

Neerology

Lucille (Blonigen) Lefeber
1931-2019



Lucille Anita Blonigen saw the light of day for the first time on August 3rd, 1931. She was the tenth of thirteen children born to Henry and Philomena (Weber) Blonigen. At the time of Lucy's birth her family lived in Mount Calvary, Wisconsin. Previous to her birth the family farmed in the small community of St. Joe.

Lucy's background involved the Capuchins. Her great grandfather sold "the Hill" to the Capuchins. Her great uncle, Theodore Blonigen became a Capuchin. He was given the name of Aloysius. He ministered at St. John's in New York, and wound up preaching retreats at Marathon, Wisconsin. He died at Marathon and is buried in the friary cemetery at St. Anthony's in Marathon.

Lucy began her journey with God through her baptism at Holy Cross Parish in Mount Calvary on August 9th, 1931. Shortly thereafter the family moved to a farm about a mile southeast of St. Cloud. Lucy went through grade school at the parish in St. Cloud. After a few years Henry, her father, was diagnosed with bone cancer and the family was forced to move off the farm. They moved into the telephone exchange house in St. Cloud. The whole family, including Lucy, learned how to connect phone calls through the switchboard in the family home.

In 1945 the family received the sad news that their son — and Lucy's brother — was killed in the war. The St. Cloud Legion Post is named after Harvey Blonigen. In 1946 the family had to deal with the death of their father and husband, Henry. He died of bone cancer at the age of 54. Minnie, with the help of her family, was able to support the family through operating the telephone exchange.

On August 30th, 1952 Lucy married the love of her life, Marvin Lefeber. Marvin, together with his father and brother, were carpenter contractors. Many of the homes in the Holyland area were constructed by Lefeber and Sons. Marv and Lucy lived upstairs from her mother until they were able to build a new home in St. Cloud. Once again tragedy struck. Gary and Gay, their two oldest children, were playing outside as their mother Lucy was hanging wash on the outside lines. Gary and Gay decided they wanted some cookies. Gary climbed up on the kitchen counter to get the cookie jar. As he reached for the cookie jar Gary put his fingers into the toaster and was immediately electrocuted. It was a cross that Lucy carried throughout her life.

Lucy and Marvin had five children. Gary, deceased at age three, Gay, Sue, Pam and Greg. Lucy also experienced several miscarriages.

Lucy started her connection to St. Lawrence Seminary by washing the clothes of a few students. In 1967 she was hired as a part of the janitorial staff. Occasionally she would also be asked to help the sisters who were cooking in the student kitchen. Invariably she would be asked to peel onions and the tears would pour out of her eyes.

In 1970 she was asked to take the job of cleaning the common areas of the friary. She had to be very careful around the friars. In those early years a few of the friars did not take kindly to a woman being in the friary. But she said that the vast majority of them were very kind and supportive to her. A number of the friars became good friends over the years. Emil Schneeweiss grew especially close to the family. Emil had many home Masses for them and was present for many of the celebrations of their children – First Communions, confirmations, weddings and the baptisms of some of their grandchildren.

Lucy was always very secretive about what went on in the friary. She would not even share with her own family when a friar left the community or if a friar left for alcohol rehabilitation. What happened on the Hill, stayed on the Hill. Lucy always used to say, “We are very private people.” They were very gentle and unassuming people. They shared those values with their children and lived those values in their community.

Lucy and Marv would try to take two vacations each year. One with their children, which would often times be a week at a cottage in Northern Wisconsin, or a road trip to a Wisconsin site or one in a surrounding state. The family would always look forward to those trips. Then they would take another trip with their good friends and relatives, Bob and Mary Salchert. Interestingly they did not seek out popular tourist places. Rather they went to places where they could live in the midst of poor people. Their purpose was not to party, but to learn and understand how people lived. During those trips they visited most of the countries in Central America including Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Belize. They also visited Panama, Argentina and Cuba.

They always returned home with a deeper appreciation for their freedom, their families and their home. Their faith was also deepened. In St. Lucia and Argentina they witnessed people going to church walking on their knees during Lent.

Lucy was affiliated to the province in 1997. She celebrated with her husband and children and her brother Capuchins. But being a very humble person, very few of her own relatives knew about it or understood what it meant.

Her husband Marvin died of cancer in 2006. That was hard on Lucy. She was heard to say, “I am mad at Marv for leaving me. We could have had many more happy years together.”

Lucy was a woman of faith. She was always present at weekday Masses at St. Cloud and weekend Masses at Mt. Calvary. She died on April 22nd, 2019 of a malignant brain tumor. She requested that we have a simple service at the funeral home which was right across the street from her home. She stated that “we are just simple people and it will be a lot easier for everyone.”

Thank you, Lucy for a true life of service and respect for us Capuchins.

~ Lawrence Abler