

Objects and Memory Podcast

Lilly Rushe and Sister Mary Ann Cirillo

Transcript

[played over an instrumental version of “yellow bird” b the Mills Brothers]

(dinner gathering sounds)

Sister Mary Ann: Are there any sounds- it's almost like you can hear the people talking and eating together and being so solicitous for each other.

Lilly: I sat down with Sister Mary Ann Cirillo in the Meadowview third floor library, the same library we had been meeting in every other Monday for our poetry group for the past two months. Before interviewing sister Mary Ann, I asked her to bring an object that reminded her of her adolescent years

Sister Mary Ann: My name is Sister Mary Ann Cirillo. I am from New Jersey. And I grew up in Fair Lawn New Jersey because you're asking about my adolescent years. So those were the years where I was growing up as a teenager. Fair Lawn New Jersey, Bergen County.

What is an object that reminds you of your teen years? Well, we decided I was going to bring a picture. This picture is from when I was a teenager.

Lilly- Is that you?

Sister Mary Ann- Yes that is me right there. 20 years old there.

Lilly: Sister Maryanne showed me her photograph. The over 60-year-old photo is still in pristine condition, sitting in a brown wooden frame. 26 people are pictured including two young children. They are all posed perfectly in two rows, the front row and chairs with their ankles crossed just so in the back row standing up straight and organized.

Sister Mary Ann: So this probably was in 61. It was just one year before I entered the convent. This event was the 60th anniversary of my grandparents. And everyone was invited. And when I was looking with it said- What color was it? Black and white. Black and white. Isn't that amazing? Yeah.

Lilly: Sister Marian then went on to point out each and every member of the photo. As she did so, she exuded so much love and adoration and her smile nearly broke through her mask

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Sister Mary Ann: This is my extended family. My mother, my father, and my sister. My sister's husband, Kenneth. My cousins Mary Grace, Nicholas, Linda. Donald. My grandparents, Domenica and Domenico Cirilo and their children, my father, Richard, my uncle, Nicholas, my aunt, Josephine, my aunt Mani, my aunt Josie's husband Nicolas, and my Mani's husband, Albert. My uncle Nick's wife, Goldie Cirilo, and their son, Donald.

Lilly: Big family!

Sister MaryAnn: Big family! So this is an extended family. And these are my sister's two children, out of five children, Kathleen, and Ricky. Kathleen is now in her 60s. And Ricky died when he was 22. And then she went on to have three more children- Michael, Bryan, and Douglas. And Michael and Brian also died. So she has lost three sons. And she's still living as the oldest girl. And then their youngest son is still living. And this is a family friend who was a priest, Father Tropasio. He has died also. And I was dating this fella- George. I was dating him. And then he knew that at some point, I would say I have a religious vocation. And he was very generous in saying, "you know if it were another guy, I could fight, but I can't fight God."

Lilly: That's a great line.

Sister Mary Ann: Yeah, it really is. And I've used it in vocation talks. It's just a great picture.

The family was always there. And they're still there. Many of the people in this picture have gone on to heaven. But those who are still here, are very much still here. When I look at these people, I pray for them, whether they're here on Earth, or in heaven, I pray for them.

Lilly:I then asked sister Maryanne, what memories this photo brought?

Sister Mary Ann: Well, having a picture always brings back a lot of memories. Are there any particular moments that come to mind when you think of this object? Many, yes, the family gathered together. You know, I think of my parents and how wonderful they were my aunts and uncles, just everyone smiling in this picture. So *many* feelings.

I think the greatest feeling would be one of gratitude, particularly toward my parents and my sister, my grandparents. Yeah, yeah. Gratitude for the life that we had. And we still have.

It amazes me that we're all there.

It's almost like you can hear the people talking, you know, yes, and eating together, and being so solicitous for each other. That's what always amazes me that people always went out of their way to minister to someone else. Always thinking of someone else. And that's probably where I learned it from. My parents- to be kind, like that sister who just came and asked. She is blind, so she can't see it. Well, I would never say to her, "Well, I'm busy now." I can't do that. You take the time to do it.

So I think I learned that from my parents.

Are there any scents? Yes, I think the scent of like, probably Old Spice after shave lotion, or the fragrance of the women's perfume. You know, I mean, you can almost,

Lilly: yeah,

Sister Mary Ann: Think of that, you know.

My mother was an excellent cook as my grandparents and aunts were. And my father was a good cook, too. And my mother used to say, "Mary Ann, why don't you come in here and learn how to do this," because my sister was always there learning how to do it.

And I said, “I don't have to because when I grow up, I'm going to have a maid!” So when I went to the convent, you know, I practiced a lot on the Sisters of things that I saw my mother making. I like to cook. Yes. And not only was food important, but the table around which we sat, not just the food, but the conversation about life. You know, and people took turns listening to each other, which was just a wonderful thing.

Lilly: That is lovely.

Sister Mary Ann: Yes, yes.

Lilly: That concluded my interview with Sister Marianne. Through my interview, I learned that sister Marianne is one of the most caring women I had ever met. She radiated warmth and kindness and I am honored to have gotten to spend this time getting to know her and learn from her life of service. Sister Maryanne had one more message to send the world before we go

Sister Mary Ann: We need sisters, so tell your friends we need sisters. Tell you- we need sisters! you can be anything you want, isn't that true. You can be anything you want. And God blesses you along the way. Don't we know that.

Lilly: Yes.

Sister Mary Ann: Yes, very much so