

Oral history interview with Sister Marceline Mattingly, 2/8/08

OK, today is Feb. 8, 2008, and this is an interview with Sister Marceline Mattingly.

01 Family Background

Sister Marceline, when and where were you born?

I was born Nov. 23, 1915. And I was born in Henderson County, Ky., on my grandfather's farm.

And tell me about your family — your parents, any siblings that you might have had.

Um, I'm the oldest of seven, and, uh, my mother [Julia Hall Mattingly] and father [Paul Mattingly] were, uh, young people. My mom was 17 — 18 — when I was born. My dad was 23. She always said she married an older man [laughs]. And, uh, our family was, ah, two girls and two boys when I was growing up, all the way up to seventh grade. And then, we got these three little kids. We always said the four big kids and the three little kids. And the three little kids, unfortunately, had not even started to school when I entered the convent. And because in those days there was great restriction on our visiting. It was also when the [Great] Depression came and my father sold our car, and so I didn't have visits with them. So I really, those little kids grew up without knowing me. You know, they'd sometimes say, "Is she our real sister?" So, um, now, um, my, um, brother, who was six months old when I left home, uh, and lived most of his adult life in the Atlanta area. He has retired, just retired, and he moved back, to, uh, southern Illinois where a couple of his daughters live. So, I'm kind of getting in touch with, with him, and, and his family.

How many of your siblings are still alive today?

Just the three little kids and me.

02 Education

Where did you attend grade school?

Well, I went to several grade schools, and, uh, they, let's see. All of my grade schools were in Kentucky. And, uh, we lived in the northwestern part of Kentucky. Um, and, uh, part of the time we were just like, just across the river from Evansville, Ind. And when I was at the end of my seventh grade we moved to Evansville. And I went my eighth grade to the Franciscans of Oldenburg [Indiana] that one year. And, uh, we went to school, I think, like Thursday and Friday in September and, uh, we had sister — and I still remember her name. And, uh, when we came back Monday we were told she was in the hospital. So they took, took us to the hospital to see her, and, uh, I can remember some of us had to stand on chairs because the hospital bed was so high. And we looked at her, you know. She had a little white cap on her head and she was very sick. She never came back. We had a lay teacher that year.

What year would that have been?

That would have been, uh, I went into eighth grade in 1928.

OK. And where did you attend high school?

Um, I went to. ... could I say just one other thing cause this is part of my story?

Yes. Sure. Sure.

My first, uh, grades of grade school were with the Ursuline Sisters of Maple Mount, Ky., and I loved them. They were, they were wonderful teachers, and I really went to school with them until I was about sixth, seventh grade — beginning of seventh

grade, then that's, we made our first move because of the [Great] Depression time. And, uh, I went to school for a short time to the Sister[s] of Charity of Nazareth. So there in my grade school, I went to three different orders of sisters. That's kind of a big point in my vocation. So then I got ready for high school I went to Reitz Memorial High School in Evansville. And I went there two years. And when I was at [the] end of my sophomore year the superior said to my mother, um, "Do you think Elizabeth" — my, my baptismal name is Elizabeth — Elizabeth Lee Mattingly. I'm named for my grandfather Robert Lee Mattingly. [Clears throat.] So, uh, she said, "I wonder if Elizabeth would like to go to school at St. Agnes Academy in Indianapolis because she has a very good record and there are some scholarships available." So when my mom asked me — well, I, I was always somebody who liked adventures. So, I said, "Oh, yes, I'd like that." So at 15 years old I got on the bus, came to Indianapolis and went two years to St. Agnes.

03 Leaving for St. Agnes Academy

What was that experience like for you, getting on that bus and leaving your family?

Well, it was hard, especially the little kids, you know. And then my, my three siblings in, closest to me in age, we were very close. And, of course, none of those three lived very long. They all reached adulthood, of course. But they died young, so, I miss them a lot. And these three little kids really didn't take their place, you know, in my life. Well, any way, uh, I can remember my father and one of my oldest sisters went to, uh, the bus station with me, and, uh, got on the bus. And, I ... the bus was OK. I don't remember anything about the bus, but I remember when the bus pulled into the Indianapolis bus station. It was a great cavernous field house-type of bus station. And,

well, I, I felt, uh, I felt scared, but I knew that I could do it, and so I walked through the bus station out to the street and there was, there were taxi cabs there. So I said to the man, “How much would it” — cause I didn’t have very much money — I said, “How much would it cost to go to St. Agnes Academy at 1350 North Meridian Street?” And he said, “Fifty cents.” Well, I had 50 cents, so I got in the cab and he took me there. And then, of course, the sisters knew I was coming and they were very, very nice to me. And I, I, I, I was home sick for a little while, uh, after school started, but I got over that. And, uh, because it was always, my mind told me, this was a good thing, and I couldn’t let my emotions ruin it. So, uh. ...

Was the coursework rigorous at St. Agnes Academy?

Um, it was, it was demanding, but I don’t think any more so than Reitz Memorial had been. It was the same sisters.

04 View of Sisters

Tell me a little bit about your perception of sisters. It sounds like you were around sisters a lot in your formative years.

Well, [clears throat] before I started to school I met sisters for the first time. We lived in a small town. It was a rural community, although we didn’t live in the, uh, in the country.

And what was that community?

It was called Waverly, Ky., a small town. And, uh, St. Peter’s Church, St. Peter’s School and we went to Mass there every Sunday. And, uh, I loved to play, especially with the boys after Mass because the, the grounds were terraced in front of the church. The chur..., the rectory, the church and then the convent. And those terraces were grassy and

we would run and jump and play and, and nobody ever stopped us. But my mother didn't like the idea because most little girls were not out there running and jumping. So she said to me, "Did you see the sisters up in front of the church..., the front of church?" Well, yeah, I'd seen them. And she said, "Well, sister is teaching catechism to the children after Mass." Now I was probably in the maybe, uh, 4 but going to be 5 in November. I was about, I was young. And my mom said, "Now you go and listen to sister and then come home and tell me everything she said."

So, that's what I did. I went in, sat down and sister was teaching catechism. I can remember, this was, uh, probably, uh, September, uh, maybe even the end of August, and, uh, she was, I can remember she was saying, "Well, who made you?" Well, I already knew those first things in the catechism because my mother was a good teacher. She, she taught me and I was the oldest, the first child. So, I listened to everything, and I just thought, oh, I thought it was so wonderful. I decided right then and there I was going to be a sister. [Clears throat.] Well, that, that was good, that really was. And, um, the day I made my first communion I promised Jesus, I said to Jesus, "Now I want to be a sister. So please help me be a sister." I wanted to teach the children. And I'm 5 or 6 years old, I wanted to teach the children.

So, um, even in the summer times I'd say to my mom, "Wake me up so I can go..." Now Mass must have been 7 or 8 o'clock. And so she'd wake me up and I'd say, "Oh, I can't get up." And she'd say, "Well, you told me to wake you up. Are you going to church?" Well, I'll always get up. And I can remember sister saying, "Somebody was in church this morning breathing heavily," cause I'd run to get there on time. We just, it was, well, maybe two blocks up the street. So, that was my first contact with sisters.

05 First Communion/Confession

Tell me about that first communion. You've obviously shared that at that time you knew you wanted to be a sister, but what else do you remember about your first communion?

Well, I can remember, uh, I can remember my first confession better [than] I can my first communion because I was really scared about the first confession. Although we'd been prepared, but I think I wasn't real good at saying my sins. Um, in fact I still have trouble saying my sins. Um, but Father was very good and he, he asked questions, "Have you done this, have you done that?" So, it was OK. But my first. ... Pardon?

Do you remember Father's name?

Yes. Um, Father, I'm so..., yes, Father McNeil — M-c-N-e-(n-n-e)-i-l. Father McNeil. His, his first name is on my baptism certificate [cough], but I don't remember his first name. Yes, he was, he was very nice. He was very much a part of the community. Uh, I can remember he'd come to some of the social events because I think everybody in town was Catholic or supposed to be. And there was a large population of black people in, in the town. But, uh, they lived on a hill outside of town, had their own school, but they came to our church. Um, but this, this priest was, uh, he would come to the dances, the community dances at the Knights of Columbus Hall. The Knights of Columbus would have them in their hall. And, uh, so, I, I remember him very well as being a very pleasant person and, and just part of our family, you know.

06 Parents' Roles in the Catholic Church

Tell me about, uh, the ways in which your parents were active in the Catholic Church or in the parish.

Well, in, uh, 1925-26, lay Catholics weren't very active in their church except my mother used to help wash the linens. And, uh, in those days there were not dryers, washers and dryers. Um, and I can remember my mother had a, this is just one thing I remember about it, she had a, an altar cloth. And of course the altars were very long and the cloths hung down on the side. And she had no place to dry it, really. It was like a nice sunny day. And so she put it outside. But because everybody was using coal, and probably bituminous coal, uh, there were little sot, soot specks, and I can remember she was having such a hard time with it. And Father came walking down the street and he saw her through the front yard — you could see the back yard — and he came and he said, "You shouldn't be doing this with four children." He said, "I'm going to tell them not to give you an altar cloth."

Now that is the only thing I know that, that they really ever, ever physically helped with. I, I don't know of anything else. And certainly there were no committees, there was no parish council or anything like that.

07 Childhood View of God

OK. Tell me about when you were elementary-school aged, what was your perception of God?

Well, I, I knew God loved me very much cause my mother told me that. And I knew, I knew it inside of me. And, uh, I don't think I had any picture except the pictures you'd see of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So I guess I thought of God, although I don't

remember dwelling on it. I knew he was a loving man, but I think I thought of him as an old man, but he was loving. And I loved my grandfather so much that, that, that would have been a good image for me. The thing I knew about God was that, uh, he was very just; that if I was good, I'd be rewarded, and if I was bad, I'd be punished. So that was kind of like the, the depth of my theology, you know, at that time.

08 Childhood View of Jesus

What about your relationship to, uh, Jesus Christ?

Now that was another story.

OK.

And I never had any conflict of thinking two persons. I just accepted that. That made sen... it didn't make sense because it doesn't to anybody. But it made sense, that was fine. Jesus was, Jesus was God's son and I loved Jesus very much. And, uh, you know, I was, I was a good little Catholic girl growing up, you know. We were talking about this the other day with another sister. We were talking about our childhood. And I said, "You know, I was so impressed that if you never tell a lie" — I don't think I've ever told a lie in my life — you know, that, that type of, uh, well, I don't know what kind of theology you call that, but, um, I, it just, it just struck when we were talking about this. I don't think I've ever told a lie in my life, you know. So I think that, uh, Jesus was very important to me, and I wanted to do, what, I, what he wanted me to do. Um, and I knew that, um, well, I loved to think about his life, and I always listened to the Gospels. I couldn't understand the First Readings very well, but I could always understand the Gospels. And so, I, uh, always listened to them. And I was surprised as I got, got older how much scripture I knew, you know, just from that.

09 Praying the Rosary

Did your family pray the rosary together?

Mmmhmm. Uh, we didn't do it every night, but we always did it in October and May. And some of my nicest memories are of my Grandfather Mattingly, who lived, my grandmother died when I was just a year old, and at various times my grandfather would come and live with us. And that was just so wonderful when he would come. And, uh, he, uh, I can remember his being with us when we'd say the rosary — not that we didn't say it when he wasn't there — but he made it special in some way. We used. ...

Can you say how?

Hmmm?

Can you say how?

Well, yes, I think what it was, was we used to call it giving out the rosary was the expression they used. Somebody led, they'd say the Our Father, first part, and then we'd all respond to the second part. So, and then he'd say the first part of the Hail Mary, we'd respond to the second part. So, they called that giving out the rosary. And when my grandfather did that, it, I don't know, it just seemed special. I guess because I loved him so much, and, you know, thought everything he did was just great. So, um, and then in May we would. ... And then I remember one time my grandfather's sister, Aunt Matilda, we called her, and she was his sister, and she lived in Arkansas or Alabama, not sure now, one of those A states down in the South, and she came and visited us for about six weeks once. And she was just as nice as my grandfather. And so I have those memories of them, although, you know, not much connection with that. And then, of course, once

we left Kentucky when I was in seventh grade, I very seldom, I never saw her again. But we would go see him some time.

10 Entrance into the Congregation

What year did you graduate from St. Agnes Academy?

1933.

And you entered the Congregation after that?

Mmmm. Well, here's how it worked [laugh]. I came in February because, um, I had a feeling that if I went home in June after graduation and waited till August that I'd never get here. I just had that feeling. And, uh, I talked to my mother about it. And she said, "Well, if you want to go, you can go." But I don't know, something just told me. A group of girls were entering the convent, three from my own class, and I thought, "Well, if they're doing it, I can do it." And the principal told us, well, told me, that I only had one credit that I had to make up and that was what they called civics in those days, government class, which I had not had. But, uh, everything else seemed to be there.

So if I understand correctly, you entered before you graduated.

I, I, yes, before I got my diploma, yes. Uh, but, um, all of us, uh, three of us who stayed, uh, and those sisters are dead — I'm the only one left in, in my band. And, uh, maybe you knew Sister Monica Withem [died June 9, 2007]. She was the last sister who just died ...

Yes.

... that was in my class. And she was about the smartest girl in our class. And, uh, any way, we, we all came at that same time, and, um, our pictures are with our class. You

go to St. Agnes and you can see us all there. And we have our diplomas, and, uh, so it worked out.

11 Why the Sisters of Providence?

So was there ever any doubt in your mind that you would enter the Sisters of Providence?

Well, you know, [clears throat] it was interesting because when I was in grade school with those Ursulines that I loved so much, I knew I was going to enter them. And then, well, the Franciscan sister I didn't know, uh, but Sister of Charity of Nazareth — uh, I really, personality-wise, I didn't like her. But there were some of the sisters on the faculty that I did like. So that would have been a possibility. But when I went to Reitz Memorial as a freshman and we were there a week or so, I can remember saying, "Now this is the community, these are the ones I really want to go to." And for a long time I was afraid to tell anybody why because I didn't think it was a proper reason. But [laughs] the reason I liked them so much, they had more fun than those other sisters did [laughs]. So that was the reason I was going to enter them. But, of course, my motives changed quite a bit before I finally made it.

12 Entering the Congregation

Tell me what it was like during your, um, as a postulant?

[Clears throat] Well, I can remember the very first day we came, which was quite an experience. It was Sept. 10, which will be this coming Sunday, 75 years ago.

Sept. 10?

No, February.

February.

I'm sorry.

That's OK.

This coming Sunday, February. I guess I did say September, thank you. [Clears throat] Um, and it was a snowy, it had snowed, it was a very cold day, and we started out in, uh, a bus that Ladywood School, which was out in the country of Indianapolis at the time, but they had this really classy looking bus, Ladywood School for Girls. And so St. Agnes borrowed that and then several sisters came with us and a couple of the postulants-to-be had sisters in school at St. Agnes, so they also came. So a whole big crowd of us came. And, uh, half way here [laughs] the classy bus broke down. And so we had to get out. I can remember standing, it was like at a filling station, and we're standing around, uh, with our little suitcases, you know, and, I don't know, some, some people had packages cause they were bringing like their blankets and things with them. So we, quite a motley crew there. Then they borrowed a yellow and green sch... public, public school bus. So we got on that public school bus and we came.

Well, when we got here and they put the uniform on us. And that was OK, that, that wasn't too different from our school uniform really. But there was a, a thing around the neck, the, that was tight and it had a little white band. They called it a shield. I never understood why they called it a shield. But it was like what we call a dickey today. And, um, it, it snapped in the back. And mine was too tight for me. So when I would laugh or move my head the snaps would pop open. And so I was kind of uncomfortable that first day. But we got adjusted. Each had a guardian angel and, um, because, uh, we were six, I guess, um, one guardian angel took care of two of us. So we just had three guardian

angels for the six of us. And, and that was OK, you know. And I, I, I, it was just like all curiosity and all learning. And, uh, I remember a lot of little things. But. ...

So just what do you remember — some of the little things?

[Laughs] Well, I can remember, uh, our clothes. Uh, we knew that, uh, we'd have to leave our clothes because they kept them here in case you wanted to go home and you'd have some clothes to wear home. And that was the reason I chose my favorite dress, although I said to myself, "I'll never go home. I'm not, I'm in this for the long haul. I'm in this to win it," you know. And so, um, I can remember the dress that I wore. It was, uh, not a two-piece dress, it was all one dress. It had kind of a V-neck, opened in front and had a snap here and it was a beautiful green because I had red hair and I liked green and blue and. ... And the skirt of the dress was black. And, uh, well, it was just, I figured I was giving the convent my favorite dress [laughs]. And, uh, I remember the first, second day we were here when we went to Instructions every morning the director of postulants — uh, they called her the mistress of postulants in those days — uh, talked with us and told us about religious life and the dos and don'ts and all that. And that was very interesting, you know. Except I felt I already knew an awful lot of what the sisters did because I had been in boarding school for two years, so. In fact, that, that came to be a little bit of [a] problem for me because when we were told that the sisters don't do certain things I thought, "Oh, yeah, they do. I know that." [Laughs] And so as a result of that I think it was easier for me because I thought, "Well, there are two sides to this, I guess." Because some of the things, even when I look back now, seem rather ridiculous.

Can you give me an example or two of something like that?

Well, just, just nothing that makes any sense. But one thing I remember was the collars we wore — now if you look at the pictures of the sisters in the '30s, they had this big, what is called a neckerchief, and it was very stiff, and, um, if you put your arms up like this to do something you'd crush it. So the sisters always turned it around which made sense so they [could] fix their bulletin board. Well, we were told that we never turn that around. And I thought, "Oh, yeah, they do, yeah." And then another thing I, I was told was — we were told, we were all told — that the sisters never sit on tables. And, yeah, they did. I'd seen, I'd seen the sisters because there were, at that time, the sisters who were teaching in high school were quite young. They were full of life and vim, vigor, vigor and all of this. And, um, I can still see, they would come to the laundry on, uh, I guess to get the sisters' clothes to take them up to their, uh, bedrooms. And, uh, they would be sitting on the table and swinging their legs, you know, waiting for the laundry to get finished. Just little things like that, nothing big, you know, nothing, so. ...

13 First Vows

Do you remember when you took first vows?

Oh, yes.

What day was that?

That was August 15, 1935. 1935.

Did you have family present for that?

Ah, yes. Um, yes, and it was a wonderful day. [Clears throat] But my brother, my favorite brother ...

His name?

... Richie — Richard Vincent Mattingly, who died in his 40s. And, uh, he had had his tonsils taken out that day, uh, that week, I guess. And the woman who lived next door to us was a nurse. Mrs. Keith, she was a lovely lady. And she said to my mom, “Leave Richie with me. I’ll, I’ll take care of him” because, you know my brother was too sick to come. So everybody else was there and in the pictures that we have, and, um, so, you know, that was, that was, that was really a great day, it really was. Cause I remember the day I got the habit, got the white veil. My mother, grandmother and aunt came and they brought my little sister, the one that my father had taken to the bus station with me. And, um, in those days we wore a cap that we put on and pulled it back to cover our hair. It was called a serre-tête, you know, tête-à-tête, you know that word, so head covering. And they still used the French term for it. And, um, mine was too tight for me. And I have a rather prominent jaw. It was never made to wear that, and it hurt under here [motions to area]. So I kept putting my finger under it. Years later, my Grandmother Hall said to me, “Honey, does that still hurt you? Does it. ...” It bothered her that it hurt. Well, of course, I got it adjusted, you know, it didn’t have to hurt [laughs]. So, uh, I remem... I remem... my reception of the habit for the first time was marred by that when my company was here.

And the other funny thing that happened that day that I remember is, uh, the director of novices, uh, came down to Sacred Heart Grove because that’s where we received our, our, uh, company. And, uh, Sister Aloyse [Hennessey (1879-1952)] was her name. I never got to know her because she left right after that Aug. 15th. And our director of postulants moved up with us to be the director of novices. So that was good. Um, anyway, this sister goes to my grandmother and embraces her and says something about

me, you know. And so, of course my grandmother is accepting this cause she doesn't know that the director thinks she's my mother. So, then I, sister turned around and I said, "Now this is my mother." And she said, "That's your mother?" And I sa... because see my mother would have been about 35, 36 years old. And my mother was always young for, young looking for her age. And, uh, as a matter of a fact my mother died in 2004, at 106-1/2. And, uh, you know, she was in really good shape until her 106th birthday in the summer, July was her birthday. She fell in the summer some time. She was living with my sister in Knoxville, Tn., and my, she always took care of herself. She'd go and take her own shower, and, you know. But she fell in the bathroom and my sister doesn't know how. She hit her head because there was a lot of blood and she had, not too big a gash in her head, but it affected her. She was afraid to walk after that and her eyesight was failing. And, uh, so then she died in January after that — January 2004.

I want to go back to something that you said that I'm not sure about the answer. Where was Sacred Heart Grove?

Oh, it, it's the, um, it's the territory just across from, well, you know where the Express Hall is? Express Hall and just go across the road. There's a path going down, that's called the Sacred Heart Shrine Path. And that was the novitiate territory. We could not cross the bridge by the church. There's no bridge there now, but there's the walkway. Um, we, we always stayed in that grove or we went beyond that. We never came to this territory.

So then when could you cross over that?

Well, only for formal things. Like if you went to class at the [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods] College, you would go that way. Um, on some events that we went to the

Conservatory [of Music] for programs, of course we went that way. But just on your own, you never did.

14 View of the Vows When She Entered the Congregation

Tell me about when you took the first vows. Tell me about those vows and what they meant to you.

Well, at the time, um, I thought, you know, this is not hard to do. I've always been obedient, I've always done what my parents told me to do and my teachers. So, it's not going to be hard, you know. And, as far as chastity goes, well, I really did not feel attracted to marriage, although I had a couple of boyfriends, you know, that I liked. Uh, but that wasn't what I wanted to do, you know. And, um, poverty, well, I never had, well, after my father lost his business we really didn't have any money at all really. [Her father was a blacksmith.] And the [Great] Depression was bad. Uh, so, you know, I thought, hey, you know, this isn't, this is not going to be bad either, you know. And I understood, I knew that we had a common fund, whatever I made by my work would go into this common fund. And whatever I needed I would receive from that. So I understood all of that. And, it didn't seem hard to me at all, you know, it seemed pretty, pretty good.

15 View of the Vows Today

What are your views today of those vows of obedience, chastity and poverty?

Well, the vows mean everything to me. They are how I live. The vows are, well, they're, they're my response to God, uh, in, in response to the call that he gave me to religious life. And I've always firmly believed that was a call. And, and maybe it came back when I was 4 or 5 years old, I don't know. But I think it just strengthened, and all

the experiences I had, uh, made me more sure of it. And, um, and then it's also the way I deepen my union with God. And it's, it's a privilege. The vows are a privilege that enable me to minister to people. You know, I'm, I'm really, um, safeguarded, and I'm, um, well I don't want to say protected, but I'm supported, um, so that I can go and, uh, work with God's people. So I think the vow, the vows are wonderful, you know. And they certainly result in a, in a very happy, free life.

16 Final Vows

When did you take final vows?

Uh, Aug. 15, 1941.

And how many women took final vows with you?

Uh, 12.

17 First Ministries

Tell me a little bit about your first ministries.

[Clears throat] I went to, uh, Wilmette, Ill., it's, it's suburb in the North [Lake] Shore of Chicago. And I knew nothing about it, uh, St. Francis Xavier School. But some of the sisters, the younger sisters, were saying to me that day, "Now be sure you use the right fork." And I thought, "What does that mean?" Well, then of course, when I got there I found out that it was a very, um, affluent community on the Lake Shore of, of Chicago. And I was there for three years ...

What did you teach?

... and I taught fourth grade. And, uh, I had 50 kids — I had 25 girls and 25 boys. Now we had had very good training in the novitiate and as far as fourth-grade subjects

go, well, I learned those in fourth grade, that, that was no difficulty. And, so, we had a sister who was one of the home superiors who used to come when we were canonical novices, that, that's our first, first year as a novice [clears throat]. She would come in the afternoon to teach us religion, which was great. And she would have us teach lessons. I remember, and there were quite a few novices at the time, so you didn't have to do more than one lesson. And mine was the Holy Trinity. And I can remember, we had, um, we had learned the Five Step Plan from, uh, Sister Mary Roberta [Young (1904-1975)], who had just gotten her master's in education from, uh, Bloomington from, uh, Indiana University at Bloomington. And, um, we, we had, she had taught us, we had learned all these how to teach and the various, various ways to approach a subject. So, I had all that, but the sister that came when we were canonicals taught us classroom management. And I'm sure if anybody told her that's what she was teaching she wouldn't, she'd say, "Oh, no, I, I was teaching religion." But almost every time a, a question would come up, she would go into some examples of how she handled a problem in her classroom. And, of course, I took all that in, and I was able to apply that. So my principal, uh, my first year teaching, my first year as teaching, I had the same principal those three years, right from the beginning she told me I was a very good teacher. And I said, "But you, you haven't been in my classroom." Because she taught sixth grade. I said, "But you haven't been in my classroom." She said, "There are ways in which I can tell that you're a good teacher." And she said — we had a glass panel in our classroom door — and she says, "I've looked into your classroom several times," and she said, "I can tell you manage very well." And then she also told me the way students walk in and out in the ranks, you can tell who's in control. So, that, and I, uh, attribute that to that sister that gave us all these examples.

How many years did you teach?

About 50.

And were they elementary and high school?

Yes, I taught elementary school about 10 years and then I went to Central Catholic High School in Fort Wayne [Indiana], that was the first, the first high school I taught. And it was a co-ed school. And, uh, I had sophomore homeroom and I had 50 kids [laughs]. So I thought that that was just, uh, just a reflection. It was a déjà vu of, of my very first year of teaching in grade school. That when I would teach in high school I'd have that many kids in my homeroom.

What were the subjects that you taught?

I taught, uh, religion, of course. Every sister taught religion in those days. Uh, and then I taught English, and I taught, uh, biology.

18 Teaching Memories

What are some of the, uh, favorite memories that you have of teaching, no matter if it's elementary or high school?

Well, I, I think in, in elementary school because it was fourth grade, um, I think I felt like I was, uh, motherly to those children. And, and they were darling, just darling kids. And they were all so bright and so eager and, and their parents were, too. They wanted them to have the best to learn, and so I think, and then, one of the home superiors told me that I had taught just about my last mission before I went to high school, she said to me, "You've been, you have taught in the best schools of this community." And I thought, "Well, that's, that's kind of funny." So I said to her, "You know what? I never once assigned myself. I just went where I was sent." Well then that next year I went into

high school, so I don't know if that had any relationship with it or not. But I, I loved every place I taught. Then, uh, after I had the fourth grade, then I had seventh grade two years, then I went into eighth grade, which I taught. And then, of course, they were much more grown up and I tried to teach them, I tried to treat them as if they were adults. And, of course, uh, you know, when you get boys in eighth grade, they think they're adults, you know. Well, the girls do, too, but the girls are more pliable. So, you know, it worked well.

19 Seattle University — Preparing for a New Ministry

So after you retired from teaching, what was your next ministry?

Well, [sigh] the, retired. ... Oh, when I didn't teach anymore?

Yes.

OK. I wanted to, uh, do something else besides teaching before, I got, if I'd have known I was going to live this long [laughs] maybe I would have taught a little bit longer, I don't know. But 50 years is pretty good. And, um, I asked if I could, uh, go study to be a pastoral associate in a parish. So I went to Seattle University [Washington] for a year. And that was a marvelous experience. It was actually a spiritual conversion for me.

Can you tell me a little bit about that conversion?

Well, it would take a long time, but just let me say this. Um, I think I became that year the closest to God that I have ever been.

How old were you at that time?

Oh, gosh [small laugh], I was pretty old. I taught 50 years [laughs]. So I was, uh, I guess I was 67.

So what made you so close to God at that time?

I think it was the approach that this, this program was — I was not in the regular school, uh, classes — it was a program called the Corpus Program, the body of Christ. And it was like a community. Uh, there were about 40-some people in it. And 20 of those people were sisters who were either retiring or who were, uh, as they called it retreading in those days, uh, to do some other work besides teaching. And so we formed a community. We lived in this dormitory on the fifth floor, and all of us — all 20 of us — lived on that floor. The other end of the hall were, uh, young men, graduate students. So I not only lived in a co-ed dorm, I lived on a co-ed floor. And that was fine because I cut hair and when those guys found out they could get their hair cut for nothing they were knocking on my door. So it was, it was a really wond... lovely experience.

But, um, in our classes and in our community meetings and, and the relationships that I formed, um, I don't know, God just spoke to me. It was just ... and, and there was an opening up of, uh, Vatican II that had not happened in Washington, D.C. [Sister Marceline taught at Immaculata in Washington, D.C., from 1970 to 1982, prior to entering this program. She also ministered at Immaculata between 1960 and 1966.] I don't know if it's happened yet. But it was, um, just so many wonderful things happened to me personally. I had, um, each of us had a, I forget what they called him, not a spiritual companion, but somebody we had to go to every week and talk about our progress and what we were doing. And I was given the director of the program. So he was a wonderful professor, he was a doctor, a PhD in theology, I think. And he, he was so good in drawing me out of myself because I had never had what they call a spiritual director — in those days they called it a spiritual director. I like to call it spiritual companion today. Um, so, uh, and I, I had never done any journaling, I had never done anything like that.

Um, there were sisters who told me when I was leaving Washington [D.C.], uh, that, you know, you're too old to do that, you know, aren't you afraid you're going to fall on your face? And I said, "Well, if I do I'll just have to get up and try again," you know. But when I got there I was surprised that, that I wasn't that much behind everybody else. Now in the psychology classes because the only psychology I had had in my background because I had at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College I had, um, English was my major and biology was my minor. When I went to Notre Dame to get my master's it was all biology, all life sciences. So I really had not had psychology per se. Just in my bachelor's, you know, we had educational psychology, child psychology and secondary, uh, educational psychology. That's all I've ever had. So it took me a while to learn the vocabulary, but as far as the, as the scripture side — and we had wonderful scriptural classes — um, see I already knew all the stories, I already knew and already had my own picture in my own mind because our meditations in which we had been trained were the St. Ignatius type, where you put yourself there and you see Jesus and you see what's happening. So that all stood me in good stead. And I can remember we were having a class in, um, theological reflection, oh, and I thought — that, that really scared me, you know, class in theological reflection. So I thought, "Oh, dear God, you really have to help me in this," you know. And the thing that we had to do in, in, some..., well in our, uh, small group meetings, we had to, uh, report on our on-site placements. See everybody who was in that program was being trained for some reason to be a spiritual director, to work in a parish, we had a sister who was going to work in a prison, somebody who was working in [a] peace and justice office and then hospital chaplains. So we all had, uh, we all had the same core, but we had on-site placements. And I was placed in, uh, St. Joseph's Parish on the Hill in

Seattle. Wonderful place. There were four Jesuits who were running that parish. And they were marvelous.

So what were some of the things that you did at that on-site location?

Oh, uh, I was assigned to an elderly priest, Father Leo Eckstein, a saint if there ever was one. Uh, I was assigned to him because he was, he had been the provincial of the p..., of the Jesuits, he had been superior, he had been professor. But now he was retired and living at that St. Joseph's Rectory, and, um, Jesuit House, I think they called it. And, um, he was going around the parish visiting the people and taking them Holy Communion but his legs were giving out. So he used to try to ride the bicycle. So when, when the university asked if they could place a couple sisters there, they were glad that somebody could come. And the parish, um, all the people that he introduced me to, uh, in that parish, it's like the old-fashioned parish, they were all within distance of the church. So they were all mostly elderly people and I visited them, prayed with them, brought them Holy Communion and made some wonderful friendships really. But, you know, yes, that was a very great experience.

So after you finished that year, where did you go?

Well, I had five ... well, um, at the time, my brother who was the Holy Cross teaching brother, my brother Paul, uh, at Notre Dame, um, he had been teaching in Mexico City, that was his last teaching because his major was Spanish and he was good at it. And, in fact, some Mexicans told me that he had no, uh, what'd they call it? They didn't call it Yankee, what, what do they call, uh, what do the Mexicans call us? Well, any way, he says he has no American accent. He, he really speaks Spanish like the Mexicans, you know, so any way. He, uh, was not well and so he went, um, to Mayo's

and they found that he had a brain tumor. So, um, I got a job in Seattle at St. Bernadette's Parish, uh, it's south of Seattle, as a pastoral associate cause I wanted to stay out there. I loved the people, I loved the area. It was a whole new life for me. My mother called me and she said, "Betty, [Sister Marceline's baptismal name is Elizabeth. She was also known as Betty.] I wish you wouldn't stay out there because" she said, "we need you here with Jack so sick" Well, my mother had never said, you know, I need you to come, you know, so I did. I called Sister Ann Margaret [O'Hara], who was a provincial in Ind... the Indiana Province and I asked her if I could come to this, and she said, "Oh, yes," she said, "as a matter of fact several priests have asked me if there's some sisters who would be interested in being pasto. ..." So I had five interviews. And then I just chose the one that was closest to my mom.

And that one was?

Uh, St. Mary's, New Albany [Indiana].

And what year was that?

That was 1982, 83. 1983.

And how long were you there?

Uh, it was seven years, I think. [Sister Marceline ministered at St. Mary Parish from 1983 to 1989.]

20 Religious Name — Sister Marceline

When you were talking about your mother I noticed that she called you by your baptismal name.

Yes, uh-huh.

Did your family always refer to you by your baptismal?

Yes, always.

Uh, I'm going to go back a little bit because I would like to know a little more about "Sister Marceline." How did you receive the name Marceline?

[Laughs] Well, I did not want a masculine name. I just didn't like the masculine part of the nuns. They wore those big ol' men's shoes, they had those great big men handkerchiefs. They were jus... and so many of them men's names. That just didn't cut with me. So I was going to be sure, and I wanted a single name. I didn't want to be like George Henry or something like that. I just didn't like that. So, um, I just kept looking around for names. Of course I thought of dozen of names since. But it has served me well. And it was, um, it, it was a book, I mean it was a name that was in the Necrology Book. And, um, there was a sister with this name, but she had two l's in it and she called it Marcelline. And I didn't like the sound of that very well, so I asked if I could take out an l and call it Marceline. And so the director of postulants said, "Well, we'd have to ask the director of novices." But, since we got that habit that Aug. 15 when that director left, nobody ever asked her. And so I was just always Marceline with one l.

Did you ever think about returning to your baptismal name after Vatican II?

You know, I was in Washington [D.C.] at the time and, uh, if any directions were given to us or explanations I missed it. Which would be unusual, but I did. Cause I'm usually very curious. I think if I had understood that my baptismal name was really the first name, the most important name, but I don't think I realized that. I think I thought my religious name was more important. And then by the time I discovered that I thought it was too late. And Marceline's a single name. Has about the same letters as Elizabeth. So I thought, "Ehh," you know. So. ...

21 Family Concerns

Tell me about the time that you, you came back when your mother asked you to come back. Uh, you were also taking care of your brother, too, correct?

Well, uh, not physically I wasn't. But the main thing was I could drive my parents to Notre Dame. But by, my father died, um, when he was in his middle 70s. So my mother remarried after about five years, and my stepfather was a wonderful man — not that my father wasn't a wonderful man, he was — but the stepfather was just a wonderful, wonderful man. And he and my mom had about 25 years together because he lived to be 100, and she lived to be 106. So. ...

So your brother stayed in South Bend?

So my brother was in, after Mayo's he went to the infirmary at Dujarie House at, at South... at Notre Dame. Yeah, uh-hum. So, um, every time my mother wanted to go to Notre Dame I would drive over and drive her up. Now I knew that before I applied for my job and when I was being interviewed for it I told the pastor about my brother and that, I, you know, I would need to go to my mother. And he said, "Oh, that was fine, we'd work that out." So, uh, my brother, you know, I mean not too many brothers in the infirmary had their mothers coming to see them, you know. So, uh. ...

22 Parish Ministry

So tell me what life was like in your parish that you were now ministering in.

Well, you know, when, when I was at St. Joseph on the Hill [Seattle], I loved that so much because the first day I was there this Jesuit priest made me a Eucharistic minister. In Washington, D.C., you, women could not be Eucharistic ministers. They hadn't come to that yet. In our convent, um, we had an order of priests on the northeast

side by Catholic University [of America, Washington, D.C.] who were chaplains for us. They came and said Mass. And because this was a community, well, when I first went there there were about 40 sisters there. [Clears throat] And, uh, if there was a little bit of snow they couldn't get through, they couldn't come over. And, so, the cardinal gave permission to one sister to give us Holy Communion if the priest couldn't get there. So, uh, that was the situation at the time.

Well, when I went to Seattle the very first time I went to my on-site placement, the sister who had been working in that parish for a while [clears throat] was asked if she would take me, show me how to get there on the bus and, you know, and take me and introduce me to the pastor at the parish. And we went to the 11:30 [a.m.] Mass which they had, and, um, there were a lot of people there and, uh, at Communion time, sister said to me, "Come and hold the cup." And the Jesuit is going like this [motioning to come]. So, I thought, "Well, I'm going to go hold the cup." So I did. I went up and she was on one side and I was on the other. And, uh, father gave the host and sister and I gave the people [the cup]. ... So that was my introduction to being a Eucharistic minister. In — part of my assignment at the parish, I was supposed to do a certain number of hours in the parish, and, uh, I would go early in the morning to the parish on Fridays and, um, it would be dark when I'd leave, most of the time, going back home on the bus. And, uh, I, I would, uh, also go on the weekends to this certain Mass and, uh, — I was Eucharistic minister then. I volunteered to be a lector, but they had so many lectors standing in line that, I was Eucharistic minister almost every Sunday. So that was very good. And I, I loved that parish, I loved those people, oh, there were just such wonderful people. And, and I think the Lord reveled himself more and more to me when I worked in that parish.

So, I thought, “Well, when I go to Indiana, oh, I know I’ll never get a parish like that,” you know. But this parish that I got [St. Mary Parish, New Albany, Ind.] was very similar and the pastor was kind of a charismatic guy, you know, um. And, and it was just wonderful working there. It really was. And the only reason I left, the pastor was changed, and the new pastor that was coming did not want a pastoral associate.

23 Returning to the Woods

What year did you come back?

’89 or ’90. [Sister Marceline came back to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in August of 1989.]

What was it like coming back, because you hadn’t really been here?

Well, you know, out East at Immaculata, our provincial out there had said to me, “You know, Marceline,” she said, “you’re one of the few sisters, your age, whose mother is still living.” And she said, “I want you to go see her at Christmas time as well as the summer time.” So I would always, I usually fly into Indianapolis and have one of my sister-friends meet me, and, and, uh, drive me to the Woods. So I would visit my friends at the Woods. So I did that maybe twi..., twice a year. Although usually if the weather was bad I would fly from Washington, D.C., to Evansville, and then get from Evansville to Mount Carmel, Ill., that’s where my mother lived. And, uh, but in the summer I always came to Indianapolis. So I was here at the Woods a lot, really, twice a year.

Do you consider Saint Mary-of-the-Woods your home?

Oh, yes, absolutely. Yeah. Live and die here [laughs].

24 Image of God Today

I want to ask you that now that I've heard some of your story and reflecting on your image of God when you, when you young. How has that image changed to today?

Well, I certainly don't think of God as an old man [laughs]. I think God is, is the ultimate mystery. And I know God is present in me. And, uh, that's a sacred trust that's, his presence. I just think God's presence in the whole cosmos, the whole universe, the whole, and in all the people that you meet every day. Just like you sitting there, Connie [interviewer], you know. Um, it's, it's just a presence.

25 Images of Jesus and the Holy Spirit Today

What about Jesus? What about the Holy Spirit?

Well, they're one, they're one. They are times when I pray to the Holy Spirit very specially. And always especially at Communion time I pray to Jesus especially. And Jesus says, "If you come to me I will lead you to the Father." So, you know, they're not separate for me.

26 Companionship Two Providence Associates

You serve as a companion for two [Providence] Associates, correct?

Yes, mmmhmm.

And those associates' names are?

Uh, Mary Fran Weber and Gary Meister [of Indianapolis].

And they're husband and wife?

They're husband and wife.

Did you know them before becoming their companion?

I met her in Rome at the canonization of Mother Theodore.

And why did you want to become a companion?

I never thought of it until they asked me. And so when they asked me if I would do it, uh, almost just taking for granted that I would be their companion, uh, I was glad to do that. Although I didn't know really what it entailed, but it couldn't entail much that would be different from what I already knew, you know. We're supposed to help them to understand something of the charism of Providence, you know. I don't understand it all, so how could they understand it all? But they are very good. Mary Fran was a novice in our community. I didn't know that for quite a while because I said to her, "Do you have a previous experience with the sisters?" She says, "Yes, I was a novice." [Laughs] She went to our Juniorate, which was a high school at the time. She went all four years to that, that school, that high school. So. ...

So are you enjoying the, the, the process of their, of their becoming associates?

Oh, yes, yes, very much. We had our first telephone conference last Sunday [Feb. 3, 2008], uh, and, uh, they had just gotten back from a trip and they were supposed to call me on that Sunday but it got to be nine o'clock, I thought, "Well, oh, you know, there's, something's happened, they're not gonna call." Sure enough about a few minutes after nine they called. And she said, "Oh, is it too late?" And I said, "Oh, no, it's not too late." So we had our conference and, uh. Course they're doing very well. Now Gary is a convert from Lutheranism. He went to a Lutheran school in his grade school. So he's a, he's a religious person, but there's a lot of customs and tradition, knowledge. Because

after their orientation here [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods] in December [2007], we were driving, they were driving me back to my apartment in, in Springhill [in Terre Haute] and Gary looks over at me and he says, “Now what is it we’re supposed to be doing? What are we supposed to be learning?” So just basic things like that for him. Well, they have done a lot of reading — you’ve, I’m sure you’ve seen the manual [Spiritual Integration Units]. They’ve done a lot of, well, we have, uh, Mary Fran divided up into chapters and when we’ll meet and talk about them. So that’s very good. And, uh, they have done a lot of discussion. She said they have discussed things they have never talked about. Course they’ve been married only five years. And, um, that’s very good for them.

27 Canonization of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

Talking about the canonization of Saint Mother Theodore. Of course you went to Rome?

Mmmhmm.

Tell me what that experience was like for you and, you know, at the Vatican and when she was canonized a saint of the Church.

The moment of canonization something really struck me, it really did. And there was a sister, not sitting next to me, but next over here [makes motion]. And I just reached out and touched her hand. And she said, “What?” And I said, “Well, we’re the only two Sisters of Providence sitting here.” “Well, OK,” you know, like that. I have to tell you I lost my ticket so I wasn’t up in the front with everybody else. But you know that didn’t matter. Cause the experience was so wonderful. And, of course, we could see the pope, [Pope Benedict XVI] we could see, you know. ...

Did you go to Rome for her beatification?

No. No.

Was that the first time that you had been to the Vatican?

Mmmhmm.

What was that experience like for you?

Well, uh, there was certain parts, the Vatican itself as far as the physical structure goes, I think the part that struck me the most is the courtyard, the rotunda outside there [St. Peter's Square] because I think that's what you see in the pictures so much. Now it's true, all the treasures of all the years, the 2,000 years. The Pieta I had already seen in New York at the New York's World Fair, so that wasn't my first time seeing it. And I wanted to see, uh, Michelangelo's David, I wanted to see that, you know. So, um, but it's, it's, that's not the part that gets me, you know. They're, they're nice. I'm glad we have all these treasures and everything. But it's the spirit of them.

I, I, I was, although I was never a big fan of Cardinal Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI] there's something about him as the pope that I like, you know. Mother Theodore said the Sisters of Providence would always be obedient to the pope. [Laughs.] Well, I certainly know that I'm obedient to the pope. But, um, you know, you don't have to like somebody. But I do like, I like him and I was so glad to see him. So. ...

28 Second Vatican Council

I'd like to ask you something about Vatican II. You've touched upon it a little bit, but how did that, how did Vatican II affect you personally, as a Sister of Providence, but also your own spiritual life, your ministry?

Well, I think I touched on that when I said I don't think there was very much opening up of Vatican II till I went to Seattle to, to the Corpus Program. Um, now it's

true, we had done, our community had done some workshops and we had done, uh, small group discussions. Uh, I don't remember. Uh, I, I read the doc... I've read, I think I've probably read most of the documents because, um, you know, we had some, some types of studies of those. But it's the spirit of Vatican II that. ... I love the Mass. I notice one of the questions you asked on here [a list of possible questions] is like what devotions do you have. And, and the Mass, of course, is the greatest prayer that we have. But since the priest — it's not his facing us that's so important, although I'm happy for that. But it's the fact that the Mass is in our vernacular. It's in English. And that the priest says the prayers out loud. To me that just makes the Mass so much more, um, real, you know, and understanding, which I have some understanding, not complete of course, of what the Mass is, what, what it does, um. That's a big devotion for me. And, and I think that Vatican II gave me that, access to, to the Mass that way.

29 Importance of the Eucharist

Tell me about the Eucharist and when you, when you take the Eucharist.

What, what does that do for you?

Well, when the priest says the — oh, you just mean receiving communion?

Mmmhmm.

Well, I know I'm receiving Jesus, his body and blood, soul and divinity. It's not a representation, it is, is. And that happens in the Mass. You know in our church the first window over here is the Annunciation [in the north transept of the Church of the Immaculate Conception]. And when the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and then Mary said, "Yes," to him, that same thing that happened there is happening on our altar. Very same thing when the priest says the words of consecration. And because I'm Eucharistic

minister almost every time I'm here I sit over on that side and all I have to do is just turn my eyes to see that window. And I can correlate those two together. And, um, I read some place that, um, when, um, the words of consecration are said that lots and lots of angels and saints all come around the altar to adore Jesus, you know. So I always think, "Gee [laughs], too bad I can't see them," you know. I just think of all of us, Sisters of Providence and the local pe... the people who are with us as, uh, joining in this. I mean the Communion of Saints is a wonderful thing. But as far as receiving Jesus goes I just know that's who it is. I've known that since I was a little kid. Those Ursulines taught us well. And not only taught, but see I've come to know it, you know. So. ...

30 Devotional Items

So, do you use various devotional items in your prayer life?

Um, I don't say the rosary very often. Um, I, I, I love going to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, I love that. Although I don't get there — now that's one thing I'm looking forward to when I come to the Woods. [Sister Marceline will move from her apartment in Terre Haute to the Woods in the summer of 2008.] Really. That's one thing that I was thinking about when I retire, you know, [laughs] for how many years have I been some place else, you know? So, so that's something I'm looking forward to. I'm sure I will have an hour every day, if possible, you know, and, and I don't know how long I'm going to be walking on two feet and doing everything. I don't know that, but, you know, as long as it lasts, I'll, uh, that's some place I'll be, you know.

31 Prayer Life

Are there certain prayers that you, you say every day?

Yes, I have certain prayers that I say before I begin to pray [laughs]. Um, and both of these prayers that I love very much are Thomas Merton prayers. And I also say, always say that one of St. uh, St. Ignatius. We were taught that, we were preparing for our, maybe we were taught it before, but didn't catch, I didn't catch it until, uh, we were preparing for our final vows.

And what is that prayer?

And that's that one, uh, "Take, O Lord, and receive my liberty, my memory, my freewill, my understanding." And when we were told to do that, uh, the, the sister who was in charge of our 30-day retreat told us to go to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and say that prayer until we could remember every one of those, I mean until we could mean every one of those — take my memory, my intellect, my will — till you could say that about every one of them. Well, in those days, there were all in pretty much the same level. If I were having trouble with it today it would be my memory because I see these sisters who've lost their memories and well, I'm sure it's not hard for them. But it just seems so, so difficult. But I say it and I mean it, you know. So, um, let's see, what else do I say?

Oh, then, then I, um, I am not a morning person. I don't really wake up till about nine o'clock no matter what. But so my prayer in the morning is not very varied, it's pretty, the same every day because I couldn't do anything if I had to think of something new to do. Now the evening's different. But, but the morning, I just, I do the readings for the day, uh, because I want to know what those readings are. And if there's a saint involved I, I have this little book and if there's a saint involved it'll, the saint's, uh, little biography will be there. And I've always been a great saint person since I was a little kid.

32 Favorite Saints and Sister Mary Theodosia Mug

Got some favorite saints?

Yes. Saint Agnes, number one. She's my baptismal name. I mean, no, she's my confirmation name. I just love St. Agnes when sister told us about her. And she gave me a little picture of St. Agnes.

And why does St. Agnes strike your fancy so?

I think the story of her life, you know, how brave she was and how beautiful she was and how much she loved God. And she was like a little lamb, Agnes, you know. When I walked into St. Agnes Academy when I was going there as a freshman [During the editing process Sister Marceline indicated that this should read junior.] and you come into that lovely foyer of St. Agnes, right to the left is this beautiful white marble statue of St. Agnes. And you think that didn't get me that day? Sure did.

Any other favorite saints?

Yeah. St. Cecilia. And I went to St. Cecilia's catacomb in, uh, Rome when we were. ... Well, it's not her catacomb, it was a catacomb of St. Calista's, but St. Cecilia's burial place is there. In fact they had a small statue, about so big, lying in the alcove where she had been buried. So, that, that was another plus. That, that was really nice. It was like meeting a friend, you know. And, um, well, Peter and Paul are pretty much up there. And then I love, of course, Peter I love, Peter, because I'm kind of an impetuous person, you know, I'm kind of a free spirit. Um, and his brother Andrew that, that. ... I loved the way they followed, I loved the way Andrew went and got Peter, you know, and said, "Come here," you know. Well, they, they, so many of them did that, you know. Uh, I, I just love the, uh, reading of when the apostles were called and how they responded.

Um, well, Saint Mother Theodore, of course. She has to be there first. See when we entered, um, Sister Mary Theodosia [Mug, whose healing was recognized by the Vatican as the first miracle in the canonization process of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin.] was still living. And, I can remember a novice said to me one day, “There, that’s the sister that Mother Theodore cured but you’re not supposed to talk about it.” And then we were told not to talk about it because if we proclaimed her, Mother Theodore, then the Church wouldn’t proclaim her. So we had to be quiet about it. But we all knew who she was and I knew where she worked and, uh. But, but I guess we never talked to her. Or, or we weren’t allowed to talk to the professed sisters. Novices did not talk to the, unless you were employed with them. And I was never employed where she was so could never talk to her. But, um, you know, that story is so thrilling.

33 Importance of Community Life

Tell me about community life. How important is community to you?

Well, now that I’ve been living with just one sister, for how many years? But we have a community at Springhill [apartments in Terre Haute]. There’s six of us there at the present time. And, and of course I come here [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods] so often. Well, I, community, community is part of my life. I mean, it’s, I certainly wouldn’t want to live without it. I could never live by myself. I just couldn’t do that. But I’m sure the sisters who did live by themselves have a community, um, that they work with. This is a community, this is their support people. I’m sure of that. But also all of our sisters have the LGU [Local Government Unit] and that becomes a support group for many of them. There [are] also sisters who, um, make contact with one another if they are within driving distance. You know, they keep in touch. Just like Sister Linda Thompson went to North

Carolina. There are two sisters down there already and she was going to be spending Christmas with one of them, you know, so, because the other one went home to her parents. So, you know, just even very remote places there very often there's a chance to get together, you know.

34 Favorite Part of Being a Sisters of Providence

What is your absolute favorite thing about being a Sister of Providence?

Well, you know, I'd have to say our community. I'd have to say that because in, in my way of thinking this community has been very loving to me, very supportive, very affirming. And I've thrived on that, you know. Um, I can't think of any other way of life. Of course I'm prejudiced, I'm sure, but, uh, you know, that's OK.

35 Final Thoughts

Is there anything else that you would like to share that perhaps I haven't asked or maybe I overlooked?

Well, I'm sure you didn't overlook anything [laughs]. Um, well, I just, I just have a heart full of gratitude for, excuse me, for, uh, the fact that God called me to this religious community. Um, and, um, I can go back and see all the little things that happened that made it happen, you know. And, um, so, so I think, I'd just like to express that gratitude to God and, and to the community because really the community has made me what I am today and, uh. Although I'm 92 years old [laughs] I, uh, I'm grateful for, for the education I've had, for, uh, the ministries that I've had and for the sisters I lived with. You know, it's, it's been a great ride really.

Well, Sister Marceline, I thank you so much for your time and your willingness to share your story not only with me but with others.

Mmmhmm. You're very welcome.

Interview and transcript completed by Connie McCammon