my heart!

Carol Washut, Niece

There are so many memories of my Aunt Vivian. Memories starting from when I was a little girl and Sister Mary Lauren would come to Casper with a travel companion wearing a full habit. Then one summer she appeared in a knee-length skirt and small veil. A store clerk called her ma'am, not Sister Vivian. The visits to Wyoming included things like mountain hikes, lake swims, picnics, rodeos, state and national park visits, family reunions, and sing-alongs as she played her guitar. Often her siblings would be around which led to many interesting and sometimes heated discussions. We cousins would vie to be the one to sit by her in a car or be by her side when partaking in some event.

When I was in college, she became a mentor and spiritual director and thus began the exchange of many letters and phone calls which lasted for decades until the last phone call just a couple of months ago. Vivian was an intelligent woman, loving and caring but strict, and very opinionated. I'm certain the saints in heaven are getting an earful! Farewell to the last of my "little aunts," you are missed.

Ron Staudt, Nephew

Growing up, Sister Vivian was our only relative in the Chicago area. My mother, Pat (Moore) Staudt, was Sister Vivian’s in-law. Sister Vivian’s brother, Marvin, married my mother’s sister, Mary. My mother, who died in October, and Sister Vivian grew up in the wild west of Wyoming and they both left Wyoming in their teens

devoted to the loves of their lives, my mom to her husband, Ben, and her five children, and Sister Vivian to the BVMs.

Sister Vivian was a part of dozens of holidays and birthdays and family celebrations in our homes for 60 years. She was also a wonderful friend to my mother making frequent visits and planning wonderful outings, especially after my father died in 1999. Sister Vivian was a joy and a treasure in these family gatherings. She was whip smart, passionately engaged in a series of important jobs for the BVMs. She was brilliant in so many dinner table discussions sharing her analysis of the changes in the Church from Vatican II to the tensions between the Vatican and American nuns. She had thoughtful opinions about local, national, and international issues and finance. I loved talking to her and learning from her. She was the very essence of a modern woman and a great model of intelligence and grace for my three daughters.

Pat Wilson, Niece-in-law

My family was saddened to hear of Vivian's passing. She was much loved. We have fond memories of her many visits to us, especially when we lived in Rome. My husband, her nephew. Howard was attached to the embassy to the Vatican. Sadly, he too has passed last December. While he could still travel, we went to Vivan's Diamond Jubilee in 2017 at Mount Carmel. I am grateful we had that opportunity. It was an honor to meet so many of her sisters at Mount Carmel. I send my condolences to all of you, her family, and her many friends. Vivian was a joy. We will miss her, her tales, her wit, and her store of family lore and love. We will treasure her memory. Rest in peace, Vivian.

Diane Radford, Niece

I was so sad to hear of Vivian's passing. She was my aunt and an amazing incredible woman, teacher, and role model. She always had funny, intriguing family stories to share. She always welcomed a good talk or debate! She and my husband Kit could talk politics and world matters for hours! As a child, I recall how my father, Chuck Anderson, bought her first wardrobe when she decided to not wear the habit anymore. She had a quirky colorful sense of style that I will always remember. She was such a wonderful woman who will truly be missed by all her family.

Sister Brigid Mary Hart, BVM

My memories of Vivian are from when she first retired to Wright Hall. She did many things, one of which was when we had adopted the new retirement philosophy. At some time, the Sisters Council at Wright Hall thought that they should be doing something. Vivian cleverly put a quote on each of the elevators so that while you wait for the elevator you could reflect on how you should be retiring. The other thing I remember about Vivian was that in those days she was taking night classes at Northwestern University in painting and in portrait. At times there were nude models which was an awakening for her. Of course, she shared and laughed as she always did about anything she was doing. When I came to Dubuque, I was lucky enough to take a watercolor class from Vivian. I remember some of her detail and wanting it done well. I learned an awful lot from Vivian. Over the years watching Vivian enjoy people and enjoy each other and doing so many wonderful things including her love of Wyoming and of the ranch and of all the outdoors. It just makes me miss her more. Thanks, Vivian, for being in our lives.

Sister Catherine "Kitty" Ornellas, BVM

I met Vivian here at Mount Carmel. She walked very slowly with a cane. Every dinner time I would see her walking with this cane. One day I went up to her and I said, "Vivian, keep practicing with your walk. As you get better, we'll have a race." She said to me, "Oh, Kitty, I'll never win!" I said, "Remember the Tortoise and the Hare? The Tortoise won!" I guess that race will have to wait until I get to Heaven. She always laughed and I was happy to make her laugh. Thanks, Vivian.

Sister Judy Callahan, BVM

The story Kitty just told is like an experience I had. I delighted in Vivian's sense of humor. It was so easy to make her laugh. We can all visualize her creeping down the hall with her walker. Each step was about an inch-and-a-half long. She would be going very slowly, and I would remind her of the speed limit in the hallways. She would just giggle. She took even her limitations in great humor. We have shared many stories and similar experiences – large families with lots of brothers, simple living conditions, no running water in our homes and so on. We had some delightful stories that we could laugh about together. I am so impressed with her catechetical knowledge and experiences and the sharing of her gifts. She was very proud of the Associates in the Chicago area who were not Catholic. She was very inclusive of other people. A great, great little woman in heaven who we can joyfully celebrate.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I only knew Vivian in the seven years that I have worked here at Mount Carmel in Support Services. We've had many wonderful conversations during that time. As her eyesight failed, she was both practical about it and sad that some of the skills she was able to use were no longer possible. I don't know the name of the artwork, but in her room, she had a glass container in which were lovely balls that had been wrapped with colored string in very intricate patterns. I always admired them when I was there. She said, "There's a book over there. You can learn how to do it." I thought, no probably not. When I think of Vivian and her room, the balls were the things that caught my eye. The other thing she loved was what I called the big, blue button clock. It's about four inches in diameter. You can tap it and it says, "It is 9:53a.m." And tap it again, "It is June 28, Tuesday." She was grateful that I asked to borrow the clock to show several of sisters because it assists not only the persons who are unable to see, but those who look at a calendar and say, "I haven't a clue what day it is." I always think of the blue button clock with Vivian and how she wanted other people to have that gift of knowing day, date, time.

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM

I really did not know Vivian until she came to Mount Carmel as was a resident in the Caritas Center. Yes, I was aware of her catechetical work in Chicago, her service at Mundelein and her commitment to religious education, but I didn't really know her. When she was a resident, she had a physical condition that required frequent trips to a physical therapist. I was her companion day in and day out. So, I know all about Vivian. We all know how she can tell stories. I know more about Lead, S.D., than anybody needs to know about Lead. I heard it over and over again. I love Vivian. What I was impressed with was that in these last couple of years, every time I would see her, she would thank me for my fidelity in serving as her companion. I just hope that I can maintain a sense of gratitude as Vivian did for the very simple things in life.

Sister Bertha Fox, BVM

I spent three years in Rapid City, S.D., where Lauren was. She was teaching second grade and I did the school music, general science and had 60 some piano students. She had a classroom that was beautiful! She knew how to do bulletin boards and she helped other sisters also. She had several sets of the letters of the alphabet in different styles. She could just snip construction paper and do new bulletin board text in no time at all. I was grateful that I was a music teacher and did not have to do bulletin boards. She also was the person in charge of decorations for all the feast days. We were isolated in South Dakota, so we made a big thing for feast days. I didn't do anything original, but I helped her. It was a learning experience and, again, I was grateful that I was not in charge. She was wonderful to live with. As the two younger BVMs, we were thrown together for many different things. I miss her. She was just wonderful for somebody new out of the novitiate.

Sister Diane Rapozo, BVM

I was Vivian's agent and got to know Vivian pretty well. Vivian talked quite a bit about her family. She loved her nieces and nephews. She would quite often tell stories about them. I had the privilege of talking with some of her nieces and nephews on the phone. Ron, Carol, and Hank came to see her. Vivian was not able to carry on a conversation, but she was able to tell them that she loved them and knew that they were there with her. I would also like to say something about the staff. While sitting with Vivian at that time, staff would come in and just say

something and hold her hand. This was the nursing staff, aides, housekeepers, our kitchen staff. They were so attentive. I think a lot of you have seen the love and care that Vivian received and that our other sisters have received. We are so blessed with such a wonderful staff. A lot of gratitude to those who showed such love to Vivian.

Nancy McCarville, BVM Associate & Former BVM

I want to acknowledge Vivian Wilson's gift to Fort Dodge, Iowa, and Sacred Heart School and Parish. She arrived well after my time at Sacred Heart, but she and my first cousins-once-removed had some real chemistry! Vivian taught some of them to play the guitar. As she was leaving Fort Dodge, she gave the family the guitar. She was aware that one of the girls eventually got into the New York City circuit with her own musical group, both singing and playing the guitar. However, Vivian never really knew where her guitar was because it had been passed around so much among the siblings. At a family reunion, I pursued the question: Who had the guitar? so I could report back to Vivian. I am still not sure where it is, but they all swore that it was still in the family!

Karen Sauser

Vivian, thank you for loving your years in Fort Dodge. I enjoyed our conversations revisiting your ministry there, and I am grateful for that relationship you had with my cousins. Rest in peace, Sister. Keeping you and all the BVM sisters in my prayers.

Eleanor (Ellie) Michaud, Former BVM

The Michauds have many fond memories of Sister Vivian! I left the community from Fort Dodge, Iowa, in 1968 after living four years with Vivian. In the years that followed she was a big part of family celebrations and gatherings. Our daughter remembers Vivian's years at Mundelein – the swimming pool, the raccoon in the elevator, etc., and our son always called her George. She was loyal to me in many ways and always kept me up to date on the BVMs. Rest in peace, George!

Father Sajeev Painunkal

I am so sorry to hear about the demise of Sr Vivian. I knew her when I was studying at Loyola University Chicago during 2009 – 2011. I used to celebrate mass at Mundelein College where she used to live. I befriended many elderly sisters there including Sister Vivian. My mass used to be on Fridays, and I often stayed back for dinner and to watch a movie with the community. Unfortunately, I could not stay in touch with the sisters after I left Loyola and went back to Kolkata, India. I miss my old friends. My heartfelt condolences to the BVM family. RIP, Sister Vivian.

Lisa Wiegand, Nurse Aide, Mount Carmel Bluffs

I so, love Sister Vivian. She was my inspiration. She never gave up; she was like an energizer bunny. She just kept going. If she had any kind of problem, she would work on it until she had it figured out. I told her one time that we were a lot alike, and she agreed with me. I will so, miss my talks with her. She was such an incredible and intelligent woman. I will continue to pray for her family and the sisters.

Colleen Horrell, Former Student

I had Sister Vivian as a teacher for third and eighth grades in Fort Dodge, Iowa. She was a demanding teacher with high expectations for her students. She was the best teacher that I ever had in all my years of schooling. I visited her in Dubuque several years ago and we had a wonderful afternoon reminiscing. We stayed in touch through Christmas cards and periodic notes. I will miss her.

Maxine Mitchell

So sad to hear of the passing of Sister Vivian. I so looked up to her as a child. Many happy memories of her and the visits at the ranch. She would ride horses, milk the cows, and gather the chicken eggs. We played baseball and went fishing too. She was not afraid to help fix a meal and do the dishes afterwards. She loved the country and we loved her. We will miss her dearly.

Sister Dorothy “Dodie” Dwight, BVM

I remember when Vivian took classical guitar lessons while at Mundelein. At some of the Saturday night Masses at Mundelein, Vivian learned to play the double bass (the stand-up bass). She enjoyed music consistently throughout her years.

One of Vivian’s Favorite Quotes

A Blessing for Old Age

By John O’Donohue

May the light of your soul mind you,
May all your worry and anxiousness about becoming old be
transfigured,
May you be given a wisdom with the eye of your soul, to see this
beautiful time of harvesting.
May you have the commitment to harvest your life, to heal what
has hurt you, to allow it to come closer to you and become one
with you.
May you have great dignity,
May you have a sense of how free you are,
And above all may you be given the wonderful gift of meeting the
eternal light and beauty that is within you.
May you be blessed, and may you find a wonderful love in
yourself for yourself.