

A Salve Regina College Memory in Honor of Eileen McCarthy Dennis, Class of 1968

Saying "Hello" from the sky was their trademark.

During her years at Salve Regina, Eileen McCarthy missed her large and busy family. Eileen was the youngest of four and always had a special affection for her brother Mickey, six years older and a family daredevil. Mickey completed his Marine Corps military training as a pilot and lived in California so they didn't see very much of one another since the family was based in Massachusetts.

During Eileen's years at Salve, Mickey was on Reserve for the Marine Corps and continued to fly a requisite number of hours, some on the East Coast. Eileen would ask different friends, one at a time, to accompany her to the lawn of Ochre Court when Mickey would stage a "fly over".

I recall standing with her on that lawn in blistering heat, soaking rain, and days so windy your coat was like a mainsail. When his jet came into focus at exactly the appointed time, we'd jump and wave our arms frantically to catch his eye. As Mickey buzzed the Ochre Court's lawn, wings tipped low, we could not only see his face but his headset as well. He threw Eileen a huge smile and thumbs up, then skimmed along Cliff Walk, blasting the eardrums of everyone nearby. Mickey would make a couple of passes like this and then veer off over First Beach, circle back and head east into the limitless sky. We'd stand there and watch until the jet was a speck. To bear witness to the love on Eileen's face was worth every moment of foul weather and the tempting of the wrath of our esteemed Dean, Sr. Mary Donald. Eventually, the naval base discovered this mischievous deed and Eileen was reprimanded because the sound of the jet had frightened many Sisters living nearby. The fly-overs stopped; Ochre Court lawn was not buzzed again.

Sometimes the memories that bind us to a place are not only ours, but of the people who touched our own lives to create something new. Eileen and Mickey shared their affection with a few Salve

classmates. Mickey, a non-smoker, died from lung cancer twelve years later at the age of 39. Eileen, living in California at the time, flew home to Weston MA where Mickey lived his last days. On the flight home, she felt his presence and when she landed at Logan, his time of death and her sense of him matched.

Saying hello from the sky was their trademark.

Eileen McCarthy Dennis, a beautiful person for all the ages, left us on Aug 12, 2013. It was a privilege to be her friend, and to have that memory of love seared into my heart.

Susan Dunphy Lawlor, Class of 1968

