

Memories 1933 to the end of time.

1933 wasn't the greatest of years. Tho I didn't appreciate circumstance, who does when one is 15 and filled with Hollywood ideas and dreams and dreams of the future. It was mid-term at Parker Sr. High and I decided to attend an all girls Catholic school. After all we went to St Bernards Church, so why not the school! Five dollars a month was a lot of money in those days, but Mom, a widow and a Health Dept. Nurse, agreed with me.

So early in February I became a student in Loretto. Mother Ambrose, a beautiful women, with red hair (I could see a whisp now and then) stands out in my mind, as our home room teacher. I think we had homeroom teachers----but I m not sure. Anyway Amby taught Latin with great skill and tried to explain how "ladies" should take frequent baths, even in difficult times. Remember that was over fifty-five years ago,

I was amazed and sometime bored at the lack of enthusiasm the girls displayed. If one knew the answer, one rested their right elbow on their desk and raised their hand... Not me I flung mine in the air. I believe Mother Ambrose died when she was quite young. Wonder if the nuns really had good health supervision? I was very fond of her.

Our exit from our room was always backwards, as we dipped our hand in Holy Water. When we met a nun we would curtsey, when we met a priest our curtsey was extremely deep. Thus did we exhibit respect.

Our class room day started with the morning offering, a practice I still continue. On first Fridays we went to Mass and Holy Communion. The water fountains were covered with white towels. The nuns said if you made the nine First Fridays you would always go to heaven.

My religion and typing teacher was Sister Gregory. A tall aloof individual who ran an envelope opener around her face. She never smiled, she never laughed, but I did, not in religion but in typing. Maybe she tried too hard, Religion to me was and still is, warmth, love, faith and understanding. Somehow I missed it in her class, but received it from the other educators.

Now about typing. "asdfg qwert, ;lkjh poiuy" day after day we sat with large paper bags over our heads, banging away at an Underwood Typewriter with the symbols marked on the keys. Hence the paper bags. Of course if you had a good nose and a touch of Irish, you could wiggle the bag up and down, and see if she was in or out of the room. Most of the time she was 'IN'. The envelope opener I mentioned was run around the starched stiff white collar on her face and forehead. That must have been difficult to wear. It must have been hot, must have caused many irritations; but the nuns looked beautiful in their robes, with the long rosary hanging on the left side. Frequently as a child, I observed, they fingered the beads. They needed help too, in many ways.

Then we had Mother AlRita or was it ElRita? A slight individual, who in my opinion had her pulse matched to what was going on in the school. She knew who was smart and she knew who was dumb, and also knew who to help this way and that. A little women, who taught chemistry. She was a very practical lady and well liked by the girls. I always thought of her as a friend.

Themuns lived in a stone house next to the school. It was quiet and serene inside. Once - don't know how, I went upstairs to the chapel. Peace seemed to permeate the area. Not so the kitchen which was way below. Pots banged and voices carried, and now and then it was not all serene.

Then there was Mother Agatha, she taught Art and History. I will never forget the Punic Wars, The War of The Roses and a Phyrrie Victory. She was small and round, with tiny lips that didn't laugh. But she had a lot of work to do, and took her job quite seriously.

We had gym! Don't ask me who taught it, but we wore middy blouses with navy bloomers.. Heel toe and away we go!!!
Sister Denise the slender beautiful lady who taught music, whom we all remembered in a booklet in 1989, and many more nuns who cared for us.

Among them Sister Leak, who never forgot ones name and Mother Borgia. My beloved Mother Borgia. Some one said she had been a lawyer. It could have been true. She would fix a steel eye on a quivering girl and ask a question. If you failed to know the answer you were told to "SIT DOWN" In my biased opinion she got a kick scaring us, and deplored stupidity. Somebody said she had T. B. In any event she was placed in a sanitarium out side of L.A. I visited her there in 1940 shortly before she died.

And now at this stage of the game I have two nun friends: Sister Mary Ellen who has done a splendid job with the Federation and with the News Letter, which my friends and I consider the important link that keeps the Loretto Contingency going. The other dear person, Sister St. Edwardine. Mary Gene and I have been friends since high school, she was always a dedicated person.

So that's it. Just a small glimpse of my memories. I hope this will be of help to you.

Jean Cahill Harris
Englewood Class of 1936.
Member of St. Bernards Parish
1930--1954

P.S. The only special event I recall was
the down town march for The Legion
Decency - (The Catholic Schools objected
to some films.) We marched down
Boul Mich.
What impressed me - The love the nuns
had for us - It was evident then and is
today - Sincerely - 