



“I don’t know if Sister Frances Agnes knows it, but she opened a door that I went through and never looked back.”
Sister Frances Agnes Bechtold, SL



Sister Frances Agnes Bechtold, SL.
Photo from “The Greatest Asset”

Sr. Frances Agnes Bechtold came to Loretto Academy in El Paso in 1964. Generations of students successfully entered science fair competitions under her rigorous guidance. Her students internalized the scientific method and its mathematical basis which led to careers as doctors, research scientists, and material engineers.

Overall, she taught a total of 56 years, 35 in high school science and math and 3 at Loretto

Middle School. She designed new science labs at Loretto in the early 60’s.

Frances herself was a pupil of Lorettes at St. Mary’s Academy in Denver, Colorado and her brother went to Regis in Denver. She was raised by a father who trained Ford mechanics in a four state area the intricacies of successive models. Her mother, raised on a Colorado ranch, yearned always to be a teacher. Her brother became a physician and she became that critically important science teacher at Loretto Academy who fostered many students’ interest in science and engineering.

Later in her career, and under the influence of UTEP Sociology Dept. head, Clark Knowlton, Sr. Frances Agnes began to focus on the needs of disadvantaged youth. Ultimately, she organized the El Paso Girls’ Club at 619 South Oregon, St. Here she was grateful for the opportunity to expand her fluency in Spanish. The program offered adolescent girls health, modern dance, and cooking. Younger girls were attracted with arts, crafts, singing etc. All of this development was provided by either donations or rounding up volunteers.

Through an International Teaching Fellowship, in 1971, Sr. Frances Agnes taught at Bengigo School for Girls in Australia.

She was a masterful teacher and an example of the value of life long love of learning and the persistence it takes to realize dreams.



Corine Prieto President
Integrated Geophysics Houston
Loretto Academy class of 1964

Corine Prieto, Loretto ’64, is founder and president of Integrated Geophysics Corporation In Houston, TX. She received the 2007 Gold Nugget Award from the UTEP College of Science. She has a Masters in Applied Physics from the University of Toronto in Ontario, Canada.

She tells the following tale...“In 1964, Sister Frances was my Physics teacher. The best way to describe her influence is to tell you a story. Sister Frances didn’t argue with me when I told her for the third time I still could not decide what to do for a science project. She made several suggestions

mentioning a couple of ideas. Having received no response she said “okay, just do something interesting.”

Two weeks later, I walked in late to room 102 with a vacuum cleaner in tow and a wooden box under my arm. I stood at the door, she came up to me and just grinned, that approving smile that was uniquely hers.

All of Loretto’s submissions to the Regional Science Fair that year had been made by the usual suspects, the straight A student with biology and chemistry projects. Even though Loretto had filled its quota for the Fair, Sister had arranged for me to submit my wind tunnel project to the Physics section at the Science Fair. When I said I was really not interested, she told me I was to be her first Loretto submission to the Physics category. I took first place, but only for an hour. The judges discovered I was a girl. Sister had told me to use only initials on the report but I forgot. Remember this is 1964. The Physics awards were given by the military, with jet plan rides etc. So, Sister and I got 4th place, Honorable Mention and \$500.

I don’t know if Sister Frances Agnes knows, but she opened a door. I went through it and never looked back. She gave me an attitude and the confidence to never doubt what I could do with my science and math. I think I have done fine by her.”

