

Sister Laurian McDonald, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, Oct. 11, 2016

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I'm not sure exactly when the BVMs began ministry in Santa Barbara, Calif., but it has continued to this day. Laurian was very proud to be the first young woman to enter the BVM congregation from our mission in Santa Barbara. It remained that way until I and another young woman in my class in 1965 entered community from there. She always said, "There are seven of us, you know, who entered."

To the best of my recollection, there are still three of us who are permanently a BVM—well, Laurian's in heaven now, and then Maria van Werkhoven, Set of 1964, and I. Laurian was proud of being from southern California, from Santa Barbara, a beautiful place with a wonderful ministry. Whenever I would meet her over the years at senates or other gatherings, she always made a special effort to greet me and say how proud she was that at least there were seven of us who had come to BVM life.

Although I didn't have a lot of contact with her during the year I've been here, there was always an outreach to me and I knew that was special. I assumed that there were other people in her life that were special to her and to whom she reached out also. Thank you, Laurian, for championing Santa Barbara.

Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM

Laurian and I became friends a long time ago after she followed in the set behind me. It started in Moraga, Calif., while we were both looking forward to completing our master's degrees in theology. Two things happened there. We had a lot of fun with the intercommunity of sisters taking courses there. We laughed at what was going on at that time, played, used the library until midnight. The one thing I never understood was whenever I would greet her in the dining room, she would grasp my hand and say, "Has the sheriff found you yet?" I, not knowing what I had been involved in, smiled, laughed and said, "I haven't met him." She did this so many times that I can't even count them. She said, "No one's found you?" I kept thinking, *Who did I miss?* If it was the sheriff, I am very happy, Laurian, that I never found him. You never told me why he was looking for me. I hope you find him there. Thanks, Laurian.

Sister Mary Janine Wolfe, BVM

I was making my way to the pool for my morning swim last Tuesday. As I passed the door, the funeral director was taking her body out. I didn't know who it was so I asked the nurse. As soon as I realized it was Laurian, two thoughts crossed my mind. One was how hard to was for her to come back to Mount Carmel, leaving the West, leaving California and Arizona. Then I thought of the last funeral we had and the prayer she had written: "Praise God! The sun breaks open; a burst of color shoots across the Heavens. God hangs out his sign, open for you, my love."

Sister Mary Ann Bradish, BVM

I was with Laurian on Sunday night before she died. I had been coming in daily. She was usually sleeping and I didn't want to awaken her. But Sunday night she was awake. I touched her and prayed a prayer quietly and then sang "O Madre Mia" because I know of Laurian's deep love and work with Mexican Americans. On Monday night, I wasn't able to go because I was with our dear sisters on fourth floor of Caritas praying together. At the end of the prayer, I said, "Is there anyone or anything else we need to pray for?" And one called out, "Let us pray for the dying." We prayed for Laurian.

Sister Catherine Jean Hayen, BVM

I am forever grateful to Laurian. When I moved the Low Vision office up to first floor, she immediately offered to assist me in that room. She worked two hours every morning for four years receiving returned audio books, checking them, rewinding them, and getting them ready to be re-shelved. She also greeted people generously at the door and wrote down any requests they had. I am forever grateful to Laurian. Thank you, Laurian.

Andy Schroeder, Director of Development, Mount Carmel

I certainly did not know Laurian as long as most of you, but over the last year and a half of working here, I truly had the privilege of spending Tuesdays at 11:50 a.m. with Laurian while transporting her to and from lunch. It was something I truly admired and looked forward to each and every week.

In the short time that we would spend going from third floor Caritas into the elevator and down to the dining room, we would converse, we would joke, we would laugh about much of what you've heard today. She certainly was a joyous person and somebody who did like to bring a smile to people's faces.

For the last year, she and I have been talking about the desire that originally she had, but inspired me, that we needed to take a two-person show off Broadway somewhere. It would be a variety show—we would sing, we would dance, we would tell jokes, and all of those things. I didn't realize how far off Broadway she was actually thinking—here. That joke was for her; she would have laughed.

But I did truly appreciate our time together and know that the show will go on. Down here on this stage, we will do our best to keep you entertained and keep you smiling and laughing every day. Thank you so much, Laurian, for being that light in my life for the time we were together. I truly appreciated it.

Sister Rosemary Surby, BVM

I began my little journey with Laurian in BVM life when I left the Scholasticate in January of 1958. Leaving 50 people and joining her and SM Brideen Keane and SM Rosemona Reiter in a small community was kind of a scary thing and joyous in a way too. I met Laurian. She was the first and second grade teacher and I was the fifth and sixth grade teacher. That was the day she really became my mentor because she gave me lots of tips on how to be a good teacher, how to be patient with children, and to prepare my work well.

We had large classes; I think I had 60 students. We also had a wonderful community because each of us lived a very small life. We just had ourselves and depended on the parish to take us places. We did go downtown to shows together. She was just a fun-loving person. She was telling jokes and I would tell jokes too.

My second encounter was when I left Ecuador and was looking for a job here in the States. Brideen called and said, "I have an opening in Phoenix if you'd like to come." So I traveled to Phoenix and who was the first and second grade teacher? Laurian. So again we took up our friendship and have been friends for 60 years. I thank her today for mentoring me as a young sister as I became more confident and more loving with people. Thank you, Laurian, again. God bless you and keep you.

Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM

Laurian was also a person of deep gratitude. I remember the year, it may have been her Golden Jubilee, when she decided to come to Clarke College and volunteer for a year. I didn't have too much contact with her, but she was there the entire year living at St. Anthony, coming over every day and doing whatever administration asked her to do. Her whole idea was to thank the community for the wonderful education that she, and all of us, have been given. Thank you, Laurian, for that wonderful lesson.

Sister Anne Buckley, BVM

I have a handicapped brother that I sometimes bring up to Mount Carmel. Laurian met him and was just so warm and gracious to him. I think she had a connection with handicapped people because one of her readings today is from Jean Vanier. She always asked about my brother since then. She seemed to care very deeply.

Sister Paul Francis Bailey, BVM

Laurian was stationed in the West for a long, long, long time. I happened to be in Chicago at one particular time when she came in for a BVM congregational meeting. She wrote a note to me saying she was looking for a place to stay so she wouldn't have to spend too much money. I wrote back and said that I had a bedroom she could use if she came to stay with me. Immediately she said that she would be delighted to come. So she came and was so excited. Every single time I heard her talking to someone, she would always tell them about the wonderful time she had when she was in Chicago. She said, "I saw everything there was to see. She took me up, she took me down, she took me sideways. We were on the go all day and almost all night.

Prior to her visit and the congregation meeting, I had already promised to go to New York with one of the sisters and I had invited my set to come to my apartment for a party. It happened to be just during the time I was supposed to go to New York. I approached the sister with whom I planned to go to New York with and very tentatively said, "Do you think you could find another nun who would love to go to New York?" It wasn't received well. So I said to Laurian, "I have to

go to New York and you know that we are having the set for dinner. If I get everything ready, would you mind hosting them?"

That's exactly what happened. I left for New York and she hosted the party for my set members, which they have never let me forget either. A couple of years later, I went out to Phoenix. When I was out there, I teamed up with Laurian and she repaid her visit with me by taking me everywhere to show me the beauties of the West. We were in every little hamlet and the places in Phoenix you always hear about. Laurian was a very loving person. I certainly will miss her. So, Laurian, be good up there.

Sister Therese Jacobs, BVM

I want to continue Paul Francis's story. I am a member of her set and was looking forward to seeing her little house and enjoying the group. But when I got there, I said, "Where's Paul Francis?" Laurian said, "She had to go away, but left me in charge." She did very well; we had a wonderful time.

The other thing I remember about Laurian was when she was a postulant and a novice because we entered together. She was always gracious and fun loving. What I always saw with her was the great love for the Hispanic culture. Her great joy in ministry was working with the Hispanic people. She was fluent in Spanish, she loved talking about them. Thank you, Laurian, for many things and for that also.

Sister Saskia Alquina, BVM

When I was the first time here in the Motherhouse while in the novitiate, Laurian was talking with us—Alegría Chunganá Chunganá, Catherine Odartey and me—in Spanish. She was sharing all her ministry with the Hispanic people. Anytime she saw us at lunch in the Caritas dining room, she was inviting us to join her table. We really enjoyed it. She started to share and encouraged us to speak English. She said it doesn't matter if you are not speaking so correctly as long as you are expressing yourself. Don't worry if the BVMs understand you or not.

Now I think that was good, because when I was here in the infirmary helping the sisters, part of my job was to change the ice in the water pitchers. Anytime I was with the BVMs, they were saying thank you. They taught us that anything we are doing for others could be simple. It is part of the love we need to share with other people. Thank you, Laurian. I am so sad, but I think we need to be a testimony of her life.