

**SISTER LA SALETTE HAYS, S.C.**  
**December 15, 1933 - October 9, 2006**



Our sister, Los, asked me to do her reflections - an awesome responsibility. I kept thinking, How will I ever capture her beautiful spirit in words? Some things are too deep for words. Well, I kept thinking and thinking and worrying and worrying. Then I got a grip and thought . . . Well, dear God, I know you will help me and so will Los. I could hear her saying to me, "Judy, don't worry about it—just say a few things and be done with it." You know how Los was just to the point . . . So, with the help of Los and all those who love her, I share these reflections with you.

On December 15, 1933, Thomas and Anna Hays were blessed with the first of their two daughters. They named her, Virginia Constance Hays. We know her as Sister LaSalette or Los and her family calls her Ginny. Clara, her sister, was born a year later. They were very close sisters. The family lived in Seattle, Washington where their parents were in show business. Their father was a singer and their mom, a dancer. A serious car accident injured her father and later took his life. Mrs. Hays, Anna, moved her family home to Pittsburgh. Their grandmother moved in and cared for Ginny and Clara while their mom worked in show business. Frequently, Ginny and Clara went out of town with their mother as she entertained for a living. They loved to go to work with their mom when it was possible. Los would tell stories about Clara and herself wearing pretty organdy dresses, staying in hotels and watching their mom dance and sing. She was always proud of her parents being in show business. Her mom could even boast of knowing Dick Powell and Mickey Rooney's Dad. And, she performed at the Enright Theater in East Liberty!

On November 26, 1946, a life changing event occurred for Ginny and Clara. Their mom married Joseph T. McCann (Sister Catherine Laboure's brother). Clara and Ginny were so excited about the wedding they could hardly stop talking about it. Los wrote, "Happily we rejoiced because Joseph Thomas McCann was going to be our stepfather, the only father we could ever remember." Joseph McCann brought a stable family life to Anna and the girls. Los called him, "*A Saint for Step-Children.*"

In 2003, Los wrote a book entitled, *Love Without End*. In the prologue, she writes, "With beautiful memories, great affection, deep love, and sincere gratitude I am sitting down to write how I recall living eight years with my stepfather, Joseph McCann." To her sisters she writes, "This is not for publication but rather as a gift to my three sisters, their families and generations to come. Every sibling in a family perceives their parents and situations differently depending on time, place and personal involvement. Your father made such a difference in my life and I wanted to put some of these stories in writing." In this book of memories about Joseph McCann, there unfolds the beautiful soul of Ginny, Los, Sister LaSalette. It is from these written memories that I share about Los.

In her written memories of Joe, Los tells this touching story. "Joe and I were walking down Second Avenue to Murphy's Five and Ten Cent Store. One of Joe's acquaintances stopped him to speak to him. Joe wouldn't have it any other way. She's my girl." I was so proud of him for not saying I was his stepdaughter. I felt he was saying, "She's my very own." He loved his girls and provided them with warmth, caring and unconditional love.

Los went to Saint Stephen's Grade School (Hazelwood) where she first met the Sisters of Charity. She loved Sister M. Clementine (O'Friel) who taught her in seventh grade and Sister Mary Giles (Brandt) in the eighth grade. She has always been grateful to them for the loving care they gave in school and after school helping her to get caught up in her studies, especially in Math and English. This special care they gave her filled her life with gratitude and love.

This is what Los did all through her years of teaching. She took these children who needed special care and love under her wing and lifted them up. One such child was Father Philip Seeton. Some of you might remember that he was the celebrant for her Golden Jubilee. Father Seeton sent this reflection.

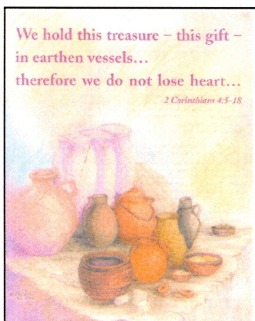
“Almost forty years ago as a first grader, I walked into the classroom at OLPH (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) in Scottsdale and fell in love. Sister LaSalette was my new teacher. Sister was also my first ‘crush.’ It was not Sister’s appearance or the habit that made me fall in love, it was that Sister put her hand on my shoulder and told me that she was glad to be my teacher and have me in her class. I was repeating First Grade after ‘not being promoted’ (flunking) at the local public school. I felt welcome and Sister made me feel like she cared about me. Sister’s warmth, prayers and affection through the years have been a blessing. Mother Seton said to her daughters, ‘Be children of the Church.’ Sister instilled this teaching in my heart and mind. She lived the words of your foundress and taught her students to do the same.”

Elizabeth Seton High School was a special place for Los. She was involved with in-school and outside school activities-speech and debate teams, the Sodality, visiting the elderly at the Little Sisters of the Poor and helping at Roselia Foundling on Sundays was well as working at Murphy’s Five and Ten. Her mom and Joe worried about her because they felt she was involved in too many activities but Los said of herself, “One gift the Lord has given me is the ability to be well organized so I managed extra activities very well.” And we all know how organized she was—a planner of parties in the convent and at school Los loved being organized and to plan ahead! Sister Mary Ann Winters shares this about Los, “LaSalette’s contagious laugh sparkled through the house sometimes even in spite of pain. It was so life-giving to live with Los. She could enjoy so much of life whether preparing food, gathering all that was needed for a faculty party, or encouraging her students. She kept learning about the computer so she could teach the students and was so encouraging with them. Her labors to prepare a bulletin board to display their work were full of love. Her love for her family was shared with us through her captivating art of story telling. She truly lived being Eucharist. . .blessed, broken and given in love to all in such simplicity!”

These last years of life were filled with illness: cancer with all the physical side-effects of treatment including fatigue, nausea, and pain not to mention the emotional side-effects of uncertainty, worry, wondering about treatment, diabetes with all the instability of blood sugars, changes in eyesight, arteries in the heart and Parkinson’s with all the shaking she endured. However, Los always told me, “If I am told what is going to happen and I am not surprised, I can get through anything!”

She never complained, was always pleasant, cheerful and said “I am fine! I am great!” She was an example to all who knew her.

Macrina Wiederkehr in her book, *Gold in Memories*, wrote a poem entitled, *A Gift of Life in Death*. I want to share the following:



I want my death to be a gif, a birth.  
When in that final  
I breathe myself back into God  
I want to be drawn into you also,  
(Anna Marie, Winnie, all my loved ones, my Sisters of Charity and my friends),  
I want to be an intimate part of all of you and of all the universe.  
And so as I am breathed back into *your hearts* and this world,  
into your hopes and dreams, and the joys of all people,  
into the yearnings and the tears and sorrows of this world,  
my death will be a birth, a gift.

Los says to us now, “I pray for you and I love you!”

*Funeral Liturgy Reflections*  
Sister Judith Laffey  
October 11, 2006