

October 24th, 2015 – Sister Mildred Millie Speed speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana.

Abbreviations

SMMS: Sister Mildred Millie Speed

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lenin in Oldenburg, Indiana at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Francis. It is October 24, 2015 and I have the pleasure of being with Sister Mildred Millie Speed. Thank you, Sister. Would you like to introduce yourself?

SMMS: Well, yes I came known as Millie. My father Ferrell at Liberty in Vine Street in Cincinnati, Ohio and he called me "Maid Millie" one night. And I stood up and said, "I'm not your maid." He said, "Millie, you are so dense. I call you maid the way a knight would address a lady." Well, by that time I was in tears, so that's how I became Maid Millie, okay. But my work in the inner city is not where I want to begin my story. My story really begins with thanks to God for my mom and dad. We had so many examples of how deeply they must have loved each other. Dad would come home from work at noontime on Mondays and help mom to hang up the wash out in the yard. His dad owned the bowling alleys in the Saint Bernard, Ohio and he worked with his dad. Course my mom, according to her father, married the wrong man, but they loved each other so very, very deeply and from them we learned that love in life brought many surprises. And dad and mom never left the house and whenever dad came home there was always a kissing party. My brothers and I used to laugh about, well I wonder how long the kissing party will last today, but every time that dad came home there would be a kissing party with him, "Dear Helen" as he said and my mom would always say there's no man on earth like her "Charlie." So we had great examples of love and care and I'm thanking God for that all my life long.

My life here at Oldenburg began with the Sisters at Saint Clements in Saint Bernard, Ohio. I was with them from kindergarten all through the eighth grade and then at OLA or the Academy here at Oldenburg and in 1942 when I was a novice, I had entered in 1939 as a sophomore in high school at the academy and classmate of mine had chosen already to enter the novitiate that was Charlene Wolf, Sister Charlene who spent many years as a wonderful teacher in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and then later in Papua New Guinea. Together we had done many things and become very dear friends in our freshman year. Now Charlene had decided to enter the novitiate in August or September I guess and all this summer she had written me letters and notes, "Why don't you come over and join Rosemary and me?" I would say, "No I'm going to finish school at the Academy." But her letters sort of stuck in my brain box and I wondered if I shouldn't consider entering. But I came back to the Academy as a sophomore and I was selected the class president. But then that letter bugged me and so on I talked to Sister Ethel Burgen who was our director for the aspirants at the time. She finally got so tired of listening to me about the letter that she took me down to talk with Mother Leonida and Mother Leonida said, "Well if you think God is talking to you through that letter, why don't you ask the priest about the letter the next time you go to confession?" So I did so. And his advice was, "Listen, to God talking to you in your heart, so I've finally wrote to my mom that Mother Leonida's advice and mom said I could enter the convent at any time I would choose to do so.

So I left the Academy on the feast of Saint Michael, September the 29th. I had met with Sister Alacota, novice mistress and my mom and I sewed my number on all kinds of crazy open pieces of clothing and I came back to Oldenburg on October the 4th and I entered the novitiate at that time. My mom and my two brothers came with me and then I grew up with two of my four brothers because two died before I was ever born, but Walt and Jim, they were the brothers that I knew. So I grew up in a family of three kids and I was the oldest one. So I thought. But then as I grew up I learned more and more about my other two brothers, Norbert and Charles.

Well to the present timeline in my story. In 1942, I was a second-year novice. It was at the time of World War II also. Soldiers were apparently all over the place. I had been to Union Terminal in Cincinnati just to see what it was like to see all the murals on the wall, but I had never been on a train in my life. But I guess it was July, I'm not sure the month anymore, but anyway they put a black veil on me and I was going to go to Streator Illinois with a Sister Otillia, quite an elderly Sister. So we get over to Batesville, we get on the train and Sister Olivia, or Sister Otillia said to me, "We have a long ride." And so we were given a seat on the train by some soldiers and Sister Otillia said to me, "Here's your ticket, now don't lose this thing because if you lose it, they'll put us off, they'll put you off the train and then I'll have to go along by myself. And I said, "No I don't want to do that." So I hung onto that ticket like it was my life sign and the soldiers were very kind to us. There was a lot of laughing and loud talking and jabbering on the train. So most of those men knew where they were going, but they didn't know if they were ever going to come home. So there was a tone of sadness also on the train, but anyway we traveled and traveled and traveled and Sister Otillia said to me, "Would you like something to eat?" and I thought, Oh we never eat in public, so I politely said, "No thank you," but she politely bought herself a sandwich from the conductor and enjoyed eating into the (unintelligible) and I was hungry wishing I had said yes. But I had been trained that we it we don't eat in public all right. So then another conductor came around he was selling ice cream did she want an ice cream cone so she says to me, "Would you like to have some ice cream with it?" "Oh no, Sister, thank you." But she did. And she enjoyed everything to the full. So we rode and rode.

Finally, we got off the train at Kankakee, Illinois. And there was a man there to meet us and he said, "Now you know, Sister, you have a long ride, yet," said I know we're in Peoria now we have to get to Streator, okay. So we get in the car and we ride, finally, we get to Streator, Illinois and that was where I first met Sister Norberta, Sister Donald, (unintelligible), and Sister Olivia Marie Stier. And I already knew Sister Otillia because she took care of me all the way up when we traveled. All right so we get out of the car and the man carry my suitcase up the steps, we got, we lived in a three-story house because at one time the Sisters kept orphans in Steator, Illinois in this house and so I was told that I would live on a top floor with Sister Olivia Marie. And Sister Donald and Sister Norberta and Sister Otillia and Sister Mary DePaul, the music teacher. They all lived on the second floor. Okay, so Sister Norberta said to me, "Why didn't you finish taking the wash down?" So I did, I knew how to do this from home. So I took all the wash down, got it all folded. And then I began my experience with Sister Norberta, and Donald, and Olivia Marie and Otillia. We were the teachers in the school. Well Sister—I don't like milk, I hate to drink milk. But there was a big glass of milk by my place in the dining room and I thought, The best thing I can do is get rid of this right away. So I picked up the glass and I drank it all the way through and then Sister Norberta said, Sister Donald you better get Sister another glass for milk because

she seems to be so thirsty. So the thing that I hated I got double dose of and but it was it was a very happy time at Streator, Illinois with Sister Norberta and the others.

Norberta and I we worked in the house every Saturday morning. And Olivia Marie and Donald would go over to church and do all the sacristy work. Well, once Saturday morning, we awoke and came downstairs and at night, on Friday night I had unwrapped all the margarine blocks and put them in a bowl, shoved the bowl in a corner without understanding that it was on the corner of where the furnace pipe went up. So in the morning it was all melted and some of it had gone over the edge of the bowl. Sister Norberta was not just too happy that morning. But anyway we survived and we baked cookies all morning because Roberta's policy was whoever had a relative in the service got a box, a can of cookies and she used popcorn so the cookies wouldn't break in the mailing and the can of cookies went to whoever had a relative in the service and each one of us had relatives in the service so somebody in the family would get a can of cookies every week and the, it was just wonderful and then the service the soldiers would write back and thank us for the cookies and so forth.

Then I experienced as a teacher was just fantastic because Sister Norberta said to me, and you're going to teach the second grade year, so here are all of the books you're going to need. And Sister Donald will be your mentor and she will be in your classroom a half a morning a week of to offer a review and then on that day you meet with her after school and she'll tell you you know well that was very good or you could be a little stronger here and so forth. And a half a day you would be teaching and I'll come down to your room when the eighth graders go out for physical therapy and sewing and home cooking at the public school. And then I'll meet with you after school that day. And then on another day you will go over to Sister Donald's room and observe her while I teach your class. So I thought, everybody did this when they went off on mission. Well apparently I was the only one who had a real education in student teaching. Then the first time that a parent came, Rosemary Bronco's mother came, and she wanted to talk to the second grade Sister and I looked at Sister Norberta and I said well aren't you coming with me? And she said, "I'm not the second grade teacher, you are" and I was really frightened to go in by myself and talk to a parent, but everything turned out quite all right. Then and Rosemary was fine in school she just simply was a little bit slow, but we got along well together and one morning I was helping Norberta to bake cookies and I dropped her mixing bowl and of course it broke, so she called Sister Donald, I don't know how she got her but anyway she came over from the sacristy, she told Sister Donald, "Take Sister Mildred up to town and don't bring her back until she has a mixing bowl for my mixer." So we get down the steps of the house and I'm on the sidewalk crying, Sister Donald said, "Well I'm not going to take a crying Sister uptown with me so, you stop crying or go back and tell Norberta you're not going to go. Well I wasn't going to tell Norberta I wasn't going up to buy a bowl, so we went to—we went uptown, I don't remember how many stores we went to, but we finally found the bowl that would go with her mixer and so go back to the house we end up baking cookies and the regular routine and then Sister Donald went over to the sacristy, finished her work.

And I remember that Norberta was loving, kind, a Superior who was absolutely fantastic, marvelous and of course I thought everybody had the same experiences that I had. I didn't realize it that I never got any mail from Oldenburg where I never had—I was never invited to write anything back to Oldenburg, but I never had any mail all year, never heard from my classmates or anything. I just thought everybody was like you know just busy, busy, busy.

We prayed and joined in the parish and one day I had a letter from my mom had a very dear friend of hers in Dayton was very sick. So we prayed and prayed and he, he recovered somewhat and then we got another letter that he was sick again and he died. His name was Frank Swab. Well when he died I sort of thought I should go home and help my mom take care of my two brothers. They were both by this time at Roger Bacon High School, so I talked to Roberta about that and I said, "I think I should go home and help my mom." She said, "What will you do?" I said, well, "I'll try to get a job and then I guess my mom will get my mother's pension back again because when I went to living in Illinois and Indiana they cut her off, but if I go back to Ohio, maybe she would get more money to help because she had to feed me and so forth. So she said, "Well, why don't we pray about this a while before you—what would you do?" I said, "Well, I could get a job and I'll try to do some schoolwork, you know, go to school someplace, maybe I go to comptroller's school because that's where the mother's pension wanted me to go anyway so—"

MEL: Sister, could you describe what a mother's pension is? Described a mother's pension—

SMMS: Oh, my mother's pension? Well, I forgot to mention that my dad died in 1932, he was 35 years old. My mom had myself to raise, my brother Walt too—I was eight, my brother Walt was five and our brother Jimmy was, he was about three months, three months when dad died. Dad he had a cold and it went into (unintelligible) poisoning. He became—he was delirious and he died. When my mom went up to arrange for a funeral at Saint Clement's church, the pastor said, "Well, Mrs. Speed, you don't belong to Saint Clement, you belong to Saint Thomas Aquinas." My mom said, "Well, we've been going to Mass every Sunday, putting our donation in regularly and everything." And he said, "I know that, but you live on—anyway the side of Tire Avenue that we lived on was supposed to be Thomas Aquinas, the other side belonged to Saint Clement's. But nobody told my mom or dad that when my mom and dad were giving donations to the church all the time. We belonged to Saint Clement's because my dad's family all belonged to Saint Clement's. But anyway my dad could not be buried from Saint Clement's because we didn't quote, "belong to the parish." She didn't just—mom didn't know what to do, so she she said she knew she knew she wasn't going to Saint Thomas Aquinas and so later she told me she called up her friend with whom she went to school at Saint Aloysius in Covington who became a Franciscan priest. He was a pastor at Saint George, so she called him up and he said, "Well sure Helen." You just bring your—bring Charlie up here and we'll bury him from Saint George.

So my dad was buried from Saint George Church. And then, I remember everything from seeing my dad in the coffin and my uncles, my Uncle Tom and Uncle (unintelligible), my brother and me on Sunday morning and the first thing I remember saying was how did dad eat today. "Well Mildred" she said, "Daddy went to heaven last night to be with God and your two brothers Norbert and Charles." Okay, so for me that was—and my uncles said, "Do you want to go to church?" And I said, "Well sure, they had always had the Children's Mass in those days at Saint Clement's at nine o'clock." So we all met on the school yard, you get in line by class and we'd all walk over to church and we'd go to the nine o'clock Mass. Well, I can remember my mom in the middle. She had me in her—by her right hand, she had Walt on her left hand. She walked up behind the casket all the way up to Saint George in front of that long walk in that church. But my brother Walt in many years we'd talk about things and I have no memory of dad and whatever and he said I don't remember

anything at all, have no memory of dad. I couldn't understand this. And I still didn't understand it even though I took courses in psychology at different colleges and universities and I thought how could anyone not remember their dad, their daddy after because he was five, he was five when Daddy died. I thought he should remember but he said he has no memory of dad, whatever, so. It was such a shock to him that everything was just wiped out just like everything else. But anyway, the mother's pension, mom applied for it. I remember her saying she had to have only \$200 to qualify for mother's pension and the mother's pension at that time in 1932 and a few years after that gave a certain amount for the oldest child the other children got lesser amounts depending on the difference in the age.

So, but mom, mom and dad had a comfortable living and dad was going to build a home for us. Before he died, I remember my dad lifting me up, we had a Philco Radio on the floor, stood on the floor like a big piece of furniture and he lifted me up and he said, You see that picture right there? He said that's something we're going to do, I'm going to have a nice house, we're going to have a yard and we're going to have a white fence around it. Because we always said you wanted to have a house with a white fence. So, and he said, we're going to have a big yard and you can all three play out in the yard and we're going to have some trees by our house too. And that was my dream what my dad was going to do for us, but dad didn't live long enough to do anything like that. Well the mother's pension for her to qualify, she had to have only \$200. So the pastor at Saint Clement's Church advised her to withdraw some of the money week by week until it got down to \$200 and put it in the trust fund in her name through the care of her dear friend, Frank Shaw and when it qualified as having only \$200 in it she should again apply for mother's pension. So she did all of this according to the direction of the pastor and all of this I know because of what my mom told me. Well then when she got down to the \$200 and applied again she had to take all of us down to the courthouse in Cincinnati and I remember that we would get off the bus at Elms? and (unintelligible) and go across the street to this huge building sharing the elevator and go up to this office where all these people were and they would ask us all kinds of questions. Well she qualified for mother's pension with the three of us children, but in qualifying for the pension she had to give up I think much of her independence because young girls who were studying at the University of Cincinnati were supposed to come in our house once every week and look at my mom in my mom's closet shelves and see that she had the right kind of food for us to be well nourished. She knew more about cooking than most people probably ever did in their whole lives. And these people, these young women would come in, I guess nutrition classes or something I don't know, anyway my mom didn't like that at all.

And every year we had to go to the fresh air farm so that we would be healthy and my mom hated that but we had to do it or she would not qualify for the mother's pension, so we would go to the fresh air farm and I guess the three of us, Walt and I at least, we thought it was pretty much fun. Had a lot of kids and a lot of games and ball and stuff so we would enjoy the time at the fresh air camp. But my mom wouldn't. She just didn't, didn't accept it at all. And I can understand now, I mean as I grew up I knew why mom didn't like it. So after the stay at the fresh air farm then we'd go back home and life would go on pretty much as regular. Does that satisfy about mother's pension or okay.

All right, then after I'm going back to Streator now. Once the end of the year came at the school year and then I would come—I came home over for the summer my classmates

would say, How come you didn't come home for Christmas? I said I don't know, did you come home for Christmas? Yeah, we were home for Christmas, we were here for Easter, you were the only one who wasn't here. I said, I don't know anything about that. So I asked Sister Norberta one day, I said, can we take a walk? All around the convent yard, I want to talk with you about something and I said, do you happen to know why I never got any letters from my classmates? Why I never knew that they went home at Christmas and they went home at Easter. Well, she said, yeah I know why. I said, well why? She said because Mother Cephas said any mail that came for you I was to open it and read it and if it was from a classmate I was to read it and remail it to the novice director. Oh. And was there a reason? Yeah. I said, what was the reason? I was simply told that you were to have no correspondence with anybody in your class and they were to have no correspondence with you. And you were to remain on mission the entire year. I said, I don't understand. And she said, you know that three of your classmates had already left the novitiate in order to become cloistered Sisters because you seemed to have the idea that a cloistered Sister who was a nun would grow up to be holier than the working Sister would be and they thought that you might be the next one to leave to be a cloistered nun. I said, well I was never thinking about that. Well, she said, they weren't sure so they said you were sent to Streator, far enough away and no correspondence for the entire year and then to see what happened. I said, I loved Oldenburg and I would stay at Oldenburg, I was very happy and I wanted to be an Oldenburg Sister and I wanted to teach the Indian children. Well you ended up here at Streator. Is there anything else you wanted to know? I said, yeah are they ever going to send you home? She said, oh no. Said the idea was to be sure you stayed Oldenburg. I said, I am an Oldenburg Sister. And so I will be. And so I will remain.

Ok, so well I went back to Streator the next year and was time—to get ready for school with Sister Norberta and so. And on the third year that I was going back to Streator, Sister Norberta was no going back, she had been transferred to the orphanage. Sister Donald has been transferred to Little Flower in Indianapolis. And I think Sister Olivia Marie and I were the only two who went back. So our great partnership and it was when I learned that all superiors were not like Sister Norberta. When it was Mother's Day, she sent all three of us downtown to the photographer. We were to have an 8x12 photo of ourselves so that we could mail it to our mothers for Mother's Day. And I just thought every superior did these things. We didn't make any more cans of cookies on Saturday to send to the soldiers. Those were all things that Norberta did that I don't think anybody else did. Anyway, I asked later on in life, I said, why was Sister Norberta never a counselor? And the answer I got from Sister Lorencia Listerman was Vatican II in 1942 and many of the Sisters thought she was far ahead and too different from the strict rule interpretation that they were somewhat frightened of her moving forward and looking ahead as to what was going on. Where I and the Sisters who lived with her thought she was just absolutely wonderful and the other sister that I—the other Superior that I heard my classmates talk about was a sister in the Indianapolis area. I think her name was Sister Bennett. And they talked to us about Sister Bennett with such great love and admiration.

Well so my third year at Streator without Sister Norberta was a learning year for me because I just learned that every superior was not like Norberta. Everybody in my class did not have the same experience I had with teaching, learning how to teach. I think most of them were told that here are your books and you're going to teach the second grade. Here are your books and you're going to teach the fourth grade and then Sister so and so will be glad to help you if you need any help. Well of course we all needed help, when we had no

training. So anyway, so I seemed to have lucked out with the best of everything. And I when Mary Ellen talked about me doing this I said, my thing would be all that I can offer God is thanks for everything that came about and that's really true so I did thank God for the love I saw in my parents, for my best experience at Streator even though I was the only one that had such an experience, but it was just absolutely wonderful.

After Streator my memory goes to Greensburg, Indiana where the pastor was a very abrupt man and a man who considered himself the absolute authority within the parish and anything that pertained to the parish. And I remember I was sitting in the community room preparing some mussels I guess, and then the door opened and father said, you'll do, come on, come with me. So I just got up and followed him and he took me over to the rectory and he said I want you to type the parish bulletin. I said, but I don't know how to type, just a little bit. And he said, well that's all right. Just sit down, I'll tell you what to type. So while I was following him typing, our superior came up, Sister Rose, Rose, something. Anyway, whoever she was, Rosalie, she had gone to school with my mom at Saint Aloysius in Covington, Kentucky, long years before. And she came in, she opened the door and she said, Sister, you are to go home now. So I got up and left. Father said, I told her to stay. And she said, I'm telling her to go home. So I went out and I left them to decide what was going to happen. I don't know what happened then. Anyway, so I went home and everything seemed to work out okay.

And then one day at Greensburg, the sister said, I think it was Thomisine? came up from the cellar, she had gone down to get some potatoes and she said something about a rat. I thought a rat was a grown up mouse. I didn't know what was going on. So anyway they said to me, you take a broom and this jacket and go downstairs and get the mouse, get the rat out of the potatoes. So I took the broom and the jacket and I went down the stairs and I saw this big fat thing which I thought was a grown up mouse and I took the broom and I jabbed at it and I said, Go back in the hole. And I didn't know where the hole was, but anyway the dumb rat got up and sort of looked at me and then went around and I said—jabbed again with the broom and they said if he starts to come at you, you just throw the jacket over him. So I got the rat off the potatoes, he went in the hole and they said when you get him in the hole and you yell for us to come down. So they came down and I said, that hole over there. So then they stuffed something into that hole and then in the afternoon they said, the men fixed the hole, the rat won't come back anymore. So, it was, we went from the community room into the kitchen and there was one spot in the floor where the hole, and if you stepped on it you went through. So they had a piece of board on that flat and then they put a black piece of carpeting over that and everybody who went to from the community room into the kitchen would walk on either side of it because if you walked on that part your foot went straight through. So we learned how to avoid the walking straight through to the next room.

And so in Greensburg I guess the next thing that I learned was that some of the kids there knew far more about life, living in Greensburg than I did because the boys, I had three boys who one day they just didn't come back to school because there was going to be an auction of horses. So they went to the horse auction to see what was going on with the horses so I said to one of the boys, I said, you go out into the hall and lock the classroom door and come in the cook-room door and after you get back into the room, I'll lock the cook-room door. And they said, well then they won't be able to get back in when they come. I said, that's the idea. They don't want to come to school, they don't get in back to the class. So these kids came back from the horse auction and they tried the door and I heard one of

them say to go to the cook room. But that was also locked so they couldn't get back in. So they began to bang real hard on the door. And I said, who's there? Well they gave me their names and I said, well I said if you don't want to come to school, you have to go down to the principal's office to register (laughs). And he said, but we're already in school. I said, you can't be in school if you're out in the hall. And you're not allowed in. So they just sat down on the floor and waited for a long time and finally they all went down to the principal and she came up and knocked on the door and said, Sister unlock the classroom door. So I said to one of the boys, go over and unlock one of the doors, so she did, or he did, rather, and then the principal came in gave those three guys a raking over the coals. And said, they had to come to her office after school that day. So they did. So that worked out okay for me and for the boys too. They learned a good lesson. I think not trying to play hooky.

All right, then. At Greensburg, I think I was at Greensburg when I celebrated my Silver Jubilee in the congregation. And so I celebrated there. By that time our principal and superior—I think it was Greensburg, while Sister Noelle Marie Rowonda? She was a fun person, a great lady to live with, deeply spiritual, wonderful. And then I remember too that one time I was, I guess my next mission was about uh, well after Greensburg I went to Cincinnati area. And I was living, teaching at Saint Barth's. They were ready for an eighth grade. The school had begun with grades one, two, three and four. And then they moved up each year they added a grade. They were ready for the eighth grade when Sister Angeline Hagamine and I were sent there as the eighth grade teachers and we were to do coordination with our classes and so for and so at Saint Barth's then we had, I had Language Arts and Religion and Sister Angeline had all the other stuff and religion in her classroom. Shared classroom. The children, the kids do not exchange rooms, but Sister Angelina and I did, we did the exchanging. And then, it was at that time that we were beginning to drive cars and have a modi—a very, a modified habit and Father, the pastor said, well just because you can drive a car, doesn't mean you are going to get one, so he would not supply a car. If the parish supplied the car, we were permitted to drive. So one of the families in the parish, said we have an old station wagon in the garage, so at least you can have that, so at least you can get to the store and so forth, where we have to go. So they gave us this old station wagon to use and one day Sister Margaret George, she's Ruth Greiwe, Sister Ruth Greiwe were driving on Winton Road towards Galbraith. And I was making rosaries at that time and I had someone who bought a rosary and so we were going to deliver the rosary. We were driving on Winton Road and all of a sudden we get near Galbraith and the light red and so we stopped. Ruth Greiwe was ready to make a turn, she went like this and she had, she had the steering wheel in her hand, it was off the pole in her hand. She said, what should I do? Well let's try to see if we can get it on and everybody on the back are honking their horns (laughs). We were trying to get that steering wheel back on whatever you call it, that spindle, the thing in the car. Finally, we got it in and so we turned left on Galbraith. Millie, she said, gosh what would we have done if we would had got hit. I said well, I would have gotten out of the car, gone back to the next car and said to the person who was driving that car, we need help up there if you can come up and help us. But we didn't so. So she got out of that one okay.

And then, we came home one day from a meeting in Indianapolis. We'd gone up to Marian College, now Marian University. When we came home from the meeting, all of us found our trunks outside in the driveway. What in the name is that? Well, we were living in what was the Boy Scouts' meeting rooms. That was when (unintelligible), they put a kitchen in that building, and that's where we were living. One floor thing, and we all had little bitty rooms,

no room for a desk or a table, so I remember my brother came out and I said to my brother one time, when he came to visit me, I said, if we had a piece of wood that we could—on a chain to the wall, maybe we could let that down and we could use, course we puts some books and paper, so my brother came out and he fixed measurement and put a piece of—we had a plank of wood that we fastened on a wall, we could loosen it and bring it down. I think he had a chain on both ends of the table. And then we had like a writing desk where we could do some work in our rooms, okay and then the Father didn't care what we did as long as we didn't ask for anything. And that time we were going into a modified habit and it was an interesting time. Oh, our trunks were all in the driveway. Father Flannigan had decided that he was going to use that building again for meeting places for the parish and the Boy Scouts and he had called Corpus Christi and the pastor over there said, well they had the bedrooms, you know the Sisters did, so we all went over to live in Corpus Christi convent and so we'd have to have transportation back and forth to school everyday. And so at that time he'd have to supply a car. So he did supply some kind of a car so we could drive back and forth. But we lived in Corpus Christi, but we taught at Saint Barth's.

Okay, and then, through all this I would say, Oh God we thank you for the good that comes. Although when things would happen I'd say, Why would this have to happen? Well so later on we can thank God for the good that came out of it. Sometimes when things are happening, one doesn't understand that good can come from such a stupid happening, with so much human interference, there seems to be just a lot of human politicking or something that would take place in my life. So but the living at Corpus Christi was very pleasant, because we were living with the sisters who taught at the high school in Hamilton, remember the name or some of them taught at she just a lot of human club politicking or something it would take place in my life so but they're living in Corpus Christi was very pleasant because we were living with the sisters who taught high school example remember they are there some of taught at Fenwick High School in Middleton. That was a good experience. I was understanding that the high school teachers had to have a different routine or a different hourly (unintelligible) I guess we would call it than a group of grade school teachers would have.

Well following that experience living in Corpus Christi I was appointed the following year to Saint Catharine's School in Westwood, a suburb of Cincinnati as principal of the school, not superior of the house, but principal of the school. And the superior was different, Sister Bertha Wolford was the superior of the house and an eighth grade teacher. And I was a principal of the school. The school was rather large. There was a Monsignor Roddy who was the pastor and there were two assistant priests there. One of whom was a secretary to the Archbishop of Cincinnati and the other one was like Monsignor Roddy's right hand and he was very, very concerned about school. And the attendance at the school increased while I was there as principal and we had—when I left there we had nine hundred-sixty children in the school. And enrollment of nine-six-zero. We were the largest Catholic school in the archdiocese of Cincinnati. I left there because I was forced out by the assistant who was Monsignor's right hand. Monsignor had died and that assistant wanted me to start a campaign in the parish so he would be named the pastor. And I told him that I didn't feel like I could do that. That would be up to the people themselves to do that if they still wanted it. Well he did not like it that I would not start up a campaign that he would be named the pastor. And because of that he sort of made things very difficult for me and he also wanted me out of the parish and so there was a letter from the superintendent to our Reverend Mother at the time and he wanted to know if they wanted me transferred from Saint

Catharine's. And I was called home. And it was Mother Marie Dillhof at that time. And she said, "Are you happy at Saint Catharine's?" And I said, "Why yes, I like it very, very much." She said, "This assistant was he good to you?" And I said, "He's sort of like a roller coaster." I said, "He can praise you to the sky and all of a sudden wham. And he's up like a rollercoaster again. I call him a living roller coaster.

So Mother said, Well, there's some concern about you remaining there. Are you willing to stay there? I said, Why yeah, I said, We have a wonderful school. She said, I know all about the wonderful school, but she said, Are you going to stay there? I said, yeah I am. So I went back to that. I went back to Saint Catharine's and when I got back there I met Sister Bertha and Sister Paula in the upstairs hallway and they said, why are you here? I said, Well I live here. I said, I work here. Not anymore, because this afternoon Father Concerta called Sister Paula and me over and he said, Sister Paula is now the principal of the school. I said, Well I think Mother Marie would have something to say about that because my obedience says that I am the principal of the school. Oh, but Father said, Sister Paula is. I said, well, I'm the principal of the school and I remain as such. They said, Well how are you going to settle this with Father? I said, Well I'm not just going to settle it with him, he has never said anything to me about it. So life was a bit shaky there and Mother said to me. If anything develops while, we'll get in touch with you. So she called me and she said, Can you come home on Sunday morning? I said, Sure I can come home. So we went home on Sunday morning. I think two of the Sisters went with me. It was the beginning of—around time for Holy Week and they were glad to have a chance to come home anyway. So we get home and Mother says, Now the Superintendent of the school sent another letter and Father wants you out. But he wants, the Superintendent wants you to stay. The bishop wants you to stay. Well the bishop is the boss, so I guess it's a matter of the bishop telling one of his priests that—well maybe it just plain words that the bishop is the boss. So I don't know what kind of transactions went on, but Mother said, Well if you go back, if anything develops that's unpleasant for you, you let me know.

So I went back and I remember going to—the following day was a—that was Saturday, I went back on to Mass on Sunday. And I remember distinctly that when Father gave me the host at Holy Communion, I didn't realize he was going celebrate the Mass that I attended, (unintelligible) I swear to God an electric shock or something when he gave me the host because in those days we were still receiving on the tongue, you know. So well, anyway, at that time in the end it all happened that I, I had to leave Saint Catharine because the priest had finally written to the bishop that if they don't relieve me, if they don't remove me from the parish, he feared that he would attack me personally, physically. And he had no control over himself whenever he saw me or met me or so forth.

So okay, Mother says to me, Well, when can you be ready to leave? I said, Well, he said this would be like my Good Friday, so I'll be ready to get out on Holy Thursday. So I went back to school and I went on with everything when it came time to dismiss the children for Holy Week, I said, well now, you know I gave the regular dismissal and so forth. Told the children that we would all be back on Easter Monday, Easter Tuesday, because Easter Monday was a free day for a holiday. We celebrated Easter again on Easter Monday. So I—and then I didn't—I said nothing to the faculty. There were two sisters and I said to Mother Marie, my I take Sister Alma Louise and Sister Joan, Joan Luerman who's now in the infirmary and have them to help me to get things carried from school to the house in the evening. I'll take the station wagon and we can (unintelligible) up the station and I'll get all

my stuff, all my personal stuff out and then on Thursday, on Wednesday when I dismiss for Easter nobody else will know what's going on. So on Wednesday afternoon of Holy Week we're dismissed for Easter and I dismissed the children said on Easter Tuesday when we'll be back and celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and so forth. And with that—when I was finished with my announcements and my dismissal, two of the teachers came in the office and they said to me, We are not going to let this happen. And I said, I beg your pardon, but, what's happening? We know what's going on that you are being forced out. I said, I have never said anything about this. We know that but, Father, Father Bensmen also knows what's going on and he told Georgina and me what is going on and we're going to the Superintendent we're going to demand that you stay. I said, It will do no good. I said, please, it is can't—nothing can be, nothing can be undone that is already done. You will just have to pray that everything goes smoothly.

All right, so I said, Please don't. Well we want you to stay. I said, Look, I want to stay but at this time, I cannot stay, so I will have to go. Anyway, I left them knowing (unintelligible) Mother had said to me, Where will you go and how will you get there and what's going to happen? I said, Well, Sister Norberta is somewhat retired and she's up in Middletown right now. Could I go back—could I go to Middletown to be with Sister Norberta? Of course. I think if I would have asked to go to Hawai'i they would have said yes (laughs). Oh my. And so, I went up to Middletown and I stayed with Sister Norberta and we would walk every afternoon and pray a rosary together and we would also visit classrooms and talk with children about the great books that they could read. And all the travelling that they could do with books. And I was well versed in Children's Literature at that time. So I had a great time in visiting the classrooms. And one afternoon Mother Marie called and she talked to Sister Virginia Marie who was the Superior at Middletown. She told Sister Virginia Marie that she would like to have me at Oldenburg the next afternoon. So Sister Virginia that Mother Marie wants you to go home.

And to me, I'll never forget this—when I got home to Oldenburg the Sister at the door said, Well Mother said that I wish you'd send for Sister so-and-so, I forget who she was, anyway I had a room with a rocking chair in Saint Francis Hall now. And I thought to myself, Wow, I never had a private room with a bath, rocking chair, my gosh, what's going on. So I got over to Mother's office, we talked a bit and she said, You know Sister Lorensia? I said, Oh yeah of course I know Lorensia, she's also from Saint Bernard. Well, yeah. I said, Her brother went to school with my dad. Well. Right now Sister Lorensia is very ill, did you know that? No. She's very, very, very sick. She's in the hospital in Indianapolis. And the principal at Scecina High School called and asked if we might have anybody who could take over her English classes. Now you know Sister, I always wanted you to be in High School. Yeah, I know that. But I've always said you know if you could keep your strong teachers out at grade school you won't need any high school. Well for the time being when need for maybe three weeks, would you be willing to go to Scecina High School? And take over Sister Lorensia's English classes? I said, Well I would try.

So I get up—I go to Scecina High School the next morning and I meet Mr. Kuntz the principal. And he tells me what Sister Lorensia's schedule is and I said, Well, okay, I'll do my best, I'll try, so last class was all football players except one student, a girl. The only girl in this class so, we were supposed to be studying something with Shakespeare, I remember that. So I go over there and I take over the class, one of the guys is not in my room and I said, well, where is he? Well he decided that since Sister was sick, he wouldn't have to

come to class today and he just took an off time. So I reported that to the football coach. Well of course the kid was sent for and disciplined with one of the football practice, think he lost one game or something, I'm not positive, but anyway, that kid gave me a rough time, for reporting. Glad you know what else to do of course. All right so I was teaching them and things went pretty good and I thought at least nobody was throwing me out a window and I wasn't throwing any of the kids out of the window so, it was going pretty good so, get to the end of the year, graduation time. Luckily I had a lot of test scores from Sister Lorensia's previous teaching so. And somebody else helped me to work out what they thought were suitable grades, you know based on the year report so we got through and everything was taken care there.

MEL: Sister, Sister—

Part II

MEL: It is November 15, 2015 in Oldenburg, Indiana at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Francis. This is part two of Sister Millie's oral history. Thank you Sister. Would you like to continue where you left off?

SMMS: Okay, I will try. When I went to the inner city of Cincinnati to teach. I think it was the first time in my religious life that I really understood the vow of obedience. I had waited so long to work with the American Indians and when I was in Montana and I had one year at two different missions and at the end of that second mission I was advised to come home prepared not to return to Montana and so I thought, Hmm. So I thought I'm going to give up on teaching totally, I will just do whatever they want me to do, keep house, correct papers, scrub floors, do laundry, do anything except teach. But then they said in obedience they were asking me to go to Saint Francis Seraph at Liberty and Vine Street in Cincinnati and I said, Well when you ask it that way there was only one answer, yes I will go, and God will help me to do what I'm supposed to do there. I think it was the second week of school when the pastor was in, in the school building watching dismissal and he notion for me to come over to him and he said, Sister, I don't know why you're not smiling all the time? But he said, I think you should come to the Friary and we'll talk together. So I went over to the Friary, rang the doorbell. He himself answered the door on Vine Street. We went in a little room and he sat down and he said I'm going to tell you a story. He told me about his being transferred from Hazard, Kentucky to Saint Francis Seraph in Cincinnati. And so I told him my story. I had been in Montana that was my, my girlhood dream becoming a sister and teaching the Indian children and then I'm told after one year and two appointments within that year to come home prepared not to return.

So I was not very happy going to Saint Francis Seraph in Cincinnati, but after listening to Father Farrell's story, when he was asked in obedience to come there, I said, Well that's the only reason that I'm here too. And so I worked at Saint Francis Seraph with the inner-city children and I had a beautiful teaching experience, wonderful happy years at Saint Francis Seraph then I went to Fenwick High School in Middletown, Ohio and then I went to the reservation for ten years and I worked for ten years among the Navajo people. I lived in Tohatchi, New Mexico and then worked at Coyote Canyon. Tohatchi in their Navajo language translates to "scratching for water" and in Coyote Canyon I was privileged to live in the canyon where the Navajo have lived and where the last chief of the Navajo tribe is buried. All we know is he is buried in the canyon, but we don't know the exact spot where

he is buried. So the people are very protective of Coyote Canyon and while on the mission in Coyote Canyon I had the dream of my life working with the Indian people. I did not teach school as school, but I worked with religious education in the parish and planned with the people all of their religious services. They sang many of their hymns in their native language because our pastor at that time Father John Middlestat was very eager to use as much of their culture in our Catholic service as he could possibly do so and so instead of burning incense we burned cedar and it was a beautiful tribute to the Navajo people to do that with it within your religious service.

And so it brought back to my mind some of the great events in my life that had happened and I remember and I was probably six years old my parents had friends who lived in Chicago and so one summer they took us to Chicago. Us being my brother Walt and myself to visit these friends of theirs and dad wanted to take Walt and me swimming. So in order for me to get my bathing suit on, he told one of the women in the club there take care of me. All right. So she got me on all dressed in my bathing suit and then she let me go out and I just jumped right into the pool in the deep end of course. Then when dad and Walt came out, my brother Walt said, Hey daddy look at that brown ball out there just keep bouncing up and down and my daddy said to my brother, Well that looks like a child. So he dived in and rescued me, his daughter. So the first part of my life that I really remember about my daddy, he rescued me and kept me from drowning in the pool.

And when I was at Fenwick High School one day, it was after school and the principal had announced at our dismissal that uh, the teachers should please remember that the candy shop and the ice cream place in Middletown was going to close and so we were welcome to go there and pick up any of the ice cream. It would be in the two gallon jugs and we can use it whatever we wanted. So I was going to Oldenburg for a meeting the next day, so I thought I'll go down and get some vanilla ice cream take it home for the Sisters in Clare Hall. They would enjoy that. So I went down to the freezer after school, it was pouring down rain that whole afternoon, went down to the freezer, opened the door, walked in and picked up what I thought was vanilla ice cream, went out and put it on a bench and it said, "lemon ice" and I thought, I don't think this is fit for Clare Hall. So I went back into the freezer, put the lemon ice on the counter on the bench in there, picked up what I was sure was marked vanilla and put it out on the bench, they went back to close the door into the freezer, put the lemon ice down, turned around and the door was closed and I thought, Okay, well Lord what do I do now? So I went to the door and I pushed on a knob, I turned the knob and nothing would open. So I began to kick at the door with my heel and then I thought hmm, I think I'm in here for a long time, so I pulled up some boxes and made myself a place to sit on some boxes and then I ripped open another box because I saw the letters on the box and I thought, I'm going to pick out the letters and put a message on this railing here, just in case I don't get out. I thought, well okay. So I prayed and I sang hymns to the Blessed Mother and prayed, prayed for something to help me open the door. Occasionally I would get up every ten minutes or so and try the door again and finally I thought, Lord I think I'm here and I will just probably be here getting colder and colder by the second, so this time Lord, I think I'll just try to get some letters and leave a message because I think I'm going to die in here. So then I thought, Well it was a big fan blowing and if I climb up and turn off that fan and I thought maybe I'd be electrocuted if I touched the wrong wire or something.

So I gave up on that and sat down again on my boxes and went picking out letters and finally the door did open and it was the assistant basketball coach, Don Moremar. He said, "Millie what are you doing in there?" I said Don, "Just get me out please get me out." So he grabs me by the shoulders and pulled me out put me on top of the counter and began to rub my feet. Well we learned the next morning everything we did was the wrong thing to do. You should first let me limber up naturally. Well, anyway Don said, "Do you want me to do anything?" And I said, "Yeah my purse is on the counter." And he said, "That's why I stopped and looked around in here because I saw the purse." And I said, "There's—I think you'll find some money in there." I said, "Just call Mary Ellen." And I gave him the phone number for the convent. He said, "Don't bother, I already know the number." And I said, "Tell Mary Ellen I'll be late." Ok so he said, I'll take you up to the hospital. I said, "No, I'm not going to the hospital. I'm just cold, cold as can be cold." So finally he said, "I'm going out and start your car." At that time I was, we were driving a Ford Escort, so he went out and started up the car, came back in, and in the meantime I grabbed a bag that I had used to make my own commode because I thought, hmm, I had to do something. So, ok, so I had that bag tied up in a corner and I said to Don, "Ok while you start the car, I'll just get my coat on in here and then I'd opened the freezer door wide as I could reached in and grabbed that Bag that I had used as my private commode and took that with me out to the car, threw it away. And so that that experience brought back the memory of my dad rescuing me from the pool in Chicago. Here, Don, a friend, the math teacher was rescuing me from being frozen to death there and I thought, wonder what the Lord wants me to hang around here on earth for? Now what am I supposed to do? But I know I'm not going to do anything with school.

Then when I, they called me one afternoon so I went to Middletown to be with Sister Norberta, my first superior on mission, and then they said to me we think we'd like you to go to Indianapolis to Holy Rosary and I said, Oh, I cannot do that, no, please mother don't send me there. What's the problem with that? And I said, I think the president of their parish council or something was a friend of our superior in Montana please don't and she would come to visit please don't make me go there. Finally in desperation I guess Reverend Mother said to me, Sister, we're asking you now in obedience to go to Saint Francis Seraph in Cincinnati. I said, Well when you ask that way there's only one answer: I'll go. So I went to Saint Francis Seraph and the pastor there, Father Farrell called me over to the rectory, to the friary one day after school then he told me his story and I told him my story how I was yanked, I thought I was being yanked out of Montana and just sort of thrown to the wolves, but instead I was offered the opportunity to teach the inner-city children. Was a blessed and very wonderful, peaceful time of my life and I served there for ten years also.

And then finally got to go to Tohatchi, New Mexico where I worked with the Indians for another ten years and that was the dream of my life. Very wonderful, very beautiful time. So I was rescued from death twice and then I always keep figuring what, why is it Lord that I'm always rescued from these dangerous situations? And I think it's just simply so I can keep singing in my heart, thank you God, thank you God, thank you God for the blessings, the friendship, the deepening love of my family and the congregation and the happy times that I had learning to become more and more deeply Franciscan and it's in being deeply Franciscan that my friendships deepen, the love of my family grows more deeply, and we share it among ourselves and in community here at Oldenburg at the mother house it's just such a show of love, of concern, of prayerfulness, of quiet, of good times, and of appreciating all the things that are done for us that are given to us and the blessings that we

know. So thank you God and thank you friends for listening to this, God bless you and keep you safe.

MEL: Thank you Sister. Do you have time for me to ask you a few questions?

SMMS: Yes

MEL: Are you sure? Okay. Thank you Sister for sharing that. I wondered if you could talk, well first a point of clarification. The ice-cream story of being rescued, where did that take place? Where did it take place when you were rescued from the ice cream?

SMMS: That took place at Fenwick High School in Middletown, Ohio.

MEL: Where you were teaching?

SMMS: At Roosevelt Boulevard and since then Fenwick High School has been moved to a new building and a new location with their own football field, their own practice gym, and um, it's in, I think it's now in Franklin, Ohio, I'm not quite positive, but I think it's now called Franklin Fenwick not Middletown Fenwick anymore.

MEL: But mostly Sister, would you mind talking a little bit more about Montana? As you put it, it was the dream of your life. Could you tell us about the people that you served in the community and how you felt going there?

SMMS: Okay, I spent one year in Montana from July until January I was at Pryor, Montana. They were known as the mountain, no they were known as the River Crow. We had a river or more like a creek, part of the mission territory there. I remember that on Easter Sunday we had fish for breakfast. I thought um, Holy Saturday they talked about fish for breakfast and I thought, well okay. But it was fish that was caught on Easter Sunday morning from our river creek and it was so delicious, it was a banquet. Truly an Easter banquet then, then, but I was told when I was working there Mother Miriam Claire had been elected and she came and visited us in Montana and the night that she left us to go to Saint X Montana, my superior there at that time Sister Mary Otto she said, Millie, an you're going to have to go over to Saint X, Mother's and I agreed today that you could be transferred to Saint X in January. I said, Well she was just here, why didn't she talk to me? Well I don't know, but she thought maybe I could tell you tonight. I said, Well I want to talk to mother before she goes back to Indiana. So she said, Well how will we do that? I said I guess we'll get in a car and you know the way so you'll drive me over to Saint X to talk to Mother Miriam Clare. Oh I better call her first. So she called over there at Saint X and they agreed that I should, I could come over to talk to Mother, however, we should come through the school cafeteria door because they didn't want the other sisters to know that mother was coming there to talk to somebody else, I guess.

So anyway, we went over there and then Mother explained to me that I was the only sister in Montana who had a viable teach—principal's license and they would have to replace the sister who was principal at Saint X, the boarding school, and so I would please go there by January the 6th. So I went to, I left Saint Charles School in Pryor, Montana on January the 6th and went over to Saint X in Montana at a town called Saint Xavier and the school was Saint Xavier, it was a boarding school and I was the principal then of the boarding school and one night when they called me they came—some of the girls came over to our

residents and said so-and-so fell out of bed I don't remember the girl's name and she's screaming, she said her arm hurts so much. So I went over and looked at the child's arm and I knew it was broken. So I took her to the hospital at Billings, Montana. Now I think, have I already talked about this? I took her to the hospital at Billings, Montana, I think it was, no it was Saint X, Montana and in order—in the wintertime, the first car who goes out makes the road so I got my car and in the road tracks and we got over to Harden, Montan—it was in the town of Hardin, Hardin Montana. We got to the hospital and I took the child in a wheelchair and we sat and we sat and we sat for two and a half hours and I would watch other people come in to the emergency center and they would all get called back if I went up to the desk and I said to the nurse there that we had been there quite some time and I would think that by now I could get back to see a doctor because the child I brought over here is very ill, needs a doctor. Well you'll just have to wait your turn. I've already waited two and a half hours.

Went back and I sat down I thought to myself, Well there are three wheelchairs over there, I'll just go and get a wheelchair and put my student in the wheelchair and take her back and I had seen how the nurses were punching the button and the door would open so I got a wheelchair came over put the child in the wheelchair, she was an—she was a fifth grader. Put her in the wheelchair and I went back, pushed the button went down the hall and said, "I need a doctor! I need a doctor! I need a doctor!" Finally a doctor came out and said, "What is the commotion?" I said doctor, I've been out there with this child for two and a half hours." "And nobody has called you? I said, "Right, nobody called." So he took care and he said, the child has a broken arm and he said, I will take care of it. So he did. We got home in time for breakfast. They were serving breakfast to the children at school I remember when we got home.

So that was my most awesome, I guess, or notorious experience in Montana and then the other times we were walking I was with a group of students we were going down a sort of a muddy road. My shoes stuck in the mud and my foot went in the next step of the mud and the kids were all laughing crazy and I was laughing sort of too, but I could hardly put my muddy foot into my shoe so anyway you have all kinds of strange experience, but very beautiful experiences when you work with the native people. They had knowledge of our God and a love of the Great Spirit as they refer to God far before the missionaries ever came. The missionaries enriched their lives by telling them of Jesus and then we came and just sort of paddle along, you know, quiet, ride down the canoe creek with them. The Indian people. Very happy years of my life.

And after Montana when I came back that's I was sent to the inner city of Cincinnati. From there I went to Fenwick High School in Middletown and began there the Kairos retreat program. I think that's credited mostly to the Jesuits, however, really the original credit for the Kairos retreat does not belong to the Jesuits, I'm sorry. I think it's the Norbertine Fathers or somebody else who began the program and it just really was so beneficial to their high school students. So at Fenwick, we were looking for a better retreat experience for our students. So I sent some teachers, I chaired the department and I sent some of our teachers to participate in Kairos retreats. They all come back saying we got to start this at Fenwick, we ought to do this. And at the first closing of a retreat where we sent students at ah—giving testimony one of the students stood up and said, Sister Millie, I know you're out there somewhere I don't know where you are in the crowd for people here, but we've got to do this at Fenwick High School. So that was my invitation and my challenge. Start the

program at Fenwick. So we did and it still continues today and the teachers who are there always inform me when they're going to have retreats and so I connect with the Fenwick students during their Kairos retreat programs by prayer for their intentions, so.

MEL: Sister, for people who aren't familiar with it, could you explain the Kairos program a little bit more?

SMMS: The Kairos program is a retreat program where the students are invited to live on God's time. So we asked them not to bring any clocks with them, no real watches, we asked them to remove their watches. Sometimes we collect the watches with name bands on them and so forth. And they know that now when they go into a retreat it's God's time and we—it's always away from school, three nights, four days and it's just simply a time away to look at one's self and place one's self in the majesty of God and the kindness of God. You mean between majesty and kindness there seems to be a great width of experience. So we were all very brought up at least I was brought up with an idea of the majesty of God, but not so much of the loving kindness of God and the merciful forgiveness that always envelops us and I think the Kairos retreat does that for the students. They become as it were totally possessed and sort of lost as—like swimming in the majesty of God, but coming on top to understand the merciful love, the unending forgiveness and the peace that God wants to give us and that was shared with us when Jesus became incarnate through the Virgin Mary.

MEL: Sister, the little girl that you helped in such a powerful way, the little girl with the broken arm. Could you tell us about your students? Why did she come to your school? Do you know why or why any of the students came to your school?

SMMS: Sure, well, it was, I was the principal of Saint X School for Children, it was a boarding school and it was a school that would collect the Indian children in the locality wanted an education and so they would go to Saint Labre Indian School, which was also a boarding school. We deliver them on Monday morning and pick them up on Friday afternoon, but the school itself Saint Labre Indian School is a powerful, powerful institution among the Crow Indian people and the Northern Cheyenne so that they have a place where their children will be well educated and prepared to come back and serve their own people and that's the purpose of the—you know, when I was working in Montana it was a Saint Labre School System. When I was working in New Mexico it was a Saint Michael Indian School System that prepared these children with an excellent, "A," "Number One" education.

MEL: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about more—would you like to talk about your students in New Mexico?

SMMS: Well, the students in New Mexico with whom I worked, attended Saint Michael's Indian School, so I became very good friends with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament who were founded by, um, let me think a minute here, Katharine Drexel, the heiress of Philadelphia and to her summer vacation, she became concerned about the poor blacks in the United States and the native children who didn't have education opportunities and so she was interested in them and her interest led her to found the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and in finding, in founding that community of women to educate the blacks and the American Indian they are still functioning as such, but like ourselves here at Oldenburg most of the remaining sisters are few in education because most of them also are retired

now and of course in our retirement we are being served and loved and helped and we're living a grateful life for the assistance given to us. Most of us if we could be right back where we were started from and doing more work with the people.

MEL: Thank you for your time, Sister. You've talked a little bit about obedience and I wondered if you could explain it for someone who isn't a Catholic Sister what an obedience is and why it's important to follow, but also why it's sometimes difficult to follow.

SMMS: Hmm. Well I mentioned about the time that I was asked to go to Saint Francis Seraph that I really understood then, that what my vow of obedient really meant because I was always eager to go where I was assigned. Eager to do the work that was given me to do and I always, I was pretty much successful in the work that I was doing because the community the, with her sisters who went before us prepared us so well and if we take the vow of obedience, take the vow of poverty, we take the vow of chastity and the vow of obedience means that I will serve the people of God in the way that I am asked to do so as a Franciscan as a valid Franciscan woman. Okay, so for me always to be assigned to this school or that school or that school and I was happy to go and successful and happy to live there and had a good time with the Sisters and then at that time in my life when I, I was miserably unhappy because I was not accepting of what my vow of obedience meant simply to live knowing that God would take care of me as we were told in the scriptures and also as the Hebrew people were told in their psalms, you know the Lord is my shepherd and he lead me to green pastures. He will give me food and cloth—and then Saint Paul tells us if we, if we have shelter, food, and clothing that's all that's needed for life and life is simply a time to prepare for the total union with God in heaven. So there are times in one's life when things hit you like a stroke of lightning I guess and you say, oh wow, so that's really what it means and when I commented about obedience, in obedience where you go to Saint Francis Seraph in there, they're reminding me that I made a vow to serve God to—as a Franciscan woman in today's society. So my congregation thought that I could serve at Saint Francis Seraph at Liberty and Vine Street in Cincinnati in the heart of the ghetto.

So that's where I went. I went unwillingly, but found that I was so richly blessed by living among the poor and serving the poorest of Cincinnati's poor that there was never a doubt, but that God would protect the people and I, I do hear yet from students whom I taught there and one time friends at Middletown took me to Cincinnati for some kind of a happy celebration a theater or a concert performance I don't recall what it was, but they took me to the Westin Hotel for dinner that day. So we went there to Westin and an American black woman came up as a hostess and she looked at me and she said, I know you. And I said, You do? And she said, Yes, you taught me in the 8th grade at Saint Francis Seraph and you sent me to Our Lady of Angels High School and she told, and I thought, Oh my, a wonderful young kid, good student, good girl in the inner city. Here she was, the hostess at the Westin Hotel and so we had a reunion right then and there in the hotel lobby. I introduced her to the friends who brought me from Middletown to see this Grand Hotel, which had opened just summer. So, hmm, life is full of surprises of the goodness of God.

MEL: Sister for my last question, would you mind describing how your prayer life has changed over your life, your prayer life.

SMMS: Well, my prayer life has changed several times over my life and I guess the last change was in coming home from the reservation to Oldenburg knowing that I would no

longer be quote "an active member" of the congregation as far as any income to the congregation was concerned and even though and when I began teaching school we, we lived on what was the children's collection on the Sunday Mass and that was not—that was rather meager, but you always you always had food, you always had a habit and you didn't worry about those things, but my prayer life sort of goes, crawls along, or leaps along or jumps wildly most time with my emotional level. I think I pray with my emotional level or from my emotions and right now my prayer life is one of struggling with accepting things as they be, not as they used to be, but as they be now and having been active for many, many years it takes me a while to realize that I am growing more and more inactive and as I grow more and more inactive, I become I think more deeply immersed in what is just the mystery of God. Who is God? and and What will God look? Does God's beauty have a look? You know I ponder some of these sort of silly questions at time, but right now my prayer life is very concerned with people in my life: my family, my friends. And they call and say, Please pray for so-and-so, please pray for such-and-such and so I put it on our prayer chart, spread the word around and I pray. Right now I pray much to Mary and I remind Mary and she made a beautiful home for Jesus and Joseph and would she find someone who's interested in buying Beth and Brian's home because they need a bigger home for their family. So, I find my prayer life related to happenings in my personal life and to the lives of others who have come into my life.

MEL: Thank you Sister. Thank-you very much. Sister is there any sister who has passed away that you would like to remember or talk about, a sister that I wouldn't have—is there any sister or member of your congregation that you'd like to remember who maybe has already gone home to Jesus?

SMMS: Well I've often used the name Norberta. Sister Norberta who was my first superior when I was sent out to teach school. I owe much to that dear sister. I have loved her and when I was sort of ousted from Montana and I was said, I was called by the Reverend Mother, said well, where would you like to go at this time of sort of rest in your life? I said, well, Sister Norberta is in Middletown, I'll go to Sister Norberta. So I went to Sister Norberta who was living at Saint Mary's Parish in Middletown and we'd walk around the yard up there, they had a beautiful location. We'd pray a rosary together and we talked about times that we knew, our mission. Hard times and happy time and we both had hard times to share, but hard times were always—I won't say a valley but they were like a mountain peak and you reached the point where you said to God, this is okay, I will live through it I will live with it and I will become more deeply in love with you as I live this experience and so, I don't know Mary Ellen have I wandered too far away?

MEL: That's beautiful Sister, thank you so much.

SMMS: Thank you