



## **Sharing of Memories of Patricia Ann Taylor, BVM (Wilbur)**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, May 26, 2023

### **Christine Keffeler, Niece, Daughter of Brother/Cousin Bob Keffeler**

I only met Sister Pat a couple of times in person. First, I was a young child, many decades ago, when she visited our family in upstate New York. As an adult, I happened to be in Madison, Wis., for a several-day training seminar. Since Madison is a relatively short drive from Dubuque, I drove to visit her one day. We had a wonderful time chatting and sharing family stories. Among other things, I learned snippets about what a rascal my father, her cousin, had been. From there on, Patty and I communicated via letters, phone, and email. She loved that I sent wildly colored muumuus – almost as much as when I dubbed her "aunt." Quite a woman, my aunt!

Aunt Patty, I've known for years that you are "ready to go see Jesus." These were my brother Tony's last words to me before I left on a business trip to California and before he passed a day later. I won't forget them. You deserve a godly award for patience! Your continued failing health certainly has been your cross. Thank you so very much for all your long-distance support, words of wisdom, familial research, and love. We will miss you and will know that you'll be smiling down at us — healthy at last and utterly at peace with God's next stage for you. Love.

### **Sister Karen Conover, BVM**

My friendship with Pat began in a simple way as part of my work in Support Services almost eight years ago. I found that she needed very precisely cut denture adhesive pieces that the aides did not seem to be able to produce to her satisfaction. So, we worked out a pattern and from then on, about every three weeks, I brought her a supply of these pieces for her daily use.

I really knew nothing of her history of the many decades of her residing at Marian Hall. I simply found that she seemed to enjoy my stopping in to visit. I was touched when she invited me and Sister Catherine Jean Hayen to a pizza lunch in her room to mark her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

At one point, when her motor skills were still good, I discovered that she loved adult coloring books, and I also learned which colors she used up quite quickly and needed to have replenished. Both beautiful and sometimes whimsical, the finished products became gifts that she gave away.

As was noted in the eulogy, the move to Gables, our new skilled care section, a little over two years ago, marked the emergence of a "new" Pat. Along with sharing meals and activities, she brought her smile and fascination to FaceTime calls and to Zoom encounters with her four special nieces - Marcia, Diane, Debbie, and Joyce, as long as I was handling the technology.

I knew that Pat had developed computer skills way before most of us thought they would be necessary. However, as I began to be more connected with her, I could see the steady diminishment of

those skills. But she was still happy for me to come and open her email and read the things in her inbox that she needed know and trash the rest. I was often the one to assist her to put together her notes to "Family and Relatives" regarding health challenges, because she wanted those important to her to know what was happening. As many of you know, she had a certain way of expressing herself – matter of fact, philosophical, and not regarding her condition as anything out of the ordinary for her age. She would say, "It is what it is" ... and then would laugh!

I eventually found that I was asked to be one of Pat's Durable Powers of Attorney. Little did I know what that would mean over the last few years as she navigated various medical issues.

It was a privilege to accompany Pat on this last part of her journey. I had heard her frequently wonder out loud why she had lived so long, and she would often conclude with a wry smile and a prayer "Come on, God!" A few days before God did call her home, I reminded her that this was what she had spent her whole life striving for, and I said to her, "Come on, God!" and she very quietly, with great effort, repeated that. We are very grateful for the Hospice personnel who made this transition easier for Pat.

On the back of the worship aid, you will find the chorus of Pat's favorite song, "Without Clouds." She requested that this, or part of it, be played at her service.

"Without Clouds," by The Dameans

Refrain:

Without clouds, the rain can't wash the land  
Without rain, the grass won't hide the sand  
Without grass, the flower's bloom won't grow  
Without pain, the joy in life won't show

Verse 1:

Never saw a sunrise that didn't follow night;  
hardly saw it shining 'til a shadow blocked it's light;  
never took a journey and not leave some place behind,  
not feel some anguish before some peace of mind.

Refrain.

The second verse that you did not hear sums up her own view of life and the challenges she faced: "I'm not afraid of pain or threats it seems to give. . . Still, it won't conquer me if I learn to bend, For when its course is run, renewed, I'll rise again."

Thank you for your friendship, witness, and love, dear Pat. Pray for us now.

### **Sister Mary McCauley, BVM**

Pat and I have a history! Pat came to Marian Hall as a resident in March of 1980 and I came to serve as the administrator in August of 1980. This means that we have known, loved, respected, and challenged one another for the last 43 years!

Then for about the last twenty years Pat was the assigned pray-er for Mary Agnes O Connor and me when we lived together in the Circle apartments. And then for some reason, for about the last three years she was assigned to me alone! I must have needed it! Because of this relationship, I felt very blessed to be with her when she died. I prayed in gratitude for her life and for her death. I praised her for her fidelity, for her acceptance of her illness, for her continual commitment to our BVM values and mission, for her forty-three years as a resident of Marian Hall and Gables, and, finally, for the way she reached out to others and, most significantly, for the way she accepted her impending death.

I remember a lot about Pat. most of all I remember the time in my early days at Marian Hall when she called me a benevolent dictator. I am not certain what brought that comment about, but my hunch is that I was doing my best to get Pat out of room and engaged in some Community activity. Not sure. I only remember the description!

Pat and I moved beyond that moment and grew to have a deep respect, love and admiration for one another. If I am certain of one thing and most grateful for it, it is that she has a permanent assignment to serve as my pray-er!

### **Nancy Edwards, Anamosa, Iowa**

I met Pat when my husband saw this message in the Texas Instrument newsletter for Cedar Rapids, Iowa, that said a sister here wanted some help with her TI computer. He showed it to me; it was very short. He said, "Should I answer this?" I said, "Yeah, sure." He came to visit her and that began a lifelong friendship with Pat. He built her computer desk. Her printer was noisy for some people so he made her a box to put over it so it would not bother other people. He would come and stay with her a while and teach her new things. If I was working, he would bring our four young sons. We had four sons in seven years. Chris is here; he's the third one of the four. This probably started about 1986. T

he first time I came, Pat took us on a tour of everything – Marian Hall over to this building, and introduced the boys to everyone. We ate lunch with her. They were swarmed by sisters who had been teachers or nurses and had not been around young ones like that. At that time, some sisters were still wearing habits, so it was quite the experience. When our youngest, I think he was five, was getting ready for bed, he said, "I met a sister who was 100 years old!" He counted to 100. I think it was the first time he had done that. It was before he was in kindergarten. He just was amazed! My granddaughters, now finishing college with one still in college, came here with their dad, Dan. He is on a trip right now or he would be here.

When my husband became ill, Patty, and all of you, prayed us through. She would often put us up on the bulletin board for prayers. One time the prayers were for rain because farming was hard. There was no rain and we desperately needed rain. She put up our prayer requests and it started to rain and rain and rain. Finally, my husband said, "I think they are hard of hearing. I told them they could stop!"

Just such a joyful spirit! She accepted her life the way it was. She loved being a BVM sister. She never criticized, well maybe a few little things. She also had a strength about her. When I met her brother Robert, she explained to him how I was in the lay ministry program for our church. He about jumped out of his chair and with his booming voice, he said, "Are they making you a priest?" I said, "No, that's not what it means. It means that I am a leader in the church." He had this power about him. I thought, she had three brothers with this spirited way about them and she was the little sister that they cared for. Imagine her life being sick as a child and still living to 93. That is part of the care she got here. I

would like to thank everyone who touched her life. She was such a blessing to our family and still is. I told the boys that they don't have to email her anymore; they can just say, "Hello, Pat!"

### **Marsha Taylor Welder, Niece**

Sister Patty, BVM, but to my family, she was always Aunt Patty. Pat was a woman of many talents, way ahead of her time. An educator, family genealogist, philosopher, friend, and an inspiration to many. I was blessed to be close to her from an early age all the way to later in my life. She was more than my aunt; she was a good friend. I remember her favorite things being yellow, Taco John's, popcorn, ice cream, puzzles, and books. She was an amateur sleuth, reading and solving mysteries. Mostly, she treasured community, friends, and family. It was always a joy to go visit Aunt Patty. My frequent visits with my mom and dad and adult children are cherished memories. In the words of my Aunt Patty, "This life was never meant to be an end in itself. I look forward to the beginning of the journey which we call 'forever.'"

I will miss you, Aunt Patty.

### **Sister Kathleen Mullin, BVM**

In 1952 in June, Pat's brother Robert was ordained in California. At that time, the family home was in Des Moines about three doors from St. John Church. His first Mass was celebrated at St. John's on a June day, the last Mass of the day. Family and friends had gathered at the home before the Mass for a brunch. Those were the days when you had six or seven Masses on Sunday. In preparation for the Mass and the reception following, Sister Karen Shay recruited the just graduated eighth graders who could help decorate the reception area in the hall and to join the adult choir. Pat came from Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago to be there for the Mass, but she could not go to the reception. As a member of the service committee in eighth grade, I was asked to accompany Pat after the Mass and go home and clean up the kitchen and dining room from brunch. That's when I met her. She was four years after entering the community. She talked about teaching, how much she loved it, and about her BVM life already, as well as some family stories. In about an hour-and-a-half, I had a new sense about the daughter of Mrs. Taylor when I saw her at daily Mass.

Years later, I was in Dubuque when Pat moved here. For three years, we companied each other. That was a great privilege. We did talk more about spirituality, but it was a different approach. We now had more maturity. Through the years when I wasn't in Dubuque, I communicated with her and would go visit her when I did come back. With all that has been said, I learned a lot this morning. But I also can say, "Amen to that!"

### **Sister JoAnn O'Connell, BVM.** (Told by Sister Kathleen Mullin, BVM)

We all know that Pat was an avid computer expert and developer. JoAnn did not ever like the computer and is thrilled not to be using it right now. But there was a period that ended a few years ago, when Pat would write spiritual notes to JoAnn and JoAnn would respond. For a good period, they had a special exchange. It was very special to JoAnn. She just wanted to say that even though there were all the limitations and challenges for Pat, she shared the gifts that she had in so many ways and JoAnn was one of the recipients.

### **Sue Herting Peterson**

I met Pat in 1980 when I worked at Marian Hall as a nursing assistant. I was 20 years old at the time. I was attending Clarke College and was studying to be a nurse. Pat was a resident that I cared for, and

she became a wonderful friend. We bonded quickly as we shared our stories of living with chronic disease. She with intrinsic asthma, and myself with type 1 diabetes.

We talked of the struggles and the blessings. She listened to my desire to help others with chronic disease and encouraged me every step of the way. Room 456, where Sister Pat resided, became a place of joy and solace over the five years that I worked at Marian Hall. I soon learned that Pat had experienced similar challenges in her life as I was experiencing. We clicked. We laughed and cried together. Pat always understood and had a way of turning what seemed challenging in life into a God-given gift that could be worked through. She acknowledged the burden of life's problems, but she also saw the blessing!

I believe this was Pat's calling in life: to see, understand and teach about the burdens and blessings of life. She did this so well. Imagine having to "retire" to a nursing facility when you are in your 50s. To Pat, that may have been a challenge for a short time, but she found many ways to minister and carry on with her calling from the walls of room 456 where she emailed others, made cards, sent holiday reflections, and shared of herself in so many ways despite having difficulty breathing. She had a child-like way about her when she would share a story. I remember being quickly drawn into every detail like the event was happening at that very moment.

Pat watched me progress from a nursing assistant to an LPN and then an RN. She sent a homemade gift when my husband and I got married. She came to my father's wake in 1993. I brought her a favorite sandwich from time to time – a Hardee's bacon cheeseburger. I administered many of her breathing treatments. We listened to one another share frustrations with the system, neither of us fond of rules, yet we knew they were a part of life.

As you can see, Pat and I shared a lot. I became a certified diabetes educator and have spent most of my career working to help others with diabetes. I feel blessed to have been a friend of Sister Pat. I know she was not afraid to die, and I know she was like a child when she met her creator, full of anticipation and joy. I can see her pushing the handle on the side of her recliner in the quick manner that she so often did, pushing that handle to get up from her chair, encouraging all of us to take part in her celebration of life and to keep celebrating our earthly lives.

Sister Pat, you were a true inspiration to me and a wonderful friend. Thank you and welcome to your heavenly home!

### **Sharon Rezmer, BVM**

When Sister Pat was a young sister teaching in a Chicago Catholic grade school, she taught a young boy who had been sent by his parents to Chicago to live with his grandparents who owned a grocery store. His parents remained in Germany, and he was very lonely since he was the only child in the house. He could not speak English, and he felt that his classmates were prejudiced against him because of his German background. (This was shortly after World War II.) Sister Pat took this young boy under her wing, taught him English and was a mentor for him throughout his life. She encouraged his vocation to the priesthood. He eventually became Father Erwin Friedl. I knew Father Erwin from my parish, St. Cornelius, and we both enjoyed our annual hike around the Morton Arboretum and dinner afterwards until he was stricken with cancer and later with a stroke. When I told him that I was discerning entering the BVMs, he told me how grateful he was to have Sister Pat in his life. When I came to Dubuque for my novitiate, I met Pat and told her of my connection with Father Erwin. He

celebrated his golden anniversary as a priest last year and continues to be grateful for the caring sister who took an interest in helping him feel at home in America.

### **Celina Sau Lin Ing**

I have known Sister Patty since the early 1970s with my first memories of her happening when I was looking for a teaching position. I was able to finally schedule two interviews in Southern California on the same day: one in North Hollywood in the morning and the other in Alhambra in the afternoon. Both schools offered me a position, and during the plane trip back to Northern California, I weigh the pros and cons of each. Initially, I was leaning towards accepting the position in Alhambra teaching third grade, which was my first teaching choice, while a sixth-grade position was offered at the North Hollywood school.

However, by the time the plane landed, I had decided to accept the North Hollywood offer. What had tipped the decision towards St. Charles Borromeo School in North Hollywood had occurred after the interview during a short walk through the neighborhood led by Sister Patty. It was during this walk that we shared our likes and dislikes. By the time the walk ended, we realized that we both loved books, walking, and eating burgers!! During my tenure at St. Charles, at least twice a month, both Sister Patty and I would walk through different neighborhoods, always ending up at the local burger joint.

I have other fond memories of Sister Patty through the years, but this first meeting remains foremost as it was instrumental to the start of a beautiful 50+ year friendship.

### **Margaret Swedish**

Sister Pat was dear friend to my beloved Aunt Kaye, Sister Kathryn Marie Reichard. My aunt was the oldest in a family with four sisters, my mother being second oldest. They were great friends all through their lives. After my father's death in 1988, I came often to visit my mother in Milwaukee. I usually included extra time for a drive to Dubuque, either to bring my mother for a visit, or to bring my aunt back to our family home to spend a few days there. It was because of that that I came to know Sister Pat.

Pat and my Aunt Kay were great friends. So, whenever I came to retrieve my aunt, she would often take me to Pat's room for a visit before our drive to Milwaukee. Those visits always involved great storytelling, teasing, and a lot of laughter. After my aunt's death in 2007, I started coming to Dubuque once or twice a year to visit Pat. By that time, we, too, had become great friends. She so looked forward to my coming. I know she always prayed for me on that long drive. When I arrived safe and sound and appeared at her door, she would look up, see me, and immediately burst out laughing with such joy.

We bonded over many shared wonders and a deepening spirituality around themes of the new cosmology, the writings of Thomas Berry, the wonders of a universe so full of mystery, and its expansiveness so full of God, of Spirit, of Creation. These new discoveries filled her with joy.

And we also bonded over the challenges of her physical limitations. I often left after these visits kind of tearing up as I crossed over the river, so inspired by her spiritual courage, her indefatigable spirit, in the face of so much suffering. She shared with me her frustration with God for not taking her sooner, and part of our bond was that I could accept that fully, not try to talk her out of it. Her longing was to

finally be set free, to be taken into the arms of God, and to be again with her friend, my aunt, her "Katie."

Through my mother, my family has a long history with the BVMs and Mount Carmel that goes back to our childhood, back all the way to the 1930s. I have cherished those bonds all through my adult life. I feel so fortunate, so gifted, that this last close bond was with such a remarkable woman who taught me so much about how to live with patience and trust. I am sad, but I rejoice with Sister Pat who now does rest in God's arms, and whom I believe is right now having a great time with her friend, and my dear aunt, her Katie.

### **Julie Blocklinger**

How ironic my 35th anniversary working for the BVM Sisters/PHS is on the same day as Sister Pat's funeral mass. Sister Pat wasn't big into large gatherings. She would eat most of her meals in her room. But while she was a resident on 4th floor Marian Hall, she would host, from time to time, pizza parties for the entire floor.

I also remember Sister Pat being one of the first sisters to have her own computer. She was always helping other sisters with cardmaking, small posters, letter inserts or anything a sister needed.

Another passion of Sister Pat's was putting puzzles together. Then she would use Mod Podge to glue them together. She would give her finished puzzles to sisters and staff. She gave me a garden scene on my 20th Anniversary. My favorite was the butterfly that hung on her bedroom wall for many years. Katie Anders has a photo of a group of us with Sister Pat with the butterfly puzzle in the background.

Recently, I was doing exercises with Sister Pat which she enjoyed. It did give us the opportunity to reminisce about old times. She often would talk about when she was young. She loved winter and the snow. She loved to go out and shovel the snow even while wearing her habit. We did joke about me taking her outside during a snowstorm; part of me wishes that I did. Rest in peace Sister Pat. You will be missed.

### **Ellie Bernstein**

Dear PA,

So sorry to read about your health deterioration and your decision on hospice. No doubt, the Lord, and your family (relatives, friends, and many former students and colleagues) will be waiting for you.

I loved our teaching time together. I have always thought that you were one of the best teachers that I have ever had a chance to teach with. And we had such fun times together. How many people got to have parent conferences with Frankie Avalon and teach John Wayne's grandchildren? Know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. Love, Ellie and Larry

### **Connie Muetzel**

Thanks so much for passing on your health news. I will be praying for you as you make the transition back to spirit and pure love. It will bring me great joy to have you looking over all of us with your passionate spirit. It has been such a pleasure to know you all these years. I think we met in 1988. You have been in inspiration to me, and I treasure our friendship. Much love and prayers.

**Eileen Milton Bugaren**

Memories come flooding back when I heard of Sister Pat's passing. It was the 1950s in Chicago at Our Lady of Lourdes elementary school. My favorite was Sister Wilbur, aka Sister Pat. She taught 5th grade at that time. She was young, vibrant, and made our classes very interesting and always had a ready smile. I reconnected with her after reading an article in SALT. I asked if she was my Sister Wilbur and explained what I recalled. I was thrilled when she responded yes, indeed she was my Sister Wilbur from Our Lady of Lourdes. We continued our correspondence for years. What a lovely woman and I am sure she is enjoying a wonderful eternal life. I will continue to pray for her.

**Chris Ledding**

I worked as a unit clerk at Marion Hall and Sister Pat and I became friends through a shared love of computers. My husband and I grew a large garden. I would bring her cherry tomatoes which she would share with the sisters. We had many wonderful conversations, and I will always cherish them as well as the friendship we forged. Rest in peace, sweet lady, you will be missed.

**Juliet Avola, Former Student, St Charles, North Hollywood, Calif., Class of 1972**

Sister Patricia Ann was my teacher at St Charles Borromeo in North Hollywood, Calif. Not only was she a fantastic teacher, but she was also very entertaining. She made learning fun. I had a lot of trouble paying attention in school and fought with most teachers, except for her. We stayed in touch over the years, and you would not believe the things we joked about, including death. I loved her sense of humor! Sister Pat will be sorely missed. Those who touch our lives, stay in our hearts forever and I am a better person for having known her.