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THE HISTORY OF NOTRE DAME ACADEMY

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Sister Anita Rolenc

December 1975

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of  
Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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## I. PIONEER SISTERS IN AMERICA AND NEBRASKA, 1920-1925

"I give Him to you that you may make Him grow." With these words, the Virgin Mary extended the Infant Jesus to the open arms of Blessed Alix Le Clerc.<sup>1</sup> Since that vision in 1597, nearly four hundred years ago, the School Sisters de Notre Dame have carried on the work of education begun by Alix Le Clerc and a small band of women, under the direction of St. Peter Fourier. On Christmas night 1597, a new Religious Order came into being in Lorraine, France.<sup>2</sup> From here the Congregation spread throughout Europe. In 1853 the Reverend Gabriel Schneider established the School Sisters de Notre Dame in Czechoslovakia. Like Peter Fourier before him, Schneider recognized the need for Religious Sisters to whom the education of youth, and of girls in particular, could be entrusted.<sup>3</sup>

By 1903, the golden jubilee year, the Congregation in Europe was educating 14,529 children in over fifty kindergartens, nineteen elementary and eight secondary schools, and in various music, sewing, and cooking classes. The Sisters also taught in two colleges which offered

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret St. L. West, Blessed Alix Le Clerc, 1576-1622, (London: Holbrook and Son, Ltd., 1947), p. 55. (Hereafter cited as West, Blessed Alix.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Sister Mary Qualbertina Vanek de N.D., "History of the School Sisters de Notre Dame, Omaha, Florence Station, Nebraska," 1924, Handwritten MS, Notre Dame Convent Archives, Notre Dame Motherhouse, 3501 State Street, Omaha, p. 1. (Hereafter cited as Vanek, "History of School Sisters;" Convent Archives cited as NDCA.)

normal training courses for primary teachers. Each year, the Congregation accepted more schools and other institutions, such as orphanages, homes for the elderly, or asylums for the feeble.<sup>4</sup>

In 1907 the Reverend Ladislav A. Kloucek of Cleveland, Ohio requested the Notre Dame Sisters of Czechoslovakia to open a school in his parish. That same year, the Reverend Charles Bleha of St. Louis, Missouri asked for Sisters to operate an orphanage which could eventually become the motherhouse of an American Province of the Congregation. Although several Sisters volunteered, and some began courses in the English language, nothing developed from these offers.<sup>5</sup>

A third request from America for Sisters of the Czech nationality came in November 1908. According to the 1920 census, the total Czech population in Nebraska was 15,818; in Omaha, 4,305; in Iowa, 9,150. The Nebraska counties of Butler, Colfax, Saunders, and Saline each had over a thousand Czechs; Douglas had 4,500.<sup>6</sup> As conservers of tradition and of their Christian culture, the Czechs struggled during their early years in Nebraska and Iowa to preserve this "heritage of the fathers."<sup>7</sup> The Liberal Czechs (or Freethinkers) taught the Czech language and culture outside of the public school hours; the Catholics included Czech

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<sup>4</sup>Centennial, 1853-1953, printed for the private use of the Notre Dame Sisters, Omaha, 1953, p. 72-75, 87. (Hereafter cited as Centennial.)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, 3:593, 317, 606.

<sup>7</sup>Vladimir Kucera and Alfred Novacek, eds., Czechs and Nebraska (Ord, Nebraska: Quiz Graphic Arts, Inc., 1967), p. 23, 26.

in the regular hours of the school day, but used the English language in teaching the other subjects.<sup>8</sup> Aware that the Catholic Czech immigrants in his diocese lacked elementary and secondary educational opportunities, which would provide instruction in the Catholic religion as well as the Czech language, the Most Reverend Thomas Bonacum, Bishop of Lincoln, while on a vacation in Europe, visited the Sisters with the intention of obtaining some for the schools among the Czech Catholics under his jurisdiction.<sup>9</sup> The following year the prelate returned to discuss further the acceptance of these schools with Mother General Cyrilla Marsik, her assistants, and the Reverend Anthony Polansky, the chaplain. Mother Cyrilla considered accepting the Lincoln diocese offer, provided there would be a guarantee of financial support for the Sisters.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, Father Bleha was negotiating with the Board of Directors of the Hessoun Orphanage in Fenton, Missouri for the conditions the Sisters had stipulated before they would accept this work. The Board agreed to the conditions, and the signed contract reached Mother Cyrilla on 27 March 1910. Receiving the approval to enter his diocese from the Most Reverend John Glennon, Archbishop of St. Louis, the Sisters completed their preparations for the journey to America.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Rose Rosicky, comp., A History of Czechs in Nebraska (Omaha: National Printing Co., 1929), p. 419.

<sup>9</sup>Sister Mary Immaculata Polak de N.D., "An Appraisal of the Educational Efforts of Mother Mary Gualberta de N.D.," (Master's thesis, Creighton University, Omaha, 1947), p. 4. (Hereafter cited as Polak, "Educational Efforts.")

<sup>10</sup>Centennial, p. 19-20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 20.



The first pioneers chosen to continue the apostolate across the ocean were Sister M. Gualberta Krivanec, the superior, Sister M. Caroline Babacek, Sister M. Xavier Hava, Sister M. Qualbertina Vanek, and Sister M. Nothburga Komrska. With the blessings and farewells of their own Sisters, and of their bishop, the Most Reverend Joseph A. Hulka, who had written a letter of recommendation to the Archbishop of St. Louis, the Sisters embarked upon their voyage on 27 April 1910.<sup>12</sup> At Bremen, Germany the group of five boarded the ship Grosser Kurfurst. They arrived in New York on the tenth of May, and reached St. Louis on the twelfth.<sup>13</sup>

The Sisters remained with the German Notre Dame Sisters at St. John Nepomuk Convent in St. Louis until 23 May when the Hessoun Orphanage in Fenton was ready for occupancy.<sup>14</sup> In July 1911 a second group of five Sisters and three candidates arrived in America.<sup>15</sup> The following month, upon the request of the Reverend John Stephen Broz, a renowned Bohemian poet and historian, five Sisters journeyed to Dodge, Nebraska to conduct the Catholic school in his parish.<sup>16</sup>

With the reception of the girls from Czechoslovakia into the Sisterhood in 1913, and the acceptance of young girls of the Czech

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<sup>12</sup>"Convent de Notre Dame Chronicle, 1910-1957," Handwritten MS, translated from the Czech, NDCA, p. 2. (Hereafter cited as "Convent Chronicle.")

<sup>13</sup>Centennial, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup>Polak, "Educational Efforts," p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Centennial, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Vanek, "History of School Sisters," p. 6; "Convent Chronicle," p. 6b.

nationality from America, the young Congregation in the United States was able to branch out into the teaching apostolate in Iowa, Nebraska, and at the orphanage in Fenton, Missouri.<sup>17</sup> Mother Gualberta, engrossed in the educational training of the teaching Sisters and the placement of qualified teachers in the Czech parish schools, delayed the purchase of a home for the Congregation. Mother had hoped to make either Spillville or Cedar Rapids, Iowa the site of the Congregational Motherhouse, but efforts at both failed. When Father Broz suggested that the Sisters purchase a house in Schuyler, Colfax County, Nebraska, they did so on 13 April 1914 and had it incorporated under Nebraska law. The Sisters promised the Czechs in Schuyler that after a year they would teach in the school which, with the church, was under construction, and would open a girls' boarding school in the Sisters' home.<sup>18</sup>

It was the intention of the Sisters to make Schuyler the location for their motherhouse. However, these plans never materialized. First, Rome did not grant permission to transfer the novitiate from Fenton, Missouri. Secondly, the Nebraska school law requirement of certified teachers posed a problem. Since the Congregation lacked sufficient certified teachers to fulfill the positions in the schools already staffed, they had to limit the number of teaching Sisters in Schuyler. Thus, the Sisters had a home, but it was not to be their Motherhouse.<sup>19</sup>

On 2 October 1917, Father Broz, who had become the spiritual

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<sup>17</sup>Vanek, "History of School Sisters," p. 6.

<sup>18</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

director for the Congregation, visited Mother Gualberta in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, bringing an invitation from the Right Reverend Archbishop Jeremiah J. Harty, D.D., to establish a novitiate in the Omaha diocese, which was under his jurisdiction.<sup>20</sup> Three days later Mother Gualberta received a letter from His Excellency in which he wrote:

I hereby invite you to make a foundation of your community in the Diocese of Omaha. I am deeply concerned about the welfare and the religious life of the Bohemians in this part of Nebraska. I have visited their churches in person and have formed a strong admiration for them. They are a noble people and if they are cared for in these United States they will grow in influence and power for God and religion. They lack schools and Sisters to teach these schools, at least those that know their language and the traditions of their Old Country. Therefore, I would like to see a novitiate of your Sisters established in Omaha. I would take it under my special care. . . .

Nebraska is a healthful, prosperous, growing State. Means will not be wanting, for the Bohemians whom I have visited show a disposition to favor such a work as we have in prospect.<sup>21</sup>

The invitation to establish a novitiate and possible motherhouse in Omaha was an answer to prayer. Since their arrival in the new country, the Congregation had grown from the original five to fifty-two, with thirteen Sisters working in Iowa, and thirty-nine in Nebraska.<sup>22</sup> Mother Gualberta had concentrated the teaching efforts of the Sisters in the Czech settlements of these two states, declining additional offers from Minnesota, Illinois, and Wisconsin.<sup>23</sup> Omaha, therefore, was

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>21</sup>Archbishop J. J. Harty to Mother Gualberta, 3 October 1917, NDCA.

<sup>22</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 31b.

<sup>23</sup>Polak, "Educational Efforts," p. 15.

undoubtedly the logical place to centralize the Congregation of the School Sisters de Notre Dame.

Two requests in early November from the Reverend Edward J. Flanagan for Sisters to work in his new "Boys' Home" brought two Sisters to Omaha on 11 December 1917. In the beginning the Sisters cooked, sewed, and mothered the poor homeless boys. A year later Father Flanagan asked for Sister-teachers in order to comply with a court order to provide a school in the home or dismiss the lads.<sup>24</sup> Mother Gualberta supplied a Sister-teacher.

While staying at Boys' Home during a trip to Omaha, Mother Gualberta learned that Father Flanagan intended to sell his ten-acre "Seven Oaks Poultry Farm" in Florence, a suburb of Omaha which had been the site of the famous Mormon Winter Quarters.<sup>25</sup> Originally, this farm was part of a larger land grant that the United States Government had decreed 3 March 1855 to be given to its army officers and soldiers. Mrs. Rhoda Rich, widow of Israel Rich, captain in the War of 1812, received the 160-acre tract in north Omaha. Throughout a period of sixty-five years, many people owned the land. The last, Miss Lucie C. Harding who married L. C. Randall Pollock of Omaha, bought the quarters numbered 185 and 186 on 4 March 1904. Five years later she built a residence on the property. Ill-advised to conduct a large poultry farm, Lucie Harding Pollock went into debt when the acreage failed to produce enough grain to feed the large flock of poultry and the herd of cattle. Forced to sell, the owner had difficulty finding a buyer because,

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<sup>24</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 21b, 26.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 29b, 30.

although the farm price was \$9000, the debt was \$14,000.<sup>26</sup>

On 10 September 1919 Bishop Harty purchased the Seven Oaks Farm for Father Flanagan, who needed a larger residence.<sup>27</sup> His increasing number of homeless boys had over-crowded the rented house on South Thirteenth Street known as the "German Home." The ten-acre farm, however, proved to be impractical and too small. Flanagan wanted to purchase a forty-acre farm about a mile west of the Seven Oaks Farm on State Street.<sup>28</sup>

Father Flanagan took Mother Gualberta and the Sister Superior at Boys' Home to see the farm in Florence. The site of the Seven Oaks Poultry Farm impressed the Sisters as a very suitable place for a novitiate and eventual motherhouse. Located on a high hill west of the historic Mormon Cemetery, the farm had an abundance of fruit and shade trees, sufficient ground for the cultivation of vegetables, several well-kept buildings and a new residence equipped with city water, electricity, and a furnace. Recognizing that the proximity to the city afforded the services of the clergy, schools, hospitals, stores, and other advantages, Mother decided to purchase the farm.<sup>29</sup>

First, she had to secure the approval for this transaction from the Mother General in Horazdovice, Czechoslovakia. While awaiting this permission, the Sisters gathered their meager savings to collect \$14,000.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 37b.

<sup>27</sup>Notation on the envelope containing the Warranty Deed, NDCA.

<sup>28</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 37b.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 29b, 30.

In the fall of 1919, they loaned this amount at four percent interest to Father Flanagan so he could buy the forty-acre farm, "until that time when a decision would come from Europe."<sup>30</sup> The Notre Dame Convent Chronicle stated that the permission from Europe arrived on 24 February 1920, and the Sisters claimed the property in March 1920. John Foral, the tenant, stayed on the farm until 15 June 1920 when five Sisters and three aspirants occupied the house.<sup>31</sup> The Warranty Deed, on the other hand, stated that Archbishop Harty of Omaha sold the property to the School Sisters de Notre Dame on 3 July 1920 for the sum of \$14,000.<sup>32</sup>

The Sisters now owned a place to call their home. Sister M. Wenceslaus, one of the second group to come to America in 1911, years later recalled the tidy farm, the crushed rock road, seven large oak and several apple, cherry, and mulberry trees, and a garden of young vegetables. A cow, several hens, and more buildings were additional possessions.<sup>33</sup>

A third group of four Sisters left Czechoslovakia and arrived in the Midwest on 1 September 1920.<sup>34</sup> That same autumn, Mother Gualberta contracted with John Machal of Omaha to expand the building on State Street hill to provide a chapel, sacristy, and two rooms. Within a few

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Warranty Deed, NDCA.

<sup>33</sup>Sister M. Vincent Dvorak, "Community Beginnings as Recalled by Sister M. Wenceslaus de N.D.," ca. 1970, Typewritten MS, NDCA.

<sup>34</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 32.

years, however, the original building proved to be inadequate for the growing Congregation, especially in the summer months when the members returned home from their various places of activity.<sup>35</sup> The lack of separate rooms for the diversity of Community members: Sisters, novices, and candidates, was a hardship. Mother Gualberta also recognized the need for higher educational facilities for the candidates who wished to join the Congregation. The simplicity and inconveniences of the present home did not attract Czech girls to the convent. Those who did apply for the candidature found it difficult to walk the four blocks down State Street hill to the parish church for daily Mass, and then to go by city transit to attend classes at Sacred Heart High School, over fifty blocks distant on Binney Street.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, parents and daughters of the Bohemian nationality expressed a desire for a Catholic High School.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the Superior and her assistants decided to erect at least a third of the contemplated Provincial Motherhouse together with an Academy for "their prospective candidates and others who wish to avail themselves of the opportunity of obtaining liberal education or would want to board there."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Vanek, "History of School Sisters," p. 12. The Sisters were employed in Fenton, Missouri; Dodge, Brainard, and Schuyler, Nebraska; Spillville, Cedar Rapids, and Chelsea, Iowa; and at St. Adalbert and Assumption parishes and Boys' Home in Omaha.

<sup>36</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 48b.

<sup>37</sup>"School Chronicle, 1926-1947," NDCA, p. 1. (Hereafter cited as "School Chronicle.")

<sup>38</sup>"School Sisters de Notre Dame, Omaha, Florence Station, Nebraska," 1939, Typewritten MS, NDCA, p. 3; Vanek, "History of School Sisters," p. 12. If the Sisters intended Czech girls to attend Notre Dame Academy, one wonders why they built eighty-four blocks north of Dodge Street when the Czech population was concentrated in an area some thirty blocks south of Dodge.

Early in the fall of 1924 Matthew J. Lahr, the architect, began to design the new structure.<sup>39</sup> He presented the first drawing of the E-shaped building on 18 February 1925. After consultation with the Sisters, he and Carl Stangel, his assistant, made revisions. The bids of fourteen contractors were opened on 10 August 1925. The highest bid was \$145,851.00. R. L. Hyde, whose bid of \$123,896.00 was the lowest, received the building contract. Mother M. Gualberta and Sister M. Gustava Melmer, her secretary, signed the contracts on 13 August 1925 with Attorney Joseph Votava and Matthew Lahr as witnesses.<sup>40</sup>

Ground-breaking ceremonies, held 15 August 1925, drew a crowd of about fifty people, besides the clergy and Notre Dame Sisters. The Right Reverend Monsignor John Vranek, papal prelate and poet-priest of Omaha, turned the first spade of sod. Speeches by Monsignor Vranek, the Reverend Timothy O'Driscoll, pastor of the Florence parish, and Lahr followed. The Reverends Leopold Blaschko, John Krajicek, and Edward Cepuran ended the momentous celebration with Benediction.<sup>41</sup>

Two days later the preliminary work began. Laborers measured the ground and felled many trees that grew on the proposed building site. The next day more than forty men started work on the foundation.<sup>42</sup>

During their fifteen years in America the Sisters had worked hard and sacrificially. Because of their small income and their generosity

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<sup>39</sup>"School Sisters de Notre Dame," 1949, Typewritten MS, p. 5, NDCA.

<sup>40</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 48b, 49b, 50.

<sup>41</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 1; "Convent Chronicle," p. 50.

<sup>42</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 50b.



in helping their Sisters and others in Europe before and after World War I, the young Congregation accumulated very little savings. Therefore they realized the need for benefactors when they undertook the expensive building project. Late in August 1925 the Sisters sent a plea for donations to the editors of the Czech newspapers Hlas and Ceska Zena, published in St. Louis, and the Chicago papers, Katolik, Narod, and Novy Domov. The appeals brought \$1000 in less than two months.<sup>43</sup>

The Czech people of Omaha and the parishes in other towns were aware of the poverty of the Sisters. A group of women, headed by Mrs. Anton Tusa and Mrs. M. J. Lahr, wife of the architect, sponsored card parties, cake sales, and fancy work raffles for the Sisters' benefit. Holy Trinity parish in Brainard, Nebraska donated \$2600.00, the proceeds from a bazaar. A letter which the Reverend Bishop Francis Beckman sent to the Czech priests in the Lincoln diocese brought financial responses from several parishes. A campaign in South Omaha, St. Wenceslaus Parish in Omaha, and in Howells, Nebraska brought over \$10,000.<sup>44</sup>

The ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone took place on 1 November 1925. The Right Reverend Francis J. Beckman, Bishop of Lincoln, blessed the cornerstone in the presence of eleven clergy, and more than five hundred prominent people of Omaha, friends from Bohemian parishes in Nebraska, and delegates from Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Oklahoma.<sup>45</sup> The Right Reverend Monsignor Alois J. Klein of Brainard,

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<sup>43</sup>Vanek, "History of School Sisters," p. 13; "Convent Chronicle," p. 50b.

<sup>44</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 48b, 56.

<sup>45</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 1; Omaha World-Herald, ca. 1925, unidentified clipping, 6 November 1925, Notre Dame Academy Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA. (Hereafter cited as NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B.)

friend and adviser to the Notre Dame Sisters, delivered the principal address in Latin, English, and Bohemian. Among the other dignitaries to speak at this occasion were the Reverend William J. Grace, president of Creighton University, the Reverend Charles Bleha from the Hessoun Orphanage in Fenton, Missouri; and the officiating prelate, Bishop Beckman.<sup>46</sup> Mayor James C. Dahlman praised the new institution of learning and Stanislaus Serpan, the Czechoslovak consul, congratulated the Sisters on their achievements in America in such a relatively short span of years.<sup>47</sup>

The box within the cornerstone contained the dedicatory documents signed in three languages, a short history of the Congregation in the Czech and English languages, photographs of the superiors in Czechoslovakia and America, a list of the Sisters and candidates in the United States according to their entrance dates and areas of activity, coins, medals, and holy pictures.<sup>48</sup> The stone displays the cross and lily insignia of the School Sisters de Notre Dame; the initials "A.M.D.G.;" the name of the institution, "Notre Dame Academy;" and "Nikomu Neškoditi, Všem Prospěti," the motto of St. Peter Fourier, the founder of the Congregation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Unidentified clipping, 6 November 1925, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>47</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 1; Omaha World-Herald, ca. 1925, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>48</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 53b.

<sup>49</sup>Cornerstone. A.M.D.G. are the initials for "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam," literally translated as "All for the honor and glory of God." "Nikomu Neškoditi, Všem Prospěti" means "Harm None, Help All."

State school officials informed the Sisters that the school would receive approval the first year of operation, minor accreditation the second year, and full accreditation when it met all the state requirements. After considering these matters, and noting the satisfactory progress on the construction, the Sisters decided on 12 April 1926 to open the school the following autumn. Later that same month two fires, which cracked twenty-four windows, burned the wood portions and smoke-damaged the walls and ceilings, temporarily delayed the work.<sup>50</sup>

Sunday, 15 August 1926, was Dedication Day for Notre Dame Academy and Motherhouse. The ceremonies began at 3:00 P.M. with a procession of flower girls in white; the Sodality of Blessed Agnes from Brainard; the Omaha Catholic lodges with their banners; representatives from the Dominicans, Poor Clares, and Servants of Mary; over sixty School Sisters de Notre Dame; civic dignitaries; thirty priests and several monsignors; and the presiding prelate. The Right Reverend Francis J. Beckman, apostolic administrator of Omaha, performed the solemn blessing.<sup>51</sup> In his principal address, His Excellency congratulated all those who had helped to establish the institution and who understood the significance of the

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<sup>50</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 55b.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 58b; "School Chronicle," p. 2. Among the clergy present were Rt. Rev. Msgr. Alois J. Klein, Brainard; Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. J. Colaneri, chancellor of the Omaha diocese; Rt. Rev. Msgr. C. Muga of St. Joseph Hospital; the Reverends Edward Cepuran (Chapuran), John Krajicek, Leopold Blaschko, and Timothy O'Driscoll, all from Omaha; John Komrska, spiritual director from Horazdovice, Czechoslovakia; Martin Bogar, Touhy, Nebraska; M. V. Nemeč, Wahoo, Nebraska; Francis J. Kopecky, Weston, Nebraska. The civil dignitaries included Mayor James Dahlman, Czech Consul Stanislaus Serpan, City Commissioner Joseph Koutsky, and County Superintendent H. M. Eaton.

opening of Notre Dame Academy to the area.<sup>52</sup> Mayor Dahlman voiced the congratulations of the people of Omaha, who would attempt to "fill this spacious academy with . . . young ladies desirous of higher education." Czechoslovak Consul Serpan spoke in his native tongue of the tremendous undertaking of Mother Gualberta to provide not only a school for secular knowledge and religious principles, but also for the cultivation and appreciation of "the history and literature of their forefathers." Another visitor from their homeland, Father John Komrska, extolled the sacrifices of the pioneer Sisters and praised the "heroism and courage of the Czech people" to whom he appealed for support and care of the institution. As Master of Ceremonies, the Reverend Timothy O'Driscoll of Omaha gave credit to M. L. Lahr for his devoted and personal inspection and approval of the building materials, and for his frequent visits to the edifice at Thirty-fifth and State Street.<sup>53</sup> Prominent Omaha women, who had assisted the Sisters in numerous ways since they first moved to the Seven Oaks Poultry Farm, sold refreshments to the guests and provided a lunch for the clergy, Sisters and dignitaries.<sup>54</sup>

One newspaper account of the dedication ceremony carried a detailed description of the new day and boarding high school for girls. Specifying the rooms for each of the three floors, the article praised the building, "built to promote the highest standards of education; all the most modern facilities for academic courses are provided." There was a

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<sup>52</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1926, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.; "Convent Chronicle," p. 59.

twenty-station house phone system, an electric clock system controlled from a central station, and rooms equipped with radio plugs for loud speakers or headsets. The newspaper elaborated on the aesthetic location of the Academy: the verdant Florence Hills, the picturesque view of the Missouri River from the fire escape, the Mormon cemetery to the east, and the surrounding terrain. The article clearly stated that the aim of the Sisters was to "offer the best possible educational advantages to girls--not only to Bohemian girls . . . but a hearty invitation is extended to all the American girls . . . regardless of their nationality."<sup>55</sup>

With the completion of Notre Dame Academy, the School Sisters de Notre Dame had the opportunity to carry on the mandate given to Blessed Alix Le Clerc in the sixteenth century: "Take this Child and make Him grow." True, the Sisters were teaching in several parish schools in Iowa and Nebraska since 1911. Notre Dame Academy, however, was their very own school.

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<sup>55</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1926, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

## II. THE DAWN OF A NEW SCHOOL, 1926-1935

Notre Dame Academy officially opened her doors as a high school for girls on 8 September 1926. Twenty-six girls enrolled in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades that first year; four of these were day students.<sup>1</sup> The roll call included students, the majority of them of the Czech nationality, from Janesville, Wisconsin; Atwood, Kansas; Chelsea, Griswold, Pocahantas, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Albion, Dodge, Friend, Florence, and Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>2</sup>

The Sisters advertised their Academy through the Czech newspapers, such as Katolik, and the diocesan papers in Nebraska and Iowa. The elementary schools in the Czech parishes of Omaha and the Nebraska and Iowa towns where the Sisters taught, provided most of the students for the Academy. Priests of the Czech nationality who knew the Notre Dame Sisters also encouraged young girls to attend the Academy.

The pioneer faculty consisted of Sister M. Qualbertina Vanek, the principal who also taught Christian Doctrine, algebra, Latin, English, and Czech; Sister M. Gabriel Klein, physics, general science, shorthand, geometry, Caesar, glee, and gym teacher; Miss Viola Kastl, history,

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<sup>1</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 59; unidentified clipping, ca. 1926, Notre Dame Academy Early Days, Scrapbook B, Notre Dame Convent Archives, Omaha. (Hereafter cited as NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.)

English, and type teacher; Sister M. Symphorosa Neuner, music teacher; and Sister M. Januarie Cemper, art teacher.<sup>3</sup> Sisters M. Symphorosa, Januarie, and Qualbertina received the major portion of their education in Czechoslovakia; the last also obtained her bachelor's degree from Creighton University in Omaha. Sister M. Gabriel, who received both the bachelor and master degrees at Creighton had multiple talents.<sup>4</sup> Qualified to teach several subjects, she also composed music, poetry, and plays, upholstered furniture, painted, designed clothes, and played the piano, organ, and violin.

From the very beginning, Notre Dame Academy devoted itself to the physical, intellectual, and spiritual development of the girls. According to Mother Gualberta, the purpose of education was to make the student "an honest person, a good citizen, a true Christian, and ultimately a prospective saint."<sup>5</sup> Along with religious instruction, the curriculum included "a complete course of cultural and informational value sufficient . . . to prepare . . . girls for a livelihood and for active participation in the life of their community."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the school offered an academic course, a business course, and music and art courses for enrichment.<sup>7</sup> The music and art, as well as handiwork, date back to

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<sup>3</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 2; "Convent Chronicle," p. 59. Miss Kastl received an annual salary of \$400, plus room and board at the Academy.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Sister M. Loyola Samek, 5 August 1975.

<sup>5</sup>Polak, "Educational Efforts," p. 59.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>Student Life, Sacred Heart Academy, Lisle, Illinois, November 1927, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA. (Hereafter cited as Student Life.)

St. Peter Fourier's Plan of Studies in the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> Music added lighthearted gaiety to the routine of a school day; art provided an outlet for the creative talents of the students. Since the majority of the girls would eventually become wives and mothers, the knowledge of sewing, knitting, crocheting, mending, patching, and darning would prove valuable in later years.<sup>9</sup> In their dressmaking courses, they learned to design, cut patterns, remodel and convert new materials into attractive garments.<sup>10</sup> Style shows, which became customary at the Academy, provided an opportunity for the young dressmakers to exhibit and model their completed outfits.

Physical education began on a limited scale that first year. Sister M. Gabriel taught dancing. At the request of Mother Gualberta, Miss Ann Rozmajzl, a member of the Catholic Sokol gymnastic team, came to the Academy one night a week to conduct drills and games with the boarders. These drill classes were chiefly for recreation; the girls received no high school credit for them.<sup>11</sup> In 1929 the school hired Miss Marie Hermanek, a graduate of the University of Nebraska, as physical education teacher.<sup>12</sup> The girls formed volleyball teams, the Cardinals and the Bluejays, and had regular intramural games and

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<sup>8</sup>West, Blessed Alix, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup>Polak, "Educational Efforts," p. 63.

<sup>10</sup>Student Life, April 1930.

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Ann Rozmajzl, Omaha, 21 June 1975. Miss Rozmajzl, a bank employee at the time, accepted no remuneration for her services.

<sup>12</sup>Student Life, November 1929.



tournaments.<sup>13</sup>

All institutions of learning on the elementary and secondary level, whether private or public, must meet state requirements before approval and/or accreditation of that school. In addition, Catholic schools are subject to diocesan standards. To assist schools in developing the curriculum, meeting classroom regulations, fulfilling teacher certification, and providing the necessary educational facilities and equipment, both state and diocesan inspectors regularly visit the school. In April 1927 Archer L. Burnham, Director of Secondary Education and Teacher Training at the University of Nebraska, and the Reverend Joseph H. Ostdiek, the first superintendent of the Omaha diocesan schools, visited Notre Dame Academy together. Professor Burnham recommended the introduction of a two-year commercial class to prepare stenographers. Sister Qualbertina informed the inspector that Sister M. Antoinette Bartek was attending Duchesne College in Omaha in preparation for teaching the commercial courses in the fall.<sup>14</sup>

Father Ostdiek was to make an annual visitation at the Academy until 1942 when the Reverend Paul Schneider assumed the job of superintendent. After one such occasion, Father Ostdiek wrote in his report:

There are many commendable features about Notre Dame Academy. One cannot help but be impressed with the splendid building conditions, the indexed library, the science laboratory, the spacious study halls, the maps and the classroom furniture. I also admired the reverence as well as the good behavior of the girls.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.; November 1928, November 1929, January 1929.

<sup>14</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 9; Student Life, November 1929.

He praised Notre Dame as "a great institution with a very promising future, for genuine characters are being moulded there according to the principles of our Catholic religion."<sup>16</sup>

Various state and local personnel made official visits and inspections of the school in these early years. Among them were Leon O. Smith, assistant superintendent of the Omaha public schools; Frank E. Bowers, director of secondary education at the University; and Dr. Albert A. Reed, Head of the University of Nebraska Extension Division. Noting the constant progress of the school, their comments expressed "highest satisfaction in every regard."<sup>17</sup>

Sister Qualbertina began negotiations for accreditation of the school before the fall term in 1928 by consulting the Reverend D. B. O'Connor, State Supervisor of Catholic Schools, and Father Ostdiek. Early in September, Father O'Connor presented the application for accreditation to the State University Accreditation Department. On 25 September Dr. George W. Rosenlof, State Director of Secondary Education, and the Reverends O'Connor and Ostdiek conducted an official inspection of the students' work, the classes in session, and the school equipment. They placed Notre Dame on the list of fully accredited schools of the State of Nebraska.<sup>18</sup> Sister Qualbertina received confirmation of the accreditation in a letter from Dr. Rosenlof, dated 8 October 1928. In expressing congratulations for her efforts of the past year, Dr. Rosenlof wrote:

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<sup>16</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1927, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>17</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 4, 10, 19; unidentified clipping, ca. 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>18</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 5-6.

I want to compliment you upon the very wonderful building in which you are working, the ample quarters, the very satisfactory arrangements as regards classrooms, laboratories, and the like. I also want to speak of the fine work that all of your teachers are doing. We were most pleased with the teaching being done.

I want to assure you that it is our desire to render you every possible service to the end that the school at Notre Dame may continue to grow and become a positive factor in the education of youth.<sup>19</sup>

When word of Notre Dame Academy's accreditation reached the Right Reverend Joseph F. Rummel, Bishop of Omaha, he wrote to Mother Gualberta:

Let me congratulate you and your Sisters upon attaining full recognition for your Academy as an accredited Institution of the State. This is the result of your hard labors and continuous efforts to meet with the requirements of our educational laws. That you should have attained this distinction after so short an experience with educational conditions in these parts, is an additional credit to you. God is evidently blessing your work and will, I am sure, continue to give his grace to your endeavors in the interest of Catholic education.<sup>20</sup>

The faculty employed every available teaching technique to provide the students with opportunities for self-expression. They encouraged the annual observation of American Education Week in November. The various classes were responsible for a short program each day. These generally were speeches on such topics as patriotism, home and school day, Catholic action, the advantages of a Catholic boarding school, and character-building in the home.<sup>21</sup> In 1932 the seniors debated on "Radio

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<sup>19</sup>G. W. Rosenlof to Sr. M. Qualbertina, 8 October 1928, NDCA.

<sup>20</sup>J. F. Rummel, Bishop of Omaha, to Rev. Mother Gualberta, 2 October 1928, NDCA.

<sup>21</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 14, 21, 25, 34; Student Life, December 1929, 1930.

surpasses printing in significance as an educational factor." That same year Geraldine Goodman, a freshman, composed and directed a playlet, "The Inevitable at a Teacher College," which provoked much merriment among the students.<sup>22</sup>

Since debates were a popular teaching tool for research and the development of oratorical skill, the teachers incorporated them into their English classes. Although current issues were the topics, the girls had fun with the debates, especially the one dealing with "Resolved: That bread rolls should be made in the form of a crescent, not straight, and sprinkled with caraway seed, not poppy seed." Seriously and very earnestly, the teams argued from the standpoint of "modern economy, practicability, sociology, and even literature and art."<sup>23</sup> Needless to say, there was no winning team.

Lectures and tours to various businesses were also part of the educational program at Notre Dame. One favorite lecturer, who invariably talked about the Guardian Angel regardless of the topic, was the Reverend Francis Deglman, S.J. of Creighton University. He came each year from 1930 until his death in 1955.<sup>24</sup> As part of their training, the commercial classes toured several businesses, including the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company, the Douglas County Court House, Iten Biscuit Company, the World-Herald plant, and radio station WAAW.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 25.

<sup>23</sup>Student Life, February 1931.

<sup>24</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 18, 163; The True Voice, Omaha, 18 February 1955, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 4; Student Life, June 1929.

Sister M. Gabriel, who had charge of glee from 1926, organized the school's first orchestra in 1931. The orchestra was in popular demand for concerts at the Academy and elsewhere. It furnished music for the Neuman Club Fun Night at Blessed Sacrament parish; entertained the Parent-Teacher Association at St. Philip Neri; participated in the annual play at St. Adalbert parish; and presented a musical program over station WAAW. Along with the Glee Club, the orchestra also provided entertainment for the elderly at the Florence Home for the Aged on several occasions.<sup>26</sup>

Mother Gualberta had realized the educational value of mastering a foreign language, especially the mother tongue of one's forefathers.<sup>27</sup> Through her instrumentality, and that of the principal, the curriculum required that the Czech students study the language, culture and customs as a way of preserving their Czech heritage. The girls listened to radio programs from Prague, Czechoslovakia which featured the Prague Teachers' Chorus; Prime Minister Edward Benes, who spoke in Czech and English; and various Czech musicians.<sup>28</sup> In 1931 the Notre Dame students began correspondence with girls from the Institution of Saint Anne, a college conducted by the School Sisters de Notre Dame in Prague.<sup>29</sup> The following year Sister Qualbertina organized a Czech Club which provided opportunities for the girls of any nationality to enrich their lives

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<sup>26</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 20-21, 26-27, 31; unidentified clippings, 1933, 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>27</sup>Polak, "Educational Efforts," p. 63.

<sup>28</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

through play productions, games, music, and other educational media in the Czech language.<sup>30</sup>

The spiritual development and growth of the students played a vital role in the educational efforts of the staff at the school. One tradition that started in 1926 and continued until the Academy closed in 1974 was the spiritual retreat of three days.<sup>31</sup> Often the retreat preceded an important feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After attending a Sodality Convention at Creighton University, the students officially organized a Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 8 December 1928.<sup>32</sup> A month later they elected officers, who also chaired the Eucharistic, Mission, Our Lady's and the Social and Publicity Committees.<sup>33</sup>

The Sodality was a very active organization. Spiritually, it sponsored novenas in honor of the Sodality patronesses, discussion and reports on religious topics, the annual retreat, and the annual May crowning ceremony.<sup>34</sup> The Sodality combined a mission activity with wholesome entertainment. Candied apples and popcorn sales, bunco parties, raffles, and plays were among the numerous projects which the various committees conducted among the students. From the proceeds, the Sodality sent donations to the missions in Puerto Rico, Africa, China, India, and

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 6; Student Life, January 1929.

<sup>33</sup>Student Life, February 1929.

<sup>34</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 6, 9-10, 33; Student Life, March 1930, February 1931.

in Pine Ridge, South Dakota.<sup>35</sup> They mailed boxes of toys and clothes, some of which the students sewed, to Holy Rosary, a Jesuit mission for Indians in South Dakota.<sup>36</sup>

The Depression years notwithstanding, the Sodalists sacrificed much in order to assist financially the missions at home and abroad. The students adopted the terminology of the relief measures of the New Deal in sponsoring benefit entertainment. The Social and Publicity Committee, for example, rallied to the cause of a "Mission Recovery Act," a version of the National Industrial Recovery Act, to raise money for the missions.<sup>37</sup>

Notre Dame Academy's early interest in missionary work led the students to get involved in organizing the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade (C.S.M.C.) in the Omaha diocese. Theresa Fiala represented Notre Dame at the first Student Mission Rally held in Omaha in 1930. At this rally, the Right Reverend Monsignor F. A. Thill, national director of the C.S.M.C., addressed the delegates from every Catholic high school in the city, thus initiating the organization in Omaha.<sup>38</sup> Notre Dame had a student on the Executive Board for the Omaha diocese in 1930 (Lillian Zaloudek) and 1931 (Gertrude Nesladek).<sup>39</sup> Annually the C.S.M.C.

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<sup>35</sup>Student Life, February 1929, April 1929, May 1930, January 1931; "School Chronicle," p. 12, 20. Bunco is a game of chance utilizing dice.

<sup>36</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 21, 38; unidentified clipping, ca. 1932, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>37</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>38</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 9.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 14, 20; Student Life, March 1930.

held a Mission Rally to display the various projects of the participating schools, and to inspire more activity for the missions.

The inter-school debates were a very popular C.S.M.C. project. Notre Dame entered into these debates wholeheartedly. In 1931 Lillian Zaloudek received a certificate and pin from Bishop Rummel, admitting her to Paladin membership, the honorary division of the C.S.M.C., for her active participation in debates and mission work.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1932-1933 school term, eight Catholic high schools competed for the Bishop Rummel Shield, named after the Omaha prelate who took a special interest in the C.S.M.C. Bishop Rummel had donated the bronze plaque as an incentive for greater effort in debating, mission work, and actual help given to the poor at home and in foreign lands. He specified that any school winning the plaque could keep it for a year, but it would become the permanent possession of that school whose students won it three times, not necessarily in succession.<sup>41</sup> The C.S.M.C. Executive Board decided that the victors of the third and final inter-school debate would receive the Bishop Rummel Shield. Notre Dame's team, Katherine Hartley and Marian Fitch, won the two preliminary debates against Sacred Heart and St. John.<sup>42</sup> The final debate, held at the Duchesne College auditorium on 9 April 1933 was between the oldest (St. Mary) and the youngest (Notre Dame) of the Catholic private schools

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<sup>40</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 17; Student Life, April 1931.

<sup>41</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook A, NDCA.

<sup>42</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 27; Omaha Bee-News, 1933, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook A, NDCA.



in Nebraska. Notre Dame lost the debate to St. Mary's High School.<sup>43</sup>

The loss was a great incentive for the Notre Dame debaters, Lillian Reida and Dorothy Polan, to win the shield in 1934. Notre Dame's defeat over Duchesne, Holy Name, and St. John's High entitled them to enter the finals against St. Mary's High.<sup>44</sup> For the second year in a row, these two schools faced each other. With Miss Reida and Miss Polan winning the debate, the Bishop Rummel Shield became Notre Dame's prized possession for one year.<sup>45</sup>

In 1934 the C.S.M.C. Executive Board changed the regulations on the debates. Each team would receive scores for the debate material, delivery, and rebuttals. The team with the highest scores for all three debates would win the shield. Thus, although Notre Dame's debaters won all three debates in 1934-1935, St. John High School won the shield because their scores were the highest.<sup>46</sup>

Interest in the missions made the students aware of world situations. During the 1930s the government in Mexico began a bitter persecution of the Catholic Church. In 1933 the struggle between the Church and State concentrated on two issues: how many priests and churches were to function, and who was to control Mexican education.<sup>47</sup> By the summer

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<sup>43</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 27.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 32; unidentified clipping, ca. 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>45</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>46</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 35.

<sup>47</sup>E. David Cronon, "American Catholics and Mexican Anticlericalism, 1933-1936," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. XLV, (September 1958), p. 205. (Hereafter cited as Cronon, "American Catholics.")

of 1934 anticlericalism had reached a peak. When on 26 July, United States Ambassador Josephus Daniels publicly praised the Mexican progress in education, Catholic bishops and the Catholic press in the United States led the protests against the sustained persecution.<sup>48</sup> Bishop Rummel of Omaha was no exception. At his request, the Notre Dame Sodality wrote letters to government officials in Washington, protesting against the persecution of Catholics in Mexico, the regime of General Plutarco Elias Calles who was the instigator of the drive to secularize the schools; and the denial of freedom of speech, of assembly, of conscience, and of press. They also asked for the recall of Ambassador Daniels, and sent appeals to the Mexican government in behalf of the suffering Mexicans.<sup>49</sup> Realizing the power of prayer, they spent an entire day before the Blessed Sacrament and held nocturnal adoration one evening to petition God's assistance for the people of Mexico.<sup>50</sup>

On 31 January 1935 Republican William E. Borah of Idaho introduced a resolution in the Senate asking for an investigation of the religious conditions in Mexico.<sup>51</sup> The resolution protested the "anti-religious campaign and practices of the present rulers of Mexico" and viewed "with the gravest concern such ruthless persecution of helpless men and women;" it further condemned the "cruelties and brutalities of the present Mexican government against the profession and practice of religious beliefs by

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 206-207.

<sup>49</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 35; unidentified clipping, ca. 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>50</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 36.

<sup>51</sup>Cronon, "American Catholics," p. 215.

our nationals of all religious faiths now domiciled in Mexico."<sup>52</sup> In April the Notre Dame Sodalists wrote to the Nebraska Senators in Washington asking them to support the Borah Resolution.<sup>53</sup> However, Borah's demand for a Senate investigation never resulted in action.<sup>54</sup>

The first school production presented for the public in 1928 consisted of three one-act plays, and a special number "Tisic tomu let" in commemoration of the millenium of St. Wenceslaus, patron of the Czechs.<sup>55</sup> During the 1930-1931 school term the girls gave two major productions: Osudne paraple and Rachel, the Leper Maiden; and a two-act comedy, Master Hoffman's Daughter, and a four-act historical drama, Saint Julia. Both plays realized a profit which helped defray the expenses on a moving-picture machine and other school equipment.<sup>56</sup> The records do not indicate whether the plays were presented at the Academy or elsewhere. At any rate, in 1932 the Catholic Sokol Hall in South Omaha hosted an oriental drama and a Czech comedy of the Academy.<sup>57</sup> Beseda Hall in South Omaha was the scene of the Czech version of Bernadette on 10 December 1933. At the request of the Reverend Edward Chapuran, the girls repeated the performance at the Catholic Sokol Hall on 11 February

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<sup>52</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate Res. 70, 74th Cong., 1st sess., 31 January 1935, Congressional Record 79:1298.

<sup>53</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 37; unidentified clipping, ca. 1934, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>54</sup>Cronon, "American Catholics," p. 217.

<sup>55</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 7. The translation for "Tisic tomu let" is "A Thousand Years."

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 15, 18. Osudne Paraple means Ill-fated Umbrella.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

1934, the seventy-sixth anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes, France. The second performance was in English, thus providing the English-speaking students an opportunity to act.<sup>58</sup>

An isolated account of a grandiose tree planting deserves mention. On 11 and 23 April 1928 the ten senior girls planted 860 shade and fruit trees and shrubs as memorials: first, to commemorate the first graduation at the Academy; second, to honor the flight of Charles Lindbergh across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927; and finally, to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Czech Congregation of the School Sisters de Notre Dame.<sup>59</sup>

The students attending the Academy did not lack the opportunities for relaxation and fun. Individual class parties, programs, or plays were all-girl social affairs, generally held in the evening because most of the students were boarders. Halloween parties, Fad Days when the girls dressed in the styles of a by-gone era or as five-year-olds, a lawn party, barn dance, fake April Fool party, Christmas parties, and variations of a Valentine Day party provided entertainment.<sup>60</sup>

Junior-senior activities that began in 1927 gradually became customary, with some modifications throughout the forty-eight-year history of the Academy. The first junior-senior banquet on 29 May 1928 depicted the "De las palomas" court of the Alhambra Castle in Spain. Each year the banquet theme varied. The following June fifth, the seniors held "Class Day," at which individual graduates read the class will, prophecy

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>59</sup> "Convent Chronicle," p. 65.

<sup>60</sup> "School Chronicle," p. 6-7, 11, 20-21, 25, 27, 30; Student Life, May 1929.

and history.<sup>61</sup> The "Class Day" later became a junior-sponsored event, usually providing embarrassing and hilarious flash-backs on the seniors' antics and portrayals of their future.<sup>62</sup>

A senior hike and senior sneak day originated in 1929. The hikes were in the locality as abundant fields, woods, and the Mormon and Forest Lawn cemeteries were near-by. For sneak day, the seniors and their chaperones traveled to St. Columban's in Bellevue, to Council Bluffs, or to Lincoln.<sup>63</sup>

About eighty-five percent of the Notre Dame students in these first years were either five-day or seven-day boarders. Some Omaha girls commuted to school daily. Generally the girls from out-of-town or other states remained at the Academy for the entire year. Those from Kansas and Iowa even stayed for the Christmas holidays. Lonesomeness was not uncommon among the boarders. Sister M. Philomena Zmolek, the first directress of the boarders, recalled that one girl cried day and night until Sister called her father to come for her.<sup>64</sup>

The Sisters did their best to provide a home-like atmosphere. A warm, friendly and close-knit relationship developed among the resident students and between the Sisters and the girls. They respected and loved the Sisters because of their role as "mothers" for the duration of their school years. Because the environment at the Academy offered the

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<sup>61</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 5.

<sup>62</sup>Student Life, June 1930.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., June 1929, June 1931; "School Chronicle," p. 23.

<sup>64</sup>Interview with Sister M. Philomena Zmolek, 5 January 1975.

"highest standards of morality and manners, under discipline which was firm, kind, consistent and fair," the girls required little disciplining.<sup>65</sup> However, they were fun-loving and full of mischief, often having midnight snacks or sneaking to Florence for candy.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the history of the Academy, the girls wore a navy blue uniform and white blouse. The styles changed frequently. In the last two years the girls could wear slacks, as well as a choice of blue, white, or red sweaters. Even though the parents and Sisters considered the uniforms economical, some girls preferred wearing clothes of their own choosing.

Generally the girls stayed at the Academy over the weekend, occupying their Saturdays with washing and ironing clothes and cleaning. Some girls helped the Sisters in the kitchen as a means of working off part of their room and board. A trip to Omaha for shopping or a movie was rare, possibly because of the distance and the money involved. Furthermore, walking up State Street hill late in the day was a frightening experience because of poor street lighting, the absence of decent sidewalks, and the presence of tall weeds and shrubs. If the girls could afford to go downtown, they had to obtain permission from the Directress; visits to a friend's home required additional permission of the parents. On Sunday the girls, with their Directress, hiked to the local cemeteries or to Doll's Confectionary Shop in Florence.<sup>67</sup> Favorite after-school-

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<sup>65</sup>Comment of Margaret Wall, Notre Dame Alumna, as printed in a mimeographed bulletin, Notre Dame Academy files. (Hereafter cited as NDA files.)

<sup>66</sup>Interview with Sister M. Philomena Zmolek.

<sup>67</sup>Questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae, 12 November 1974.

hour excursions in the autumn included an apple roast in the Smith orchard north of the school, a picnic lunch in the Florence Woods, or a weiner roast in Elmwood Park.<sup>68</sup>

The Depression affected Notre Dame in various ways. The enrollment dropped from fifty-three in 1931 to forty-four in 1933, due to the inability of the parents to pay the tuition and board.<sup>69</sup> The Government had sponsored a program through the National Youth Administration, whereby a limited number of pupils could earn money by working in the school. The girls performed janitorial services for which they received a government check. Some of them used this money to pay for their school expenses.<sup>70</sup>

Sister M. Philomena noted that the Sisters could not afford to prepare good meals during the Depression. Consequently, the girls ate "bread and jelly for breakfast, jelly and bread for lunch; the jelly was the cheapest, once it was red . . . the next time it was green, but it had almost the same taste, so some of the girls from Omaha brought their own butter to school."<sup>71</sup> Owning and operating the Academy with the

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This questionnaire was sent to seventy-five alumnae of whom forty-three responded before 1 January 1975. The Alumnae Co-Moderator assisted the author in selecting alumnae who were representative of academic achievement and boarding experiences at the school. The questionnaire was sent to at least one alumna from each class of the first twenty-eight years; after that it varied from two to seven, depending on the class size. The questions related to social functions, week-end activities, school spirit, and cooperation among the boarders.

<sup>68</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 34; The True Voice, ca. 1928, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>69</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 20, 25.

<sup>70</sup>Interview with Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl, 7 January 1975.

<sup>71</sup>Interview with Sister M. Philomena Zmolek, 5 January 1975.

limited income from the board and tuition placed a real hardship on the Sisters. The people in Florence were aware of their poverty and often brought food to the school. John Van Wynsberghe, who owned a farm northwest of the Academy, gave milk, half a hog and some beef in lieu of the tuition for his daughters.<sup>72</sup>

In an attempt to provide jobs for unemployed teachers, the government instructed them to organize Recreational Centers for elementary and high school students. As a result of this program, Notre Dame obtained a physical training teacher in January 1934 and a drama teacher a few months later.<sup>73</sup>

On 10 June 1928 Notre Dame Academy, holding its first graduation exercises for ten seniors, presented Lillian Chapek the first diploma and senior class honors.<sup>74</sup> The school awarded its first scholarship to Christine Foral in 1929.<sup>75</sup> On 9 June 1934, the Academy conferred its first honorary diploma to the mother of Geraldine Goodman, a senior from 5825 South Twenty-third Street. For four years, Mrs. William Goodman drove her daughter and four other girls to and from Notre Dame each week. The diploma read, "This certifies that Mrs. William Goodman has satisfactorily completed her course of study as taxi driver for four years, and therefore merits this diploma for her many willing and kind services,

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<sup>72</sup>Interview with John Van Wynsberghe, 28 May 1975.

<sup>73</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 30; interview with Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl.

<sup>74</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 5.

<sup>75</sup>Student Life, June 1929. The four-year scholarship was to any one of the four Nebraska Teacher Colleges.



and her whole-hearted generosity."<sup>76</sup>

Once Father O'Driscoll had urged the girls to be "loyal to this educational institution . . . and take pride in its progress and its accomplishments."<sup>77</sup> The first graduates heeded this advice by organizing the Notre Dame Alumnae Association in 1928.<sup>78</sup> Sister M. Qualbertina served as the directress of the organization. The Association held election meetings, a dinner-dance honoring the senior class, and various money-making projects each year to assist their Alma Mater with expenses or to purchase necessary equipment. On 30 April 1931 the Association affiliated with the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, an organization concentrating on Catholic education, literature, and social services.<sup>79</sup> In 1934 the Association joined the Omaha Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.<sup>80</sup>

Most of the credit for developing the spirit and character of Notre Dame Academy belongs to Sister M. Qualbertina. As principal for the first ten years, she laid the foundation for a "genuinely balanced" education system, which provided for an "academic program encompassing an appreciation of beauty in art, music and literature, with useful knowledge of business and homemaking, and attention to the important skills of speech and writing."<sup>81</sup> Through Sister's untiring and unselfish

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<sup>76</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1935, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook A, NDCA.

<sup>77</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1927, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>78</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 5.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 18; Student Life, May 1931.

<sup>80</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 37.

<sup>81</sup>West, Blessed Alix, p. 7; comment of Margaret Wall, mimeographed bulletin, NDA files.

efforts, school projects succeeded. Her particular interest in the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the retreats so infected the students that full participation resulted.<sup>82</sup>

Sister M. Qualbertina was not merely a principal and teacher; she was Sodality moderator, counselor and friend, winning the hearts of students and adults alike. Years later the alumnae remembered her as being very sincere, helpful, and willing to listen.<sup>83</sup> Sister taught until serious illness forced her to resign in December 1939. When her life ended on 8 February 1940, students, faculty, and alumnae mourned her death.<sup>84</sup>

After nine years of operation, Notre Dame Academy earned the distinction of providing a quality education for day and resident students. With the increase in the enrollment to seventy-three, two additional Sisters joined the faculty. For the first four years, a lay woman also taught at the Academy.<sup>85</sup> In 1927 the Reverend Anastasius Rebec became convent chaplain and religion instructor in the school. The Reverend James J. O'Brien assumed this position from 1930 to 1937.

The Sisters had always placed a high priority on their teaching

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<sup>82</sup>Notre Dame Academy Spotlight, Omaha, March 1940, p. 1. (Hereafter cited as Spotlight.)

<sup>83</sup>Questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae.

<sup>84</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 71; Spotlight, March 1940, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 68. In addition to Viola Kastl and Marie Hermanek, mentioned earlier, there was Miss Martha Clark who taught for two years for a salary of \$900 plus room and board.

qualifications. They attended summer sessions at Creighton University and the University of Nebraska. Occasionally a Sister had to teach a course for which she was not fully qualified, as when Sister Quälbentina's death necessitated changes in teaching assignments. Hence the Sisters took correspondence courses or attended classes on Saturdays during the year to prepare themselves for their courses and eventually to earn certification in given areas. Most of the Sisters earned their bachelor and master degrees through summer sessions and Saturday classes. They continued to update their professional growth through workshops and additional courses so as to meet the new challenges in education.

Notre Dame became known during her first nine years of secondary education in north Omaha as a school which provided a quality education. The Sisters attempted to include in the curriculum those courses which were common in the public schools of the 1930s. But secular education was less meaningful without exposure to the world around them; thus the Sisters utilized outside sources of knowledge through lectures, tours, missionary activity of the C.S.M.C., and debates. They encouraged attendance at public affairs, such as the Nebraska Jubilee Celebration at the City Auditorium in 1929, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the organization of Nebraska Territory, and the Sixth National Eucharistic Congress at St. Cecilia Cathedral in Omaha in September 1930.<sup>86</sup>

Quite evident, too, was the moral and religious atmosphere which permeated the school. The Sisters were primary models of Christian living, evidenced by the fact that three or four girls from these first

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 10; Student Life, November 1930.

graduating classes entered the Notre Dame Congregation or other religious orders. These intellectual and religious opportunities demonstrated the educational philosophy of the Academy: to promote the complete development of the student.

### III. NOTRE DAME ACADEMY BROADENS HER SCOPE

1936-1949

A building expansion at 3501 State Street, made necessary by the need for space, ushered in the tenth scholastic year at Notre Dame Academy. The 1935-1936 enrollment of eighty-three students from Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. crowded the high school and boarding facilities.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Notre Dame Sisters had intended to enlarge the Motherhouse as the Congregation increased in number. Another reason for the expansion was the request from parents of daughters in the elementary grades to provide a boarding school for them.<sup>2</sup>

In August 1936 the construction began on a \$50,000 addition to the building.<sup>3</sup> The forty-eight foot square structure to the front of the initial building would house quarters for the Sisters, with provisions for a future chapel and library. Extensive alterations on the 1925 structure would allow for more space in the school and dormitory area.<sup>4</sup>

The Most Reverend James H. Ryan, Bishop of Omaha, blessed the new

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<sup>1</sup>Enrollment figures for 1935-1936; unidentified clipping, ca. 1936, Notre Dame Academy Early Days, Scrapbook B, Notre Dame Convent Archives, Omaha. (Hereafter cited as NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.)

<sup>2</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 108; "School Chronicle," p. 54.

<sup>4</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1936, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

addition on Sunday, 15 August 1937.<sup>5</sup> He expressed appreciation of the work the Sisters performed in the educational field in his diocese and commented on "the famous culture of their [Czech] nation, their wonderful sciences, music and art" which "is so thoroughly imparted to the students in this academy."<sup>6</sup> The Reverend Edward Chapuran, M.A., Mus.D., pastor of St. Wenceslaus Church in Omaha, stated in his sermon that "the education of the mind and heart the Sisters give their students makes the graduates competent in every way."<sup>7</sup> A distinguished guest at the dedication, Miss Josephine Kolarik, secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovakian government, delivered the congratulatory message and special blessings from Charles Cardinal Kaspar of Prague.<sup>8</sup>

The dedication of the new addition was also the occasion for the first homecoming of the Notre Dame Alumnae. Sixty-two of the 119 graduates attended, with all ten graduating classes represented.<sup>9</sup>

The Academy's location on a high hill overlooking a lush valley and scanning the Missouri River and the bluffs in the distance impressed visitors. However, more noteworthy was its educational philosophy of developing the total person in a Christian atmosphere. The Omaha Bee-News remarked that Omaha was "fortunate in having two schools for girls such

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<sup>5</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>Omaha Bee-News, ca. 1937, p. 9, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.; unidentified clipping, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>8</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 1937; unidentified clipping, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook A, NDCA; "Convent Chronicle," p. 108b.

<sup>9</sup>Spotlight, January 1938, p. 3; Omaha Bee-News, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

as Brownell Hall and the Academy of Notre Dame . . . [which] offer the best of training for girls, and their work is felt through all the walks of society."<sup>10</sup>

In 1937 the Sisters received permission from Bishop Ryan to open an elementary school, provided they did not accept boys nor the children from St. Philip Neri parish.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the elementary girls who attended Notre Dame had to board at the school. Most of them came from Omaha and Council Bluffs and went home on week-ends. Occasionally one or two came from Lincoln, Hastings, Lexington or other Nebraska towns.<sup>12</sup> One family in Kansas sent five daughters, probably because the lack of a Catholic school or the distance to a country school posed difficulties for the parents. There was one large dormitory and two classrooms, in which the Sister-novices who were in training taught.<sup>13</sup> In order to allow sufficient classroom and dormitory space for the high school girls, the Sisters limited the number of elementary residents to forty. On 3 June 1954 the Sisters discontinued the grade school in order to accommodate the increasing number of students in the high school.<sup>14</sup>

The high school enrollment fluctuated during this thirteen-year span. From the mid-seventies in 1936 and 1937, the enrollment dropped to fifty-two in 1939. Two reasons for the decrease were the large numbers

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<sup>10</sup>Omaha Bee-News, 17 August 1937, p. 4, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>11</sup>Unidentified clipping, 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook A, NDCA; "Convent Chronicle," p. 106.

<sup>12</sup>Spotlight, 15 November 1943, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Author's personal knowledge.

<sup>14</sup>"School Chronicle, 1947-1959," p. 157.

in the graduating classes of the previous three years, and the financial difficulties some parents experienced after the 1937 recession. Furthermore, the Sisters decided against accepting as many students who were unable to pay anything toward their education as they had in the first years of the Academy.<sup>15</sup> The number of high school enrollees gradually began to increase so that during World War II, the figures were in the high eighties. Except for a slight drop in 1945 to eighty-one, the enrollment continued to rise above the ninety mark until it reached 106 in 1949.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1936 and 1949, approximately fifty percent of the girls were residents. They came from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, Texas, Missouri, South Dakota, Minnesota, Ohio, Wyoming, and California.<sup>17</sup> Several Omaha parishes and the Catholic grade schools in eastern Nebraska supplied girls for the Academy. In 1943, day and resident students represented sixteen Omaha parishes.<sup>18</sup>

Not all of the girls were of the Czech descent, as a random sampling of the surnames O'Neill, McMahon, Hemingway, Dougherty, O'Rourke, Hartenhoff, Canterbury, Delehanty, and Kellogg indicated.<sup>19</sup> There were at least two or three non-Catholics among the students each year; some

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>16</sup>Enrollment figures, see Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup>Spotlight, September 1939, p. 3; September 1940, p. 3; September-October 1942, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 15 November 1943, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 84, 92, 105, 108; Spotlight, November-December 1942, p. 3; 3 March 1947, p. 6.



converted to Catholicism while at the Academy.<sup>20</sup>

Notre Dame's students were primarily from the middle class of laborers and farmers. The girls could pay for their board and education through custodial work and assisting in the kitchen on Saturdays. In a few rare cases, the Sisters accepted girls who were unable to pay any amount toward their room and board. These charity cases were gradually eliminated because the Sisters found it increasingly difficult to continue educating and boarding girls gratis. Furthermore, some parents who could afford to pay, failed to make complete payments. Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl recalled that in 1937, when she was principal, only eleven of the seventy-two girls paid full tuition and board. All the others had reductions.<sup>21</sup>

Failure to make the payments for board and tuition placed a financial burden which the Sisters assumed after constant reminders produced no results. The Sisters considered an education in a Catholic atmosphere of greater importance than monetary reimbursement or gain.

A Notre Dame brochure listed the tuition at \$15.00 a semester. Five-day boarders paid \$110.00 per semester which included room, board, tuition, and sewing; the seven-day boarders paid \$125.00. Additional fees for rental of bedspread, bed curtains, stand cover, and the laundering of such was \$2.50. All day and resident students had a \$5.00 matriculation fee, and a book rental of \$2.50 per semester. There were

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<sup>20</sup>Spotlight, March 1938, p. 1; April 1942, p. 1; "School Chronicle," p. 84, 93, 105, 108.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl, 7 January 1975.

also special fees for library, gymnasium, laboratory, oil painting, dressmaking, and piano, violin, and voice lessons.<sup>22</sup> In 1947 the tuition remained at \$30 a year, but the board increased to \$300 a year. In 1949 tuition was \$35 a year; board was \$325 a year.<sup>23</sup>

Notre Dame maintained her standard of quality education by providing a four-year college preparatory course, a two-year commercial course, various sciences, home economics, and special courses in music, art and sewing. The curriculum offered four years of English and religion; algebra, advanced algebra, and geometry; ancient, medieval, modern, and American history; general science, botany, physics, civics, economics, foreign languages, and physical training. The commercial courses included type, shorthand, bookkeeping, office training, and commercial arithmetic.<sup>24</sup> In 1944 several girls enrolled in specialized correspondence courses in art, music, and science which the University of Nebraska made available.<sup>25</sup> The Academy revised its courses in clothing and biology in 1944 and introduced sociology in 1945.<sup>26</sup>

Although the students had a choice of Latin, French, Spanish, and Czech, most of the girls took Latin. In 1936, the Czech language course and the Czech Club ceased to be a requirement for the girls of that

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<sup>22</sup>Notre Dame Academy brochure, ca. 1939, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>National Catholic Welfare Conference, Department of Education, Report for Scholastic year, 1947-1948, 1949-1950, NDA files.

<sup>24</sup>Notre Dame Academy brochure, ca. 1939, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Spotlight, 21 January 1944, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 31 January 1945, p. 4.

nationality. This reflected a slowly declining interest in the Czech language, but the club remained active until 1943.<sup>27</sup> Students in the club presented papers for discussion on European-born composers and authors, Czechoslovakian art and artists; reported on prominent Czech-Americans, learned Czech songs and dances, wrote Czech poems, translated their surnames into the English language, and discussed the conditions of the Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>28</sup>

Lectures by educators and professionals contributed significantly to the program of education at the Academy. Dr. Charles C. Charvat, professor of English at Creighton University, lectured frequently at the Academy.<sup>29</sup> In addition, there were lectures and film slide presentations on Shakespeare's life and works; a movie-lecture on the Chinese life and customs; talks on the work of missionaries in Africa, the Philippines, and among the Negroes of the South; and illustrated lectures and demonstrations on the telephone and "mirrophone."<sup>30</sup> Included in the students' business training were tours to Omaha businesses where they observed office personnel in action.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Interview with Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl; Narod, Chicago, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA; Spotlight, January-February 1943, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1936, 1939, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA; "School Chronicle," p. 58, 64-65, 71; Spotlight, January 1939, p. 1; March 1940, p. 5; December 1939, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Spotlight, November 1941, p. 1; "School Chronicle," p. 43, 80, 86.

<sup>30</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1936; The True Voice, ca. 1937; unidentified clipping, ca. 1949, NDA Early Days Scrapbook B, NDCA; "School Chronicle," p. 80, 94.

<sup>31</sup>Notre Dame Academy brochure, ca. 1939, p. 12.

In 1937 the International Business Machines Corporation of New York sponsored a national essay contest on "Today's Need for Thoughtful Effort." Over 50,000 students across the nation entered the contest. Limited to three entries, Notre Dame Academy submitted the essays of Frances Horinek, Marie Kubat, and Frances Hartley.<sup>32</sup> Miss Horinek won state honors; Miss Hartley received honorable mention.<sup>33</sup> In announcing the winner, Thomas J. Watson, president of the I.B.M. company, wrote to Notre Dame:

It is my privilege to inform you that the essay . . . submitted by Miss Frances Horinek in the . . . creative writing competition has been chosen as the best of all papers produced in the state of Nebraska. . . . Her achievement is a tribute not only to her, but to the<sup>34</sup> excellent quality of her training and guidance.

At a school assembly, a representative of the company awarded Miss Horinek a gold wristwatch and presented the Academy an all-electric writing machine and a bronze plaque as a "perpetual recognition to Miss Horinek's creative ability."<sup>35</sup>

Notre Dame typing students placed second in the nation and received a trophy in the second year typists' division of the "Every Pupil Typewriting Contest" sponsored by the National Catholic High School Typists Association in 1940. Competent typing skills throughout the

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<sup>32</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>33</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 53.

<sup>34</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

early forties brought numerous certificates, honorable mentions, and a third place rating in the nation for the students and the school. In the sixteenth annual National Catholic High School Typist Contest held 11 March 1948, Notre Dame's senior typists sped to first place in a fifteen-minute letter-typing test.<sup>36</sup>

Although the Academy had no organized gym classes during this period of her history, the girls participated in various games, exercises, and dances during the noon-hour and after school. The boarders, in particular, enjoyed softball games. Ping pong tournaments created enthusiasm among the girls.<sup>37</sup>

Music, on the other hand, retained its traditional vital position in the curriculum. Grade and high school girls availed themselves of private piano, violin, and voice lessons. In 1939 the Glee Club, orchestra, and the music pupils organized a Music Club for the purpose of fostering a greater appreciation and knowledge of music.<sup>38</sup> On 15 December 1940 Notre Dame presented her first public musical, which became an annual spring event for the duration of the school's existence.<sup>39</sup> Beginning in 1946, several music students entered the District Music Festival at Joslyn Memorial, where they received ratings on their performances.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Spotlight, 28 May 1948, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., November 1938, p. 7; March-April 1943, p. 3; 31 January 1948, p. 3; March 1949, p. 3; "School Chronicle," p. 112, 123.

<sup>38</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 73.

<sup>39</sup>Spotlight, January 1940, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 106, 115, 121.

One outstanding music student of Sister M. Imelda Buresh eventually gained fame as a singer and actress. Genevieve Hering, now known as Jeri Southern, showed distinctive talent in music when a sophomore at the Academy. She studied voice, harmony, and piano, and composed music.<sup>41</sup> At an audition music contest held at the University School of Music in Lincoln in May 1943, Miss Hering won a music scholarship for her piano and vocal renditions.<sup>42</sup>

Artists and musicians were among the many unemployed professional workers whose specialized abilities would have been lost to society during the years of the Depression. Under the Works Progress Administration, created in 1935, the Federal Music Project utilized the talent of musicians through recreational group singing, music appreciation, and community orchestras. The state and local governments were essentially responsible for the nature and content of the program; the Federal Government provided the funds and determined the general conditions for their expenditure.<sup>43</sup>

In Nebraska, the WPA Music Project sponsored the Omaha Civic Orchestra's Music Appreciation Concerts for the elementary and secondary schools, PTA and similar groups throughout the city. The Omaha Civic Orchestra performed frequently at Notre Dame Academy between 1937 and 1942. The orchestra, conducted by Dante Picciotti, captivated the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 80; Spotlight, February 1941, p. 5; May 1941, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup>Spotlight, May-June 1943, p. 4; "School Chronicle," p. 95.

<sup>43</sup>Doak S. Campbell, Frederick H. Bair, and Oswald L. Harvey, Educational Activities of the Works Progress Administration (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 11, 20, 85.

students with the dances and folklore of foreign countries; an explanation of the structure, function, and production of the string and woodwind instruments; classical music, and music of American composers.<sup>44</sup>

The Academy's philosophy of education stressed the importance of the religious dimension in its process of educating the whole person. Since the Sister-teachers aimed to develop "noble and useful women . . .," they viewed classroom instruction in Christian Doctrine and Church History as only a part of one's religious formation.<sup>45</sup> Through the Catholic Action programs of the Sodality and the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade, religion became a daily practice.

The Sodality assisted the missionaries in home and foreign regions through their money-making projects among the students. Notre Dame girls sent several boxes of clothes, toys, and necessities to the Indian Missions in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Arizona. Needy families in St. Philip Neri, St. Therese and Our Lady of Guadalupe parishes in Omaha were recipients of food baskets and clothing at Thanksgiving and Christmas.<sup>46</sup> From 1938 to 1942 the Sodalists held annual public card parties and in 1943 substituted bingo at Beseda Hall in South Omaha.<sup>47</sup> Although the Sodalists

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<sup>44</sup>Unidentified clippings, ca. 1937, 1939, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA; Spotlight, February 1941, p. 6; April 1942, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>Narod, Chicago, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>46</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 42, 85, 94; Spotlight, October 1938, p. 4; November 1941, p. 1; November-December 1942, p. 7; 15 November 1943, p. 4; 14 November 1944, p. 3; 31 October 1946, p. 7; 31 October 1947, p. 7; 31 January 1948, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 61, 75, 81, 85; Spotlight, February 1938, p. 1; November 1939, p. 1; October 1940, p. 1; October 1941, p. 4; November-December 1942, p. 7.

solicited prizes and sold the tickets and chances, Joseph Ficene directed the affair. The Sodality bingo was successful until its discontinuance in 1948.<sup>48</sup>

Notre Dame students shared their missionary zeal with students from several Catholic schools in Omaha and the Nebraska towns of Dodge, Wahoo, Prague, Brainard, and Dwight at the Mission Day held each May from 1935 to 1941.<sup>49</sup> The Notre Dame girls exhibited many dresses and clothing items they either sewed or purchased for the missions. A program of mission playlets and musical numbers provided the entertainment. Proceeds from the concession stands and the sale of refreshments supplemented the mission fund.<sup>50</sup>

In the fall of 1935, the Omaha Mission Crusade Conference voted out the debates which they had in previous years as too exhausting for coaches and debaters. Instead, each school sent monthly reports of their mission work to the president of the Conference. The school whose students had done the most for the missions during the year received the Bishop Rummel Shield. A group of priests decided that Notre Dame was deserving of the shield at the end of the 1935-1936 school term.<sup>51</sup> The following year, the Conference decided on a point system for various phases of social work, particularly for actual help, pecuniary or other,

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<sup>48</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 99, 102, 105, 108, 116, 112; Spotlight, 31 January 1948, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 38, 80.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 38, 45; Spotlight, May 1940, p. 5; May 1941, p. 1; The True Voice, ca. 1940, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>51</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 41.



toward the missions. Notre Dame, the youngest of the nine competing schools, gained permanent possession of the Bishop Rummel Shield in 1937 for her outstanding social service.<sup>52</sup>

After 1937, the C.S.M.C. activities varied considerably. There were speech and essay contests, radio broadcasts, dances to raise money for the missions, and rallies.<sup>53</sup> Notre Dame girls served as officers of the Omaha Council of the C.S.M.C. and as members of the Board of Governors.<sup>54</sup> In 1942 they organized Junior Units of the Crusade at Assumption, St. Adalbert, and Notre Dame Academy grade schools.<sup>55</sup> Gradually the students at Notre Dame and the other schools lost interest in C.S.M.C. Despite the efforts of the diocesan director to reorganize and revitalize the Crusade in 1949, it ceased to be active beyond 1950.<sup>56</sup> Still, interest in mission activities continued and this work of the Sodality and C.S.M.C. made a lasting impression on the students.<sup>57</sup>

Between 1938 and 1949 there were some noteworthy beginnings at the Academy. In January 1938 the Reverend Joseph Vitko, chaplain and

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<sup>52</sup>Omaha Bee-News, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook A, NDCA. Notre Dame's leaders of the C.S.M.C. in 1937 were Frances Horinek, Atwood, Kansas; Helene Zaloudek, Chicago; Irene McLaughlin, Tilden, Nebraska; and Rosemary Black, Omaha. Notre Dame accumulated 483,100 points; St. John High ranked second with 443,600 points.

<sup>53</sup>Spotlight, May 1940, p. 6; May 1941, p. 4; October 1941, p. 3; November-December 1942, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 86, 99; Spotlight, 15 November 1944, p. 3; unidentified clipping, 1944, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>55</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 94; Spotlight, November-December 1942, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 119, 131; Spotlight, 31 March 1949, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup>Questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae, 12 November 1974.

religion instructor at the Academy, printed the first issue of a school paper, the Notre Dame Academy Spotlight. Its purpose was to foster a school spirit and to keep contact with the alumnae.<sup>58</sup> In 1947 the senior class edited the first year book, the Academette; in 1956 the title became the Mantle; between 1966 and 1968, a quarterly publication, Focus, replaced the yearbook; and in 1968, I Remember, a picture booklet served as the school memento. From 1971 to 1974 the journalism class re-introduced the yearbook, naming it the Hilltopper.<sup>59</sup>

The seniors of 1940 conceived the idea of having a distinctive school flag. The design, selected from those submitted in a contest, featured the cross and lily emblem, the school motto, "Virtus et Scientia," and "Notre Dame Academy" on a background of blue and white.<sup>60</sup>

In 1941 the Academy awarded its first one-year scholarships to girls completing their eighth grade. The Omaha girls received a thirty-dollar scholarship; those from out-of-town or wishing to board received sixty dollars.<sup>61</sup>

National affairs during this period of the school's history attracted the attention of the faculty and students as it did many Americans.

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<sup>58</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 60; Spotlight, January 1938, p. 2. The Spotlight ceased publication in 1952. In 1959 the students revived the school paper, calling it Hill-top Hi-Lites. Between 1969 and 1974 the journalism class published it as Hilltopper.

<sup>59</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 110; Spotlight, 31 March 1947, p. 5; Notre Dame Academy yearbooks.

<sup>60</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 70-71, 74; Spotlight, June 1940, p. 2. The emblem signified faith and purity; "Virtus et Scientia" means "Virtue and Knowledge;" and the colors denoted truth, loyalty and virtue.

<sup>61</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 81.

When President Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to authorize him to add six members to the Supreme Court, the Socialists, upon the direction of their faculty moderator, wrote to Nebraska's Senators and Representatives to protest the action. They contended that the proposed legislation would "inevitably lead towards the destruction of the Supreme Court's historic function as the independent guardian of the Constitution."<sup>62</sup>

The country was in a very isolationist frame of mind in the 1930s. As the war clouds gathered over Europe, Americans became seriously concerned about the possibility of U.S. involvement. The Notre Dame faculty and students, no less aware of the dangers, wrote to the President, Congress, Nebraska Representative Charles W. McLaughlin and Senator George W. Norris, asking them to keep the United States out of the war.<sup>63</sup> Later, in the fall of 1939, they appealed to the officials in Washington not to lift the embargo on arms and to adopt the Ludlow Amendment.<sup>64</sup> The students received responses from the Nebraska Congressmen who promised to keep the country out of the war. But the President's decision to allow the belligerents to buy munitions on a cash-and-carry basis disturbed them.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>63</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 68, 75; Spotlight, February 1939, p. 1. Curiously, there is no record of student or faculty reaction to the German aggression in taking over the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in 1939.

<sup>64</sup>Spotlight, September 1939, p. 5. Except for instances of foreign attack upon the United States, the Ludlow Amendment would have required a referendum before American soldiers could be sent to participate in a war.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., November 1939, p. 3.

The sudden attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into the Second World War. Americans immediately turned their labors toward ending the war quickly and victoriously. At the Academy, the students initially got involved by organizing a Junior Red Cross on 30 January 1942.<sup>66</sup> For the duration of the war, and for several years after, the grade and high school was very active in the Red Cross. They sewed lap robes and hospital garments and knitted sweaters and afghans for the servicemen; purchased defense stamps and bonds, and collected scrap iron, magazines, and paper.<sup>67</sup> Among the scrap iron was the ten-foot, one-ton tank of a buried boiler which a group of girls had discovered while exploring the campus.<sup>68</sup>

In response to a request by the National Red Cross that five percent of the population in each city be trained in First Aid, several Notre Dame teachers and students enrolled in Home Nursing and First Aid courses in 1942 and 1943.<sup>69</sup> Beginning in January 1942 the school conducted monthly air raid drills, with the gym as the air raid shelter.<sup>70</sup>

The Academy cooperated with the war effort in other ways. At the request of the War Production Board, Notre Dame released three typewriters for their use.<sup>71</sup> As a means of conserving fuel and paper, the

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<sup>66</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 87.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 88, 96; Spotlight, January 1942, p. 5; February 1942, p. 4; November-December 1942, p. 1; 15 November 1944, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup>Spotlight, September-October 1942, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., January 1942, p. 4; April 1942, p. 3; "School Chronicle," p. 88, 96.

<sup>70</sup>Spotlight, January 1942, p. 3; "School Chronicle," p. 89.

<sup>71</sup>Spotlight, November-December 1942, p. 4; "School Chronicle," p. 97.

Spotlight staff published five issues instead of the regular ten.<sup>72</sup> The Sodalists cancelled Mission Day, the Alumnae reduced the number of their meetings, and the faculty eliminated the annual picnic because of the rationing of scarce items.<sup>73</sup> Every two months the Academy received a certificate for purchasing 420 pounds of sugar, another for a specified amount of meat and shortening, and a third for canned fruits, vegetables, staples, and other foods. The number of meals served at the Academy during the preceding two months determined the quantity for each certificate.<sup>74</sup>

After the war, the Sisters requested permission from the immigration authorities in Washington, D.C., to receive students from foreign countries beyond the prescribed quota for refugees. It was their intention to assist the candidates and younger Sisters to come to Notre Dame from Czechoslovakia.<sup>75</sup> On 19 March 1949, Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl, the principal, received notification "that the school has been duly approved by the Attorney General for nonquota immigrant students in accordance with the Immigration Act of 1924."<sup>76</sup> In later years several girls from Central American countries enrolled at the Academy. The

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<sup>72</sup>Spotlight, September-October 1942, p. 2. Gasoline removed the ink from the drum of the printing machine.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., January 1942, p. 4; February 1942, p. 4; May-June 1943, p. 8; "School Chronicle," p. 95.

<sup>74</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 130.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 150b.

<sup>76</sup>Joseph Savoretti, Assistant Commissioner of the U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D.C., to Sister M. Magdalen, Principal, 15 March 1949.

circumstances in Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia prevented the fulfillment of the original purpose for the request.

Notre Dame's reputation of staging plays which "conveyed a message, eulogized Christian living or cultivated a taste for better things" drew crowds to her all-school productions at the Creighton University auditorium, Knights of Columbus hall, Catholic Sokol Hall, and Beseda Hall.<sup>77</sup> After 1944 the senior class play, performed at the Academy, replaced the all-school productions.<sup>78</sup>

The Notre Dame Alumnae Association carried on its tradition of loyalty and support through benefit raffles, card parties, bake sales, and voluntary pledges. In 1940 the Association amended its Constitution to permit the establishment of affiliated units in the states where a large number of alumnae lived. Graduates in Iowa organized their unit in 1940; the Kansas alumnae did so in 1946.<sup>79</sup>

The Notre Dame Ladies' Aid, organized in 1923 to assist the Sisters, marked its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1948. Each year these women from St. Wenceslaus, St. Adalbert, and Assumption parishes, and the mothers of daughters from Omaha who attended the Academy, raised money for the Sisters.<sup>80</sup>

While the junior-senior banquet remained a traditional spring

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<sup>77</sup>Narod, Chicago, ca. 1937, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA; "School Chronicle," p. 43; Spotlight, January 1938, p. 1; December 1939, p. 1; November 1940, p. 1; January 1942, p. 1; 15 November 1943, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup>Spotlight, 31 March 1944, p. 1; "School Chronicle," p. 109, 116, 121.

<sup>79</sup>Spotlight, December 1940, p. 5; "School Chronicle," p. 77, 111.

<sup>80</sup>Academettes, Notre Dame Academy yearbook, 1948.

event, the Academy held its first junior-senior prom on 31 May 1938.<sup>82</sup> An elaborate coronation ceremony climaxed the first boy-girl social dance. In 1941 the girls, voting against a prom, chose instead to honor their parents at a special evening with a play, musical numbers, dancing, and refreshments. To show their appreciation, even the parents who lived a distance from Omaha made every effort to attend. This parent-daughter evening was customary until the 1950s.<sup>83</sup>

There was no individual dating among the boarders. They could receive visitors on week-ends, but normally these friends or relatives could not take their meals at the Academy unless they paid for them. Week-end visits with friends or day students required the permission of the parents. The Sister Directress restricted the use of the telephone to necessary business. She also read their outgoing and incoming mail. Some girls objected to this infringement upon their privacy. However, the practice continued to a certain degree until the early 1960s. Whether the Sisters who were responsible for the residents in the fifties and sixties actually read all the mail is uncertain. Girls who wished to go shopping to Florence or downtown Omaha had to obtain the permission of the Directress. On occasion, a Sister-chaperone accompanied the residents on hikes and outings.<sup>84</sup>

The discipline at Notre Dame was primarily parental, as the Sisters showed motherly solicitude, particularly toward the boarders. The

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<sup>82</sup>Spotlight, May 1938, p. 1; unidentified clipping, ca. 1938, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>83</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 79, 188; Spotlight, June 1941, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup>Notre Dame Academy brochure, ca. 1939, p. 14; questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae.

Sisters regarded courtesy, gentle manners, and thoughtfulness of others as the rule of daily life. They expected the students to conform to the rules, since ready and cheerful compliance produced good order. Insubordination which mild but firm government failed to overcome, was sufficient reason for dismissal from the school. The Sisters reserved the right to request the withdrawal of a student from the Academy if her behavior was harmful to the general good of the other girls.<sup>85</sup> The records indicated few expulsions.

While the discipline was strict, the residents and day students of the thirties and forties cooperated, because most of them came from homes where obedience and respect for authority characterized their family life. The girls experienced a happy and simple life as boarders. They enjoyed weiner roasts, picnics at Vennelyst Park, Halloween and birthday parties, and especially the visit from St. Nick and the Black One (the devil) on December sixth. According to the Czech custom, the Black One furnished the fun and pranks and St. Nick rewarded the girls for their good behavior with candy and fruit.<sup>86</sup>

Many of the girls enjoyed roller skating around the large circular sidewalk of the fruit orchard. Winter was a favorite season, as the snow-covered hill on the east side of the building was ideal for tobogganing.

After school and on Saturdays, the residents cleaned classrooms and

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 6-7.

<sup>86</sup>Spotlight, December 1958, p. 6. Notre Dame boarders enjoyed this custom from 1926 until the mid-1950s. In later years, the Sisters simply treated the girls to fruit and candy.



the dormitories, peeled potatoes around a huge tub, washed clothes on a washboard in a tub, or ironed their clothes with a hot flat iron. Otherwise, they occupied themselves with studying, writing letters home, practicing music, or taking walks around the spacious campus.

Notre Dame Academy's reputation for developing well-educated Christian women spread far and wide. In 1938 a missionary who had met several alumnae on his tour of the United States wrote to the Academy that he was "greatly impressed by their distinctive Notre Dame spirit and their winning influence."<sup>87</sup> At the commencement exercises in June 1938, the Right Reverend Monsignor Edward Hunkeler, pastor of St. Cecilia Cathedral, remarked that "from his own observation Notre Dame students acquire not only leadership qualities . . ., but also bring and integrate enthusiasm into the activities of their respective parishes."<sup>88</sup> The Commercial School of Commerce congratulated the seniors of 1944 for being fortunate to have "such an excellent core of instructors to guide you."<sup>89</sup> In an article for the Sunday World-Herald, Rita Kucirek wrote that at Notre Dame she learned to distinguish true values from worthless ones; acquired the art of studiousness; learned the importance and value of education; and was grateful for the small classes that made it possible for the teachers to give individual attention.<sup>90</sup>

Several of Notre Dame's graduates credited their education at the

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., April 1938, p. 5.

<sup>88</sup>Unidentified clipping, 1938, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>89</sup>Spotlight, 31 May 1944, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup>Sunday World-Herald, 26 October 1947.

Academy for their ease in obtaining successful jobs. They regarded Notre Dame's business courses as unequaled in any high school of the city. Graduates of Notre Dame who desired employment as secretaries, stenographers or bookkeepers had little difficulty obtaining a position, because businesses recognized the school's competence in training the girls.

One alumna wrote that she experienced "none of the trauma connected with the demands of higher education because Notre Dame had given me the proper basics upon which to build. College was simply a continuation of the demands . . . Notre Dame had placed upon us."<sup>91</sup> A 1941 graduate who had transferred to the Academy for her junior and senior years, recalled that she was able to take enough college preparatory courses in two years to enable her to enroll in a university where she frequently made the honor roll. She praised the patient, diligent and individual attention of the Sisters for this achievement.<sup>92</sup>

Graduates of these years have become teachers, religious education specialists, high school counselors, school administrators, businesswomen, nurses, an Omaha School Board member, music teachers, and a music composer. Between 1935 and 1949 there were 247 graduates; of these, approximately fifty have earned baccalaureate degrees, a few have master degrees.<sup>93</sup>

The faculty and the two administrators of these years were out-

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<sup>91</sup> Questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Information supplied by Sister M. Eleanor Kramolisich, Co-Moderator of the Alumnae Association, 16 September 1975.

standing women religious, exceptionally qualified and dedicated as teachers. Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl began the first of her two terms as principal in 1936.<sup>94</sup> During her first principalship, the faculty consisted of seven other Sisters and the Reverend Joseph Vitko, the chaplain who taught religion. Sister, noted for her broad knowledge of science and mathematics, was an excellent teacher. Over ninety-three college hours beyond her master's degree, which she received in 1938, testify to her belief in keeping pace with modern trends in science, some of which she introduced at the school. While principal, Sister printed the Academy brochures and telephoned prospective students to increase the enrollment.<sup>95</sup>

Sister M. Gabriel Klein was principal from 1941 to 1947. Being on the pioneer staff she was well-acquainted with the school. During her principalship, Sister received her master's degree in English from Creighton University.<sup>96</sup> Six other Sisters and the Reverend Monsignor James Aherne, the chaplain, composed the faculty. In 1941, Miss Frances Horinek, a Notre Dame alumna taught English, Latin, and world and American history.<sup>97</sup>

At one time or another, Sister M. Alexia Hobza taught history, biology, Latin, advanced algebra, English and art. She was an accomplished

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<sup>94</sup>Sister Magdalen was principal from 1936 to 1941, and from 1947 to 1954. She taught at Notre Dame from 1936 to 1941, 1947 to 1954, and 1955 to 1968.

<sup>95</sup>Interview with Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl, 7 January 1975.

<sup>96</sup>Spotlight, February 1942, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., June 1941, p. 1.

artist, whose creative floral arrangements adorned almost every junior-senior banquet and prom, parent-daughter evening, and alumnae banquet that the school sponsored from 1936 on.<sup>98</sup> Sister taught at the Academy from 1935 until 1953, and from 1962 until she retired in 1971. Even after her retirement, she assisted in the art department where she produced ceramic pieces by the hundreds.<sup>99</sup>

Sister M. Vincent Dvorak's teaching qualifications included Latin, French, algebra, geometry, English, and European and American history. From 1934 to 1952 she taught at the Academy. She also served as librarian and alumnae directress for many years. Both Sister Alexia and Sister Vincent earned their bachelor degrees from Duchesne College and their master degrees from Creighton University.<sup>100</sup>

Sister M. Emmanuela Karnik, on the Academy faculty at various times, taught business courses, mathematics, English and dressmaking. In 1944 she devised a dressmaking course and planned and printed her own sewing workbook to include the use and care of the sewing machine, selection and alterations of commercial patterns, color harmony, various stitches, and ornamental processes.<sup>101</sup> This course received special recognition from the Reverend Paul Schneider, Archdiocesan Superintendent of schools and F. E. Sorenson of the North Central Education Association.

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Sisters M. Edwardine Rezek and Miriam Brcka, 6 October 1975.

<sup>99</sup> Author's personal knowledge.

<sup>100</sup> Sister M. Alexia Hobza and Sister M. Vincent Dvorak to author, 11 October 1975.

<sup>101</sup> Spotlight, 31 January 1944, p. 4; 31 January 1945, p. 3.

At the request of Father Schneider, Sister explained her dressmaking course at the Catholic Diocesan Teachers' Meeting in February 1945.<sup>102</sup>

A building addition, the opening of an elementary school, an expanded and updated curriculum, student involvement in missionary work and world affairs, several awards and honors, and changes in the school's social activities and life of the boarders are the major features of the 1936-1949 period. The well qualified and experienced teachers, most of them Notre Dame Sisters, deserve the credit for the achievements of these years, as well as the Academy's renown for graduating well-trained students. With this foundation, the Academy approached its twenty-fifth year of secondary education in North Omaha.

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<sup>102</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 103.

#### IV. THE YEARS OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION, 1950-1964

Twenty-five years after the construction of the first portion of the Motherhouse, which included the Academy for girls, the Provincial Council of the School Sisters de Notre Dame considered another building venture. On 14 January 1950, Mother M. Alphonsa Suda, Provincial Superior, decided to build a chapel, the west wing of the convent, and a central heating plant. The E. E. Gilmore Company, which placed the lowest bid of \$332,597.00, contracted for the work. Realizing that the Sisters' income from their teaching apostolates in the Midwest was insufficient to finance the project, the Sisters negotiated for a loan of \$300,000.00.<sup>1</sup>

On 26 February 1950, the Most Reverend Archbishop Gerald T. Bergan blessed the ground and broke the sod with the same spade used at the 1925 and 1936 ground-breaking ceremonies. Two archbishops and two bishops from Australia, several local clergy, and a Guard of Honor composed of the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus attended the Omaha prelate.<sup>2</sup>

In less than a month, on 20 March, excavation began for the chapel and convent.<sup>3</sup> Beneath the chapel was the auditorium, with a seating capacity of four hundred. The new convent wing contained a kitchen, laundry,

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<sup>1</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>The Sunday Visitor, Archdiocesan True Voice edition, 5 March 1950, Notre Dame Academy Early Days, Scrapbook B, Notre Dame Convent Archives, Omaha. (Hereafter cited as NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.)

<sup>3</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 153b.

infirmary, and living quarters for the Sisters. The former convent section became classrooms. Within a year, the construction had progressed sufficiently to permit the use of the new auditorium for school-related events in May.<sup>4</sup>

Archbishop Bergan solemnly dedicated the new chapel and new convent on 12 August 1951.<sup>5</sup> Since that date corresponded with the reception of young women into the Congregation, the Sisters postponed the public dedication and open house until 21 October 1951. A group of about thirty men organized and planned the Civic Celebration which began with a High Mass of the Assumption, which the Reverend Anthony Alberts, chaplain, celebrated. The Notre Dame Ladies' Aid and the alumnae served a chicken dinner to over 1700 people. Later in the afternoon, choirs from several parishes and schools participated in a Sacred Concert in the Chapel of the Assumption, after which local and outstate talent contributed to a variety show in the new auditorium.<sup>6</sup>

With the availability of more classrooms, Notre Dame Academy expanded and updated her curriculum. Some of the new courses introduced between 1950 and 1964 included journalism, business practice and office training, sociology, sketching, oil painting, ceramics, and a variety of sciences, mathematics, foreign language, and English courses. The home economics department benefited from the extra space when in 1953, carpen-

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<sup>4</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 131, 139.

<sup>5</sup>The Sunday Visitor, 12 August 1951, NDA Early Days, Scrapbook B, NDCA.

<sup>6</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 139; "Convent Chronicle," p. 160; Spotlight, October 1951, p. 1. The school received the \$5006.00 profit from the chicken dinner.

ters started remodeling and equipping the former dining room of the Sisters into a four-unit kitchen. The adjoining rooms became laundry facilities for the cooking class and the resident students. In the fall of 1954, thirty students enrolled in the first cooking course taught at the Academy.<sup>7</sup> Gradually the home economics department expanded its dressmaking and cooking courses and introduced home decorating and family care.

Speech was another addition to the curriculum. In March 1951, four girls participated for the first time in the District Declamatory Contest at the University of Omaha and the Invitational Speech Meet at Creighton Prep.<sup>8</sup> By the mid 1950s the speech course was a requirement for every student. From then on, there was participation in the various speech meets each year.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the nineteen-fifties and early sixties, Duchesne College of Omaha sponsored a mock United Nations Day in October.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of the event was to encourage young high school people to study world events in greater depth, with emphasis on the United Nations, and to develop their ability to talk on these matters. Several weeks in

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<sup>7</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 158; Spotlight, special issue, December 1954, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Spotlight, June 1951, p. 3; "School Chronicle," p. 130.

<sup>9</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 190; "School Chronicle Scrapbook," 1961-1962, compiled by Sister M. Dolores Pavlik, Principal, NDCA. (Hereafter cited as "Chronicle Scrapbook.")

<sup>10</sup>Spotlight, June 1950, p. 2; "School Chronicle," p. 157, 160, 166, 175, 184, 197; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 36; 1960-1961, p. 40; 1961-1962, p. 83; 1962-1963, p. 84; 1963-1964, p. 31.



advance of the day, the participating schools received a list of some of the year's most difficult international issues, and the names of the two countries their delegates would represent.<sup>11</sup> The Mock U.N. conducted discussions of the main topics and voted on the issues. In 1950, the major issues were the recognition of Communist China and control of the atomic bomb. On the question of the bomb, the Russian delegates walked out. Her satellite, Yugoslavia, which the Notre Dame girls represented, remained for the balloting.<sup>12</sup>

As the United Nations dealt with more serious world problems in the 1960s, the Mock U.N. gained importance and attracted the attention of more schools. At the 1962 event, over four hundred students from Iowa and Nebraska debated and voted on disarmament, withdrawal of troops from South Korea, and the U.N. operations in the Congo.<sup>13</sup>

Notre Dame juniors and seniors also participated in the County Government Day, which the American Legion sponsored on a state-wide basis to acquaint the youth with the work of county government and to prepare them for better citizenship. At the Academy, the American government class conducted the elections, complete with filing for candidacy, campaigning, and voting by the students, to determine the county office for each girl attending the event at the Douglas County Court House.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>The Des Moines /Iowa/ Sunday Register, 18 November 1962, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>Spotlight, June 1950, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup>The Des Moines Sunday Register, 18 November 1962, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Spotlight, December 1950, p. 5; December 1951, p. 6; "School Chronicle," p. 130, 138, 145, 186; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 13.

City officials explained their duties and responsibilities and gave the students a tour of their offices, after which they attended the city council session at City Hall.<sup>15</sup>

Boy-Girl Week, also known as Youth Week, was a city government project which the Omaha World-Herald initiated. Each of the eighteen Omaha high schools sent one representative. The drawing of names determined the honorary city government positions for the students. Twice, in 1952 and 1955, Notre Dame girls were honorary mayors.<sup>16</sup> During the week, the teen-agers visited the city offices, attended council meetings, and rode in the Youth Parade which climaxed the week's program.

From 1952 until 1974, a Notre Dame senior joined girls from all over Nebraska at the Cornhusker Girls' State at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln each June. Sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary, Girls' State provided a knowledge of American government through the actual formation of their own state, election of officers, and the enactment of laws. Usually a religious or civic group, such as the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women or the Omaha Benson Women's Club, paid the expenses for the Notre Dame girl who attended.<sup>17</sup>

Music appreciation, the special heritage of the School Sisters since Peter Fourier founded the Order in the seventeenth century, had its greatest growth during this period of the school's history. After a

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<sup>15</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 5 August 1962, "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1961-1962.

<sup>16</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 26 April 1952, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA. The honorary mayors were Elaine Zelinger and Regina Markey.

<sup>17</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 140, 181; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 18; 1963-1964, p. 65.

lapse of about eight years due to the lack of student interest, Sister M. Gemma Uhlik reorganized the orchestra in 1949.<sup>18</sup> Her music pupils performed at Schmoller and Mueller's "Stepping Stones to Stardom" over Radio Station KOIL and the Glee Club performed over KBON.<sup>19</sup> A musical jamboree to raise money for orchestra instruments, spring recitals, music clinics for the orchestra, and the Annual Junior Festivals of the Nebraska Federation of Music Clubs at Joslyn were among the music department's activities throughout the fifties.<sup>20</sup> In May 1959, a variety show, which the music students produced, led the World-Herald to exclaim, "One word for Notre Dame Academy Variety Show Friday night--overwhelming. Name it--the 1959 edition had it to spare: specialty acts, pantomimes, three masters of ceremonies, senioritas, rock and roll, band numbers and chorus."<sup>21</sup>

In 1960 the freshmen formed a separate chorus, and in 1961 a select singing group organized as the Madrigal Singers.<sup>22</sup> In addition to the previously named events, the various musical groups entertained at the Veterans' Hospital, produced Thanksgiving meditative programs and Christmas musicales, and made frequent television appearances.

In 1963 the choral groups cut a record, "Notre Dame Sings Gloria," which included "Gloria," an original composition of Sister M. Jean Zmolek,

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<sup>18</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 127; Spotlight, 31 October 1949, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup>Spotlight, March 1950, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 127, 141-142, 148, 154, 164, 167-168, 193.

<sup>21</sup>Omaha World-Herald as cited in ibid., p. 192-193.

<sup>22</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 35; 1961-1962, p. 27.

the music instructor. Later that year, the Concert Choir, formerly the Madrigals, joined in a concert of original compositions sponsored by the music department of the University of Nebraska. Notre Dame was the only high school performing.<sup>23</sup>

The thirty-seven-member concert choir presented a special musical program at St. Cecilia's Cathedral on 22 November 1964, the first anniversary of John F. Kennedy's death. The concert included Gabriel Faure's "Requiem" and the ancient "Litany to the Black Virgin" set to music by the modern French composer, Francis Poulenc.<sup>24</sup>

During these years of the Academy's growth, most of the students registered for Latin, although the curriculum offered French, Spanish, and Czech if there were sufficient numbers to warrant a class. Between 1957 and 1965, Latin involved the girls in activities as Czech had in the 1930s. In 1959, the Academy organized a Latin Honor Society, affiliated with the national organization, for students who had maintained a ninety percent average for the first three quarters of the Latin course.<sup>25</sup> For several years the girls competed in the nationwide Association for the Promotion of the Study of Latin (APSL) examinations.<sup>26</sup> In 1963, the Academy received an APSL trophy for having three students who scored highly in the contest.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 1963-1964, p. 65, 71.

<sup>24</sup>North Omaha Sun, 19 November 1964; Sunday World-Herald, 15 November 1964, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA.

<sup>25</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 199.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 184; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 48; 1960-1961, p. 30; 1961-1962, p. 58; 1962-1963, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1962-1963, p. 48; Mantle, Notre Dame Academy Yearbook, 1963.

In 1960 the girls organized "Classic 28" for the purpose of acquiring a thorough knowledge of Roman life, appreciating the Latin language, and understanding better the English language. They learned songs, poems, prayers, and jokes in Latin, conducted contests, and presented plays and reports at their bimonthly meetings.<sup>28</sup> The following year they renamed the club, "Classica Societas." Among the highlights of this club's yearly activities were the October Ludi Romani (Roman Games) which consisted of chariot races, javelin and discus throwing, and three-legged races; and the Roman Festival in the spring.<sup>29</sup> One such banquet commemorated Caesar's triumphant return to Rome. For several weeks, the ninety-six Latin students researched every detail for the banquet: menu, decorations, clothing, Caesar, and the triumphal arch. Dressed as goddesses, senators, soldiers, and slaves, the crowd greeted Caesar with "Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat!" as he entered the gymnasium to receive the laurel crown and scepter. A three-course meal, which the freshmen "slaves" served Roman-style, and a program concluded the festivities.<sup>30</sup>

From 1961, when "Classica Societas" became a member of the state and national Junior Classical League, the girls participated in the J.C.L. State Convention and the national conventions in Kansas, Louisiana, and Arizona. Twelve to sixteen Nebraska schools competed in the written tests on vocabulary, grammar, derivatives, and mythology, and the contests on oratory, costumes, games, and various projects. Notre Dame students

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<sup>28</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1961-1962, p. 56-57.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1962-1963, p. 53; interview with Sister Agnes Marie Ostry, 14 January 1975.

won numerous awards each year; they usually won first prize for their mosaics.<sup>31</sup> One unique mosaic depicted Emperor Diocletian's summer house on the Adriatic Sea. Using a black and white magazine picture as a guide, Dorothy Hanus, Alice Pleskac and several volunteers dyed, spray painted and crushed 508 egg shells, and broke 813 enameled shells, which they glued to form the picture. Begun on 22 January and completed on 18 April 1963, the thirty by forty-eight-inch mosaic symbolized 1050 hours of difficult labor and merited first prize at the State Convention.<sup>32</sup>

Latin class and its various activities reached a peak at Notre Dame in the early sixties. Then, student interest in the challenge of learning the language began to wane. As more girls enrolled in French and Spanish, Latin succumbed to these modern languages.<sup>33</sup> The French Club held its first meeting in 1961; the Spanish Culture Club began the following year.<sup>34</sup> Both clubs patterned their projects after those of the Latin Club, but neither one reached the latter's degree of enthusiastic student participation.

An important feature of any Catholic school is its religion program of instruction and practice, which also experienced changes and growth during these years. The Sodality held the distinction of being the school's largest and most active religious organization. The Sodalists

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<sup>31</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1961-1962, p. 56; interview with Sister Agnes Marie Ostry.

<sup>32</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1962-1963, p. 52; The Sunday World-Herald, 26 May 1963.

<sup>33</sup>Interview with Sister Agnes Marie Ostry.

<sup>34</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1961-1962, p. 36; 1962-1963, p. 54.

were active in the monthly study clubs, the annual spring Sodality Convention, and Vocation Day, which the Omaha Sodality Union sponsored.

Mission work was a high priority in the fifties. Each year the Sodalists filled hundreds of Christmas stockings with candy and small items for the Indian missions in Porcupine, South Dakota.<sup>35</sup> In addition they sent donations of clothing, toys, and money to other missions and to the needy families in the Omaha area.

The sixties ushered in several changes in the structure and thrust of the Sodality. The accent was on spirituality and the lay apostolate. To cultivate the first, the weekly "Sodality Newslet" gave timely points on prayer, meditation, and the Mass. For an apostolate, the girls volunteered to work at St. Joseph Hospital, Christ Child Center, and similar places.<sup>36</sup> A bus tour to Nebraska's scenic and historic spots, the Sodality Ball, and the Sodality Union Talent Show were new social and recreational events begun in 1961.<sup>37</sup>

In 1962 the Sodality had become so large that it was necessary to divide each class into groups. Three Sisters moderated four groups with a maximum of eleven members in each. As a means of unifying the groups, the "Blue Cord" column in the school newspaper reminded the girls of their spiritual duties, announced Sodality affairs and reported on completed projects.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 196.

<sup>36</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 35; 1960-1961, p. 6, 47-48; 1961-1962, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 1960-1961, p. 47; 1961-1962, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 1962-1963, p. 80-81.

Realistically, the Sodality did not appeal to every girl attending the Academy. This became more apparent as the enrollment increased and as a different generation of girls entered high school. Other organizations attempted to fulfill the need for practical application of religious instruction. One of these was the "Fighting 69," begun in 1952 but not active until 1960, which stressed purity of life. The members spent after-school hours as volunteers, planning recreation for some of the youngsters at the School for the Deaf. "Fighting 69" lasted only two years.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, YCS (Young Christian Students), which also started in 1960, existed until 1965. The chief thrust of YCS was to develop leaders for the Church and to christianize all the areas of teenage life: home, school, recreation, neighborhood, parish, work and dating.<sup>40</sup>

The availability of various religious organizations were indications of the search for meaningful spiritual experiences in the sixties. During the first thirty years at Notre Dame, daily Mass, recitation of the rosary, group morning and evening prayers, novenas, and an annual retreat were required spiritual exercises which most girls performed and few questioned. Several alumnae recalled with gratitude these religious opportunities.

Gradually the Sisters relaxed some of the religious exercises for the boarders, probably because of lack of student interest. In an effort to continue some practices among the students, the Christian Life department planned liturgical celebrations for special occasions or specific

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<sup>39</sup>Spotlight, March 1952, p. 5; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 15; 1961-1962, p. 61.

<sup>40</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 6; 1961-1962, p. 85; 1963-1964, p. 110.



groups. They substituted class retreats for all-school retreats because of the large enrollment. Later they offered week-end retreats on a voluntary basis, so that by 1970, only a small percentage of the girls made an annual retreat. Also, by the 1970s there was no religious organization such as the Sodality to provide a stimulus for activity. Therefore, the Christian Life department created a Christian Action course which enabled the girls to perform works of charity among the poor, at St. James Day Care Center, and elsewhere.

In comparing the spirituality of this period to the earlier years, it appears there was a definite laxity which became more evident in the 1970s. The girls probably regarded many of the religious practices as inessential. Changes in American society and in the church, as a result of Vatican Council II, created uncertainty as to what was expected and indifference as to its value.<sup>41</sup>

In 1960, several students who were familiar with the Mercy High School custom of honoring the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, approached Sister M. Dolores Pavlik, the principal, with the request for a similar event to honor the foundress of the School Sisters de Notre Dame. This was the origin of Blessed Alix Day, observed on or near her feast of 28 October. The main features of the day were the Mass, a dramatization of Alix Le Clerc's life, and a movie. Since the day had a unifying effect upon the students, the Sisters hoped it would become a traditional

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<sup>41</sup> Author's personal knowledge; interview with former faculty members who wish to remain anonymous. Vatican Council II called for changes in the liturgy and the sacraments, revision of canon law, renewal of religious life, the practice of ecumenism, and the emergence of lay leadership in the Church.

event; however, it did not continue after 1965.<sup>42</sup>

There were other clubs besides those which correlated with the subjects taught and the religious organizations. The Fire Patrol, which the seniors organized in 1952 and which continued into the sixties, conducted the monthly fire drills and arranged for demonstrations and lectures by the local firemen.<sup>43</sup>

The Red Cross, active since 1942, entertained at the various hospitals, worked at the Red Cross Blood Center, sponsored projects to raise money for gift boxes and overseas packages, and assisted the victims of the Papio Creek flood in 1961.<sup>44</sup> Notre Dame girls were enthusiastic supporters of the Criss-Crosser Dance, held each year to raise funds for the Junior Red Cross summer training camp. Notre Dame sent her outstanding Red Cross member as the school's candidate for queen of the Criss-Crosser.<sup>45</sup> The girls who had reached the age of eighteen, joined the "18 Club Day" and donated their first pint of blood at the Center.<sup>46</sup> However, the most rewarding Red Cross activity in which the girls participated was the Handicapped Swimming Program. Twenty-one girls assisted

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<sup>42</sup>Interview with Sister M. Dolores Pavlik, 30 July 1975; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 5; 1961-1962, p. 25; 1962-1963, p. 13; 1963-1964, p. 26; "School Chronicle," p. 4. The pageant that dramatized Alix's life varied each year and was an original production of different Sisters.

<sup>43</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 145, 151, 160, 166, 174, 179, 183, 187; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1962-1963, p. 27.

<sup>44</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 194; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 31; 1960-1961, p. 41; Omaha World-Herald, 20 July 1961.

<sup>45</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 31; 1961-1962, p. 69; 1963-1964, p. 53.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 1960-1961, p. 41; 1963-1964, p. 96.

specially trained instructors in teaching handicapped children the fundamentals of swimming.<sup>47</sup>

Over forty juniors and seniors who had either a driver's permit or a license enrolled in Safe Teens, a national group dedicated to making teens safer drivers. Organized in 1958 under Notre Dame Safe Teen Council, Chapter 94, the girls won a trophy in 1960 for their safe traffic record.<sup>48</sup> The Safe Teen members assisted the police at bicycle clinics on the Saturdays in spring, held mock court trials for careless drivers, launched safety campaigns for student drivers, sponsored a safety display at a local shopping center, and conducted annual membership drives for the organization.<sup>49</sup>

The teachers tried organizing a student council in 1953, but due to lack of interest it did not become a reality until 1962, when the Sodality and home room officers formed the school's first Student Council.<sup>50</sup> In later years it would be an important group at the school.

In 1958, Sister M. Dolores Pavlik petitioned for and obtained a charter to the National Honor Society of Secondary Schools. Named the Blessed Alix Chapter, the object of the society was to create enthusiasm for scholarship, stimulate a desire for service, promote worthy leadership, and develop character in the students. Unlike the other clubs at

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<sup>47</sup>North Omaha Sun, 22 October 1964, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA.

<sup>48</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 194; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 42.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 1962-1963, p. 78; 1963-1964, p. 95.

<sup>50</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 152; Mantle, Notre Dame Academy Yearbook, 1962.

the Academy, membership in the National Honor Society was not a student's personal choice. The faculty elected the members on the basis of a "B" average, service, character, and leadership. The Blessed Alix Chapter held Induction Ceremonies each year for the chosen seniors and juniors; sophomores were probationary members for a year.<sup>51</sup>

Two centennials and a golden jubilee singled out the fifties as significant in the school's history. One centennial commemorated the founding of the Congregation of the School Sisters de Notre Dame in Horazdovice, Czechoslovakia in 1853. At a public celebration on 24 May 1953, the grade and high school students presented the history of the Congregation in a pageant, "The Legacy of the Lily and the Cross," which Sister M. Gabriel wrote and directed.<sup>52</sup>

The city of Omaha celebrated its centennial on 30 April 1954 with a gigantic parade depicting youth and education. Nearly four thousand elementary, secondary, and college youth participated in the floats, the bands, or in the parade.<sup>53</sup> Aided by the Friends of Notre Dame and the Sisters, the Academy girls constructed a float bearing the motto, "All-American Team--Church--Home--Community--School."<sup>54</sup> Notre Dame commemorated Omaha's centennial in other ways. The freshmen planted a "centennial" tree on the front lawn of the school, and in May, the music recital

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<sup>51</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 189.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>53</sup>Our Sunday Visitor, Omaha True Voice edition, 9 May 1954.

<sup>54</sup>"Convent Chronicle," p. 170; "School Chronicle," p. 152; Omaha World-Herald, 25 April 1954.

bore a centennial theme by featuring Omaha composers.<sup>55</sup>

On 10 May 1960, Archbishop Gerald T. Bergan dedicated the Shrine of St. Joseph to solemnize the Golden Jubilee of the arrival of the Sisters in the United States. Following the brief outdoor ceremony, the visiting clergy assisted the Archbishop in the celebration of a Pontifical High Mass at which the Glee Club sang. Later in May, the choirs from the parishes where the Notre Dame Sisters taught joined in singing the liturgical story of the congregation's existence at a Choir Festival.<sup>56</sup>

The increased enrollments of the late fifties necessitated changes in the recreational events at the school. In 1957, each class had its own picnic at different parks; in 1958 the individual class parties replaced the traditional all-school parties, and roller skating became popular.<sup>57</sup> The juniors sponsored the school's first public dance on 16 November 1951. When the administration banned dances at the Academy in 1957 because of vandalism, the school organizations held their dances at local parish halls.<sup>58</sup>

Among the annual school plays, the two outstanding productions were The Upper Room, a dramatization of the last hours in the life of Christ, given in 1956; and A Mid-summer Night's Dream, a combination play and ballet which Sister M. Ruth Dolch directed in 1964 to honor the 400th

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<sup>55</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 152, 154. For several years thereafter, the freshmen class planted a tree on Arbor Day.

<sup>56</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 20, 24.

<sup>57</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 175, 186.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 142, 186; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1962-1963, p. 24; 1963-1964, p. 28.

anniversary of William Shakespeare's death.<sup>59</sup>

For several years the Sisters were cognizant of the fact that many day students from South Omaha and other areas in the city had difficulty getting to the Academy. City bus service provided transportation only for those who lived near the bus lines. Therefore, Notre Dame decided to purchase its own school bus to bring the girls, especially those who were not on the city bus route, to the school. On 15 January 1956, the school held its first carnival as a means of raising money to buy a forty-eight-passenger bus. The net profit of \$2,192.86 testified to the success of the cooperative venture of the students and Sisters.<sup>60</sup> Successive school carnivals, an annual affair until 1964, helped equip the science room, paid for new lockers and desks, purchased a second bus in 1962, and supplemented the building fund.<sup>61</sup>

Among the changes in the junior-senior events were the discontinuance of the Senior Skip Day; the addition in 1960 of the Ring Ceremony during which the seniors received their class rings as a symbol of loyalty and achievement; and the revival of the junior-senior prom in 1951 after a lapse of ten years.<sup>62</sup> In 1957, at the request of the girls, the prom and the banquet became off-campus affairs at local ballrooms and

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<sup>59</sup>Omaha World-Herald, ca. 19 March 1956; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1963-1964, p. 81.

<sup>60</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 167; "Convent Chronicle," p. 176b.

<sup>61</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 176, 188, 184; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 10; 1960-1961, p. 9; 1961-1962, p. 25; 1962-1963, p. 15; 1963-1964, p. 27; 1964-1965, p. 1. The 1963 carnival realized \$7541.59.

<sup>62</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 179; Spotlight, June 1951, p. 1; Mantle, Notre Dame Academy Yearbook, 1960.

hotels.<sup>63</sup> Three years later, the students asked for a Prom Announcement, a clever way to announce the date, place, theme song, band and queen candidates for the prom through skits and songs. The first "P.A.," its popular nickname, was a simple affair. Gradually the preparations for the "P.A." became more elaborate, expensive, and highly secretive. Seniors looked forward to that all-important day, and juniors worked untiringly to make their "P.A." the best one ever.<sup>64</sup>

Notre Dame's new chapel was the scene for the senior commencement exercises from 1952 until 1960, when St. Philip Neri Church in Florence hosted the graduation for the next four years.<sup>65</sup> Notre Dame's chapel was too small to accommodate the large senior classes of the sixties, as well as their relatives and guests.

The Academy administered its first scholarship examination for eighth grade girls in 1953.<sup>66</sup> Earning the scholarship was more meaningful than receiving it without any effort. Furthermore, the Sisters anticipated that publicity of the scholarship recipients would advertise the school and draw more enrollees.

From 1958 to 1962 Notre Dame operated a kindergarten for boys and

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<sup>63</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 182; interview with Sister Agnes Marie Ostry, 14 January 1975.

<sup>64</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 16; author's personal knowledge.

<sup>65</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 139; Spotlight, May 1952, p. 1; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 17; 1963-1964, p. 64. Graduation exercises were in Notre Dame's new gymnasium from 1964 to 1968; the large classes of over ninety necessitated the rental of the Music Hall at the Civic Auditorium from 1969 to 1972; in 1973 and 1974, graduations were at the Academy.

<sup>66</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 149.

girls. The local parish schools had closed their kindergartens, and since the Academy had a large room suitable for this purpose, the Sisters yielded to the requests of the parents for a Catholic kindergarten for their youngsters.<sup>67</sup>

Two groups which closely associated themselves with the Sisters and the Academy continued their remarkable record of service and support. The Notre Dame Ladies' Aid reorganized on 22 February 1952 under the leadership of Mrs. Walter Neef and adopted the name of Friends of Notre Dame. Composed of the mothers of the present and former students and relatives and friends of the Sisters or the school, the new group elected officers, conducted four business meetings a year, and sponsored one large money-making affair yearly.<sup>68</sup> In the fall of 1956, the Friends of Notre Dame began meeting monthly to plan a courthouse bazaar, rummage sales, a mission benefit, and a card party. They held a tea for new students and their parents, and enjoyed book reviews, concerts, and style shows.<sup>69</sup> From 1958 to 1964, these women planned specific programs for each month of the school year in an effort to maintain the Academy's high standards and to promote her expansion program. Each class and the girls' mothers were honored guests at one meeting during the year.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Interview with Sister M. Loretta Polak, 29 July 1975. Sister was in charge of the kindergarten those four years.

<sup>68</sup>"The Friends of Notre Dame," Typed MS, NDCA; "Convent Chronicle," p. 163.

<sup>69</sup>Mantle, Notre Dame Academy Yearbook, 1957; "Friends of Notre Dame," typed bulletin, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA.

<sup>70</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 188; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 15; 1960-1961, p. 19; 1961-1962, p. 45; 1962-1963, p. 35; 1963-1964, p. 63.



Meanwhile, the Alumnae Association varied its ways of raising money until 13 September 1951 when the group sponsored a card party for the benefit of the Sisters and the school.<sup>71</sup> The card party became an annual successful event, noted for its warm hospitality, numerous prizes, gift shoppe, and bake sale. In 1958 the Association inaugurated a teacher-education fund, earmarking a percentage of the card party profits for this purpose.<sup>72</sup> Eight alumnae from the classes of 1944 and 1945 who were close friends from high school days formed the Madonna Guild in October 1958 as a means of keeping in touch. They worked together on handcrafts and novelties for the Sisters' Gift Shoppe and helped with the alumnae doings.<sup>73</sup>

Life among the resident students at Notre Dame had its share of changes. While still following the traditional schedule of morning Mass, classes, after school tasks, two one-hour study periods, recreation, night prayers, and lights out, the girls expected more freedom in choosing how to spend their leisure time on school days and especially on week-ends. During the fifties the recreational activities such as weiner roasts, outings, square dances, and birthday or special occasion parties were simple. Other than the prom, a few dances at Boys Town were the only other boy-girl socials.<sup>74</sup> At Christmas time the girls

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<sup>71</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 144.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 184. The teacher-education fund finances the college education and professional growth of the Sisters.

<sup>73</sup>Interview with Mrs. Mary Ellen Boyle Kerwin, 4 August 1975.

<sup>74</sup>Questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae, 12 November 1974; "School Chronicle," p. 124, 135, 155.

caroled at the homes of the neighbors, St. Therese and St. Philip Neri convents, and Florence Home for the Aged.<sup>75</sup>

Gradually the Sisters allowed the girls to have more entertainment, among which were the birthday dinners at nearby restaurants, picnics by the Missouri River, slumber parties, week-ends with the day students, and Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine parties with the Sisters. A newly-equipped lounge on the dormitory floor provided a place for relaxation through radio, television, ping pong, and various games.<sup>76</sup> In 1961 the resident seniors entertained their boyfriends at the first dinner party permitted at the Academy.<sup>77</sup>

Trips to downtown Omaha for movies or shopping were more frequent in the sixties, but there was a curfew hour which some girls disregarded and therefore had to sneak back into the building by way of the fire escape stairs. Since the fire escape door was next to the dormitory, this was an ideal place to smoke without getting caught too easily. Usually the Sisters were lenient with offenders until in later years when the administration placed a fine for smoking in the building during the school day.<sup>78</sup>

In retrospect, some alumnae felt their sheltered and narrow existence as boarders did not prepare them adequately for life in the world. Yet they acknowledged the friendly, unified, and loyal spirit among the

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<sup>75</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 33; Mantle, 1958, p. 33; interview with Miss Grace Thompson, 27 May 1975. The Thompsons live across the street, north of the Academy.

<sup>76</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 43.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 1961-1962, p. 67.

<sup>78</sup>Questionnaire of author to Notre Dame Alumnae.

girls. Recalling the normal conflicts and differences of teen-agers, the former residents agreed that the Sisters, especially the "substitute mothers" who were with the girls more frequently, were patient, generous with their time, kind disciplinarians, understanding of adolescents and their problems, and truly concerned about each girl.<sup>79</sup>

In the mid 1950s, board and tuition was between \$440 and \$500 a year, depending on whether the girl stayed at the Academy over week-ends.<sup>80</sup>

In 1960 the freshmen and sophomores paid \$90 a year for tuition; juniors and seniors paid \$100. Five-day residents had a board fee of \$350.00 a year; seven-day boarders paid an additional \$100.<sup>81</sup> By 1962 the tuition fees increased to \$135 plus \$10 for activities and book rental.<sup>82</sup>

The enrollment at the Academy reached over the hundred mark for the first time in the fall of 1949. From that year on, with the exception of 1951 and 1952, the enrollment increased steadily. When the war babies began entering high school in 1957, the figure soared from 190 to 242 and continued upward until it reached over three hundred in 1962.<sup>83</sup>

In the 1950s, fifty percent of the students were Omahans; by 1964 the percentage reached seventy-five. The girls represented almost every parish in the city; with several enrollees from outstate and from Iowa,

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>National Catholic Welfare Conference, Department of Education, Report for Scholastic year 1955-1956, NDA files.

<sup>81</sup>Handbook for Students, 1960, p. 20-21, NDA files.

<sup>82</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1962-1963, p. 37.

<sup>83</sup>Enrollment figures, see Appendix A.

Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, Illinois and California.<sup>84</sup> The first foreign student came from Guam in 1951; later in the decade, four girls from Panama and three from Puerto Rico joined the students.<sup>85</sup> The number of Negro students seldom reached more than seven or eight in any given year. On the other hand, non-Catholics came in increasingly greater numbers during the sixties. Also, the Czech nationality was no longer as predominant as in the early fifties.

Before long, the Academy could not accommodate the many students who applied, chiefly for the ninth grade. In 1961 alone, Sister M. Dolores refused admission to nearly ninety applicants. Yet, in 1962 the enrollment was 328; in 1963 it reached 374.<sup>86</sup>

For obvious reasons, the School Sisters undertook their fourth and final building project. A quiet ground-breaking ceremony on 22 September 1963, which the Reverend Francis Moreci, chaplain and religion instructor, the Sisters and the students attended, initiated the construction of the east addition to the Academy and a south addition to the convent.<sup>87</sup> In November 1964, the Omaha archdiocese announced a 13.6 million dollar expansion program to meet the growing demand for more space and equipment in the secondary schools. Of this amount, Notre Dame received \$200,000 to

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., March 1951, p. 4; Notre Dame Alumnae Newsletter, December 1958, p. 18; The South Omaha Sun, 17 December 1959; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1960-1961, p. 44.

<sup>86</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1961-1962, p. 1; 1962-1963, p. 1; 1963-1964, p. 1.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 1963-1964, p. 5.

help defray the cost of her new section.<sup>88</sup> Private donations, alumnae and Friends of Notre Dame benefits, and the savings of the Sisters financed some of the cost, but a heavy debt remained.<sup>89</sup>

The original plans with Boyer and Biskup, the architects, and the Butler Construction Company, the contractors, stipulated the completion of the new school in time for the opening of the fall term in 1964. However, several delays restricted the use of the new facility until after the holidays. On 21 December, student volunteers assisted in the movement of furniture and equipment to the new wing which contained classrooms for business, journalism, and foreign languages, the music and art departments, and administrative offices. The three-floored structure also included custodial quarters, a large gymnasium, and a cafeteria for over four hundred diners.<sup>90</sup>

Three events officially launched the new school in February 1965. First, the junior and senior residents invited their friends to a bunco and dance party in the school's lobby. On 17 February the Open House incorporated a tea which the Madonna Guild held for prospective freshmen. Finally, a dinner for the faculties of the neighboring parochial grade schools preceded a general tour of the east building on 21 February.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Omaha World-Herald, 13 November 1964; North Omaha Sun, 19 November 1964, p. 38, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA.

<sup>89</sup> Each Notre Dame Sister who is employed sends a certain percentage of her salary to the Motherhouse for specific funds and for the upkeep and operation of the Motherhouse and Academy. The Sister-treasurer deposits the money or invests it for the retirement, hospitalization, and daily living expenses of those Sisters who reside at the Motherhouse.

<sup>90</sup> North Omaha Sun, 22 December 1964, p. 18, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 11 February 1965, NDA Scrapbook, NDCA; "School Chronicle," p. 2.

Two major building ventures; a varied curriculum; numerous cultural, social, and religious clubs and activities; civic and community involvement; foreign students, larger enrollment and an increased faculty; and the scholastic performance and excellence of the girls marked the history of Notre Dame Academy from 1950 to 1964. During these years, three principals guided the course of events.

Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl, principal from 1947 to 1954, developed the science department where she taught for several years before, during, and after her principalship. When Sister became school treasurer in 1955, she sought to rationalize the financial procedures of the institution. She inspected the account books and notified the students whose bills were in arrears. She estimated that she collected about one-half of the total \$2000 in unpaid bills.<sup>92</sup>

Sister M. Magdalen was dedicated to professional growth. She received three National Science Foundation grants: in 1959, for chemistry at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington; in 1961, for chemistry and modern mathematics at South Dakota State College, Brookings; and in 1965 for radiation chemistry at Montana State University in Bozeman. The National Science Foundation also paid her expenses for a teacher training course in Modern Developments in Physics at the University of Omaha in 1964, and a course in P.S.S.C. Physics at Creighton University.<sup>93</sup>

From 1955 to 1958, Sister M. Emmanuela Karnik met two major challenges. First, an enrollment increase from 119 in 1954 to 242 in 1957 necessitated more faculty members. The 1954 faculty had eight

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<sup>92</sup>Interview with Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl, 7 January 1975.

<sup>93</sup>Sister M. Magdalen Rozmajzl to author, 11 October 1975.

Sisters and two priests; in 1956, Notre Dame employed Miss Janice Schott, the first lay woman since 1941. By 1957 there were eleven Sisters, two priests, and one lay position filled in rapid succession by three different women.<sup>94</sup> The second challenge concerned the girls. By 1957 over seventy-five percent were Omahans. With more girls earning their own money, their life style became less-disciplined and more permissive. As a result, the administration deemed it necessary to dismiss some girls for disciplinary reasons in order to preserve the quality of education and the moral standards of the Academy.<sup>95</sup>

Sister M. Dolores Pavlik, principal from 1958 until 1964, introduced several changes. With her characteristic concern for the low-achieving student, Sister outlined a special reading program, with oral book reports as a motivation for the development of reading skills. She devised a Service Honor Roll which recognized those students who could not achieve scholastic honors, but who served the school by participating in any of the numerous school-related events. At the end of each quarter, Sister posted three lists: the Scholastic Honor Roll, the Service Honor Roll, and the Reading Honor Roll. To be listed on the latter, a student had to accumulate 125 points for the books read, which included four classics.<sup>96</sup>

An incident during Sister M. Dolores' term indicates the school's rapport with the Florence community. On 7 January 1963, the faculty and

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<sup>94</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 181. Miss Schott received a salary of \$1,350.00 a year.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 126, 159, 165, 174.

<sup>96</sup>Mantle, 1960; "School Chronicle," p. 189, 195; "Chronicle Scrapbook," 1959-1960, p. 41-47; 1960-1961, p. 22-28; 1961-1962, p. 51-53; 1962-1963, p. 49, 107; 1963-1964, p. 73-74, 111.

elementary school children from the old Florence Public School transferred to the new building on Thirty-Sixth Street, west of Notre Dame property. As the youngsters and their teachers walked past the Academy, the high school girls greeted them with banners, cheers, and signs of welcome. Notre Dame also sent a potted plant to grace the office of the new school. The Florence School faculty and Paul A. Miller, Superintendent of the Omaha Public Schools wrote to acknowledge the "gracious reception of several hundred young strangers in your community."<sup>97</sup> The following September, Sister M. Dolores and Margaret Wall, an alumna of Notre Dame and kindergarten teacher at the Florence Public School, hosted a tea for the sixteen teachers, the school nurse, cafeteria workers, and Dr. Elizabeth Tate, principal of the new school.<sup>98</sup>

The reminiscences of a graduate aptly described Notre Dame's impact on "her girls," regardless of their status as resident or day student:

To me Notre Dame was a total experience. The sights of blue-uniformed girls all equal no matter what color their skin was, of smiling faces under black veils, of the chapel at Christmas time . . . , Lent and the shroud-covered statues.

The sounds of happy voices talking, laughing, in the dorm, in the halls, of singing along with the radio, the chorus, or at mass. . . . Bells ringing, waking us in the morning, at mass, . . . reminding us of class, lunch, and the end of the school day, and at the end of the day, the sleepy sounds in the dorm at night.

The smells of fresh bread baking, of good food cooking, of floor polish and Lysol, starched curtains in the dorm and

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<sup>97</sup>Paul A. Miller, Superintendent of Schools, to Notre Dame Academy, Notre Dame Alumnae Newsletter, Spring 1963, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup>"Chronicle Scrapbook," 1963-1964, p. 14.



incense in the chapel. The taste of fresh baked kolache, or a sour gum ball from Florence Drug Store or a package of Chee-tos from the school store.

The feeling of well-being, happiness, understanding and getting along with others, the knowledge that you belong. Notre Dame was all that and much more. It was an education, scholastic, social,<sup>99</sup> moral, and religious, an education to last a lifetime.

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<sup>99</sup>Questionnaire from Mrs. Rollin Ellis (Margaret Ann Salstrand), Roca, Nebraska.

## V. INNOVATIONS AND PROGRESS, 1965-1971

The expanded building facilities at Notre Dame Academy warranted the development of new educational trends to meet the challenges of an increasing enrollment. In 1965, Sister M. Immaculata (Pauline) Polak, the principal, organized a Home and School Association whose members would be the parents of the girls attending the Academy and the faculty teaching at the school.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the Association was to strengthen the educational policies and promote the students' welfare.<sup>2</sup> Husband and wife jointly served as the officers of the Association. The Association held meetings four times during the school months, sponsored a fall dance for the parents of the students, and conducted a carnival to raise funds for the Academy; however, fund-raising was not a regular function of the group. In general, the group helped to bring about a closer cooperation between the faculty and the students.

Two years later, Sister Pauline Polak initiated the Notre Dame Academy Board of Education which became responsible for promoting "an effective program of religious, intellectual, cultural, social, and physical education for the students attending Notre Dame Academy."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>North Omaha Sun, 25 March 1965, p. 19, Notre Dame Academy Scrapbook I, Notre Dame Convent Archives, Omaha. (Hereafter cited as NDA Scrapbook I, NDCA.)

<sup>2</sup>"School Chronicle, 1965-1974," p. 4, 8.

<sup>3</sup>Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, December 1968; Constitution of the Notre Dame Academy Board of Education, mimeographed copy, Notre Dame Academy files. (Hereafter cited as NDA files.)

Basically, its functions were to define broad educational programs to determine policies for the operation and maintenance of the school, to authorize teacher employment and benefits, and to establish the budget.<sup>4</sup> The original Board of Education consisted of the principal, the husband-wife presidents of the Home and School Association, a representative of the Friends of Notre Dame, and six members which the principal selected. A 1971 amendment to the Constitution empowered the Home and School Association to elect the six members from among the parents of the girls attending the Academy. Their three-year term of office was on a rotating basis.<sup>5</sup> During the course of its existence, the Board set tuition costs; sought financial aid for the Academy from the Archdiocese and other sources; established grants-in-aid; approved the handbook, school calendar, extraordinary school activities, and student appearance and behavior; and handled requests for the public use of the Academy facilities. While the Board of Education did not administer the school, it aimed at serving the best interests of the majority of the students, their parents, the faculty, and the Sisters.<sup>6</sup>

A historic change in the administration of Notre Dame Academy was the appointment of its first and only lay principal in 1968. Timothy Rouse, social studies instructor and debate coach at the Academy, held that position until 1971, when Sister M. Louise (Gene Marie) Waiss became principal.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Constitution of the Board of Education, revised, 12 August 1971, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>6</sup>Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, August 1969, NDA files.

<sup>7</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 13; The True Voice, 1968, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

In December 1967, Sister Pauline Polak, who was the principal of the Academy, accepted a new position as Education Coordinator for the Notre Dame Sisters. Since this was a full-time job, effective in September 1968, she asked to be relieved of her duties at the Academy. Apparently, the other qualified principals among the Notre Dame Sisters hesitated to assume the job of principal at a time when the school had an enrollment of over four hundred, and had several new educational methods in process. Possibly another reason for the appointment of Rouse was the trend of the sixties to place the laity in the roles of administration which formerly the religious women held. Such an appointment might broaden the scope of the Academy, attracting more girls and financial support from the public.

Another innovation at the Academy was the establishment of the Notre Dame Academy Board of Regents in June 1969. The ten civic, religious, and business leaders, which the Board of Education nominated and the President of the Notre Dame Congregation appointed, elected Mrs. Frank Morrison, wife of a former Governor of Nebraska, as their first chairperson.<sup>8</sup> The creation of the Board of Regents was probably an attempt to involve influential leaders in Omaha in the Academy's management as a means of obtaining financial support and assistance from the larger community. The Board of Regents was to "advise and assist the administration and the Board of Education . . . in formulating policies affecting the management and growth of the school."<sup>9</sup> To fulfill this

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<sup>8</sup>"Notre Dame Academy Board of Regents," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>9</sup>North Omaha Sun, 19 June 1969, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

function, each member served on one of three committees: the Campus Planning Committee which advised the school concerning renovation, construction, maintenance and replacement of equipment; the Financial Planning Committee which recommended means of securing adequate funds to stabilize the budget; and the Public Relations Committee which advised the school on effective relations with the parents and the community.<sup>10</sup> At the suggestion of this last committee, which recognized the complexities of operating and financing a private school, Notre Dame hired Edmund J. Leslie as full-time public relations director in May 1969. His duties included internal and external communications, fund-raising, and student recruitment.<sup>11</sup>

Leslie reported the activities and educational programs of the school through newspaper articles and the publication of the Notre Dame Academy Newsletter. His efforts were beneficial. However, in view of the school's financial situation at the time, it was costly to employ an individual for a job which either the administration, a faculty member, or the journalism class could have performed.

Notre Dame experimented with various educational innovations in the late sixties and early seventies. In 1967 the school adopted a modular scheduling system which divided the school day into twenty modules of twenty minutes each.<sup>12</sup> An individual student had a different schedule for each day of the week. In the course of one week, the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.; Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, August 1969, NDA files.

<sup>11</sup>Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, May 1969; The True Voice, ca. 1969, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>12</sup>Focus, Notre Dame Academy, Omaha, Fall 1967, p. 3.

student spent time in a large group, small group and lab group instruction, and in independent learning. In the large group of fifty to two hundred students, the teacher presented the subject material in a lecture, a movie, or other media. The small group, consisting of approximately fifteen students, had discussions of and presentations on the subject material. An average of twenty-five students formed the lab group where experimentation, discussion, and analysis of the subject enabled them to practice the newly-learned skills. In mathematics and foreign language courses, the teachers applied only the small group and independent learning techniques; the other subjects utilized all four methods. When not involved in any of the three settings, a student spent the unscheduled time in a resource center, the library, or the media center where she worked independently, with others, or with the aid of a teacher. Because each department had a designated work area (resource center), there were no study halls.<sup>13</sup> Through the modular arrangement, the teachers were available to assist the individual students on a one-to-one basis. Furthermore, this system enabled team-teaching in such areas as English, history, science, and the fine arts.

An added feature of the modular system was the localization of multimedia equipment in the Instructional Materials Center. This area housed filmstrips, tapes, records, films, video-tapes, slides, transparencies, and the various machines, which the students utilized in individual carrels, making it possible to replay any item for additional learning. This centralization of all the electronic equipment cut down the expense

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<sup>13</sup>"Excellence Through Innovation--A Team Approach," Student Handbook, 1968-1969, p. 4-6, NDA files.

of purchasing separate audio-visual materials for each department.<sup>14</sup>

The flexibility of modular scheduling permitted other changes. In 1968, the inauguration of a three-track course program allowed for the different intellectual abilities of the students. The new curriculum offered an accelerated college preparatory program for the exceptional students, college preparatory or business education for the average and above-average learners, and general or vocational education for the slower-learning students. The three tracks involved different courses, teachers and books geared to the learning ability of the students.<sup>15</sup>

The three-track system had some problems. Slower-learning students had little challenge and motivation when placed consistently with their equals in class. The teachers discovered that a girl in this lower level often regressed or showed little progress. The exceptional or above-average students shunned certain courses, particularly the home economics and business courses, because they regarded them as vocational subjects. The teachers of these courses, on the other hand, reasoned that the girls, regardless of their intelligence or future plans, would profit from the knowledge and skills which the courses offered. Unfortunately, the three-track system labeled the girls according to their learning abilities. In the past, the intelligent students had registered for academic courses, but there apparently was no stigma attached to the less capable students who had chosen courses adapted to their abilities.

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<sup>14</sup>Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, December 1968; The True Voice, 11 April 1969; p. 7, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>15</sup>The True Voice; Omaha World-Herald, 1969, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

Student resentment to the three categories of academic, general, and developmental prompted the discontinuance of this program.<sup>16</sup>

Along the idea of the three-level learning tracks, Sister M. Dolores Pavlik, the full-time reading specialist, created such courses as developmental reading, vocabulary development, library skills, speed reading, and enrichment reading, a course designed to broaden the student's knowledge through the reading of a variety of paperbacks.<sup>17</sup>

Notre Dame experimented with an integrated curriculum in 1969. This innovation eliminated the duplication of information by combining previously independent classes. While integration required more preparation for each teacher, it also permitted a better use of the staff because each teacher could concentrate on his specific subject. Large group lectures and small group instruction became a team responsibility, and not solely the task of one teacher. The integrated system also classified students according to learning ability, thereby setting certain standards of achievement for each group. The two integrated programs were the American Studies and the Fine Arts. The former correlated American history and literature for the sophomores and juniors; the latter dealt with the history of fine arts, dance, music, drama, and painting for the freshmen.<sup>18</sup>

After a year's trial, the team evaluated the American Studies program. The major advantage was the development of a total view of

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<sup>16</sup> Author's personal knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, May 1969, NDA files.

<sup>18</sup> South Omaha Sun, 4 December 1969, p. 28, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.



American life through the history and literature of each period studied. Two chief disadvantages were the extensive planning required of the teachers and the amount of work expected from the students. However, recognizing the success and value of the program, the staff decided to correlate literature and Christian Life (religion) into a Modern Man course for seniors, and the literature and history of the Asian countries into a World Studies course for sophomores and juniors in 1970.<sup>19</sup>

Each year the administration and faculty evaluated the educational program of the school and made improvements. In 1970, Rouse, the principal, devised the progressive cycle which eliminated the loss of a day of classes due to holidays, vacations, and teachers' workshops. In place of Monday through Friday, the days were numbered from one to five. Day One did not always coincide with Monday, and so on.<sup>20</sup> The progressive cycle proved effective. Therefore, in 1971 and 1972, the calendar indicated a ten-day cycle instead of the previous five-day. In 1973 the cycle consisted of seven consecutive days.<sup>21</sup> The longer cycle provided greater option in the number of times each class met, as long as it abided by the state regulations regarding credit hours.

The school also searched for ways to involve the parents in the educational progress of their daughters. In past years, the school sent report cards to the parents, either by mail or with the girls. In 1964

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<sup>19</sup>North Omaha Sun, 7 May 1970, p. 24, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>20</sup>"Student Handbook for 1970-1971," mimeographed addenda, p. 2, NDA files.

<sup>21</sup>"Student Handbook," 1971, appendix; 1972, appendix; 1973, p. 5, NDA files.

the faculty distributed the report cards for the first quarter to the parents at parent-teacher conferences.<sup>22</sup> This new method proved to be effective because the teacher and the parents discussed the girl's progress and offered suggestions for improvement.

A modification of the plan in 1966 allowed the parents to attend classes on an evening during which they followed a telescoped schedule similar to the one their daughters followed.<sup>23</sup> The next two years, the parents received the first quarter reports in the mail. Shortly after, a team of teachers volunteered to visit the homes to gain a better understanding of the students' environment. In 1968, the teachers visited only the homes of the freshmen.<sup>24</sup> After evaluating these three ways, the administration and faculty concluded that parent-teacher conferences each fall and spring were the most profitable, and adopted that plan for the remainder of the school terms.<sup>25</sup>

There were some interesting enrollment facts during this period of the Academy's existence. First, from 1964 until 1970, the girls attending Notre Dame numbered over four hundred. The peak enrollment was 432 in 1965.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, the school discontinued the boarding facilities in 1967.<sup>27</sup> The Sisters located homes in the neighborhood for the few girls

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<sup>22</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 13; "Student Handbook, 1968-1969," p. 19, NDA files.

<sup>25</sup>"Student Handbook, 1969-1970," p. 19, NDA files; "School Chronicle," p. 17, 19.

<sup>26</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 1, 4, 8, 12; Appendix A.

<sup>27</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 8.

from outstate or other states who wished to complete their education at Notre Dame. In 1968, ten junior and senior boys from nearby Rummel High School, an all-boys school operated by the Christian Brothers, were the first male enrollees at the all-girl high school. They attended a new experimental class in dramatic arts; experimental in the sense that Rummel and Notre Dame considered exchanging students in other subject areas if this one proved successful.<sup>28</sup> Three foreign girls, one from Talcahuano, Chile in 1966, an exchange student from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1969, and another exchange student from Quezon, Philippines in 1970 attended the Academy.<sup>29</sup> No student from the Academy studied abroad as an exchange student.

Two fundamental differences in the enrollments of these years involved nationality and religious denomination. From the first year of its operation, the Academy welcomed students of any nationality and faith. However, as the population of North Omaha shifted because of more Negroes moving into the area, the clientele of the Academy also changed. Furthermore, the bus services either were non-existent or were too inconvenient for those areas of Omaha where the Czech girls lived. As a result, the girls from South Omaha found it increasingly difficult to attend Notre Dame unless they provided their own transportation. An unofficial and incomplete survey, which the Spanish class conducted in 1968, revealed that among Notre Dame's students, those of Irish descent

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<sup>28</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 20 September 1968; The True Voice, September 1968, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>29</sup>Focus, Fall 1966, p. 22; North Omaha Sun, 27 March 1969; The True Voice, 18 September 1970, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

were most numerous; Germans came in a close second; Czech, though third, finished far behind, and almost every other ethnic group had some representation.<sup>30</sup>

Non-Catholic girls now reached a significant number. The 1968-1969 enrollment of 430 included thirty girls of ten different denominations. Catholic students came from thirty Omaha parishes and one each from Blair, Elkhorn, Ralston, North Bend, and Norfolk.<sup>31</sup>

During the 1969-1970 school term, forty-eight of the 421 girls were not Catholic. The girls represented the Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Christian denominations from nineteen different churches. The Catholic students came from thirty-one parishes in the metropolitan area. Students also were from Ralston, Elkhorn, Fort Calhoun, Blair, and Carter Lake.<sup>32</sup> Of the entire enrollment, ten were Negro students.<sup>33</sup>

When questioned as to what they found to be advantageous at Notre Dame, the non-Catholic and Negro girls listed individual attention, more elective courses in business and science, greater discipline and less freedom, smaller class sizes, friendlier teachers, and a stimulus to study. However, they also noted that some teachers were less qualified than those at their respective public schools, that Notre Dame girls were less mature, and that racial disturbances at the public school was

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<sup>30</sup>Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, December 1968, NDA files.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., May 1969; "Parish Data of Notre Dame Academy Students, 1968-1969," Student Handbook, NDA files.

<sup>32</sup>"Profile of Notre Dame Academy, 1969-1970," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>33</sup>Sunday World-Herald, 8 February 1970, Section B, p. 1, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

the major reason for their transfer to the Academy.<sup>34</sup>

Notre Dame recruited students through phone calls, letters, open house programs, newspaper advertisements, and especially by "word of mouth" of the students. The Academy limited her recruitment of students from the Catholic elementary schools to those parishes where the Sisters taught or which were close to the school. In the late sixties, the Archdiocesan Education office established several evenings in January and February when all Catholic high schools could present information about their educational programs to any students from the elementary schools who attended. This prevented the disruption of classes at the grade schools and eliminated undue competition for the above-average students.<sup>35</sup>

In 1968 the Notre Dame Board of Education initiated a new program of grants-in-aid to assist students who would otherwise be unable to afford a private education. Through the program, a student received a subsidy, depending on her need, to defray all or part of her tuition cost, which was \$275.00 in 1969.<sup>36</sup> To retain the grant-in-aid, the girl had to maintain a "C" average and continue to demonstrate financial need. Twenty girls received assistance in 1969 through this program.<sup>37</sup>

Another means of financial assistance was available to the girls

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>35</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 14; Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, May 1969, NDA files; Omaha World-Herald, 8 January 1971, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>36</sup>"Profile of Notre Dame Academy, 1969-1970," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>37</sup>Unidentified clipping, ca. 1969, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA; Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, August 1969, NDA files.

who lived near the school. Each year about twenty girls received credit toward their tuition for each hour of custodial work performed after school. The work involved classroom cleaning.<sup>38</sup>

The adoption of modular scheduling and the large enrollment between 1967 and 1972 necessitated a faculty increase. Typical of the faculties during this period, the 1969-1970 faculty and administration consisted of twenty-one Notre Dame Sisters, fourteen lay men and women, three priests, and two practice teachers. Of these forty, twenty-eight were full-time and twelve were part-time teachers, and three were full-time office personnel. Fourteen members of the teaching staff had a masters degree or higher, seven were beginning teachers, and ten were on the staff for the first time. The average teaching experience was 12.3 years. Included in the faculty were a reading specialist, two full-time instructional materials specialists, one full-time guidance specialist, and two part-time counselors.<sup>39</sup> Of further interest, among the faculty for that year were Morven Ngaiyaye, a native of Malawi, Africa and the first Negro to teach at Notre Dame; Jorge Leal, formerly of Cuba, and Richard Gulizia, a blind teacher from Omaha.<sup>40</sup>

These six years witnessed some new and interesting features in the school routine. As early as 1959, when the school applied for North Central accreditation, the State Department of Education wrote that to qualify, the Academy needed a physical education program with a certified

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<sup>38</sup>"Notre Dame Student Handbook, 1971-1972," NDA files.

<sup>39</sup>"Profile of Notre Dame Academy, 1969-1970," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>40</sup>Unidentified clipping, 1969; Omaha World-Herald, 24 October 1969, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

teacher and proper facilities for such a program.<sup>41</sup> With the construction of the east wing in 1964, the shower and gym rooms were available, but there was not an organized physical education program until 1969 when Carol Chandler, a graduate of Peru State College, introduced a complete physical education program for freshmen and intramural sports for the upperclasses. She worked on expanding the Girls Athletic Association to include bowling, horseback riding, and ice skating.<sup>42</sup> In January 1970, about fifteen girls spent an hour and a half each week at Ponca Hills Equestrian Center, taking a horseback riding course for credit.<sup>43</sup>

Sister Mary Lee Kenworthy broadened the program in 1970 to include archery and track. The girls practiced archery in the spacious garage beneath the east wing. Notre Dame's track team competed in various meets, winning third place at the Invitational Track Meet at Peru, Nebraska in 1971.<sup>44</sup>

Debate once again became a popular co-curricular activity. In 1966 the school joined the Greater Omaha League of Debaters (GOLD) which gave beginning debaters frequent opportunities for practice.<sup>45</sup> In 1968 the Academy formed a National Forensic League Chapter which sponsored the Hilltopper Invitational Debate Tournament in 1968, 1969, and 1970.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 190.

<sup>42</sup>North Omaha Sun, 2 October 1969, p. 14, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>43</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 9 January 1970, p. 8, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>44</sup>North Omaha Sun, 7 January 1971, 15 April 1971, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>45</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 8.

<sup>46</sup>North Omaha Sun, 21 November 1968, p. 20; unidentified clipping, ca. 1969; Omaha World-Herald, 22 November 1970, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

Annually, Notre Dame's debaters participated in numerous tourneys in the state and in Kansas, Iowa, and Minnesota and won several first and second place honors. In 1970 thirty-six teams from nineteen high schools met in the Nebraska National Forensic League's annual championship debate to argue the national topic, "Resolved: that the U.S. Congress should prohibit unilateral U.S. military intervention in foreign countries." The Academy's team of Regina Pirruccello and Mary Jo Hill defeated a Creighton Prep team to win this contest.<sup>47</sup>

Since its organization in 1963, the Concert Choir gradually earned a reputation for proficiency and excellence that brought numerous invitations for public appearances. Consequently, the choral group presented concerts at the Cathedral of the Risen Christ in Lincoln, Burns High School in Norfolk, St. Cecilia's High in Hastings, Central Catholic High in West Point, Clair Methodist Church in Omaha, the Rotary Club convention banquet and the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention and other civic and social functions in Omaha.<sup>48</sup>

Notre Dame released its second record, "Notre Dame Salutes the Baroness" in 1969. The disc commemorated the Concert Choir's performance honoring the Baroness von Trapp Family Singers at the University of Nebraska "Weekend with Music" in January. The girls sang six selections from the movie, "Sound of Music."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 20 March 1970, p. 9, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>48</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 9-10; The True Voice, 1 November 1968; Omaha World-Herald, 8 November 1968, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>49</sup>Benson Sun, 23 January 1969, p. 21; unidentified clipping, ca. 1969, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.



There were several new additions in the extra-curricular activities during Notre Dame's years of rapid innovation. In the spring of 1967, the school replaced the class parties and school picnic with its first Field Day at Miller Park.<sup>50</sup> The day consisted of competitive games between the four grades.

In 1967 the school launched its first Homecoming with a powder puff football game between the Notre Dame girls and the Mercy High School girls. A parade of floats and a cheerleading squad added color and excitement to the event. The highlight, however, was the coronation of a Homecoming Queen at the evening formal dance in the school's gym.<sup>51</sup> In the succeeding years, homecoming extended to a very spirited week of class competition in hall decorations, float construction, skits, and the exhibition of school spirit through songs and cheers.<sup>52</sup> A volleyball game between the faculty and the Roadrunners, the student team, and a parade of floats and decorated cars through the Florence area were special attractions in later years.

The Christian Life department initiated a Day of Sharing, a pre-Christmas project, in 1968 and sponsored it for the next five years. On the last day before the holiday vacation, the students spent the morning bringing Yuletide cheer to hospitals and homes for the elderly, packaging toys at the Salvation Army, helping the elderly and sick with house cleaning, baking and decorating cookies for distribution to the needy,

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<sup>50</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 10; Focus, Spring 1967, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup>Focus, Winter 1968, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup>North Omaha Sun, 18 December 1969, p. 19, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

and assisting at the "Toys for Tots" project at Fort Omaha. In the afternoon the girls returned to the school for a special liturgical celebration, during which they recounted their experiences of the day.<sup>53</sup>

Notre Dame sponsored the first inter-school academic competition between private and public grade and junior high schools in 1969. Known as "Wits Clash" and based on the television show, "College Bowl," the contest pitted teams from fifteen schools against each other in science, mathematics, social studies, English, music and art. Each school entered two teams of four members each. During the first three rounds, the competing teams attempted to win the most points. The fourth and final round between the two teams of different schools which accumulated the most points, determined the winners of the "Wits Clash." Notre Dame awarded first and second place trophies to the winning and runner-up teams, and certificates to the teams which won in the preliminary rounds.<sup>54</sup> Because of the beneficial competition in an area other than sports, "Wits Clash" continued until 1973.<sup>55</sup>

On 21 April 1970, the Notre Dame girls joined thousands of youth and adults in the first nation-wide Earth Day, which alerted Americans to the causes of environmental pollution. The faculty suspended the regular class sessions for first-hand "teach-ins" about pollution and conservation. Wearing gas masks, the girls marched from Thirtieth and

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<sup>53</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 20 December 1968, p. 9; North Omaha Sun, 19 December 1968, 17 December 1970, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>54</sup>South Omaha Sun, 13 November 1969, p. 30; Benson Sun, 20 November 1969, p. 3; Northwest Omaha Benson Sun, 19 November 1970, p. 10, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>55</sup>Author's personal knowledge.

State Streets to the Mormon Bridge, a distance of over twelve blocks. They recorded noise levels at a rock music dance to study sound pollution.<sup>56</sup> The school's locker room became a pollution room of smoke, sulfur fumes, garbage, litter, and tubs of green water.<sup>57</sup>

A Right to Life Day in March 1971 provided the girls with an insight into several aspects of the abortion question. Competent professionals handled the medical, moral, social, and psychological implications of abortion. The Right to Life program concluded with a debate on the pros and cons of abortion.<sup>58</sup>

In 1967, Notre Dame's drama department began producing two plays instead of the usual one.<sup>59</sup> In 1968 the class delved into a multi-media drama, The Black and the Rose, a play which depicted the fragments of a young man's life through the utilization of sound and light in films, slides, music, and voice.<sup>60</sup> The following year, the traveling theater of the Hilltop drama class presented Aesop's Fables at fifteen locations throughout the city. The musical blended modern-day terminology and rock music with the wit and morals of the ancient Greek, Aesop.

Aesop's Fables was unique for three reasons: it was the first Children's

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<sup>56</sup>Sunday World-Herald, 19 April 1970, p. 6-B, 22 April 1970, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>57</sup>The Notre Dame Earth Day activities drew press attention outside of Omaha. See The Lincoln /Nebraska/ Star, 23 April 1970; Dallas /Texas/ Morning News, 23 April 1970, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>58</sup>The True Voice, 26 March 1971; North Omaha Sun, 26 March 1971, p. 1, 13, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>59</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 13-14.

<sup>60</sup>North Omaha Sun, 17 October 1968, p. 10; Omaha World-Herald, 18 October 1968, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

Theater production of the drama class, their first performance in the round, and the first time they went on the road with a play.<sup>61</sup>

Since 1966, boys from the locality played the male roles in the school's productions.<sup>62</sup> However, the Fantasticks in 1970 combined the talents of the Notre Dame girls with the experience of several Omaha Playhouse and college thespians in a performance that thrilled the audiences.<sup>63</sup>

The Notre Dame faculty made history in 1969 when it starred in its first all-teacher production, No, No, A Million Times No. The melodrama was so successful that the faculty presented Up with Charlie Brown in 1970 and Winnie the Pooh in 1971.<sup>64</sup> The proceeds from these plays helped to supplement the Academy's budget.

Two new organizations in 1965 were the Student Council and the National Business Honor Society. Student Councils were popular in the sixties; therefore, Notre Dame inaugurated one which would promote harmonious relations throughout the school, improve student morale, assist in the management of the school, provide a forum for student expression, and direct activities.<sup>65</sup> Initially, it sponsored a style

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<sup>61</sup>North Omaha Sun, 9 October 1969, p. 15, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA; "Progress Report of the Board of Regents, May 1969-November 1969," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>62</sup>Focus, Fall 1966, p. 16.

<sup>63</sup>North Omaha Sun, 26 February 1970, p. 10, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>64</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 24 January 1969; North Omaha Sun, November 1969; The True Voice, 5 February 1971, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>65</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 4; "Student Council," mimeographed bulletin, NDA files.

show, faculty tea, and an Inaugural Ball for their officers.<sup>66</sup> In later years, the Council assisted with freshmen orientation in August, held a Christmas Party for the faculty, organized the Homecoming in October and the Shamrock Sales in March, and reported school events for weekly publication in the North Omaha Sun. As a result of the Council's recommendations, the administration consented to a student lounge, off-campus lunches for seniors, early dismissal for students who had jobs, dismissal of seniors after their last class in the afternoon, and various school projects and activities such as the nostalgic Fifties Day. The Council also served as a forum for student suggestions and complaints on such items as disciplinary methods and school regulations.<sup>67</sup>

The school commenced the National Business Honor Society in 1965 with the nomination of ten seniors as charter members.<sup>68</sup> In 1968 the Academy became the third high school in Nebraska and the only one in Omaha to inaugurate a Nike Club, the young women's auxiliary of the Business and Professional Women's Club. At a Charter Night Banquet at Notre Dame on 19 January 1968, Mrs. Romana Freeman, the state president, presented the charter to Sister Pauline Polak, the school's principal. Miss Olga Andreas, the Omaha president of BPW, initiated the sixteen seniors as the first members of the Nike Club. The aim of the club was to develop leadership and service to the school and community, to afford opportunities for the study and preparation of careers, and to instill

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<sup>66</sup>Mantle, 1966, p. 14-15; Focus, Winter 1967, p. 18.

<sup>67</sup>Author's personal knowledge; Minutes of Notre Dame Academy School Board, 5 November 1969, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>68</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 5.

responsibilities of citizenship.<sup>69</sup>

In order to understand the financial condition of the Academy at this time, one must consider the following facts. Since 1926, the Sisters had recorded all expenses and the income from board, tuition, and fees in the general accounts which included those of the Motherhouse. As the school was the Sisters' property, they carried the responsibility for its operation. Tuition and board fees, donations, Alumnae and Friends of Notre Dame fund-raising projects, and activities such as school plays helped to a certain degree, but the remainder of the income for the school's budget came from the salaries of the Sisters who taught in the parish schools or who had other employment. The Sisters who taught at the Academy received no pay until 1968 when each received a salary of \$1500 a year, if the funds were available.

In 1968 Rouse conducted a survey of the 438 girls to determine who actually paid their fees and tuition. The results indicated that parents paid the entire bill for 296 of the girls. Fifty-two girls paid the full cost from their own earnings; ninety paid a substantial portion of the cost. Of the students, 166 held part-time jobs during the school year; 252 worked the previous summer.<sup>70</sup>

For the 1968-1969 school year, the estimated per-pupil cost of education was \$435.00, which included approximately \$380.00 for general operating expenses for each girl and \$65.00 per girl for service to and retirement of the capital debt. Of the total \$435.00, the tuition and

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<sup>69</sup>Focus, Winter 1968, p. 18; "School Chronicle," p. 13-14; unidentified clipping, ca. 1968, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>70</sup>"1968 Survey of Who Pays?" mimeographed copy, NDA files.

fee income accounted for only \$245.00; if auxiliary income failed to cover the balance, the Sisters assumed that expense.<sup>71</sup>

With the creation of the School Board and the Board of Regents, the financial status of the Academy came under scrutiny, chiefly because determining and supplementing the school's budget was one of their functions. To achieve this, the two Boards requested that the Academy accounts be separate from those of the Motherhouse. In 1968 the School Board set the tuition at \$235.00 and raised it gradually until it reached \$350.00 for the 1971-1972 term.<sup>72</sup> Actual expenditures were \$204,345.32 in 1968-1969 and \$226,139.85 in 1969-1970. Since the respective incomes of \$151,902.77 and \$167,653.87 did not cover the entire cost, the Sisters assumed the deficit of over \$50,000.00 each year.<sup>73</sup> These facts alarmed the School Board.

In October 1968, the principal, Timothy Rouse, explained the reasons for the financial problems of the Academy. With most of the students from medium income families, and with no parish support coming to the Academy, the school had no alternative but to increase the tuition costs. This caused a drop in enrollment because the parents could not afford the tuition increases. The school, which built the new addition

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<sup>71</sup>"Cost of Education at Notre Dame Academy," mimeographed bulletin, NDA files.

<sup>72</sup>Minutes of the Notre Dame Academy School Board, 7 January 1968, mimeographed copy; Notre Dame Academy Student Handbook, 1971-1972, p. 8, NDA files.

<sup>73</sup>Notre Dame Alumnae Newsletter, Autumn 1968, p. 21; "Summary Analysis of Revenue and Expenditures," mimeographed copy, NDA files. Since the Sisters and priests on the faculty received a lower salary than the lay personnel, there was a saving of approximately \$150,700.00 yearly.

in 1964 at the request of the Archbishop, had operated in the red for the past eight years. Furthermore, the Notre Dame Sisters carried the extra burden of the debt on the new addition.<sup>74</sup>

Several times the Notre Dame School Board had asked Archbishop Daniel Sheehan about the possibility of the Academy receiving financial assistance. His response was that the Archdiocese had obligations to archdiocesan schools, not to private institutions; therefore, Notre Dame received no funds.<sup>75</sup> For the same reason, the parishes did not support the Academy with subsidies.

In an attempt to alleviate the problem, the School Board trimmed the budget drastically, advised the Sisters not to borrow more money, and discussed various ways to bring extra income. They suggested a fifteen-dollar discount to students who paid their full tuition before mid-August as a means of attracting more students. They hired only two custodians, instead of five, and gave deductions in their tuition to those students who performed the custodial work.<sup>76</sup> For the 1970-1971 term, they discontinued the Public Relations office and employed three additional Sister-teachers to replace lay teachers, for a savings of \$20,000.00 in salaries.<sup>77</sup> The tasks which the Public Relations employee

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<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the Archdiocesan School Board Meeting, 30 October 1968, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>75</sup> Minutes of Notre Dame Academy School Board, 13 November 1968, 11 November 1970, mimeographed copy; Minutes of Academy Study Committee, 11 February 1971, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>76</sup> Minutes of the Notre Dame Academy School Board, 12 June 1969, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 5 November 1969, mimeographed copy, NDA files.



performed became the responsibility of the administration and a faculty member.

The Finance Committee of the Board of Regents recommended a careful study of alternatives for the future of the Academy. These alternatives included the continuance of the Academy and the raising of supplementary revenue, merging with another school, making the Academy co-educational, reducing the enrollment so the school could be almost entirely Sister-staffed, developing a curriculum for a particular type of student for more efficient operation, and closing the Academy and finding other uses for the plant.<sup>78</sup> In 1971 an Academy Study Committee began this investigation. To clarify the school's budget and financial report, Rouse informed the Committee that operational expenditures rose yearly; that audio-visual, physical education, and library expenses increased; and that the three-track program and modular scheduling demanded more staff members, which caused an increase in salaries.<sup>79</sup> The Committee recognized the school's selling points: spacious building, an all-girl's school, small class sizes conducive to individualized learning, college preparatory courses in the curriculum, and a reading expert on the staff.<sup>80</sup>

After months of research and many meetings, the Academy Study Committee recommended, among other things, the use of Notre Dame's facilities by North Omaha groups, a tutoring and adult education program, the

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<sup>78</sup>"Proposals of the Notre Dame Academy Board of Regents," 16 August 1970, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>79</sup>Minutes of the Academy Study Committee, 11 March 1971, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 5 May 1971, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

establishment of a Foundation Trust for donations, and a fund-raising committee to coordinate projects.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, the fund-raising activities were basically unsuccessful, probably because of the inactivity of this committee. However, the Sisters rented the gym to basketball and volleyball teams in the vicinity, and the dining and kitchen area for wedding receptions and other large gatherings. Some of the semi-retired Sisters tutored youngsters from the neighborhood.

The school's enrollment began a downward trend, dropping from 421 in 1969 to 349 in 1971. This decrease permitted the hiring of a smaller staff with a savings in salary expenditures. Therefore, the 1971-1972 operating budget was \$133,752.37; the income was \$136,375.00, leaving a balance of \$2,622.63, which helped defray the deficit of the previous year.<sup>82</sup> However, the financial future of the Academy was still bleak. The deficits from the past years and the debt on the building reached the tens of thousands. The bulk of the deficit in operating the school required bank loans which placed a heavy burden of an annual interest of over \$3,000 on the Sisters. The Booster Club, which the Board of Education started in 1969, raised over \$2000 in private contributions from friends and businesses. Notre Dame's Alumnae Association began a program of Annual Giving that netted over \$3000 in 1969; \$2,987 in 1970, and about \$1500 in 1971.<sup>83</sup> Even with this assistance, the decreases in

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<sup>81</sup>"Recommendations of the Academy Study Committee," 4 August 1971, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>82</sup>"Operating Budget for 1971-1972," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>83</sup>Notre Dame Academy Newsletter, July 1969, NDA files; Notre Dame Alumnae Newsletter, September 1970, Summer 1972.

the enrollment and the rising costs of education compounded the financial situation and forced the School Sisters to consider seriously the alternatives proposed by the Finance Committee of the Board of Regents.

During this six-year span of the school's history, innovations and developments kept pace with a changing society and the demands of the educational system. Private and public schools across the nation experimented with flexible or modular scheduling, individualized education, team teaching and independent study.<sup>84</sup> For example, in Omaha, Notre Dame joined Ryan High School, Rummel, Duchesne Academy, Westside and South High in the adoption of modular scheduling, and with Cathedral High School, Dominican High, Duchesne and Ryan, incorporated team teaching and individualized instruction.<sup>85</sup> Notre Dame's innovative programs were necessary but expensive. With the assistance of the Home and School Association, the School Board and the Board of Regents, three principals initiated changes and struggled with the financial difficulties of the Academy.

Sister Pauline Polak had the foresight to inaugurate the three organizations and introduced the Student Council, the National Business Honor Society and modular scheduling. Her successor, Timothy Rouse

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<sup>84</sup>For information about these innovations see Herbert I. Von Haden and Jean Marie King, Innovations in Education: Their Pros and Cons (Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1971); Donald C. Manlove and David W. Beggs, III, Flexible Scheduling (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965); B. Frank Brown, Education by Appointment (West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker Publishing Company, 1968); David W. Beggs, III and Edward G. Buffie, eds., Independent Study: Bold New Venture (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966).

<sup>85</sup>Interview with Father Thomas O'Brien, Superintendent of Omaha Archdiocesan Schools, 25 October 1975.

broadened the scope of modular scheduling, adding an integrated curriculum, team teaching and a three-track program. During his three years as principal, operating expenses rose significantly. When he resigned in 1971, he undoubtedly recognized that his creative ideas had advanced education at the Academy, but realized that Notre Dame could not continue paying a lay principal's salary. Any further innovations were actually modifications of the basic methods he introduced. For the 1971-1972 term, Sister Louise Waiss, continuing the traditions of her predecessors, introduced special activities on the first and third Fridays of each month to provide a liturgical celebration, an all-school assembly, club meetings and field trips.<sup>86</sup>

In retrospect, the years of innovative progress warrant a few pertinent observations. Is it possible that the Academy over-expanded when it built the east wing in 1964? At that time, the enrollment was over four hundred and remained so for only six years. Then it declined quickly and drastically. Had the Academy limited the number of students in the late sixties, one building facility and a smaller staff would have sufficed. Furthermore, more Sister-teachers, qualified for high school, would have reduced the number of lay personnel for a savings in salaries. Since these years coincided with the renewal in religious communities as a result of Vatican Council II, possibly many Sisters sought their self-identity and fulfillment in teaching outside their community-owned Academy or in employment of another nature. That may explain the insufficient number of Sister-teachers for Notre Dame. The decline in

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<sup>86</sup>North Omaha Sun, 15 April 1971, p. 2, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

religious vocations was another reason for the lack of Sister-personnel.

Between 1965 and 1969, the Academy established a Home and School Association, a School Board, and a Board of Regents, which involved the parents and prominent Omaha citizens in determining policies for the school. Is it possible that the functions of these groups overlapped? If so, was it necessary to have all three?

A fourth speculation concerns the innovative programs. Granted, they were valuable and perhaps vital in view of the circumstances of society in the sixties. Yet there is the possibility that the Academy devised too many changes, too frequently, and at too great an expense. However one evaluated the school at the end of the 1971 term, the conviction that Notre Dame offered an academic program in a God-centered atmosphere encouraged the Sisters to keep the Academy in operation, for a few more years at least.

## VI. CRISIS IN PRIVATE EDUCATION, 1972-1974

Notre Dame Academy commenced the 1972-1973 school year under the leadership of Sister Michelle Hayek, the fourth alumna to become principal of the school.<sup>1</sup> The probable closing of the Academy did not deter the administration and faculty from revising and updating its curriculum in order to "provide a well-integrated program for the social, intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual development of each student."<sup>2</sup> Nor did it hinder student enthusiasm or participation in the activities of the school.

The most significant innovations of the 1972-1973 term were the organization of a public relations committee, and the introduction of mini courses and girls' competitive sports.<sup>3</sup> The Public Relations Committee publicized the school through open house activities, newspaper coverage, and student recruitment. The committee also participated in the High School Nights held at three grade schools in the city.<sup>4</sup> These events made it possible for the Catholic high schools in Omaha to introduce eighth graders to the educational programs and activities of their

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<sup>1</sup>The other alumnae principals were Sister M. Dolores Pavlik, Sister Pauline Polak, and Sister Louise Waiss.

<sup>2</sup>"Philosophy of Education at Notre Dame Academy," mimeographed copy, NDA files.

<sup>3</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

respective schools.

The faculty planned the mini courses for enrichment and as a break from the routine of the regular classes. Held after Easter, the mini course offerings included tennis, macrame, judo, horseback riding, swimming, auto mechanics, modeling, decoupage, and crocheting.<sup>5</sup> During the course of the week, each student chose from four to six mini courses, none of which merited credit or grades. Some of the faculty and volunteers from the community conducted the courses.

With the formation of the Greater Omaha League, girls' sports became more prominent. Notre Dame organized varsity and junior varsity volleyball and basketball teams which played in competitive games against other private and small public schools in the area.<sup>6</sup> After winning the District B volleyball tournament championship, Notre Dame's Roadrunners entered the State Volleyball Tournament at Scottsbluff in November 1972, but lost to Waverly in the semi-finals.<sup>7</sup>

Two new clubs assisted the athletic program. These were the Pep Club in the school and the Booster Club, composed of members from the Home and School Association. The former promoted student interest and support at the games through cheers and pep rallies. The Booster Club was instrumental in the painting of the gym and in the purchase and installment of the second-hand bleachers at a savings of over \$600.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 19; Sun Newspapers, 3 May 1973, Notre Dame Academy Scrapbook II, Notre Dame Convent Archives, Omaha. (Hereafter cited as NDA Scrapbook, NDCA.)

<sup>6</sup>"School Chronicle," p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Sun Newspapers, 23 November 1972, p. 5, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>8</sup>Sun Newspapers, 7 September 1972, p. 5, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA;

The greatest change in 1973-1974 was the adoption of the block system. Instead of two semesters, the school year contained six blocks of six weeks duration. Each block was a distinct academic period. The teachers developed their courses into bodies of content around key concepts. They outlined each course to include the minimum requirements for credit. Certain subjects which had a sequential or chronological order, such as foreign language and American history, continued the next block's content where the previous one ended.<sup>9</sup> The chief objection to the block system came from the mathematics department which taught a discipline that needed more continuity than the six-week plan offered.

After each block of courses, the students received an evaluative report which recorded credit or no credit for each course taken. The report provided checklists for the quality of the student's assignments, class discussion and participation, behavior, and attendance. Teachers also checked whether the student merely performed the minimum requirements, worked above the minimum, or did exceptional work. There was ample space for further comments from the instructor. Since credit or no credit replaced the traditional grades, the students, especially those who planned to attend college, questioned the reports. The school counselor explained that the evaluative report provided enough information for her to substitute easily grades on college forms if necessary. Furthermore, she noted that many colleges required entrance examinations and other testing results that had more placement value than grades.

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"School Chronicle," p. 17, 19.

<sup>9</sup>Student Handbook, 1973-1974, p. 4-5.



Surprisingly, most fears disappeared after the girls received their first evaluations. Competition for and comparison of grades dwindled, thus making school work desirable for the average and below average students.<sup>10</sup>

If a girl received no credit for a course required for graduation, such as a science or English course, she repeated that particular block's work. If it were an elective, she had the option of repeating the course or choosing another elective in the same subject area.<sup>11</sup>

The block system had several advantages. First, the concentration on key concepts over a six-week period was a highly motivating incentive. Secondly, six blocks in a year enabled the teachers to offer a wider variety of electives. For example, the social studies department developed courses on India, Japan, China, the Middle East, the American Indian, Nebraska Heritage, and American Minorities. Thirdly, since Archbishop Rummel High School had the same program, it was possible for some Notre Dame girls to attend the history of film study, mechanical drawing, and physics classes at Rummel while several boys came to Notre Dame for science and drama classes.<sup>12</sup> The chief disadvantage was the cost of purchasing books for each block's offerings.

While keeping abreast of educational trends, the Sisters faced three major problems at the Academy. First, the decline in the numbers of available and qualified Sisters necessitated the hiring of a lay faculty which created the burden of high salary costs. Secondly, inflation

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<sup>10</sup> Author's personal knowledge.

<sup>11</sup> Student Handbook, 1973-1974, p. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Sun Newspapers, 1 August 1973, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

affected all aspects of operating a school system. Finally, the enrollment decline was steady.<sup>13</sup> From 349 in 1971, it dropped to 259 in 1972 and to 220 in 1973.<sup>14</sup> Sister Michelle Hayek explained the reasons for the decrease in students. Many girls, wishing to complete their high school education in three years, transferred during their junior year to other schools which offered this program. Tuition increases were difficult to meet because a high percentage of the girls earned their own money to pay for their education. Furthermore, the drop in the nearby grade school enrollments created a smaller freshman class at the Academy.<sup>15</sup>

Similar problems of inflationary costs and declining enrollments confronted Rummel, which the Christian Brothers operated, and Marian High School, a private school for girls which the Servants of Mary owned. Consequently, as early as 1970 the administrators of the three private schools engaged in a research study for a possible new educational system in northwest Omaha.<sup>16</sup> When the idea of a three-school consolidation materialized, the Servants of Mary decided to maintain their private school as such and withdrew from the study. Notre Dame and Rummel continued investigating a possible merger of the two schools. During the course of the study, several meetings involving the two School Boards, the Parish Councils and the pastors of the parishes in Omaha's north and northwest area, the faculties and students of both schools, and the

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<sup>13</sup>"Provincial Chronicle, 1973-1974," NDCA.

<sup>14</sup>Enrollment figures, see Appendix A.

<sup>15</sup>Minutes of the Notre Dame Sisters Legislative Assembly, 1 August 1973, zeroxed copy, NDCA.

<sup>16</sup>Minutes of the Notre Dame Academy School Board, 11 July 1972, mimeographed copy, NDA files.

parents broadened the scope of information necessary for a final decision. At these meetings, Brother Ignatius Brown, FSC, principal at Rummel, explained that an analysis of the proposed merger indicated a savings of \$90,000 with the operation of one school; a reduction of faculty from fifty-two to thirty-three, an enrollment capacity of 850, and a tuition cost of \$450.<sup>17</sup> The merger plans had considered the use of the Notre Dame building, but decided that the structure was too small for the expected enrollment and would have required extensive remodeling to accommodate boys.

The Education Committee of the Archdiocesan Board of Education was aware of the developments, as were the two communities of religious, the Notre Dame Sisters and the Christian Brothers, who staffed the schools in question.<sup>18</sup> Since the merger required the closing of the Academy, the Sisters had a decisive vote in the venture. On 20 October 1973, the Sister-delegates to the Legislative Assembly of the Notre Dame Community held a special meeting to consider the accumulated reports on the financial, social, and educational value of the merger. They voted unanimously in favor of it.<sup>19</sup> However, Archbishop Daniel E. Sheehan was to make the final decision, after careful consideration of the facts and consultation with his advisors, because this new co-educational school would come under the auspices of the Archdiocese.

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<sup>17</sup>Omaha World-Herald, 14 September 1973, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA. Rummel's enrollment in 1973 was 480; Notre Dame's was 220. Rummel's tuition was \$528; Notre Dame's was \$425.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 11 September 1973, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>19</sup>"Provincial Chronicle, 1973-1974," NDCA.

On 26 October 1973, Father Thomas O'Brien, Archdiocesan Superintendent of Schools, and Robert Matt, President of the Archdiocesan Board of Education officially announced the consolidation of Notre Dame Academy and Archbishop Rummel High School.<sup>20</sup> A few days later, Father O'Brien named Brother Ignatius Brown as principal of the new school which would use the Rummel facilities at 6300 Redick. Brother Ignatius appointed Sister Michelle Hayek to be assistant principal for administration.<sup>21</sup> In the months that remained of the school year, a new Board of Education, Student Council, and faculty which consisted of most of the teachers employed at both schools began the arduous task of organizing the co-ed school, known as Roncalli High School.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, school activities continued at the Academy with unusual enthusiasm, but tinged with nostalgia. Homecoming Week, which came at the end of October, was an exhibition of school spirit of loyalty and happiness mingled with sadness. Aware that this was their last Notre Dame Academy homecoming, the four classes entered into an exuberant competition for the "spirit stick," a symbol of class display of talent and vivaciousness in their skit, hall decorations, and cheers. The coronation of the king and queen at a joint Notre Dame-Rummel Homecoming Dance climaxed the event.<sup>23</sup>

In February the foreign language department sponsored its last

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<sup>20</sup>The Catholic Voice; Omaha World-Herald, 26 October 1973, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>21</sup>Unidentified clipping, 19 November 1973, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA.

<sup>22</sup>Roncalli is the family name of Pope John XXIII.

<sup>23</sup>Notre Dame Academy Hilltopper, 26 October 1973.

Mardi Gras with a special liturgy during which the girls sang French songs and read choral readings. The coronation of the queen followed the liturgy. The girls continued the traditional spirit of generosity by donating the proceeds of the Mardi Gras projects to help defray the hospitalization costs of Sister M. Gabriel Klein, instructor of German, who had suffered a stroke in November and had not regained consciousness for any length of time.<sup>24</sup>

For the school's last play production, the Drama Club compiled scenes from Everyman, The Upper Room, Arsenic and Old Lace, Daughter of Fear, and many other plays of the past forty-six years to form the theme, "Yesterday Once More." Several alumnae returned to star in their original roles. The faculty also presented a cutting from Up with Charlie Brown.<sup>25</sup>

The month of May witnessed several final events: an all-school tea, the induction of the seniors into the alumnae association, an Athletic Sports Banquet to honor the volleyball and basketball players and the cheerleaders, a field day for the freshmen and sophomores, and the junior-senior banquet.<sup>26</sup> The commencement on 24 May 1974 ended a forty-eight-year history of education at Notre Dame Academy. The forty seniors who received diplomas that evening brought the total number of graduates to 1,751.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 22 February 1974.

<sup>25</sup>Sun Newspapers, 28 March 1974, p. 14, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA; Notre Dame Academy Hilltopper, 12 April 1974.

<sup>26</sup>Sun Newspapers, 9 May 1974, NDA Scrapbook II, NDCA; Notre Dame Alumnae Newsletter, September 1974; Notre Dame Academy Hilltopper, 24 May 1974.

<sup>27</sup>Notre Dame Alumnae Newsletter, September 1974.

Of these alumnae, 115 entered religious life; nearly three hundred have college degrees; countless numbers are or have been nurses, teachers, and business women. Also among them are registered pharmacists, a president of a bank in Ennis, Texas; school administrators, social workers, government employees, high school counselors, several college and nursing school instructors, lecturers, leaders in church and women organizations, and two 1972 graduates in medical school. Notre Dame is proud of her alumnae, scattered over the country and in Europe and Asia, who have made outstanding contributions to society. These include Sister Lillian Reida, S.SSp., President of Holy Spirit Junior College, attended by 3500 girls from junior high to college level, in Akita City, Japan; Colonel Mary Patricia Maguire, an aero-space nurse and instructor in many hospitals in the country and abroad; Marian Fitch, an American government employee in France and teacher in Japan; Shelley Kalkowski, a former Foods Editor and a feature writer for the Omaha World-Herald; Marian Soulek, a paraplegic and athletic teacher, who has participated in Paraplegic Olympics in Israel, South America, Canada, Mexico, and the United States; and Sister Lillian Pluhacek, foundress of the religious community of Our Lady of the Prairies in Powers Lake, North Dakota where she is a home missionary and educator.<sup>28</sup>

In her near half century of education, fifty-two Notre Dame Sisters, forty-eight lay women and lay men, and twenty priests combined talent, energy, and dedication to form the 8,229 young women who at one time or

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<sup>28</sup>Sister M. Eleanor Kramolisch, Co-Moderator of the Alumnae Association supplied this information from alumnae records and her personal knowledge. Not all alumnae have kept Notre Dame informed of their specific careers, degrees, and distinctions.

another enrolled at the Academy.<sup>29</sup> These hundreds of women, particularly the graduates, have verified the words of a 1974 graduate when she wrote of her Alma Mater,

Notre Dame is not only a school. It is not only an institution for taking required courses, but a place to grow as a person and to learn to share oneself in many ways with others. As ridiculous or overused as it sounds, Notre Dame really does further your development as a woman--a woman capable of making her own way in today's or tomorrow's world.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Commencement address of Sister Pauline Polak, President of the Notre Dame Community, 24 May 1974.

<sup>30</sup>Tribute of Margaret Meister, Notre Dame Academy Hilltopper, 1974 yearbook, p. 58.

APPENDIX A

Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment
1926-27	26	1950-51	111
1927-28	39	1951-52	106
1928-29	39	1952-53	93
1929-30	50	1953-54	111
1930-31	52	1954-55	119
1931-32	45	1955-56	140
1932-33	44	1956-57	190
1933-34	59	1957-58	242
1934-35	73	1958-59	260
1935-36	83	1959-60	251
1936-37	76	1960-61	273
1937-38	69	1961-62	289
1938-39	61	1962-63	328
1939-40	52	1963-64	374
1940-41	58	1964-65	343
1941-42	70	1965-66	432
1942-43	77	1966-67	406
1943-44	90	1967-68	424
1944-45	91	1968-69	438
1945-46	82	1969-70	421
1946-47	94	1970-71	378
1947-48	95	1971-72	349
1948-49	91	1972-73	259
1949-50	106	1973-74	220



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