

Sister Patricia Beaumont, SC

Entered eternal life on August 17, 2024



I approached the role of keeper of memories with great trepidation and much humility. How does one encapsulate 95 years of memory making? And the evolution of the Church's attitude toward the religious life for women? I will begin by acknowledging that Pat's vocation was the fulfillment of my mother's dream. Mom in her early years had thought she would become a nun, but then along came Dad and six children.

When Pat became a Postulant in her sophomore year of College at St. E's, mother's heart burst with joy. Our only brother Dan was six, Blanche and I were 17 and 12 respectively. I remember her riding her bike on Newark's Clinton Hill, taking the bus to St. Vincent's where she was an outstanding scholar and later to Bamberger's Department Store [currently known as Macy's] in downtown Newark to work to support her trips to St. E's as a Day-Hop as they were called.

St. Vincents was her launching pad. It was intrinsic in our lives. Mom, Pat, Blanche and I attended SVA. Sr. Josephine Marie was my sophomore English teacher and Pat's sponsor in religious life, then Principal at SVA, then Mother General of the Sisters of Charity. When I was a senior, Pat, as Sister Daniel Margaret returned during my last semester to teach Religion. My classmates surreptitiously called her "Danny Bones" because she was suffering from a yet undiagnosed thyroid condition for which she was treated over her lifetime.

Soon Pat was out on missions and the family visited her in her varied stations. Our younger son recalls catching salamanders and becoming enamored by rock fireplaces at her station in New England. Blanche remembers taking herself, bedecked in her wedding gown, wedding party in tow, to St. Vincents to see Pat on her wedding day. Also, in those early years Pat travelled to France on a Fulbright scholarship. She confided it was a lonely trip as fellow travelers were deterred by the habit from approaching her socially. Later on, when regulations eased there were wedding receptions and beach trips she took alone and with family. She so loved the ocean.

Most of all she loved family, her sisterhood family, of course, but also her family of origin. As little kids, Jackie and Chris would meet her at the bus stop when she came to visit. When Mom died at age 56, they were 13 and a half and 15 respectively. Pat became the "Matriarch", the glue that held our burgeoning family together. Family was an extraordinarily inclusive concept for her. It stretched back to the ancestors and included the spouses of her siblings and their families, her nieces and nephews and their children. This fascination with and devotion to family manifested in many ways. Significantly, over nine years she researched the family's ancestry, which included a trip to Europe and resulted in an album of family genealogy replete with copies of official documents, given to her siblings and their children on Christmas 1994.

Many memories of that European trip linger, but at least two are worth sharing. When we were in Paris, Pat engaged a Frenchwoman in the train seat facing us. As they chatted, the Parisian glanced over at me a couple of

times. When questioned later Pat explained the woman wondered why I had left for America. You see, Pat's French was so excellent it was assumed she was native to France, and I was an ex-patriot who left and spoke English. In another hilarious episode Pat demonstrated her attitude toward driving, a means to an end to be approached vigorously and courageously. I did most of the driving but in the one country Pat had a license to drive, the driver's seat was on the right side and one drove on the opposite side of the road from the U.S. This was unsettling and was coupled with driving on a narrow road very close to a rock wall. Suddenly, a loud raucous sound of crackling glass erupted. "What was that?" I exclaimed. As a passenger I thought we had hit something. Pat reassured me in a calm voice, "Oh, don't worry about it. That was only the side view mirror. I don't use it anyway". That explained a lot.

Pat's love for extended family manifested in a sincere and sustained interest in each of our children and grandchildren. She watched kids grow up, welcomed school pictures, tolerated the antics of the "little demons". She asked about and followed college and career plans. The letters on cards for special events as well as her thoughtful gifts and presence at those events and celebrations, no matter the distance or time involved, illustrated her genuine interest and attention. Most recently, her presence at her nephew's wife's baptism into Christianity and her gift of a valued cross is treasured. Over and over, I've received accolades regarding her unique way of making those whose lives she touched feel cherished, valued, significant. She overlooked flaws and reminded people of their gifts. Despite her intellect and accomplishments, she never took herself too seriously and enjoyed a good laugh. When she moved to Convent Station her Post Office was challenged by her address and title. The mail arrived labeled Sis Pa and Beaumonster! Of course, her nieces picked up on that and addressed Sispa accordingly- it tickled her funny bone. She taught her niece how to knit and gave her patterns and books on needlework as well as mom's crochet needles and patterns. The attitude she portrayed was upbeat and positive. There were no "shoulds" only the unremitting model of Christian morality, kindness, caring and joyfulness. The one negative response I recall was when her treasured brother moved a distance beyond where she could drive, and she thought she wouldn't see much of him any longer. But again, the family took care of that and get togethers were arranged.

More recently we all received a spiraled hardboard calendar. On each monthly board every birthday and wedding anniversary was inscribed for two generations, so that all 29 of us could maintain what she started - recognition of one another.

In her last days, Pat reminded us of her humanity. She directed us to her comb from her hospital bed so she could fix her hair for her company. But at the same time, she was, and I quote from messages I've received from family, "a beacon of light" who left a "legacy of warmth and grace" expressed in "kindness, compassion and unwavering love" "who pointed us toward Jesus in how she lived her life".

Sister Pat, our sister, your absence will be deeply felt. Rest in eternal peace surrounded by the love and light you shared with us all.

~ Shirley Winrow, Sister Patricia's sister