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**Histories of
The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
in Wyoming since 1875**

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

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**Autobiography
of
Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.**

I, Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, am a native of Wyoming having been born in Laramie on March 25, 1919. My education in the Laramie public schools fitted me well for my life's work. In 1935 my father gave me permission to become a Catholic because he felt that I was serious about being a good one. After high school graduation, I attended the University of Wyoming for a year.

It was my desire at this time to bring my long-nurtured hope of becoming a Sister of Charity to fulfillment. The Sisters had built St. Joseph's Hospital in Laramie in 1875 and they opened St. Mary's Academy there soon after. Their spirit and dedication was my inspiration. Sr. Philomena Quinlan died in 1892 and was buried in Laramie. We kind of thought of her as our guardian angel. To learn more about the Sisters I went to Denver to meet the Sisters at St. Joseph's Hospital. They encouraged me to apply for entrance to the novitiate. The reply to my request contained the news that I wanted to hear. September 8, 1937, was my entrance date and on June 18, 1939, I made my first vows. St. Mary's School in Butte, Montana, was my first mission where I taught second and third grades. I also taught in Billings and Helena until 1945 when I made my perpetual vows, after which I taught in schools in Kansas, Missouri, California, Colorado, Nebraska, and Illinois. In 1981, after 42 years of teaching in elementary and junior high schools, I retired.

It was not difficult to find ways to use retirement time. My main interest was crafts and the desire to work with the retired Sisters at the Mother House. We were able to make saleable articles for craft sales which provided monetary support for our projects. We knitted, crocheted, quilted and made latch-hook pillows and rugs. Beaded work was also

popular. For six years we enjoyed our work there, then I was feeling a need for a change.

DePaul Hospital in Cheyenne had positions for volunteer workers. During my five years there, new experiences taught me many new skills. I was receptionist at the Health and Fitness Institute, the hospital archivist, did Public Relations writing, and was the Director of Volunteers. When the hospital was sold, I moved to Laramie to help in the office of St. Laurence School. While in Wyoming I also lived in Worland and Sheridan. At the end of January, 1995, I fell and broke my hip. When I was able to travel, I came to Kansas for complete healing. Since then I have served as a foster grandparent tutor in junior high schools and became an interviewer for Catholic Community Services in Leavenworth. I have written most of the history of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Wyoming, 1875-2002. The rest of my years are in God's Loving Hands.

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The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Wyoming since 1875 by Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, SCL

Introduction

The editor asked one of our local, survivor Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, in Cheyenne, Sister Therese Steiner, S.C.L., to take the message to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Mother House that a history of the Sisters of Charity in Wyoming needs to be written. The Holy Spirit got a Wyoming-born Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L., to do it. In her 80s Sister Catherine Louise, born and raised in Laramie who became a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth about 60 years ago, provides the details in her Autobiography herein and the text you see before you. Sister did the histories in two years of study, I may say, putting into it the anguish Sisters feel about having to give up so many institutions.

The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth came to Kansas in 1858 [see their web-history at <http://www.scls.org/MainMenu/history.htm>] and they first came to Laramie, Wyoming, in 1875. But the most arresting story of the “Coming of The Nuns (in popular parlance)” to Wyoming is that of Sister Joanna Bruner who came to Wyoming in 1888 to be Superior of the Mission. She protested that she was the last anybody should choose to go to the Wind River because she was 68 and weighed 300 pounds. The wagon driver commented after the trip over Beaver Hill from Rawlins to Lander, “I tell you, man, I hauled on this trip the biggest woman ever seen in these parts, oh, but she's heavy.” Sister Joanna, the “biggest nun” in the West, was named “Big Chief Squaw” by the Arapaho chief, Black Coal.

Most of the readers will recognize the habit worn by Sister Catherine Louise at her profession more than the “White Cap” habit worn by Sister Joanna. Sister Catherine Louise wrote her autobiography and the histories which follow. Now we can begin to fill in the histories of the

479 Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth – the largest number of any Order
– who served in Wyoming between 1875 and 2000.

Father Jan Joseph Santich, editor.

SCL web history

<http://www.scls.org/MainMenus/history.htm>

479 Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth 1875-2000

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
LARAMIE
1875-1900

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

First Rocky Mountain Mission at Helena, 1869

It was just eleven years after the Sisters of Charity arrived in Leavenworth, Kansas, on November 11, 1858, when Father Peter DeSmet, S.J., asked that Sisters be sent to start a mission in the western Rockies at Helena, Montana. The Sisters' purpose in coming to Kansas was to build a community in frontier country to care for orphans and the sick, and to educate the children. Fifteen members formed the first group in Leavenworth and they wasted no time in furnishing the convent and starting the schools for girls and boys.

It would indeed be a sacrifice to send six of their group to the west. Mother Xavier Ross consulted her council who favored the challenge if Sisters were willing to accept it. They were willing and excited to go west especially because they would be working with the Indians. Father DeSmet started immediately begging for money to pay for the Sisters' transportation which he bought at half price.

September 23, 1869, was the day that Sisters Julia Voorvoart, superior, Regina McGrain, Mary Buckner, Loretto Foley, Bertha Grany and Rosa Kelly, musician, began their two-week trek west. Their route took them first to Omaha by Union Pacific where they changed trains there for Corinne, Utah. They now had completed the first thousand miles. A stagecoach took them the rest of the way – 400 miles to Helena, arriving October 8, 1869.

Father DeSmet wrote to Father Van Gorp, S.J., who was pastor in Helena, announcing that the arrival of the Sisters would be soon. However, they arrived before the letter. Three families offered to take

care of the Sisters until other arrangements could be made. Several days later it was decided that the Sisters could live in the place occupied by the Fathers of the Missions called "Gazette Shanty." It was that indeed. "The Shanty" was merely a shelter, unique to say the least, built partly of weather boards and partly of pine slabs standing upright. One half was roofed with boards and the other half with earth. Rough planks made the floor. It was usual to find the beds covered with snow in the morning, because of the badly finished roof. Each Sister had a bed and a chair. The Sisters stayed there until January 1870, when the first St. Vincent's Academy opened for occupancy. This was the first institution of its kind for white young girls in Montana. Mother Xavier asked Sister Julia to fit out the Gazette Shanty as a classroom for boys. This was the inauguration of St. Aloysius Institute, the forerunner of Carroll College in Helena.

The number of children in the mining camp was small, but the number of miners who needed nursing care because of illness or accident was considerable. Mother Xavier received the petition for a hospital with an open mind, feeling that if the sacrifice were made, God would send blessings and replacements. Plans were made to build St. John's Hospital in the summer of 1870. Sister Julia transferred from the Academy to take charge of the project and Sisters M. Teresa Stanton and Modesta O'Hara came west to assist her. November 1, 1870, was the opening date.

The next year Mother Xavier was anxious to see how the Sisters were faring. She made the same trip as the pioneers did two years earlier, but alone. She found the Sisters very busy, very happy and successful in all of their projects. Mother knew that God's will was being fulfilled.

Mission to Laramie City, Wyoming, 1875

Again in 1875, Mother Xavier traveled to the western mission to visit with the Sisters. On her return trip to Kansas the door of opportunity swung open for the Sisters of Charity to expand their western ministry. Some call it coincidence, others know that it was Divine Providence. When the train stopped to change engines in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Mother left the train for a walk in the fresh autumn air. She put an addressed envelope on her seat to reserve it. Father Eugene Cusson, S.J., pastor of Laramie City, was returning from a meeting. As he was leaving the coach he noticed Mother's envelope and noticed the address. Immediately he hurried out to find the owner. He had been asked by the Union Pacific officials and the Commissioners of the County Poor to obtain the services of the Sisters for Laramie City. Mother Xavier listened but was unable to give an immediate answer. She was on her way to Denver for an important meeting but would consider it as soon as she could and would give him a final answer. Further correspondence was exchanged between Mother Xavier and Father Cusson while she was in Denver. It was settled.

December 15, 1875, was the date arranged for Sisters Joanna Bruner and Martha Mead to set out for the new mission in Laramie City. The day was balmy in Denver and the Sisters dressed to be comfortable. No one warned them that they were traveling to mountain country and would need another layer of clothing.

Two sights excited Sister Martha on this trip. "Vedauwoo" is the Indian name for the breath-taking collection of huge granite boulders fifteen miles east of Laramie. The boulders had been deposited there at the end of the Ice Age, stacked in piles forming many interesting shapes. Some rocks balanced precariously above the base, seeming to threaten to tumble down and crush anything in the way. Sister's desire was to somehow remove the possibility of disaster. Farther east, now in the middle of the median on Interstate-80, grows a pine tree that had rooted in a crevice of a granite boulder many years ago. It is protected by an

iron fence. But in 1875 it was by the side of the railroad tracks. The train stopped there when it passed to let the conductor water the tree.

By the time Sherman Hill was reached the weather had changed considerably making the Sisters uncomfortable enough to suffer chattering teeth and goose bumps. By the time they arrived in Laramie City it was evening and they were grateful for the hot supper Father's housekeeper had prepared for them. He was gone on a sickcall. The prospect of a warm bed with plenty of warm blankets seemed like Heaven to the tired and cold travelers.

The next day they toured the city, expecting at any time to meet Indians riding into town in all their regalia, but it never happened. Father Cusson returned during the day and cordially welcomed the Sisters. The Commissioners were also grateful that their charges would be in capable and caring hands.

Hospital, Academy, and Good Works in Laramie City

A frame house belonging to the Union Pacific Railroad just a few paces from the tracks was given to the Sisters to be used for a hospital. Formerly it was used for that purpose, but now it needed much repair. While this was taken care of, the Sisters were busily preparing for their duties. They were helped by friendly and generous residents. Sister Martha wrote to Mother Xavier: "In the three weeks we have been here, we have made 15 comforts, 25 sheets, 25 pillow cases, hemmed 36 towels--oh, not by hand! Of course not. We spend our mornings soliciting and in the afternoon we tear out sheets, towels, etc., and turn down the hems. Then the next afternoon we go to some kind lady's house, the fortunate possessor of a good sewing machine. We eat no idle bread." Sister Mary Toole and Sister Mary dei Pazzi Lane arrived to assist the other two Sisters. They were pleased with the progress that had been made.

Early one morning shortly after the Sisters' arrival everyone was awakened by a deafening blast. They soon realized that it was an explosion at the Union Pacific Rolling Mills. The boiler had exploded at a very safe time because it came at the change of shifts. The Sisters dressed quickly and were ready when the first five patients arrived. The injured were wrapped in cotton saturated with linseed oil. Four more men were carried in, but they were not as seriously injured as the first. Four workers had been killed, eleven injured. Two of them were taken in by their families and nine were cared for by the Sisters. Five of them were Catholics. They found Father Cusson there when they arrived at the hospital. A Scotch Protestant saw the priest's gentle care and prayer for the patients and asked for prayers also. Six hours before he died he asked for Baptism.

In 1878 the community bought land east of the railroad and about a mile from the church. The Wyoming Legislature allocated \$3000 to help defray the cost. The rest of the needed \$15,000 was obtained through the efforts of the Sisters who traveled around the State's mining and railroad camps begging. The red brick three-storied structure housed four wards, having six beds in each, and a few private rooms. No operating room was included. In case of necessity one of these rooms served in its place. A barn housed the cows and the horses. Occupancy was high and the Sisters were kept very busy. The railroad paid a dollar a month for each of their patients. This was inadequate to cover expenses, so the Sisters begged to make up the difference. The Commissioners paid for their charges.

Much of the attention and energy of the Sisters focused upon the spiritual well-being of their charges. Two stories illustrate how it went. A patient came to the hospital who had been out of the church thirty years and planned to leave it that way. Sister Fidelis tried to win him over but with no success. She made him some tea and flavored it with Lourdes water. The next morning he asked for a priest and made his peace with God a few days before his death. Later another worker came

to the hospital very ill and very hostile. He ate only rice. He had been away from the Church most of his life. Sister Fidelis felt helpless in her efforts to bring him back to the sacraments. She decided to try Lourdes water. She rinsed his dish with the water and then filled it with rice for his supper. He refused the offering and would have nothing to do with it. He died the next day.

Father Cusson felt the need for a school to provide a good education for the children of the city. His request for teachers brought Sisters Loretto Foley and Francis de Sales to Laramie City in 1878. They stayed with the hospital Sisters and taught in a rented house near the church. After a year the community bought a house which would be the school as well as a home for boarders. This change brought the faculty up to five, adding Sisters Mary Clement McAneny, Alberta Rohr and Mary Cecilia Lawless. The enrollment of 150-200 students required the addition of another Sister [?]. “The new convent was a large frame house with a small stove in each room, a dormitory for sleeping and a chapel where they had Mass every day except Sunday. There were no gas or electric lights and water could be found in the kitchen only. Outside toilets, a barn and a laundry were in the back yard.”[?] The boarders were numerous in the beginning because the ranch families near Laramie City were anxious to have a Christian education for their children. In the last year there was only one girl from Laramie City, Margaret Coughlin.

The Sisters also found time to visit the jail, and they were well received. When they made a point of seeing a man accused of killing his brother-in-law in an angry brawl, the sheriff hesitated, fearing the abuse that all had received when trying to communicate with him. The Sisters insisted. What a surprise the sheriff got when the prisoner warmly greeted the Sisters and wished to speak with them! That was true of all of the other prisoners who had been there. They treated the Sisters with great respect.

Trouble in Laramie City after 1895

Fortunes changed for the Sisters in 1895 when the railroad found a place in Denver to send their injured men. The Union Pacific asked the Sisters to take charge of the hospital there, but none were available. The rolling mills were taken to Rawlins, which required the workers to move with their families. This left large vacancies both at the hospital and the school. The Commissioners took their patients to secular housing. Only a few private patients were left at the hospital.

The decision to leave Laramie was made when the Sisters received threats of harm from the A.P.A. (American Protective Association, or “Know Nothings”). Preparation to leave Laramie was made immediately. They gave the deeds to their properties to the bishop and the building was sold to the Episcopal Church for an orphanage.

The school Sisters also felt the presence of bigotry and hate. Sister Perfecta Shanahan taught at the Academy in its later years. She told me that she was the sacristan at the parish church. One Sunday morning when she walked into the sanctuary to prepare for Mass, she noticed white flaky crumbs strewn all over the rug. She realized that some one had opened the tabernacle, taken out the hosts and chewed them before scattering them on the floor. Father Cummiskey, angry and saddened, offered Mass and invited those who were responsible to come to the church next Sunday. Four strange men were seated in the back pew of the church the following Sunday. Father had the opportunity to instruct them and to let them know the implications and consequences of their actions.

Many accounts are given in the community archives of the kindness and generosity of the Sisters in caring for their patients. Hard, roughened miners or railroad workers turned to God when the love of God was shown to them through the ministry of the Sisters. The Academy remained open until July of 1900, and when the Sisters returned to Laramie in 1952 to reopen the school, some of the former pupils of St. Mary’s Academy were present for the dedication of the new building.

Sister Philomena Quinlan, buried in Laramie, 1892

Sister Philomena Quinlan succeeded Sister Joanna Bruner as the second superior of the hospital in 1877. Several years later Sister left Laramie, but returned at the beginning of 1892. She died October 11, 1892, of heart disease and was buried in Laramie. Much consternation greeted the Motherhouse Sisters when they came to make arrangements to take Sister's body to Leavenworth, but they understood when they saw how well Sister's grave had been cared for. So Sister Philomena remained with those who loved her.

[Addendum. Below is the transcription of a letter from an official of the Union Pacific Railroad in response to an inquiry by Bishop McGovern regarding the Sisters hospital in Laramie.]

Union Pacific Railroad Company
Cheyenne, Wyoming
February 6, 1940

Bishop Patrick A. McGovern,
2105 Capitol Avenue,
Cheyenne, Wyoming

My dear Bishop;

In regard, to our conversation January 29, at which time you made inquiry as to steel foundry formerly operated at Laramie, and also when Union Pacific first established Hospital at Laramie:

I handled this with Mr. E.C. Schmidt, Assistant to the President, and after making due research he advises as follows:

“The Laramie Rolling Mills were built in 1874, consisting of a main building 113 x 310 ft., of stone construction with slate roof, a warehouse 50 x 100 ft., a shed 42 1/2 x 61 ft., a carpenter shop 21 x 49 ft., two hose houses and other miscellaneous buildings. The original cost of the building, the machinery and stock was approximately \$200,000. In the main building were machine shop, blacksmith shop, two store houses, bolt house, trestle rolling mill and spike house. The mills and most of its contents were destroyed by fire November 9, 1910, and in its last year of operation employed about 85 men with a monthly payroll of from six to seven thousand dollars.

The mills produced angle bars, track bolts, track spikes, bridge bolts, tie plates, car bolts, car forgings, bar iron and rerolled rails into shorter lengths.

We have been unable to find any tangible evidence that the Union Pacific ever established a hospital at Laramie during the construction period or during the years immediately following it. There might have been some hospital facilities provided in connection with the rolling mill, but none of the rolling mill records refer to any such hospital. Furthermore, the Union Pacific Hospital Department did not adopt the practice of keeping records until 1884.”

I hope that this information will be of some assistance to you,

Yours very truly,

B.O. Wedge
Superintendent

St. Mary's School
LARAMIE, Wyoming
conducted by
The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas
1878 to 1900 (July)

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

Pleased with the work of the Sisters of Charity in St. Joseph's Hospital, (opened 1876) the Reverend Eugene Cusson (Ku-son'), pastor of St. Mary's Church (later St. Lawrence O'Toole), Laramie, Wyoming Territory, appealed to Mother Josephine Cantwell at the Mother House in Leavenworth, for two Sisters to open a parish school. Sisters Loretto Foley (d. Feb. 21, 1922), and Francis de Sales Cannan (d. Dec. 10, 1887) were assigned to Laramie in September 1878.

For a little over a year they lived at St. Joseph's Hospital and taught in a little rented building near the Church. Probably there were between 80 and 100 children in all 8 grades. The Union Pacific Rolling Mills employed 150 to 200 men, and it is logical to conclude that most of them were men with families. Then (possibly some time in 1879) the Sisters bought "a roomy frame building on A Street not far from the Church." ["History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth" (1898), p. 284.] Three more Sisters were added to the "faculty": Sisters Mary Clement McAneny (d. Aug. 20, 1921), Alberta Rohr (d. Mar. 11, 1914) and Mary Cecilia Lawless (d. Sept. 14, 1934). The parish or parochial school became a private school—St. Mary's Academy, equipped to accommodate both day pupils and boarders. In addition to the regular work of the elementary grades, the Sisters taught music and sewing. The "History" states merely, "The school was well attended."

Sister Mary Alfreda Dineen who taught music at Laramie, 1898-1900, wrote:

“ Our school, St. Mary's Academy, was a large two-story frame building. Downstairs we had three large classrooms, two parlors (the smaller back parlor where Father Cumiskey had his meals), the Sisters' dining-room and kitchen, a small bed room, and a little serving room. Upstairs was one long dormitory curtained off in the middle with heavy red curtains. Back of this partition bed-steads, mattresses, bedding of all kinds were stored.

“ Next to this large dormitory was a large room where the Sisters slept in the winter time. It had a stove in it. Across the front of the second story was the Sisters' Community room, and adjoining it, a Chapel—cozy and complete. We had Holy Mass here each morning except Sundays and holy days.

“ Each room had a stove. There was no gas or electricity in the house, and water in the kitchen only. In the back yard were the laundry, the barn, and the toilets.”

This description of the house gives credence to the surmise that there were as many as 24 to 30 boarders, and from 80 to 100 pupils (including the day pupils) when the building was equipped. Anna Byrnes who attended St. Mary's School, finished high school at St. Mary's Academy, Leavenworth, in 1889. The last boarder at the school was Margaret Coughlin (1898-1900). “Because her home was so distant, she lived at the school.”

The Sisters of Charity withdrew from Laramie in July 1900. During the last school term there were between 90 and 100 children enrolled in all eight grades. Among them were the Ransom children—the only negroes in the parish. The teachers were Sister Mary Clement McAneny (d. 1921), Superior; Sister Mary Isabella McCormack (d. 1938); Sister Mary Alfreda Dineen (teaching in Kansas City, Mo., 1959), music teacher; and Sister Bibiana Nally, a golden jubilarian, living at the Mother House in 1939. She was the housekeeper at St. Mary's.

The building that had housed St. Mary's Academy, also was deeded to the Diocese when the Sisters left Laramie. It was destroyed by fire on July 14, 1925, according to this excerpt from a newspaper story:

“ Fire early this morning completely gutted the Cottage Rooms at 156 North Third Street, a two-story frame building that dates from 1879 or 1880, and was originally occupied by Catholic Sisters. P.T. Smythe, present owner of the building, told a Republican-Boomerang reporter today that the building, then comparatively new, was occupied as a school when he came to Laramie in 1882. It is his understanding that the building was erected in 1879.

“ During the last two years the building had been rented and used as a rooming-house by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Southgate. There were 12 people asleep in it, 9 on the top floor and 3 on the main floor, when the fire was discovered shortly after 2 a.m. . . .

“ The old building that once looked out on Laramie when this city [chartered as a city in 1884] was a raw and turbulent village of the American frontier, stood today a scorched and blistered shell. Once the prim and proper school house of a leavening element of a lusty community, an oasis of peace and quiet in a town where the hurrah of the cowboy was familiar, this old landmark has flared out in a final scene as violent and vivid in its way as anything its circumspect windows had frowned on in the old days.

“ The loss is estimated at \$4000.”

Some of the Sisters who taught at St. Mary's, Laramie:

Sister Mary Celestia Brady (Diamond Jubilarian, plus)

Sister Mary Perfecta Shanahan, 1890 to 1896 (Golden Jubilarian)

Sister Dominica Williams (d. 1916)

Sister M. Seraphine Carroll (d. 1928)

Sister Rufina Jullien (Diamond Jubilarian)

Sister Mary Remegius Reynolds (d. 1936)

Sister Mechtildes Dwyer (d. 1934)

Sister Petronilla Barbaz (Golden Jubilarian)

Sister Mary Flavia Croghan (went to Laramie as a novice and made her

first profession of vows there)

Sister Mary Joseph Flynn (Golden Jubilarian)

Sister Mary Constantia Atwood (d. 1926)

Sister Mida Smith (1899)

Sister Francis Marie Wasser

Sources:

“History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth,” vol. 1, 1898.

Chronicle

Journal, St. Mary's Academy, Laramie

Communication:

Sisters Mary Alfreda, Mary Perfecta, Mary Rufina, and Petronilla.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
WIND RIVER INDIAN RESERVATION
1888-1890

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

Early History

In 1851 Father Peter DeSmet, S.J., again responded to the plea of the western Indians to hear the word of God. Many of the tribes met in the Plain of the Great Council. They begged to learn about the sacrament of Baptism and after hearing Father's talk they asked that he baptize their infants. 1,586 natives received Baptism during DeSmet's visit. Many of these died in a plague that followed shortly after.

By 1876 the Arapahoes were assigned to live on the Wind River Reservation along with the Shoshone, who had been their hereditary enemy. They made peace and they were ready to share the land.

For eight years the government did nothing to help the Indians. In 1884 that was changed when the administration began to build a boarding school for the children of the Wind River. Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha had collected \$5,000 to be used for the Indians, so he gave it for the project specifying it to be used to furnish the interior of the school. The gift was accepted and the bishop was given permission to take over the school and to provide the teachers. Father John Jutz, S.J., of Buffalo, was made the superior of the school and he was to bring the Franciscan Sisters of Buffalo to the reservation when the school was completed.

When Father Jutz arrived in Lander, he found that Rev. John Roberts, an Episcopalian, had received permission to take over the school because the missionary had stopped there on his travels and stayed to teach the children. Father Jutz had been delayed by the task of collecting the necessary supplies and equipment for living on the reservation. The Indian agent suggested that Father find another location to settle.

Coincidence or providential? It proved to be providential. He chose a high place in Arapahoe country to pitch his tent and found that his closest neighbor was Chief Black Coal and family. These Indians were eager to have a school as they had been sending their children back East for an education. The Episcopalian pastor praised Father Jutz for his wise choice.

In preparation for his trip to the reservation Father Jutz bought a pony from a soldier and a tent from an army surgeon. It took all morning for the two Jesuit priests, Father Moriarty and Father Jutz, to travel from Lander to the reservation. The site he chose, as we told you, was a happy one. After he had pitched his tent, he prepared for Mass. In the morning Chief Black Coal and family were there. The congregation consisted of the chief, two wives and two children, who sat on the ground around the altar. The language difference did not seem to deter them from enjoying themselves. They were very attentive to all that Father did.

Father Jutz was able to add another room to his tent by using the protector as another tent. His bed was a mattress of hedge branches covered with buffalo hide. His kitchen was a hole in the ground filled with a few stones.

Life became more complicated when Fr, Moriarty was withdrawn from Lander. Father Jutz then offered Masses on alternate Sundays there and at Fort Washakie and returning on Tuesday. Brother Ursus Nunlist, S.J., was sent to lend an extra hand.

Immediately plans were drawn to build a mission house, 24' x 24', with four rooms: chapel, kitchen and dining room, sleeping rooms for each of them, and a living room with a workroom for Brother Ursus. Timber was hauled from the mountains 35 miles away. Bricks had to be made by hand – Father Jutz's hands! His letter to the bishop telling about their experiences somehow appeared in the public press. The result was that Father Jutz received \$500 in gifts and another \$5,000 from Miss

Katherine Drexel of Philadelphia to pay for the project. Because of her generous gift she has been named the foundress of St. Stephen's Mission. She also founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to care for the blacks and Indians. Her fortune was used for many schools and hospitals. Xavier University of New Orleans was one of her outstanding gifts. In the autumn of 2000 she was canonized by Pope John Paul II.

Because of an unfortunate misunderstanding Father Jutz was recalled to Buffalo and a veteran Indian missionary, Father Paul Ponziglione, S.J., replaced him.

Call to the Sisters of Charity, 1888

Father F.X. Kuppens, S.J., arrived at the mission as superior at the same time [1888]. He helped build the convent and also secured 160 acres of land for the new mission which he started to cultivate. In March 1888 construction began on the convent. Father Kuppens asked for the bishop for Sisters to teach in the school recommending that he try the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth first.

Sister Joanna Bruner was chosen to be superior over her objections that her age (68 years) and her weight (300 pounds) were obstacles to the safety of the trip. Her companions were: Sisters Ann Davis, Clara Kammer, Mary Jerome Martin, Jovita Jennings and Mary Claudia Finnigan. Bishop Burke intended to accompany the Sisters from Laramie to St. Stephen's Mission; but he was unable, so he sent Father Ryan of Rawlins in his place.

At Rawlins they took a covered wagon. Two Sisters were left behind because of the lack of space. Sister Joanna was dismayed at the prospect of boarding the wagon, but the driver upended a trunk to make a stairway. There was no report of how she got out of it. They traveled a day and a night. At the bottom of Beaver Hill they stopped for breakfast

and a new driver. They arrived in Lander about suppertime and remained there for the night.

After breakfast the next morning the Sisters were ready for the 25-mile trip to St. Stephen's Mission. They arrived about 5:00 in the evening. Their supper was prepared by Father Kuppens' housekeeper Mr. Jones. Their residence was not ready yet so they at the old Mission House a month. It was a half-mile from the new convent.

Wind River Valley was a paradise of beauty. The river cut across the reservation, native wild flowers lent their color and fragrances and the Sisters noticed that the birds were very different from those of Kansas. The magpie intrigued them most. They could be taught to talk and their chattering entertained the Sisters, but these birds were bold and destructive. Their meals came from the food given to the pigs. If not driven away, they would easily carry it all away.

The workers were proud of the convent, and the four Sisters were, too, because it had been well planned and the workmanship of the carpenters was special. "At the end of the kitchen porch was a well with water as cold as ice and as soft as rain water. A short distance out into the yard was a similar one."

While the Sisters were still at the Mission House they used their time to plan the celebration of Sister Joanna's golden jubilee on the first day of the New Year. It was difficult to keep their work secret. She would strenuously object. Father Kuppens welcomed the occasion because it was an opportunity for the Indians to meet the Sisters and to learn the reason for their coming.

Some time before the Sisters took possession of the new house the Indian women began to call on the Sisters. Very few of them spoke English. So sign language came in handy. The first to come was the wife of Chief Black Coal and Mr. and Mrs. Yellow Owl. Then came Mrs.

Rage Bear, Mrs. White Antelope, Mrs. Sleepy Wolf, Mrs. Spotted Crow, and Mrs. Shakespeare, the sheriff's wife. They wanted to meet the "White Caps" and to speak to "the Big Chief Squaw" about sending their children to school.

Most of the Sisters' callers stalked into the house without a knock or a greeting, sat down and studied the Sisters, gazed around the room until their curiosity was satisfied and then they left. But the next day they would probably return for another visit.

All of the tribe was invited for Sister Joanna's jubilee. She became suspicious of the Sisters' plans when guests started arriving New Year's Eve. They included the members of the Indian Agency with families, and friends of the Sisters. Father Kuppens, through an interpreter, explained the meaning of the festivities. They understood and really appreciated the Sisters.

At two o'clock dinner was served. The Sisters had prepared it. No menus were recorded. The Indians asked to be allowed to show their gratitude by performing one of their picturesque dances in colorful costumes. It lasted two hours but the Sisters were fascinated by this novel entertainment. At the end of the meal Father Kuppens asked the Indian agent to speak about the opening of the school. The Indians were impressed and pledged to send their children to school---to the big fine house where the "White Caps" lived.

When school started shortly after jubilee, eighty-five girls and boys arrived. The first task of the Sisters was to make them proper inhabitants of a new clean house. In the first place, each child had to be bathed, combed, and cleanly clad. Sister Joanna's job was combing hair. She found it especially difficult when cutting was necessary. The children were frightened by the scissors, afraid that they were going to be beheaded. Losing hair was serious enough. Shakespeare was her lifesaver because he was able to explain to the "victims" that they were

in no danger. The clothing for the students was ready for them. Katherine Drexel had seen to that.

The forming of the classes went according to size because they all knew the same amount and no one could speak English. The Sisters started teaching the numbers 1,2,3 until they knew them all to one hundred. Then they started on the alphabet. Learning to write was not difficult because the students were skilled in imitating anything in the line of drawing.

The plan of the house was not made with the children particularly in mind. It was almost impossible to separate girls from boys. It seemed best to add an extension onto the house. Sister Joanna informed Miss Drexel of the need who responded that she was anxious to come to see what the situation was for herself. When she reached Omaha Bishop O'Connor dissuaded her from continuing her westward trip because of the dangers and hardships of the travel. She did not try to go any farther.

During their summer vacation the Sisters cultivated gardens to give them fruits and vegetables for their charges. Sister Joanna described the results in a letter to the Motherhouse. I quote: "The soil of this place is most productive; splendid vegetables are raised. Of cabbages raised here this season not a head weighed less than twelve pounds. One weighed 52 pounds and it was taken to Lander for exhibition. All the other produce was equally fine. Melons cannot be surpassed in quality, quantity or size."

A number of cats lived on the reservation, but they were more afraid of the Indians than of the dogs. When the Indians retired to their tepees at night the cats appeared. They fed themselves by fishing in the river. They sat on the bank and when a fish came close enough they jumped into the water for the catch.

Berries were abundant providing the makings of jelly. The Sisters also had a herd of Milch-cows which provided them with the necessary milk. 2400 pounds of beef came from Lander. Some small animals made it difficult for the Sisters to keep chickens and eggs.

September arrived. Help was needed to supply clothing, accommodations, and money to pay the hired help. Bishop Burke and a group of friends of the reservation visited to assess the needs and the amount of money required to make them possible. They estimated that \$10,000 would be a feasible amount to enable the Sisters to open the school.

Sister Joanna was determined to hold to her decision – no help, no school. December came along with the Rev. George Willard of the Catholic Indian Bureau. He was very concerned that school was not in session, but Sister Joanna still persisted in not opening the school until her requests were granted. When no aid arrived, the Sisters dissolved their mission on the Wind River Reservation. The Sisters were transferred to other mission houses where their services were gladly accepted.

**School at St. Stephens Mission
(Arapahoe Indians)
Wind River, Wyoming
conducted by
The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas
1888 to 1890**

The beginning of St. Stephen's Mission was briefly presented in The Jesuit Bulletin, XIV:2, February, 1935:

“St. Stephen's Mission was begun in 1884. It is situated in the eastern part of the Shoshoni Reservation in Fremont County, Wyoming, about 100 miles southeast of Yellowstone National Park.

“Two tribes, each numbering about 1000 Indians, occupy this Reservation: the Shoshoni who live in the western part, and the Arapahoe, who occupy the eastern part. Up to the present time, St. Stephen's Mission has been working almost exclusively among the Arapahoes. The majority of these are Catholics; the Shoshoni still mostly pagan.

“The Arapahoes were assigned to their present position in 1876. Up to 1884 practically nothing was done to civilize them. In 1884 the Government opened a boarding school near Fort Washakie for the Indian children. Bishop O'Connor of Omaha collected \$5000 which he offered to the Government for equipping the school. Apparently the Government accepted the offer, and gave Bishop O'Connor permission to take over the school, and provide it with teachers. Father John Jutz of the Buffalo Mission, a branch of the German Province, was appointed to take charge of the school, and the Franciscan Sisters of Stella Niagara had already been selected as teachers.

“Father Jutz arrived in the spring of 1884, it seems, before the building was finished. Imagine his disappointment when he learned that the

school had already been turned over to an Episcopalian Minister, the Rev. John Roberts. What could Father Jutz do under the circumstances? He consulted the Government Agent, reminding him of the Bishop's offer, and of the understanding with the Government. The Agent was very kind, but could do nothing except advise Fr. Jutz to open another school wherever he pleased. Father knew that the Arapahoes occupied the eastern part of the Reservation, and that they were said to be more inclined to culture than were the Shoshoni. They had, in fact, already sent some of the children to Indian Schools in the East. For these reasons, he resolved to begin his missionary activities among the Arapahoes.

“He purchased a pony, a saddle, and a tent; [he] loaded his belongings into a wagon, and accompanied by a Father Moriarity, who was a secular priest in charge of Lander, Wyo., he went to the land of the Arapahoes. He chose a spot in the triangle formed by the confluence of the Big Wind and the Little Wind Rivers, about four miles west of the present town of Riverton. Father Moriarity returned to Lander, leaving Father Jutz alone with the Indians. He pitched his tent, and set up a temporary altar where he said Mass the next morning. The sole attendants at his Mass were his next door neighbors, Chief Black Coal, and his two wives, and two children.

At this time saying Mass was Father's only spiritual missionary activity, as he did not know the Indian language. However, other duties were almost immediately thrust upon him. Father Moriarity was recalled from Lander, and Father Jutz supplied his place, saying Mass at Lander and at Fort Washakie on alternate Sundays, and returning to his mission on Tuesday or Wednesday.”

Sometime, then, between 1884 and 1887 the Jesuit missionary, Reverend F.X. Kuppens must have taken over the work at the Mission. It is surprising that this article in the Jesuit Bulletin does not refer to it.

In 1887 Miss Katharine Drexel appropriated funds to build a school for the children of the Arapahoe Indians at St. Stephen's Mission, Wind River, Wyoming Territory. The Government had decided that it would be more practical to educate the Indians in the West than to transfer them to the schools in the East where the climate seriously affected them. In September 1888 when the building was nearing completion, the Right Reverend Maurice F. Burke, Bishop of Cheyenne, at the suggestion of the Reverend F.X. Kuppens, S.J., of St. Stephen's, asked Mother Josepha Sullivan, Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, to open the school.

Although it had been the wish of the founder, Mother Xavier Ross and her Sisters to teach the Indians, this was the first opportunity they had been offered. Yet, because of the great distance from Leavenworth, and the uncertainty of the situation, Mother Josepha hesitated. She was, however, prevailed upon by Sister Columba Normile, her treasurer, to comply with the Bishop's request.

For the Mission, these five Sisters were selected: Sisters Ann Davis (d. 1898), Clara Kammer (d. 1899), Mary Jerome Martin (d. 1933), Faustinus Jennings (at Mother House 1939), Mary Claudia Finnigan (d. 1926). In spite of her protests, Sister Joanna Bruner (d. 1903) was made Superior of the colony, and after ten years in Kansas, she again went West to open another institution.

The six Sisters made their first stop at Laramie where Bishop Burke met them and delivered Father Kuppens' message. The building had not been completed, and he wished the Sisters to remain in Laramie until he sent for them. But Sister Joanna felt that their presence at St. Stephen's would hasten the completion of the school. "We will go on and help them prepare it," she said. Their railway journey ended at Rawlins. There a Father Jas. Ryan met them. The covered wagon awaiting them could accommodate only four of the Sisters, so two had to wait for the next trip.

“St. Stephen’s is in the Wind River Valley, a very beautiful spot, hedged in on all sides by mountains, and traversed by two rivers known as the Little Wind and the Big Wind Rivers. . . .”

But it was a long and hazardous trip from Rawlins to Wind River. The coach left Rawlins at 10 in the morning; traveled all day and all night. Early the next morning it arrived at “Beaver Hill, a precipitous mountain, down which the Sisters thought they would never pass alive.” The steps for the horses had been cut in solid rock. They made the descent slowly but safely. The Sisters breakfasted at the small station-house, and then with a new driver continued the journey to Lander where at five o’clock they met Father Kuppens who had brought the wagons to take the Sisters to the Mission. That night the Sisters accepted the hospitality of a Mrs. Crowley and remained in Lander. The next morning they heard two Masses: Fr. Kuppens’ and Fr. Ryan’s. (There was a church in Lander, but no resident priest.) After an early breakfast, the Sisters with the two priests, began the last stage of their journey with Chief Black Coal and his brother-in-law, Yellow Owl, driving. They had come with Father Kuppens from the Mission the day before.

It took them all day to travel the 25 miles from Lander to St. Stephen’s Mission. They arrived about five o’clock. For a month the Sisters were to live in the old mission house, about a half-mile from the new school building. The next morning, they walked along the bank of the River to the school.

Early in November 1888, the Sisters took possession of the new building, St. Stephen’s, “all bright and new and shining, and completely furnished by the generosity of Miss Drexel, with everything necessary for school and housekeeping. . . .

“It was a large three-story brick building with a basement. The rooms were spacious, the ceilings high, windows large, with inside shutters,

halls broad with wide staircases. All the house was conveniently arranged.

“At the end of the kitchen-porch was a well with water as cold as ice and as soft as rain-water, and at a short distance in the yard was a similar one. . . . The Sisters were well pleased with all they saw.”

Immediately the Sisters began the task of making the acquaintance of the Indians. Few of them could speak English, and [they] communicated by signs. Besides Chief Black Coal and Yellow Owl, the Sisters met Mrs. White Antelope, Mrs. Elk, Mrs. Sleepy Wolf, Mrs. Spotted Crow, Mrs. Crazy Man, Mrs. Scar Face, [and] Mrs. Shakespeare, the wife of the Sheriff, an educated Indian, who became their interpreter, and whose 12-year-old daughter, Annie, was to be a pupil in the school. Among the women was a Mrs. Broken Horn, a white woman who had been captured when a child, and married to an Indian. Though she had forgotten all the English she once knew, she was always happy to see “a pale face.”

All of these women came with their children to see the “white caps” about sending their children to school.

January 1, 1889, was the 50th anniversary of Sister Joanna’s entering the novitiate, so the Sisters made it an occasion of great festivity in which all the Indians participated. Father Kuppens and the Indian Agent, Colonel Thomas Jones, were there too. Colonel Jones made an appeal to the Indians to send their children to school, and they, through Chief Black Coal, assured him that they would send the children “to the fine big house where lived the white caps.”

After the jubilee, the school was opened to 85 boarders, boys and girls. The Sisters found [that] it was a great problem to teach these children how to be “proper inhabitants of a new clean house.” Though the Sisters preferred to take only 18 children at first until they could adjust them to the new and strange environment, the Indians insisted on bringing all 85

the first day. (Here in the History a seventh Sister is mentioned.) The new clothing for the children, also was supplied by the Drexel fund.

None of these children could talk English. They were classified according to size. At first the Sisters taught them the Arabic numbers from 1 to 100; then the alphabet. The blackboards were the teachers' great assets, for the children loved to draw.

“One of the duties of the Sisters was to teach the children how to work. . . . They began by teaching them how to wash dishes.”

After a month's experiment, the Sisters knew it would be necessary to segregate the boys from the girls. This could not be done in one building. The only solution was to build an addition to accommodate the boys. Miss Drexel was at once informed of this exigency. She started immediately for St. Stephen's to consult with the Sisters. When she reached Omaha she was told of the difficulties of the route to Wind River, and by Bishop O'Connor was dissuaded from going further.

Sister Joanna was resolved not to open the school again in the fall unless her requests were granted. She had written to both Miss Drexel and to the President of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions at Washington, D.C., but received no reply until December 11.

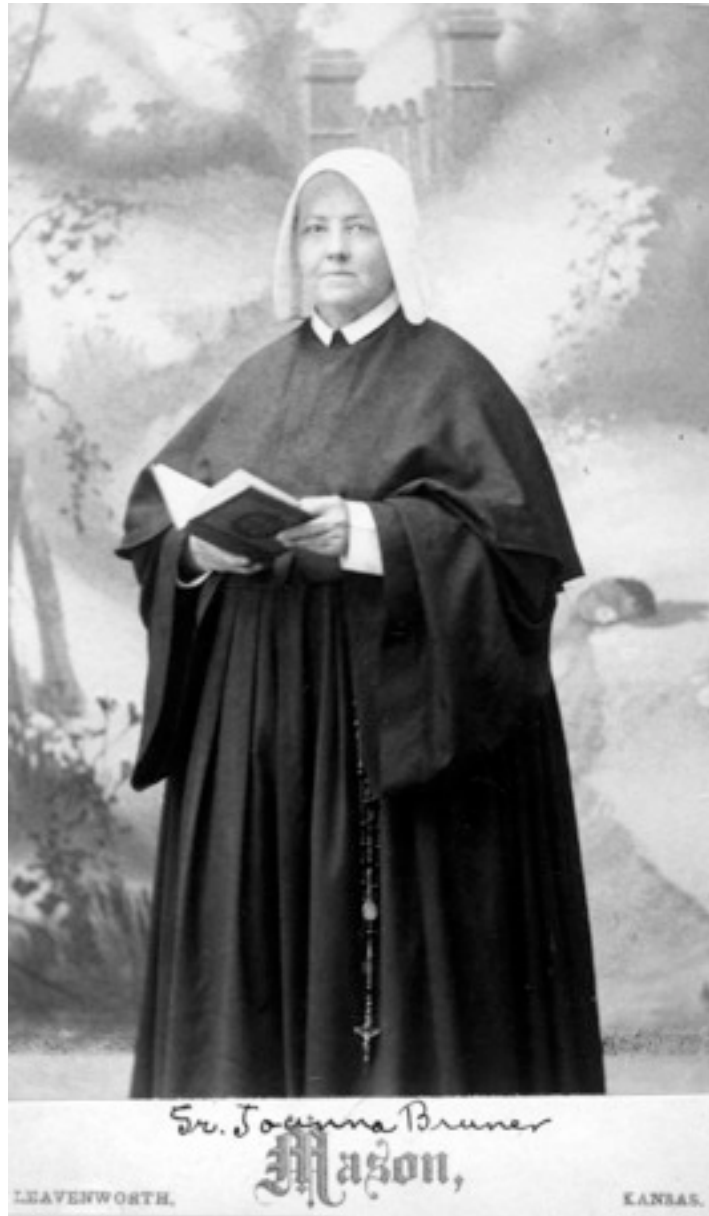
When it was time to open school in September there was great need of provisions, accommodations, and money to pay wages for hired help. At the close of the spring term, Bishop Burke had visited the school; Colonel Thomas Jones, the Agent, had carefully observed the affairs of the Mission for three years. General Armstrong and Judge Carey had both spent several days investigating conditions at the Mission. All agreed that another building was absolutely necessary; that cattle should be bought; and stables provided for them (2400 pounds of beef were bought weekly at Lander and transported to the Mission School.); that out-houses and general improvements were imperative. Their very

conservative estimate was \$10,000. If this appropriation were made, the school could be maintained. The appropriation was not made, and the school was not opened.

In December, the Reverend George Willard of the Catholic Indian Bureau, made an inspection of the Mission, and was gravely concerned to find that the school was not in operation. Apparently no attempts were made to meet the needs of the school. Sister Joanna knew that she could not hazard bringing the children together again under the existing conditions, so early in 1890, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth withdrew from the Wind River Mission.

Sister Leo Gonzaga
The Mother House
Sisters of Charity
Leavenworth, Kansas 1939

Sister Joanna Bruner, 1888



SISTER JOANNA'S JUBILEE
(from The History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, ch. 34
[Anonymous, 1898],
excerpted by Sister Catherine Louise)

The Coming of Big Chief Squaw

In September 1888, the Convent building at the Mission was nearly complete. The Bishop and Father Kuppens, the Jesuit Superior, went East to secure the services of the Leavenworth Charity Sisters for the new school. Sister Joanna Brunner was appointed to head the school. She first protested much against being sent, stating for the hundredth time her physical incapacity of always being to the front, for she weighed three hundred pounds, and was already sixty-eight years of age. Notwithstanding Sister Joanna's lamentations, she with her band of five Sisters arrived at St Stephens in the Fall of 1888. On the wild stage-coach ride from Rawlins to Lander, down Beaver Hill, the driver was overheard telling a fellow at a rest stop made at the base of the Hill, "I tell you, man, I hauled on this trip the biggest woman ever seen in these parts, oh, but she's heavy." After arriving in Lander, the Sisters were accompanied to the Mission, nearly 25 miles away, by Father Kuppens and two Arapaho, Chief Black Coal and his brother-in-law, Yellow Owl.

Black Coal drove the wagon in which Sister Joanna rode, and it is said that she must have impressed him very favorably, for he said at the end of the drive, placing one hand on his heart, and pointing with the other towards her, "She all good," and he possibly thought even better after she gave Yellow Owl and himself each a bright silver dollar for their assistance. In the first part of November 1888, the Sisters took possession of the new convent and at the same time prepared for the approaching Golden Jubilee of Sister Joanna. Father Kuppens decided to invite all the Indians to the festivity since he could also then explain the reason why the Sisters had come. On January 1, 1889, the great day came. A number of Arapaho had already called at the Convent to make

their acquaintance, which had to be done by sign language, since but one or two spoke any English. The first to come were the wives of Black Coal and Little Owl. These were followed, in a short time, by Mrs. Rage Bear, Mrs. White Antelope, Mrs. Elk, Mrs. Sleepy Wolf, Mrs. Spotted Crow, Mrs. Crazy Man, Mrs. Scar Face, Mrs. Shakespeare, wife of the sheriff, who was an Indian who had been educated, and Mrs. Broken Horn, a white woman captured when she was a child, who had grown up with the Arapaho, had married into the tribe and could not speak a word of English. Others soon came to bring their children to see “the White Caps” and to speak to the “Big Chief Squaw” as they styled Sister Joanna, about sending the children to the new school. Soon, the Indian people had their favorites among the Sisters. Annie, the daughter of Shakespeare, a girl of twelve or thirteen years of age, had taken a fancy to Sister Jerome. On one occasion Mrs. Shakespeare came to the house bringing Annie with her as usual. Sister Mary Claudia, taking her by the hand said by signs, “This is my little girl,” but her mother, with a frown, drew Annie away from her, and went across the room to place her hand in that of Sister Mary Jerome.

Jubilee Day, January 1, 1889

Finally, the great day of Jubilee came on January 1, 1889. The guests, headed by Chief Black Coal, repaired to the spacious Chapel, where Mass was offered by Father Venneman. Father Kuppens, through an interpreter, made a speech in plain language, where he explained the Scriptural meaning of a Jubilee and accounted Sister Joanna’s good works, which the Indians fully appreciated and understood. After Mass, the constant patter of little feet and the joyous unrestrained laughter of many children who took endless pleasure in exploring the broad halls and spacious stairways of the new convent could be heard. At 2:00 p.m. all came to the handsome dining room, including 200 Arapaho Indians, who partook of a great feast prepared by the Sisters as a gift from Father Kuppens to Sister Joanna. The Arapaho then requested to be allowed to

show their own appreciation and respect for the occasion by having one of their exceedingly picturesque dances in costumes worthy of the stage of an Eastern opera house. The dance continued while the guests ate and lasted nearly two hours, to the delight of the Sisters who had never before witnessed such a scene. When the Indians left, Father Kuppens sent with them a bountiful supper, all prepared, to finish the day at Black Coal's house. But before the conclusion of the festivities, Black Coal made a fine speech saying why the building had been erected and telling the Sisters, the Indian Agent and the assembled Indians of the wish of himself and the Agent that they send their children to the school and fill it to capacity. The Agent then spoke and reminded the people that the new school gave them an opportunity to be educated on the Reservation rather than send their children to the industrial schools far to the East, which had already proven so fatal to their health. It all must have worked, for on opening day the Sisters suddenly found themselves with eighty-five young boys and girls as boarders, even though Sister Joanna had asked Shakespeare to request that the people only send eighteen children at a time so that they could be properly cared for by the Sisters.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
SHERIDAN
1914-1993

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

Pioneers

The Sisters of Charity had not been in Wyoming since 1900 when St. Mary's Academy closed in Laramie. But in 1914 the Sisters were asked to come to Sheridan to open Holy Name School. Father John Duffy, the pastor at Sheridan, had known the Sisters at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver and felt confident in bringing them to Sheridan.

The faculty who pioneered the mission were Sisters Seraphine Carroll, Redempta O'Sullivan, and Mary Martin Scanlon. Sister Mary Faber McGeehan joined the group a little later.

When the Sisters arrived in Sheridan, the red brick school on East Works was ready and waiting. It contained four classrooms. Three were to be classrooms for Grades One-Eight. The other room was made into an apartment for the Sisters. The cloakroom served as the bathroom. The dedication was held August 30, 1914.

Opening Day for Holy Name School, September 5, was a special event as reported by the Sheridan Press. A procession marched from the church to the school where Bishop McGovern blessed the building. They then returned to the church for a High Mass. In the evening the bishop confirmed a large class of children and adults. Sixty-eight children enrolled for class the first day.

The parish assumed the responsibility for all of the expenses of the school. No tuition was charged and the books were free. Holy Name was not the first parochial school in Sheridan. The Adventists were already in operation. The public schools also had a good reputation. The Sisters'

goal became “a good school among good schools.” Father Duffy announced that since the school was available, Sunday school was unnecessary. He later realized his mistake and reinstated Sunday school classes.

Increase in enrolment made building more classrooms a necessity. In 1920 the “bungalow” was placed to the south of the school. It was like a rural schoolhouse with one stove to heat the whole place. Sister Mary Jude Redle, S.C.L., was a third grader at the time. She remembered that your degree of comfort was determined by the distance you were from the stove. Later it was used for the Boy Scouts and others.

Mrs. Rogers sold her house on East Works to the parish in 1922 to be used for the convent. The Sisters were very pleased to have a new home. They were able to have a chapel where Father Duffy could offer Mass every day except Sunday. The Sisters and any parishioners who wished could attend. Peter Demple furnished the house. The annual food shower for the Sisters was also initiated.

Sports

The first football team, coached by Bill and Frank Redle, played their first game against Buffalo in 1931. They lost. When Bill left Sheridan to attend law school, Frank continued to coach. Bill returned in 1938. He immediately organized a collection of funds around the parish to provide uniforms for twenty-two players. The reward for his efforts was a winning season. The team won all their games.

Basketball had a more difficult beginning. The team had no place to practice, but occasionally they could use the old gym in Hill School. No suits either. Shortly before the district tournament some young ladies of the parish came to their rescue by forming a sewing group who produced twelve uniforms. The team played very well, but they were defeated by

one point in the final Class B game, making Big Horn the winner. In 1954 a state parochial school basketball tournament was organized and was active until 1970. St. Stephens won eight titles during that time and Sheridan won seven.

In the fall of 1959 Bob Juresek volunteered to coach both teams. The first paid coach, Ed Rachac, came to Holy Name School in 1965. The school has been blessed by many good coaches. Their records spell success.

The excellent sports program was equalled by the academic excellence demonstrated by the honor students who won in spelling bees, math challenges and science fairs.

Building

Father Frederick Kimmett became pastor of Holy Name parish in 1948. Soon he realized the need of a parish hall. In making the plans they also discovered the need for more classrooms because of the increase in enrollment. As a result, the final plan included a stage-gymnasium, four classrooms, a cafeteria with a kitchen, a library and two meeting rooms. The fund-raising campaign set the goal at \$125,000, but they netted \$136,000. However, the actual cost of the building was \$228,234 because preliminary work was necessary to shore up the subsoil.

The new school opened in 1952, and the extra advantages were enjoyed by all. The library equipped with 1000 books and audio-visual supplies made learning fun. The hot lunch program was a favorite, especially on cinnamon roll day. Peas were not so popular.

The lay teacher program began in the late 1950s. Mrs. Leo Lehr was the first lay teacher, and for two years three Extension Volunteers from New York taught at Holy Name. Part-time teachers were aides to the classroom teachers.

The next project initiated by Father Kimmett was to build a new convent for the Sisters. The house on East Works was now about fifty years old. In the spring of 1959 the planning sessions began. Father George Stoll replaced Father Kimmett, but the committee continued the work. A generous donation of \$100,000 by Countess Thorne-Rider made the task of the planners more pleasant. The building would accommodate twelve Sisters, with the possibility of adding another floor if necessary. Bishop Hubert Newell blessed the new convent in 1961.

Works

Many activities kept the Sisters well occupied. Besides teaching at Holy Name School, the Sisters instructed CCD classes in Sheridan, Ranchester, and Buffalo. They made visits to shut-ins each week, both those in the hospital and at the nursing homes. Later parents assumed the responsibility of the CCD classes which gave the Sisters opportunity to serve the parish in different ways. They enlarged their service by joining various groups, such as the parish council, altar society, and liturgy committee. Sister Mary Carol Hogan was appointed to a Diocesan committee on CCD. She attended meetings in Casper and Denver. The Sisters were very active in the Search movement for the high school students. CYO and Newman Club also were part of the Sisters' program

1970s and 1980s

As happened throughout the country in the 1970s and 1980, there developed a shortage of Sisters to staff the schools which made the hiring of more lay teachers necessary. This resulted in fewer Sisters living in school convents. The parish was suffering from lack of space. Obviously, the solution to the problem was to cut the first floor and the ground floor of the convent in half to provide office and meeting room space for the workers. The north end of the building contained the

chapel, parlors, office and meeting rooms which accommodated the staff members. The Sisters quarters were adequate with the kitchen, dining room and laundry. The bedrooms were on second floor. Later the remaining Sisters moved to the maintenance man's house across the street from the convent, and the convent became the parish center.

Sister Dolores Erman taught science in the Holy Name School. Sister Dolores taught science in Wyoming schools for eighteen years, six years in Rock Springs and twelve years in Sheridan. In 1999 she received the Distinguished Service in Science Award for making a significant contribution during her teaching career.

Sister Jean Lind was the pastoral minister to the elderly and sick. She was also the chairperson of the liturgy committee. Other committees have profited by seeking her expertise.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Principals of Holy Name School:

1914-1915 Sr. Mary Seraphine Carroll

1915-1919 Sr. Barbara Sammon

1919-1925 Sr. Mary Lewine McMahan

1925-1931 Sr. Mida McInerney

1931-1937

1937-1940 Sr. Mary Emilda Gleason

1940-1946

1946-1949 Sr. Helen Joseph Gillispie

1949-1955 Sr. Mary Boniface Lynch

1955-1957 Sr. Mary Benedict Caples

1957-1960 Sr. Mary Maurice Coughlin

1960-1966 Sr. Marie Dominic Driscoll

1966-1968 Sr. Frances Cabrini

1968-1975 Sr. Mary Rachel Flynn

1975-1984 Sr. Agnes Mary Brickley

1984-1993 Sr. Mary Jane Schmitz, the last of the SCL principals.

As a fitting close I'd like to quote a poem created by the fifth grade class of 1999.

“ Holy Name

Faith-filled school

Sharing, caring, loving

By word and example

Family tradition.”

**Holy Name School
Sheridan, Wyoming
conducted by
The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas
1914**

Sheridan boasts that it is the most beautiful city in Wyoming—that when one arrives there, his sensations are like those of the desert-traveler who has come at last to an oasis. “It nestles in the green valley at the confluence of the Big and Little Goose Creeks, beneath the shadows of the Big Horn Mountains whose wide circle of lofty and beautiful snow-clad peaks forms a majestic background. In these wonderful mountains designed by the great Architect of the Universe for the perpetual pleasure and refreshment of mankind, the Federal Government has set aside what is known as the Big Horn National Forest.” (Sheridan Publicity Pamphlet, p. 1.)

To this alluring little city, Father John Duffy invited the Sisters of Charity to teach in the Holy Name School in September 1914, only 46 years after the great missionary, the Reverend Peter J. DeSmet, S.J., had offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Sheridan on the last Sunday of March. That Mass was the first Christian service offered on the site.

Father Duffy had first met the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth when he was assistant at the Cathedral in Denver, Colorado. So impressed was he by the Sisters at St. Joseph’s Hospital that when he had an opportunity to employ Sisters as teachers he immediately applied to their Mother House.

The Sisters selected for Holy Name School were Sisters Mary Seraphine Carroll (d. 1928), Mary Redempta O’Sullivan, and Mary Martin Scanlan. (These were the first Sisters to go to Wyoming since 1900 when the Sisters withdrew from St. Mary’s School in Laramie.) That first year there were 68 pupils in the eight grades.

In the school building there were four classrooms. Three of these were occupied by the pupils of the eight grades. The fourth was partitioned off to provide a miniature apartment for the three Sisters. Then to provide for the increase in enrollment “the bungalow,” a small frame building, was erected next door to the school in 1920. This served as a classroom “just like a rural schoolhouse with one big stove,” said Sister Mary Jude (Redle) who spent her third grade days there. This “bungalow” later became the headquarters for the Holy Name Boy Scout Troop and the “Friendly Indians.”

In 1922 Mrs. Rogers gave for the use of the Sisters, her \$6000 home at 350 East Works Street. In this new home was a beautiful little chapel in which Father Duffy celebrated the weekday Mass for the convenience of the Sisters and the very few parishioners who daily assisted at the Holy Sacrifice.

The Sheridan Press gave the following account of the dedication of the Holy Name School:

“The beautiful new Catholic school building on East Works Street . . . is to be dedicated this (September 5, 1914) morning with most impressive ceremonies . . . Rt. Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, Bishop of Cheyenne, will conduct the dedicatory services. The edifice . . . is a very handsome building . . . erected at the cost of \$18,000.”

In a brief sketch of the historical development of the city the Sheridan paper stated:

“In 1914 the Holy Name Church erected its parochial school on East Works Street to provide Christian education for its children who come within the grammar grades. The school cares for approximately 200 children. It is conducted by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, who are everywhere noted as excellent religious and efficient teachers. As the school does not make provision for the high school

courses the children, upon graduating pass on to the city school where at this time there are over 100 Catholic pupils.

“The Holy Name School is a free school for all the children of the parish who come within the eight grades. All the expenses of the school and cost of textbooks are met directly out of the church treasury. While providing a first class education for the children, the Holy Name School saves the taxpayers of District No. 7 an annual sum of \$25,000 in taxes, an item worthy of consideration these days of high taxes and general depression.”

These comments are especially interesting when one recalls that Sheridan boasts also of the best school system in the State. It rated the Holy Name School, superior.

See “Four Decades of the History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (1898-1938).” Manuscript at the Mother House.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
ROCK SPRINGS
1951-1979

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

Ever since the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth opened the mission at Wind River Reservation in 1888, the Catholics of Rock Springs dreamed and hoped for a school for their children. Sixty-six years passed before that dream became a reality. Encouraged by Bishop Hubert Newell, Father Albin Gnidovec bought the land for a new school. Two buildings already occupied part of the area. The barracks of Camp Pilot Butte had housed the Army who were peace-keepers in Rock Springs after the Chinese Riot in 1885. And the two-story house was brought from Cumberland, Wyoming, when the mining Superintendent was transferred to Rock Springs. He brought his home with him by rail. The house was divided into quarters, and it made the trip very well. In fact it was still standing in 2002 and in use, the chapel devoted to Perpetual Adoration.

Fund raising campaigns were initiated in the two Rock Springs parishes, Our Lady of Sorrows and Sts. Cyril and Methodius. Sts. Cyril and Methodius parish decided the bids for a two-storied brick structure were too expensive and decided to renovate the barracks.

Sts. Cyril and Methodius School, 1951

Six Sisters were surprised and delighted when they arrived by train from Kansas and received a rousing welcome by Father Gnidovec and seventy-five parishioners, including a small brass band. It was heart-warming for the Sisters to see such acceptance and enthusiasm. They knew for sure that they were welcome. Their convent, as you may have guessed, was the converted Superintendent's home. It made a very

comfortable home, refurbished and newly painted. The chapel was always the center of the Sisters living, and the new one was a wonderful haven after a very busy day.

September 5, 1951, school bells rang for the six Sisters and 196 students. Sister James Marie was the principal. [The editor attended the Fourth Grade that day and Sister Mary Eugenia was the teacher.] The students found that their classes were challenging, and they were given the opportunity to participate in many activities to develop their talents, thus enhancing what they mastered in reading, writing and arithmetic. Sister James Marie asked Sister Madonna to supervise the baseball game on the playground and to referee the other games to help the youngsters to learn the rules. Things had gone well until one afternoon when one runner was called out. He was running between the bases. He was angry because he did not agree with the call. He immediately took his case to the principal. Sister James Marie listened and then gave him money to go to the store, a block away, for a rule book. Two Sisters and a player checked the rules and found that the referee really knew her business. From that time on Sister Madonna's word was law.

The seventh and eighth grades were added in 1952. The highest enrollment of all the years was in 1961 when it reached 323. Afterwards the enrollment gradually decreased until the seventh and eighth grades were dropped in 1970. This dropped the enrollment to 160.

Our Lady of Sorrows School, 1952

1952 was also a special year for Rock Springs because of the completion of Our Lady of Sorrows School on the south side of town. The brick structure of two floors would be sufficient for all eight grades. The cost was \$140,000 plus the lots that were purchased to provide playgrounds for recess.

The convent was built close to the school and furnishings were carefully chosen by a committee. Women of the parish initiated the annual food shower which was always a pleasant evening and a big help for those whose task it was to serve tasty and healthful meals.

Bishop Newell blessed and dedicated the school August 28, 1952. He gave high praise to the people for their faith and loyalty. He also blessed the flag given to the school by the V.F.W. It became a custom to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag at the end of morning recess when all of the students gathered around the flagpole. The Salute to the Cross was also included.

The students enthusiastically entered all of the extra-curricular programs, such as sports, spelling bees, science and math fairs, essay and poster contests. The schools' trophy cases displayed their successes. Both schools had a history of many accomplishments and trophies. The students showed great talents in the academic and extracurricular events. They also belonged to the Diocesan basketball parochial conference that was very active at this time.

Combining the schools

Reorganization of the education process in Rock Springs in 1971 was planned to make more efficient use of teachers and materials. SCM enrolled students in Grades One-Three, and Grades Four-Six went to OLS. This combining of services and materials was a thrifty move. The actual moving was so well planned that it was accomplished in several hours. Some students complained that it should have taken longer, so that a free day was necessary.

This system of combining classes worked well. In the spring of 1979, Sister Marjorie Feuerborn resigned as principal. From that time on, the schools had a series of lay principals, until 2000.

The next change came in 1988 when the SCM School was forced to close because of boiler and flooding problems. All students transferred to the OLS building. By 1990 more classroom space was needed. The plans were approved and the building provided the room that was needed.

The latest change for the Catholics of Rock Springs was the forming of a single parish, Holy Spirit, in 2000.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Principals who served in Rock Springs:

Sts. Cyril and Methodius School

1951-55 Sr. James Marie Taney

1955-60 Sr. Rose Angela Dougherty

1960-66 Sr. Owen Marie Falk

1966-68 Sr. Mary Terrence McGovern

1968-70 Sr. Dolores Erman

1970 Grades 7 and 8 eliminated

Our Lady of Sorrows School

1952- 57 Sr. Mary Aloysius Manning

1957-63 Sr. Catherine Ann McCormick

1963-68 Sr. Jean Catherine Hayden

1968-69 Sr. Stephanie Porter

1969-70 Sr. Angela Rose Barbieri

Rock Springs Catholic School

1971-73 Sr. Dolores Erman

1973-77 Sr. Angela Rose Barbieri

1977-79 Sr. Marjorie Feuerborn, the last S.C.L. Principal.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
LARAMIE
1952-1998

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

Father John McDevitt became pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole's parish March 1, 1935. He earned the reputation as "The Builder" because of his accomplishments in Laramie. He built the school and the Newman Center on 18th and Grand.

One of his first moves in Laramie was to purchase the block facing Fourth Street between Kearney and Sheridan Streets for \$11,000. Bishop Hubert Newell gave the parish \$3,000. Father also sold the property and rectory which was across the street from the church on Grand. He used the janitor's house at Seventh and Iverson as the rectory. Using all sorts of means, he was able to raise the \$179,000 necessary to build the school.

Before the school opened, the Blessed Virgin Mary Sisters (B.V.M.) from Casper came for vacation school each June for a number of years. We looked forward to this special time. Contact with the Sisters was a delightful experience.

St. Laurence School

Work on the school began in 1951. St. Laurence School was ready for occupancy September 17, 1952. Two Hundred Ten students enrolled. Seven Sisters were also ready for their work. Sister Mary Carlotta was Principal. Sisters Martha Mary, Mary Incarnata, Catherine Sienna, Gregory, Lorraine, and Loretta completed the faculty.

The blessing and dedication of St. Laurence School began with Solemn Benediction in the church followed by a procession from the church

down Fourth Street. A thousand spectators participated in the ceremonies. A color guard of members of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars assisted in the dedication and raising of the flag. Special guests included Bishop Hubert Newell, City Manager A.J. Hull, Jr., Mother Mary Francesca, Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity, Sister Mary Baptista, Supervisor of Education, and Sister Mary Flavia, who taught at St. Mary's Academy in 1900. Father McDevitt presented the hand bell from the old Academy to Sister Mary Carlotta requesting that she use it in the school for the first week.

Several years later an additional wing was added on the north end of the building to provide a junior high education for the St. Laurence students. This would make the transition to high school easier because all the city's youth would be starting in the same new situation. The addition contained two classrooms and a library and resulted in an increase in enrollment.

Sr. Theodota's Death and Burial

December 18, 1960, was a very sad day for the Sisters of Charity and the residents of Laramie. It had snowed heavily during the night and flakes were still falling when the Sisters left the convent to attend the 6:00 a.m. Mass. A postal worker was traveling west on Grand Avenue going to work to sort the early Christmas mail. The meeting point of these travelers occurred at the intersection of Fourth and Grand Avenue. The caution light was not blinking, but the driver stopped to allow the first group of Sisters to pass. He did not see the second group because his windshield was not cleared except for a space in front of him. When he started to move, he struck Sister Martin sending her flying away from the car. Sister Theodota was hit squarely, pushing her under the car. Sister Kevin Marie's ankle was bruised and her skirt was caught under the wheel of the car. As Sister Martin rushed to her aid, she noticed Sister Theodota under the car. When the Sisters finally reached her, she

was unconscious. Sister Martin ran quickly to get Father Callahan. Parishioners on the way to Mass took time to collect blankets and coats to keep Sister warm. Father gave her the Last Rites. The ambulance took her to Ivinson Hospital. Doctor Bernard Sullivan was at the hospital, and he did all that he could do, but the skull fracture was beyond repair. Sister Theodota died only an hour after the accident.

Monday morning the school children went to the church for the rosary and then walked to the mortuary just a block away to view the body. The Sisters formed an honor guard. They chose hours and led the rosary. At 6:00 p.m., the body was taken to the church. The parishioners filled the church for the rosary at 7:30 p.m. Various church groups kept vigil all night. The Sisters were overwhelmed by the outpouring of the love and concern they experienced.

The funeral on Tuesday was a continued sharing in the Sisters' sorrow. The celebrant of the Mass was Father Callahan. Monsignor McDevitt was too ill to attend the funeral. Bishop Newell delivered the eulogy. Many tears were shed. Sister had endeared herself to all who met her. Among the mourners were eleven priests, seventeen Sisters of Charity and seven Sisters of three other communities. The Sisters sang the Mass a cappella from the pews. Sister Theodota was buried in Greenhill Cemetery beside Sister Philomena.

A flashback is necessary here to let you understand how Sister Philomena was in the Catholic cemetery. In 1953 Father McDevitt bought a section of land adjacent to the cemetery to be blessed as a Catholic burial ground. His first desire was to move Sister Philomena into the Catholic area. Mother Mary Ancilla gave her permission, and the other legalities were given attention. Plans were made to have the ceremony after school the next day. Seven Sisters were able to participate with Monsignor McDevitt. Several altar boys had charge of the holy water for the blessing. The undertaker had placed the remaining bones in a small white casket. These were the arm and leg bones and a

piece of the skull. The undertaker remarked that Sister must have limped badly because her left femur was broken and the ends were lopped over so that the left leg was much shorter than the right. The Sisters asked to have the coffin opened and the undertaker, overruling Monsignor's objections, opened the small casket. They asked to hold the skull. One of the servers fainted and had to be revived. A lovely gold crucifix was also in the casket. Sister Mary Sarah decided to leave it with Sister. Monsignor blessed the grave and Sister Philomena was home in consecrated ground.

1970s Changes

Due to the lack of teachers in 1970, it was decided to close the junior high, making St. Laurence School an elementary school. In 1976 a kindergarten was included in the school system. It was hoped that it would be a good feeder for the school. Also, a pre-school used the house across the street from the school. Morning and afternoon sessions accommodated the parents, and the students were able to use the school gym for their games and exercises.

1997 Celebration

1997 marked the forty-fifth anniversary of St. Laurence's School, a perfect opportunity to celebrate and remember the good that had been accomplished. The date for the festivities was set for July 12. It would be part of Laramie's Jubilee Days, a miniature of Cheyenne's Frontier Days. Former teachers and principals received invitations. Twenty Sisters traveled to the mountains to share in the commemoration and fun.

St. Laurence School sponsored a float for the parade. Some Sisters rode as part of the float. The rest were in a truck that came right behind the

float. At noon a tasty barbeque was ready for the hungry crowd. The playground gave plenty of seating space for those in a picnic mood and the lunchroom took care of those who preferred a more protected place. It was a good time and place to meet old friends and share memories.

In the gym were displays of photo albums and memorabilia arranged according to grades and years with lists of the faculties. It was easy to spend most of the afternoon catching up on the doings of old friends. Everyone was invited to the 5:30 p.m. Mass for all participants. The liturgy was planned especially for the occasion.

Other Works

Penny Day was a special day planned for a Friday afternoon activity for the whole school in early September. The penny jar was a large bottle placed inside the front door of the school inviting those who entered the building to check their change. It provided a fun afternoon in the gym, where math and science stations were set up for the students to use the pennies to experiment and solve problems. Every student and teacher participated. Plans were made to make every Friday afternoon a time for special projects.

It was a custom for the parish to sponsor Thanksgiving dinner for the needy and lonely of the city. The Sisters were always involved in setting the tables, serving and hosting the guests. One group that was always most appreciative were the university students who could not go home. They ate well and also helped with clean-up.

1998 Departure of the Sisters

The Sisters worked with various parish groups as parish council, home and school association. Some had adult education groups. One Sister coordinated the parish service to the elderly and sick by organizing

schedules and training for lay members of the parish to take the Holy Eucharist to shut-ins.

The month of May 1998, was the final month for the Sisters of Charity to serve the people of Laramie in St. Laurence School and parish. Many activities had a special significance for the Sisters and school children. On May 7, the Living Rosary brought the children to the gym. The lower grades lead the prayers by rotating past the microphone so that everyone could hear them. The upper grades did the readings and the singing. Sister Pat Canty accompanied them. The service was well attended,

An Evening of Thanks on May 13 honored the two remaining Sisters in Laramie and included all of the Sisters who had taught at St. Laurence's School from 1952 to 1998. Mrs. Winona Munari was also honored. She taught kindergarten for seventeen years at the school. Testimonials and letters were read. Sandy Aguilar read a letter from the Bishop. A plaque of gratitude was given to Sister Elizabeth. Refreshments were served.

Memorial Day gave the Sisters a chance to finalize things in the house and to pack their own things. Sister Elizabeth thought, "If ever a house could tell stories, this would be one for tales of great years and very special people." School closed June third, and on June seventh, Sister Elizabeth Skalicky and Sister Pat Canty left Laramie to go to the Motherhouse for the fifteenth General Chapter of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Principals of St. Laurence O'Toole School

1952-1954 Sr. Mary Carlotta Flynn

1954-1960 Sr. Mary Sarah Fasenmeyer

1960-1966 Sr. Kevin Marie Flynn

1966-1971 Sr. Patricia Sullivan

1971-1981 Sr. Sandra Brosnahan

1981-1983 Sr. Margaret Finch

1983-1991 Sr. Katherine Mary Westhues

1991-1998 Sr. Elizabeth Skalicky

Epitaph for two Sisters of Charity buried in Laramie

One final note of historical importance. We, the Sisters of Charity, leave two of our loved members buried in the Laramie cemetery, Sister Philomena Quinlan and Sister Mary Theodota Cosgrove. Years ago when the community wanted to transfer the remains of Sister Philomena to Leavenworth, the people asked that it not be done, "so that the Sisters may return some day." In 1951 the Sisters did come back after fifty years. May these two women, who in various special ways, continue their presence in Laramie, and maybe in some way enabled the Sisters to return to the high plains again. We are very grateful for these years and for the blessings of having been able to serve God's people in this place.

Sisters of Charity in the Post Vatican II Shift in Ministry

Sister Therese Steiner came to Laramie in August of 1978 to plan a family religious education program for St. Paul's Parish, a part of the Newman Club building designed by Monsignor John McDevitt. Father Charles Taylor was appointed pastor. The next year Sister Therese also became involved with the students at the University of Wyoming. She was joined in 1985 by Sister Catrina Ann Bones who was able to assist in the programs and implement others. Support groups for the divorced, separated, or widows were initiated, as well as advocacy for those seeking annulments. The needy found assistance not only for food, but also the mentally, or physically ill, spiritual needs, the homeless or homebound. They were able to affiliate with the other charitable agencies in Laramie.

Sister Mary Beth Minges came to work with the student organizations as mentor and director. The Search retreats were very popular and they were responsible for raising the spiritual awareness of those who participated in the retreats. The Newman Club had regular meetings and activities.

Both Sisters Therese and Catrina Ann held Diocesan offices and were active in the Sisters' Council. They also were active in the work of the Synod of 1993.

In August of 1988 Sister Therese moved to Cheyenne as a Pastoral Assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral. She continued work in religious education, presentations on prayer and spirituality with a move toward a more holistic approach to spiritual growth. She studied massage and was able to work at the DePaul Health and Fitness Center applying what she had learned. Things were going well, but she felt the need of time to deepen and refresh herself and renew her skills. She went to the School of Applied Theology at Berkeley, California, for a sabbatical year.

Upon her return, Sister Therese was more convinced that holistic spirituality should be studied and applied more widely. Father Gerald Sullivan agreed and asked her to join the Holy Trinity staff. Her main area of interest and responsibility was providing formational opportunities for adults and families for spiritual growth. She introduced Small Christian Communities and now has ten active groups. The rest of her ministry time has been devoted to responding to people's interests, especially women, for spiritual growth and development. She has conducted workshops in fourteen Wyoming cities.

In recalling her years in Wyoming Sister Therese remarked, "Looking back over my years in Wyoming, I notice a development of ministry in response to the needs people expressed. I have enjoyed my years in Wyoming and value all the contacts and friendships, I have been privileged to develop. My experience is that it takes years to build trust

and awareness of peoples' needs and desires and I hope that I am able to continue resourcing them in the years to come.”

In 1996 Sister Catrina Ann moved to Kansas to work in the Health Care Systems.

**Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
CHEYENNE, DE PAUL HOSPITAL
1952-1992**

Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L.

When Bishop Patrick McGovern invited the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in 1945 to establish a Catholic Hospital in Cheyenne, he knew that they would bring with them knowledge, experience and good will to their mission.

In 1875 the Sisters had come west to Laramie, Wyoming, to build St. Joseph Hospital, to serve the Union Pacific workers and the residents of the small town that had developed there. Twenty years later they gave the Hospital to the Bishop and left Laramie because of threats from the A.P.A. (American Protective Association), the forerunners of the K.K.K. (Ku Klux Klan) in Wyoming.

Seventy years later, the Sisters were urged to return to their healing mission in Wyoming. Bishop McGovern donated land for a building east of the city in the new Mountainview addition. The city's fund raising effort on behalf of the Hospital realized \$300,000, so that the bids could be let and the construction started. The Sisters would be responsible for the remainder of the two million dollar construction cost. The City of Cheyenne gave a gift of spruce trees which were planted at the west end of the Hospital. The Sisters brought in the trees, on the east side, from the mountains, and the apple trees were gifts from friends.

Bishop Patrick McGovern told Mother Mary Francesca O'Shea, the Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, that the name of the Hospital should be "Mercy Hospital." She was living in Santa Monica, California at the time. Telegraph wires began humming. Mother did not think that the name was meaningful. Her idea was to call it "St. Patrick's" because

this was the Bishop's project. This time it was "no" from the Bishop. His suggestion of "DePaul" won approval.

Opening of DePaul, 1952

Dedication of DePaul Hospital was set on the feast of the Sacred Heart, June 20, 1952. The cornerstone was laid. One sad note was that Bishop McGovern had died only seven months before at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver. However, for those of us who knew him and his work for the Hospital, he seemed very present.

The band from the Warren Air Force Base came to enhance the dedication ceremony with their music. They helped carry out the chairs for the program. One unfortunate musician cut his hand badly when opening the chair and needed bandages. The medical supplies had not yet been delivered, so we had to run across the street for help from the neighbors. A lovely dinner was served to the visiting clergy, dignitaries, and Sisters of the area.

July 2, 1952, was announced as the opening date for patients to be accepted. Many ambitious souls anxious to be the first patient had lined up early that morning. The line reached all the way to the corner of 18th and Hot Springs. Sister Ann Raymond, administrator, had other plans. She received a call early that morning concerning a traveling migrant worker whose infant son became very ill during the night. Sister arranged to go to the family and bring the baby in the side door of the Hospital. Rueben de Leon was admitted for treatment of dehydration and malnutrition. It was a most fitting way to honor St. Vincent de Paul, the Hospital's patron, by accepting as its first patient a very poor, sick infant. St. Vincent was famous for his nightly ventures through the streets of Paris in the 1660's in search of abandoned babies. He took them to the Daughters of Charity to receive care. Rueben became a healthy child after several weeks of loving attention.

DePaul Hospital was an imposing sentinel as it stood etched against the eastern horizon of Cheyenne. The north and the south wings were joined at the center by a tower and formed a wide letter L. It seemed to be standing guard until the Sisters could take over. The building dominated the whole neighborhood because of its location in the new Mountainview addition. No residences had yet been built. DePaul's arrival seemed to invite neighbors to share the delights of Cheyenne's new eastern addition.

The chapel, the gem of DePaul, was the pride of the Sisters. Mrs. Nellie Derr, a Cheyenne resident, gave a gift of \$20,000 to make the chapel a fitting memorial for her son who died several years earlier. Mrs. Derr and her son, C.E., had a doughnut shop near downtown which was a very popular stop for motorists. Announcement of the coming of a Catholic Hospital made the Derrs very happy and they started saving to build a donation fund. Before the Hospital's completion, C.E. died unexpectedly. Without hesitation, his mother knew the fund would supply a special memorial for her son. She wanted a unique place of worship to draw many visitors. Mother Mary Francesca worked with Mrs. Derr, and their achievement won the praise of all.

The decorations, furnishings, vestments and vessels were all selected to form a unity of design. The pews were made of walnut. The altar was birdseye maple with walnut trim. The frame for the reredos was made of the same wood. The cross on the altar and the altar railing matched the same scheme. The Stations of the Cross and two statues came from Bolzano, Italy, and were carved from Italian limewood. The corpus on the large cross over the altar was also carved in Italy. The drape on the reredos at the back of the altar was a bright gold crushed plush. The most expensive items in the chapel were the mural decorations and the pews. The gold in the murals was genuine gold leaf. Anton Schwarzler was the chosen artist. He was a native of Austria where he did his first painting and later lived in Wheatridge, Colorado. He specialized in

ecclesiastical design. Original sketches were made for each of his contracts. At DePaul the motifs depict the articles of the Apostles' Creed.

DePaul Hospital had the capacity of 121 beds and forty-three doctors made up the staff. In 1991 this statement was made for the DePaul Archives: "The bed capacity has remained the same, but there are now over a hundred physicians and dentists practicing at De Paul.

Departments have enlarged and have become more proficient in delivering the best health care in Wyoming. The Hospital employed 469 people, 337 full time people and 132 part time. Monthly pay roll amounted to more than \$800,00, making the annual sum of almost \$11,000,000. This was quite a boost for Cheyenne's economy."

The medical staff was of prime importance to the Hospital. Forty-one medical personnel made up the DePaul staff in 1952. These were nineteen in general medicine, five dentists, three in radiology, 2 surgeons, 2 each of pathologists and otologists***, and one each of the following, ophthalmologist, urologist, pediatrician, internist, orthopedist, and gynecologist. The figures indicate that the majority of the physicians were family practitioners, but that could be misleading because many of the doctors had become specialists through past training or graduate studies. As a result, it was quite difficult to delineate members according to specialties because many of them were masters in several areas. Over 100 doctors were on the staff in 1992.

In 1953 DePaul Hospital was incorporated in the state of Wyoming, which meant that the Board of Directors was legally responsible for the management and operation of the Hospital. The first lay Board of DePaul Hospital was created in 1953 as an advisory group. They met every other month. Because the group had no authority to make changes and could only make suggestions, there was small chance for effective follow-up. Sr. Mildred Irwin, president of the SCL Health Service Corporation, instructed the Board that eleven members would make up the Board, five lay men or women and six Sisters of Charity who had

knowledge of Hospital operations, but she emphasized the impact and value of lay members. Their business expertise, their knowledge of the needs of the community with projected goals were vital to the functioning of the Board. The two groups formed a professional team for effective Hospital management and the Sisters could not accomplish their goals without both teams working together. The Board members were serious about their commitments and were quick to realize that public relations were of prime importance. They offered to visit doctors' organizations and surrounding areas to acquaint the people of the special services of DePaul. They looked into the possibility of sponsoring a Poison Center. It was suggested that clubs and organizations hold luncheon meetings at DePaul and take a tour after their meetings.

DePaul was served well during the years of the Board of Directors. Fred Marble was the first chairman from 1953-59, followed by Byron Hirst, 1959-70, W. Robert Dubois, 1970-71. Paul Etchepare served as its first president and was active from 1971-76. Robert Smith followed 1976-79, James Higday 1979-80, Doug Reeves 1980-82, Attilio Bedont 1982-84, James Helzer, 1984-86, Fred Loomis 1984-89, and Barbara Murray, 1989-1992.

The Hospital Guild

The women of Cheyenne were eager to be a part of the service to the patients who came to DePaul. Mrs. W.H. McInerney and her deanery committee initiated a patient library, the first patient service. They purchased a library cart, secured magazine subscriptions and solicited book donations. The service was ready for operation before the Hospital was opened. This was the inspiration for the Hospital Guild.

Sister Ann Raymond Downey, S.C.L., administrator, asked Mrs. John (Ruth) Loomis to organize a Guild. She saw the need to provide patient services not directly provided by nursing care. These included a sewing

committee, Gift Shop, an information desk. These would be set up and maintained by the members. The first planning meeting was set for October 20, 1953. Mrs. Loomis was the first president, Virginia Hirst, secretary, Ethel Norris, treasurer, Elizabeth Hoffmann, membership chairman, and Jessie Lummis, publicity chairman. Suzanne Pattno reported that the purpose of the Guild would be “To create a firm foundation for a broad social support for the community to assist in meeting the needs of adequate Hospital and health facilities.”

A membership tea on December 6, 1953, brought 210 interested new members. Six in-Hospital services were defined and developed so that the members could designate their choice of activity. By February 1, 1954, these services were in full operation.

As the Hospital grew, more medical equipment was needed. In April 1954, the Guild sponsored its first benefit to raise funds for a diathermy machine for the new Physical Therapy department. A game night was held at the Elks Club and the Plains Hotel. So successful was the event that the diathermy machine was obtained, and an iceless electric oxygen tent was also added.

Christmas sales were held in the downtown area until 1988 when it became a much larger project named Wyoming Professional Craft Sale and moved to the National Armory. Craftsmen from around the state rented tables and sold their crafts. DePaul received a percentage of the sales. Since the crafts were juried, a high quality profile was maintained. It proved to be a profitable venture and the proceeds, as always, were given to DePaul.

In 1961 Guild members launched a larger, more elaborate endeavor for raising needed funds for Hospital equipment. The DePaul Charity Ball became a reality in April as “A Spring Affair” and achieved such success that Cheyenne society wished to designate the opening of the spring social season each year with the Charity Ball. The first ball was held at

the Hitching post. The Harry Smiths donated the Coach Room for the dinner dance. Blue Barron, noted orchestra leader, provided the music. Because of the ball the Guild was able to give a substantial down payment for a new Mark II Imperial X-Ray. The Charity Ball became a much anticipated spring event which always presented a different theme with matching decorations and menu.

The last Charity Ball was held in 1992, the thirty-second event for the Guild. All participants enjoyed a gala Mexican fiesta with all of the music, decorations and menu from South of the Border. A Mexican dance group from Denver performed a program of genuine native dances. The guests entered into the spirit of the event and made the final Charity Ball a memorable one.

The Gift Cart, a 1968 addition to Guild activities, brought sundry items to the patient's bedside. Soon the patients were waiting for the highly decorated cart with essential articles as well as magazines and candy. A year later the cart evolved into a glass case in the lobby to supply small gifts and some crafts for visitors and patients. Success brought a need to enlarge the service by opening a gift shop. By using the cashier's office to the right of the front entrance, carpenters created a very attractive room for all the wares of the Guild. It attracted the attention of all those who came to the Hospital. The Lemon Tree was opened Saturday, July 16, 1977. The name was suggested by Mrs. William Dineen. Gift items included stuffed toys, plants, silk flowers, religious articles, cards, magazines, candy and sundries. The Lemon Tree received visitors seven days a week managed by the Guild volunteers. They contributed from \$8,000-\$12,000 each year to the Hospital.

A junior volunteer service was begun in 1979 under the direction of Barbara Murray. Young people between the ages of 14 and 18 enrolled. These were not Candy Strippers because that organization did not enroll boys. Mrs. Norman Stark, Mrs. Jack Brubaker and Mrs. Dana Lanier

coordinated the group until it became the responsibility of the Director of Volunteers.

The ladies of the Guild should be congratulated for their great work. I am indebted to Suzanne Pattno for the history of the Guild which she wrote in 1991. Many of the facts were new to me so her writing was vital. I'm sorry that I couldn't use all of the material because a book would be the end product.

Equipment

Pediatric Services became a part of DePaul in 1981. The unit needed new decor and furnishings, so Mrs. Earl Kincheloe, Mrs. L. Wallace and Mrs. Russell planned and actually did much of the work to make Peds a special place for the little ones. An additional service was added in 1987. Small patients were given pillows, and teenagers received autographed animals. The whole Guild became involved in the project. A sewing committee was formed to provide the gifts and another group was to finance buying the material. Their idea was a very popular one. "Breakfast with Santa" was held at the Knights of Columbus Hall with the help of the Kiwanis Club. A delicious pancake breakfast was served. When Santa and Mrs. Santa arrived they visited with the children and passed out gift packages. Only a nominal fee was charged, but it was enough to provide material for the pillows.

The last service of the Peds department was the TLC program. If a child was ill and needed attention but not in need of a doctor, a working mother could be relieved of the worry by bringing her sick child to pediatrics for the day to be supervised. That was the TLC program.

Increase in the number of patients and demand for services soon made it obvious that plans needed to be made for expansion. The Board of Directors started gathering information on everyone's needs and

developed an addition that would enhance the appearance of the building, and add new medical procedures by providing space for their accomplishment. The bids were let and construction began in 1976 on a two-story attachment to the north side of the Hospital. It would contain a thirty-two bed medical floor, a new radiology department with the most recent designs in equipment so that they could boast of a state-of-the-art facility. The new surgical suite included five operating rooms, cystoscopy room and a cast room. Also added was a recovery area with room for ten patients, a large central service department, physical therapy, materials management, two meeting rooms and a large auditorium on the ground floor. The emergency entrance was greatly improved by allowing through traffic access.

Since the opening of the emergency room in 1976, the patient count increased every year. An average day meant that thirty-five patients saw doctors and had been treated for minor or major ailments. The staff had an enviable record of 100 years of accumulated service in the field of emergency medicine. They maintained “business around the clock” seven days a week, an essential part of DePaul’s health care package.

The concept of Hospital-based Home-Health care was new in Wyoming when DePaul initiated their program in 1975. It was a well-established part of the Hospital extension service. It included home nursing, volunteer caregivers, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

In the early 1970’s the two Hospitals in Cheyenne agreed to share services for the sake of efficiency. Laramie County Memorial Hospital took all of the OB/GYN patients while DePaul specialized in developing an outstanding pediatric department for the whole region of southeast Wyoming and surrounding areas.

In 1980 the doctors were especially anxious to initiate a more sophisticated heart treatment for the people of Cheyenne. At the time it

was necessary to send seriously ill heart patients to Denver. Our doctors worked at the Denver Hospitals on their critically ill patients. This posed hardships on both the physicians and families. In 1981 the cardiac lab became a reality, and cardiologists and nurses were hired to complete the staff. The ICU unit, a part of the cardiac unit, had ten beds equipped with the latest monitors and equipment needed for cardiac patients. In the fall of 1988 the first open heart surgery was performed. The program became a very valuable asset to the Cheyenne community. Over 100 successful bypass surgeries were performed in the unit. Other diagnostic tests and treatments became available to heart patients in the Cath Lab, such as angioplasty, pacemakers, scanning machines and stress tests. Another service of the cardiac team was outreach education. They spoke to groups, businesses, and schools about heart attack prevention and the necessary components of a healthy lifestyle.

At the same time that the Cath Lab was organized, the Chemical Dependency Center was given priority and a place to set up a treatment center was on the third floor. The twenty-eight day program included individual counseling, group sessions, family involvement, and an individual plan of behavioral modification so that a greater degree of success was made possible. A rate of over 66% success, compared with the national average of 39%, was a great achievement.

DePaul administrators also took an interest in sponsoring medically supervised wellness programs aimed at preventing acute illnesses through exercise and nutritional instructions.

DePaul Health and Fitness Institute (DHFI) was established in 1984. Classes and programs were held in the Tower Room on fifth floor. The response was so great that it was necessary to find larger accommodations. A satellite was established when they were able to use part of the Warehouse Grocery on East Pershing Boulevard. They remodeled and furnished it with equipment necessary for classes and other services. Physical Therapy, Sports Medicine, Massage, Cardiac

Rehab II were vital parts of the help patients received there. Health programs such as weight-loss and stop-smoking seminars added to the effectiveness of the work done for the wellness of the city.

Volunteers performed many valuable services for the patients and the nurses throughout the Hospital. One hundred thirty-five men and women donated 12,200 hours annually doing tasks that relieved the nurses to spend more time in the actual care and comfort of the sick. They were also able to file or type and do other office chores to relieve the office workers.

Goldencare Plus was an outreach to the senior citizens of Cheyenne established in 1988. They planned to aid the seniors with their Medicare and insurance payment problems. They also received free coffee in the cafeteria, preferred parking spots, a private room for the price of a double room when the beds were available. Educational and social programs were planned each month. Membership numbered almost 1350 at its peak. The age level was to be lowered to sixty through sixty-five. Their part was to be called Prime Life Plus, but it was still in the planning stages when the Sisters departed in 1992.

Some of the new machines in the radiology department increased the ability of the physicians to diagnose and treat patients with more accuracy due to the sophistication of the technology of the machinery.

SPECT made images of the body by rotating around the patient taking pictures at a high rate of speed so that the technicians were able to build 3-D images of any organ. It could also slice an organ at any angle so that the interior of the organ could be seen as well. Nuclear imaging was made possible through the use of the machine. It was the only SPECT machine in the state. CAT SCAN also took high speed pictures. Magnetism was used to produce the images so that it was safer than the Xray. ULTRASOUND INSTRUMENTS AND EKG monitoring were two of the valuable tools used by doctors.

Meals were served to the patients from the kitchen where dietitians were in charge of seeing that each patient received the kind of nourishment he or she needed. They also maintained the cafeteria on the ground floor to feed the employees and guests.

The last addition to DePaul Hospital was dedicated in 1991. The third floor extended the surgical floor by adding twenty-six beds. Most of these were private rooms. Renovation of the boiler rooms and the installation of three new boilers made the heating of the plant more efficient. The Chemical Dependency Center building was outside the Hospital, but joined to the cafeteria so that the patients could get their meals there. It housed seventeen guests, two large meeting rooms and six counselors offices.

The Skilled Nursing Facility located on fourth floor cared for those patients who were ready to leave the Hospital, but were not able to return to their homes because they needed nursing care. The unit has twelve beds, a dining room and a recreation room.

DePaul was the only Catholic Hospital in the state and one of two that was privately owned. DePaul received no tax money from the county or the state, or any financial support from the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health Services Corporation. DePaul's revenue was from the daily income from patients, donations from bequests, the Guild, and the Foundation.

Departure of the Sisters, 1992

The prospects for the years ahead were happy and exciting ones. 1991 was the year of growth and change. Many more changes would be made possible in the future. The front entrance would be extended to the sidewalk, the Lemon Tree extended and the foyer of the Hospital would be enlarged and refurnished. The approach to the emergency room

would be enclosed so that the patients could be protected in inclement weather. Our slogan, “Moving Forward with the proud tradition of care,” seemed to pinpoint the administration’s view of DePaul’s position in Wyoming’s medical environment.

This was 1991 and everyone at DePaul was aware that the big day was coming fast upon us, DePaul’s 40th birthday! Committees were grouping, getting heads together to brainstorm the possibilities of making this a day to remember. The struggle seemed over and there was much to celebrate. But times were changing for Hospitals and administrators were starting to seek solutions to the growing problems. In 1989 Manuel Ortiz of DePaul and Jon Gates of Memorial met often to gain understanding of the situation and to suggest possible solutions.

The first problem was the product of improved surgical methods. Outpatient surgeries made hospitalization unnecessary. The result was lower patient occupancy for the Hospital. The second problem was the large sum of unpaid bills because of the high cost of the care, and the third was the low rate of reimbursement from the government’s Medicare and Medicaid.

A research firm was hired to conduct a survey of the situation. Since both institutions were financially sound it was not a question of saving only one of them. The fact that faced each one was the need to enlarge the cardiac services department by building a unit that could house large sophisticated equipment. The decision rested with the Health Service Corporation of the Sisters of Charity. They sent back the decision that the Sisters would sell DePaul to Memorial. It was an unbelievable shock to all at DePaul, because it was a foregone assumption that DePaul was in a position to create a medical center in Cheyenne.

Reflection on the Last Days at DePaul

The following is a reflection of the final days at DePaul Hospital in Cheyenne written by Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L., Director of Volunteers. Forty years! Forty years of skillfully, cheerfully serving the sick and the community of Cheyenne. Forty years of struggle daily to make ends meet. Forty years of successfully sharing the SCL mission of respect for the individual regardless of race, color, creed, or ability to pay for the services rendered. What about now, in 1992? DePaul's services and mission have been entrusted to Laramie County Memorial Hospital. The many facets of the health care situation in Cheyenne had to be diligently and prayerfully studied to reach the decision that would most benefit the two hospitals, the community, and the patients who needed the best care possible.

Motivating the decisions were these factors: the cost of duplication of services and equipment to the customers, the administration of Medicare and Medicaid monies by the government, the pressing need to update DePaul's heart program which boasted ten years of successful treatment for scores of patients. These were the most pressing needs.

Did the welfare of DePaul's employees enter into the negotiations? Most certainly. Attrition rather than dismissal would bring the needed total of nurses and other employees to the proper level. The few who were not needed or who did not wish to stay received help in relocating or finding another job.

It was a privilege of sorts to be a part of the transition, to be with those who had shared all that DePaul stood for. When the study began, it was taken for granted that DePaul would assume responsibility for Memorial. Most of us could see no other solution. As time passed, the climate changed drastically when Memorial proposed to buy DePaul. The final decision was announced September 8 by Sister Mary Andrew. Tears flowed copiously, some in anger that Memorial seemed to triumph, some in fear of what the future held, while others expressed a feeling of betrayal. Denial and disbelief quickly replaced the anger and fear, and

one could hear offers of possible ways to change the course of events. The pall of heavy hearts everywhere in the Hospital gave one the feeling that a death in our family had saddened all. It was difficult to visit with employees or friends because tears were in the voices and on the edge of the eyelids ready to spill over if anyone else's started. The knowledge of the Kubler-Ross steps of grieving helped us understand what was happening to us here. Yes, it had to be that way to help us cope with our shattered feelings, and to be a support to the employees and friends of DePaul.

The final week, the last week of October 1992, was very busy, fortunately. Tasks of packing, meetings, seeing and visiting with as many of the DePaul friends as schedules could handle made the time slip by more easily. The Guild hosted a tea honoring the Sisters and employees on Wednesday afternoon. The Governor and Mayor attended and proclaimed October 28 as Sisters of Charity Day. Thursday, the Hospital hosted an Oktoberfest for the employees. The menu, music and costumes gave an authentic German air to the celebration. Prizes were awarded to employees whose names were picked from computer lists. It was a heart picker-upper event.

A notable change was taking place in the tenor of the remarks we heard during that last week. We heard exciting ideas expressed about the spirit of DePaul's employees and how it might be possible to take that spirit with them to Memorial. One young physical therapist said to me, "It is our job to make it the best that it can possibly be." How can we consider the forty years a waste if those who worked with us owned our mission statement and were determined to carry its ideals with them wherever they went?

The final steps of Kubler-Ross took longer to become reality, but I have the feeling that in the end DePaul's spirit triumphed.