

**Eulogy: Dr. Marylouise “Weezie” Fennell, RSM**  
**A Celebration of Life and Legacy**  
**Sunday, November 20, 2022**  
**Carlow University**

In early 1991, I was a 31 year old new college president. Although I had been at the University for six years as a Vice President, the assignment was a bit overwhelming. I had a business thinking board that expected me to have the answer for everything. I didn't. And the old guard presidents in higher education really didn't have the desire to help new, young presidents.

I turned to the Council of Independent Colleges for assistance, and they connected me with Sister Marylouise Fennell. “Weezie” as we all know her. “Supernun” as she is known in the AOL and social media world.

I remember that first call so well. She quite pointedly, in what I learned to be true Weezie style, lectured me on a select group of vendors that would target a young president and capitalize on his inexperience for their business gain. I was impressed and grateful.

It was the start of a personal and professional relationship of over 32 years.

*The Pittsburgh Post Gazette* said she was no shrinking violet — how true. She was very opinionated, often on behalf of underrepresented populations. She championed opportunities and support for those that had been traditionally left out of higher education strategies. She envisioned a more equitable future for higher education and then worked tirelessly to make that vision a reality.

Weezie and I co-founded the InterAmerican Consortium, traveling to most of our partner institutions. For 17 years we worked together, she as the executive director and I as the chair of the Board.

For 15 years we worked together on the CIC new presidents program — Weezie as the executive director and I as her advisory group chair.

We co-founded *President to President* and served as co-executive editors for 19 years.

Yes, we collaborated on 18 books, eight monographs and 167 columns. She always had those figures at her fingertips. Writing was an exhaustive process — we would often debate the topic, commit it to paper, then re-debate during a process that would sometimes include 8 to 10 drafts. And then, after it appeared publicly, we'd re-debate it again.

But our relationship was more than that. We attended each other's important family events...from her jubilee with the Sisters of Mercy to my daughters' weddings...to World Series and All-Star games – sharing our mutual interest in baseball. I might add, on a local note, she always was very opinionated about the current management and direction of the Pittsburgh Pirates – even after moving to Florida.

2001 was a rough year for college presidents. The market had plunged and as such college leaders were feeling the associated pressures. Each morning during her readings, she would identify good leaders who were struggling through circumstances not of their doing. At her urging, we would then divide the list up and email, text or call each with encouragement. In some cases, it involved follow up for several months. And many of these colleagues have become friends for life.

These are the actions of my trusted colleague, steadfast mentor and true friend. These are the actions of someone who will be there for you when the chips are down. Someone who wants to see you succeed and will go out of her way to help you do so. That was Weezie, a true Super Nun.

At last count she had, in addition to her earned doctorate, 45 honorary doctoral degrees — representing the respect she held within the higher education community. I wonder if those of us celebrating Weezie today have 45 collective honorary degrees.

When we think about honorary degrees from 45 institutions of higher learning, think of how many students that represents... How many lives she touched...How many doors she opened... How many pathways she forged...

Weezie was a lot of things to a lot of people. For those of us who were lucky enough to know her personally, she was a mentor, a friend, and a confidant. For all the students at all the universities she helped to shape and guide behind the scenes, she was something akin to a guardian angel, though perhaps with a more colorful personality...

Weezie Fennell....Super Nun.