



Sharing of Memories of Diana Malone, BVM

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, May 13, 2025

Sister Mary Lou Caffrey, BVM

Diana gave me a big shock ten days ago. I initiated a big birthday party for Diana to celebrate her 90th birthday. She died the day before her birthday celebration. Diana was a strong woman. She was outgoing and straight forward and very self-confident. Most of all, she was very perceptive of the needs of those she knew, including me. Diana loved teaching chemistry and loved introducing her students to God's magnificent universe at the atomic level. She was a gifted teacher and a mentor. And she was a lot of fun.

I have a few of her memories about her early life. She was 11 or 12 years old when her brother Chuck was born. One day when she was a little girl, she told me of her attempt to get new crayons by planting her used ones in their vegetable garden. Around age 7, she took a ride in her uncle's piper cub plane. It was unknown to her mother. Her mother Phil was not pleased.

Her mother was also a very outgoing and outspoken woman. She once told Diana, "I could nail the furniture to the ceiling, and you wouldn't notice." She did notice people. When Diana first entered, her mother called the postulant mistress to say, "We named her Diana. That should be her name."

Diana met her good friend Johanna Trisoliere in grade school at St. Callistus and then on to St. Mary's High School. Johanna lived just a few blocks from the Malones and was a frequent visitor to their home for many years and friends for numerous outings in the Chicago area, including ball games for the Cubs and other sports teams.

While in high school in the 1950s, Diana worked at the Food and Drug Administration laboratory in the downtown post office. It was used to support her way through Mundelein College. She never told me much about what she did in the chemistry lab there. But she did make a remark – and this illustrates her interest in people rather than things. It was during the Korean War and the post office was the center in which relatives of deceased military would come to see the caskets of their loved ones. She was deeply moved when she passed by a large room with caskets and military watching over each individual casket. It's one of the memories that she had regarding the observations of the needs of people. She was very aware of what was going on anywhere she was.

I first met Diana on a muggy day in the summer of 1957, the year I entered. It was the first time we postulants were permitted to recreate with the novices. We were on the driveway near the side door of the novitiate. I don't know exactly how our introductions proceeded, but soon after we started chatting, we were brushing off sweat bees, the smallest species that lived near the riverbank. They are often attracted to perspiration. I saw one landing on her habit along the border around her face. Soon it found the entrance near the bottom of the border and crawled in and up the inside of the border toward her forehead. I said, "There's a bee in your border!" She hurried toward the porch and went inside to remove it. Our first meeting ended way too soon. I never found out what happened to the bee.

During her first ministry at Assumption High School in Davenport, Iowa, she taught chemistry and math. It was there she met long-time friend Carola Broderick. She enjoyed their mission at Assumption, which was a brand-new high school at that point. They were having one of the first accreditation visits and she wanted her chemistry class to be knowledgeable and make a good show for the visitors. Diana told her chemistry students the importance of the visits. If she posed questions to the class, she wanted a good response. "Raise your right hand if you know the answer and your left hand if you don't." She called on one young man with his hand raised. He stood up pointing at his hand and said, "Left hand! Left hand!" Again, I don't know the end of the story.

Our wonderful long friendship began in 1972 when I returned to Clarke [College] and Diana was there as a faculty member in the chemistry department. We lived in a very large BVM community. Our local community at that time included 67 BVMs, including a significant number of our retired faculty and staff. Younger sisters lived in the dorms and took turns in the evenings working at the resident hall desks.

Diana was dyslexic. Spelling was not one of her gifts. I'm not sure when this happened, but Diana told me about this incident. I had applied for a promotion and Diana wrote a recommendation for me. The letter began, "I can hardly recommend Sister Mary Lou for this promotion." What followed was a very positive evaluation of my work. A member of the faculty review committee called her to clarify the contradiction. Diana thought she had written, "I can *heartily* recommend . . ." We had a good laugh about it.

A great deal at Clarke changed during the fire of 1984 both for students and the local BVM community. I want to share two memories of what Diana was doing the day of the fire. I think these illustrate a real perception of people's needs. Diana realized that most of our elderly sisters lived in the buildings that burned first. She knew that those sisters had left everything, including prescription drugs, behind as they evacuated to the outdoors. She contacted each of them to determine which of the many pharmacies held their prescriptions. She then called the pharmacies to explain the situation and spent the late afternoon picking up prescriptions and distributing them to the sisters who would reside in one of the residence halls that night.

In the days and weeks after the fire, and even in the years prior to that, there was a move in the community to move off campus and many of the Clarke sisters did. Thanks to Ginnie [Virginia] Spiegel, who was teaching at Wahlert at that time, we became aware of one of her colleagues who rented a large home on Grandview near Clarke and knew he was moving to Iowa City for study that summer. That rental would be available. Mary Ellen Caldwell, BVM and I quickly made an appointment to see the landlords. They were very happy to have nuns interested. So, in August of 1984, Diana, Mary Ellen, Sara McAlpin and I moved to the North Grandview home that we shared for many years. Diana and I remained there until we moved to Mount Carmel in late 2022.

Our early efforts to keep the 1984 local community in contact with each other were initiated at that time. We had an annual potluck at the end of the Christmas break. That tradition continued until about 2020. Diana was very aware of people, and we wanted to keep in touch with the sisters who had to move away because of the fire.

I was very happy to attend the anniversary of Diana's parents. She was at my parents' anniversary too. We shared the loss of our siblings over the next decades. Diana made the trip into Chicago every weekend for many years before her parents and Chuck moved to Dubuque. Diana did all the work to find a suitable residence for them, packed up all their belongings, and arranged the move. I was lucky over the years to join them for Sunday dinner. Diana was a great cook. The birthday party we had planned was a visit to the cemetery here in Dubuque, where her parents and Chuck are buried, followed by lunch afterwards. Her first question was, "Do they serve calamari?"

After her father died, Diana was so relieved and thrilled when her mother Phil could reside at Marian Hall, technically *Philomena* Hall. Phil died in 1999 on Diana's birthday. In the years that followed, Chuck became a

regular for Sunday dinner at our house, especially when the Bears were playing. I remember them sitting in the living room, jumping up to cheer at times and criticizing coaches and referees at other times. They were loud.

During her retirement years, Diane looked for ways to care for the elderly. Thus, her work for DuRide, the non-profit agency that provided door-to-door transportation for a very small fee. She told me this story of picking up a passenger she frequently had and driving to some location on Highway 20. Suddenly, the passenger started shouting, "She's kidnapping me! She's kidnapping me!" The passenger started grabbing the wheel. Diana knew that there was a detour in the area and had to take a different route than they had used previously. Diana finally had to pull over to calm her and take her phone away. The passenger was calling the DuRide office to repeat the charge.

After her father's death, Diana spent a good part of her Saturday taking BVMs to shop. One of the sisters wanted to go to "Always." Diana said, "I don't know where that is." The sister said, "I'll show you." They drove on Highway 20 to Walmart. The Walmart name was over the center of the building and signs over both side doors read, "Always the lowest prices." That was the "Always" store.

Diana was very proud of her Italian heritage. I used to kid her about having an Irish relative. In fact, Florence Kenny, one of her grandmothers, was from Irish descent. To close, I would like to draw your attention to the blessing "For Friendship" in the funeral program. It is from the book *To Bless the Space Between Us* by John O'Donohue. It's in honor of her Irish grandmother. But also, to honor the wonderful friendship we had over the many, many years.

Pat and Juris Mezinskis, Assumption High School Class of 1964 and 1965

My husband, Juris, and I have known Diana since she taught us both chemistry at Assumption High School in Davenport, Iowa. We both remember her excellent teaching skills and quick wit! She made learning chemistry fun, which I was not expecting. We also remember that she took her classes to Chicago each year to visit the Museum of Science and Industry. We thought this was fantastic. I served on the Student Council, and she was our faculty advisor, so I got to know her even better through that experience. When my father died in March of my senior year, Diana came home with me after our parish priest came to Assumption to get me. She was extremely supportive of my family.

My freshman year at Marycrest College, she attended my pinning ceremony as I began the nursing program. I recall driving to Dubuque in the late 1960s with my mom to have dinner with Diana at Timmerman's Supper Club. After getting married in 1970, we moved to Ohio, so I did not see her for a very long time.

A few years ago, my husband and I drove to Dubuque and visited with Diana. She was the same fun person with a ready laugh, who always shared an interest in others. We emailed often and talked on the phone. Her emails always ended with "Take care of each other," although this Easter it was "Eat lots of chocolate!" We are grateful she was in our lives and will miss her.

Maureen Quann

Sister Diana was the reason I transferred to Clarke. I met her during my first semester of my sophomore year at Iowa. I was majoring in Chemistry, but I had not been able to get into a chemistry class yet because they were full by the time my letter in the alphabet could register. I told my parents how frustrated I was, and how I didn't want to spend more than four years in undergrad. My Dad said, "Let me call Clarke." He called Clarke on a Friday, and Sister Diana met me in the atrium the *next day on Saturday*. She personally took me through the Chemistry department and said, "I will get you through undergrad in the two and half years you have left. If you max out on Chemistry labs and classes until graduation, I will make sure you to graduate in four years total." We hashed out a plan that day, and I started at Clarke in the spring semester. We spent a lot of time together in those 2.5 years, and she was unfailingly smart, funny, and salty. She kept me on my toes and stayed true to her word: I put in the work, and she made sure class schedules worked, made sure I had great lab partners, challenged me,

taught me, and cracked me up. She changed the course of my education, and I will always be grateful to her. She was one of a kind, and students were lucky to have her in their corner. I certainly was.

Norm Freund, BVM Associate

It was my privilege to serve together at Clarke with Diana for nearly 35 years. She was a force to be reckoned with throughout that time. When I came in 1981, chemistry was chock full of BVMs – Marguerite Neumann, Mary Lou Caffrey, and Diana Malone – extraordinary women of science and of strength. At faculty senate, everybody listened to what Diana Malone had to say over the years. I would say that it was often three parts inspiration and one part lightning bolt when she spoke. But people listened to what she had to say.

My favorite memory is this. When I came, Diana was not just a professor of chemistry, she was Director of Student Activities as well. If you go back far enough in time at Clarke, BVMs never got just one full-time job. There was always something else that needed to be done as well. The students loved her. They loved her energy. They loved the way she directed, year after year, the Student Show. They always gave her a garland of roses at the end. Given her energy, they gave her a nickname based on her name Diana Malone. They called her Dynamo. I well imagine that in the Kingdom she is being welcomed with a garland of roses as well. God bless you, Diana.

Donna Neal, Former Student

I was lucky enough to have Diana as my chemistry teacher at Assumption. When I think back, I was about 14 or 15 and she was in her twenties because she was brand new. She was everything that people have shared. She was dynamite. I am not a chemistry major by any means, but she made chemistry fun. She got along with everybody. Everything they said about her continued from that time until she died.

Back to her spelling. We had homerooms. Every Friday we would have the possibility of having Mass. She said to me later, "I never knew how to spell 'roll.'" Teachers had to count who wanted to take milk or wanted a roll after Mass. She said, "I could never remember if it was 'r-o-l-e' or 'r-o-l-l.'" Then she figured out she could spell doughnut. And it was "d-o-n-u-t." I taught high school English. For many years I would have kids who couldn't spell. I would say, "Guess what? I have a great friend. She has a doctorate in chemistry. She's really smart and she can't spell. So don't worry about it. You're smart. Get a thesaurus. Get a dictionary. Get the internet. Diana was great. She was one of a kind.

Sister Margaret Mary Cosgrove, BVM

I worked with Diana at Clarke. We [Regina Qualls and Margaret Mary] also lived with her and Mary Lou for a year on Key Way Drive. There are so many Diana stories out there. This is one I remember. She used to dye her hair. To dye her hair, she would get a big black garbage bag. She would cut out holes for her head and her arms. Then she would strip down to her underwear and dye her hair with this garbage bag on so she wouldn't get the dye on her clothes. One night, Mary Lou, Regina and I went out to Kennedy Mall. When we came back, Diana was in the garage in the garbage bag. She was not a happy camper. This was November so it was a little chilly. She had locked herself in the garage when she walked out. We didn't have any keys hidden in the garage. She was in the garage for quite a while until we got home. She wasn't a happy camper, but she did get her hair done.

Sunil Malapati, PhD

I had the pleasure of teaching with Diana and having her be my chair for a while. Twenty years ago, almost to the day, was the first time I met Sister Diana. In fact, she was the first person I met at Clarke. I had just driven in for the interview all the way from Michigan. I entered the CBH (Catherine Byrne Hall) building. It's kind of a weird building. I didn't know where I was going. I happened to meet Sister Diana, and I extended my hand to shake. She took my hand with both of her hands and said, "I hope you like it here." I didn't know what I was expecting. I was coming just to an institution not being Catholic or even Christian. Here was one of the warmest welcomes I got.

I know there were a lot of people who were afraid of Sister Diana. But for me, I will always remember that warm welcome. She knew how and when to turn on the charm. No wonder when Clarke decided to invest in a new science building, she was the face of the campaign in many ways. You take Sister Diana to the Board of Directors and charm them, and the Board says "OK, I think we should build a science building." It is the warmth I will remember. I still feel welcome.

Kathy Schultz

I am going to tell you how Diana would have addressed me. "Schultz, whatever you say, make it short." Donna Neal introduced me to Diana during my freshman year [at Clarke] since she knew Diana from Assumption HS. Diana was my sophomore advisor. She tried desperately to talk me out of being a math major and remarked, "Schulz, it's your worse subject." I spent hours with her and Therese Mackin involved with the Clarke Student Association. (CSA). I was never a chemistry major. She attended my wedding 28 years ago. Nothing got passed Diana. Nothing. I loved her and I know she loved me. I thank God for her love and friendship.

Erlene, Clarke College Class of 1976

I was a student of the amazing trio of Marguerite, Diana, and Mary Lou. I must tell you that when I got out into the professional world, I realized that I had one of the finest chemistry educations that there is. Sister Diana didn't hold our hands, and she didn't pat our heads. But she did have two hands and two feet on our backs. She pushed us, and she pushed us, and she pushed us. There were twelve of us chemistry majors. I think it is fair to say that was the most chemistry majors that Clarke ever had. We were quite a group.

Freshman year there was Sister Diana. We were getting ready for an exam. She was doing her thing, going across the blackboard writing and erasing. At one point she stops, and she turns around to the twelve of us and she says, "You know, if you get to a question that you don't know the answer to just write, 'God did it.' You'll get it right." She wrote a couple more things on the board, then she stopped and turned around. "But you can only do that on one question."

We were in lab one day and there was an accident. A vacuum flask imploded. Sister Diana was right there with us. She grabbed this young woman's head and shoved it into the sink and turned on the water. There wasn't a moment of panic. There wasn't a moment of indecision. She was just amazing. I believe that young lady kept her eyesight. There was damage, but Diana was amazing.

Diana really liked us to pay attention to instructions. One day she gave us this quiz. For your educators, this might be a very common thing. The very first line on the top said, "Read all questions before you do anything." Of course, we were little idiots. We just started answering questions. Guess what the very last instruction was? "Don't do anything except put your name on the top of this paper and hand it in." So, all of us fools sat there that day and took an exam we didn't need to take. Diana was amazing. When I hear people say things about her sweet side, I have to tell you that when it came to chemistry, there wasn't sweet. There was just a charge ahead. I will miss her.

Mary Moothart, BVM Associate

I was a chemistry major with Sister Diana Malone and Sister Marquerite [Neumann]. I was with Kathy, a very reluctant chemistry major. I went to Clarke to be a dietician, but in my sophomore year, they decided they weren't going to offer dietetics anymore. So, I am in Sister Diana's office crying. The suggestion was that I could go to another school. Sister Diana said, "Well, chemistry isn't your strongest subject, but we are going to teach you how to think and we are going to make this work. Sister Marguerite and Sister Diana put together a special chemistry class so now there was a food chemistry major. I didn't see the sweet side of her a lot. I was not a good chemistry major, but I did learn how to think. And I learned how to use my relationships with other people to try to make this world a better place. Those are the things I learned from Sister Diana.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

As a young sister and a chemistry major at Clarke College in the late 1960s, I had the privilege of having both Diana Malone and her good friend, Mary Lou Caffery, as teachers in successive junior and senior years, shortly after they came back from completing their PhD degrees in chemistry at the University of Iowa.

Diana was a wonderful teacher, and I recall her as someone who pushed her students to strive, to question, and to analyze.

While I have no specific or distinct memories, she definitely played a part in preparing me to pursue a master's degree in chemistry at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, and to happily go on to teach chemistry for over 40 years in three Catholic secondary schools, the last two being all-girls institutions.

All our successes are because we stand on the shoulders of those who helped and mentored us. I am sure there are *many* who can credit their own path in life to the encouragement and professionalism of Diana.

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM

I am a member of the set of 1956, hence I have known Diana for over 68 years. Diana was a woman who we all knew, loved and admired. We did not always understand her, but that did not affect our love for her. Diana was smart, a great storyteller, a superb teacher and always concerned about the poor. Last year I had the joy of teaming with Diana as we attempted to teach a few basic English skills to one of our Vietnamese sisters. For this occasion, Diana and I were on an equal playing field because neither one of us knew what we were doing but we had fun doing it. So, Diana, I say thank you for the memories, the laughter, the good times, your friendship, and your understanding heart.

Liz (Brimeyer) Wright, Former Student

I had Diana when I went to Clarke. She taught chemistry. I feel bad because I was not a great student back then, but she tried with me. I think I tested her patience a couple of times. She had an interesting sense of humor, and I respected her.