

Interview with Sister Barbara Mardian (BM)

Conducted by Carol Just (CJ)

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- CJ:** It's a pleasure today to visit with Barbara Mardian here in Good Council Hall in the city of Mankato where the interview is taking place. I thank you very much. I am going to ask you your given name and your chosen name.
- BM:** I was baptized Margaret Mardian in then the church in Bowdle, South Dakota. And my chosen name for sister....we exchanged our names the three sisters were received together; Margaret, Barbara, and Christina. At the time we were received into the convent the Provincial decided to exchange our baptismal names among the three of us and since there were too many Margarets already, they took the name Marina. So it was Barbara, Marina, and Christine.
- CJ:** And you became Barbara?
- BM:** I became Barbara.
- CJ:** And you became Barbara even though your given birth name is Margaret. Did that get a little confusing for you?
- BM:** Very confusing.
- CJ:** I would think so. What is the date of your birth and where were you born?
- BM:** I was born on a farm at Boodle, South Dakota northwest of Boodle on March 10, 1914.
- CJ:** Were you delivered at home?
- BM:** I was delivered at home by a midwife.
- CJ:** Do you remember who it was?
- BM:** No, I don't.
- CJ:** What is your father's name and where was he born?
- BM:** My father's name was Anton E. Martian. He had a cousin Ancel Martian so to distinguish between the two he added the "E". He was born in 1885 in Baden, Russia. He came over when he was about nineteen years old. There was a second marriage. He was born of the second marriage and had some older brothers. At that time there was an outbreak of the Bolsheviks and somehow he didn't want to get involved with it. He knew about some cousins that had come to America. He got on a ship all by himself and came to New York and then to South Dakota where his cousin lived. He got on the Milwaukee Road train and came to Rosland. He expected to meet his sister who had come to America sooner. She wasn't

there so he went on to Hosmer, and there his cousin met him. He stayed at Hosmer with his cousin on his farm for a couple of years until he got married.

CJ: What a brave young man to say good-bye to all.

BM: His mother was living, a younger brother and two or three girls, all stayed in Russia. It seems to me that some of his brothers maybe when they wrote on their passports they weren't familiar with writing in English, and so there was a mistake. Some of them had a "T" and some of them had a "D" but they were still valid with one brother and a half-brother. My father used the "D" to make it look like a "T" by crossing it.

CJ: So your father came here on his own, did he ever discuss the ship voyage?

BM: It seems to me not too much, but I know when I was a kid, he used to get letters from his family and they would read them out loud and we'd all have to listen and they cried. He felt so bad and he also said, "Someday I want to go back to Russia" but he never got back. He was really lonesome.

CJ: As a young man leaving all that was familiar in coming here. Well you descended from are a pretty strong person. When and where did your father die and where is he buried?

BM: He died in 1960 and was 65 years old here in Aberdeen, South Dakota where they retired. After the family had left the farm, he died in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

CJ: What was your mother's name and where was she born?

BM: My mother's name was Regina Heintz and her mother's name was Senger and she was born in Russia and came to America when she was six years old. Her father came, and it seems to me that one child died on ship on the way to America.

CJ: She lost her sibling on the way over here.

BM: They must have come the same route by New York. Then they settled north of Bowdle.

CJ: What county is Bowdle in?

BM: In Edmonds County.

CJ: Did your mother have any memories of this ships voyage?

BM: No, I never asked her. Actually her mother died and there were four children. She was born in 1890. She must have come over in 1896-1897 and settled in the same area that my dad was in Hosmer, and was involved with his family.

CJ: Where did your mother die, and where is she buried?

BM: Mother died in Aberdeen in 1970 and buried in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

CJ: Do you know the name of the cemetery?

BM: Saint Mary's Cemetery in Aberdeen.

CJ: When and where did your father and mother marry?

- BM:** In Bowdle, and I don't know how they met. They were married in 1910 in the Bowdle church. I have their wedding picture.
- CJ:** Did you know your grandparents at all?
- BM:** I knew one grandfather, my mother's father. He was retired in Aberdeen and we used to visit him quite often.
- CJ:** How many brothers and sisters in your family, and can you name their birth order?
- BM:** Sister Christine is the oldest and was born October 8, 1910; Sister Christine is the one that died and was born April 22, 1912; I was born on March 10, 1914; Father Joe was born November 22, 1915; Father Pius was born June 15, 1918 and my youngest sister Adelaide, the one that just died, was born January 19, 1923.
- CJ:** Big family! Did your father homestead in the Bowdle area?
- BM:** At first, as I remember they had a small farm which was south of Hosmer. Then later on they bought a farm eight miles west of Bowdle. That's where they homesteaded and farmed all their life there.
- CJ:** Do you have any idea where your ancestors come from in Germany?
- BM:** No, I wouldn't know.
- CJ:** Did your father or your mother talk about any ancestral German villages in Russia, and did your dad ever talk about his little village?
- BM:** He talked about it but I don't remember any details. He often talked about it. When the family got together, we always had a lot of gatherings with relatives, especially Namesday. They always celebrated Namesday with a party when all the relatives got together. They even had a dance all the time. Seems to me it must have been a custom to celebrate the Namesday.
- CJ:** Did your father have any favorite folk songs that he liked to sing?
- BM:** That I don't know.
- CJ:** Did he ever talk about life in the village, stories, social events, harvest etc.?
- BM:** I know he talked about it. I remember hearing it, but don't remember any details. He was very much involved with the life in Russia and he talked a lot about it a lot. He tried to keep customs. My father's faith was very deep. As I remember we kids had to line up at night and say the "Our Father" in German.
- CJ:** Can you still say it?
- BM:** I couldn't say it anymore. When they couldn't get to Mass on Sundays we would kneel down and say the Rosary facing the crucifix. When there were thunder storms we would sit in the parlor. He would read scripture from the Bible. My mother would light a candle; she would take some palm leaf and burn it to ashes and then sprinkle holy water. Every night they came in our bedroom and would sprinkle us with holy water the palm. Another custom was on New Year's Eve, we were told, that as soon as we wake up any time during the night we should come to their bedroom and wish them a Happy New Year. The first ones got the most money, so all we went in there and wished them a Happy New Year.

- CJ:** And then you would be rewarded. What about Christmas traditions and do you remember the Christkindel?
- BM:** I remember that one real well.
- CJ:** Who was the Christkindel?
- BM:** I think my oldest sister was. My mom had a curtain over her all covered up on top and had ribbons hanging down.
- CJ:** It must have been majestic!
- BM:** Then you know mom said the Christkindel was bringing us some. Other times I remember my dad saying he had to go to the barn and check on the cattle. When he came back we got little baskets of goodies. While you were gone the Christkindel brought us these things. He had gone out and pretended he went to the barn.
- CJ:** Did they ever talk about the Belzenickel?
- BM:** Yes, I think so.
- CJ:** If you were naughty, the Belzenickel would come and wrap your fingers or put coal in your shoes.
- BM:** No, we didn't have that penalty very often.
- CJ:** You were all good children.
- BM:** No, we didn't have Saint Nicholas or anything like that. That I don't think we did in our family.
- CJ:** You mentioned that your parents would receive letters from the old country. What would happen when the letters came?
- BM:** They read them and we all had to listen. I was six years old, and then later on when I got older they felt so bad because they were so poor. One time they took gunnysacks and sent clothes over. Every time they wrote, they were so poor; he would always feel so bad for them.
- CJ:** There were political happenings in that region.
- BM:** I think that one of the sisters joined the Bolsheviks or something like that and we felt kind of bad.
- CJ:** He had to feel pretty powerless about that whole situation. One foot left in the old country, while he was trying to raise a family in a new country and be a success. What language did you speak at home?
- BM:** We spoke mostly German, Plattdeutsch or whatever it was.
- CJ:** We all gained a dialect and that region in Russia the Kutschurgan Enclave were from Baden. They all had their distinct dialect, and I won't put a name on it. Did your father and mother speak the same dialect?
- BM:** I think they used the same dialect.
- CJ:** You understood it and could you speak it as a child?

- BM:** We always spoke it even after we went to the convent. When my parents came to visit we always had to speak German. My mother didn't know any English, but my father could understand English somewhat and could speak a few words.
- CJ:** Your mother came here at the age of six, but she never learned English.
- BM:** She went to school just including the third grade. Then her mother died, and she had to stay home and take care of the housekeeping.
- CJ:** What was your mother's maiden name?
- BM:** Regina Heintz.
- CJ:** Growing up in a farm family each child had some chores. Do you remember what your chores were?
- BM:** We three girls were the oldest in the family, and we had to do the milking of the cows while my mother helped my dad in the fields. We girls did the milking and cleaning of the house. I remember dishes - one had to wash and one wiped, and I was suppose to sweep the floor.
- CJ:** And who took care of the smaller children?
- BM:** We took care of them, but I don't remember too much about that.
- CJ:** What was there a discipline philosophy that your parents had if one of the children wouldn't behave? What did they do for discipline?
- BM:** I remember one time when my brother had a birthday. He was demanding more than what he received, and my dad spanked him, but they were very strict and very protective. They wouldn't allow us much freedom. Of course, we all left after the eighth grade for high school; so we didn't get into any more trouble.
- CJ:** Did you go to a rural school?
- BM:** It was about one-fourth mile from our place. We went over the railroad track and across the field.
- CJ:** And you would walk?
- BM:** We would walk.
- CJ:** All eight grades, and were you able to go to school for the full term?
- BM:** Yes, I did through the eighth grade.
- CJ:** You didn't have to stay home do housework, farm work etc.
- BM:** No, we didn't.
- CJ:** Were all the other students in your school German-Russian?
- BM:** I don't think so. We were about the only Catholic students in that school. There was another German family, as well, but they were of a different culture than our's was.
- CJ:** How were they different?

- BM:** Their German accent was a little bit different, otherwise their life-style was pretty much the same.
- CJ:** Do you have any special memories of your childhood school---teachers etc.
- BM:** I remember the school real well. How we all walked over there and how we played games and had fun.
- CJ:** Any favorite teachers?
- BM:** I don't remember their names anymore. I know there was one favorite but I don't remember her name.
- CJ:** Was it was a secular school?
- BM:** It was all secular.
- CJ:** Was religion and church education important in your upbringing?
- BM:** I didn't know too much because we had very little. All the religion we received was when we went to church on Sunday. We did get a two weeks vacation from school before we went to First Communion. We had instructions from the priest just once a week when we could get there. Outside of that we didn't have much religion: but my father had a deep faith and insisted on taking us to church and confession.
- CJ:** Do you feel it was your father more than your mother who wanted you to have religious training?
- BM:** I think mostly he was, as my mother was more on the quiet side. My father had such great respect for priests and sisters. He thought they were out of this world.
- CJ:** Did he ever talk about his religious training as a child?
- BM:** No, he might have but I don't remember anything. As kids we were not interested in anything like that, but I know he would have loved to talk about it.
- CJ:** So when you worshiped near Bowdle was the service in German?
- BM:** Yes, German.
- CJ:** Probably was still German when you left there.
- BM:** It was still German when I left there.
- CJ:** In your religious community, when you were still living at home, did everybody speak German?
- BM:** Yes, I think they did, as everything was German.
- CJ:** Was worship conducted in Latin?
- BM:** It was Latin and then the German was in German. Everything else was in German.
- CJ:** Were there any special festivities connected with the church that you remember as a child like any special holy days?
- BM:** I remember my First Communion. My sister made her Solemn Communion when I made my First Communion, which must have been in 1922.
- CJ:** Were your parents involved in founding that congregation at all?

- BM:** I think they were.
- CJ:** What was the name of the church?
- BM:** Saint Augustus Church in Bowdle, South Dakota.
- CJ:** How did your family respond or cope with death? Was it discussed when somebody was dying?
- BM:** Not too much.
- CJ:** For instance do you remember when a relative died?
- BM:** Yes, I do. One night it was dark when my uncle came to us and said that his son had died, who was my fathers' nephew.
- CJ:** It was unexpected.
- BM:** Yes, unexpected.
- CJ:** So what kind of reaction did your family have, and do you remember your reaction?
- BM:** I was quite young and I know they felt bad about him.
- CJ:** How old was your cousin?
- BM:** He must have been a teenager.
- CJ:** So this was unexpected. What kind of reaction did your family have and what was your reaction?
- BM:** I was quite young then, and I know they felt bad about his death. They lived in Hillsvie where my uncle and aunt lived in a sod house. I remember visiting them, where the sod house was quite nice inside.
- CJ:** Was it?
- BM:** The walls were finished off and the sod house had a wooden floor, I believe.
- CJ:** When your cousin died how did your family express their grief? Was there a great coming together of family?
- BM:** I don't remember that at all.
- CJ:** Do you remember anything about the funeral?
- BM:** No, I don't remember if I went to it or not.
- CJ:** Did your church cemetery have any iron crosses?
- BM:** It's been such a long time. It seems to me I was out there when somebody died. My mother had some relatives buried in Bowdle Cemetery, but I haven't been there since I left after the eighth grade.
- CJ:** Did you as a child attend any wedding dances?
- BM:** I was at a wedding as a child I when I went along with my parents. I must have been eight years old, as I remember that wedding really well. The ladies were getting ready with the food when I remember the dancing started. They had ribbons for decoration. I remember dancers at my aunts wedding. After

midnight, she changed to a blue dress. Sometime a long time later, I asked her when she was real old, is that really true I remember something about you changing to a blue dress after midnight. And she said that's true.

CJ: Your memory is good, and did she have a wedding dance?

BM: She had a wedding dance right at the home. First they had their dinner, cleared the living room and had the wedding dance right in there.

CJ: Were the fiddlers people from the community?

BM: I think so.

CJ: Do you remember anybody singing German songs at the wedding?

BM: That I don't remember as I was only about seven or eight years old.

CJ: Did anyone in your family play a musical instrument?

BM: No, we were so poor we couldn't afford to get anything extra.

CJ: Did you have any games that you played as children on the farm?

BM: I know we did. We played Anti-High-Over, cricket and baseball.

CJ: Isn't it amazing how resourceful children can be.

BM: We had a shovel as a sled to slide down the snow banks. When we had much snow, then we would slide down on the snow banks.

CJ: Any favorite childhood stories, books, fairy tales?

BM: I don't think so.

CJ: How about folk medicine and did your family participate in any or Brauche healing?

BM: No, I know my mother believed in Chamomile tea, which she always gave us whenever we were sick.

BM: That grew right on the farm. There were those leaves with blossoms, which she dried and used them on us.

CJ: Did it work? Do you remember any other folk medicine and are you familiar with Varmouth (absinthe/wormwood) It was a plant they brought with them from Russia that you would put in the chicken house to rid it from lice.

BM: That I don't remember.

CJ: Any other home remedies that cure?

BM: We know that Watkins [flavorings and medicinal of Winona, Minnesota] (traveling peddlers) came around, and they sold salve. They also sold liniment, which we used.

CJ: Was everybody in your family delivered by a midwife?

- BM:** Yes, they were because I remember when my sister was born. I was in rural school; when I came home, I did not know that we were going to have a baby. I was nine years old.
- CJ:** Big surprise!
- BM:** The midwife was in the kitchen while my dad was giving the midwife a shot of brandy before she left. Then he said, "You have a little sister." I was so surprised!
- CJ:** You hadn't even asked.
- BM:** But my two older sisters knew, but I didn't.
- CJ:** Isn't that interesting. You had three brothers also?
- BM:** My brothers, of preschool age were taken to the neighbors, I think.
- CJ:** Do you remember your father using any verbal expressions from the old country – any phrases that he used?
- BM:** I don't remember; but every time he started out in the field, he gave the horses, "In Gottes Name" meaning go ahead and go. Every time he started his work, he said, "In Gottes Name." ["A dedication" of daily tasks to a holy God]
- CJ:** Very good. Even that demonstrates his personal faith that he would start his chores and farming and calling upon God or saying that this was in God's name. Did your mother have any expressions in German that she used?
- BM:** I don't remember any, as she was quiet and never said too much. She had a very gentle and kind way about her. I used to comb her long hair; [which was traditionally uncut for her entire life; and daily twisted large strands of hair together up into a "bun"]; and she liked that care. When I left, she said, "Who is going to comb my hair now?"
- CJ:** Did you subscribe to any German newspapers?
- BM:** My dad did, but I couldn't read or write in German. None of us kids did.
- CJ:** Do you remember the name of the newspapers?
- BM:** No, I don't know.
- CJ:** There could be the Dakota Freie Presse or Der Staats Anzeiger.
- BM:** That sounds more like it.
- CJ:** What kind of information would he get from the newspaper, like news from the old country?
- BM:** I think that or political, maybe some news. He was interested in everything and was quite intelligent.
- CJ:** Is there a family member you remember most in your childhood?
- BM:** I remember grandpa not too well, but he was the oldest one. I remember my mother and dad.
- CJ:** Were there any women that homesteaded in your community that lived alone and filed their own homestead that you remember?

- BM:** Not that I know of.
- CJ:** Did women perform tasks outside the home?
- BM:** I think they did as they couldn't afford hired help. There were women that helped outside. I don't think very many of them did. We were so poor that my dad couldn't afford to pay anybody.
- CJ:** Now with your brothers being younger with three older sisters: Does that mean your mother went out and worked on the farm?
- BM:** She helped my dad, and helped with the harvesting and things like that.
- CJ:** What about you? Did you get to participate in gardening and milking?
- BM:** The milking and when we were older. We used to shock the wheat and corn.
- CJ:** Do you remember any special foods your mother prepared?
- BM:** She baked a lot of bread. She made noodles, dumplings and kuchen, but she made it with bread dough. When she made bread, she would never let us touch it not even to knead it down. Once in a great while when she was in the field, she would ask my sister to knead the bread dough down. Mother always took care of the bread. Whenever she baked that was all we had. Sometimes on bake day when the bread wasn't ready by noon, she would make "fry cakes" called schlitzkuechle. We would eat them with potato soup. She made many egg noodles which we had with soup. Then we had Kase KnÀ? Àpfle that she made quite often as we had cows for milk and cheese. She made a cottage cheese cooked it, and we had butter and milk. We girls had to "separate" the fresh milk which was one of our chores. [to separate butterfat/cream from the "whey"/skim milk.]
- CJ:** Who washed the separator?
- BM:** We had to take turns; that was always a chore. We kept the fresh cream in the cellar in cream cans. Once a week it was taken to town and sold.
- CJ:** Did your mother sew your clothing?
- BM:** Yes, she sewed everything and even sewed the suits for my little brothers. You should see the pictures of them. She would go to the mercantile store, we had a couple of them, which were run by two Jews. So we enjoyed the Jewish food--especially sweet Halva. The Jews sold that, special food, so we always had some. They had a general store, and mother, would look at the dresses, came home cut a pattern to make all of our dresses. Her mother died when she was nine years old, and I don't know where she picked up dress making skills.
- CJ:** What about quilting or embroidery?
- BM:** I don't think she did that. She made quilts by just sewing them together, but nothing fancy.
- CJ:** Now we are going to talk about your decision to enter religious life. You went through eighth grade at a rural school and then what happened after that?

- BM:** My sister, Marina, had gone to Good Counsel to start high school. My sister and I were parting, when all at once I had no idea what I was going to do. I said, "Why don't I go to Good Counsel?" So I said to her, "I think I'd go to Good Counsel," she said, "Would you, well that's nice."
- CJ:** Your sister was home for the summer. You were separating cream and milk, doing the farmyard chores and suddenly you thought about your future, by deciding that you would like to go there. Had your sister spoken positively about her experience?
- BM:** Yes, I think she liked it and she was going to high school with the intention to be a sister/nun at Good Counsel.
- CJ:** Now did you think that you wanted to be a Sister.
- BM:** I guess I thought I would want to be a Sister, ya know.
- CJ:** She was one influence. Were there any other influences in your life that made you think you would like to follow that direction?
- BM:** Not just then exactly. As I started high school and as I was more acquainted at Good Counsel, I began to value life more. I wanted to do something to be more sure of eternal life.
- CJ:** So you felt the holy calling and you were the second daughter.
- BM:** My oldest sister was home and had come to Good Counsel in 1926 to grade school. Because her eyes were so poor and there was no doctor that could help her, they suggested she go home, as she would not be able to be a sister/nun. She was home and helping on the farm while the two of us went to Good Counsel. She was in her early 20s and decided she wanted to be a sister/nun too. Then my dad said, "If you want to be a sister, just go ahead." We can manage farming alone, and she entered a year later.
- CJ:** What was done about the eyesight problem?
- BM:** My dad had heard about some doctors in Zeeland, North Dakota, I think. The doctor did some surgery on her eyes in 1927. She prayed to Mother Theresa, and the eyes got better. Then my sister went to Bismarck, North Dakota (and stayed with my dad's aunt that came from Russia) to get a certificate saying her eyes were cured.
- CJ:** So you never knew exactly what the illness was?
- BM:** No, I don't know.
- CJ:** But she was cured. By this time you and your sister Mariana were in high school?
- BM:** Then as a junior, Sister Christina entered the candidature. I was a junior. Somehow I was discouraged with school and thought I wasn't doing well enough, as my grades weren't good. I wanted to quit high school. Then they talked me into the candidature as a home service sister is what I did. So I went to candidature as a junior and did housework. That is what I did all my life, and also did the cooking at the Good Counsel for the sisters.
- CJ:** How wonderful, that's an important role. Nurturing, feeding and making sure they got what they needed.

- BM:** I enjoyed it very much and just loved to cook. I had big jobs. For three years I was in Rome and did general-aide cooking there. It was very exciting and I liked Italian cooking very much.
- CJ:** What did you think when you were notified that you were going to Rome?
- BM:** Well I asked. We have a certain program where we could ask to work in another country. I volunteered, before I interviewed and really wanted to go. This was in 1972. I was one of the first ones that went over, at the beginning of the program. I didn't know what I was going to do. I thought I was going to help out in the dining room. When I arrived there, they put me as head-chef of the kitchen, when I had to do all the shopping and meal planning. Normally we were about twenty-six nuns of thirty nuns in our community: Two-thirds were American sisters and one-third were European sisters. We used three languages. One per week: Italian, German and English was used for prayer service. Normally we talked English. Most Europeans could understand English.
- CJ:** You went to the market place and did grocery shopping.
- BM:** After I was more acquainted, I went alone in Rome on the bus. When I had a free day, I went alone and toured some architectural ruins. It was exciting!
- CJ:** How exciting a young girl born in a NO MORE HEARD ON TAPE!

SIDE TWO OF TAPE

- CJ:** The time in the Vatican, was that the highlight of your career?
- BM:** Yes, I think so...working there in Rome. Then while I was over there we could have vacation every August and we could travel and go some place. One year I went to El jeers. We had some sisters over there and I went there for two weeks. It was interesting to be with the Arabs. Then we went down to the town and did some shopping.
- CJ:** What are your memories of leaving home to enter the convent or attend high school? That first leaving home, what was that like?
- BM:** Well I know it must have been an awful shock, because I was not really prepared for everything like that. My mother and father were quiet. Most of my instruction when we came to Good Council was the way of life for young girls.
- CJ:** Did you take a train?
- BM:** Yes, we took the train from Aberdeen. My father and mother took us to the train in Aberdeen and I remember my mother kissed us goodbye. We cried.
- CJ:** What did you take with you?
- BM:** Well I think we took our clothes, we had to have uniforms and a trunk we shipped with it.
- CJ:** How did you land at Good Council? Were there Sisters of Notre Dame in your community?
- BM:** No, the first girl that wanted to be a sister went to the priest in Bowdle. There were Sisters Ipswitch and Aberdeen, but we didn't get out much and just knew that they were there. Once in a while they came to

church to plead for money or whatever. Well this Sister was a relative of mine, a cousin, from Hosmer. She came and wanted to be a Sister. Father Keffler was the pastor. He said there are the Benedictants at Ipswitch and Presentation Aberdeen. But I have two Sisters that are Notre Dame Sisters in the Milwaukee Province. Now this was like in 1925. Now Mankato was opened in 1912, so his Sisters were from Debuque, Iowa. He was in the Souix Falls Diocey. So he said they are in the Milwaukee Province, but now they have a mother house in Mankato. She said she'd go there and started going to Mankato. When the rest of us wanted to be Sisters we went to Mankato.

CJ: What kind of reception did you have when you got here?

BM: The train came and left Aberdeen and we traveled all night and arrived early in the morning. One of the Sisters met us at the depot and took us.

CJ: Were you scared?

BM: Yes, I think so.

CJ: Was it like being in foreign country when you got here, it would have been so different from what you were used to?

BM: Oh yes, it was different. I guess all the Minnesota girls were more worldly and we mixed in and got to be like them in time.

CJ: What was the typical daily schedule here when you were a young girl?

BM: I think we went up there together and then we went to mass and breakfast. Then we must have gone to school classes at 8:00-8:30 and then dinner; after dinner school again till 3:00. I think we had a little recreation or something and then we had study period till supper time. After supper we usually just took walks or played games.

CJ: There was a lot of girls. About how many in your high school class?

BM: I think there were about....I was in the girls with the intention of being Sisters. Now the Borders in the big building they were different. We were more secluded and restricted in many ways. We didn't get out much or anything like that. We were about 30 or so, probably 8 or 10 in a class.

CJ: Ok. Were there things you were encouraged to do, to strive for?

BM: I don't remember that much.

CJ: How did you continue communication with your family once you were here?

BM: We had every Sunday we could write home. We had a certain time. We took a walk after dinner and had a period were everyone wrote letters home.

CJ: And they could write to you?

BM: They could write to us.

CJ: Did you keep in touch with anyone else from back home?

BM: Not really. I don't think I did.

- CJ:** Did you ever go home for vacations or events?
- BM:** In high school we did. We went home for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Because of this distance we didn't go home until June when school was out.
- CJ:** That was a long time to be gone. Were you homesick?
- BM:** Oh yes. I was homesick.
- CJ:** Did you comfort each other, you and your sister?
- BM:** Well yes, I think we did.
- CJ:** Did you ever question your decision to become a Sister?
- BM:** A little bit. Sometimes when there were disappointments. The first years in the convent were very strict and hard. The goal was the harder it is the more merit you get. There were many penalties that were hard for human nature. It was hard but we accepted it because we knew. I know that the dress was hard, but we got used to it. I remember first day when we got it on reception day by evening my shoulders just ached from the weight of the cloth because it was so heavy. The thing around the face was hard to get used to. I remember one time I was sick in bed for two days and then when I got up and put it on I felt so uncomfortable. After you wore it awhile you didn't mind it, but if you had it off awhile you noticed.
- CJ:** What are the steps and the length of a Postulant?
- BM:** Usually there was like Postulants were two years; one year in the mother house and one year out on mission. Then there was an Avishat for one year and took your vows for three years and then other vows for three years and then your final vows.
- CJ:** That's a lot of vow taking. At any of those times did you ever think maybe I made the wrong choice.
- BM:** No, I never did.
- CJ:** What was the ceremony like when you took your final vows?
- BM:** It was similar to the first vows but was more private. None of our families were there just a private ceremony with our sisters.
- CJ:** But you had a sister here and by then did you have your other sister there?
- BM:** Yes, we were all together. We could have our families in the afternoon, but could not be there for the ceremony.
- CJ:** You have had your entire career here, except for the time in Rome?
- BM:** In Minnesota, I was in St. Paul about 30 years.
- CJ:** What did you do in St. Paul?
- BM:** I was different places and at different missions at schools. I was at Sacred Heart, St. Agnus, St. Francis, St. Matthew, and a little bit at St. Andrews. We all had big schools there.

- CJ:** And your job there was the same as it was here?
- BM:** Cooking.
- CJ:** How would you stay in touch with your family back in South Dakota, through letters and mail?
- BM:** The first years we were limited to visits. We could have visits three times a year, but because of the distance my family came once a year. We could write to them once a week and get letters.
- CJ:** By the time that Vatican II into effect, you had already been a Sister thirty years?
- BM:** Oh yes.
- CJ:** How did Vatican II affect your religious life?
- BM:** I was happy about it. It was a relief because a lot of the customs we had put a damper on life. It was just a lot of things to do.
- CJ:** What was the best thing about Vatican II?
- BM:** We were so restricted. We could not eat with our families or stay in their homes. After that we could visit and eat with our families. Our visits to home were limited occasions anymore. We could go to anyone in the family.
- CJ:** You still did have your parents back there and sister and her family.
- BM:** No, I think my parents were dead by the time the changes came. When we first entered we could have only two home visits; one the death of the father and one the death of the mother. That went on 10-20 years; then it was lifted to every 5 years and then lifted to anytime. It gradually gave more freedom.
- CJ:** Was it difficult to adjust to giving up the garb.
- BM:** A little bit at first. It was so inconvenient. It was a relief to give it up. We had took a modified form for our headpieces in 1962. That was a little more convenient than the original starch one.
- CJ:** How did you perform duties in the kitchen with that garb?
- BM:** I don't know...it was so hot in the summer time. All I could think about was the night when I could take my clothes off. The hardest part was we took hours and hours of time starching the linen. It had to be so stiffed and it was my job. We starched them about three or four times and iron them to get them straight. It was so much work.
- CJ:** It was so amazing that you were able to do your job.
- BM:** Besides all that laundry.
- CJ:** That laundry was a fulltime job.
- BM:** There were a lot of them that had two sisters; one did the laundry and one did the cooking. We didn't have the modern conveniences of washers and dryers.
- CJ:** So Vatican II was a good thing for you in terms of rest and more freedom. What about giving up the Latin?

- BM:** It was a little bit hard at first, but I liked it OK.
- CJ:** Do you think that the Vatican II made a big difference for women in Catholicism?
- BM:** I think so. I think it made them a little more aggressive.
- CJ:** Then ten years after Vatican II you were able to live for three years in Rome. Did you ever come back to the states after that?
- BM:** No I was there two and a half years and then I came back and then I went back for another six months to help. So I was home for about two or three years and then went back for the half year.
- CJ:** I'm looking at a newspaper article from The Bishops Bulletin, December 1994 and the headline reads "Jubilees beginning to be old hats for Mardian clan". It shows a photograph of you and your two sisters and your two brothers who entered the priest hood, your parents and baby sister who stayed home and raised a family. You and your sisters took your vows at the same time?
- BM:** Yes we did. At that time in the early 30's during the depression they were so poor that the provincial decided that they allowed it to have us take our vows together. That way our parents would not have to make a trip every other year for the celebration, because it was so far and the times were so hard.
- CJ:** What a thrill for your mother and dad.
- BM:** It was a thrill.
- CJ:** While this was happening your brothers were entering priesthood.
- BM:** They were still in grade school but the first year they went to St. John's University. Father Pius did he started and then two years later Father Joe decided to go to St Johns. So they started high school and went to philosophy at St. Johns and finished up at the St. Paul Seminary.
- CJ:** When first one of you and then a second, then a third, daughter leaves to enter the religious community and then your father has two sons who ideally could stay home and help with the farm and they decided to enter priesthood. What did your father do about help on the farm?
- BM:** My sister helped and I think they got some hired help. At that time they had such a season of drought and everything was so poor they didn't do much. I remember when they came one time to visit us in 1934, they said "It was so dry and it was just a pity too see to the cattle or anything." I think this happened in the late 1920's and early 1930's the opportunities were not as much then as they are now. So when you finished grade school when you wanted to do something and our parents didn't want us to go to public school, so when we decided to go to Catholic High School they didn't oppose it. There wasn't anything else to do in those days, you know, except getting married.
- CJ:** We'll include this article that you have graciously given to the state university. I'll put this with our information. I believe you have some photographs to go with this, and I want to thank you for giving us your time and for sharing your story with us. Once this is transcribed you will receive a copy of it for you to review and make any corrections you might make. We'll also be certain that you get your photographs back.
- BM:** Thank you.

