

Mary Ellen Woods Atkins 21 May 2018

Sister Mary Philemon Banigan changed the course of my life. As a freshman, I entered Salve Regina College planning to become a history teacher. I took chemistry as my science elective freshman year since I had done well in high school chemistry. While enrolled in Sister Philemon's chemistry class, she asked me, "Would you consider chemistry as a major?" I responded, "I do not think I can do the math." She said she was confident that I could and Sr. Philemon's belief in my ability was instrumental in my becoming a chemistry major. She guided me to recognize that women can be scientists.

Dr. Ascanio Di Pippo's teaching involved application of chemistry to our lives, in other words, how chemistry affected our food, paints, and modern technologies. By making chemistry interesting and understandable, I conquered my hesitations and excelled at teaching others. I always learned something new and interesting from him as I continued my friendship over the decades.

Lastly, Jessie McCoy taught me calculus, essential to every scientist. But the most important skill that he taught me was to think with a pencil. Even today I do my best thinking and composing ideas with a pencil in hand. Thank you, Jessie McCoy and all the other professors, who guided our academic strengths and encouraged us to reach our most far-flung goals.

I am thankful for the rigor of science courses at Salve Regina in the new laboratories at O'Hare Center, which set my life's direction to over three decades of teaching high school science, heading the Rogers High School Science Department, and nearly twenty years of teaching Salve Regina undergraduates. My goal is to imbue these young people with a life-long interest in science.