

*Sister Rosemary Shaughnessy, BVM (Gerald)*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, Jan. 31, 2017*

**Sister Diane Forster, BVM**

We received two blessings for Rosemary by email from former BVMs. Kathleen Jackson wrote, "God bless the dear good sister!" Rose Carter Milani said, "Peace is hers forever now with God."

**Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM (John Laurian)**

I knew Rosemary my entire religious life. We were in the novitiate together, we went to summer school together, and we were at community meetings and community celebrations together. When she resigned from the financial office at Loyola, she went off on a sabbatical to New Hampshire.

During that time, I called her and said, "Rosemary, come and work in the Secretary's Office." Rosemary, in her sardonic fashion, said, "Why would I do that?" I said, "I need you." She said, "But I have lived my whole life in Chicago." I said, "Be daring, Rosemary. Come to Dubuque." And she did.

When the Circle apartments were built, a great group moved into one of the buildings. We had a wonderful community of which Rosemary and I were a part. That's when her brother Tom joined our community. You may think he's a Columban, but he's really a BVM. We also had some great parties in that apartment building.

At one of our dinner parties, we were all sitting around the table. All of a sudden, Rosemary's face was in her plate; she had fainted. We immediately called 911. The ambulance came with siren and red lights flashing. The fire trucks came with sirens and red lights flashing. The sisters were looking out the windows at Mount Carmel and some were standing on the road. Everyone in the apartments was looking out of their windows. In the meantime, Rosemary had come to. As the medics were carrying her out on the stretcher, she said to us, "Don't tell anyone!" I loved Rosemary; she was a good friend.

**Sister Theresa McNerney, BVM (Grace Michele)**

I am in Rosemary's small set; there are now five of us left. I was reading the daily scripture reading at home and it made me think of Rosemary right away. "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter." That made me think a lot about Rosemary.

Her dry wit was something you had to learn to understand, and I did. When I was at Assumption in East Los Angeles, it was a time of welcoming refugees and a sanctuary city. Rosemary came out for a summer program. Rosemary never really gets excited, but she came in and said, "Look at this!" Rosemary had gone through a crosswalk. In LA, every car stops for a crosswalk the second a person steps off the curb. Well, Rosemary had gotten a ticket. She said, "What's all this about? In Chicago we don't stop."

Anyway, we had a really good summer. I got to know her better than in the novitiate because we never talked. Feb. 2 is our feast day. I came a week late and got in at night. The next morning, I was chatting away when Pat O'Rourke, who was Rosemary's good, good friend, came up and said, "We don't talk here." Those were my good times with Rosemary.

**Sister Judith Callahan, BVM (Eugene Mary)**

I am now an orphan because Rosemary was my prayer partner. She had been my prayer partner for quite a few years. When we were first assigned to each other, she said, "Let's not do all that stuff about cards and presents. Let's just pray for each other and leave it at that." That was her simplicity as captured beautifully in the opening song.

**Sister Marion Murphy, BVM (John Patrice)**

I lived with Rosemary for a short time many, many years ago. It was a very happy, pleasant and fruitful time. It's obvious that her sense of humor and quick wit were just tremendous. She was so very caring and competent. She was principal and superior at the time. A very competent administrator and a very, very kind person. There had been many difficulties in that particular house. It wasn't long after Rosemary arrived with her positive spirit and patience that it became a very joyful place to be and to work.

**Beth Shaughnessy, Niece**

I was one of the few nieces and nephews who had the opportunity to have her as a teacher. We played liaison between her and the students and the students and her at times. She was very much a family organizer. One of the things I really missed when she moved to Mount Carmel was when she would get us all together. I was very happy when we had her golden jubilee here. We had another family picture. That's what we did almost on a regular basis; someone out there has lots of pictures.

Rosemary was always someone who was uplifting, as I have heard so many other people say. Her teaching me math skills certainly helped me get where I am today. I now teach at the University of Cincinnati; I am a surgeon there. You have to pass a number of tests first. She will be sorely missed.

**Sister Susan Rink, BVM (Michaela)**

Rosemary worked with me at Mundelein College. She was our director of student aid. She was marvelous in that position. She had the smarts to understand all the federal and state regulations, but she had the compassion to sympathize with the people who came and really needed help. I appreciated the work that she did as did everyone else. Later, Rosemary lived next door to me in the Circle apartments. All of us had fun together and we enjoyed having Father Tom as part of our group.

**Sister Carolyn Farrell, BVM (Lester)**

I thought it would be appropriate for this story to follow Sue Rink's. Rosemary, at the time of Mundelein joining Loyola University, moved to Mallinckrodt. (Mallinckrodt College in Wilmette, Ill., was absorbed by Loyola University in 1991.)

For a while, we had Mundelein College of Loyola University located there and Rosemary was in charge of student aid. Rosemary went walking around that building and came into a very large chapel. The building had been owned by the Sisters of Christian Charity, who were a little more conservative. Rosemary happened to be in the chapel walking around and checking it out when a sister in full habit entered. The Christian Charity sister introduced herself and then Rosemary introduced herself. Then the Christian Charity sister said to her, "Well, how would I know that you're a sister?" Rosemary said, "Because I told you."

### **Sister Rosemary Surby, BVM (Rose Mary)**

I got to know Rosemary when I first came to Mount Carmel in 2012. One time I looked at the October list of birthdays and there it was – Rosemary Shaughnessy and I had the same birthdate. I thought, *Wow, this is going to be great.* She was on the second floor so I went down and very excitedly said to her, “You know, you and I were born on the same day.” She said to me, “You were born in 1929? You look pretty good.” I said, “No, I’m about eight years younger.” We had good times celebrating our birthdate.

In 2012, I got two cupcakes and candles and put a big sign in the kitchenette. The people on the floor came and wished her a happy birthday. The second year, I said, “Let’s get together.” She said, “I don’t know.” I said, “Yes, we are.” I bought a box of candy and she and I had a little private birthday party in her bedroom. When the third year came along, I said, “Let’s have another celebration.” She said, “Again? This is the third time.” I said, “I know.” It’s been five birthdays. The last one I didn’t have a chance to visit with her, but usually we sat and had a little intimate talk. She would tell me about herself because I had not met her before coming to Mount Carmel and then I would tell her a little bit about myself. We shared the same initials, R.S., and the same birthdate. It was a great privilege to get to know her. We just had a good time when we talked.

### **Katherine Brennan, Niece**

I am a daughter of Edward, Sister Rosemary’s older brother. I’m here with my sister Monica. I have oodles of fond memories of Aunt Rose. My family moved from Chicago, where my parents had lived their entire lives, to Maryland in 1969 to a tiny town that wasn’t even on the map at the time. I’m sure they all thought we were crazy. Aunt Rosemary would come to visit for periods of time.

I don’t know if she was assigned to keep me busy or if it was just her wonderful nature, but she tried to teach me to sew. Please, Monica, no comment. I don’t sew, I don’t craft, I’m not particularly artsy. She tried so hard. We finished a shift dress and I was so proud. I went to put it on but I made the armholes too small. So I never did actually wear it, but she did diligently try to teach me. She also tried to teach me to crochet; my grandmother was a beautiful crochet artist and Aunt Rose learned it as Grandma got older. I wasn’t much better at that than sewing. We just decided to stick to cooking, and that was good.

I lived in Chicago and worked as a nurse after graduating from St. Mary. Not too long after I moved there, my grandma suffered her terrible stroke. The beauty of my Aunt Rose was her true dedication to my grandmother. She was in that nursing home for 11 years, a long time. Aunt Rose would go out to visit her all the time. She always had some funny joke. The big joke from my daddy was that my grandma developed a sense of humor only after she had her stroke. She was quite a stoic, German lady most of her life. Somehow, when she had that stroke, it released a wonderful sense of humor. We had a wonderful time visiting her in the nursing home. She wanted us to help her escape so we would take her to the original pancake house in Wilmette for dinner where she would have her favorite German pancakes.

Later, I would go back and visit with Rosemary. I had a wonderful time getting to know her as a young girl and as a woman. I cherish those 10 years we had together in Chicago. She was just a wonderful lady. Her dry sense of humor was always present. I was so glad to see that piece of my grandma open up due in part to Rosemary spending each day with her during those long 11 years in the nursing home.

She was a great lady. I’m glad she is together again with my grandma and grandpa and my father. I think there are some Manhattans flowing today! I’m sure she brought along the party spirit of the Circle, of

which I was blessed to be a part when I came for her 50th jubilee. We still talk about that party at our Shaughnessy gatherings. It was a great festivity. I'm glad to be back at such a beautiful place. Thank you for all you have done for my aunt over these years.

**Sister Diane Forster, BVM**

When Senate committees were very active many years back, Rosemary and I were on one together. I have always appreciated the immense amount of work that Rosemary gave to that committee; it was greatly facilitated by her ability with computers and paperwork. Rosemary was in the office when I followed Kitty as Secretary of the Congregation. Rosemary always said the right thing; I was far more inclined to be rattled than Kitty ever was. When I would get rattled, Rosemary would say something just right and very calming. I appreciated that also.

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

I didn't know Rosemary very well, but I certainly got to know her dry, sardonic sense of humor. This may be apocryphal, but one day I was talking with a friend about the wonderful "Mall in the Hall." We've all enjoyed receiving wonderful clothes that had been beautifully taken care of and honored. This may not be true, but I heard that Rosemary said, "Oh, the dead giveaway."

**Mary Ellen O'Brien, Friend**

My brother, Father Clarence Beckley, is a good friend of Father Tom Shaughnessy and they were ordained together. The first time we met Rosemary, I worked at Starlight Art & Framing. These two BVM sisters came in. One was looking around the shop. She came back to where I was working and was watching what I was doing. I said to her, "Do you know Sister Shaughnessy?" She said, "I am Sister Shaughnessy." Of course, we had a little conversation about our brothers. She was just a perky little thing. She came in different times with a sister who did some artwork. It was a joy to meet her. When Father Tom would go to Dubuque, we would go with him occasionally to have dinner together. She was just a joy to be around.