

*Sister Veronica Grennan, BVM (Ita)*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 28, 2016*

**Bill Butler, Nephew**

I am the oldest son of Mary Alice, Sister Veronica's youngest sister. Sister was the fifth child of seven. Her younger brother Edward is the father of the Grennans who are here. Her older sister Evelyn is the mother of the Barrys who are here. There are quite a few of us hanging around on the right side of the chapel.

I think I was two-years-old the first time my folks took the family down to Mississippi where Veronica taught for several years. But I got to know sister best at a later time and owe her big time for it. You've probably heard how the U.S. Army is the most powerful military force on earth. Well, that's not a correct statement. The U.S. Army was not, and still is not, the most powerful entity; Sister Veronica was. I am living proof that I am correct. When she was missioned in Seattle, the U.S. Army extended the kindness of offering me a draft position into their club. They promptly sent me to Seattle. I went screaming and hollering and told them that I had asthma and shouldn't be drafted and that I couldn't go to a jungle like Vietnam or a rainy place like Seattle. But that was where they sent me in their wisdom. I got through most of it, but then, thanks to the Seattle weather, got quite ill, very ill with a 103-degree fever and needed ice baths. I'm telling my mother all this who promptly called Sister Veronica. Sister Veronica came over, looked at the chart at the end of the bed and said, "This will not do." She went right to the commanding officer. The next morning, I had an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army. The moral of the story is you don't mess with Veronica, even if you are the U.S. Army.

I thank all of you for being her friend and caring for her and for all the times my family, the Grennan family, and the Barry family have visited. Our biggest shindig was probably 10 years ago when Sister was celebrating her 75th jubilee and we gathered again for her 100th birthday party which we all remember quite well. Thank you!

**Richard (Dick) Barry, Nephew**

My mother was Evelyn Barry, sister of Sister Veronica. I have fleeting memories of Sister Veronica (Ita) as well as Sister Mary Manetta Grennan (Helen) and Sister Catherine Grennan, all who were alumni of this Motherhouse. Aunt Catherine was extremely dictatorial when it came to family affairs. She had certain reservations about the way we conducted ourselves at family gatherings, mainly—keep the bottles corked. Aunt Helen was also somewhat on the affirmative side. She earned the title "the boss" from me because when I was little, she insisted that I get out of my pajamas and get my clothes on when she was visiting the house.

Sister Mary Ita lived longer than her sister and her aunt. We had many opportunities to interface with her. We frequently travel to Colorado and would stop in Rock Island, Ill., to visit with her. She was very busy carrying Communion to shut-ins, and so forth. I admired that very much. The thing that strikes me the most about her was her devotion to the family as a whole and her prayers for us and her attention to things like birthdays, Christmas and Easter. She would send personal cards to each of the grandchildren. As you may guess, there are a lot of grandchildren in the Grennan family. For that we remember her. She was gracious to come to our house several times after making her retreats in Warrenville, Ill. We were always glad to have her. We will miss her profoundly.

**Sister Anne Buckley, BVM**

I'm telling this story for Sister Donna Schauf, BVM (Blanche). The day before Veronica died, she was very much alive and had breakfast. She went down to her hair appointment. When the hair dresser finished, she asked Veronica how she liked it. She looked in the mirror and said to her, "I look like an old lady. Can't you fluff up the front a little bit?"

#### **Bernadette Hermes, Niece**

There are so many different memories because I had so many different lifetimes with her—when I was a little girl, when I was a young mother, and when I got old and had grandchildren. She has been a part of all of those times. When I was little, she taught me how to make a bed. It needed to be a nurse's corner and had be redone if it wasn't done properly. She was always so mindful and gentle about reminding us to listen to our parents. She had this aura about her. What she didn't know is that I would take her false teeth and put them in my mouth every night in the bathroom. Both of the sisters would spend the night and they would leave their teeth in the bathroom. We thought that was so much fun. I'm just happy I didn't break them, Sister! She was always so gentle, so loving, so caring. She was peaceful or at least made us feel that being with God was peaceful. I will always have such fondness. I'm sorry she's gone; I thought she could make it to 110!

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

I have one extremely distinct image and memory of Veronica. It's as clear in my mind today as it was in early summer of 1999 when we were preparing the various documents in completion of the Caritas Center. I was in the Community Room. It was about 12:30 p.m. and we were having a 1:30 meeting with all the architects and the Community Board, etc., about how much we were going to spend on the furniture and fixed equipment. I had the tendency to go over budget. I was just so nervous trying to figure out how I could present this appropriately. All of that must have been written on my face. Veronica walked by the Community Room, looked at me, and simply said, "I am praying for you." I think she is saying that to all of us today. Whatever your intention is, remember that Veronica is praying for you.

#### **Carlene Jenner, Niece**

I have an old memory. We lived on a farm. Sister Helen Manetta and Sister Veronica would come visit us every summer at sweet corn time. They had the big boxes then on their heads. We always wondered how they were going eat the corn off the cob because they *had* to eat it off the cob. Well, the boxes did come off. That's one of my little memories.

#### **Sister Donard Collins, BVM**

About four or five years ago during an associate retreat, the director of the retreat had asked if I could get some volunteers who would be interviewed by the associates making the retreat and share with them their style of prayer. I went around and asked people. The one who was the most eager to share was Sister Veronica. I gave her the basic questions that the director had given me. I would say that at least two or three times per week before the retreat started, Veronica would send for me and go over this time of prayer that she prepared for the associate. The associate later told me that of all the things in that retreat, the highlight truly was sharing with Veronica. Veronica kept saying, "Now don't be disappointed and don't be discouraged. You have to persevere."

#### **Sister Paulina Sullivan, BVM**

I lived with Veronica a long time. One day she was on the elevator and was afraid that they weren't going to let her off. She said, "I'm Sister Veronica and I'm on the second floor." The whole elevator said, "So are we."

### **Sister Catherina Walsh, BVM**

I, too, lived with Veronica for a long, long time. After she left her ministry as counselor at Alleman HS, she came to live with us at Sacred Heart convent in Rock Island, Ill. She did parish work even before she came to Sacred Heart. She would visit the sick, visit the hospital, talk with people on the phone. She was very, very interested in everyone. What I found interesting was that after a number of years when I had retired from teaching and was around, she would come to me on a Sunday and ask, "How did the Chicago Bears do today? I'd say, "They won," or "They lost," whatever it might be. The next day I would hear her on the phone talking to some of the men who would visit her. She'd say, "Wasn't that a great game yesterday?"

### **Sister Catherine Dominick, BVM**

Veronica also liked Notre Dame. She'd come to me and say, "What time is the game on?" I would tell her. Later she'd ask me, "What's the score?" I would always have to keep her updated all day Saturday and then on Sunday tell her whether Notre Dame won or loss.

### **Sister Therese Jacobs, BVM (Therese Carmelle)**

My first mission was in Cascade, Iowa, right down the road. The music teacher had been gone for a year, so they needed a music teacher. I arrived in March. Veronica was there in the high school with Sister Mary Simplicia Collins, BVM, and we had a full grade school. Veronica was a firm teacher. She had the high school students and they certainly learned what they were being taught. They were very responsible. That was my first experience with Veronica. She only lived there that year with me, but I stayed on.

Later I met Veronica in Rock Island, Ill. At that point, I think she was already retired at Sacred Heart. She visited people, brought Eucharist, called people on the phone regularly. She was always attentive to the needs of others. Then we came to Mount Carmel. There were times when we had private retreats here. If you wanted to make a retreat, you asked somebody. I was on that list. I really took the place of a very good friend of Veronica's who couldn't come any more. Her whole life was really about praying for others. We talked sometimes about different forms of prayer. She would say to me, "I think that when I read Father George Maloney, SJ, and the scriptures, that's how I pray." Anyway, we became friends. She was a great woman of prayer with an interest in everything—family, sports, politics, community. Veronica was a great gift to all of us.

### **Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM**

My little story is to share how alert she was and aware of other people. On my first visit to her room I simply said, "I'm Sister Mary Angela." I had to repeat it three or four times due to her hearing loss. Finally, she got it and said, "Are you Buser?" I said, "Well, yes, I am." I was just so startled that she knew my family name and that she already knew me before I had gotten to know her. I was privileged to accompany her to the eye doctor a couple of times. Those were long appointments with eye dilations. It is not a good place to visit, but we managed a little bit. When we finally got into the doctor, I remember distinctly how the first year she said, "Doctor, I'm 101." He replied with a big smile, "Yes, Sister, I know you're 101." The next year, her first words were "I'm 102."

### **Sister Therese Frelo, BVM (Ann Carmelle)**

I never lived with Veronica, but I reaped the benefits of her hard work and her ability to be an educational leader in Mississippi. Immaculate Conception in Clarksdale opened in 1948. S.M. Rosarita Donnelly, BVM, was the first principal, then Veronica (Ita) was the second principal, and S.M. Janelle

Janssen, BVM was the third. That's when I went to Clarksdale. But the thing I wanted to mention about Ita is that she was a tremendous school woman. We had such high standards at our school. More than anything else, she opened the high school there. At that time, Immaculate Conception HS was the only black high school in the state of Mississippi. She left her mark there.

**Sister Anne Marie McKenna, BVM**

I did not know Veronica, but because she left us nothing to prepare her funeral other than that one examen, I went to her room and looked to her Bible for some hints. I feel like I know her in an amazing way after finding all handwritten prayers in her Bible. Very little was marked except the reading you heard from Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6-10) which was underlined and had a note as to what year's retreat it came from. As Mary said, she prayed for you. She seemed to have a special devotion to St. Dymphna, the patroness of nervous and mental disorders. There were many different prayers to St. Dymphna, some rewritten by her to be very personal, as well as a great devotion to St. Joseph which we will honor in a few moments. Thank you all for your sharing.