

Interview with Sister Mary Dominic Klaseus (SD)

Conducted by Mary Kay Miller Feist (MF)

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MF: Today is July 27, 1998. I am Mary Kay Miller Feist, a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University Libraries in Fargo. It is a pleasure to be visiting with Sister Dominic in Good Council Mankato, Minnesota. Sister Dominic was my eighth grade teacher in Strasburg. Would you give me your chosen name? The name you chose when you became a sister?

SD: Dominic.

MF: Why did you choose Dominic?

SD: I wanted a name in honor of the blessed Mother. And every name that I had thought about had been taken. Then I didn't want any of those manufactured names, a piece of this one and a piece of that one. So I thought well Saint Dominic is supposed to have had a lot to do with the prolongation of the rosary. So I thought that would be a good name to take. That's why I took Dominic.

MF: Sister, what is your date of birth?

SD: February 26, 1928.

MF: Where were you born? Can you also give me the town, were you born at home or at the hospital?

SD: I was born right here in Mankato, Minnesota in St. Joseph's Hospital.

MF: Are you originally from here?

SD: I'm from Mankato.

MF: So you didn't travel to far from home.

SD: No, I just had to come up the hill.

MF: Great. What is your nationality?

SD: I don't know. It's a mixture of German I suppose. I suppose that's predominately what it is. My uncles and aunts, what did they always say we were? I can't even think of it right now. That little country right between France and Germany; Luxemburg. They always said we're Luxemburgers. But I think it's, what do they always say, a dog from every kennel. (Laughter)

MF: Would you tell me your father's name?

SD: Clarence.

MF: Last name?

- SD:** Klaseus
- MF:** How about your mother and her maiden name?
- SD:** Agnus Rohrich.
- MF:** Are they both living?
- SD:** No, they're both deceased.
- MF:** Do you know when your father died and where he was buried?
- SD:** My father died right here in Mankato. He had a heart attack in our parish church and died in church. He is buried right here in Mankato at Calvary Cemetery.
- MF:** How about your mother?
- SD:** Mother died of a stroke and she is also buried right here in Mankato at Calvary Cemetery.
- MF:** Do you have any brothers and sisters?
- SD:** I have one brother and one sister.
- MF:** What order are you in the birth of the family?
- SD:** I'm the oldest.
- MF:** You're the oldest?
- SD:** Oh, yes.
- MF:** I'm the oldest. So we have something in common.
- SD:** The role models.
- MF:** Well, we try to be. Were there any other family members or relatives that entered the religious life?
- SD:** No, not to my knowledge. There was a Sister Bernwada Klaseus, I have an idea where she is from or what branch of the family she is.
- MF:** Is she part of the school Sisters of Notre Dame, too?
- SD:** Yes.
- MF:** Were your parents very supportive of you joining?
- SD:** No, they did not want me to enter.
- MF:** Really?
- SD:** That's a fact.
- MF:** It seems like most parents are really excited when their daughters or sons would want to enter the Sisterhood or Priesthood.

- SD:** Well, this was not the case in our family. If this were not on tape, I'd tell you what my father said the first time.
- MF:** No, some of them aren't supportive. You know. But it's the life you chose and you have to live out your life to your satisfaction.
- SD:** See my father died before the rules were changed. When I entered you could only go home twice in a lifetime.
- MF:** Okay, Okay.
- SD:** My father died when he was 50 years old and our rules were still very strict. He had a very hard time with us not being able to come home, not being able to eat with the family when they came and visited. He just thought it was a bunch of nonsense.
- MF:** What role did the Holy Scripture and prayer play in your home life?
- SD:** Not a tremendous amount. We were not an overly Pius family.
- MF:** Who influenced you to enter the convent?
- SD:** I had a teacher in sixth grade, she was a Notre Dame Sister, who I thought was the best teacher I ever had. I admired her and her work. I think she was the one who really influenced me.
- MF:** So you went to Catholic school?
- SD:** Yes, I went to St. Peter and Paul School right here in Mankato from kindergarten right through senior year.
- MF:** Did you have the school Sisters from Notre Dame?
- SD:** All the way through. School Sisters from Notre Dame, there is no other order is there?
- MF:** I enjoyed the ones that were in our school, I know. Did your local pastor influence your decision in any way?
- SD:** None what so ever.
- MF:** Upon deciding on your religious calling, did you ever consider or think about what would be left behind with social life?
- SD:** No, I think that I so wanted to do this that I didn't think of those things that much. I don't know the Lord has his ways that's all that I can say.
- MF:** Of letting you know?
- SD:** He just sort of leads one on and when you look back you think oh this is why this happened, interesting.
- MF:** At what age did you enter the convent?
- SD:** Age 18.
- MF:** And we talked about not being far from home being you were right here from Mankato. What memories do you have leaving home to enter the convent? Like the day you left, what was it like coming here?

- SD:** I don't even remember if we took a cab up here or drove me up. I don't remember that. I know that Sister Charlotte, my senior home-room teacher came with us and my mother was along. I know I was running around in my slacks till the last minute and my mother finally said, "Don't you think you better change clothes?" So I did. She was weeping most of the time. You would think that I was going to die or something. It was not a happy occasion it was very difficult. I was getting what I wanted but my folks were very upset and unhappy with my decision.
- MF:** What was it like when you got here? Did you feel real welcome?
- SD:** It was very different. Yes, I felt welcome. There was a group here before us, the class ahead of us, which welcomed us and took us under their wing. They showed us the ropes as it were and got us acclimated to where we were going to sleep. My mother had to come up and make sure my bed was alright, to see if I had a good mattress.
- MF:** How many other gals were in your class when you started?
- SD:** There were 18 of us when we first started.
- MF:** And when you graduated did all 18 finish and become sisters.
- SD:** No, no. People dropped out in the candidature as we called it. I think we lost 3 in the Vishit(sp? 075). When we were professed we might have been down to about 12 or 13. I'm not so sure of my numbers right now. Two people from the class following us were pushed into our class and went to the (076) with us. So our numbers were 2 more than what we had. At the present moment there are going to be 7 of us celebrating our golden jubilee next year. Actually, of the original 18 there are 6 of us left. One died so that means the others left.
- MF:** But that's quite an accomplishment to have stayed in and be celebrating this big event.
- SD:** Well I'm looking forward to it.
- MF:** Will that be celebrated here?
- SD:** Well yes, yes. It will be celebrated here. We will have one celebration in spring for those of us living here at Good Council and at that spring celebration we can invite our friends and relatives. In August we have the Provincial where the whole providence comes together to celebrate. So that will be a year from now.
- MF:** What was your typical daily schedule at the convent? What did you do in the morning, afternoon, and evening?
- SD:** Our mornings started, depending where we lived, most of the time at a 4:45 or 5:00. I think we had about a half hour to dress and get ready. We went to chapel, Morning Prayer, half hour meditation followed by breakfast. Then if we had some time we did our little light housekeeping duties around the convent, whatever area you cleaned. We probably mopped a room or whatever. Then we went to school. We were in school and had a little break for lunch. Then we stayed in school until prayer time. Then usually hurried home and got home in time for the afternoon prayer which was a 15 minute meditation. That was followed by supper and supper was followed by an hour of recreation. Then we had quiet time for study so we could prepare our lessons for the next day. Lights out at 10:00.

- MF:** Well if you had to get up early I'm sure by 10:00 you were ready for bed. It was a long day. Did you keep in touch with classmates?
- SD:** No, because we were restricted in our writing. We received mail every Sunday when we first came in. We were restricted as to how much mail we could write and then even visits. So even being here from Mankato I really did not stay in contact with my classmates that much.
- MF:** Were you able to return home often for funerals, weddings, special occasions or birthdays being that you were so close?
- SD:** No because of the rules. Once we were professed we could go home twice in a lifetime. That's the way it was when I was professed in 1949. Then we had a change in rules that said we could go home four times during our lifetime. I was very fortunate because my mother and dad were celebrating their silver jubilee, their wedding anniversary.

I used one of those four home visits and I could remember asking my Provincial. I was stationed in Wabasha, Minnesota and can still see where we were. We were standing in the kitchen and I asked if I could have permission to go home for my mom and dad's silver wedding anniversary. She said, "Well I'll have to ask my council." I said, "Well you're the Provincial why do you have to ask your council?" She said, "Because you're so young."

See I had only been professed for two years at that time. Usually two years wasn't long at all. Usually we were in for three years and then we'd have a summer and renew our vows for another three years. Then at the end of six years if we were still determined at becoming a sister we took our final vows. So I was just a sprout when I asked if I could go home for my dad and mom's jubilee wedding anniversary. I did get to go but I was not able to attend my brother's wedding.

- MF:** Did you ever question your decision of joining the convent?
- SD:** Probably the only time was when my dad died suddenly and mom was left alone. My youngest sister was only a fourth grader at the time and my brother was in the Navy. But that wasn't a very serious thing. It just came to my mind and then thought what good could I really do. Mother was a very capable woman. She was a survivor so she managed very well.
- MF:** So you felt very good about your calling? You felt you made the right decision?
- SD:** Yeah, if I had to do it over again, I'd do it with a blink of an eye.
- MF:** Good, wonderful. Let's talk about the training for the religious life. Describe the steps and the length of time it took you to go through the Posalance stage.
- SD:** Ok. We were candidates. They called us first year candidates when we came in. So we had one full year of college courses and learning something about religious life. The second year was baptism by fire. They wanted to know I guess if we could teach. They would send us out to teach after one year. We only had one year of college under our belts, but we studied hard. We covered a lot of territory in that one year. They sent us out to teach and after that one year of teaching then we came back in. If we still persevered then we entered the Vishits (sp? A141). In the Vishits (sp? A142) we took religious classes

and learned all about the rules from the Notre Dame Stand and about meditation, prayer, religious life. After one year then we were allowed to be professed. So it was a three year period.

But like I said earlier we took vows for three years and then a summer of reflection to see if we wanted to go on another three. So we renewed our vows for three more years. There was a period of nine years before you really said this is it and took your final vows.

MF: What was that ceremony like when you took your final vows?

SD: It was in the context of a mass. We exchanged our white veils for the black veils and that was the real ceremony. At one point in the ceremony..... You said final vows?

MF: Yes.

SD: I'm thinking of first vows, when you took your first vows you exchanged your white veil for the black veil. There was one part in the ceremony that was very impressive. That was the part where all of us were kneeling in front of the altar. If you've seen our chapel you know what a large sanctuary we have. There was a point in the ceremony where we would prostrate ourselves on the floor of the sanctuary and there were four large candlesticks at the corners. Then they put up the black pall over us and that symbolized that we were dead to the world as it were and that part was very impressive. And of course each one of us took our vows. We said the formula of the vow together and then each one pronounced our names. It was very solemn, very solemn. I remember I was on an all time high when that happened. You know now the commitment was made. I had always made that commitment as far as I was concerned this forever the first time I walked in that door. But now it was official. Our vows were accepted by the bishop and by the church. It was solemn.

MF: So you were a sister.

SD: Yes.

MF: Ok. Describe the training you had for teaching. You got your college education up here you said?

SD: We started up here. While we were out teaching that first year when we were still postulance (sp? A171) remember I said we had one year here and had intensive courses? Then that second, year even though we were teaching, we took Saturday classes. We always worked with the senior sisters, somebody who was an experienced teacher, you had a mentor.

You learned a lot from the sister you working with. They always paired us off with someone. Then our education was peaceful as it were. I attended the college of St. Catherine and I received a lot of my so-called classes. We took our actual methods classes at teacher's college. You know how to teach math, reading, and religion. So the different types, that's how that was taken. My liberal arts course I had a major in English, Education and a minor in History.

I waited a little while and then went on for a master's degree. They wanted me to go on in English. So I went to Marquette University and spent about three or four summers there. I figured this was not my cup of tea. I couldn't see myself teaching these guys. If it would be six foot something and I'm supposed

to teach them like ode to (A188). Can't you just see some big guy waxing eloquent and getting excited about (A189)? Well I didn't think that was my cup of tea. So I came back and said to my director of studies at the time and said I don't think this is for me. She said well you're a little too young to be switching masters. She said well what do you want to do? I'll put you on my problem pile.

So I guess I was on her problem pile for awhile. I didn't hear from her and finally she called me and said "Say would you like to go into Administration?" I said, "Yes, I think I would." So then I got my master's degree and my specialist degree in elementary school administration. I was licensed.

When they first put that six year program in they called it superintendent's license. You could be a superintendent if you wanted to be. Well I wasn't that crazy. I liked what I was doing, I liked being in grade school and liked being in interaction with children of that age. My favorite class I taught was sixth grade. That was the level I really enjoyed. My first experience with eighth grade was out at Strasburg. I had come from a very energetic and enthusiastic group of sixth graders. Then I came out to Strasburg and I had these eighth graders.

I can remember I'd say now would you like to do this, or what's your pleasure? How would you like to do this? They never answered me. So I had to always say if you don't want to do it this way, you don't want to do it that way so you do it my way. So that's how we did it until finally they got used to me.

I think your class was much more alive than that first group. I didn't know if they knew how to take me. I wasn't used to the lack of enthusiasm. They didn't show their feelings that much. Whereas, those sixth graders, my goodness, trying to keep track of them. I always compared them to a popper of popcorn, you always had to keep a lid on them because they were so enthusiastic they were like kernels of popcorn that would pop right off the pan if they had the chance. We had so many projects that we did.

MF: How many years were you in Strasburg?

SD: Two only two. They were two good years though.

MF: Now I had you as an eighth grade teacher but did you have an eighth grade class before my class?

SD: I had the grade ahead of you because I had Stucky in that group.

MF: Ok. Anything you want to share about that group?

SD: Well, that was a tough group to handle. It was my first go at being an eighth grade teacher and I didn't quite understand the difference. They were really different, I don't know. I had come from a large city school in St. Paul, Minnesota where I had forty some children in a class. They were an enthusiastic bunch of kids. I just thoroughly enjoyed my work there. They had no problem with discipline. There is a difference between being a sixth and eighth grader.

MF: I would believe that there would be.

- SD:** There was a big difference. Then I grew to love those kids too, though. I had my eighth grade there and then I had your class which was a fun class. I can remember Frances Feist some of the things she said were just riotous. She had such a good sense of humor.
- MF:** Yeah, she does. She was quite a leader.
- SD:** Yeah, she was.
- MF:** She just organized our class reunion and she was quite involved. She's teaching.
- SD:** I was very happy to hear.
- MF:** She's an administrator.
- SD:** Which I was doubly glad to hear.
- MF:** She is teaching first grade in Strasburg and is the Principal. She seems very happy. I can see Fran enjoying the kids.
- SD:** She enjoys life. She was living life to the full already when I had her in the eighth grade. I don't remember you that well. I don't remember if you were that quiet.
- MF:** I don't know.
- SD:** I don't know either anymore. A very gentle lady you were and are. I think you are as gentle now as you were in eighth grade. I don't know how many times you interacted with me.
- MF:** I got in trouble once. I remember that. I don't remember what for, but I know I got in trouble once. Where were you first stationed? What was your first assignment?
- SD:** My first assignment was a sink or swim situation when we went out as postulance(sp?) and taught for one year. I had a fourth grade class at St. Matthews and St. Paul and I had 54 students. I was glad I had Notre Dame Sisters because I just imitated what our teachers had done.
- MF:** Then you had a support group when you came back too. Did you live here then?
- SD:** Yes. Well, but we lived at the mission. I was stationed at St. Matthews so we stayed right at the convent. But because of the rules at the time there were four of us postulance(sp?) and the irony of it was that there were two of us that were partners. One of the postulance(sp?) taught first grade, so she had a sister that was her partner and fully planned their work together every Sunday. Then the other postulance(sp?) was teaching third grade. She too, had a sister. She would go down stairs in convent and they'd plan their work. Then there were two of us postulance(sp?), who had fourth grade. I had 54 she had 56. We sat across the table from each other and said well what are we going to do this week. We had sisters we could ask questions so that part was ok. As a profess sister my very first year out was at Holy Childhood in St. Paul. I had a third grade. Then the second year I was there I had a third and fourth.
- MF:** A combination classroom?
- SD:** Yes, which was ok. Then by the time the next year, my third year, they usually wanted to move you around so you had a different experience before you took your renewals. So my third year out as a

profess sister I was in Wabasha, Minnesota and again I had a combination of fifth and sixth. That was a class.

That was probably the toughest class I've ever had. That sixth grade was something else. And you know the thing of it is I can't tell you right now how many students from the fifth and sixth grade class I had ended up being killed in car accidents and drownings.

MF: Oh, how sad.

SD: It was just unbelievable, one after the other. It was a very tragic thing.

MF: What were some of your interactions with the parents? I would assume at the beginning of your sisterhood you weren't able to leave the convent very often. Were you able to go down town? Were you able to go to people's homes?

SD: No, no we weren't. That was the rule of enclosure we called it. We couldn't go. We went from our convent, to church or to school and that was it.

MF: So how did you get your groceries?

SD: We phoned them in and they were delivered.

MF: They were delivered to the convent then? Did you have someone that prepared the meals?

SD: We didn't in Strasburg. We had someone who was preparing the meals for us in other places... When I first went out we did have what we called home service sisters and they were the ones that really made a home for us. I always called them our surrogate mothers because we would come home from school and the meals would be ready. We'd open the door after a hard day and we'd either smell fresh bread or cookies.

MF: Well I'm sure you were very, very glad not to have to prepare a meal after a full day.

SD: Now we do. Times are changed and we don't have home service sisters anymore. So we hurry home. Even here in our small community, where I live there are five us that live in a small community, we prepare our own meals in the evening. So you plan ahead just like you do. There isn't much difference. We hurry home after our work and get the meal on the table so that by 5:30 all of us can sit down to a hot meal. But when I think about it these home service sisters were preparing for large numbers of sisters who didn't have lay folk helping you and you'd come home. For example, At Peter and Paul one time I think that there were forty sisters down there. That's a lot.

MF: Where did you live in Strasburg? Did you live in that great big huge convent or had you moved over to where the pastor used to live?

SD: Oh, no. We lived in what used to be the church. It was moved in from the countryside. That's the story I heard.

MF: I think that's correct.

SD: Yeah. I lived in that and they always said this is historic because Lawrence Welk slept in the section of the house as a border. It was an old, old building and I know that we would be meditating in our chapel and they had these cedar shingles on the rounding part.

You'd be in there and all of a sudden you'd hear this drilling sound and some woodpecker would be making this sound. It was just like being a doctor in a dentist's chair. Then we'd have Mr. Feist, our maintenance man at school, and he'd come over and get a ladder and he'd cover up the hole with little round tin. He'd nail that in. So if you looked at the back of that chapel from the outside you'd see all these little round tin.

MF: Now what Mr. Feist would have that been?

SD: That would be the one that lived down...you know there is that little cemetery there right behind the convent. If you went down that road there was a Feist farm just right there on the edge of town. It would be the road between the convent and the rectory. If you walked out Francy Feist's front door there was that road and you went right straight down there. I think that's the Feist farm because it was a Mr. Feist that was the janitor of the school.

MF: I just can't recall which Feist that is right now.

SD: I can't help you because there is so many.

MF: The convent is no longer there.

SD: That's what I heard. Then I heard they moved into what was the rectory and now I don't think Rose was living in a rectory. Wasn't she living someplace else?

MF: No. I'm not sure where Rose lived but what they did do is they built a house. It's more like a house not this big huge rectory like they used to have. I think Sister Rachard was in the old rectory. And Sister Rosie is that who it was?

SD: Rose Marie.

MF: Rose Marie.

SD: I think it's Rose Marie.

MF: I'm not sure. I didn't know her as well. I did teach with Sister Rachard. I think it was her first year there and it was my first year teaching. So it was probably in 1974. She was just wonderful. I don't know what I would have done without her. Did you have many church duties? Did you have to do a lot of things for the church like cleaning or getting things ready for Father?

SD: Oh I helped with sacrcity work especially at Sacred Heart. I remember there were three of us because there were so many Priests there. It was a huge parish. I also had servers. I taught the boys how to become servers and taught them the Latin.

MF: Which their no longer using.

SD: I did church work too at Wabasha. I remember that. Sacred Heart was the place where we spent hours over there, especially on Holy Week. Oh mother my.

MF: Oh I can believe it.

SD: All the ceremonies.

MF: Yes, yes. When you were in Strasburg, Sister, I think I remember you being in the habit.

SD: Yes I was.

MF: What do they call it the v one.

SD: No I was there with the original with the stiff veil. The reason I had to be is because I didn't change my habit until I was principal down here at Fitzgerald Middle School. That was after I had been out at Strasburg. I was at Strasburg for two years and then they sent me back here to Mankato to be the principal and eighth grade teacher at St. Johns, which is a grade school here in town.

After four years of being eighth grade teacher and principal, they asked me if I would be the administrator of this middle school that they were going to start. So that's what I did. I became the first principal of Fitzgerald Middle School here in Mankato. It was during that time that I was principal of that school, when I changed. Wait a minute. No...you are right. I'm thinking of when I went so-called modern. You're right we changed habits at Sacred Heart. We went out to Strasburg after Sacred Heart. Oh lordy lordy. I remember we came down into community room after getting rid of this stiff veil and what we called as a wimple.

We came down into the community room and we had peripheral vision. I ended up with a headache and I could hear so much better. That community room when we came in there, there were 20 of us at that place. When we got all of us into that room it was just like voices were bouncing off every place. I thought oh my. I didn't realize how much I did not hear. Even at that students thought we heard everything anyhow. See we had that wimple which we pulled back over our ears and beside that we had that stiff, stiff veil. Sound couldn't get through that either that well.

If I was facing directly at you there was no problem hearing. I could hear from behind. My, what a revelation that was when we came downstairs for the first time. So you are correct I did have the modified habit when I was out there. Which was the cape with a v and we had like a dickey with a little collar. The part of the veil over the front of your forehead that was still stiff. But the veil itself was soft. We could drive because we had vision then. Up to that time we wouldn't have been able to drive a car.

MF: Did you have a car in Strasburg? Did you have one available to you? Or how did you get around?

SD: We asked a lot of people to drive us places.

MF: You probably didn't have a car. I know one of the other sisters said that they were real excited when they got a car. Before that they had to asked people to take them to Linton, because that is where a lot of the doctoring was done. What were your feelings when you went into lay clothes when you actually wore regular clothes like you're wearing now?

SD: Well we went through the polyester age. That is the material we had it could either be blue or black. I didn't know how the students would react. In those days, I was much smaller than I am right now. So I

think they were surprised that there was this little nun inside all that black stuff. You know the thing that I really resented was the fact that it got to the point.

I wore that habit so long I could almost read the newspaper through it being that thin. So I knew I had to get a new habit or go into a modern garb. So I consulted with my mother and she of course wanted me to go modern. She thought this black stuff was enough. She said for heaven sakes get some color you've been in black long enough go to blue. I changed over Christmas vacation.

By that time the rule had changed to the point where I could visit because I remember I took some Christmas presents with my mother out to my sisters for her children. I still had the long habit on, but for midnight mass I changed. What really got to me was the fact my mother and my sister were wearing these long dresses at the time that was style. Here they came a long in long dresses and here I am running around in this short skirt. But I got used to it. I loved the old habit. I'd probably die of heat exhaustion now if I had to wear everything. But at that time I was younger and could handle the heat a lot better. So it didn't bother me so much.

MF: What do you feel has been one of the biggest changes from when you first came to now?

SD: Well I think for one thing. You know all of us were either teachers or home service sisters. We lived in a large convent and there were a lot of us around most of the time. Even out in the rural areas. We had a quite a few sisters at Strasburg if you remember? We had the high school there too. We always had that community life. That to me was a shift from a large sort of community to now we're going out in ones or twos. We're not living in a convent.

I did that too when I worked at Buffalo. That was my first experience of living along in an apartment. I commuted to my school which was about 10 minutes away in another town. So we're scattered all over the place. The other thing is that there are so many opportunities to do so many different things than we did. Either you taught or you didn't teach. Now you can go into any number of types of work. Primarily we stayed in a classroom situation.

Now we're working in parishes and doing a variety of type of work and within in the church which is wonderful. That shift from community has really changed. I do like the many more opportunities for a variety of spiritual advantages as far as choosing different types of retreats we like to do.

Our prayer life is different. We used to all get up at the same time and all march in the chapel and we all would have this meditation sitting straight up. Half of us were still half dead I think. Now you can pray at a time that is more convenient and good for your own body. I still pray early in the morning because that to me is still the best time for me to pray.

Other people who are night people like to pray in the evening and now they can. The prayer is a much better prayer. We used to have the office of the blessed mother and now we pray the office of the

church. I love the psalms. I just think our prayer life is much richer than it was. From my own personal opinion I think it is.

MF: There have been some big changes.

SD: Even being able now to interact with our families. I can go and visit my brother. If you're parents need help you can go into your own home and help them. Whereas before that you went home for a funeral.

MF: Didn't Sister Miriam go home and take care of her parent's for awhile?

SD: I don't know which ones. A lot of our sisters have been.

MF: She's back now because I interviewed her this morning.

SD: Was it a Miriam?

MF: Yes.

SD: Could have been but I don't know Sister Miriam that well so I don't know.

MF: I thought at one time that is what I heard but I don't know if it is true. Do you remember any German food that sticks out in your mind? Can you think of anything?

SD: What was that pastry they made?

MF: The round?

SD: Yes.

MF: Kuchen?

SD: Yes, that was it. That would be the thing.

MF: They could make what they called a raised kuchen with a thicker dough or thin kuchen that was kind of made with sugar and cinnamon.

SD: Both were kind of sweet to me I thought. One almost seemed like it had almost like a pudding.

MF: Yep, a custard.

SD: Yeah, yeah. What did you call that?

MF: Kuchen.

SD: So it's just called kuchen?

MF: Yes.

SD: We used to get that from the people and that was a real treat. No one in the house made it.

MF: No.

SD: None of the sisters did. Lots of times we would just have that for Sunday breakfast. Of course we used to get some mighty good homemade sausage from the people.

- MF:** It must have been good because someone else mentioned that.
- SD:** It was wonderful. Good sausage makers out there.
- MF:** So they would just bring it to the house?
- SD:** We'd have it for breakfast or even for supper.
- MF:** Were there a lot of German meals served at school for lunch? I don't remember going to lunch because a lot of times I'd skip.
- SD:** I don't even remember eating there. I remember walking the students over there and I know we ate in the church basement.
- MF:** Didn't you have to go from the school to the church?
- SD:** Yeah. That's right. That's all I remember. Then I remember that one of the sisters would be in charge of policing the place as students were appointed to clean it up. They had to mop the floors and getting everything back. I know that the students didn't realize that she understood the dialect.
- MF:** German.
- SD:** That's right. Because I know that first year when I was there the eighth grade boys could say anything they wanted to about me and I wouldn't know the difference because they were speaking the dialect. That made me uncomfortable because you never knew just what the score was. They could be calling you everything under the sun and you wouldn't know it. But this sister had charge of supervising the people who were cleaning.

These students one day were putzing around and just weren't getting the job done. So finally she let them have it with a whole stream of the dialect. It was just like someone had taken a cattle prod to those kids. They got on those mops and got that place clean just like that. Just no time flat. I think they were in a state of absolute shock to think that a sister understood and could speak the dialect. I tell you that was a new awakening for everybody in the school. They knew now that they couldn't talk around her because she would understand them.

- MF:** And you sisters weren't supposed to speak German.
- SD:** I don't know German. We still have a custom that when we are suberjubilarians they have a special spiritual renew program in Rome in for us. So we went to Rome and then as part of that program we went to Munich where our congregation started. It was like a heritage trip. Once I had gone there and I had met a sister who spoke English and had a great visit with her. I wanted to know what convent life was like in Germany and how it was different than America.

We started of course correspondence. I came back convinced I was going to learn German. Well at the time I was principal of Fitzgerald and my duties there just ate up my time. I wanted to learn the language but I never did. My grandmother spoke German because I remember as a little kid I would accompany her across the street.

She had a friend and those two would sit on the porch and talk German. I'd sit on the porch railing bored out of my gored not knowing what their talking about. Then I would walk my grandmother home again. The only German I ever got was maybe when it would lightning real hard or thundering my mother would get frightened and would say (B565). That was about the extent of my German. Then sometimes I better not say what I thought I heard. I never knew what it was.

- MF:** Is there any family, any people, any parish members that you can remember from Strasburg while you were there?
- SD:** The rules were such that you only saw your parents when they'd come to school or if you'd meet them in church. Even at that time you weren't supposed to stand around and talk to anybody. You were supposed to go to mass on Sunday and get right back to the convent.
- MF:** So you weren't allowed to interact?
- SD:** We didn't interact when I was out there. It was still pretty tight as far the rules were concerned. I can remember the janitor and his family were around a lot. I know one time it hailed and they made fresh homemade ice cream and brought it over as a treat.
- MF:** Is the Feist janitor you were talking about?
- SD:** Yes, yes. Sorry I don't know the name. Maybe someone can help you with that.
- MF:** I'm sure somebody will remember who it is.
- SD:** I didn't have that much interaction with family that I can remember. It was a lot different say when I got down to St. John's for example. By that time things were loosening up. Then I could interact. I didn't visit a tremendous number of homes. I know I never did that.

My interaction was either because they were committee members or on my school board or something of that nature. Or what we called womb mothers then I got to know people. I never really got to meet a lot of different people. In a more intimate way it was always just business. State your business and be gone.

- MF:** Anything else you'd like to share about your experiences in Strasburg? Highlights or anything you can remember that stands out in your mind?
- SD:** I know it was a year of growth for me because as I said it was the first time I had eighth grade. So I was scrambling. I know I was supposed to teach Earth Science. I know I took a college class at Bismarck. I think it was a geology course. I enjoyed it tremendously and really liked being there. I really liked the quiet. The thing I remember is I used to pray outside once in a while for meditation.

It was so calm and the scenery was gorgeous. A lot of people from Minnesota would say, "There's no trees!" I didn't miss that. In the yard we would have I don't know how many meadowlarks just feeding. I never saw so many meadowlarks. I always associate meadowlarks with the early morning (B594) during the daytime being in North Dakota. Even today once in awhile I hear a meadowlark in Minnesota and it will take me back to the North Dakota days.

I love the sunsets. Oh man, you'd see these buildings and they would be silhouetted. I really truly appreciated being out there. It was not a pain for me to be out there. I liked it. The convent was really a ramshackle building. When the wind would blow the dirt would sift in under the door or the snow would come in.

MF: I think I have heard stories about the convent.

SD: I had a trap line there awhile. Every season the mice would want to come in and share your house. So I had a trap line down in the basement. I don't know how many traps I had. Every morning I would go down and empty them and reset them. I'd come home from school and I'd empty them and set them again. One time we down there and the whole one wall right above where we had the freezer.

The whole basement wall had a section were there was a gaping whole. We saw the daylight coming through it. Mr. Feist or somebody came over and had to do that for us. You didn't mind that. It was incidental and you just laughed about it. It was the community that was so great. The nuns out there were good and it was a good situation. It was hard but it was good.

I remember Kennedy was shot and died while I was out there. I can remember sitting in that community room watching television we didn't have school we closed the school. I know everyone was in the state of shock. They were running around that school like nobody could believe it. That's where I was, I was out teaching eighth grade in Strasburg when Kennedy was shot. I had a wonderful experience teaching with a gentleman by the name of Adam (B616). He had seventh grade and I had eighth grade. I took his English classes and he took Agriculture or whatever was supposed to be taught.

MF: Adam is living in Linton. He works at the bank in Strasburg. I just visited with him at the end of June or beginning July. He seems to be doing well. Adam is Adam very talkative, very friendly and very outgoing.

SD: I want to know if he still has his dish of ice cream of breakfast. I think that is something we ought to find out. That is of historical value. It was the first time I have ever heard of eating ice cream for breakfast was out there. Adam was funny and had a good sense of humor.

MF: And the German accent...

SD: Yes. That caused us some being from not having the German when the note the come, "Please excuse Jerry he has to go to the doctor for a jack up." instead of for a checkup.

MF: I always remember him say something about, "Is that a yolk?" a joke.

SD: He would probably say Chudy and Cherry.

MF: Right. Do you remember El Dosch?

SD: Yes, He was a coach?

MF: Yes.

- SD:** Yes alright. Ok what relation was Al Dosch to Mike Dosch who was such a good friend of Lawrence Welk? I know Lawrence would bring Mike along and Mike would play the squeeze box. I remember we had a tag dance one time when Lawrence came.
- MF:** Oh you remember Lawrence Welk?
- SD:** He came out.
- MF:** To the school?
- SD:** Yes. We went down to the auditorium or whatever the gym. Didn't we have a gym?
- MF:** Yes.
- SD:** Ok. We were going to have a tag dance. Mike played the accordion and nobody was dancing right away. So Lawrence said am I doing something wrong is this permitted. Yeah it sure was permitted. Then the girls started loosening up and they started to dance with him.
- I remember one little fourth grader. Oh my goodness I wish I could remember her name! She could polka like mad. She was just a stitch. She went out there and she just danced her little feet off. She was very hospitable. Those of us from Minnesota were in awe, but the kids around there that was no big deal because he was a relative.
- MF:** I remember him passing out pencils.
- SD:** I don't remember that.
- MF:** Maybe that was when we were younger. But I know he used to come up to the school and it was a treat to have him come up and play. We knew somebody famous.
- SD:** That's right and he was. My mother would not miss Lawrence Welk when I went home to visit her. That was a ritual you didn't talk, you watched him. She knew everybody in his band, she knew who was married to whom and she knew who was pregnant. She knew everybody.
- MF:** I think he ran his show as one big family.
- SD:** Yep. He did.
- MF:** He was real interested in all of us band members.
- SD:** My mother loved it. So I was brought up on that one. That's when I went home to visit with my mother. I was at St. John's at a time when the rules were such that my mother could come into the convent, she could eat with us and I could go to mass with her. When she got to the point she couldn't clean her house that well, a couple of us could go down and clean the house for her. We decorated for her at Christmas time and put up a Christmas tree. I was so sorry that my dad didn't live long enough to see that.
- MF:** To be able to see you come home and see that the rules had changed.
- SD:** Yes. I really feel bad. It was the parents that had to keep the rule. I got what I wanted. I wanted to be a sister. The rules were there and I kept them. It was hard on the folks. The other thing I remember is I

lost contact with my relatives. I don't have a lot. We only have those few relatives, but there are a lot of second cousins. I never got to know those people because I left right after high school.

So that was it. So when I come back there are whole generations that I don't know. You talk about your family tree. I don't know much about my family tree. There is no one. I have four first cousins and that's it. So it is kind of a small relationship. Luckily my brother had five children so that kind of beefs things up again. My sister had two girls and that helps. My brother lives in (B670) so I don't see him that much even though he is here in Minnesota. My sister is living in Raleigh, North Carolina. I'm sitting here talking to you.

MF: I think we have pretty much covered everything unless you have anything else you want to share.

SD: No, I think that's probably it.

MF: I'd like to thank you sister. I really enjoyed it. It was just wonderful to see you again. It was quite an experience for me to come down to Good Council. I've always wanted to come and see what this would have been like.

SD: I'm sorry I sounded so foggy. I hope the tape is going to be ok. I know my voice.....

END OF TAPE