

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ursuline Sisters

History of Ursuline Sisters, 1930's to Present

O.H. 80

SISTER JEROME CORCORAN

Interviewed

by

Donna DeBlasio

on

May 6, 1975

SISTER JEROME CORCORAN

Sister Jerome Corcoran was born in Chicago, Illinois. Her parents were both immigrants from Ireland. She came to Youngstown at the age of seven where she received her grade school education at St. Columba Cathedral. She continued in the parochial school system and graduated from Ursuline High School. She then went to Sisters' College in Cleveland and Catholic University for her B.A. and M.A. degrees in English, and to Case Western Reserve for her Ph.d. in Education.

Deciding that she wanted a religiously oriented life of service for God, Sister Jerome Corcoran joined the Ursuline Order in 1935. She chose the Ursuline Order in particular because her whole background, grade school and high school, was with the Ursuline Sisters.

Since joining the Ursuline Order, Sister Jerome Corcoran has taught in the Youngstown Parochial Elementary Schools and at Ursuline High School. She was a Supervisor for the Diocese of Youngstown from 1953 to 1965, and has been involved in the Head Start Program from 1970 to 1975.

Sister Jerome Corcoran has received such recognition as the Mahoning County Law Association Award (1965) and the B'Nai B'rith Brotherhood Award (1964). She belongs to the Roman Catholic Church and has been involved in such organizations as the Urban League, NAACP, National Council of Teachers of English

and the Council for Learning Disabilities. Because of her special interest in helping drop-outs earn their high school diplomas, Sister Jerome also serves as Director of Volunteer Instructors in Adult Education, Inc.

ELIZABETH A. REITZEL
July 6, 1978

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INTERVIEWEE: SISTER JEROME CORCORAN
INTERVIEWER: Donna DeBlasio
SUBJECT: History of Ursuline Sisters, 1930's to Present
DATE: May 6, 1975

DEBLASIO: This is an interview with Sister Jerome Corcoran for the Youngstown State University Oral History project on the Ursuline Sisters by Donna DeBlasio. It is May 6, 1975 at 11:00 p.m. This interview is taking place at the Ursuline Motherhouse on Shields Road.

Sister, could you tell us a little about your family background and your educational background?

CORCORAN: My parents are still living at the age of 90, and they're both immigrants from Ireland years back. I was born in Chicago, and came to Youngstown around the age of seven. I went to parochial schools; grade school education at St. Colomba Cathedral and Ursuline High School all the way through. I went to Sisters College in Cleveland and Catholic University for my B.A. and M.A. degrees in English. Then I went to Case Western Reserve for my Ph.d. in Education.

DEBLASIO: What influenced your decision to enter religious life?

CORCORAN: I entered in the days, looking back, when everything was very simple. In 1935 we hadn't yet gotten into World War II, and women at that time had really very limited options. If a person was interested in

service, there wasn't a whole lot you could do about it! There really wasn't. So those of us who had had a parochial education for many years and who were from stable old Catholic families, six of us who were all in the same club, decided what we wanted was a life of service for God, religiously oriented, like the Church. In those days there was no Peace Corps and no Vista, so we decided on the Church almost as a group, although of course as individuals.

So, in 1935 six of us who were in the same class at Ursuline High School came to this Ursuline Community which at that time had its headquarters on Rayen Avenue. We lived in what was called a four story Motherhouse.

D: Why did you join the Ursuline Order?

C: Well, I joined the Ursuline Order because my whole background, grade school and high school, was with the Ursuline sisters. I went to college for a semester before coming to this Ursuline community. That was an Ursuline college in Kentucky with another Ursuline group, but my roots were here. My friends were here and Youngstown was the place I had known for twelve years, so it was logical.

D: Could you describe a typical day when you first entered the order?

C: I first entered the order, yes, in 1935, but in those days we, quote, "entered," or joined the community which had its motherhouse on Rayen Avenue. But, the younger sisters lived in the old Andrews mansion that since has been torn down. It was on the Ursuline High School property. You may remember it. The younger sisters lived up there so that we would get up about 5:00 in the morning and walk down to Rayen Avenue for Mass about 5:30, possibly 6:00.

The day would begin with getting up, and at any temperature. One day after we got down to Rayen Avenue we discovered the temperature was four degrees below zero, but we walked down.

Then we would begin breakfast at Rayen Avenue with the entire community which was probably about a hundred members or so. After breakfast about 7:00-7:30 we would commute from that location to the school where we were teaching. Now of course by here I mean schools such as St. Peter and Paul, which was closed, the Cathedral, closed, St. Cyril's was still in operation, and Immaculate Conception. We left from that central location for the schools where we taught.

Of course at 4:30 we'd come back to the convent. Now the younger sisters would go back to the convent on Wick Avenue and we'd take turns kp-ing, you know, getting the vegetables, baking the cakes and so forth. Then after supper we would have what was called recreation. As a group we would be together for 45 minutes or so, just talking. In those days there were cotton hose you had to darn. We also had those little things like eggs and we would darn our hose. That was a natural avocation. We would also talk and visit.

After recreation as a group we had a study period of about an hour and a half, for lesson plans or studies related to the college courses we were taking. Around 10:00 it would be lights out.

D: How would you say this has changed through the years?

C: Well, it's changed drastically as of today. One major difference is that not everybody's teaching. We have great variety. Not everybody's doing classroom teaching in the Catholic schools. Practically everybody thinks they are. Our sisters are probably in at least twenty different kinds of work. For example, I am Education Supervisor for Head Start, so three days a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I go to the Head Start. I go by myself and I drive, of course. In those days we did not drive.

There is such a variety of jobs we are doing, which includes as our daily schedule how we get to where we are. Also it includes our night schedules. For example, many of us now have to go to meetings related to our work or our interests. I teach two nights a week in our volunteer program for adult dropouts to help them get their high school diplomas. Weekends for example, in 1935, were almost entirely the work that had to be done in the convent plus our studying and a little recreation. In those days of course, like anywhere else there was a lot more work and there were fewer labor saving devices. We didn't have Wisk for the collars and that kind of thing.

It has changed drastically partly because we are in so many different types of work and partly because now there is greater individual responsibility for choice. For example, now a sister will say what she prefers to do. If it's within limits, not skydiving, then the Council will usually go along with it.

D: What have your duties been while you've been at Ursuline, at the convent?

C: Well, I have spent about twelve years teaching in the classroom, six years of elementary school and six years at Ursuline High School. I spent twelve years as Education Supervisor with the Diocese, that's elementary and high school, visiting the classroom, doing curriculum improvement, doing courses of study, some administrative work for the Diocese, and a lot of research and statistics for the Diocese. Then, I have spent about twelve years, it's funny, my life runs in twelves, well it's been about six full time years studying for the B.A., Masters and Ph.d. The other twelve I have now spent recently working directly with the poor. I work half time at Head Start helping teachers provide pre-kindergarten children with a stimulating, adequate functional education. To qualify for Head Start the children have to be in the poverty bracket, so they can't possibly have all the puzzles, stories, games, experiences that middle class kids have. So I work with the teachers. Now the teachers in the Head Start Program are not required to have anything beyond high school. So, that is all in my background of working with teachers, curriculum improvement and all of that.

Incidentally, when I was at the Diocese, I wrote a book on the elementary school principalship, and after a few years that was the Bible of the assistant principalship.

But, I work half time with Head Start helping the teachers to give the children the best possible tailored type of prekindergarten education, and it's fantastic. Now the other half of my time I spend as a volunteer in the program our sisters have to help high school dropouts get their high school diplomas. I administer the program and I teach two nights in the program. Part of my work is raising the funds. It costs around twenty five thousand dollars a year to run the program. Volunteers are volunteers. The teachers don't get any money, but of course we have to pay for a secretary, supplies, aides, and that kind of thing. That volunteer program for high school dropouts is very dear to our community because it's completely a volunteer thing. We do everything ourselves. We've been doing it for seven years now and we've had seventy graduates. They've gotten their high school diplomas and they never would have made it without us, you see, so that we have a real vested interest in them emotionally. So that's been the kind of activity I've been engaged in as a nun.

D: Could you perhaps describe a typical day at Head Start?

C: I leave here at about 8:00 in the morning. I get there at 8:30. The office is right across from Ursuline High School

on Wick Avenue. Ordinarily there's about an hour to an hour and a half of paperwork, reports, questionnaires or inquiries, organization or ordering of supplies.

On Monday and Wednesday I go to the classrooms. I work with the assistant teachers, the teachers, and the children. I take some pictures when they get to a certain point. When they can really skip I'll take a picture of them. They come by that at certain points. They might not be able to skip for . . . Well, one little boy just learned to skip last week, and all he wants to do now is skip. I go to the classrooms, work with the teachers and children. I work with groups, but I'm not directly teaching the children. I have developed a daily schedule and curriculum for pre-kindergarten children and I have helped the teachers implement those. Now occasionally I can get a Federal Grant for Head Start and in those grants we can invite in additional speakers or additional workshop things so that the teachers can get a lot of enrichment.

Every Friday is our "in service" day. The children do not come to Head Start on Fridays, they come four days a week, half days, a group in the morning and a group in the afternoon. But, on Fridays we have our "in service" day and we do one of two things; either I organize a workshop in the curriculum areas, say math or language or self-image or emotional adjustment. I organize the workshop and conduct it for the teachers and aides on a regular schedule, or I go to the individual classrooms and work with the teachers on the needs of that individual classroom, whether it's supplies or a child who is responding in a certain way. I help the teachers with additional assistance that they need and that's pretty much the pattern. It's very varied and very personalized. It isn't a paper job, where I have to do papers everyday.

D: Could you describe a typical day at your volunteer work?

C: Oh yes. The Tuesdays and Thursdays and parts of Saturdays I devote mainly to our adult dropout program, but partly to an activity I've been in charge of another twelve years. Funny, another twelve, but anyway I've been in charge of this activity twelve years here. It's our major fund raising activity for the motherhouse, but that's something else.

Back to the volunteer instruction. Almost eight years ago now our sisters felt, we know now for sure, that the major handicap of the very poor was limited education. As we

talked with people we could see that when they go to fill out a job application, one of the questions is, "When did you graduate from high school?" If you say, "I didn't," that application is either on the bottom or in the circular file. Even in sweeping a parking lot, and that has nothing to do with a high school education, very often they're asked, "When did you graduate from high school?" So we became convinced that they just had to get their high school diplomas. So, sisters signed up to teach evenings because we all are employed during the day.

So, we test the people who come to apply to study to see what they need most. We organize the classes into three areas: reading, English grammar and math. We give classes in those three areas. There are many, many books now which are available that help them get used to the kind of questions that will be asked on a test. So we teach fractions, decimals, percentage, new math, algebra, geometry, weights and measures, for the math.

In the English we teach spelling, vocabulary, grammar, useage, punctuation, and capitalization.

Two evenings a week we teach out in the northeast McGuffey area, another poverty area. We get the building free. It's the McGuffey Methodist Church, which has been bought now by a Christian Church, but they donate the facility. We have about twelve volunteers usually. Three of those are lay people. One's with Ohio Bell. Two others are teachers. We hold class for an hour and a half at their level. We keep class down to about eight or ten students, then we can work on a one-to-one level at whatever level they are. We do that two nights a week and some people have to come two or three years. We don't let them go. Once we get their phone numbers, they're stuck. We keep calling them and writing them. When they don't come, they're ill or someone in the family is ill, or the gas has been turned off, or they have real problems. We know it's not lack of interest. So, we keep in touch with them between classes and we have a paid secretary who can use the phone.

Once a year in the fall we have a crash-bang graduation party. Model Cities gives us money for materials, but not for parties, so that we have to beg the gifts and so forth. Each person gets about fifty dollars' worth of gifts. We get pictures taken and all of that. We have about ten graduates a year. All our graduates tell us that that's one of the

happiest days of their lives, when they get that cap and we play the music and they give their speeches and they have their fling. So that's a program that means a lot to our community. We stay with it.

Now, with regard to the fund raising, I've been in charge of our Century Club for twelve years now, and that was begun so that we could have the mortgage on this house completely paid off by 1974 when we'd be a hundred years old. The community came in 1874, so to 1974 would be a hundred years. The Superior twelve years ago organized Century Club with the help of some outstanding laymen, so that we would have no debt on this place in 1974. I was given the job of keeping charge of the membership, billing them, thanking them, organizing them, reminding them, cheering them on and all of that. So we've raised now over \$260,000.

D: What do you remember about the Ursuline Academy when you went there?

C: I never went to the Ursuline Academy.

D: The high school, then.

C: Oh, I see. You know there was an Ursuline Academy. Do you have some information on that?

D: Some, but not much.

C: I went to the St. Columba grade school. Those who had a little more money paid tuition and went to a private academy right next door. Do you have any information on that?

D: Some, but not much.

C: You must. That's cute, oh, that was darling. The ones who didn't have much money went to St. Columba Cathedral School. If you had a little more money, you went to the Academy. That was a real small group, maybe only ten persons in a grade, or eight in a grade and that was taught over at the Convent.

Now, when the boys got to fifth grade, they came over to us and we used to look at them, you know. They were ok, but they had come from the Academy. But the girls continued through eight years of the private tuition academy and then we all went to Ursuline High School.

Now what do I remember about Ursuline High School? I started Ursuline High School in 1930, September, when the first boys were admitted. So that was a big deal. It had been a private girls' academy until September of 1930 and then in come the heathen boys. It was very interesting because it was organized for girls, and the sisters who were teaching there had to kind of reorganize themselves. But the boys they called gentlemen. We had stairs for boys and stairs for girls. Of course we started out with sports and that helped the boys a lot. In my graduating class, there were only eighty-four students, forty-some boys and forty-some girls. We knew one another very well and we knew the teachers very well. There was real closeness. Anybody gets sick, you knew it. Now in the days I was there, Ursuline High School, like most of the more private schools, was largely academic. You could take cooking or sewing, but that's about all it seems to me. Oh, there was typing, but everything else was very academic. Then the Depression hit, so we all would have gone to college in 1934-35, but the only ones lucky enough to go were the ones who got a scholarship. I was lucky enough to get the scholarship, so I went for a semester and then came back and entered the ranks.

D: Could you describe the building, the physical surroundings?

C: Of Ursuline? Ursuline High School when I went to it was just the front part of the present building. Do you know where the auditorium is? Where the bricks are still beige, it was just that front part there and all the rest was grounds where we could walk. Now I walked to school. My brother and I were in the same class. We lived about seven or eight blocks away, so we always walked to school and we always walked home. The kids from the South Side and the East Side would take a bus downtown and they would nearly always walk up the hill so there was a real closeness and a personalism that is unbelievable. Now the building that extended that far the rest of it was grounds. The big old Andrews Mansion was there, and in between was a lovely thing that's been torn down now. It was one of those circular things that in the good old days served as a place to have your guests for tea. Now in the field beyond, which was not cultivated, it was a football field, the boys played their football out there, no track or golf or anything. They played basketball in the current auditorium. That was the extent of the construction of the building and the grounds.

We walked home from school. Most of us at least walked part of the way, so it was a different kind of existence. No school busses. Practically nobody had a car because they couldn't afford one. We were in the Depression.

D: Could you describe a typical day at Ursuline High School?

C: Right now?

D: No, when you went.

C: When I went, it seems to me school started around nine, about forty-five minutes later than today. We had forty-five minute periods, I'm not sure, with loads of time between classes. Seems to me it must have been about five minutes, but we weren't racing across campus to anything, so it was kind of leisurely. We went from class to class with two study halls. I think it will be the lunch period that was most different. We had about an hour for lunch. As I recall, all the girls were there together for lunch, and then we went outside and we walked around the building. We had a very leisurely lunch. The boys had theirs separately. We did have home rooms. The home room period and the religion period were combined. There was a lot of socialization there, too. We had gym, which would be a big deal. The same kids would be there. All the seniors would take gym together, and all the freshmen and sophomore girls together. We did have organized girls' basketball on a competitive basis, inter-mural.

One of the very interesting things about the day was at that time that our class was the class that introduced boys, so that after our class there would be half boys and half girls. Above our class were all girls and all ladies. We had that ladylike thing above us and we had the coed beginning with us. The schedule went, lots of personalism, lots of interaction, but we were already accredited by Northcentral way back then and accredited by the State of Ohio. So, academically the standards were excellent, and you really had to study. We had four years of Latin, and could be there was French and four years of English. We had at least three years of math drummed into us, but it was lots of fun.

D: Do you recall any teachers you thought were particularly memorable?

C: In my high school years?

D: Yes.

C: We had excellent teachers, really good teachers. One of the persons that I remember best was our Latin teacher, Mother Paul. She had been a Protestant through all of her life. When she came to Youngstown, she met some of our sisters and in her interaction with them she first became a Catholic, then a nun. She was a very academically oriented person. She was my Latin teacher. She was an outstanding person. Mother Holy Angel, her name was Locklin, and she was related to the Garratys. Two generations ago, the Garratys and Locklins were the contractors in Youngstown. Mother Holy Angel was my English teacher for three years. She was a very bright and scholarly person. As a student, you'd better do those compositions every Monday morning. She was a very serious and capable person.

Sister Winifred was my English teacher in my senior year. Now you may have heard of her. You wouldn't have had her, she would have been out of there. She's been out of there for about twelve years. She was an excellent teacher of literature especially.

Sister Regina, you might have heard of her for Science, and Sister Paterna for math. Sister Cathleen for typing also was there. There also was our gym teacher and I was very fond of her. The religion teacher, usually the principal, taught at least one religion course. Father Corne was the principal through the years I was there. Father Cunningham, who's now at Assumption, was one of our religion teachers. Father Missic, who has just retired in Cleveland, was a religion teacher. That would be the teachers whom I remember most. Oh no, Sister Rosemary Diebel who's still at Ursuline High School taught me French for two years. She had a great influence on me, an excellent teacher.

D: How did you feel about leaving Ursuline when you graduated?

C: Well, we had a very closely knit group, and we felt sad about leaving the students we used to know. We felt sad about leaving the teachers. The year 1934 was during the Depression and there were just no jobs. The world we went into was a world of stark realism. There was no romanticism, and we struck out into what should have been the working world with no jobs.

D: What do you think you remember about any of the convents that you've lived at?

C: I've lived here now for twelve years. The Logan Avenue Convent, the old Wick Mansion, was a gorgeous convent. The architecture was out of this world, English Tudor. It was out there on 4350 Logan. That now has become a development. Stillington Drive is out there. It was a beautiful place, beautifully landscaped. The woodwork was exquisite. You may have perhaps noticed some of the woodwork was just taken out, whole slabs, and moved to Strouss' and the Eastwood Mall. Just beautiful, the ceiling, the panneling, just exquisite. That convent is beautiful architecturally, especially with the woodwork in. That was at the old Wick Mansion and it was built for a person who was interested in architecture and art. It was lovely. I lived out there for part of the time when I was a member of the Council here. At that time I would leave everyday and go to the Diocesan Office to be a Supervisor. In the evening I would be back out there for administration. At that time the novices lived out there, and it was a ha-ha beautiful world. There's nothing like youth. It was a beautiful place and I enjoyed it very much. I think about beauty when I think of that place.

But since then of course we had to sell that and have it torn down to get around \$100,000 to put into this place.

D: Could you describe special occasions, like Christmas and Easter and how they were celebrated?

C: How were they.

D: When you first started, and how it's changed.

C: When we lived in the Rayen Avenue Convent there would be close to a hundred sisters there, certainly 85. That would mean jammed and packed. Even a table in the dining room, it was called the receptory, there would be maybe 75 sisters at the tables in the morning. At a typical Easter day, the Mass would be a big thing. We'd be rehearsing for weeks before the Gregorian Chant and polyphony would be out of this world. That would be the highlight of the morning.

In those days we kept silence at meals. We had readings from the Pious Book and kept silence. We didn't talk there. But on Easter, crash-bang we would talk and that was a big thing, jokes, ha ha ha ha ha.

The rest of the morning most of us would go out to our churches for the regular mass with the school children, and

we would come back at noon for a very festive dinner. In the early, early days, we did not have visitors on Easter Sunday. But, after a few years we did. We would have visitors beginning at two o'clock. The funny part of that was, there would be 65 persons, certainly 50, who would have visitors, relatives, family and friends. The parlors, as we called them, were very small. They would be maybe 12 by 12 feet and there would be four of them plus a hallway. I always think of this. It was knee to knee because you'd have one little group here almost knee to knee and another little family over there knee to knee. One of the great things about those days was that we knew everybody's relatives. Every child as it was born, every child as it made its first Communion, everybody who got married, came to the convent. We were close, physically, because there wasn't much space, but very close to families. There would be presents until you were fifty years old, and piles of presents. It was a very different kind of thing. That was before we went home to visit.

D: What sisters stand out in your memory a lot?

C: Other than the ones we talked about? One of the sisters I think of very often is Sister Margaret Mary, who was in charge of the altar breads, which was a big industry in those days. The sisters baked with the flour and the water to make the bread into sheets. Then they cut the Hosts for Holy Communion and packed them, covered them and stored them. Sister Margaret Mary was in charge of making altar breads. She had been a teacher for many years, but then she was in charge of altar breads. I remember her, not only in her work but especially for the hundreds of contacts she kept up with her students. She kept track of who married whom, who their children were, who their children married, where they lived and what they were doing. She really kept in touch.

One of the things that really impressed me the most about Sister Margaret Mary was her strong community spirit. She never went to Ursuline High School when there were boys, but every game she listened to on the radio. She followed every game and she knew how Ursuline was doing. She knew if Ursuline almost won. She knew the names of the boys. She was also crazy about the Cleveland Indians. She knew every player and kept track of the scores. This was way back when there wasn't television, only radio. I remember her very distinctly as a very community-minded person and very strongly related to her students.

Another person was Sister Anthony. She'd been born in Ireland, and hadn't gone to school more than a couple of years when she came into this country and had become interested in becoming a nun. She was a very bright person who never knew how to read. She entered the community way back around the turn of the century when we had two groups in convents, what we called the Lay Sisters and most of them had never gone to school long enough to learn how to read. But, they were sharp. My, they were fantastic! They had entered religious orders with the idea of doing the cooking or doing housework of some kind, and they had never learned to read. Sister Anthony was one of them. She had a fantastic sense of humor. She was a very bright person who never went to school or learned how to read, but she maintained her dignity and personhood.

D: What was memorable about some of the Mothers you served under?

C: The General Superiors?

D: Yes.

C: When I came to Ursuline, the Superior at that time was Mother Holy Angel who taught me English. She was a very bright, scholarly and structured person. She was a firm person with a real sense of person and a real sense of community purposes, very well organized and structured person. She was a rather distant and remote person, but I always loved her very much.

The next Superior I served under was Mother Paul, whom I mentioned earlier. She had been my Latin teacher for four years. She was a very cultured person and I always felt about Mother Paul that she never really became a Catholic. I was very fond of her, but she always seemed to me a real good Protestant. She was just a real good, dedicated, apostolic, cultured Protestant.

One of the very interesting experiences I had with Mother Paul was when I used to go up to the Presbyterian Home to visit some of her friends with her. Mother Paul had had a very Protestant and very wealthy background until she was in her teens. Her family had a lot of money. In Mother Paul's years they didn't keep up contact with many friends because we didn't go out to visit. She was from Pennsylvania, so friends of her childhood didn't really come to see her much. As she got older, two of her very close friends from Meadville came to live up at the Presbyterian Nursing Home

on Broadway. They have since moved over to Park Vista. But, two of her very close childhood friends moved there. They were about seventy or so. I used to go with Mother Paul up to the Presbyterian Home to visit them. That was a real experience for me. Mother Paul was so much at home there and so kind and thoughtful to them that I imagine that was my first real experience of ecumenism there. We were the first nuns who ever visited that home. When Mother Paul died I continued to visit there and to keep in touch with these two friends of hers. When they died, I went to their wakes and paid my condolences. That was, to me, very memorable.

Mother Edna Marie was a Superior and a remarkable financial person. She was a Superior beginning in 1960 and she organized a group of lame men who helped us purchase this property, build this house, and pay it off in twelve years. That's fantastic! The place was worth about one million when we moved in and it's worth about three million now. Mother Edna Marie was the financial organizer and the spiritual leader who managed that tremendous transition.

D: Why do you think it's difficult to get a modern woman to enter the convent?

C: I can see that an institutional convent might not have appealed to me in 1934. Persons now who are deeply interested in serving have many avenues of service, many. If they want to spend their time completely in service for a given period, say three years, they can join the Peace Corps, Pabla, Vista and others. That is a great opportunity. Another reason why I think an institutional convent doesn't appeal as it did forty years ago is that young women who are interested in service have so many avenues today. To a modern woman who is really interested in service, you have this institutional convent. There's a real suspicion of institutions and fifty percent of the time, I think those suspicions are justified. At least fifty percent, maybe ninety percent. So, there's that uncertainty that I, as a person, with my talents and background and objectives, might be lost in that thing called an institution. Would it be personalized, or would it swallow me up? Could I adapt and change and serve as I matured? I think that would be a real threat to a young person today.

From about 1965 to 1973, in those eight years we were all aware of the turmoil on college campuses, the Vietnam thing; it's something we don't like to talk about now, this whole thing about God being dead and the theory that God is not

dead, the women's lib thing. . . this whole liberation thing of liberating whatever has to be liberated. Then, there are the scandels that have come to light in government, in Church and elsewhere, the wholesale breakup of established patterns, marriage, jobs, the ministry, convents, a wholesale exodus. For about eight years, many people were just shaken. Some people stopped buying the newspapers, stopped watching television. They couldn't stand anymore clamor. In those years, some of it was personal maladjustment of a given individual at a given time, but it wasn't all that. There were real evils in the establishment. During that great big upheavel we had young people growing up and maturing and having to make decisions that young people did not have to make in the past. There wasn't just a college they were going to go to for four years and then they're going to be teachers or nurses or something else. They were questioning the value of establishments, and I think rightly so. Any institution, church, ministry, convent, college, gray-suit job or whatever, everything was questioned.

In the days of turmoil people growing up would logically shy away from any institution that they feared might swallow them up. That, and there were many avenues of service.

For instance, if a young woman in my day wanted to serve, and especially if she wanted to do something for God, she didn't really have a choice. She could get married, have a good family and work that out. But, if as an individual she wanted Christ, she couldn't do a thing but go to a convent. There was no choice. I didn't want to go to a convent either. I just didn't want to go to a convent. So I said to myself, "Do you want to get married?" Yes, that would be very attractive, very nice, some very nice fellows I know. But if more than that you do feel you want to serve, ok, go to a convent and get it over with. Get started. I used to say about anyone who really wants to go to a convent that there's something wrong with her. No one really wants to go to a convent. There were no other choices. Particularly with no other choices a girl thinks that maybe she might want a total life of religious dedication as well as service. She considers the Peace Corps, Pabla or Vista for a few years. She thinks, "After I get my college education I'll see. Maybe, maybe I do. If so, I'll keep that option open, but I'm not going to jump in there because if you quit, or you leave, there's a kind of a failure." Whether it's the breakup of a marriage, termination of employment, or whether it's a change in a religious dedication, there's an idea of personal failure in quitting something. Why invite

failure? I'm not saying shop around. I don't mean that. There are at least as many sincere, capable, dedicated people today as there ever were, but they have more options. I think they can be slower about making that decision.

D: What changes have you noticed from when you first entered the order until now?

C: The major changes I think would be so blasé that it's almost corny, "free to be me." I think an Ursuline Sister today is free to be herself. I don't mean to do her own thing, though, because we do have restrictions. We do have vows. We are members of a community, and we must not only take from the community, but contribute to the moral and the financial support of the community. I do think that we're free to be ourselves. For example, when we changed our headdresses in about 1963, we took off this white encasing. At one time you could see part of the sister's hands, from the wrist down, and you could see just this much of the sister's face. I think that was symbolic of a pattern that we took on, the kind of a lifestyle we've adopted in speech, walking, teaching, and meeting people.

There's a pattern in there that was part of our lifestyle in those days that I think was good. I don't think I'm exceptional, but I really don't have any major gripes about it. I do think that that this "free to be me" is a tremendous thing. For example, in my own life now I can't think of any structure or any lifestyle in which I could do more that I like to do than a commune. I'm not exactly a free lance artist, but I sort of am. With Head Start I also teach at the University a couple times a year, usually. Sometimes I teach communications, sometimes I teach early childhood. I can't think of anything in this country, anything structurally patterned that would give me the freedom of choice and of support that I have. Lots of people wouldn't want to do what I do, but I like it this way.

D: What do you think is the future direction of the Ursuline Order?

C: I mentioned that in those eight to ten years of real upheavals in our country, with the communes, campus riots, wholesale exodus from the ministry and convents, and the corresponding breakup of marriages, every young person growing up became a different young person than what that

person would have been twenty years earlier. With regard to the future of an institution such as a convent or a religious community, there was great upheaval, great reaction, great negativism in running away and throwing tomatoes. But there are just as many dedicated and fine kids today as there were. Now there is a slight counter-reaction, but not a complete swinging back of the pendulum which I think would be bad. "This was awful, so let's get security." I think the future of our religious institution, like the community, will be that they will be smaller, for one thing, because people who want to serve have more choices. I think the number will be very small, but I also think that in the modified lifestyle we have "free to be me" in a good sense.

I think there will continue to be communities of women who will be interested in service, who will band together for financial reasons and mutual support, and for the thing that we have somehow almost become ashamed of. It's amazing how seldom people speak of the honor and glory of God that happens to be the motto of our community. To the glory of God alone our order was founded in the middle 1500's, so the order was over four hundred years old. Just think of the French Revolution and all the industrial changes. Our order has continued to adapt and it hasn't died out.

In the future I think there will be groups of women interested in service and the honor and glory of God. These women will group together for service as living and contributing members of society, but in smaller numbers.

End of Interview