



Sharing of Memories of Viviana, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, April 9, 2024

Caren Mitchell, Joy Harman and Bruce Heitmann, Cousins

It is with sadness we must say farewell to you, dear Patsy. We will always cherish our times together. With long, long phone calls late into the night, we talked and talked. We talked of the deep roots of our family and our love of our Lord and Savior. We talked of all things relevant to today's world and what we could do to keep our country on the straight and narrow path. We talked about how we could keep God in public schools and in the forefront of everyday life. We remember with delight our wonderful meals at Marie Callenders and who made the perfect Brandy Alexander and of course take out from the Canters Deli on Fairfax downtown, where we never had a cookie that we didn't like.

Dear Patsy, you were a truly compassionate and dedicated lady who nursed your parents and brothers thru long illnesses. You never once complained nor grew weary spoon feeding and caring for loved ones in need. Your dedication to the children you educated was evident when you had open heart surgery. The nurses who had been taught by you were too numerous to count. They all checked on you several times a day to ensure that you were healing.

You have been a special gift to us. We laughed and we cried together. You, dear Patsy, are the last of a long line of family who dedicated their lives to the Catholic Church. We are forever grateful for your dedication and education. The family always said, "It's not a party without Pat." And now it's true, there is a party to receive you with love and celebration as the Lord Jesus welcomes you home and tells you, "Well done good and faithful servant."

Sister Marguerite Murphy, BVM

There were eleven or more convents in the southern California area during the second half of the 1900s, so many of us only knew each other by name, but not personally. When some sisters moved into apartments, clusters were initiated. It was at that time that I became friends with Viviana. Viviana was always pleasant and was very involved with acquaintances in the central Los Angeles area. She was devoted to her family and was loyal to many friends throughout her life. She always had a kind greeting and a smile on her face. She grew up in a family that liked to discuss current affairs with each other, so I always remember her as an individual who was able to discuss many topics. Initially, she'd pick me up and give me a ride to a meeting, so we had some time to share. After a few years, I became the designated driver because of the darkness and it was on those evenings, that I knew Viviana always had another story to share.

Viviana lived a simple life. She enjoyed going out to restaurants or a friend's house rather than hosting a dinner. She was a woman of gratitude. Whenever you shared a ride or a meal with Viviana, she always made sure that you knew her gratefulness.

I had the privilege of sharing many days with Viviana when she had her heart surgery. It was at that time that I really got to know her more informally. Viviana was given a large red heart pillow and was told to put both arms

around it and hug it to her chest to offset pain. She laughed and it was easy to see that she hadn't played with dolls like I had as a child. Then she was asked to wear sweatpants for physical therapy. She explained that she had never in her life worn any kind of trousers and didn't want to wear them now. Well, she compromised while at the hospital, but she never took the pants home.

What I appreciate most about Viviana is that she was genuine. She was an accomplished researcher and musician. She was articulate. But she always acknowledged others. If they joined her in an elevator or she passed them in the garage, she made a personal acknowledgement. Another trait were her expressions of gratitude. She never failed to say thank you and smile.

Sister Mary Martens, BVM, Set of 1954

Viviana had an additional six years of maturity over most of the rest of us who were fresh out of high school. I never really knew Viviana personally while at Mount Carmel. We had recreation at specified times and silence the rest of the time. There weren't that many opportunities to visit and chat and get to know people. When she returned to Mount Carmel in 2015 from Southern California after retiring, I was able to get to know her better as a person. I know how dear family and friends were to Viviana. I sat with her on Easter Sunday afternoon for about 20 minutes. I had the sense of those "thin places" that the Irish speak of – the feeling that Heaven and Earth are closer than at many other times.

While I was there, she had two long-distance phone calls from friends inquiring about Viviana. The first person was a gentleman who I think was born in South America. He simply asked for Patricia and then changed it to Sister Mary Viviana. I said, "I'm afraid that she is not able to come to the phone, but may I get your name?" She had been a friend of his. A loyalty to friends was a strong suit of Viviana. The second was a woman calling from Burbank, Calif. She, too, had been a friend and was inquiring about her. Longtime friends who she never forgot and who never forgot her on her final journey.

I know that she was a saver of things that were precious to her. Among them were her brother's medals from the Navy. She was very careful about distributing items while still in California. She was very careful that her brother's furniture items went to the people who he had connected with.

I also remember her during the pandemic when we delivered food to the sisters' rooms in Marian Hall. Viviana was the poster child for good nutrition – heart healthy things after heart surgery. There were things that she would not accept and things that she knew she needed. Dear Viviana, it was a privilege for me to get to know you.

Sister Mary Jean Ferry, BVM

I have one short story about Viviana. I want to tell it because it shows her resilience. Viviana took a long-time taking care of her brother's furniture and finances so she would spend her days at his home. She didn't know the parts of the home very well. One day she was in the kitchen. There were several doors and she opened one. It was just pure darkness. Viviana stepped right into that darkness and went flying down to the bottom of the stairs to a dark basement. Somehow, in her resilience, she got up, climbed up the stairs, called us at Holy Family Convent and told us that she had fallen. We went right over. We found her sitting in the kitchen and smiling as happy as can be. We were worried about her, so we took her to the emergency room. All she had was a tiny scratch behind her ear. Viviana certainly was a resilient, strong person. Thank you, Viviana for your incredible life and honor you now as you live in the extravagant love of God.

Sister Anne Kendall, BVM

I knew about Viviana when she lived in Southern California, but I got to know her when she was visiting us in New York. During the early 1970s, Sister Viviana sometimes came from New Jersey to be with the BVMs at West Hempstead, N.Y. At that time, she was working on her music in New Jersey. We had lively discussions at the

dinner table at St. Thomas. Viviana was an ardent Republican and was defending President Nixon to the upmost. She steadfastly held her position no matter what the New York Times said.

Sister Anne Buckley, BVM

I knew Viviana very little, but as Anne Kendall just said, she came to Long Island where we were living. She was going to give a talk at the NCEA [National Catholic Education Association] about music. She left her car, which was very lovely, with us. I was taking a summer school class and she said I could drive it. That was wonderful! It made life very convenient. Somebody mentions her simply living. I must tell you, that car was a Volkswagen Beetle. Never before or since have I driven one. Thanks, Viviana.

Sister Bertha Fox, BVM

Viviana and I entered Mount Carmel on the same September day 70 years ago. We sat at the same table in the Postulate for those first months as beginning BVMs. We had both studied music during our college years, so we had topics to discuss when we could talk. I learned about her family, California, and aspects of spirituality she and her brother shared.

A few years after profession Viviana heard about some new methods for teaching group piano. So, she worked with the teacher-author who had developed the ideas and student piano books at an East Coast university. Then she tried them out with groups of children in Texas, and reported results back to the East.

My last extended time with Viviana was about 20 years ago in California, Los Angeles area, when I was a traveling computer tutor for BVMs. Viviana had a new Apple computer to replace an old one. We set it up so she could use it for religious education needs where she was missioned.

She showed me Hollywood and the Walk of Fame, told me lots of stories about the Hollywood stars and a great variety of her teaching and life stories. A delightful, impressive work-visit. Viviana was such an interesting, dedicated person. She was unique, fun, and amazing. How blessed I am!

Rebecca Cumins, Denver, Co.

I am 71 years old right now. I met Sister Viviana very early in her career. My mother Jean Pyeatt and Sister Viviana were the best of friends since meeting at Mount Saint Mary in the 1950's. They were always happy and laughing. She would invite us to her house, and she would come to our house. She loved children. My mother was going to come to the convent with Viviana, but then she met my father who just came back from the Korean War. There went my Mama! She became the mom.

Through the years they met up with each other to go shopping or out to eat. Sister Viviana (or Sister Pat as we knew her) smiled all the time and never complained. My mama loved her so, as did our whole family, and we know that she loved us. I would call Sister Viviana and she would call me. We were bound together.

Rest well, Sister Pat. You are with God now, and with Father Charley. Praise the Lord for He is good. You are wonderful people, and I am honored to be here. Thank you for all that you do. God bless you. Love, Becky, Jeff, our children Doug and Sarah, and grandchildren Emily and Katie.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I came to work here in 2015 about the time Viviana came. It was a hard transition for her as it was for many of us. I became her letter writer. It was through that that I got to know her. People have spoken of her gratitude. She never asked you to do anything for her that she didn't express her gratitude. If gifts came, she wanted to share them. She wanted me to take care of making things that were edible available to other people. I was being included in the small group of family and friends. I am so glad that Becky, Jeff, and their son are here from both Virginia and Denver because there was a deep connection. Becky's mother and Viviana met on the first day of going to school at Mount Saint Mary's. They were tight. That family became an extended family. One of Becky's

brothers is the person who called Viviana on Easter Sunday when she was in that thin place. He was charged by Viviana's younger brother to "take care of Sister Viviana." I felt like I was part of that wonderful circle of care. Yes, she was very proud to be a BVM. I am grateful to have known her and to see the world through someone who had just very different eyes.

Sister Maurita Dillon

Sister Viviana was a good friend. I helped her get an apartment in Los Angeles. I was also able to have her priest brother admitted to St. John of God skilled care. When I left LA, Sister Viviana maintained contact with people that I had been working with. I am sure that they were overwhelmed by her gracious and kind manner. God bless Sister Viviana.

Lisa Wiegand, Former Mount Carmel Nurse Aide & Current Volunteer

I will miss Sister Viviana. She had the most beautiful smile. Her eyes would twinkle, and her face would light up every time she smiled. I remember how she was always so happy. One time I asked her how she stayed so happy. She said, "I am so blessed." I have come back to volunteer with the sisters each Monday. I would make a point to go and see her and ask for her to give me one of her beautiful smiles so I could remember that while I was at my job. I told her I would think about her and her beautiful smile. I'm so happy that she is with Jesus now.

Sister Diane Forster, BVM, Student Comments on Viviana's Retirement

Viviana taught many students for three years in English and religion. It seems that quite a few came from families for whom English was a second language, and thanked her for their growth in oral and written English. Many also mentioned that her way of teaching included a sense of humor and information.

One student wrote, "You taught me so much, especially about life's greatest lessons. We will all turn out to be better men and women in a changing world." Several wrote that she was an inspiration, a religious role model and mentor. Students recognized and admired her kindness, patience, and ability to communicate with others. They knew they were being well prepared for high school and college. Many stated, "You are the best teacher I have ever had." Many expressed thanks for her many years at St. Brendan, one adding, "I wish you could stay at St. Brenden School forever. After 23 years, why not make it 30?"

Various students wrote the following:

- You taught me how to be a kind, loving, and understanding person. You are an inspiration in my life.
- You gave me a new outlook toward Jesus. I am grateful for your explanations of the Bible.
- You have an intense knowledge of life and inspired me to aim for higher goals. I will always remember your guidance.
- There was never a question you couldn't answer.
- Where did you get all your knowledge? How did you remember all of it?
- You know so many things. Sometimes you get carried away, but that's a good thing because we learn so much more.
- We never had a dull moment. I hope you find the "dull" moment you have been waiting for.

Olivia Land

I found the poem "A Story About You" by Leroy Maxwell. In a way, it describes you perfectly. All through your life you have spread wisdom and knowledge to everyone. I have learned so much and I want to thank you. The younger children will not be able to have the wonderful language teacher that I had. I will miss you very much and so will everyone else.