

BEAVERTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

SISTER BEATRICE RIGERT

at St. Mary's of the Valley in Beaverton, Oregon

INTERVIEWER: SHIRLEY TANZER

Date of Interview: November 4, 1981

SUMMARY OF TOPICS DISCUSSED

INTERVIEW WITH: SISTER BEATRICE RIGERT

BEAVERTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

1. Sister Beatrice's father settles on Cooper Mountain.
2. Farm purchased from Burkhardts
3. Growing nuts and prunes, etc.
4. Building new home
5. Later owners of their old home
6. Her brothers and their families
7. Sister Beatrice from family of eight
8. Cooper Mountain Cemetery
9. Her brothers and their families
10. Her sisters; Sister Joan
& Mrs. Frank Moore of Beaverton
11. School in horse and buggy
12. The last days of Prince the Pony
13. Catholic Churches in Beaverton, Cedar Mill & Cooper Mountain
14. Early schools of teaching Sisters of St, Mary
15. How Sister Beatrice decided to become a nun
16. Bears and deer on Cooper Mountain
17. Cooper Mountain cemetery
18. Shivaree
19. Life in the convent
20. St. Mary's Home for Boys
21. Archbishop Howard

(Where unknown, phonetic spellings are used)

INTERVIEW WITH SISTER BEATRICE RIGERT

for

BEAVERTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Place: St. Mary's of the Valley, Beaverton, Oregon

Interviewer: Shirley Tanzer

SHIRLEY TANZER: Sister Beatrice, where did your family come from?

SISTER BEATRICE RIGERT: Bavaria, Germany. My grandmother was the first one out of 12 children. My father was born in Switzerland, so he is a Switzer. He settled in Wisconsin, got a job. He always thought America had gold and dollars all over everywhere. He found out he had to work hard.

Somehow or other, he came out to Portland and a man asked Dad to be a partner in a dairy farm in West Portland. And a priest decided my mother should be married to somebody (laughter). This priest asked my daddy to meet my mother because he didn't have a chance to practice his religion as a Catholic. That was something my mother could persuade him to do -- leave that job and practice his religion. He had delivered milk all the time, pretty near every day.

I don't know exactly how they met, but it was a very short courtship -- very short! And very suddenly they got married -- November 24, 1903. And they decided they were going to buy a farm with her parents. They thought they could make a living on a farm with both parents. My grandfather on my mother's side was a carpenter and he built a lot of houses. But my father always worked around cows. He liked cows. Therefore, they moved on this property way up here on Cooper Mountain, five miles from here. From Portland they moved out when they bought the farm, so they had to sell that milk plant from that man, and they moved to Cooper Mountain which is -- Do you know where 185th Avenue is? -- way up to the hill, about two miles.

Then on one place there is a road that went right past our farm; they called it Rigert Road. My father lived there and then he died in 1960 (my mother died in 1967). They both died at Marian Home in Sublimity because they needed more care than what my brothers and sisters could give them; they were all married and had families.

TANZER: I want to ask you what your mother's maiden name was.

SISTER: Yes. Presentia Tansy. And my grandmother's name was the same. And I have an aunt that is named Sister Presentia. That was a very important thing to name children after their parents in the Bavarian country, Germany.

They wanted to come to America because it was a rich place. Lot of advantages. I don't know what advantages. They never did tell. But they thought they could make more money.

TANZER: Did they mention anything about persecution?

SISTER: No. They were free to practice their religion. There wasn't any persecution, political, religious or any way. No matter what angle you wanted to look at it, they were free people. They didn't have anybody telling them what to do. My daddy liked to climb mountains and one time he was climbing mountains and I guess he was up too long; and he froze his toes. He had to be in the hospital on Christmas Day. And you know what he remembers of that -- on Christmas Day, they gave him a little Christmas tree in bed.

TANZER: Where was this?

SISTER: In Switzerland. It made a big impression on him. Now I don't know how old he was when that happened, but he froze his toes (laughter).

TANZER: Your paternal grandparents, the Rigert grandparents, did they remain in this country?

SISTER: The only one that came over was my father. When his father and mother came to see what kind of place it was, they went back and stayed there. They never did come out. My niece, Rita Rigert, went to Switzerland two years ago and visited my father's family (there's still a lot of Rigerets over there). They had a stove when my father's father and mother (that's my grandfather and grandmother) got married. I don't know who gave them the stove, but they had a wedding present of a beautiful stove. In back of the stove was a plaque that said this was a donation for a wedding present. And it's still being used by some members of the family. I remember Daddy telling about that.

He also remembered very much (he must have had a good teacher) about his school days. Mr. Henzel, I think, was his name, and he even had a picture of him -- it's in the family. My sister has that picture. It's got a little "X" -- his name was Alois. My dad's name was Alois. He had a funny little skullcap and those little collars, you know, and big shoes. There was a whole big group of children there. It must have been a primary grade, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, because they're all small children.

When they came to that farm, no one had been living on it for 30 years. This land was bought by my father from a man by the name of Mr. Anton Burkhardt who bought it from a homestead in 1862. And my father bought it in 1903. So there was a period of about 5-6 years when nobody lived on it.

During that time when the Burkhardts bought that farm, they had planted a hop yard, a hop house, but no dryer. You have to have a dryer; that's why when my folks came there, they didn't know where to go to get dryers so they pulled out the hops. There were a lot of apple trees, pear trees, prune trees, berries -- and the trees had so much moss on them. For 30 years no one had lived on it. Evidently it looked too bad.

But Mr. Burkhardt must have had a lot of money to be able to start a big farm like that. They had to use rakes and hoes and scrape down the moss from the trees. And when a tree isn't pruned, it gets a lot of shoots out. They had to take 20-foot ladders and cut off a lot of the trees. All during those years that my father had that orchard, those trees were still too tall. Then my brother bought the farm from my dad, when he wasn't able to take care of it any more. Of course my brother also planted peach trees. There were no peach trees. They always got curly leaf, so Daddy didn't bother because they were too

particular. But my daddy did ask his folks in Switzerland to send him some of those great big nuts. They had a nut farm in Switzerland. Oh, they were huge! About this big. Oh, I never saw such big nuts. I never saw any like that. We used to give our teacher one of those big nuts as a Christmas present that little children used to give. I can remember that.

So later on, my dad ordered trees from the Stark Nursery Company, and toward the end he had six and seven tons. We had to send them to the dryer at Canby because we couldn't manage. We had built prune dryers because there were prunes there. Sometimes prunes get ripe too fast and then they spoil, so we dried them. The first dryer that they built burnt. My mother was a carpenter, too, so she went and started building a second one. And we had many hours of shaking the trees and picking the walnuts. After the prunes were dry, we had to dry some of the walnuts. We didn't have very many in the beginning, you know. So they made a good deal of this farm.

My grandparents found out that it was not feasible to stay there because there wasn't enough income to supply for two families. You see, my grandparents still had two children at home who later -- in 1910 -- became nuns here. One is still living. She's 87 years old. Both of them ~~were~~ teachers. She has had a senility -- she can't remember anything. She can talk to you, but two minutes later she doesn't know what she said. She's nice to deal with. Her name is Sister Presentia, too. She's over at Maryville and needs attention all the time. One day about three, four years ago, she was in the dining room taking a cup of coffee and all at once she fell, and they picked her up and they brought her to the hospital. She had shattered a hip, so she can't walk any more. But she doesn't realize what really happened to her. But when people get old, their bones just break automatically, not because they fell. She fell because the bone got shattered.

So my grandparents had to move out. And on this farm, when they moved out to the farm, there was a barn that was leaning over toward the windward side (laughter) and the house (Sister Presentia even remembered that. She was ten years old when she moved out to this farm) -- the rats were all over every place in the house (laughter). And I don't know what else was in there, all kinds of weeds and things like that, and so they moved back to Portland. They didn't stay there very long. So that was the end of that.

But my father and mother, they started to clear land, and my grandfather built the house for them later on. He had to have help for the chimneys. He wasn't a chimneymaker or anything like that. But I remember when we moved in from the old house to the new house, we just put a plank from the front porch of one house to the bank porch of the other house and walked across it then.

TANZER: Was the new house much larger?

SISTER: Oh, yes, it was a beautiful house. It's still standing -- the new house. This must have been about 1910, maybe 1908. I don't know just which year. I didn't put that down in my diary. I keep a diary most of the time.

TANZER: Who lives in the house now?

SISTER: I don't know exactly. It's a sad story. When my father couldn't take care of the farm any more (He had 14 children. The first one died.), and

since nobody wanted it in the family, they sold it to a developer. And the developer built just 20, 30 houses. Our old house is towards another end of the area. It was hilly; there were a lot of hills there. Most of the fruit trees are gone. There are a few in between houses that they left. One time there was a group of young people who owned the house, and they had a rock festival. And during this rock festival -- with no permission from anybody, the owner or anybody -- they had hundreds of people there, no sanitation, no water, no nothing. My niece had built a house right across from my folks' land and they couldn't even get into the house because there were so many cars around the front yard and the lawn. They got reported, because you have to have special permission; that group of people had to move out.

Later, they had an old bachelor living in there, and he didn't know how to take care of the place. I don't know how many different people lived in there. Nobody took much of an interest in the trees or anything, and my brother could see that there wasn't any way they could take care of the farm. So, therefore, the house is there and every once in a while they get renters, undesirable ones, usually, like you do when it's a run-down house. But it was a beautiful house.

TANZER: Does your brother still own the home?

SISTER: No. He had to sell it to those developers. It was a real estate man, and then the developers came and bought it from them.

And my brother now lives with his charming wife. He married a girl by the name of Anna Speary. My other brother married a Baker girl. Anyway, they have 50 grandchildren. One family, when she got married, she said, "I want 12 children." That's the second oldest one. And she lives right across from the old home farm. They just built a brand new house. She married a man by the name of John Land, who is an insurance man and also worked in Tektronix. I think he's still working at Tektronix, selling insurance, things like that. So he got 12 children. The youngest one is 5 years old. (I just asked her the other day.) Another one of the Rigert children wanted a lot of children; she's got 9 now, she adopted one before she was even married, she adopted. She worked in the Jewish child care center in Portland. They had asked her to adopt a newborn handicapped child; they felt that being in a home with children would be good, and they knew that she wanted children. He is first year high school now, but he had to go to a special school. He really needs quite a bit of attention, and still is not normal with the rest of the children. He quarrels and things like that because he just doesn't understand a lot of things. But they have to put him in special classes in high school in Hillsboro and he's doing fine, they say.

TANZER: So your own family, there were 12 children?

SISTER: No. In my own family, there were only eight. And two of them died as babies. One was a cripple, and then we got another one in his place, my youngest brother, who is 16 years younger than I. I was 12 years old when he was born(?), so I took care of him like Mother did, except I couldn't nurse him (laughter). So I took him out in the field where Mama was working and then came home after he finished his breakfast.

TANZER: I want to ask you about your brothers and sisters.

SISTER: My oldest brother got married and they didn't have any children

for 11 years. My second oldest brother got married first, and he's the one that has the 14 children. The first one died and is buried up at Cooper Mountain Cemetery. We have a cemetery up there; my brother took care of it and cleaned it up. There are 25 graves up there and they still keep it up. We had a church up there, too. My brother had 13 that lived and they all married happily together. But my own brother, Al, had only 4 children.

One time, the one that had 14 children, his wife got TB and she had to go to the sanitarium in Salem. In those days it was Salem. Nowadays you can go into Portland. She had a baby and she couldn't take the baby along so my oldest brother that didn't have any children took the little baby and kept it for a whole year. He didn't like to leave it. After that, her maternal instincts developed and she got four little boys, one after the other. They are all married except one. And they've got nice children, too. My brother Joe's children all came out very well, too. Some of them only have four and some have five. But the two that have the 12 and the 9, two of them live out by Hillsboro; they go to St. Matthew's School there. And they all have good jobs. Most of them are mechanics or electricians, or something like that. Even one of the girls is an electrician. And she married a man who was an electrician.

TANZER: Do you have sisters?

SISTER: Yes, I have just two sisters. One sister is here as a nun, Sister Joan, and she takes care of the park. We were both teachers, but when we retired we did other jobs, since we stopped teaching. I stopped in 1972, and she stopped earlier. It's difficult for her to teach. She and I are so different; it's just marvelous how different we are.

My other sister got married to a man by the name of Frank Moore, and he lives down in Beaverton. He was a barber and he barbers off and on. He's one of the old Irish (laughter).

One of my teachers (She's still living) was one of the first to teach in the new school in St. Cecelia's. She says she always remembers she had four little Rigerts going to school, first, second, third and fourth grade.

The first two years we went down to St. Mary's of the Valley 'cause we couldn't walk as far as Beaverton. But when I went into the third grade, they bought a horse and a little buggy, and so three of us the first year and the next year one more boy joined and we went on the buggy -- two sat in the back. I was the driver cause I was the oldest one. Mama made me a nice little pair of mittens with rabbit skin in them and I was really proud of those mittens. Anyway, the two boys sat in the front. Of course, when it rained, I forgot what we did. I guess we covered 'em up or something (laughter).

We did that for about two years and one day we had quite an experience -- the horse, when we were about two miles away from home, got too tired and wouldn't go any more. So a man with a load of lumber (one of our neighbors -- there was a sawmill about a mile away from us, I don't know why he was loading lumber to his sawmill), took a buggy whip and whipped the horse and got it goin' again. He watched us, and it went for another mile. Then we had to turn off and he had to go to his sawmill. We had muddy roads (there were no rock roads or anything), so we all piled out of the buggy and stepped into the mud and pushed the buggy, and the horse went another half a mile up a steep hill, and then he flopped down. Couldn't get up. So here we were -- four little,

shivering youngsters, trying to know what to do with a horse on this road -- and the road was so narrow with trees on each side that you couldn't pass except in certain spots. The two oldest ones went home, and the two younger ones stayed with the horse. I happened to be one of the older ones, and we were saying the rosary all during thattime because we didn't know what was going to happen.

Daddy wasn't home -- he had to sell the apples and things at the markets and stores in Portland every so often, once or twice a week. It took about three hours to get to Portland with a horse and wagon, you know, loaded with things. So when he came home, Mama told him the story and he came that evening with a bucket of water and another bucket of oats and things and shoved the horse off the road and to the fence and put a lantern there. The next morning Dad came to the same place where the horse was and he decided that horse wasn't ever going to get up again, so he told a neighbor to get rid of him, so, he had to shoot him and dig the grave.

Our horse was named "Prince" and whenever Daddy's team would go past that place where the horse was -- I don't know how they knew it, they'd snort and make all kinds of noise, go way out way away from where the horse even lay there that day before. Every time we'd pass that special place on that hill where that horse fell, we'd say, "Here's where Prince was buried." We still say that. We know exactly the spot. (laughter)

TANZER: Oh, that's a wonderful, sad story. How old were you at the time?

SISTER: I was in fourth grade. Let's see, I must have been 8, 9, 10. Must have been 10 or 11 years old. I had to stay in the first grade one extra year. When we started first grade, I didn't know a word of English. We always talked German so I had a language barrier when I started school. The others didn't have that. The year I was all by myself, I went to St. Mary's as a boarder, and my aunt, Sister Presentia, was there and she helped me out because she knew German and I didn't know English, so we got together quite a bit.

TANZER: She was the oldest in the family?

SISTER: Oh, yes. Out of eight. The two youngest ones died. Mama was working too hard on the farm, slashing and cutting, helping make fences and things like that, when the two boys died, so it was a good thing that the one that was a cripple did die. We got another one after that.

When we used to go to church on Sundays, and even when we went to school, Mama would take bricks and put them in the oven and warm them and put them in the buggy. When we went to school, and on Sundays each one of them would have a brick to put our feet on. You see, four, five miles takes quite a while and the horses wouldn't always run either -- especially when we had our old nag.

Finally, we decided our old nag wasn't going fast enough. We got too cold sitting in the buggy, so we said, "Mama, can't we please walk?" Well, I had to stay in the buggy and drive the horse. The others walked and they went on ahead. The horse was too slow. So finally they gave in. We had two horses. The first one, that's the one that died, and the second one -- we convinced Papa and Mama to sell it.

Maybe you would like to know what happened to the horse when we went to school. About 7 or 8 blocks from the school, there was a great big grain mill owned by Catholics by the name of Mr. Musik. We got permission from that grain mill to build a little shed, and we had a little bin where we put a sack of hay. In the morning when we came, we took the halter off the horse and in the evening, we went back (of course, the bricks weren't warm any more). And once in a while, that horse was stubborn; we couldn't get the bridle on so we had to go in and ask the man in the mill. He was a good man. He was very gentle and kind and nice to us, so he put the bridle on for us. It didn't happen too often.

TANZER: Were you the only children who were coming to school by horse and wagon?

SISTER: I think so, yes. All of the others either walked or lived close enough. I don't remember anybody else having a horse and buggy. On Sundays we went to church in our wagon.

TANZER: Tell me about your going to church.

SISTER: Well, Mama had placed a blanket between the driver in the front of the wagon. It was a real wagon, big; see, Dad had to take it to town with 40 boxes of apples. And they put something in the back. We sat on two boards with boxes and nice warm bricks under our feet. After the services were finished, we would get out and take our breakfast and Mom would have a two-quart jar of hot chocolate or buns or whatever it was, I don't know.

TANZER: Where was the church?

SISTER: You know where Damerow is? It was there.

TANZER: Tualatin Valley Highway.

SISTER: Where the Berg's Clothes Shop was, that was the priest's house. And about 15 steps or so away, the school and church was built together. But before that, the church was where the Highland house was. Anna Highland lived there, down at the end of that same street where Damerow is. That is the place where the old church was.

TANZER: What was the name of the church?

SISTER: Well, that's a nice story. Father Lamiller (my godfather in Baptism), the first appointed pastor, heard of a place where they were selling a cheese factory so he bought that and gave it the name of St. Mary's Church. We had a great big pot bellied stove and I remember very distinctly my sister and I stopped at the first bench where the stove was so we'd get warm. Father Lamiller didn't stay there too long. I have a list of all the pastors that have been there. He came from Cedar Mill, the mother church of Beaverton. Cedar Mill got their priest from Verboort because Verboort got started first. And Father O'Flynn says that he was the first one to be the pastor of Cedar Mill. The priest that went to Cedar Mill to say Mass came sometimes from Cathedral and sometimes from Verboort. And once in a while they had church up at Cooper Mountain. St. Peter & Paul Church was its name, and there were about 20 families up there -- nice, big Catholic families.

I'll tell you about Cedar Mill. They had started in the early 1800's, and once in a while when the priest came from Portland to say Mass at Cooper Mountain, they would stay at our place because it was only half a mile away. It wasn't really a big mountain, but they stayed there.

TANZER: Is that church still there?

SISTER: Oh, no. It was torn down around 1920. A man tore it down. I have it here somewhere, when St. Peter & Paul was torn down.

They had a boarding school at Cedar Mill. It burnt down and then the church and the school and the sisters' house all burned down the first few years and then they built it up again. Mercy Sisters from New Zealand came. The sisters at Verboort parish came from our own community. The Archbishop that was reigning at that time was at Grosse and he was interested in having an orphanage -- a home for the boys that didn't have any home, so they built St. Mary's home. We supplied three of those sisters there. We started out taking care of babies and we were not nurses or anything. Our Order was just beginning our own selves in 1886. We came out from Wisconsin; that's where our first community started from. They had moved out to Sublimity, Oregon, near Salem.

TANZER: Now you're talking about the Order of the Sisters of St. Mary?

SISTER: Yes. But they never did teach at Cedar Mill, because they found out that Beaverton was having a school. We built it in 1912.

TANZER: Was the elementary school St. Agatha's?

SISTER: Yes. Well, I think for a couple of years they did teach a few high school classes. But it wasn't too long.

TANZER: So St. Agatha's, St. Cecelia's and St. Mary's are all connected?

SISTER: They're separate parishes; each parish takes care of its own school. People who belong to the parish had to pay for the sisters for teaching there and things like that.

But it's connected by the teaching Sisters of St. Mary's. You have all these schools here. That's the first copy of the magazine that they started when they started teaching high school. See, Volume 1 and Volume 9, so that would be in June. That's my niece (indicating photo). That little girl is my niece, Patty, the one out of the 14 children.

TANZER: When did you decide to become a nun?

SISTER: When I was in fifth grade.

TANZER: What was the influence?

SISTER: Well, I had aunts. I had two other ones in another community, but we weren't very well acquainted except through writing letters and things like that.

TANZER: Who were your two other aunts?

SISTER: They belonged to the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Milwaukie, Wisconsin. But the order had to split because they were too big. They couldn't have proper government with so many nuns, so they split. One became Mankato Province and the other became Milwaukie Province, so my two aunts had to split because at that time when that happened, one was teaching in the Milwaukie Province and the other one was teaching in Mankato. I happen to have had the privilege of visiting the one at Mankato for her diamond jubilee in 1965. It was a wonderful experience. We had never been out of Oregon, my sister, Sister Joan and I. We spent a day and a night on the train and we spent five days at that community where our diamond jubilarian was. Her name was Mother Annunciata. She was Mother General for about 12 years. They had about 2,000 sisters, and she died just shortly after we made that trip, about three or four years. But she was just a wonderful superior and Mother General. They all loved her very, very much.

Her other sister was in a nursing home, a place called Meekland which belonged to the Milwaukie Province. It was a nursing home for all of the sisters when they had surgery or had to be put in the hospital, a nursing home. We went to visit her, too. She was well taken care of. And she was able to do things for other sisters that were not as well off as she was. She would put on the record player and play for the people that were in bed, and she'd help with stamp collections, and she was able to be around and talk to them.

TANZER: How were these two sisters in Wisconsin related to you?

SISTER: They were my mother's sisters. And these two that were joined to our community -- they were my mother's sisters, too. They were the two youngest ones. And the other ones were the two oldest ones.

TANZER: How many children were there in your mother's family?

SISTER: Twelve. Only six lived. Six of them died. All of them as babies except one. She was 12 years old; she died of I forget what they called it -- something like obstruction of the bowels.

TANZER: Colitis?

SISTER: No, it wasn't colitis. Something worse than that. When she died, they had already planned the move to another town, from Jordan to St. Paul, or St. Paul to Jordan, either one, and they took the body along. It was wintertime, cold, and my mother always said she looked like a waxed corpse, because she was just perfectly frozen. And they buried her. They wanted to have her buried at the place they were moving to, and that house where they lived in Jordan. We have a picture of that in the family somewhere. It was a stone house.

TANZER: You're talking about Minnesota?

SISTER: Yes, that was my mother's family. My mother was married by that time. No, she wasn't either. Mama didn't move out here yet when that happened. See, she was the oldest one and when she was in the fifth grade, she had to quit school to help financially with the rest of the children and she worked where they sold clothes. She sold linings for fur coats. She must have been a

pretty good seamstress because that takes a lot of know-how. That's all I remember of her saying she did. When she left home, she worked in factories.

TANZER: So there were only the two children in the family who got married; the four became nuns?

SISTER: My mother got married. Marie didn't get married. I think my mother is the only one that got married, out of the 12 children. See, there were only six left. One, two, three, four. Four became nuns. My mom was the fifth one. And Marie was the old maid. --Couldn't get along with my mother (laughter). And she was the modern type. My mother was the old type (laughter). Are you going to put that down?? (laughter)

TANZER: Well, sure. Well, there's nothing wrong with anybody saying somebody is modern and somebody is a bit old fashioned. Did your Aunt Marie spend time with you?

SISTER: Not very much. They tried to live together but it wouldn't work. She was a seamstress. She made money by making dresses and things like that. She was a good seamstress but she lived in Canada most of the time so we didn't see her very much.

TANZER: I see, so the influence upon you was both of your aunts, persuaded you to become a nun.

SISTER: Yes. When I was born, I was a premature. I didn't even weigh four pounds. They didn't expect me to be born yet, and they didn't have anything ready for me, not even clothes. They wrapped me up in a blanket the next morning and got me baptized in the blanket (laughter). Grandma didn't come out and help and get things ready, I guess she thought there was a lot of time yet. I don't know how premature I was. People ask me that and I said Mom didn't ever tell me how soon. Anyway, that was the way it happened.

TANZER: You were talking about your decision to become a nun.

SISTER: The clinching of it was when I was in church in Mass one Sunday. When they read the gospel (from the liturgy of the Bible), there was one sentence that really gave me the inspiration: Many are called but few are chosen. And that decided me. My teacher, Sister Aquinas, who was a very holy nun, entered when she was quite old. And that family had four nuns, also. They are all dead now, though, but they were a wonderful family from Verboort. She was a teacher at Greenville School in Verboort, this sister that I had. When she got older, she decided she was going to be a nun, too. She used to talk about being a sister, vocations and things like that, even in the classroom. I remember one thing she had us do as a teacher was a nice custom. She had done it in other schools where she had taught. She had what they call pen pals. Now that was way back in 1913, 14, we had pen pals already.

The pen pal I wrote to is still alive, Louella Kendall, and she lives out between Roy and Verboort. She's in our convent, too, Sister Marcella Kendall. She has M.S. We have two sisters with M.S. One is walking with four legs, two on one arm and then she had braces on her legs, too. Oh, she's a marvelous inspiration to everybody. Her outlook on life is just marvelous. She keeps track of medical and Blue Cross, you know how much work that entails, for the whole community.

TANZER: How many sisters are there?

SISTER: We have about 180, but they're not all here now. They're out teaching. There are about 80 of them during the wintertime.

TANZER: How did your family react to your decision?

SISTER: They were happy. They'd been praying ever since I was born that I'd be a sister. It was through prayer that I was able to be strong enough. They had to carry me in a basket, a shoebox, since I was so small, and they really worked hard on God taking care of me and making me strong enough so I could be a sister. I remember walking -- later on when we were old enough, we walked to school. I used to get what they call run down in the spring. I'd have to quit school, miss nearly two weeks, get a tonic and (laughter) it was just kind of hard on me.

TANZER: Now, you walked from Cooper Mountain to --

SISTER: Well, to St. Mary's first, and then to Beaverton later on, all four of us did. After I graduated in 1920, my two brothers got bicycles. Of course, they had to leave them at the foot of the hill because the roads were too muddy. Somebody had a garage at the foot of the hill, and my father later on got a truck, a real truck, and he left it at one of the neighbors during the daytime.

I must tell you on the way to school the first few years when we walked, we had about four or five different ways we could go to school, all kinds of different roads, and on one road there was a lot of woods and there happened to be an old log cabin there with a log bed and some straw on it and no doors or windows in it, and we'd sit down there and take a rest. Later Daddy got it into his head that he needed to have more land, so he got the four Moore brothers, Arthur, Leslie, Daniel, Floyd -- I remember them. They lived in that log cabin. They fixed it up all winter. And you know that winter they couldn't work for weeks, it was so cold and full of snow. It just happened they had a stroke of bad luck. But they got finished and spring came and they got finished clearing that land; you know, blasting the stumps and whatnot and that's where our biggest, main orchard was.

In the beginning, way early, 1903-1904, when my family first moved onto the farm, during the wintertime, the apples fell down onto the ground and they could see bear tracks. The bears helped themselves with the apples that fell down on the ground.

TANZER: Did you ever see any bears?

SISTER: No. That happened before I knew what was happening. Dad saw the tracks. And the deer would come to the barn not too long ago, and he would see that deer look up at him. My mother had bought some beautiful new variety of Gravensteins. They had real bright red cheeks on them, and they were his prize apples. He got permission from the Game Commission (he was losing a lot of crops because of the deer coming) and he got his gun and looked at the deer and said, "I can't shoot that deer." (laughter). He let it go, let him have some apples.

TANZER: When did you leave home and officially join the Order?

SISTER: September 8, 1921. Quite an interesting episode happened the day before. Mama and Daddy were very proud that I entered. They bought a brand new car, a Ford Touring Car. Mama took it to Portland. We couldn't make enough money selling to the stores; it was too wholesale type, so they had a public market on Yamhill Street, and she worked there for 19 years, standing out and letting people come and buy. That's when we started making money.

We had to dig a well because our well wouldn't give enough water. Up at Cooper Mountain it's hard to get water. They had to take barrels and a sled and go down the valley and get some neighbors to donate the water for us to drink and do our washing, in the summertime.

TANZER: What did you do in the wintertime?

SISTER: We had cisterns right by the house. And when summertime came, they dried up. We had a cistern at the barn that lasted longer because it filled up all winter. We didn't have to take any water for the cows, only for human consumption.

I'll tell you about that car. I went to Portland that day with Mama. She left about 6 or 7 in the morning, went home about 5:00. When Mama came to where the car was parked (in those days there weren't parking lots), we didn't get any parking tickets or anything like that. Remember that big deer that was down in town?

TANZER: Southwest Main, yes.

SISTER: Well, she had to park on that street. When she got there that evening -- no car. It had been stolen. That was bad luck. So I had to go in the truck with my trunk to the convent.

TANZER: Did they ever find the car?

SISTER: Well, this was the 20th of September. They found it in December in Washington along a neglected farm and some Army man had to get to headquarters and just stole that car that nobody was in; you see, new car, a Ford. And Mama had put a triangular pennant on the back of the car, that was the main identification when they found the car to prove that that was her car. It had been changed, all kinds of tires and speedometer and other fixtures that they put on. They couldn't fix it. They bought a new one.

TANZER: Now when you came to the Order, where did you go?

SISTER: What we call our Motherhouse. And that was (checks papers) -- here it is. This is where I entered. This was the chapel. This was the academy. This was the dormitory.

TANZER: That was the first St. Mary's building.

SISTER: Yes. St. Mary's Institute. The other one was St. Mary's Home. And that was only, oh about a half a block going this way. And I don't have the old building of St. Mary's Home for Boys here, so that's where I went and this was the older sisters' division here. And these were dormitories in here. This was the attic.

TANZER: How often did you see your family?

SISTER: Well, whenever they had visiting days, and if anything happened -- they used to bring fruit down because they needed fruit down here at this end. When they found out that we were feeding apples that were culls to our pigs, they decided they'd better come up and pick them and use them for their applesauce. We were very, very poor when we first began. Very poor; they used applesauce instead of butter because butter was too expensive. Except on Sundays, I think they had butter.

We really had to save an awful lot. We had a barn; we had our cows. We had pigs. We had hired men who would do all those kinds of jobs.

TANZER: How many sisters were living at the Institute?

SISTER: There were about 125 because I was No. 125 when I came. I am now 120. We kept our number, because five of them left the community. We keep our numbers after they're dead, and I think we have about -- we have a big cemetery out here. There must be over a hundred of them buried out there. They have a plan; they keep the families and relations in the same area, so we know where we're going to be buried -- a blueprint, as they call it.

TANZER: What about the Cooper Mountain cemetery?

SISTER: That's still there. My brother and another man helped for days and months to fix that up. It had been neglected for years.

TANZER: But now, do you have family buried up there?

SISTER: My brother's oldest girl had died when she was a baby. She was born in August and died in October. She had obstruction of the bowel. She was born that way and they had surgery. They took out the part that was obstructed, but it was too much of a strain and she died after the surgery. Mary Ann is her name, Mary Ann Rigert. They've got the names of the people that are buried there.

TANZER: But she's the only member of your family buried there. Did your parents continue to live up on Cooper Mountain?

SISTER: My brother lived there until 1977, but my father and mother left earlier than that.

TANZER: They left, you said, when they needed physical care?

SISTER: That's right.

TANZER: But until the time that they did, did they continue to live and farm?

SISTER: Yes. Joe and Ann took care of them for a while and when they got to where they couldn't manage to take care of them with all the children, they took them to Marian Home in Sublimity. It wasn't this nursing home, because this one wasn't built until 1962.

TANZER: What do you remember as a child about Beaverton?

SISTER: Beaverton? Well, I remember about Cooper Mountain. One of the things we always liked to hear was a shivaree. Whenever anybody got married, we'd listen to the shooting, the blasting, you know, and they had beer parties, I guess, and things like that.

TANZER: On Cooper Mountain?

SISTER: Yes, in the neighborhood. That's one thing I remember as a child. And then on Fourth of July, we always had a big picnic and one of the families -- we never had it in our area, but the next neighbor, they were kind of influential, and they all came.

TANZER: So Cooper Mountain actually was quite separated from Beaverton at that time?

SISTER: Oh, yes. See, it was way out on the muddy roads, you know, and nobody would go up there. Except when we had church, or there were funerals for people that lived up that way, the sisters from St. Mary's here would come up in a surrey. Do you know what a surrey looks like, with fancy little fringes? And we had a darkie who used to work for us; he'd be the driver and they'd sing the high Mass for the person who died.

TANZER: Sister Beatrice, you have been a nun almost 60 years. Is it next year that you have a celebration?

SISTER: Yes, in July, 1982.

TANZER: How many had joined at the same time?

SISTER: Six of us were joined, but one wasn't able to continue for certain reasons and four of those were teenagers, 17, 18 years old. We used to ask one how old she was and she said, "I'm old enough to be your grandmother." She never would tell us how old she was and later we found out she was in her 30's already. Ordinarily they don't take them at that age, but they made exceptions. She died before she made her 50 years as a nun. But she sure was a good sport. Now there are three of us left.

TANZER: You'll all be celebrating together?

SISTER: Well, we don't know. There's one that's got cancer. We don't know if she'll make it or not. So there will be only two if she doesn't make it. The other two died.

TANZER: You were telling me about the St. Cecelia's basket socials.

SISTER: Oh, yes, out on the lawn. We had the new church then. I remember that very well. And we played "Last Couple Out," you know that game? I don't know what basket I paid for, but we had a lot of fun. I wasn't a teenager yet, because I came to the convent when I was 17 you know, very early. My sister was 21 before she came. She had to stay home and take care of the little baby, well, the youngest one.

TANZER: Tell me about the schools that you went to.

SISTER: St. Mary's Institute and St. Cecilia's; that was the grade school. And I went to University of Portland for my college degree. That's all I went.

TANZER: Were you in the Order by the time you went to the University of Portland?

SISTER: Oh, yes. We took an extension course from Eugene in the summertime, but they wanted us to be full-fledged sooner than just going to summer school so some of the sisters went the whole year. And now that's what they do when they join the Convent. Most of them are supposed to have college degrees, but as a teaching order we need special subjects that they didn't take when they were going to college as before entering the convent, so they still have to go to University of Portland or Portland State University. They go during the year, too, to get the credentials necessary for the subjects that we teach in our high schools.

TANZER: What did you teach?

SISTER: I taught 1st to 8th grades, and I taught for 13 years at St. Mary's Home for Boys. That was quite a record and a lot of happy memories. I was there when they had the old home and I helped move in 1930 to the new home. That was a very memorable day. They had to move out of the old home because there was a fire hazard. The day that they moved, August 20, I went and looked out the window, and going through the field, the dusty road where they would do their plowing and things (it was real dusty), I saw all the little boys with a big pillowcase, all their belongings in the pillowcase, walking through that field. Just a big cloud of dust -- and that evening there were no boys around. They were at the other home already. But to see those boys taking their belongings on their backs (laughter); they each had a little closet in their dormitory room, took their shoes and stockings and whatever they had. That really impressed me very much.

TANZER: Do you keep in touch with the boys?

SISTER: Ooooh, yes! Last year we had the first reunion of the boys and they just loved it. They want it every two years. Next year we're going to have another one. I help one of the older sisters that these boys loved very much to write letters (she's not able to communicate very well and write). The boys worked for her many years out in the garden, they remember her and every time they come back, they say, "You sisters were our mothers and the priest was like our father." They just are so grateful because we took such good care of them, and trained them so well.

When the war broke out, a recruiter came around and said, "Bring us some more of those boys. We don't need to train them. They know what it means to obey. They know what it means to keep their clothes clean, and all those things." Some of the boys lost their lives in that war, too. They would come back as often as they possibly could and one of the boys, when he died, he gave all his insurance money to the home for a swimming pool. He was going to give it to Father, but they said that wasn't allowed to do that in the Navy; so they got a nice outdoor swimming pool.

TANZER: How many boys are in the home today?

SISTER: About 30. We had 165. At the new building, they take what they call disadvantaged children; they are placed by the children's services, Catholic Division, downtown Portland. They have nearly one teacher per pupil. They need special training, special care. They have what they call shop work, technical training. Every chance these boys get they come out and visit, and the sisters are getting fewer and fewer that know them.

One railroad man who came way back in 1914-15, comes out and we are allowed now to have people visit and have meals with us. His name is Mr. Klappervitch, and he knows our Archbishop who is going to celebrate 105 years living, Archbishop Howard. He's not able to perform any services; he's just barely able to walk around. Once in a while the nurses take him to his home where he lived across the street, and they take him out to look at the park and things like that. But some days he's not even communicable. He's interesting to talk to. He can remember things, and he can remember our family; he asks about Joe and what is he doing, things like that. My sister's husband (Frank Moore) is a barber and he used to go and barber his hair. He still goes to see him yet, even though he doesn't have much hair on his head any more, but to visit. The Archbishop stayed in his house as long as he could, but one time he went out for a walk by himself after supper and they didn't find him until about 9:30 that evening. He had a fall and could not get up off the ground. And after that they moved him to Maryville.

TANZER: How many years ago was that?

SISTER: About five years ago. Mr. Klappervitch, that railroad man, visits him every time. He's a very good friend of his. And we had one boy that was what we call a foundling. He was put in a basket and laid on the front steps of our orphanage around 1900. His name was Lawrence Fernsworth. Now the boys that went to high school there are getting together and are writing a history of the Boys' Home and the different boys. One of our sisters is helping, too. Her name is Sister Christina. She gets these different boys to give input. There's one Mexican-Indian boy; he's a specialist in Indian history who works for the government -- he's back east and his name is Ricardo Martinez. He's an Indian. And he writes to us. He has taken care of two Vietnamese boys and trained them and got them a good job, put them through college and got a good job for them now. And he's taking in some other ones now. He writes and tells about it, and he visits us. He came a few years ago and stayed about two weeks with us. We treated him royally and everything.

One of the things that impressed him was that we had a sister who is a real Indian; she volunteered to go to the Mission down in Peru. Her name is Sister Kateri, and she is all crippled with her hands and her feet with rheumatoid arthritis. There were four sisters that went down there. But she's still out teaching, a very capable person. She's an Indian from Grande Ronde. Her parents are still living; they're very proud of her. She's teaching in Portland, I think St. Agatha's.

TANZER: After you left St. Mary's, the boys' school, where did you go from there?

SISTER: I went to a very big Milwaukie school. We had about 17 sisters there-- not 17, four of them went to college and stayed with us. That would be 13. We had a couple of lay teachers, too. It was a very large school, but it's

not so large now. This is it, right here (indicated photo). It is a little bit changed, not quite the same. They have a new church now. My room was right about here. One year I taught the 5th grade; the next year I taught the 7th grade. I left St. Mary's Home in 1943, then taught for two years there.

TANZER: So you went in 1943-44 to Milwaukie. Did you then return to Portland?

SISTER: I came back to St. Mary's during the summertime. We always came back to St. Mary's. I had it written down where I went from one year to another because I changed around all the time. I think I went to St. Stephens. I was in St. Stephen's in 1922-23, the very first place that I got. A sister got sick so I took her place and had fifth 1st and 2nd graders; this was in December, so she had a good start on the children. And that sister had to go to teach the 8th grade. From the 1st grade, she had to teach the 8th grade.

TANZER: Where is St. Stephen's?

SISTER: It's out on Taylor Street, near Mt. Tabor, near All Saints Parish, out in that direction. After Milwaukie I went to different schools. I went to Sublimity. I went to Gervase. --I should have brought the list.

TANZER: Were you at St. Cecilia's?

SISTER: I was appointed once and just as I was ready to go teach down there, Mother General said, "I think it's too cold for you." She knew I had arthritis, and she said, "I'm going to put somebody else there." And that sister went down there and took my place. She's dead already now a long time ago, and here I still am plugging along (laughter). --With my arthritis and all.

TANZER: Well, how old did your parents live to be?

SISTER: One was 83, and Daddy must have been (he was two years older than my mother) -- in their 80's.

TANZER: So they've lived, and so the genes are good...

SISTER: And all the Rigert family -- there are a lot of Rigerts around Beaverton. They married good Catholic people.

