

Judy Gray Holcomb
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Not everyone takes a direct path to find herself. Salve was part of my circuitous journey. I wanted a safe environment. In the summer of '64 I applied to Salve which offered both Latin and Chemistry. By September I was in and Latin was out. Salve began to narrow my course.

Purely an internal struggle, I felt an outsider and remember it as an unhappy time. I have always like architecture. The Cliff Walk remains my favorite spot. I couldn't have been in more pleasant surroundings. As a science major, my circle was small, and I made a few very special friends: Mary Ellen Woods, Sandra Whelly, Debbie Madden, Sister Mary Christella (Betty McAuliffe), Eileen Pangborn, Kathy Reardon, and Betsy Mastalski. Some of these special people remain in my life today. I did well in philosophy and that helped me spin quietly in my own world.

Professors were easy to get to know even for those of us who were introverts. Dr. Di Pippo spouted incredible bits of weird knowledge. He exuded confidence. Mr. Bottari could make the truth humorous. Dr. Morris was simply my favorite. He didn't start class until I arrived. The most compelling and influential was Sister Mary Brenda. I enjoyed watching her groom Gertrude St Marie the year ahead of me.

Sister Mary Brenda shaped my life direction. We did blood typing in physiology lab. I did it twice with the same results and learned that at least one of my parents wasn't biologically mine. I asked her if the solutions were good. Recognizing my concern, she had the presence to say, "Maybe not." I am grateful to her for that wisdom. It would be thirteen years before I would confront the knowledge of my adoption and find truth, peace and additional family. That test and her assessment of my readiness steadied my course.

The late 60's was a time of amazing changes and questioned values: the Vietnam War, women's roles, civil rights, family dynamics, many core issues were questioned. I bought my last pair of Weejun loafers (which all of us wore at Salve) just off UC Berkeley campus walking by a person in a gorilla suit. No one there thought it unusual, even streakers in their birthday suits barely turned heads. At Salve a girl in a pair of pants would have set heads spinning. Unlike Salve, there was no dropping in to see a professor, I needed an appointment to see Dr. Marion Diamond, a genius of a woman and incredible role model who passed away this year in her 90s. She asked where I did my undergraduate studies and looked at me in amazement. At that moment we both accepted there are many paths to success. Salve gave us support, whether we understood its importance at the time or not, and exemplary human values to sustain us for a lifetime. I applied to Salve for safety and got a sense of well-being.