

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese

Personal Experience

O.H. 1576

SISTER VIRGINIA G. MCDERMOTT

Interviewed

by

Stephanie Fisher

on

October 22, 1992

SISTER VIRGINIA MCDERMOTT

Sister Virginia was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1915. She was the middle of eight children: Gerald, Margaret, Beatrice, Joseph, Virginia, Robert, Betty and Bill. Her family lived on the east side of Youngstown and attended the Sacred Heart Parish. After graduating from Ursuline High School, she entered the Ursuline Convent a year later.

Sister Virginia chose the Ursuline Sisters because she had such fond experiences with the nuns in high school. Besides this, the Ursuline Sisters were in need of teachers. Sister Virginia had always wanted to be a teacher. Her five sisters were all teachers and it was assumed that she would become one as well.

In 1939, she started teaching at St. Rose in Girard. For the next fourteen years, Sister Virginia taught the first grade. During this time, she received her B.A. in education from St. John College and her M.A. in education from Catholic University. She left the first grade and was assigned to teach grades nine through twelve. This saddened her, but she followed her mother's advice, "Whenever you start to do something new you just have to fall in love with it."

Sister Virginia's second assignment was at Immaculate Heart in Youngstown. She taught High School Journalism and English. Her other duties included supervising the school yearbook and newspaper. After thirty-five years of teaching, she decided to leave teaching and began working at St. Thomas Hospital admitting patients. Later, she went back to Ursuline High School as office manager. She is presently semi-retired and enjoys reading, writing and listening to music.

-Stephanie Fisher

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese

INTERVIEWEE: SISTER VIRGINIA G. MCDERMOTT
INTERVIEWER: Stephanie Fisher
SUBJECT: Sacred Heart, St. John, St. Rose, Journalism
DATE: October 22, 1992

F: This is an interview with Sister Virginia McDermott for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the History of the Youngstown Diocese project, by Stephanie Fisher, on October 22, 1992.

Sister, if you could tell me when you were born and where?

M: I was born in Youngstown in the year 1915. I was born into a family of eight children, one of whom died at the age of four. The rest of us lived through maturity.

F: What side of town did you live on in Youngstown?

M: We lived on the east side [of Youngstown], at Sacred Heart parish.

F: What schools did you attend?

M: I attended Shehigh School in the first couple of years, and then I went to Sacred Heart school which was newly built at that time. I finished my elementary school there. Then, I went to Ursuline High School. A year after high school, I entered the Ursuline Community. Then I went to St. John's College for my undergraduate work, and to Catholic University for my graduate work a

few years later. It wasn't all consecutive.

F: What made you choose your particular order?

M: I believe that the Ursuline [sisters] needed teachers. I had always wanted to be a teacher. Five in our family were teachers. I liked teaching. I had learned to love it because my sisters were teaching. I just kind of fell into it. But, I did want to go to the Ursulines. I knew that the Ursulines needed teachers. They had educated me. I felt that in turn, since I was going to be a nun, I would be one of them and teach.

F: What grades did you want to teach?

M: I wanted to be a first grade teacher. So, I did. I started out in the first grade after my college preparation. I started to teach in 1939, I believe. I taught first grade for fourteen years. Toward the end of that time, I was into my master's work. The superior told me to get into high school. I said, "Okay, I would do it." I like journalism and I love English. So, I thought that would be a good chance to teach those two subjects. So, I began to prepare for high school.

Then, when the time came--I didn't really believe it would happen, but it did. So, then I went to high school. I taught a total of thirty-five years. Seventeen of those were at Ursuline High School. I went back to my old alma mater to teach. I taught English and journalism. I taught many students who went into the field of journalism. I felt a very satisfactory, very happy career as a teacher. I love kids and I like to work with them.

In journalism, of course, if you have a course like that, they automatically give you the yearbook and the newspaper. I had those jobs where you really learned to know the children well. You enjoyed them too, because you are working at off-times: Saturday, Sunday. All the time we were working either on the yearbook or the newspaper. Now, I think how crazy I was to take those two things together. But, I did. I got along. I didn't win big prizes but I had fun, and I got to know the children. I learned to write. So, I've always been happy about my career in teaching.

I loved the first grade too. I didn't know how I would ever leave the first grade. In fact, the first year I taught, I said to my mother, "I can hardly let these little children go, they are so dear. They're going on to the second grade. I felt so sad. They're so special." She said something I never forgot. She said, "Virginia, whenever you start to do something

new, you just have to fall in love with it. Then, you'll always love whatever you do if you just fall in love with it." I thought of that many years when I was reading a book called, A Separate Peace." Which was, I thought, a classic book. Do you know A Separate Peace by John Knolls?

F: No.

M: The main character at one point, he says, "Whenever you love something, it's got to love you back in whatever way it can." I think that's a good philosophy of life. The love that comes to you is the love that you give. Right?

F: Right.

M: I found that very operative in my life. I loved the kids. I thought they thought a great deal of me too because we enjoyed. If you don't enjoy, [you should] quit.

F: That's right. You said your first assignment was 1939. Did you say St. John's?

M: St. Rose in Girard is where I started.

F: Where did you go from there?

M: I went to Immaculate [Heart] from there. Of course, my teacher preparation was inserted in between there. But, I went to Immaculate [Heart]. I don't remember what year that was. I taught five years at St. Rose and then I went to Immaculate. I was there for eight years. Then, I went to Ursuline. That was the whole of my teaching career. I only had three changes.

F: Were you an administrator at Ursuline?

M: No. I was a classroom teacher. It was many years later that I went back as office manager. By that time, I had almost retired. But, I taught for those eighteen years and many, many things happened during that period. At the end of that time, I went over to St. Thomas Hospital and worked in medical records over there, in admitting. Because I had been in the administration, I did not want to go back to school. I felt that the curriculum had changed. I just didn't feel right about going back and doing more work. That's what I did.

You never really retire. You are always doing something different, finding something new, something that will keep you alive.

- F: Right. You were with the Cleveland Diocese before it became the Youngstown Diocese?
- M: We were. The only thing that I would know about administration or administrative policies was that periodically, someone from the Cleveland Diocese would come to supervise. We would be scared to death that we were going to have a supervisor. But, our connections with the diocese as classroom teachers was almost nil, even in the Youngstown Diocese. There was a meeting and you knew what was going on. They would just tell you what you were supposed to be doing. If you weren't supposed to be doing that, you found that out, too.
- F: Everybody was well-informed?
- M: I think so. Oh, yes. In religious orders, you are well-informed. Your life is so structured that you do get to know what you are supposed to be doing. You don't know everything. You don't know the interesting things, let's say.
- F: How did you feel to be in a new diocese instead of the large Cleveland Diocese?
- M: I thought it was great. I really thought it was great, because Cleveland, even though it's not very far away, was still a distance from us. But to have our own diocese and to have it right here. . . . Bishop Malone was the administrator of education. Superintendent, that's what he was. He came around and saw all the classroom teachers even though we knew Bishop Malone from the time he was a young boy. It was kind of scary. But, you live through those days. I get the idea of someone being critical of what you're doing is always frightening a little bit, until you grow so old that you say it doesn't really matter.
- F: Did everybody feel pressured, do you believe, to live up to expectations?
- M: No. I don't think so. The ties with the diocese even then were loose enough. You work from the diocese through your principal. So your principal was the knowledgeable person who issued directives from the diocese. You performed just the same as public school teachers do today, I'm sure. You would go to teacher meetings, faculty meetings, and learn what is going on everywhere and about the changes that are being made. That's part of it all, too. So, there have been many changes in the diocese down through the years.
- F: Could you give me a comparison of the Cleveland [Diocese] and Youngstown [Diocese] since you had experienced the Cleveland Diocese?

- M: Just off hand, I would say the distance factor. Although it was just a short distance to Cleveland, we had very little contact with anybody from Cleveland except the occasional supervision. Even then, that was only a day. You really didn't bother too much about it, but you always knew what they wanted. They communicated very well with us. I thought being part of the Cleveland Diocese was wonderful. But, I thought it was great that we had our own diocese.
- F: Do you have an opinion on the fathers who chose to go with the Cleveland Diocese and not to stay with the formation of the Youngstown Diocese?
- M: I think that was one of the first signs of good freedom--to go where they wanted to go, to be where you want to be happy. I do. I don't really remember who switched to the Cleveland Diocese from here. I know there were a few, but I just think people have to be free to live their own lives. Now, that was before the movement we called Vatican II. That was even before that. So, I thought it was a good move toward freedom to choose, which was very necessary. It's necessary for anybody's happiness fulfillment.
- F: To begin such an option, there must have been a lot of negative reaction, or some towards those who wanted to. . . .
- M: I would say, maybe in the priesthood. But, I don't think so. I don't think it made much of a wave at all. I can even remember the names of people who were going to stay with the Cleveland Diocese. It was their choice. I don't think it stirred anybody very much. If I were in the diocese at that time, working in the diocese, I may have known, but the way I got the information was, "Okay, we changed."
- F: Where were you when you first heard that there would be a new diocese, a Youngstown Diocese?
- M: I was teaching at Immaculate Conception at that time.
- F: How did you receive the news?
- M: I thought it was great.
- F: Were you told by a newsletter?
- M: I think word got out and then we got the official news that we were going to have our own bishop and we were going to live in a little different feeling about a diocese. It was like your home. It's part of your home. It's close to you. So, it has been really

close. The diocese doesn't intrude either in our professional life or our community life to any great extent. They have to have accountability for religious orders. They have to have accountability from the schools that you understand. There was never any feeling of oppression or domination of any of our ideas.

F: To recall, who were some of the central figures?

M: Bishop Walsh was the new bishop. I just don't remember who the chancellor was. It was probably somebody who was in the dioceses. I remember noticing him at first. He was very Southern. He had come to us from the South. We just didn't know him. Afterwards, then, when Bishop Malone came in, that was different. We knew him from the time he was a young boy in our high school.

F: You went to high school with Bishop Malone?

M: No. There's four years difference between the bishop and me. I will remember that because he was in class with my brother. My brother was four years younger. So, I always knew. When we meet now he'll say, "Oh, you're not gray yet!" [And I say,] "No, I'm not gray yet," but he's white. Have you ever met Bishop Malone?

F: I've never met him. No.

M: He's a wonderful bishop. He's getting old now. I'd imagine he's pretty close to retirement now. But, he's had a very full life. He has organized the diocese very well. He organized the school system here before he became bishop. He was superintendent. He, with his staff, organized the system that was to be the Youngstown School System. That was under Bishop Walsh.

F: Do you recall what schools were formed along with the Youngstown Diocese?

M: When the separation occurred, different areas. . . . Canton was one that was attached to the Youngstown Diocese. I just don't recall all of the places that were. . . . Salem is in the Youngstown Diocese. All the area of Northeast Ohio, outside of Cleveland. That was so long ago, I just don't remember which areas were to be called the Youngstown Diocese. Cleveland had plainly grown too large and is still growing too large.

F: Still at this time, do you believe?

M: I think.

- F: It needs to be sectioned off again?
- M: It could still. I think they could. But, not knowing the doings of either the Cleveland Diocese or of church organization that way, the diocese and organizations, I wouldn't even have an opinion. It seems to me that Cleveland is pretty large.
- F: It could have been a Canton Diocese. Why do you believe it was in Youngstown, Ohio? [Why do you believe] Youngstown became the center and became the diocese? It's within six counties. Why do you believe Mahoning County was chosen?
- M: Probably Mahoning County is more central to all of these. I don't know of any other way or any other idea that we were honored to be the seat of the diocese. It could have been Canton. I think there was discussion about Canton. Even later on, there was discussion by Canton becoming the diocese. Nothing has happened yet.
- F: Is Canton even larger than Youngstown, Ohio as far as it's. . . .
- M: I don't know the figures for you. It's large. It's a very wonderful city. I don't know just why they would chose it, but I know there's been talk about Canton. I don't know if it ever will or not.
- F: Besides location, do you think economically with the steel mills that was a factor? Was it the strongest, economically?
- M: At that time, it could have been. You don't wonder about a lot of things. I would think the steel mills would have had some factor in it. So, we were fortunate that it came that way. I suspect though, that if the seat of the diocese were Canton, it would be similar to Cleveland, just like Canton now comes to Youngstown.
- F: Economically, with the Phar Mor closings and all the other things; now you don't have G.M. who is real economically strong. If we are a hard-hit depressed economy in this area any more, is that going to have anything to do. . . ? Would the Youngstown Diocese ever be centralized somewhere else?
- M: I don't know why they would. They have their offices here. They are all set up. They could operate from any place to any place. But, it's very true that our school was in closing.

At first everybody was a teacher. Everybody. If you weren't a teacher, you would go someplace else. Now,

we're doing ever so many different ministries. Maybe that's a very good thing because we really concentrated on the education. Although that was wonderful, there are still many other avenues of possibilities that we could go into. Everybody was prepared for the teaching. So, most everybody has their undergraduate, and most people have a graduate degree too. You wonder sometimes. You say, "Gee, if we had started out in a different way, what would things have been like?" We didn't have a hospital to staff, so we didn't have nurses except for the community. We had teachers. Even the girls that became nurses were teachers first. Then, they wanted to be nurses, so they trained as nurses. Who knows.

F: What other vocations are the sisters getting into besides education and nursing?

M: They are not getting into any particular ones in great numbers. I think they are going into a lot of parish work now more than. . . . We never had that before, though. We were never involved in the parish. Women was regarded as "good teacher". We always had women as principals in our schools. The same in the high schools. One of them was a high school principal. Now, Cardinal Mooney has a woman as a high school principal.

But, women were teachers and anything else that came up. There were orders that took care of other things like the Humility of Mary or the nurses. They had a hospital to take care of. Eventually more than one. Then, they also had schools, which was good. Because, when a girl wants to enter a community, she has definitely an idea of what she would like to do. Well, if she liked to teach school it's quite different. Not everybody wants to do that.

What other things? Most of what they do is parish work, they visit the sick, they go into the hospital, pray with people, bring the sacrament of the Eucharist to people. They do some organizing in the parishes. They take charge of the educational program for children who are not in Catholic schools to learn somewhat about their faith.

F: Do you believe as far as parish work and sisters becoming principals and being allowed to do things they were never allowed to do, is that primarily due to Vatican II or the shortage of priests?

M: I think everything has a little bearing on it. With so many things that have happened in the church, now, especially, the decline of vocations, as sisters decline for the schools, you had secular teachers going

into the schools. They had to have a salary that was a living salary. We worked for a very cheap salary for long years because there were many of us. We weren't working for the salary but we had to live. Then, as the vocations declined in the sisterhood, the secular teachers had to be paid more. Everything contributed to the closing of the schools. Parishes cannot afford to pay salaries that the public school pays. Who knows why? I don't. But, I think everything that touched on it a little bit, contributed to the decline of the schools. Finally, they seem to be going out of existence.

Yet, there are very many other things that can be done to help people. Now, we have to spread ourselves a little further, I think.

F: So, what is the situation right now with the Catholic school systems in this area?

M: We have a couple schools that are going to be amalgamating. There is parish tension about that because people of Immaculate and Sacred Heart will be amalgamating. That's going to be hard for the people who want their own school. St. Patrick's is another one that's having a dreadful strife to keep open. Yet, the people want that school open. It's doing a very fine thing down there. There are many, many Black people in that area who go to the Catholic school. They feel it's safer for their children. They are going to get a good education. They are all Baptists but they are going to Catholic schools. It's just the willingness to do that for their children. So, that school is kept open. It's very sad that it will have to close pretty soon. We are going to make a struggle to keep that school open for another year. Those people are so grateful. It's hurting. It's hurting a lot of people too, to give up what they've been accustomed to for their children. I dare say that there will be for all of them a very fine education when they go into the public schools.

Nevertheless, there has been special concern that the sisters will be there for years and years, and that the people will grow accustomed to the same teachers like they have in the past. Now, the sisters are not there for various reasons. Who knows, each one is an individual when she leaves the school. She is going into is something she wants to do, I think. Nobody is ever forced to do what she doesn't care to do.

F: Is it the same situation with the other five counties when they close any consolidating schools, the Catholic schools?

M: I don't think as much. See, the economics here are real bad. I think Youngstown has been hard hit. I'm sure in every one of the counties there is trouble there with the schools. If we had enough sisters to man the schools and to take the salary that we could live on, then I think the schools would stay open. There was a glorious day [when there was] a sister in every classroom. That was what people wanted when they sent their children to a Catholic school. They wanted a sister. Sisters were well-trained and made wonderful teachers. This is what we've had to do.

Some people would call to us for leaving the schools. That was just a natural. It just happened naturally. When I started teaching, I started at St. Rose and we had one lay teacher there. [She was] a very fine teacher. Everybody loved her and accepted her. As time went on, there would be three, four, five, six lay persons. Now, whole schools are staffed by lay people. So, people will say [that] you may as well have them in the public school. If they wanted a sister for a teacher. . . . I believe, because I had a family of teachers--all the girls were teachers and my brother--I felt that the public school system was equally good. Now, we're just a different brand of teachers that's all. Certainly, [we are] very dedicated. I wouldn't say more dedicated. I know my own sisters were wonderful teachers and very dedicated. They would come home and make things for the children, do things for them. You had to put yourself out a little bit in those early days. They didn't have the machinery, they didn't have things to duplicate. They just had a little gel pad to duplicate with. If I remember those days, it was exciting to get that stuff done, even though it was harder work. It was exciting. I have a great admiration for the public schools because I know my own family was involved in the public school. My brother went to Florida after the war. He was a superintendent of the schools in Volusia County. He loved the school system and the kids and the teachers too.

So, I have a strong public school background in relationship even though I was part of the Catholic school system. Some of my family were public school products all the way. We didn't all go to Catholic schools because it was a belt. I was probably the first one to go to Catholic school. I really think highly of the public school system. I think in any system you can have some teachers that are mediocre. You even have teachers who don't care, teachers who don't like kids. That's people.

F: You're not blaming the lack of sisters in the schools because of choosing other vocations, or is there a lack of sisters? Is that the problem?

- M: That's the problem. That's the big problem.
- F: Same with the priests? Has there been any talk about what to do about his problem to save the diocese and the school system?
- M: I don't know. We need more young men to become priests. We need young girls who would be willing to live the life of a virgin. But, they're just not coming like they used to. They used to come nine and ten at a time. I think one time, we had about twenty girls come at the same time. That was a huge number. So, we grew. Then, we lost them.
- F: They left?
- M: We lost a number of sisters for different reasons. Some had been disenchanted about things. Some of them wanted to get married to somebody. There were just different reasons. It just seemed like an epidemic for awhile. Then, it evened off. But, the decline of vocations of people coming in is really the reason that we cannot staff many schools. We don't have any schools with more than a couple sisters now. We don't have that many schools now. But, its part of an age. . . .
- When I pray about that, I say, it could be that there was a need at the time and we filled the need. Maybe that need is over. I don't know. The economics of it all, too. No parish can staff a school of sisters, even all sisters. Now the sisters are getting better salaries. They had been getting very, very small salaries in those days. During the Depression, some couldn't afford to pay us, so things were very poor for us too, to keep going and to keep trying. The Lord's will be done and it is. So, I accept it as a thing that's just in the cards. It's in the plan that we don't know the reasons for everything.
- F: So, what is going to become of the diocese in twenty years, do you believe?
- M: Well, things could build up. It depends on those vocations.
- F: That's what I'm saying. I'm really spanning it for twenty years, everybody is in the retirement age or past and twenty years past, more than half the sisters and fathers are not going to be here. So, who is going to be running the diocese? I know a lot of lay people are right now. For instance, what is going to happen to this mother house here in twenty years? Are they going to have sisters from out of state or different

parishes?

M: Everybody has the same problem.

F: Oh, everybody?

M: Everybody has a dearth of vocations. Everybody is suffering. This is where your faith has to come in that God will help us and help us to do what he wants. It could be that communities could join forces with one another and could be either that places have to be closed. Some hard, hard things. I think things like that have already happened. Sisters have had to leave the locality for various reasons. One of them would probably be that we don't have enough people staffing the school, or there at all. Their committee might remove them from that mission. Then, there are schools like that in Youngstown. They are not just for schools anymore. Nobody's there, no school to offer to their children. That's like the golden age has passed from where we were building up that school to make the best education for the kids. So, you wonder.

F: Were the Catholic School Systems in this area really strong in the early 1980's?

M: Yes. They were strong. They were very strong. I suppose they can't stay strong forever.

F: I remember in 1986, I think they were pretty strong.

M: I think we have parishes that are not able to keep their schools open. They don't have enough money to pay the salary for the teachers and the upkeep of the school and all those things. It doesn't mean that the system isn't strong, it means that parishes are just not able to meet it. We are in a recession, and people don't have any money. It costs a lot to send kids to Catholic schools. That's why there's the big tuition now. When I was at Ursuline. . . . In 1929, I started at Ursuline. Tuition was fifty dollars. We had four of us there. My dad would write out a check at the beginning of the year. [It was] fifty dollars for the year. Not a month. That took care of all of us--all the girls. The boys didn't go. It was a private school. The economics is the cause of a lot of things. That influences so much.

F: So, starting off in 1943, what helped the diocese growth?

M: There was a strong growth in vocations at that time. People came into the convent and priests came into the rectory. The diocese was able to spread and develop. As time has gone on, all those things have changed.

Priests are aging and they are not getting any new priests into the priesthood. They are losing priests. That's the story of life.

F: That's sad. Besides vocations, do you think that the starting of the Catholic school systems in this area, if it wasn't for that, you wouldn't have the push that you do now?

M: I don't know how you mean that, Stephanie.

F: Well, Monsignor Regan had stated that he feels that the Youngstown Diocese growth was so strong and positive because the school systems were expanding continuously at that time. He feels that that the expansion of the school system, buying new property and building a new school is what helped it continually grow.

M: If you don't have the personnel, there's no reason. See, things could change. I think it all depends on the youth. It doesn't appear that too many young people are very interested. Maybe in time, the structure of community life will change more than it has. We've already changed it an awful lot in my lifetime. I have almost sixty years in the community. I've been through so many changes that happened. They were good ones. I always thought changes were good because otherwise, you grow static. I always appreciated that we were going to do things a different way or we weren't going to do something at all that we had done before. I thought they were very positive things. The whole answer is [having] needs interesting people to be involved in that. I don't think it will ever be quite the same. We may work with smaller groups, sisters. As long as we are able to exist, we may do many different things. I never would have thought of anybody doing anything but teaching when I was young. I never thought of doing anything myself but teaching. It was only after I had been out of school and had been in the administration that it was time to go back that I said, "I really don't feel secure about going back."

So, I went into something else. [I went to] St. Thomas Hospital. That's how things happen. You change because of circumstances in your life have changed. You just have to meet those circumstances head on.

F: It really seems that just starting from the formation in 1943 that it was just really smooth. It was accelerating and nothing could stop the diocese. That doesn't seem to be any hindrance of the time. Could you estimate what year. . . . Was it the 1970's or just until the 1980's that you started having problems in situations that are hindering the diocese?

M: You mean the vocation problem?

F: Is that the only problem? Is that the only hindrance the diocese has?

M: Well, the economic situation would be a large factor. The dearth of vocations would be another factor. Outside of that, I couldn't mention anything else. I can't even think of anything else it could be, because the people were willing to sacrifice and give to the church and help in whatever way we needed. All that was there. But, without personnel and without the money to. . . . Even without the personnel, if the money were there, then the Catholic schools could have gone on with other teachers just as the public schools.

F: Do you think the formation of the Catholic Charities is what helps the diocese? I mean, educationally, it's not helping the diocese?

M: No. It helps the people of the diocese in a different way than the education. The education is not the only thing, but a very important thing. We have all kinds of programs going on. Someone more knowledgeable [than I] would tell you about those, probably. There is a lot going on in the diocese yet. The bishop is very positive about everything for the diocese. It doesn't exist just for the school system. It exists for the church. It exists to further and enhance the life of the Catholic person in the diocese. It exists to give a structure to all of our lives. In that way, we are administrating to people, now in so many various ways.

We have ourselves, we have a little kindergarten that develops over one hundred children every year. Those children grow up. Now there has been a generation of children, more than a generation of children [that has] gone through our kindergarten. Now, we are building the new kindergarten. Maybe this is what we are supposed to do. Get them at the grass roots and develop them into fine people. I think in today's world to talk about just indoctrinating or religious beliefs, there is much to confining. I believe we have to educate our children. I have always felt this, that many of them are going to choose differently in religious beliefs. Maybe they've had the roots of Catholicism, and it doesn't mean that they're not going to go into something else. Their beliefs will change. I believe that the important thing is not that everybody practice the faith that they started out with, but that they do worship God; that they do pray; that they do love their fellow beings. We came into the world to love our God and love his creatures. He didn't set a pattern that you've got to be this or you've got to be that. I have felt very strongly about that.

Every religion evangelizes. They try to spread their religion, but eventually, it's the person who has to see that they believe and how they can follow that to make their lives truer. So, I believe that there is something that is not up to us to know. We can't know everything. We can't know the why of all these things have happened, but we must view them very positively for whatever reason, that we're going to be all right, we're going to make out all right. Things may not be the same, but they will be whatever they're supposed to be. That's the way I believe. I love what I have dearly, but what I have is not for everybody. Not everybody would want to live the life I live. People tell me today, they say, "What makes you legitimately retired?" "So, what do you do, you take a job?" I say, "It is fulfilling. I get very little. I have a master's degree. I would not be welcome in school today." I love teaching composition. I love journalism. I just would like to be teaching composition.

F: Have you ever thought about teaching at YSU?

M: No. I'm past that stage now. But, I loved the classroom. I would love to be still in a high school tutoring the kids. But, when you are passed the age, they won't let you. You had your day. It was a good day. Now your day is on the way where you are getting ready for another new day.

F: You're supposed to enjoy yourself now.

M: Another new door. . . . But, things come to you. We'll call them grace. . . . The grace to respond to something. I am very happy in what I'm doing, even though I am up at four o'clock in the morning, and I'm off and running. I'm tired when I come home, but I'm fulfilled. I feel happy about that. The Lord just plants things for you to grasp, if you will, but if you don't want them, then, okay. I believe so many opportunities come to us just in our daily being with people too, to do good or to just give them the love that they need right at that moment.

F: Would you like to see the Youngstown Diocese expand and become even larger than it is?

M: It may be in the future, because we may need more areas within the dioceses. We might. I probably won't be around when that happens. When you get to my age, everyday is a gift. Everyday you thank God for that gift and you hope that there will be another day, but if there isn't, you've had it.

F: What has been your most positive aspect with the dio-

cese?

M: I've never felt any rejection by the diocese. I've always been on the other side of the fence where you are working for the diocese, you are a part of the administration. They never bothered me, because they change things. That was okay, because that's also a part of my philosophy of life. You live with change. You're not wearing the same dress you wore when you were a little kid, because you grew.

F: Even twenty years ago.

M: You grew. You grew in so many ways. Not only in size, physically, but you grew emotionally and mentally. So, you are reaching a new size all the time. You have so very many things that have been part of your background. They are all changes. We just live with it.

F: So, are you saying that you feel change is what has made your life so positive here?

M: Not, exactly change, no. But, I think acceptance of everything. It also reminds me again of that story. My mother said to me, "No matter what you do, you fall in love with it." I think that's the positive thing. If you love everything you do, then how can you be unhappy? If everybody loved what they do. . . . When you hear people say, "I hate my job," they ought to quit. They really ought to quit.

I picked up a spiritual book by Henry Gowan yesterday and I began just to read the introduction. He said he had been interviewing a young man who said he couldn't wait to get home from work. He couldn't wait to get out of the place. He just hated the work he was doing. Henry said, "Tell me why do you do that work then, if you hate it?" He said, "The money." Henry said, "Oh, what a price you pay for money."

F: Even the money isn't making him happy, obviously.

M: He's just bored with life entirely. I've thought--in community life too--that acceptance of everything to a degree. . . . There is a degree where you have to talk about things. There are times where you have to speak your mind and complain about things, but not as a general rule. I think you have to accept the people you live with. We are so different in background, in national background. We have people with more interest in the things that are beautiful in life. You have that everywhere.

But, you accept whatever gift they have. Everybody's got a gift. You carry that gift in a loose hand. You

carry that until the end of your days in a loose hand. You have it like I've had a joyful time in life teaching, with my interest in reading and writing. I found it even after I had retired, one day I was doing the archives at this time, and Sister Nancy Dosas said, "I would like you to be my social secretary. I would like you to write all my letters for me." I said, "Oh, I'd love it." Now, the other day, I was throwing things away and I had this whole file of letters I had written for copies of letters I had written for her. I'd write them and then I'd take them down to her secretary. Her secretary would type them up. I had fun with those letters. Sometimes I would ham them up, and they'd be funny. Sometimes they'd be serious. There were all kinds of letters. I thought, now, a gift that I had came back to me and I was allowed to write.

Also, I joined the Cursillo movement. It is a movement in the church. It came from Spain. It's a very simple family type of thing. The people at the Cursillo join together in prayer. It's the most exhilarating experience. I remembered it for a long time when I joined that. You would go to their meetings, you would pray, then they have a Cursillo movement where people are imbued with the love of God. I joined that. Then, I gave a witness talk. Then, I joined the team for that Cursillo and I gave a talk to the laity of the church. Then, I was invited out for various talks to the Sarah Club and different groups. So, that couple years, I was writing all the time and I liked it. I just love to write. I often thought it would be fun to write children's literature. But, I never did. I never really had any chance to get into it.

F: You can do it now.

M: I could, but I think I'm too tired. My mind is too tired to be excited about things that I would do for children. As when I was teaching, I was just real bubbly about things and loved everything I did. Everyday was a joy. But, I think you grow tired. I think there's a time also, to say goodbye to some things and get ready for the next door to open.

F: It doesn't appear that you've had any negative experiences.

M: I do not remember negative experiences. I never wanted to be influenced by negative things even when I didn't agree. I think that virtue is saying what you think and letting it go and not begrudge anybody else their opinion. If they have make a decision that you don't agree with, that's too bad. There's no feeling of frustration about it. It's just one of those things.

F: If you can say, what has been the biggest change in the diocese since 1943?

M: I think we should rather talk about the changes in the church, rather than the changes in the diocese, because they may have built new structures. The school system may have changed somewhat, as every school system would. The changes can be so imperceivable. I was at Ursuline High School for seventeen years. There were many changes within the school. The school was remodeled in many ways, but essentially, it's moved on as usual, with the teachers making their contributions and the children advancing. I don't see any of that as being part of the diocese.

F: The biggest change you've seen is what we've already talked about is with the lack of priests and sisters, consolidating churches, and sisters being allowed to have other vocations.

M: Right. They really chose, because some of them were disenchanted with the school, too. There was a period there where people felt the children were changing. Believe me, the children did change. Not in my experience. But, I think from hearing people talk, there were vast changes in the children. We could see changes in the home meant changes in the children and their attitude. I taught at a time when you gave the kids the homework and they did their homework. I never had to exert a lot of pressure for homework. I would make it very inconvenient for them, though, if they didn't do their homework. When it was time to add up the grades and their homework wasn't in, they were still going to get a lower grade, but I would call them up and make them come over on weekends, just to inconvenience them. That was the way I found better than getting angry with them. [It was the] same when I had my newspaper. If the copy wasn't ready and time to go to the printer, at first I would get so scared and I'd be yelling at the kids.

Then, I got wise and I'd say to them, "It doesn't matter if the Christmas issue comes out at Easter. That's all right. Everybody will understand." They would say, "How can you talk that way? How can you act that way?" It was better to be easy with it. You get things better that way. If you force yourself, or force people to do what you want them to, you're never the winner, because they don't totally exceed to what you make them do. So, it's better with the little easier approach, which I have always used. That's another aspect of keeping happy because you can't be [fighting] with the children. You officiate the very aim you have to influence their life, by being angry. They don't forget that. They remember you for helping them out or

listening. I have a little collection upstairs of all the pictures kids give me when they graduate. I look at the messages on the back. "Thanks for giving me a chance," or "Thanks for doing this or that for me." That tells you, "Yeah. That was good." It was a good experience.

But the diocese has always kind of been in the background of my experience, because I never really worked down there. You have to be there to really. . . . The people that are going to tell you the most will be by the diocese and the things of the church. That's where it all comes from. People who come from the diocese.

F: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

M: Well, not anything, except that I think I've told you everything about me.

F: I just wanted to make sure that there is nothing that you think would be important to the project that we didn't cover.

M: I probably don't contribute much to the project, except to tell you my story. It's a little story. I spent twelve years as a director of the young sisters; the junior profess sisters. That was mostly kind of a counseling job, where you listen to them and talk to them, but mostly listen. I spent ten years in administration. I went into administration in 1966. I was in two different administrations until 1976 as a counselor. There again, there is an opportunity there to give your piece to the community. It was never something I wanted, but when it came, I was surprised. When it comes, you accept it. So, my life, I think, has been rather calm and peaceful. As I said before, I think there is a time you must speak and never hesitate to say what you think, but I never made that an issue of my life.

F: Thank you.

M: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW