

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ursuline High School Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 304

KATHRYN EBERHART

Interviewed

by

Donna DeBlasio

on

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: KATHRYN EBERHART

INTERVIEWER: Donna DeBlasio

SUBJECT: Ursuline school life, teachers, tuition; classrooms

DATE: November 17, 1974

D: This is an interview with Miss Kathryn Eberhart for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Ursuline High School by Donna DeBlasio at Miss Eberhart's apartment on November 17, 1974, at 4:00 p.m.

Miss Eberhart, would you tell us a little bit about your background, your family?

E: My father was born and raised here in Youngstown. He was born down at the corner of Boardman and Front Street, down where the Youngstown Hotel was. He was one of six children, the youngest of six children. He went to the Front Street School and to the Westside School. He went through the eighth grade, I guess, but he never went any farther. His mother died when he was six years old and his father remarried and then there were four children of the second marriage, so there were ten children. He always told about when his father took him to the Milton Brothers Sunday School and it was his job, because he was so little, to pump the organ. (Laughter) Until he got to, I guess, maybe fourteen or fifteen he did that, and one day he told his father he wasn't going to do that anymore. His father said he didn't care whether he did that or not, but he wanted him to go to church, that was the important thing.

My mother was born outside of Pittsburgh in Broad Creek, Pennsylvania, one of four girls. They finally moved to Girard, Ohio. My mother was a dressmaker. She had a dress-making shop in our house. She was one of the finest seamstresses that ever came around.

My father and mother were married on July 22, 1897. My grandfather, my mother's father, had died so my grandmother and my mother's three sisters all came to live with us. Then I had a brother. There were just the two children. We always had a house full of people.

When I was six years old, I started in what was then the Ursuline Academy. On the corner of Rayen and Elm was the old brick school. We called it St. Columba's School. Next door, to the west, was the Ursuline Convent, and they had an academy for girls. They took boys through the first four grades, but then they had to go over to St. Columba's School. Girls went up through high school there. There's my graduation picture. There were just two of us in the class.

D: How large was this school at the time you went?

E: It wasn't a school. We just went right into the convent part.

D: About how many students were there?

E: Well, in the four lower grades, in the first, second, third, and fourth grades, probably there would be thirty children, that would be boys and girls in each grade. But after we went upstairs in the convent to the fifth grade, the number went down. I can't ever remember having a class with more than five or six in it.

D: Would you describe the building?

E: It was a long, narrow, red brick building, three stories high. It had a front entrance on Rayen Avenue and a walk-in door and a side entrance in the yard across from St. Columba's School. It had a beautiful little chapel in it.

When we were in high school, we just had two teachers, Mother Josephine and Mother Vincent. They were really excellent teachers. We really got a good training.

I wasn't the first class, but like I said, Marie Roller and Mary Maloney were the first two graduates. I know Marie is still living. She's Mrs. John Sferra now. I'm not sure about Mary Maloney, she was living not too long ago. She was a sister of Father Maloney, who was one-time pastor over in Hubbard and then one-time pastor of St. Edward's Church. He retired and lived on Benita somewhere.

D: Where were most of the students from?

E: They were all from pretty close around here on the northside. When we went to school, we walked four times

a day because we went home for lunch.

But it was a wonderful training. Then they moved the school. I went to it in 1915. In 1920, I think, they moved up to Wick Avenue, to the big Andrew's mansion. They made that into a girl's school. I think it went on for ten years as a girl's school; I think it was 1930 that they made it coeducational.

D: What was the cost to go to Ursuline?

E: Five dollars a month, whether you were in the first grade or whether you were a senior in high school.

D: Did you have to pay for your books also?

E: Oh yes. You bought everything. Pencils, paper, everything that you used, you bought yourself. They didn't furnish anything.

D: How exclusive was Ursuline as far as social classes go?

E: Well, better classes. People with a little money went there. Of course, it wasn't just that kind. It seemed like the lawyer that owned the hardware store down on West Federal Street, and the real substantial Catholic families, sent their girls there.

: How strict was the discipline?

: (Laughter) It was very strict, very strict. We didn't think it was so strict because we were used to the same kind of discipline at home as you had there. It was nothing like today. We wouldn't think of talking back or answering back. What youngsters do now, standing there and thinking up a million and one excuses to give you . . . We sat silent. We were reprimanded for anything.

We had lots of advantages at the academy. We had a speech teacher, a vocal teacher, and we had a sister that taught us all kinds of fancy needlework. We had painting and art, which the other schools weren't having at that time.

D: Could you describe a typical day at Ursuline?

E: School started at, I think, 8:30 in the morning. On a typical day we started out the day with prayer, and classes went pretty much as classes go. Like I said, it was interspersed with these different activities; one day we would have speech and one day we had vocal and one day in the afternoon we had sewing. We really had

a nice time; everybody enjoyed going. Everybody was crazy about the sisters. They were very wonderful to us.

I was sorry when they changed it from a girl's school, but adopted it. There weren't too many going. Sister Mary Louise who is down at the convent was a 1914 graduate with Bessie McGraw.

D: What classes did you like the most?

E: I like math and Latin. I took four years of Latin and English, but I liked math and Latin, I think, the best.

D: Were there any courses that you had to take?

E: We didn't have any choice. We were just told what we were going to take, the courses that we had to have to get into college.

D: What type of extra-curricular activities did they have there, clubs, dances?

E: None, nothing. They didn't have any social life at all. Only among ourselves, we had little clubs outside of school, but nothing in the school.

D: Did the students have any particular place within the school that they would gather to talk?

E: Oh yes. We had the big sisters community room. They had the four years of high school students in the same room, so you know how many there were in it. (Laughter) During the school day, that was sort of our place. It was school, but any free time, we all congregated there. We talked and made plans for what we would do and all that. We had no social activities in the school.

D: Were there a great number of cliques?

E: No, I really don't think there were. I think everybody was everybody's friend. Everybody seemed to get along and we didn't seem to have just one or two that would shut out all the rest. Everybody seemed to fit in. The Ursuline Alumni Association wasn't formed until after they went up on Wick Avenue.

D: What did you think of the teachers?

E: I thought they were the most wonderful things that ever were, and I think both of our high school teachers were really well-educated and friendly.

D: What kind of classroom method did they use to teach?

E: We used our books a good deal, but there was conversation and you could voice your opinion if you didn't think something was just right. You didn't have to take it verbatim.

D: How many hours of study per night did you put in?

E: I don't think I ever went to bed before twelve o'clock, and I would study from about eight o'clock. We really had homework in everything, every night. I can't ever remember going to school without my homework.

D: Do you think that the classes were very difficult?

E: I know geometry was difficult for me. (Laughter) To this day I don't know what it is all about. In physics I got along all right, but I couldn't see through geometry at all. I did pass in it, but I don't know how it happened. But languages, English and Latin, and math, all that I always got through fine. I got the General Excellence Medal when I graduated so I guess I did pretty well.

: Do you think there was a strong emphasis on religion?

: Oh, definitely, yes. We had the Baltimore Catechism and I don't think anybody could ask us a question in that catechism today that we couldn't answer.

D: Did you go to college after Ursuline?

E: I didn't go away to school. We used to have what they called the Youngstown Normal School here in town. It was at South High when we started and then they opened Monroe School and it was supposed to be the model school of Youngstown.

D: Do you think that Ursuline prepared you well?

E: Oh yes. I think I was well prepared. I was able to study and concentrate and I didn't have any trouble whatsoever.

D: When you graduated, what kind of feelings did you have leaving Ursuline?

E: I cried for days. (Laughter) I just wanted to go back there and be a senior all over again the next year. I didn't want to go anyplace else. I think all the girls felt that way. They hated to leave. The sisters were wonderful to us. They took a real interest in you. Of course, a few like that you have practically individual attention. Anybody can learn if they have that.

D: Do you think there was a feeling of superiority at Ursuline?

E: No, no, nothing like that. I don't think we had any feeling at all towards our friends that went to Rayen. Some dropped out every year and would finish at Rayen. No, we never felt we were any better than they were, that we got anything any better than they did.

D: How would you compare the two schools as far as there being a feeling of pride in going to Ursuline because it was a Catholic school instead of going to a public school?

E: Well, if I ever went to a public school, I would know. I never went to a public school. I imagine at Rayen they probably had more courses than we had, but all the girls that ever went away to college were always able to get in without any trouble and they would keep up their grades. So I'm sure we had a good foundation.

D: Since Ursuline was a small school, were newcomers resented?

E: No. We welcomed them with open arms. We were glad when they came. We never had too many, but when they came, they were treated just in the kindest way.

D: Did you notice any changes between Ursuline when you went and now?

E: Not anything is the same. There's no comparison. Of course, that isn't exactly the school's fault. I think the manner the children are brought up in nowadays had a lot to do with that. We were brought up to respect our elders and to obey and all that. If they said black was white, we went right along with them. But you don't find children like that today. Even the smallest ones will challenge you. So, I think there's a great difference in it. And of course, having the boys there it's entirely different.

D: I think it is wonderful for the Catholic children to have schools like Ursuline and Cardinal Mooney.

E: Looking back at your years at Ursuline, are there any changes you would have made with the school while you were there, with the school policy?

D: I was perfectly happy and satisfied with the way everything went.

E: Would you say there was a feeling of pride?

D: Well, yes. We did feel a little pride, I imagine, but

not jealousy or anything like that. There were no feelings that we were better than anybody else or anything like that. But, I think we did appreciate the fact that we had been able to go there, that our parents had made the sacrifice. Five dolalrs now sounds like nothing, but I imagine to get the five dollars back in those days was just as hard to get the amount they're asking now.

D: Were there any notable classmates when you were going to Ursuline who sort of made it fairly well?

E: I don't know that any of us have done anything. I taught for 51 years and this is my 7th year substituting. But I don't know. I can't think of any that have been real outstanding. We've all done a good job in whatever we have been doing, but nothing spectacular. Sister Dorothea up at Ursuline has made quite a name for herself. She's head of the speech department over there. Of course, she came after our time. I don't think she went to it when it was Ursuline Academy. I think she went when it was a high school.

D: Do you know when they changed the name to Ursuline High School?

E: I think it was in 1930.

D: Are there any other comments you would like to make about Ursuline?

E: Just that I thought it was the finest place in the world. If I had to do it over again, I would like to do it that way again.

END OF INTERVIEW