Forty years ago last August, I entered Marymount College as a freshman. This was a milestone for my family. I was the first to go to college, the oldest child to leave home and to enter a new phase of my life. While I was only 3 hours away from home, it seemed like it was farther.

As I sit back and try to remember specific events around entering Marymount or even attending, I find that the specific events are gone and just vague impressions remain. I realize there must have been some orientation classes, some tours to get to know specific parts of the campus and a chance to visit classrooms and labs. There would have been time in the student union, some type of welcoming party, and meeting with various student leaders, teachers and administrators, but the details are lost in time. I can remember going to the cafeteria and the library at the opposite ends of the administration building, but as to the particular day or time, those have faded away.

Memories are like that, we may not remember the specific details but the event can have a profound impact on our life. My time at Marymount was like that for me. Being there changed who I was and would be, but the moments of change are lost. I remember some of the people from my time there, but everyone there changed me in some way. The classes that I took there formed the basis for later classes in graduate school and seminary. I remember struggling through a public speaking class — barely passing if I remember right — and now I speak before congregations every day. Or the English class where we had to write a paper or two, and now I write an article every week for the parish bulletin.

Some of the memories that remain are not of classes but of the activities outside of the classroom. I remember playing Frisbee golf around the campus, flag football in the lower field and sledding on cafeteria trays in the park. I remember sitting around the Village Gate visiting with friends and getting a little loud. I also remember escorting various classmates back to the dorm who had a little more to drink. Even then, it seemed I was watching out for others. I also remember singing in the church choir and the late night Masses in the dorms.

After graduating from Marymount, I found a job programming microcomputers and teaching classes on the side. I discovered that I liked teaching and decided to continue school at Wichita State University where I received a master’s degree in computer science. But a career in computers was not to be. During the last year of my degree program, I finally gave up telling God “no.”

While at Marymount, I attended a SEARCH retreat, and there I began to hear a call to the priesthood. I would look at the priest saying Mass and a feeling would come that I could do that. Of course I said no. I wanted a family, a career, and a life. What kind of life could a priest have? I kept saying no for 5 years until I finally agreed to go to the seminary, but I doubted I would stay.

I joined the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, also known as the Redemptorists. I discovered a family of men who looked out for each other. I found that I had the ability to talk to others and help them through the struggles and troubles of life. I realized I had found more than a career but a vocation. And that life was something that you lived as you went along, not planned out.

I will have been ordained 25 years next June and I have been to places where I never thought to be and discovered that God had given me talents that I did not know I had.

Who knew that working in the cafeteria and
Reading with Friends returns for another year

This fall’s Reading with Friends program at Neighbor to Neighbor kicked off at 10 a.m. Oct. 13 with the children’s classic illustrated storybook, “Strega Nona.”

Area preschoolers were introduced to Strega Nona and her meddling assistant, Big Anthony. He was determined to prove to the townspeople his knowledge of the magic secrets contained in her pasta pot. In so doing, he unleashed a torrent of pasta which threatened to engulf their little Italian town.

The story, by author and illustrator Tomie dePaola, is a Caldecott Honor-winning 1975 children’s classic. Guest reader Sister Christina Brodie, of Concordia, brought the story to life with her preschool audience.

The Reading with Friends monthly story times begin at 10 a.m. at Neighbor to Neighbor, 103 E. Sixth St., Concordia. Each session includes playtime and a snack, plus children receive a free copy of that day’s book to take home. Children ages 3 to 5 years are welcomed to attend. Parents, grandparents and other caregivers are invited to enjoy coffee and snacks downstairs at the day center for women while the story is being read upstairs.

There is a limit of 30 children per session, so parents need to register for each session in advance by calling Neighbor to Neighbor at 785/262-4215 or emailing neighbortoneighbor@csjkansas.org.

The monthly program has been a part of Neighbor to Neighbor’s regular offerings since September 2012. The Oct. 13 date was the first session for the 2017-18 school year.

Reading with Friends is scheduled for the second Friday of each month, with upcoming dates being Nov. 10, Dec. 8 and Jan. 12. In the new year, the program will continue through April 2018.

November’s book will be “Frederick” by Leo Lionni, and December will feature “On the Night You Were Born,” by Nancy Tillman.

This year’s Reading with Friends is made possible thanks to a generous donation from Betty Drake of Beloit.

Marymount

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serving food would give me the talents that I would need to run a retreat center?

Or that all the business and accounting classes would allow me to run a parish? And that all the computer classes would have set me up to help my congregation to keep up in an electronic world?

But most of all it was the people that I met that gave me the skills I would need to bring God’s forgiveness and healing to people in need.

When I entered Marymount, I was shy and found it difficult to meet people. I had few friends, but I was going to break down those walls and reach out to others. I wanted to be a friend that people could turn to when they needed help.

And so though the late night talks in the dorms or in the sunken garden, through the poker parties and dances, through the study sessions and labs, I talked to people and did what I could to help. It was only later when I looked back that I realized that God was teaching me the things I needed to know.

When God calls you, you must give up your dreams, but God replaces them with dreams you never knew were there.

You do things you never thought you could, see things beyond our limited experiences and go on journey of a lifetime.

For me, that journey began to take shape at Marymount and all of the people and experiences I had there formed the trailhead of the path I would later walk when following God.

And while the specific events are lost in the fog of time, the memories remain of Marymount and the people who changed my life.