

SISTER VIRGINIA HINKS



HOME OF GOOD SHEPHERD PROJECT

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Interviewer: Toby Harris

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TRANSCRIPT

13 S 1/2

SIDE A

I'm here with Sr. Virginia Hinks. This is Toby Harris. It's May 8, 1999. We're at the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Convent in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sr. Virginia will be talking about her years of service at the Seattle Good Shepherd Home.

I was in Seattle twice, by the way.

1964 is when you first went there?

No.

You were there earlier then?

I was there earlier than that.

Do you remember when those years were? About?

Actually, Seattle was my first mission. I was still a young professed. I always kept thinking that it was '58. I think it was '58; I think it was the year before I made my final vows. I went there as a young professed. I wasn't there very long because I was going to go to a seminar in St. Louis in the spring so I think I went in October and left in, probably, May. And there were some really horrendous things that happened during that time.

What happened?

First of all, when I got there, I think other than when I entered in 1952, it was the first time I had ever been away from home. I worked for 11 years before I entered and I traveled and did things like that but it was the first time I ever lived away from an established home for me. So I left home in 1952, I entered St. Paul and lived here until 1958 until that October when I was sent to Seattle and I was told that I would only be there until May when I would go to St. Louis for this childcare course.

It was in October so it was beginning to be Fall. And I think now as I look back at it, although I had periods of depression following that, I became very depressed there and I began to find myself feeling very blue. And I can

remember one morning at mass when it was raining and I left mass and I went outside and there was kind of a stairwell with an isinglass cover on it. I think I must have cried all during mass and then I came down and I was outside and it was raining and I can remember being outside and just weeping, which I rarely ever, ever did. But the Superior was Sister William at the time and she must have observed this and she called somebody to come out and talk to me that day. And I think it was just- they say that light is a great influence in our lives and I think even though I must have been 34, 35, 36 years old, and never had experienced, really, depression- I think it was just probably that, I think it was probably a combination of things. I went with another Sister who had been kind of sickly and was a person that could not tolerate a lot of stress. The minute she had any stress, she went to bed. And I was just a young Sister although as a novice, I had spent some time in the class here at St. Paul because I know I was in charge of the kitchen for awhile.

And we were, at that time, was it that early? I guess we were not talking about splitting the large group down into smaller groups at that time. I think we were still handling all of the girls in one large group. She went as directress and I went as her assistant. And there was another Sister there that had been there many, many years as the directress of the girls and she was stepping down, and Grace and I were taking over.

Do you remember who that was?

Which one?

The directress who was stepping down.

Serena. Sister Serena. Any change in our classes was always very upsetting for the girls. And I can remember one Saturday when they were really just defiant. And this was the day that Grace had gone to bed. And the girls were forbidden to wear makeup; they were forbidden to wear their own clothes; and of course, the doors were locked. You knew that our doors were locked.

They had to wear uniforms all the time?

Yes. They had to wear- seems to me that on Saturday, though, they wore their own clothes. But during the week and when they went to school, they wore uniforms. But anyway, they were very defiant, a number of girls, and I can remember being out in the yard with them. And they came out and they were wearing makeup and they were putting makeup on each other and I mean, this was a real act of defiance. On Saturday, they used to go up to the dorms right after dinner, like at 6:30 or 7:00 and they would take baths and put their hair up and do whatever they had to do and go to bed early. And you could feel the tension in that house. It was palpable. And in those days, if you were in the class, you were in the class all day. So I was with those girls all day, in the yard, and in the House. There was an office where I would be but, as young as I was...of course, I was just about to have a first experience that I realize. I could

see and I could feel the tension and I just felt like things were going to explode any minute.

And this was when you first -

This was my first as assistant directress. Let's see, who was in social serv.....can I see that list again of who was in Seattle at that time?

It would be 1958 you're talking about?

I'd forgotten about that. Sister Mary William was Superior. I do remember that when I came- because I told you she was the one that observed me during mass and called somebody and had them come out and talk to me.

Did she call a priest?

Yes. Serena was there. She probably was the one that I went to, and was aware of that. [reading from list] Annunciation, Adrienne.....none of these people were with the girls. I think Elsie was there?

Let's look at 1959 too.

Yes, because my name isn't even here.

Your name is not there?

No, it's not there.

Well, maybe, it was before that.

Try 7 or even 6. Actually, it couldn't have been '58 because I made my final vows in '58 and this was before. This is '59.

It's not on '57.

Try '56 or 7.

I don't think it's there. Here you are in 1956.

Oh, okay. You know, that's better because I made my first vows in '55 and I remember this was, yes. So we had William who was Superior, Serena who was in charge of the girls and here's Our Lady of Grace. So the two of us came, we came together. They have us down here as coming in April; oh, no, that's when we...

That's when, right, it doesn't show when you came; it just shows -

And it was the Fall. It was in the Fall.

That's your date of profession of vows.

Not this because...

August, 1954.

Oh, that's right. Date of profession. That was my first profession, I never can remember whether it was '55 or '54. Okay, this was my first profession so it would be three years until 1958, I'm sure is when I made, August, '54, '55 '56. I would have had to....date of profession. Well, anyway, I did go in '56. So it would have been Serena that I would have turned to at that time because Gracie was in bed.

I remember starting out with the girls in the dining room and Serena came over to relieve me- why do I keep thinking of- that must have been later when Dorothy was there - Serena came over to relieve me so that I could go over and get something to eat and I remember going and talking to William because we used to get on our knees when we would talk to the Superiors at that time. And I can just remember being by her and talking to her and I loved her, and still do to this day. Then I went back to the dining room and Serena left and I stood up to say the evening prayer, the prayer after meals and I heard this horrendous bang and what had happened- they used to have these big round tables that had these hard formica tops on them, and a couple of girls in the back had turned over a couple of these tables. And you know, God does provide. Here is this young, little, Sister, not in age because I was thirty...well, I was born in '21 so I was 33, I was young. I was on a podium and I just stepped off of that podium and I must have gotten this face on me and I just walked back and they just backed up. So I sent the rest of the girls upstairs. I said, "go upstairs" and I stayed with the girls that were in the dining room and there must have been another Sister there or something, because she went over and got....there must have been somebody in the kitchen. And they must have called the police. The police came, they carted away 18 girls that night. And by the way, you need to know, that this was the first of three experiences I had like this in a year and a half.

By that time, I had one here. This was the last one. I was just ready for the nuthouse. And they sent me to Omaha where I did almost nothing for 8 or 10 months. But anyway, the police said after that, whoever was with those girls at that time, really handled the situation because they were prepared to tear that place apart. And I remember when I first entered, I came from a family of five children, of a mixed marriage. My father was not a Catholic but my mother was. And at one time, 4 out of the 5 children at that time, were in religious life. My father was a remarkable man and when my twin sisters and my brother- my brother joined the Jesuits and I had twin sisters that joined another religious congregation- and he never said anything one way or the other. But when he found out I was going to join the Good Shepherd Sisters, he was very upset, because in Detroit, our Home there, the girls had absolutely demolished that convent. They tore up the plumbing fixtures; they ruined doors and windows and it was just terrible. And when he heard that I was going to join the Good

Shepherd Sisters, he was just really- I think he was frightened. But anyway, I experienced this in Portland and in Seattle, the first time, and then here, inside of a year and a half, I was right with the girls when they rioted.

What was it that they did exactly?

In Seattle? They turned over these huge, big tables and they were going to throw all the salt and pepper shakers, they were going to break all the windows. And when I got off of that stand and just walked back towards them, they all backed down in the chairs. They didn't do anything. And I just stayed with them until the police came. And the police, I understand after they just nearly destroyed the paddywagons carrying the kids off. They were just....

Were there dishes on the table?

There were dishes, yes, on the table that they turned over. And if I remember, there were just two tables and then the girls just kind of separated, the girls that were in this group, kind of came together, and I sent the rest of the girls upstairs to the dormitory, and was all night with them, just walking around in the dorms. And after that, every time I heard the word "riot", my whole system would just physically react to it. Here, it happened in October. This would have been- it was quite soon after we were there- it doesn't say when we came, does it?

No. How many girls were sitting at each of those round tables?

Probably about 8 or 10.

And did they always sit at the same table with the same girls?

No. I don't think so.

They could sit where they wanted?

Yes.

What was it that you talked to Sister William about before?

I probably was frightened, concerned. I really didn't know what would happen. I had no experience of anything like this so I never thought they would do what they would do. I just knew that they were being defiant and I hadn't had that much experience to understand what might happen. This was my first experience of something like that.

Then you left Seattle?

I left Seattle in the spring, it was probably May, and then I went to St. Louis to- it was a childcare course that was given at St. Louis University during the summer. I had another experience there that would raise your hair too. During the summer and then I came back to St. Paul. Actually, from 1956 which was

my first tour here until 19... when did I come to Seattle? '64? Okay, that is eight years, right? I moved 11 times. I came here, I went to St. Louis, I came back to St. Paul, I went to Portland, then I went to St. Louis to finish the course, then I went to Spokane for 3 weeks...

Did you have any choice about any of this?

No.

You were just sent. Did you still feel good about what you were doing or did that experience cause you to have-

I loved my religious life. Although trickles came back to me after, that I was responsible for these things that happened, these riots here and in Portland and in St. Paul. I knew I was not responsible, and I never held myself responsible. When I went to Portland after I made my final vows in '58, the night before I got there, the girls refused to come in to the convent and slept out in the yard and on the roof the night before I got there, so you can imagine the condition the class was in. And it was the same thing when I got here; they had gone through reconstructing the class and breaking it down into small groups and those changes are always very hard, were always very hard for the girls. No, I never blamed myself for any of this. I was just caught in situations that had been building up for years and somehow or other I happened to be the catalyst at the time these things happened.

Did you continue to be frightened?

No. When I was in Seattle, every time I heard that word "riot", as I say, and you know, Toby, I had been in classes, I do believe in the devil. I do believe there is real evil in this world. We're taught that we are to believe that God creates every person as a good person, does not create evil but good people do evil things. And there is evil- evil, evil in the world. And sometimes, - and I swear that this happened to me in Seattle- I don't even hardly believe in hell anymore actually, but I can remember walking through that lower hall and just almost smelling brimstone because that was a very, very frightening time. First of all, because it was the first time I had ever experienced anything like that and secondly, it was so uncertain what was going to happen. Was this going to continue? Was I going to be subjected to that kind of thing? I don't think I ever thought or felt that I was ever in any physical danger. It was just frightening. That's all. It was scary. But we had wonderful girls and we had wonderful relationships with those girls. They were so talented. I didn't have that much time during those few months to do the things that I did when I was there later on and when I came back in '64.

You mentioned that they were not allowed to wear makeup in 1956. Did they have a beauty parlor there at that time?

I think they did. I think they taught cosmetology. I think they had a cosmetology department there at that time.

But they couldn't wear makeup. So they just did hair? And skin care?

I was never much involved in that. That would be more part of the schooling. And I was more the day to day living with the girls, to provide for them and to see what they had, what they needed, and if they were sick, that they were taken care of. At that time, if a girl ever came and was pregnant- and that's why this whole thing about we took care of pregnant girls- and I remember being here in St. Paul a few years ago actually arguing with a woman- we do not, we did not, we never did take care of pregnant girls. At that time, if a girl came in and we found that she was pregnant, she was out the next day because that is a whole different kind of care that we could not do. Although in Hawaii, we took care of unwed mothers, young, pregnant girls. But that was Catholic Charities, that was under Catholic Charities and Sister Barbara just administered to that program.

I don't know if you remember whether the layout was very different in 1956 than it was when you went back in 1964. You said there was just one large dormitory?

There were two.

There were two large dormitories.

On the second and third floor.

Okay. Which actually is the third and fourth on these [floor plans]. So one was next to the chapel, on this side above the school., ... now this would have been above the school, this was the Sisters side, is that right?

Yes, we were opposite the...

So the South end was the Sisters side and the north end.....

Where's the front door?

The front door is here.

The school was over here and that big, big, big auditorium and of course, the Northwest dance took it over right after we first sold it, the Northwest dance were there for a number of years.

That would be on this level. Here's the front stairs.

Oh, yes. Coming in, this is the hallway..

This is the big room.

This would be the big room, yes. And then the office...

This floor plan is not- there might some other walls-

Right. The directress' office was right in here, around in here. It was right on the other side of ...

Across from the assembly room?

Yes. And this was the second level.

And where was the Superior's....actually it's the main floor, they call the basement level one.

That's right. Superior's office, isn't that funny? I thought I would remember. It was over in here.

This is the school. These are the two stairways that are right next to each other. So this wing is what started the classrooms and the school. Is the Superior's office within that? That wing? And then the addition was over here. In 1956- the addition was in 1954.

You know, I think the dormitories were over here. They were up above the school. But this big room over here....

I have pictures of that room.

I'm positive that that was here but I could remember going up these stairs to my group which was on the second floor.

Okay, so that would be level three on this.

Yes. I remember going up these stairs. Where's the elevator?

The elevator is right in here.

Right in here?

That's actually the elevator, right there. So the girls were on this side. The dorms...

Yes. This was the living room here and this would be the dorm over here, I think.

So that was one of the dorms, one of the girls' dorms.

Yes, and then there was a dorm on the third floor.

And you said you lived, which floor did you live on?

It was on the second floor.

So you were above the -

There must have been dorms over here too because that was my window. I pointed out my window to you.

Right. You pointed out your window which would have been on the south end-

Right here. These were windows in the dorms.

I noticed that there was a kitchen, this room on the third floor, the second floor as you know it, was a longer room and it has a sink in it, some kitchen things. Did the dormitories have cabinets and a kitchen?

No. They might have put them in later. Because when I came the second time in '58, they had already broken this down into groups and there were three groups, I think, and I had one group. Part of this was their living area, down in here was their dining. I don't know what this is here, that looks like the second part of the building.

The girls' dining?

The living room was in the front and then right in back of that was their dining area. And there was a kitchen, a whole kitchen, refrigerators and stoves because I remember, I used to cook. They used to eat, well, I used to cook breakfast, I remember on Sunday, I would fix a breakfast for them. But I think the rest of the meals, they ate, they continued - no, I don't think they did because we had tables in there- how did they get that food up there? Escapes me. I know positively that we used to eat in our groups.

You ate in your groups? Well, there is, right in here, there was a dumbwaiter in the building, that you could sent up and down.

I don't remember our doing that but I know that we ate- because sometimes I would leave the kids there eating and I would go over and get something myself. By that time, we would leave the kids by themselves but the doors were locked, the doors were still locked.

Which doors?

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SIDE B

...On the second floor to the groups. I do not remember how that food was brought up but I do remember they ate in their rooms.

Breakfast?

We ate, yes. Everything, all three meals.

In the rooms? They didn't eat in the dining hall in those later years?

When I went back, Sr. Helen Louise was there and those groups were broken down into three separate groups. I think the group I had was Marian Heights. Say, these are the front windows- this was this part right in here.

Right under the chapel. That's where that is, is right under the chapel.

Right. So that was all open. That was hallway and the elevator was in here. Am I wrong about this? I think I am. I think this must have been my room and this was- my room was off of the dormitory. I never had a room where the Sisters slept until later. I know I was on the front because there used to be a ledge here and sometimes, we had kids run away, sneaking through these windows that had a bar at the top.

And there was a ledge.

And there was a ledge that you could walk on. It wasn't all that wide; it may have only been about that wide, because there was a man, one time, that crawled up on that ledge and crawled into one of the Sister's rooms. The Sister at the time was the Superior of the House. And she just led him by the hand and took him downstairs and called the police. You'd have to know Sr. Frances Xavier, not Frances Xavier, but Frances Borgia. I heard about that story; I wasn't there at the time.

That was on the third-

On the second floor.

Second floor ledge right under theWas there an alarm system?

On the windows, yes.

So how could they get out?

Well, you can lift them up so far but I thought that they were not high enough. Eventually, those were taken off and the kids would open up the windows. But when I went there- this was another thing. This was Sr. Ruth that did that. They had opaque, in Seattle, in beautiful Seattle, they had bars and opaque glass on the windows. And one of the first things that Ruth did when she came as Superior and that was when I was there the second time, she took the bars off of those windows and they put clear glass in them. And I can remember walking down these stairs. This was the class site so it must have been.....This is where my room was. This was the dormitory and on the other side was the girls',give me a piece of paper.

You can write right on there.

It's like, this is the front of the building, this is Miriam Heights. I think it's coming back to me now.

Miriam Heights? That's the name of the dormitory?

Marian Heights. This was my room right here and this was the dormitory and here are the beds and stuff. And these are the windows. Now it's coming back to me. Then over here, and this was just a portion of this whole floor, this was the living room and this was the dining area and this was the kitchen in here. That's how it was. And this is the front of the building. Now I remember, this did look out in the back.

So this looked out at the swimming pool?

Yes.

Okay, this would be your room...

Marian Heights.

[writing]. Marian Heights dormitory. So each of the small groups of girls ate their meals with their own group. Did they always stay with that group of girls?

Yes. They were assigned to that group.

So they had very little interaction with other groups?

Well, they went to school together. And they would recreate in the yard together. Even the Sisters now have broken down into smaller groups so that we don't have 25 or 35 or 40 all together. You break them down and you get a better relationship with the girls and the group mother and they kind of work together. And we very seldom changed girls from one group to another because they weren't getting along or something like that.

I had wonderful experiences with those girls. And I used to write and direct plays and I would make all the costumes and sometimes I would do all of the scenery.

Here's a picture of a dormitory. Is that one when it was a smaller dormitory or is that when it was large?

Yes.

That was one of the smaller dormitories?

Yes, you can even see there, there were a lot of girls there.
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15. See there are our girls right there. I think

we may have started with between 18 and 20 girls and then gradually the groups became smaller and smaller and smaller.

Here it is. Is that one of the drama productions that you -

No. I don't remember that at all. This was 1957.

Oh, that was early.

I don't know what that was. Maybe it's a May procession or something like that. No. And we had, I'm trying to think if it was, I think it was here, that we had a wonderful girl who was doing ballet and came in and worked with the girls. And it was so wonderful for those girls to do. It gave them such confidence in themselves. And it was just fun for me. I loved it!

Did you teach drama as part of the school?

No. I just took that on because I wanted to do it. We had singing and dancing and you would see a little play or something.

Was that an optional program for the girls?

Yes, but they loved it.

And they would perform for the rest of the residents and Sisters?

Yes. I remember, I'm quite sure that this is where I did this. The Mother General came to visit Seattle and I did a musical thing where I took songs from every state that I could find and if I didn't find a song, then it was somehow in the dialogue, and I can remember at that time, there was a song called "Poor Little Rhode Island" and that was one of the songs that we used. Oh, boy, when I look back, I wonder how I did those things. Whoo.

I also heard you did a Gershwin production.

I did. That Gershwin production, that was 12 sets - I did that here. I did. That was done here. There were either 12 or 13 scenes in that and I made all of the costumes and recorded some of his, their works.

Did the girls help you make the costumes?

No, not usually. I make all my own clothes and I do alot of sewing. That's really my hobby.

So you knew music? You taught them music also?

No.

Singing?

Yes, I had the choir and I taught them singing as a choir but I didn't teach individual music to them.

Do you remember what happened when girls first arrived?

Well, I really had nothing to do with the interview, I can tell you that. That was the work of the social work, the social service department and they would interview, they would work with the case managers and the probation officers because these girls were committed through the courts. I think, if I remember, I know Dorothy always did, when I was Denver, Dorothy was the social worker. I was there for a year and a half. And I had a group there. Seems to me that they would always talk with us and let us read the history. There was a great thing with confidentiality but they would let me read the girls' history and it was really important that we knew where and what she came from and some of her background.

When you came back to Seattle in 1964, were you the group mother? Was there no longer a first and second?

Right. And that's when I went into Marian Heights. I was in Portland, I was very unhappy there. I had a Superior who was, well, was on drugs, if you would believe it, which I never knew until later. But I remember the Provincial coming and it was Marjorie. She was the Provincial at the time, Blessed Claude. And I had moved all these times from 1954 until 1964. When she came to visit Portland, I said to her at that time, I said "you have got to move me somewhere for awhile. I cannot continue this." So I was in Seattle for 20 years. [laughter] I came in 1964, I left in '84. And I loved it. I loved Seattle. The second time, particularly, I was there, I have many, many positive memories of working with the girls.

There was a young man.....I started to learn the guitar. I have been singing since I was seven years old. And there was a young Sister who was a novice that came and played the guitar and she began to teach me. So I can remember, I'd sit in my room at night maybe for 10 minutes and I'd get out a few chords and then I finally said, after a couple of weeks, I can do this! So then I began to take some lessons and I took some lessons from this young man by the name of Barry Myers and we became quite friendly.

And we were looking for somebody to assist me in my group and Barry was finally the first male we ever hired to work in our groups. And he worked with me, I think, right up until the time we closed in 1973.

So he would come, he didn't live there?

He would come. I took a day off; that was the first time, there came a time when we were really free to take a day off. First it was an afternoon and then it became a whole day off. And he would come and he would spend the day. Of course, they were in school all day. They may have eaten their noon meal in

the cafeteria and maybe breakfast and dinner in their groups. But he would be there when they would come up from school and I trusted him implicitly. [SEALED PORTION - TWO SENTENCES.] He was wonderful with the girls and they loved him. He probably was 27 or 28 when he started working for us and then he went-

What did he do?

He would just be there, talk to the girls and maybe help them with their homework. They had a wonderful relationship with him. A couple of times, he had a friend, Gene, which was a man, a young male. Several times, we took the girls camping in Oregon, which means we crossed the state line with these two males and these girls but I, of course, was with them too.

How many Sisters would be in charge of how many girls?

Well, at that time, give me the list again of '58.

Is that when you went camping, in '58? Or the later time?

No, excuse me. That was in '64. That was the later years.

I don't think I've got it. It stops inI don't know how far it goes.

I think Sr. Lewis was there at the time when I came.

It stops in 1964.

You're kidding. Let's see '64 because I know Sr. Lewis, Helen Louise, was there. She would have had a group.

When Barry was there with the girls, and Gene, was there a Sister there always as well?

When Barry was there, no. He never stayed all night with them. I suppose if I.....I do remember that I used to take a night off. I think maybe another Sister would come over and sleep in my room. Sometimes we had some of the novices, probably never a novice, but maybe a young professed that would come out from St. Paul, like I did in '58, as a young Sister. But I can remember spending nights away because then eventually I did have a room over here on the other side.

Sr. Germaine, she came later in Seattle. The only other one I can think of that would have had a group at that time would be Sr. Lewis and myself. And Sr. Serena, I don't know how long she stayed. It seems to me that when I came the second time- John Eudes was there, that's right, Valerie. Oh, yes, here she is right here. I went by her name "Mary". She did have a group. She had a group and I had a group and Helen Louise were the three Sisters that had groups.

What were some of the different rules and privileges that you remember from 1956 and then, what changed between those years and when you came back?

In 1958, if I remember correctly, and I don't remember when this started, the girls were not allowed to go home. They stayed for months before they went home and even when I went back in 1958, we had a demerit system.

When you went back or the first time?

The second time there was a demerit system. Then they began to go out. And there towards the end, before we closed in '73, they could not smoke either. I just cannot remember the things or when I do remember the things that we layed on those girls, I just can't believe it.

And then there was a time when we did allow them to smoke and then that decision- I guess we talked about it and the group mothers had made the decision that they could smoke- not in the House- or there would be a smoking room or something like that. And then that was taken out of our hands and the administration decided no, they couldn't smoke, after the group mothers had said they could smoke. I remember getting very angry at that because it was kind of an arbitrary decision that was made by people that did not have to live with these girls. I can remember being very angry and I can remember that Dorothy Marie was the Superior at the time and I remember she got very angry at me. I can still see her yet getting up from the table and slamming her plate down in the kitchen. But I just thought it was very unfair that it was just arbitrarily made, that decision, and we were not even involved after we had made the decision. But anyway, that came later while I was there.

But the restrictions were very much loosened. The girls began to go home for a day and then they began to go home for a whole weekend. And unless there was some really bad infractions, unless they had run away or unless they were caught smoking so many times before, eventually they were allowed to smoke, never in the House, never in the dormitory. It seems to me they were allowed to smoke in the living room.

What the girls used to do- they used to be allowed time away, like on Saturday afternoon that they could go out, 2 or 3 of them at a time. And guess where they went? The University District, in the '70's.

Oh.

Yes, oh is right! [laughter].

Would they walk up there?

Yes, sure you could walk up there. We were on 45th and Sunnyside and the University was right further down on 45th. I've got to go to the bathroom but I'll be right back.....

I've said this before. I had wonderful memories of Seattle. And because I was there for such a long time. It was really just '64 to '73, 9 years. I saw girls just grow and grow. They would come in and the hair would be right over their face so they'd hide behind their hair. And gradually you could just see them pulling that hair back, and the eyes and the face coming out. And I always wanted black girls in my group. So there was a time there that Dorothy was there and at one point, there were two Sisters that came in on the same day that were black. And she put them in my group.

Two Sisters? Two girls.

Two girls. And then there was Lonnie, my dear Lonnie, we just had a love affair, I think, she and I. We kept in contact for a long time. She went with this young man for years. I think she started going with him when they were very young, like 13 or 14 or something like that. And they were married right after she left the Home, much too young to get married. She was absolutely a delightful person. And they were married for quite a while and she was never able to get pregnant. Finally, she had a couple of children and then she had twins. And then the marriage began to break down. And I kept in touch with Lonnie for years but I think when that marriage broke down- she had a wonderful job at Central University...

Seattle Central?

Seattle Central. She was secretary a long time to the President. And I think she lost her job and I think she divorced and I think she began to run around which very often happens because I worked with Mary [unintelligible] in the tribunal after the Home closed and I went to school at Mt. Angel and came back and worked for the tribunal. I discovered that very often when people marry that young and they don't have a really healthy experience with other people when the marriage does break down, they just go wild. And I think that's what Lonnie did. Somehow or other she did not continue to keep in touch with me. And I tried to have somebody look for her and find her and she may be remarried now and I just don't know how to go about doing that. Because I'd love to hear from Lonnie.

What was her last name?

Her last name was Samson. I used to call her Samsonite.

So it was just S-a-m-s-o-n ?

We were very close, and then when she married, her name was Williams. So try and trace that down.

Samson, S-a-m-s-o-n?

Yes.

And then Williams.-

Was her married name.

About how old was she when she was there?

When she was here, she was only 14, I think. She looked and she acted much older than that. She was kind of a big girl.

And that was in the early 70's or the 60's?

No, that was in the '70's. She stayed for, I would say, a couple of years.

You had started to tell me about girls that would get to have a few hours. How much time did they have on Saturday afternoons when they would go-

They would have 2 or 3 hours. At first, they kind of earned that and then it just kind of became accepted, like on Saturday afternoon, there wouldn't be anybody in the group. They'd all be.....They'd have little visits with their families; they'd go home for weekends; they would go out for walks and we hardly ever had anybody run away. Once in awhile, somebody would not come back from a weekend or something like that but there was not alot of that. I'm sure there must have been a record kept of that someplace. But I remember there at the end, it became very hard because I think the girls were into drugs quite a bit. There was no kind of testing like there would be today. We just assumed, I guess- I think we were naive, that the girls would go down to the University District, I think that they were having some sexual relationships down there and meeting men. I'm sure that they were getting drugs although we were not as alerted to reactions from drugs as we would be today. And I have never been a very suspicious person and somewhat innocent in that area.

How do you think the needs of the girls changed over the years?

I had an experience that was my own personal experience and it taught me alot. I remember one time I told a girl to do something and she said to me, "why do I have to do that?" And I said to her, "because I told you to do it." And after I came away from that confrontation, I thought "that was really very arrogant of me to say that to her." And it taught me a really big lesson of not listening to people and of imposing my will on somebody else. And I went to her and talked to her about that. That was a tremendous learning experience for me.

I think that our girls, as well as the women that we deal with today, need to be respected. Their boundaries need to be respected. We can make observations and we can give them - I don't even like to use the word "advice" - but we can observe them and give them feedback on what we see and what we hear them doing and saying. But we have to let people make choices. And the same thing with the women that we have today, they are so wounded and they have been so destroyed by their experiences with all kinds of abuse, that we have never experienced. We have to really be open to listening to them, to let them express

their feelings, to let them grieve over what has been taken from them and I don't think that has changed since Mary Euphrasia, or St. John Eudes, for that matter, started our work with women and girls. We have always worked with the abandoned, the broken, the abused and that's a very sacred place to be.

So when you ask about what are their needs, those are their needs - yesterday and today and tomorrow.

[long pause]

Do you remember any differences between the Seattle Home and the other homes that you were at?

Not really, especially in those earlier years. Seattle was the first and then I.....

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...back from St. Louis University and that summertime, then I went to Portland. And I was told, "you're only going to be there until February because in February, you're going back to St. Louis University and finish the course" that I had begun in the summertime. So I went to Portland, again where I told you the kids refused to come in the night before I got there. I really was the directress for that short period of time. But the children were not to be allowed to know that I was going to leave but the class was very upset the entire time that I was there. And I have to say I was so glad to get out of there because of all of the unrest. And even, I think, a person knowing that you're only going to go - and that you're only going to be there for about 4 months - it doesn't give you any opportunity to establish any roots or anything like that.

So I just disappeared, which was terrible. We used to do that to the kids all the time. Sisters would be missioned and the girls would never be told. They would wake up.....The Sisters used to leave the same way. If a young Sister came in and she decided, "I'm not going to stay; this is not my life, I need to leave," she'd be gone the next day. And we would never know anything about it - the Sisters, the young Sisters that she lived with. Her place would just be gone at breakfast time. When I look back at that, it just.....but it's the way they did things in those days. So you can't argue today with 1950 and 1960. But it was the same thing in the classes.

And I apparently had made some relationships with those girls and I remember we had a New Year's party which was wonderful. The class changed from before that party until after. There was a definite change in that class and I think I left at the end of January and the kids just rioted the next day when I was gone.

Was it still that way in the later years, in the late 60's and early 70's, in terms of when Sisters decided to leave, they would disappear - or when Sisters were missioned somewhere else? Was that the same?

Well, if they were missioned, that was okay. But if they left the convent, we didn't know until they were gone and their place wasn't there. Oh, it was just awful. Awful.

Was it the same in later years?

It changed.

How did the Vatican II Council affect how the Home was operated? Or with reactions within the community?

It wouldn't affect the way the Home was operated. It affected the Sisters and that affected them, the girls. We changed our habits. I was the first one in the province. I remember we got a letter that our hair could show and I went upstairs immediately and took my veil off - we just wore a veil then, across like this, with our hair showing. Then we shortened the habit and then the habits became, at least for certain occasions, they became optional. And I immediately changed clothes, especially because I was with the girls at the time and we would take them out on outings and that was a source of embarrassment for the girls, to have them go out with a woman who is in a habit, a religious habit. So then, at that time, I began to make some sports clothes for myself that I always wore going out on weekends and things like that.

That was pretty soon after Vatican II Council that you....

Yes, Vatican II ended in '65. We were never allowed to go home before then and I think I made my first home visit in 1967. I couldn't believe it - when I heard that we might be allowed to go home, I don't think my feet even touched the floor.

What kind of outings did you take the girls on?

We took them on picnics and then, I told you, with Barry and his friend, Gene, we took them camping. We went over to Oregon, I think it was over to the State Park, this beautiful park over there. And we camped all weekend; we would go Friday, Saturday and come back on Sunday. There was a place that had a place over across - I'm trying to think - was it Puget Sound? I'm sure it was the ocean. I'm sure it was Puget Sound. It was up in Edmonds, you'd cross the water. And they had a place, they allowed us to use that place on weekends sometimes and we'd all sleep together. The guys brought tents and they slept out in the yard and then we slept in beds, and I don't know how I remember, but I do remember I slept right with the girls there.

Did the girls have other contacts with males?

Well, if they went home, they would have contact on the weekends. And then it got, they started out with one weekend a month and then, it seems to me, that there towards the end, they were going home every weekend, especially if a girl

was getting ready to leave. It was kind of a way of getting her back into the family, back into the community.

Who decided when a girl was ready to be released? And was there any kind of ritual or procedure when she left?

No. She would just leave. She'd pack up her things. She would gradually, if she knew that she was going to be leaving, she would gradually take her things home with her. And that was a decision that was made, I'm sure, with the social worker and with the caseworker, the group mother and whoever, maybe the principal or the teacher which very often was a Sister at that time.

So she would be told ahead of time?

Yes, exactly.

Did you have much time for recreation yourself?

During those years that I was with the girls until we closed that Home, no. And of course, we were not allowed to go out a great deal - like now, I do everything. I'm driving to Detroit to see what's left of my family on Monday. We have a fleet of cars here. We go and do. If we're going to be gone overnight, we should check that in with our coordinator so they're not wondering where we are or why we're not here. Ordinarily you don't even have to tell them where you're going but I think people don't have that kind of secret lives [laughter] that they can't talk about what they're doing or where they're going. At least, I don't - secrets drive me nuts.

How was it back then? You didn't have many interactions with the community or businesses?

None. None, really. I worked with the people in social services. I remember we had a man that was in charge of social service there for awhile.

Was it Mr. Moyers?

□No. I don't think I knew Mr. Moyers. He may have been before. Oh, what was his name? Anyway, it doesn't matter. He was there for about a year, year and a half and then he got divorced, had an affair. I remember Sr. Germaine just loved him and that just really broke her heart. She knew both of them and they had several children. Those things happen.

There was never any concern about sexual activity?

You know, I never ran into that with the girls. I never, never - in Portland, I think there was a lot of it, especially that first time I was there, those few months that I was there. I think there was a lot of sexual activity between the girls at that time but I never saw it other than to see them walking around holding hands and that kind of thing. And that was so scary in those days. We just forbid the girls - I

can remember forbidding the girls to hold hands and that kind of thing. But in all of the years - I can remember, where was it? I remember one place and I think it was in Portland where this girl had made the announcement that she was going to masturbate the next day. And everybody was going to come and see her. And I can remember that morning, everybody kind of going, hurrying down the stairs and running - and of course, I was right there and that ended that. But other than that, unless I was just blind to what was going on, never ran into that kind of thing.

What about men that came?

There weren't that many men around, actually. And there was never a whisper about Barry. I just absolutely could trust him completely and there was never even the slightest hint that ever came back to me. And he was wonderful with the girls and they loved him. They felt very free with him and talked to him and I think, shared things that were going on in their lives with him, maybe with him more than with me.

I've noticed in some things that I've read, it mentioned St. Joseph's Gym. Does that sound familiar to you?

St. Joseph's Gym? In Seattle? No.

I remember reading about it and I was trying to find out what building they would have been referring to because I didn't know that there was a gym there.

I don't remember a gym. They had a pool. They built the pool - that was wonderful, especially when the top collapsed and it was open in the summertime. Oh, it was wonderful to be out there. They had a pool in Portland, too, that was an indoor pool, although they had a bubble over that too.

Did you ever go swimming in Seattle?

Yes, I did both places. I would have gone swimming at night in Seattle, especially after they took, the bubble collapsed or fell down or something so they took it off so it was an open pool. I think they filled that in.

They have filled that in. So the Sisters did use that swimming pool as well as the girls?

In Portland, I know, and probably, as long as Helen Louise was there, she was very athletic, I'm sure she probably used it too. I can't think of anyone else who would have used it.

Did you ever swim with the girls?

No. I remember one time on one of these outings that we went on, I was still in full habit and I remember getting into the water and swimming in my habit. I think I kind of started out and kept getting wetter and wetter, and then I thought,

"what the hell" [laughter] so I'm all wet in my habit. And it was so hot that I just dried out.

And that was on a picnic or something?

No. Yes, I think it was a picnic.

Where did you have picnics?

I don't remember. Maybe Golden Gate-

Golden Gardens?

Golden Gardens, right.

That was cold water to swim in.

Yes, the Puget Sound water was very cold so it might not have been there. I remember the water being quite nice and warm. I'd forgotten about that.

Do you remember any special events or other programs? I know you mentioned the visit that you had....were there fundraising events that you ever attended?

No. At that time, I believe, did we still have the laundry? Yes, I think, in '73. And we also got money from United Way. I can remember that they supported both Portland and Seattle to quite a large amount of money, to support those two Houses. And that was supplemented by the laundry work. We absolutely had the laundry in Seattle. I never worked much in the laundry ever but I can remember going down and working sometime in the summer when maybe the kids were gone for the weekend or something like that.

Were you there when the fire started? There was a fire in 1967.

I was there.

Do you remember much about that?

I can remember alot about that! We had costumes up on that third floor which was a fire trap, really. And I had a young Sister, a young novice who was replacing me. I was leaving on a vacation and I had given the key to this girl to do something up there, either to get a costume or put something away, or do something, and I wrote a note to the Sister who was taking my place and I said to her, "get that key, so-and-so has the key, please get it from her right away." And I was off on a home visit. She did not get the key. And the girl went up and started the fire. And I was held, I was so angry about that, I was held responsible by one of the Sisters, the Sister that was there, and the key was taken away from me.

So, wait, you had given the key to-

To the girl.

To give to the Sister-

No, I had given the key to the girl to go up and get a costume and put away a costume or do some work up there or something. And when I left, I wrote a note to the Sister who was taking my place and said to her, "get that key from so-and-so and she did not get it and the fire started.

So did she start the fire on purpose?

Yes. Definitely. And the firemen found that out. Those men are wonderful. They found that out the next day, that she had set it deliberately.

Was this someone that you had trusted before?

Oh, yes. By that time, do you know what year that was?

1967. It was August 7, 1967.

That was probably my first visit home.

So you were gone.

I was gone, yes. I think it happened a day or so after I left. So I had only been there three years and yes, I did - '64 to '67, three years - so you can see, even by that time, I often trusted a lot of girls with my keys. Often. I had built up really a very good relationship with the girls and I can't even remember when that trust was betrayed. I mean, by any of them. I'd give them keys to get in and out of the House, or to wander to the yard, so that was a key that was an inside key to the House.

Where were some of your most favorite places in the building or on the grounds?

The chapel. The chapel, I loved. Lots of wood. It was beautiful. And I loved directing the singing and by that time, I was playing the guitar and leading the singing for the Sisters and for the girls. And I can remember my mother and dad came to visit me at one time. It was a Sunday and even though he wasn't a Catholic, they were up there in the chapel sitting together and I was up there leading the music and I turned around and caught my dad wiping his eyes.

What did I like? It was a nice yard. I can remember sitting around that pool, you know, like in the evening and the kids swimming. The air was so wonderful. I remember rehearsing plays and little performances with the girls.

Were the performances in the assembly room?

Yes. That's the only place we had.

Do you remember the penthouse? Or paradise room?

The penthouse sounds familiar. I think that's where those costumes and things were hanging and we ordinarily didn't let the girls go up there. It wasn't too safe or something, I don't know.

I remember the pergola. I had never heard that word before. It was a walkway, a covered walkway into the laundry from the House. Never heard that word before or since.

Were there pool hours? Special times when the girls could use the pool?

I think it was when the yard was open, like after school or Saturdays and Sundays when it was free. I think we got to the point where the doors were just open out into the yard. We used to keep them locked. We used to keep that door locked and it seems to me, the trust became very high, particularly after the time when the girls were allowed to go home on weekends, and they were allowed to see their families more frequently.

That was a gradual change over the '60's?

Yes, right. And I'm looking at 9 years, a lot of changes during those years. And then I guess the same thing that happened here is that the girls became, were sent to us less and less and less, and they also - I can remember those last few years where it was just extremely difficult because the girls that came in were, we were beginning to see that they were much more disturbed. And I think there was much more drug use and there was much more damage, and it was just too hard to handle them, I think.

Why was there much more damage?

I think because of the drugs - 70's. Lots and lots and lots of drugs. And they could walk down to the University District. They had lots of privileges there before we closed and they could get all kinds of drugs there.

Was there ever inspections made of the girls when they came back? Or of their rooms?

No. Never.

What about their mail?

We read their ingoing and outgoing mail for years and even when I first went to, not the first but the second time I was in Seattle, because I can remember Helen Louise and I reading the mail, and that stopped. We stopped doing that. So we would open it and maybe there would be money or something. And then we

would take the money out and put it in an envelope or we'd keep it for them. And it seems to me that we had a little store where they could buy things. Seems to me that Serena had a store where they could buy certain things, like deodorant or toothpaste. I don't even remember some of the things she had but it seems to me she had a little store for them.

So they would have to buy their own toothpaste and deodorant? That wasn't provided to them?

No, it was not provided for them. Although I think if a girl just didn't have anything, especially when they first came in, we would see that they had whatever they needed. But most of the time, those kinds of things were provided by their families. But as I say, we did have that little store and I think even if they didn't have the money, if they needed it, they got it. Some of them didn't have any money.

You can look through these photographs. Some of them might be older, before you were there.

Oh, I remember this room and we had a girl there that helped me learn to run off that printing-

The printing room.

Yes. There's Michael. Oh, my God. And that looks like Margaret Mary. Margaret Mary lived here until maybe a couple of years ago and one Saturday night, she went down to do some burning in one of the rooms and just dropped dead. She'd never been sick as far as we knew. She was in good health. That was really a shocker.

See, they're all in uniform here.

Here's a-

They had nice hair! Look at their hair!

There's the pool. Wow, I remember this. Isn't this too bad? It absolutely amazes me the way people do not date things. I cannot believe, or they may put the date and never the year. This was '57. Now this was the grotto over there in the schoolyard.

Those are very early pictures.

Where did that snow come from? We never had snow like that.

It was from 1919. That was the laundry superintendent who lived right next to the service entrance. And that was the truck that was used-

We never had snow like that in Seattle. That's up to their waists! Of course, they could go up to the mountains or they could go someplace where they had more snow.

In this photograph, there's two girls at the pond, are those uniforms? So they were still wearing uniforms even at the very end?

Yes. This was a colored picture.

That's a color xerox of a photograph that I didn't bring.

Was this towards the end?

I don't know. That one did not have a date on it. If you look at those uniforms, does that look like-

Well, the uniforms could have changed.....oh, here - see, they're wearing their own clothes, of course, they're at recreation here but they're wearing their own clothes. I don't remember this. I don't even remember this building. We may have had a summerhouse.

That's the summerhouse. [going back to girls at the pond picture] So you don't know, you can't tell from looking at it about when that was?

No. There towards the end when I was there, they wore their own clothes. They're wearing their own clothes here too so there must have been a time where they wore their own clothes and then it was decided they should uniforms and then it was decided that they would not wear uniforms. Because it doesn't seem to me that they wore uniforms much while I was there.

I think these are uniforms because these skirts that they have on-

You're right. All the way down the line, you can see, and they wore their own blouses. That's an instructor there. Yes, they do have white. They all have white blouses on.

This looks familiar to me too.

That's the kitchen.

It's the kitchen. That's funny. I was in too many places, I guess. I was there a long time. Now I do remember, it was on the bottom floor, yep.

This brochure has alot of pictures in it. It's from an earlier time but maybe some of the rooms looked the same later.

[reading from brochure] A good home and happy girls are..... beautiful. So there's St. Joseph's Gym.

That's where I saw it.

I wonder whether it was not there anymore. Or whether that was the summerhouse. This is the dining room where they turned - see those round tables - those tables that they turned over. And it looks like there's 1-2-3-4-5-6, there were 8 sitting at a table. Those tables were so heavy, I can hear that bang yet - it sounded like a cannon going off. Here they're square dancing out in the yard. Nice pictures of these girls. I never saw this. They had lots of opportunities. Some of these girls, it was the only home they ever knew. I had been told I was the only parent they had ever really had.

Was there still some vocational training going on in the 70's?

Oh, as long as we - they were in school. They were given lots of opportunities to learn. I don't know whether they ever did it - I'm trying to think if we did it here - where sometimes they went out to a school in the neighborhood. It seems to me that we may have started that near the end.

I had heard that some of the girls went to Lincoln High School-

Yes!

And I was curious about when that started and why.

It was another way of getting them back into the community, gradually.

But they didn't start that until-... did that happen during the 60's?

Well, it must have happened while I was there because I was there until the school closed. And that wouldn't have been done earlier. So I must have been there when they did that.

There's Michael, my God, she looks like she's 25.

They would start the year off at Lincoln High School?

Or maybe they would go the middle of the year or the beginning of semester or quarter or something like that...

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...in the washhouse. You need to know the history of the laundry. When we came here in 1885, the Sisters came up from St. Louis, on the Mississippi, to St. Paul. St. Louis had already been founded. And we came up and we lived in several places and then we built the place at 931 Blair and we were there for 93 years. And there was a deficit of, I think it was, \$75,000 or something like that. And some of the Sisters had previously had some connection with Mary Hill who is James J. Hill's wife, who was a Catholic. So Mother Holy Spirit was the

Mother at the time and she wrote a letter to James J. Hill asking if he could be of some help with this \$75,000 debt. He did not answer the letter. He appeared in person and this is in the annals. He was critical and disturbed how these women were no businesswomen and how could they get a debt of \$75,000 and why was it not paid. And Mother Holy Spirit said, "oh, if we had the money, we would be only too glad to pay." And he said, "well, I will take over this debt but you will pay me on regular monthly installments." And she said, "oh," again, "if we just had the work, we'd be only too happy to pay this money." And he said, "you will have the work. Beginning Monday, you will do the laundry for the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific Railroads." We did that laundry for 67 years or thereabouts. ~~And~~ we did it everywhere. We did it in every one of our homes. We had homes in Portland, in Seattle, in Spokane, Sioux City, Denver, and in every one of those places, we did the laundry. And he provided the machinery and we hired these men and he kept this machinery running but you know what? We saved them millions of dollars, I think, in those years.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.