

Helena Cooley.

Helena is the sister of the later Sr Monica Cooley.

Ramblings of the Cooley family from the 1930s to the present time.

In 1939, aged 5 years, I was in Coloma kindergarten. I remember being a soldier in the school play- dressed in red and yellow- with a tall hat (made by my mother). Apparently I had the hat on back to front amid much laughter from the parents.



During the 'Doodle Bugs' I was in Upper Prep. I was the 'stick' in the 'Water Babies'-wearing a brown paper costume. Sadly the doodle Bugs took over and the play and the Garden Fete had to be abandoned.

After the war we had our first school outing by coach to 'Camber Sands'. What a surprise to see Mother Mary Cuthbert and Mother Augustine (in the old habit) paddling.

Some other memories of school days. I wasn't very bright- not as good as my sisters- I was told on many occasions.

Mother Margaret Mary told us we should always pray in the most comfortable position. You do not have to kneel down. I have always remembered her words.

Mother Mary Victoire playing the organ. Every time I hear 'Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring' I think of her and the beautiful Coloma Chapel where we all made our first Holy Communion and Monica was clothed in 1948.

Sister Norbert would come out into the playground at break for a chat and I would go down to the kitchen to see the lay sisters- which was out of bounds.

Holy Week Services- a 7am start on Holy Saturday!

When Monica was at University she lived at St Anne's Convent and we were allowed visit her on the first Sunday of the month. We used to go to Benediction and then tea in the parlour. Monica was not allowed to eat with us. One Sunday my father and Mr Donovan (who was also visiting) were smoking. They put a large vase on the floor as an ash tray. Reverend Mother arrived and they stood there like two naughty boys with the cigarettes behind their backs and the smoke rising!

On another occasion Reverend Mother G asked Michael what he was going to do when he grew up. He was about 8 years old at the time. He said: 'I intend to be a priest.' He stood

back and fell over with legs in the air. Rev Mother always had the habit of turning all the lights out- leaving us in the dark on many occasions.

One Summer in 1959 I was staying in Scarborough Convent when Monica was teaching there. I was sleeping in the room that the priest usually stayed in. I had washed my stockings and left them on the radiator. When the nun came in to clean she nearly had a fit- not knowing I was staying there.

When Monica was at Wickham Court Mummy, Michael and myself were visiting. Monica showed us the Chapel (Old Wickham House) but we couldn't find the door to get out- so Michael climbed out the window in to the arms of Rev Mother Columba.



At Monica's 25th anniversary we were at Shirley Court and Mother Mary Cuthbert and Mother Mary More had cooked supper for us. When we got to the dessert they had forgotten to take it out of the freezer. What a laugh we all had trying to eat frozen meringue with bits flying everywhere. .. and much laughter trying to defrost it.

While on holiday in Cornwall Sr. Sheila Barrett (who was nurse training at the time) put her cornflakes on the plate while she went to collect her coffee. A seagull ate her cornflakes while she was away. On her return she thought Michael and I had hidden it. She couldn't believe a seagull had swooped and had eaten it. We still laugh about that.

To finish my ramble I must add the wonderful care that Monica had in the Convent when she was so ill. Sr. Mary Christopher cared for her so wonderfully and I have never forgotten that.

There are so many more stories I could tell. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph and Coloma have always been part of my life. Although I was not a good pupil I must have learnt something.

Miss Spilsbury always said the Morning Offering and Memorare each day with us. I still do the same every day – seventy years on!