



Sharing of Memories of Dolores Becker, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Oct. 26, 2022

Nancy Porter, Sister

I would like to thank everyone that has in some way taken care of my sister since she became ill. She could not have been in a better place than Mount Carmel, her home base for 65 years, to say her final farewell.

She was my big sister, being nine years older. When she entered the convent, it left a gap in our home in San Francisco. My Mom and Dad made it possible for us to make the long trip to Iowa for our visit with Dolores and most other locations on the West Coast when she was stationed there. She wanted to be a BVM since grade school after being educated and loved by the nuns at Most Holy Redemer in San Francisco. She enjoyed everything she did while teaching, pastoral work, caring for AIDS patients and just being a nun serving her God over these 65 years.

She went to Star of the Sea High School with the St. Joseph of Carondelet nuns, but still was faithful to the BVMs. She studied hard. I remember her having a bag of chips, a soda, and peacock blue pen doing her homework on the dining room table. She played sports over the years which ended with her wrecking her knee. She went to all the dances and proms. She babysat neighborhood kids. She volunteered at the Emporium Department store on Market Street and was Santa's helper at Christmas. She acted in school plays in high school and was on a lot of yearbook committees. She loved dressing in the latest styles for either church or a dance or every holiday. She loved her hats and stylist high heels. I always wanted to dress like her. By the time I reached that age, styles had changed.

She was always doing something or just going to Golden Gate Park to the Japanese Tea Garden to look at the grounds or have a seat and a nice cup of tea and some of their dollar coin-shaped cookies. Her best trip ever was when she went to the Holy Land and walked the paths of Jesus to view the surroundings. She loved her godson Jason and kept him in her prayers and kept him abreast of being a Catholic in these times. I want to thank you for letting me share some of these memories.

Geri Greco Steenveld, Former BVM, Set of 1957

Dolores was one of my set sisters. I saw her at our set reunions, except for our last one in July. She was unable to join us. Through the 65 years of knowing Dolores, I received a few phone calls and many cards and notes. Her kindness, caring and spirituality will be missed. Rest in peace, dear Sister Dolores.

Mary Ann McGinley, Former BVM, Set of 1957

After sharing our Novitiate and Scholasticat years, Dolores and I were excited to learn that we would be missioned together at St. John's in Seattle. As the "young sisters" we shared many learning experiences - most notable of which was learning to cook breakfast for the other nine sisters in the house - a skill that was not taught in the Scholasticat program. During our many hours of *perpetual* lunch playground duty, we discussed ways to perfect breakfast efficiency. By June, we were effective cooks, only to learn that we were both being transferred to other missions the following year. My second learning experience? Keeping this newfound talent hidden in subsequent missions!

Mary Eileen (Donovan) Sorenson, Former BVM, Set of 1957

Dolores was one of our Set of 1957. From the postulate to our set reunions, she was always welcoming, generous with offers to help, and just being herself in a myriad of ways. I remember how hard she worked to make contacts with members of our set for our reunions and how disappointed she was when she couldn't locate someone. She loved being a BVM. At the same time she never forgot we who left, always making us feel we still are a part of the BVM family. For Dolores, we were all, to our core BVM's forever. Thank you, Dolores. Rest in peace.

Sister Judy Callahan, BVM

I am a member of the set behind Dolores. I never really knew her during our long years in ministry until she came to Mount Carmel. When she was in Marian Hall, she was always very happy to see me even though we never had many experiences together. I am especially impressed with how she was in Gables even with her memory extremely limited and her energy was very low. We have readings twice a month at Gables for those who want to listen. Dolores would sometimes come and really make an effort. I was wondering how difficult that was for her. She would do her best to pay attention and to respond and try to understand. I was impressed with her good model of how to be old and not well and still deal with that in a pleasant and pleasing way.

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM

We listened to many wonderful things about Dolores' ministry and presence to so many people from coast to coast. I certainly admire her teaching religious education to people in the RCIA program. She did some wonderful work. I would also like to comment on her years in Gables when she was very dependent and found it very difficult to communicate. She could always communicate with those beautiful eyes. If you passed her, you saw her love and respect in those eyes. She didn't lose her love for person even though she lost her ability to speak. I would also like to commend the Gables staff. They would often be assisting her especially at dining time. They were so respectful and loving to Dolores and Dolores was open and receptive to them. It was a sign of pure love. For this, we shall always be grateful.

Donna Tobin Westemeyer, Former BVM, Set of 1957

I have many fun and fond memories of Dolores. Dolores from early on promoted women priests. We were at our set reunion in Chicago in 1977 when I heard a set member made the comment to her, "Dolores, I understand you want to be a Father"? Later, with our 50th set reunion at Mount Carmel in 2007, we divided into groups and Dolores lead an inspirational discussion.

[Sister Anne Marie noted that one member of the set who worked with Dolores on the discussion sent a copy of Dolores' handwritten notes for a beautiful 30–60-minute meditation.]

My last visit was Aug. 6, 2022, at our 65th set reunion at Mount Carmel. Dolores was missed at the reunion festivities, but I went to her lovely room. She had a smile for me. We reminisced about our lives. I noticed the beautiful petite pink rose in the vase did not have water. She pointed to the bathroom for the water. Lifting the rose I realized it was artificial. We laughed and I wondered how my state of mind was doing, but for those moments hers was fine for our visit.

Sister Regina Wagner, BVM

After we were professed, I was stationed in San Francisco. Her family became my California family and we had almost a sister relationship. I went with her on several of her home visits. I spent time with her family even when she wasn't there. We've had a very close relationship all these years. It's one that I will always cherish.

Mary Ann Henry, Baldwin, KS, Former Set of 1957 Member

My fondest memories of dear Dolores are the personal messages she sent – birthday greetings, notes of encouragement and support. They meant so much especially coming from her.

Kathy (Norris) Komar, BVM Associate, Former BVM, Set of 1957

When my husband Ray and I were first married, we were living in Nassau Bay, Texas, when our daughter, Julie, was born. Dolores came to visit us. Not only did she bring a baby gift, but she spent time with Julie and allowed us to run necessary errands. More recently, when Ray and I were in Dubuque for his commitment as a BVM associate, we remember the warm greeting that Dolores gave us when we went to the dining hall. Her welcoming smile and warm embrace made us feel right at home. Rest in peace, dear Dolores.

Sister Dolores "Dee" Myers, BVM

As you can tell from all of those comments, our Set of 1957 was a big set, so we have plenty to say. When we were asked to give some suggestions for our religious names, Sister Mary Dolores had just died. My birthname is Dolores so I thought I would just keep it simple and just ask for Dolores. I was afraid that I would get a name of two names put together. My mother's name was Bertha and my father's name was William. I was afraid I would be SM Berwilliam for the rest of my life. Unbeknown to me, Dolores' mother was also Dolores. The day of reception we are in the chapel along the long communion rail waiting for our names. Dolores Becker got Dolores. I thought that ends it for me. Well, I think they were desperate for names because when they came to me they said, "Sister Dolores Myers, you will be known in religious life as Sister Mary Dolore." They just chopped off the "s." Dolores and I laughed about that after the fact. She was a good Dolores and we shall miss her wonderful, generous heart.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I only knew Dolores since she came back to Mount Carmel when I worked in Support Services. The image I have goes back a year or two; I can't remember if it was before or after the big move in February and March 2021. We found a very flashy, multi-colored caftan. Dolores was so delighted to have it, to wear it, to sparkle in it. That's the image I have of her – vibrant colors. It always pleased me that she was so pleased with that particular flowing garment.

Mary Kay Roach, Former Set of 1957

Two memories of Dolores that remain alive for me. The first was her inquiry to me the first week of August 1957. Coming from San Francisco, Dolores found the heat and humidity of Dubuque almost unbearable. She asked me when the weather would get cooler as she didn't think she would survive. Being from St. Louis, I replied probably not until September or mid-October. I still remember her facial expression upon hearing my answer, she was not a happy camper! But survive she did, for sixty-five years plus!

Our friendship developed over the years, and she was constant in remembering birthdays, anniversaries, and special holidays with cards and greetings. She never failed to ask about our kids, always assuring us of her prayers. I would have to say that Dolores was optimistic, upbeat, and genuinely interested in others.

It was a blessing for Dennis and me to visit with her this past August. We'll always remember her smile and treasure her friendship. I read recently that "Death is an extraordinary moment." God speed, Dolores! We love you and will miss you.

Ann Anderson Freitas, Former BVM, Set of 1957

My address book is perhaps the best way to remember Dolores. Jesus missioned his disciples to "Go on your way. . . Carry no money bag . . .no sack. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you . . . cure the sick in it . . . and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.'" The scripture passage resonated with Dolores. Updates to my address book include Wright Hall, Chicago; Hampton, Va.; Lodi, Calif.; Seattle; New York; and San Antonio. I am sure the Community Archivist will find others. As multiple as the locations and addresses Dolores had, a similar pattern is evident in her outreach and ministry. Her ministry was never static. Moving from town to town, like the disciples, she worked with AIDS patients, the elderly, and the sick. No doubt because Dolores did not spotlight her own achievements, there are many corners of her ministry and apostolate that only those who were recipients of her care and compassion fully know. Today, dear friend, no United States Post Office change of

address card is needed. Dolores, you have a permanent home with your companions with whom you served generously.

Dae McBride Hannah, Former BVM, Set of 1957

In my early years after I left the community, Dolores was a great friend checking in often to see how life was going and to share news of our set. It was always fun hearing from her. She was thoughtful and loving in caring about so many of our mutual friends. And a birthday wasn't a birthday without a card from Dolores. In her later years she continued to send birthday cards to many in the community. She always had time for a quick visit on the phone to keep up our connections. It was difficult for her when she wasn't able to continue this. She will be missed. Rest In Peace Dolores. We all miss and love you.

Marge Haralson

My family met Sister Dolores when one of our daughters was in her fourth-grade class in Seattle. That daughter is now 64 years old. We became friends and stayed in touch with her over the years. Yes, we have known Dolores for quite a few years and always treasured her friendship. May she rest in peace.

Sister Monica Seelman, BVM

One of my favorite memories of Dolores is from our years at the Scholasticate together. She and I were named custodians of the Curriculum Lab, the large room on the second floor where we could do projects that needed table space, where we had Teaching of Art classes and where Scholastics could get school supplies. Besides cleaning the room and keeping track of all the supplies, we also cared for the room's only permanent resident, G.E., a little parakeet that belonged to Sister Mary Grace Esther. We cleaned his cage, kept him in birdseed and water until he died of a growth on his beak. We both mourned his loss, but we cherished our time with a bird called G.E.

I also remember all the stories Dolores told me about her years as a hospice worker serving young men with AIDS. She spoke of how scared and lonely the young men were and how many of them had no contact with their families. Often, she said, she was at their bedsides when they died. I know that the faces of those young men stayed with her in memory for the rest of her life.

Cecilia, Former Set of 1957

I am in the same set with Dolores, of course. Dolores wrote to us a lot for occasions – birthdays, Christmas, etc. When she found out that I had cancer, she said the community was going to pray for me. She sent me a holy card, a saint I had never heard about – St. Peregrine, patron saint of people with cancer. Every time I say the prayer on the card, I say, "This is for you, too, Dolores. Thank you, for your kind gesture." I miss her cards for occasions like birthday and Christmas. I didn't realize how ill she had gotten until I came to Mount Carmel. It was a blessing that she was here with wonderful care and surrounded by love from all of us. Thank you, Dolores.

Mary Eileen Sorenson, Former Set of 1957

Dolores was one of our Set of 1957. From the postulate to our set reunions, she was always welcoming, generous with offers to help, and just being herself in a myriad of ways. I remember how hard she worked to make contacts with members of our set for our reunions. And how disappointed she was when she couldn't locate someone. She loved being a BVM. At same time she never forgot, we who left, always making us feel we still are a part of the BVM family. For Dolores, we were all, to our core BVM's forever. Thank you, Dolores. Rest in peace