



Sharing of Memories of Veronica “Ronnie” (Rosine) Higgins, BVM

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 9, 2025

Sister Donna Day, SL

Mary Nolan [BVM] and I lived together in St. Louis. Ronnie is gone from my sight but never from my heart. Life for Ronnie was somewhat ambiguous, but she made herself a good path - working at the hospital many times when staff was short and she had to cover many patients. She was always driven by love for those who were ill. She was a faithful presence in the lives of others when they were most lonely and fearful.

Ronnie loved being part of our little community. She brought joy and faith and courage and always said “yes” to babysit our dog, Bailey. Ronnie loved animals, especially her cat Precious who happens to be buried in my back yard!

When I was the administrator at Pillar Place, our place for homeless families, Ronnie was our #1 volunteer: Christmas, getting the kids ready for camp, at the Easter egg hunt, serving at all our auctions. Ronnie was the first to be there and worked with a smile.

Parker Palmer, an educator, wrote, “Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.”

Ronnie listened to her life, she knew who she was and thanked God for her inner truth. I will always remember her courage. She found strength in serving and she knew that human vulnerability, presence and compassion were the ground of her spiritual life. She loved her God and the BVM community. She answered her call with great faith.

I am sorry I am not with you all at Mount Carmel for Ronnie’s Mass. I will miss her presence in my life and the joy and faith she shared with me. Thank you, Ronnie.

Kris Kinderfather, Friend, St. Louis

I met Ronnie over 31 years ago. We have a big connection. Her birth date is the same as my father’s. My father was gone when I was ten. Also, she died the day my sister passed away three years ago. When my mom died – we didn’t know that she would die that night – Ronnie was there holding my mom’s hand and saying prayers. My mom couldn’t talk, but she was mouthing the words. Ronnie was right there with me when Mom died a little bit afterwards. So, I feel we are always connected. I feel we were very close.

I helped her pack to move here. We would do little crazy things together. She loved hot dogs. We would buy her hot dogs on a regular basis. She was amazed that I figured out how to get them delivered to her house.

I have some thoughts from some of the people in St. Louis.

Iris said, “Ronnie was an amazing, inspiring force in my life. I only knew her for a short while, but the time I had with her shaped my perspective and philosophy of life. I am entirely grateful to have known her and will miss her words of wisdom. Much love and prayers to her remaining friends and family.

From Julie, "Oh, no! She is with her God now. We must have comfort knowing that our friend is in the best hands ever."

Tess says, "She always had the best advice. I learned so much from her, especially all my acronym tools. 'Rigorous honesty' was one. 'Rub-dub-dub' we would get her up early in the morning. I heard yesterday that death was more of a welcoming home. Surely, that is exactly how Ronnie views it too. Love you, Ronnie, and love you all very much."

So, from St. Louis, Ron, I'm going to miss you, love you and I know you are going to be there with my sister haunting the living daylights out of me.

Sister Mary Anne Hoope, BVM

Veronica and I have been friends since we were novices. We were in the postulate only one week when we were told we could go to the novitiate to visit with the novices. I remember going into the novitiate and there was a space next to someone. I sat down. She said, "I am Sister Rosine." Rosine was Veronica. I spent 36 years in Africa. Veronica kept in constant contact with me. We didn't have telephones for a long time, so she would send an email. When we got a telephone, Veronica would call and tell me what was happening at Mount Carmel. She was so faithful. She looked at every need I had and tried to meet it. I hope, Ronnie, that all your needs are being met.

Sister Colleen McGinnity, BVM

One of the things I greatly admired in Ronnie is that she took the Serenity Prayer seriously. I'm sure that over the past 30+ years she has probably said it a hundred-thousand times. I was Ronnie's Congregation Representative. As painful as it was, I had to say to Ronnie one day, "It's time to stop driving." Ronnie was living in St. Louis. She had to find other ways to get to meetings, the grocery store, church, doctor visits, a thousand things. She accepted the challenge of not driving with great grace and creativity and a lot of help from her St. Louis friends.

When she began to realize that she had more serious health problems, she accepted them and made the decision it was time to come to Mount Carmel. She did find that painful. She was very aware that she was probably the youngest person living here. That was uncomfortable.

When she received the diagnosis of dementia, Ronnie accepted it and worked to learn as much as she could about the disease and what it would mean for her. She was not just concerned about herself, but what this would mean to her family and to our community in terms of care. I thank you, Ronnie, for your gift of acceptance, courage, and wisdom. I miss you.

Sister Agnes "Dee-Dee" Keena, BVM

The Church celebrates the Feast of St. Veronica on July 12. Today, July 9, we celebrate the life of our own Veronica, Ronnie Higgins.

I knew Ronnie when she ministered at St. Mary's Hospital in St. Louis. Like Veronica in Scripture, Ronnie was there to wipe the face of the wounded, the lonely and the frightened.

William Breault wrote, "A cup must be emptied before it can be filled." My times with Ronnie revealed a person who worked tirelessly to empty herself to receive the peace of the Lord. She was persistent in hollowing out a space in her heart where hope would grow. Only Ronnie will know if this was achieved.

Anthony de Mello wrote, "You sanctify whatever you are grateful for." I am most grateful for Ronnie and for the times we shared a meal and shared our hopes for the future. Now, Ronnie, you can put down your cloth of compassion and greet the Lord proclaiming: "In truth, you are my Lord and my God."

Sister Mary Jean Ferry, BVM

Only a few weeks ago, after Sean Bradley gave us a reflection day, we gathered in St. Joseph Hall. Ronnie took the microphone and said, "I feel amazingly loved." After a few minutes passed, she said again, "I feel amazingly loved." Yes, Ronnie is still amazingly loved by her relatives gathered, by her set, by the employees of Mount Carmel Bluffs, by all of us. She is amazingly loved. Ronnie, we thank you for your wonderful life and for teaching us that we are amazingly loved.

Sister Roberta White, BVM

I did not know Ronnie until I moved here to Mount Carmel seven years ago. Ronnie loved to be a part of sharing groups. One fun group we belonged to was the card club which meets every Friday night. Just like the rest of us, she loved to win. She said, "I won twice tonight, didn't I!". Ronnie loved being part of the choir. She was part of a choir since her youth. She also loved being part of committees that helped the community and others, for example CCC [Continuity and Coordination Committee]. She loved being part of groups helping others. Thank you, Ronnie, for that. I also love you for your little "giggle smile." I'm glad they caught that smile in your photo.

Suzie Coulthard, BVM Associate, Associate Coordinator, Friend

Distances really didn't stop Ronnie's dedication to people whether they were family in Chicago, friends and colleagues in St. Louis, prayer partners in Africa, or the rest of the BVM community.

I first met Ronnie when I became a member of the CCC. I had never served on a congregational committee, and she was a welcoming soul ready to answer my myriad newbie questions. When she didn't have an answer, she was more than comfortable admitting this was all a little new to her too. Sometimes, she would get a gleam in her eye and then sheepishly state that something was a little too much for her, "a truck driver's daughter."

During a committee retreat in Chicago, we moved from acquaintances to friends, and I pledged to assist her in getting settled in Dubuque once she moved from St Louis.

She was always eager to travel. Unfortunately, we were only able to have one long road trip before her health turned. I was going to Chicago, and she tagged along for a visit with her beloved family. Occasionally we would zip around the Dubuque area, looking at the murals downtown or enjoying a leisurely tootle along a country road to look at the autumn leaves. She longed to return to St. Louis but the timing for that trip never materialized. Thankfully through Zoom she was able to maintain strong connections to her friends in her 12 Step group there. They were life-giving relationships for her, and she talked about them often.

Once Ronnie moved to Dubuque, she was eager to be a part of life at Mount Carmel Bluffs. Soon she was part of a monthly spirituality group, a book club, the Wisdom Women Cluster and was a committed Wii bowling fan. She loved to play cards and when COVID made us all too alone, she was an eager member of our Saturday night trivia Zoom group. We may not have known many answers, but we sure did laugh a lot.

Ronnie was especially delighted to be a Clarke RA [resident assistant] prayer partner. Her pairing with Becca Schroeder was filled with joy and deep sharing.

In many ways, their relationship was similar to her friendship with Mary Anne Hoope, BVM. Ronnie's affection for Mary Anne was decades long and surpassed the ocean that separated them so often and for so long.

Her affection for all was deep and abiding. Veronica's smiles often led to a hug, her laughter soon led to a story, the twinkle in her eye led to a well-timed zinger filled with friendliness and love. Ronnie, we miss you.

Alice Roche, Friend

Sister Veronica was a special friend. She was always available to talk if I had something on my mind that was bothering me any time of the day or night. I will miss her words of wisdom. Sister Veronica had a great sense of humor and liked going to Cardinals games in St. Louis with me—even if she was a Cubs fan! I will miss her very much, and she will always be in my prayers.

Sister Carol Spiegel, BVM

I got to visit Ronnie when she was hospital chaplain at St. Mary's in St. Louis. It was clear that she loved that ministry and made a difference in many lives. I hope the memories of those days were a comfort to Ronnie during this last part of her journey. Even though she suffered, she managed to express her affection for our BVM community and the love she felt from us. Thrive now, Ronnie, in your new life.

Sister Serena

I met Ronnie shortly after she came to St. Louis. Her deep love of community was always there. She talked about when the sister in Africa came home, and she would be able to meet with her and stay with her. She talked about going to her community groups in the evenings to have a meal and play cards. She was always eager to say "I love you" to others. As much as people loved her, she was always ready to say, "I love you" as well. She was always there and a great friend. Sometimes, when she suffered so much at the end, she would talk about her hallucinations and other things that were happening. But after all of that, she would always end with, "I love you." That's the way Ronnie was and that's the way I will remember her.

Sister Bernadette McManigal, BVM

I knew Ronnie when she was at St. Jerome's in Chicago, one of her first missions. For a number of years, she taught middle grades. Ronnie worked very diligently being a teacher, but she was always very gracious and loving to the students. I think the greatest joy or blessing in her life was when she did take that [assessment] survey and saw that her skills would be better used in another field. She had the courage to change and accepted change, just as she accepted the students in her classroom.

Miriam Todoroff, BVM Associate & Former BVM

In the 1970s, Veronica and I lived at Wright Hall together. My mom died in 1971. I would go home on Wednesday and then for the weekend to be with my dad to make sure he was eating and taking care of himself. I would take a sister with me at those times. I asked Veronica if she wanted to go. She said, "Sure." We would go on a Saturday night, stay overnight, and come back on a Sunday. We did this throughout the year 1971, because I really wasn't sure that my dad would continue with life.

When we went for the first time, I wondered if they would hit it off. She asked my father what he did in Macedonia. He said he was a "shepherd." She said, "You were a shepherd!" I thought, "Oh, they'll hit it off very well together!"

On Saturday, he would cook for us. We would clean up the dishes and then sit and play cards. When I came to Mount Carmel Bluffs in 2023, the first thing Veronica said to me, "Do you remember how we only had one tea bag, and we kept filling up the cups?" I remembered that, but she said, "Fifteen times we did it!" The last tea bag we had in the house at that time was chamomile, and chamomile doesn't stretch very far. I thought it was cute that that was the one thing she remembered. She helped me and my dad at a very hard time in our lives. Veronica, thank you very much and blessings on you.

Sister Mary Nolan, BVM

So far, everything that has been said is true. I can vouch for it. My favorite memory of Ronnie was her ability to switch gears, listen to where you are at, and then respond. Up until the very end she tried to do that even as it became more and more difficult. I was one of her drivers in St. Louis when she could no longer drive. Going back and forth from our house to her apartment, we used to sing a song, "Love one another as I have loved you. Care for one another as I have cared for you. Share each other's burdens. Share each other's joys. And then we will know that He is come." Bless you, Ronnie.

Jo Clauer, BVM Associate, Mount Carmel Bluffs Employee

I had known Ronnie since she came here because she joined our Wii bowling team in Caritas Center. She loved it. When she moved to Gables, we already had a team, and she jumped right on it. We were very competitive.

We loved that. If you came in when we were bowling, we were screaming. Recently, she joined our Euchre game. She learned to play it, and she was very good at it.

At one of our services here at Mount Carmel, I sang a song for a woman who entered association. She brought her family here once a month to volunteer. So, I sang this song at her ceremony because it reminded me of her family. When Ronnie heard me sing it, she had a copy put on her door forever because that was the kind of person she was too.

Let Me Be a Little Kinder

By Glen Campbell

Let me be a little kinder
Let me be a little blinder
To the faults of those about me
Let me try a little more

Let me be when I am weary
Just a little bit more cheery
Think a little more of others
And a little less of me

Let me be a little braver
When temptation bids me waver
Let me strive a little harder
To be all that I should be

Let me be a little meeker
With the brother that is weaker
Let me think more of my neighbor
And a little less of me

Let me be when I am weary
Just a little bit more cheery
Let me serve a little better
Those that I am strivin' for

Let me be a little meeker
With the brother that is weaker
Think a little more of others
And a little less of me
Think a little more of others
And a little less of me

Jacqueline Reese, Former BVM, Set of 1962

Veronica was in the set behind me. I was too immature to get to know her while we were in the Novitiate together. Since I have been back to Mt. Carmel several times, Veronica would always greet me with her quiet charm and made me feel welcome like I was coming home. I am glad I grew up to know this gentle soul before she died.

Linda McBride

I remember Sister Veronica when she was a senior at Immaculata. Then Sister came to study Pastoral Care at St. Joseph Hospital where I worked. Over the years I saw Sister at many BVM events. I am grateful she was able to join us for lunch last year when we did Mac to the Miss. It will seem strange not to see her at Mount Carmel Bluffs.

Sister Joan Mueller, BVM

When Sister Ann Harrington was comatose and dying, I stopped in her room one afternoon to be with her. I was sitting in a chair near her bed, quietly praying the rosary, when someone else came into the room. The person stood behind me, and I assumed that she was also praying.

After a few minutes, the person started praying out loud in a confident, yet soothing melodious voice. In her prayer, she included dear Ann and me and recognized how the three of us were united in communion in this space between heaven and earth. I couldn't help but wonder, "Who is this sister who is praying so beautifully and understands this moment so well."

Eventually, the sister sat beside me. It was Veronica Higgins—I had no idea how talented she was in accompanying the dying. I smiled, appreciating this interesting circle of friends—Ann, Veronica and I, and remembered Kitty Lawlor's words, "Aren't we a bunch!" Thank you, Veronica, for your prayerful presence, which we know you earned at a great price. You accompanied dear Ann with exquisite grace, and you edified me with your insight and tenderness. Rest now in God's loving arms.

Regina Ann Hatton, RSM

I was saddened to hear of Ronnie's death, and I have no doubt she fought the good fight! I met Ronnie for the first time in Darien, Ill., where we were attending an annual retreat along with many other BVMs and sisters from various other communities. It did not matter if we were in Darien or Ft. Myers Beach, Fla., we always were blessed to see each other and to spend quality time together.

One special week we spent vacationing in Gulf Shores, Ala., at our vacation spot on the white sands of the Gulf of Mexico! It was truly a blessed week for both of us. I will forever treasure the gift of her friendship. May Ronnie now rest in eternal peace. I will be joining all of you via streaming for her funeral service. May we always remember, the sun never sets on happy memories. Peace and love to all as we grieve her passing.

Patricia Tiess

Fond memories of Veronica many years ago as part of our set. I enjoyed the few reunions I was able to attend to get reacquainted. Remembering her quiet caring and thoughtfulness.