

Oral History Interview Transcript

Oak Lawn Tornado

Sister Margaret (SM) & Sister Joseph (SJ)

April 4, 2007

Maureen Gilligan (MG)-Interviewer

MG- This interview is with Sister Margaret and Sister Joseph of Little Company of Mary Hospital. We're going to discuss some background information and then discuss their role at the hospital the night of the tornado and subsequent and what they remember subsequently over that weekend. We're at the library, it's April 4<sup>th</sup> the interviewer is Maureen Gilligan. Okay we can just begin. I would like, at least initially to talk about your service and your order, how you got involved, how old you were, was this the first place that you went, did you come to Chicago, are you from Chicago? Sister Margaret?

SM- I'm Sister Margaret Hoben (sp?) I entered Little Company of Mary in 1951 so I have 56 years of wonderful experience. I entered Little Company of Mary because it was a nursing community and they cared for people. How long have I served? 56 years. Some highlights of my career, I suppose the highlights would be I have worked in every single area of the hospital; including the maintenance department when we had a generator failure one night I worked in the laundry, housekeeping, nursing, for a short time medical records and administration. Now I'm a community rep for Evergreen Park for the Evergreen Park community; attempting to make a difference in the healthcare of the people in our community.

MG- Still in a healthcare capacity?

SM- In a healthcare capacity with a particular focus on the poor and the needy in our community.

MG- Which is the focus of the order isn't it; to provide sustenance and care...

SM- Care for the sick and the dying.

MG- I understand it was an Italian origin?

SJ- No, definitely not; Irish and English.

MG- Irish and English, I was wrong. I just didn't remember I didn't get my chance to review my file.

SM- Gilligan would be quite at home with the sisters at Little Company of Mary.

MG- They're from Limerick.

SJ- So is sister.

MG- Yes, I could tell, I could detect a light accent.

SM- My sister, Sister Paul entered Little Company in 1951.

MG- And where are you from?

SM- County Mayo.

MG- That's where my family is from.

SM- One of ten children. Nine girls and one boy. Night of the storm it was about supertime, I'm not sure what the time was exactly, seems to me it was about 5:30. So it maybe was close to six o'clock. There was just a terrific darkness, another sister and I went to the emergency department. And we just got there as the first ambulance arrived. And the children had roller skates on and almost at the same time the lights went out but our emergency generator went on. But it did not go on through the entire hospital; it only covered areas. So we had flashlights, a lot of flash lights. And there was a question there how did you assist Sister Christopher? Well, I was working with the people coming in; a lot of our employees came to volunteer and a lot of our doctors. So I attempted to identify the people coming in to the hospital and also those who were coming looking for their children for their families. So that primarily was my role other than helping to transfer the first patients into the emergency; they were a cast room off the emergency room. So the ones we thought, I thought were dead were transferred to the cast room and they waited there until a doctor looked at them. So primarily that was my role to organize the first (unintelligible) to organize the personnel to work with her.

MG- So you were greeting people, you were one of the first faces they saw when they walked into the hospital?

SM- I was at the emergency door pretty much because that was where everybody was coming in (4:12) All the other doors were...

MG- Now were most people coming in under their own speed or were they escorted in ambulances?

SJ-The ones I got were all ambulances.

SM- A lot of ambulances.

SJ-Cars anyway they could.

MG- So they weren't necessarily walking in off the street.

SJ- Well maybe I wasn't at that entrance.

SM- I do not have any recollection of anybody walking in. There was such a crowd; there were so many people in that particular area.

SJ- Police, firemen.

SM- The response was unbelievable of local people and our nurses and doctors coming in to help. I remember that distinctly.

MG- People coming in to volunteer?

SM- To volunteer, yes.

MG- I've read a few stories about particularly these were some hospital personnel but who might not, who might have been volunteers also. Who just hopped on whatever vehicle they could to get to the hospital. Give their service for that.

SJ- And our dear friends the Dominican Sisters from St. Bernadette School they came right away to Pediatrics...

MG- They did? I didn't know that part.

(unknown male voice?)- Sister Joseph should introduce herself.

MG- Yes, please.

SJ- I'm Sister Joseph Casey. I've been a member of the Sisters of Little Company of Mary for 60 years and I have served most of my time here in Evergreen Park but I was also stationed at some of our other hospitals. My background was mainly in Pediatric Nursing and supervision. Can you name a highlight? Well the highlight of my career would be many years in pediatrics with the children. And fortunately I was able to be there that night and stay almost 24 hours on the unit actually. I was at a meeting with Sister Michael at St. Thomas Moore. We didn't even know a tornado had hit because we were in the basement of St. Thomas Moore School. And as we were driving down California it was quite dark and rainy and some Chicago Policeman stopped us and said "Sisters you can't go down there it's a devastation." So we identified ourselves as nursing sisters at Little Company of Mary, "oh they need you desperately." So naturally we got through. We both went and changed from our outgoing clothes to our white nursing and I immediately went to Pediatrics where child after child was being brought in on a stretcher. That's when the St. Bernadette Sisters came over to see what they could do to help us. And I remember two children unidentified with brown glass in their backs; many with broken hips and legs. About 2:30 in the morning Father Dudley Day,

an Augustinian Father, who had been at the confirmation where Cardinal Cody was at St. Gerald's School came in with a woman who was obviously distraught and weeping. I knew Father and he said Sister do you have any unidentified children? I said I had a number of them. He said this is Mrs. Brady her husband and little girl are dead over at Christ but two of them are missing; two children. They were the two with the most injuries from the brown glass in their backs. They had been in a car with their dad while she was shopping. And the car went up and over a tree. So she was able then to identify her two little girls. We spent the night just trying to comfort children and nurse them as best as we could. And by morning many of the volunteer people from PEDS(?) I don't know how they got in because some of them came from long distances but they were able to get through. We had twice as many staff members as we ordinarily would of but we needed every one of them. And the night passed very quickly and the day...

MG- Did you have power? How long was it that you were out of power?

SJ- Well, Sister Margaret could probably tell you that.

SM- I don't remember. We were in such a state of absolute shock I don't remember how long but we were for a while. I would expect it wouldn't have been very long because we would have gotten emergency generators. So I don't expect it to be too long because Commonwealth would have come out.

SJ- By the time I arrived they had already triaged and were starting to get people up to the units and since the roller skating rink so badly hit, that was the bulk of the children that I got. Their distraught parents were just...

MG- Now I think when in of the accounts I've read of Sister Mary Christopher, she talks about getting a call from police, I believe it was Chicago Police saying that there had been a massive car accident on 87<sup>th</sup> near Kedzie and they could expect thirty-five-forty victims. But I don't think at that time she knew there had actually been a tornado.

SM- I think according to her most recent letter and there is a letter that came from her. And it said that it had got dark in the dining room. And we were, another Sister and myself, were ahead of her in the Emergency Department because the convent was attached to the hospital; it was just a walk-way to the hospital so we had walked ahead of her. So I don't know if that was correct about the accident, I don't know. Her account is in there...

SJ- But she never mentions anything about it.

SM- Accident, I never heard about it. There was no preparation, they were there when we got there at the emergency... as soon as it appeared dark we just went over and the ambulances were coming in already.

MG- Were you aware when the victims started coming in that this was the result of a tornado?

SM- I wasn't aware of anything other than it had gotten really dark over head and we knew that something was happening; there were a lot of sirens.

MG- Obviously, at some point it must have sunk in...

SJ- A policeman told us...

SM- Yes, the first ambulance we saw they said that the skating rink was hit. That was the first because they had the children, some of the children.

MG- But you really hadn't any idea that it had started this far?

SM- I didn't.

SJ- I don't think there ever had been a tornado in the Midwest here.

MG- Not in this urban area.

SJ- But many homes also were destroyed and people caught in them and hurt as well. They were being brought in at the same time.

MG- So do you think that many of the roller skate rink victims were brought to Little Company of Mary as opposed to Christ Hospital?

SJ- I thought most of them were. At the time we were the larger of the two. Christ was much smaller. We had a very large unit with over 87 beds for children.

MG- You ended up transferring far fewer of those who were admitted.

SJ- Oh we didn't transfer any that I'm aware of.

MG- When we looked at the numbers; I think there were a few that might have been transferred out of Little Company to St. Francis.

SJ- There may have been but I don't recall that.

MG- I know that Christ transferred fifty or more.

SJ- Well they were much smaller at the time.

SM- But they got flooded (unintelligible)

SJ- It was because most of the injuries were in Oak Lawn. But I had so many from the roller skating rink. I can close my eyes and see them now. The skates, the crying and their faces all glass.

MG- Was that the predominant nature of the injuries?

SJ- Besides the broken legs and hips.

MG- And that was from debris falling?

SJ- From debris and from the roof collapsing on them.

MG- Some people talked about when they went outside there was extraordinary amount of debris flying around. Trees, bricks, garbage cans, pieces of buildings. Avoiding that was...

SJ- Mrs. Brady told me, course she wasn't in the car, her husband said you go into whatever store in Oak Lawn and I'll stay with the children in the car. So she actually didn't see the terrible thing that happened. From what Father Day told me how he got the information from a witness that the car just went up and over a tree and then came down and killed the father and one little girl...

MG- And he had all the children?

SJ- He had all the children. And the ones that I had were in the back seat and the father and the little girl were waked together. Mother was from Ireland.

MG-At St. Gerald's, correct?

SJ- Yeah Cardinal Cody kind of, he was joking because he was not the most popular man, that's why I defend him whenever I could. He said, you know I glad I was here at the confirmation or I would have been blamed for the tornado even.

MG- Oh, he was in the...

SJ- He was at the confirmation at St. Gerald.

MG- But it didn't happen that night?

SJ- Yes it did.

MG-Oh I thought it got cancelled?

SJ- I was just talking to Father Dudley Day not to...

MG- Tell me about that because I don't have any...

SJ- St Gerald's had its confirmation that evening. The priests were at dinner they were going to the, maybe the confirmation never came off...

MG- I thought it didn't?

SJ- No, I would say it didn't either

SM- It would have been later.

MG- Correct it would have been more like at six- thirty or seven o'clock. There were a few people in their remembrances...

SJ- That's right. But all the priests including Monsignor O'Brickie (sp?) were

MG- They were all there.

SJ-...were seated at the dinner table when the roof went off.

MG- Well, that's a good story.

SJ- And Cardinal Cody said well you all know that I'm here and I didn't cause the tornado. He was kind of teasing about it. But then those priests started coming to help to see what they could do. And actually, as an aside, Mendel Catholic Prep had the first teacher's strike in a Catholic School in history of Illinois. It happened that day so it completely took them off the front page which they were grateful for and they got a little squib in about page 30 that there was a strike at Mendel. A priest friend of mine was the principal at Mendel at the time and he said they nothing about it. I remember calling father that evening; he said I didn't hear a thing. Of course he was so tied up about this strike business. Cardinal Cody that night asked me did I know anything about the strike at Mendel or is that just a fluke?

MG- So Cody was, I didn't realize that he was actually in the village at the time.

SJ- He was at St. Gerald's at the time. So that's how Father Dudley Day happened to be there. He had been invited to come to the...

MG- Tell me Father Dudley Day, who is he? (16:08) what's his...?

SJ- He's an Augustinian father that lives at St. Mary's Star of the Sea Convent with four other Augustinian fathers. He's retired but still works.

MG- He was a pastor at the time?

SJ- No,no, no.

MG- Can you give me his relationship to...

SJ-I'm trying to, well, he was a guest for dinner at St. Gerald's; that's why he was there.

MG- But you mentioned him as though someone that I might know or should know.

SJ- Well, I doubt it.

MG- I'm trying to figure out what the connection is.

SJ- I just see him frequently.

SM- Well, he probably could tell you about the dinner.

SJ- He could.

MG- Cause he was there. He was there for the confirmation, to help with the confirmation.

SJ-He went to go to the confirmation. Somehow he knew Mrs. Brady or he got to know her because of that night. I don't know; because I was talking to him about it the other day and he has a crystal-clear memory also of the whole evening. So I, you might want to call Father...

MG- I'm hoping that after we get a chance to begin this process I can start collecting more interviews from particular your generation, you need to tell your stories.

SJ- I notice that up here. It says we're well into their seventies.

MG- Well, I wanted to know how old you were because, if you don't mind telling me so I can be more specific cause you must have been pretty young when you...

SJ- I was 38.

MG- Thirty-eight? And you had been in service by that time...

SJ- Twenty years.

MG- Almost twenty years.

SJ- Over twenty years actually.

MG- When did you say you started?

SJ- Forty-seven.

MG- Forty-seven, (to SM) you were fifty-one.

SM-I was about three years after.

SJ- Yeah, three years. Four years behind me.

MG- And you had already worked at the hospital for twenty years?

SJ- I was already a registered nurse.

MG- What was your impression of the way that the hospital reacted to this?

SJ- Oh with great pride and I still have that great pride.

MG- Do you feel like you were mentally and physically equipped to deal with this?

SJ- Oh, yeah, we were all young women.

MG- Was most of the nursing staff...

SJ- Our whole lives were in the nursing career.

SM- I think we did an incredible job.

SJ- We did.

MG- That's the impression I get from all the accounts.

SJ- I remember Governor Ogilvie coming saying this is unbelievable because there were parents at the bed sides saying what a wonderful job that we all did and how confident they felt in us. I remember one woman said to Senator Percy when I came in and saw all those blue-veiled sisters I knew everything would be okay. He told me that, Senator Percy.

MG- Percy, was he a Catholic?

SJ- No.

MG- I didn't think so.

SJ- Either was Governor Ogilvie. But that didn't make any difference. (19:09)

MG- No, but their familiarity with...

SJ- The Blackhawk players all came to visit the children. they had so many celebrities coming.

Unidentified male voice- Drury Lane was just down the street. Pat O'Brien was doing Showboat.

MG- Right, I saw the pictures of, and that was a fundraiser, Showboat show. Most definitely for the tornado victims.

SJ- of course the Martinique was very prominent at the time.

MG- Yeah, that's a shame that it got closed down.

SJ- Yes it is.

MG-At one point I read some minutes about the debris thing after that weekend and the discussion centered around the emergency plan and how well you thought that it worked? Were you aware that you were operating under an emergency plan at the time? Or were you just operating on the instinct; just doing what you thought was right to do?

SJ-That's how I operated, absolutely. I don't know about the administration.

SM- We had a plan to organize our staff and Sister Christopher would be more in a position to put that into affect than I was.

MG- But in terms of; I know that getting the power back on...

SM-You know it was highly organized...

MG- Communication was broken down for quite a period of time because there were no telephones.

SM- Yes, the telephones were dead.

MG- There was no way to communicate back and forth except through some radio or I think they talked about carrying notes back and forth; some of the volunteers doing that in the hospital because there were so many floors. Did you generally stay on the lower floors?

SM- I stayed on the lower floors.

SJ-I went to nine.

MG- You went to nine which was the pediatrics?

SJ- Or large wings.

MG- And the elevators were working fine?

SM- Yes

MG- All that was amazing.

SJ-Oh yeah.

MG- How many sisters were serving as nurses at this time?

SM- Do you remember? There were two (Unintelligible) There were probably twenty-five?

SJ- At least.

MG- Was that the majority of the nursing staff...

SM- Everybody went to help. Nurse or no nurse, everybody went to help.

SJ- We had some sisters in x-ray and of course they went to x-ray.

MG- All the sisters you mean whether they were nurses or not?

SJ- Yes, right.

MG- But were most of the...

SJ- Most of us were.

MG- Were most of the nursing staff sisters, were they religious?

SM, SJ- No, no

SJ- We call all the rest of them the greater company of Mary, we're the little company of Mary.

MG- I see.

SJ- He's greater.

Unidentified male voice- No you are.

MG- I was nine years old and I broke my arm and was brought to Little Company of Mary.

SJ- Were you?

MG- I remember being treated very gently. As a kid; an important impression. How were you feeling at this time when people come in and they're probably distraught? Particularly parents looking for their children. Distraught, looking for some kind of answers from you; you were actively working with the victims so you probably...

SM- I think that I was just in such of state of surprise and shock, I don't even recall that I had feelings. you know there was a job to be done and you did it.

MG- Did you do any outreach in the community after this?

SJ- We also had the snow storm and we were kind of prepared, we had just had that terrific snow storm when we were snowed in for days. We handled that just the same. And

again people volunteered and came to help us. The Dominican Sisters came over and gave baths to the children.

MG- Were there injuries related to that, to the snow storm?

SM- Not that we know of.

MG- But it was being isolated and shut off.

SM- It shut the village down as a result of the storm.

MG- My impression is the magnitude of this on a hospital is far greater than the snow storm would have been? Just in terms of, you would have been saturated with victims.

SJ- We were.

SM-Inundated.

MG- Yeah, inundated.

SJ- And I would say the parents of I dealt with were so happy to let us kind of take over. I mean they were in a real state of shock. Some of them, some were hurt themselves and didn't want to go downstairs for care. (23:52) They saw all these people helping up in Pediatrics they were very, very helpful to us. They just let us do our job.

MG- I know at one point some of the doctors talked about having trouble getting into Oak Lawn. Obviously the police were doing their job in setting up this perimeter and trying to keep people out if they didn't have ...

SJ- Well, we were stopped as I said coming into 87<sup>th</sup>.

MG- You wear a habit fortunately your identity is far more transparent than perhaps a doctor's would be. Where he would just have a badge that may or may not look official.

SJ- that's because reporters were starting to stream in.

MG- Absolutely. In some of the pictures you can see the ratio of reporters to emergency personnel. That's not that far apart but there's a great deal there. And part of my question was do you remember what some of the doctor's attitudes once they were able to get through; were they frustrated by this, did they...?

SJ- I don't think so, they just did their job. Something just takes over, I mean you don't stop to think. I'm sure nobody was worried about permits and privacy act and all that kind of thing then. They just, everybody...

MG- And even then, now here's something that struck me early on when reading through some material. The bill for the hospital work was the slate was wiped clean. And this is a decision that Sister Mary Christopher announced, I'm sure she didn't make it solely.

SM- They didn't send any bill. The cafeteria food was free, everything was free.

SJ- Everything was free.

MG- Now was this something that the hospital on its own; it would be a decision it would make?

SM- No Sister would have had, as an administrator she would have the authority to do that.

MG- Do you have any...

SJ- It was the right thing to do.

MG-...comments on that?

SJ- People had lost their homes, they lost everything.

MG- Do you know if any of the other hospitals did anything like that?

SJ- I doubt that.

MG- Because almost all of them were religious hospitals or at least founded ...

SJ- I really don't know. (26:28) But I was very proud of the fact that we did. That's not unusual for the Little Company of Mary Hospital either. We've written off many, many, many bills and still do.

MG- It made me smile when I read that especially in today's atmosphere.

SM- Well I doubt if we could do it today but it was wonderful I suppose we would do it today.

MG- Another part of the story just the fact that the tornado struck the community, it happened so fast for one thing. Most people didn't get a chance to hardly stand up and realize what happened. It's the way the community reacted and you have alluded to that in a number of ways. How people poured in to help.

SM- I don't remember who, somebody went to the kitchen and was helpless...

SJ- That was during the snow storm.

SM- But I think that...

SJ- The man from PEDs (pediatrics) had a child and he went, he was a chef, and he went down and cooked.

SM- But I thought some people...

SJ- I didn't hear about it.

SM- Went down and made sandwiches for them.

SJ- They could of, I don't know. As I said I was up on the ninth floor until the next; about five o'clock the next day.

MG- How long did this, this spirit of community and generosity last after that initial weekend? Was it a week, did people continue to participate?

SJ- Well, it lasted a long time for me because these celebrities kept coming to PEDS (pediatrics) like the governor, Senator Percy and the athletes. That's why it was maybe more prolonged for me. Where I would assume the emergency room just went back...

SM- Went back to normal after the influx of patients.

SJ- But by the time they came all the crises was over. In fact, some children had gone home even.

SM- Even in any kind of emergency, when we have a disaster the hospital goes back almost immediately. We have disaster plans; we have many, many mock drills and everything. And it just has the ability to kind of just fall back as soon as...

MG- Contracted to its normal operations once again.

SM- It has to because people don't stop coming.

MG- Has there been anything else in your service that compares to what that night was like?

SJ- Not to mind, the snowstorm and the tornado were two of the most...

SM- The plane crash at Midway; a lot of the people didn't come. The doctors went out to the (unintelligible).

MG- When was that?

SJ- That was December 8, 1972. A plane crashed into a home and Sister Margaret sent me over. I went over and most of the people were dead.

SM- We sent supplies, equipment and teams, different teams.

SJ- So many people were already deceased. We were there just kind of for comfort. That's when Howard Hunt's wife was killed on that flight. They discovered that she had thousands and thousands of dollars in cash on her. (30:11) That didn't make an impact because they didn't come to us we went to them.

MG- You've told me a little bit about Cody, I'm just interested in his, if you had an impression of what his larger view of the church's role was in providing assistance to the victims? I mean he a...I didn't know he was at St. Gerald's that night.

SJ- He was.

MG-That's a revelation right there that he was in the midst of it, it wasn't just that he was looking from the outside; he had actually experienced the tornado himself, which is remarkable.

SM- I think for the most part hospitals are independent entities and you take the responsibility yourself. I don't ever recall any directions; maybe some suggestions coming from any of the cardinals or bishops. For the most part they leave you alone to do your work and it is all part of the church's work and they just delegate the responsibility, the people assume the responsibility of running their own institution.

MG- When I was reading some of the correspondence between Sister Christopher and Cody, she had asked him to come and say a special service for the victims and for those who were still at the hospital and he declined due to a busy schedule. Which sounded a little bit like a...

SM- No, that could well be, no, that could very well be if it was around confirmation time or whatever reason...

MG- That's true, that's true he would have been committed...

SJ- He came that night. He came right away and he was there probably most of the night.

MG- I'm not looking to criticize Cody I'm just trying to interpret the...

SJ- People always blamed him for everything and ....

MG- Well, it's hard to be a public figure.

SM- Well, he was a no nonsense individual, he saw something and he went for it. He was probably an A-type personality. He saw something and he went, he made a decision to (unintelligible.)

MG- I think that helps explain some of the swiftness also of the dioceses in providing some funding for the two parishes.

SJ- Probably the parishes... (unintelligible) No.

SJ- Because as sister said we're independent. We pay our own bills.

MG- You're part of the community but you're not part of the dioceses or under his control.

SM- If we were short of cash we would not go to the dioceses we would probably go to other resources but we're responsible for paying our own bills, doing our own fund raising as most hospitals are.

MG- Do people come back to you when they come to the hospital or maybe they write or something and thank you for your service during this time? Or even want to talk about it?

SJ- Not for that.

MG- Not for that?

SJ- I have parents who come ones that I'm friendly with whose children actually died on my unit. I have kept in contact and they with me for years.

MG- Because they would have gotten to know you?

SJ- I don't recall any of these people that did. It's like you sing your song and then you go home. An unpleasant...they're so glad to move on I'm sure.

SM- I find that the people at the time when their in the hospital and they have a wonderful experience, but when they go home, and I have done it myself; I should write a note, I should write a note. Days go by and I think oh no everybody else will write the note. So I think that, it's not that they're not grateful, but it is just that it doesn't seem to be that important to people.

SJ- They all say they're going to do it.

MG- There are several that did but they may not come directly to you but they went to the administrator.

SM- Absolutely, they would have.

SJ- Although sister was telling me that yesterday she was visiting a priest and he said I answer the phone and say Ritz-Carleton. And they say oh-oh. And he says well that's how I'm being treated here.

SM- I was very glad to hear that.

MG- That's very nice. Let me just see if I missed something. Now you remember in terms of the victims, did any of the victims have a lasting impact on you and you talked about the Bradys.

SJ- The Brady's more than anybody. And that little girl she was the last one to leave that's in that picture. She had multiple breaks and hips and...

MG- This Deborah ?

SJ- Rend I think it was. Was it Rend?

MG- Rend? It's the same girl. She was quite...

SJ- She was in the longest.

MG- Impacted.

SJ- I remember my brother when he called me when he saw that picture in the paper. He said do you hear that loud noise? I said no. He said that's your father spinning in his grave that you're hobnobbing with a Republican. I said oh my goodness.

MG- Hobnobbing, you didn't have much of a choice after all he was a senator.

SM- Politics doesn't play much of a role in a hospital.

SJ- He was teasing.

SM- Whoever comes is...

SJ- he was only kidding.

MG- Now are you two, are you retired from active service?

SJ- Semi.

MG- Semi-retired so you still are...

SM- We're still very much involved.

SJ- We still work at the hospital. I work one day, sister works too.

MG- In a similar role, you're still in pediatrics?

SJ- No, I'm what a call a patient advocate in the emergency room. All I have to do now is smile, I don't have to worry about who come on duty and who made a mistake and who did this or who didn't come at all.

MG- The complicated world...

SJ- I just have to be nice to people.

MG- That's good, that's a thankful job.

SJ- Well, it's a way of giving witness.

SM- And that she does.

SM- Likewise.

MG- I'll probably call Margaret Brandt(sp?) was her name?

SJ- Who?

MG- Former sister, Christopher?

SJ- Christopher.

Unidentified male voice- Margaret Brandis is the name she is going by. She might have left a contact number and this is her...if not we can find a number for you.

SJ- She lives out-of-town.

MG- Does the sister still serve as administrator of the hospital?

SM- No, Dennis Riley, he's a lay person but Sister Kathleen is chairperson of the board of directors. So the sisters..

MG- So that's where the sisters...

SM- There are three sisters on the board.

MG- The Holy Cross Hospital which is run by Sisters of St. Casimir?

SM- Yes.

MG- Because I went to Maria High School and I don't think that they are actively administrators anymore.

SJ- No, at Holy Cross. They have a lay person by the name of Learner I believe is his name.

MG- In your role as administrator how would you describe what Sister Christopher's demeanor was and how she handled this pretty massive responsibility?

SM- She's extremely capable and competent type of individual and she knew an awful lot of people.

MG- Was she your age at the same time?

SM- She was older.

MG- A little older?

SJ- She was younger than I.

MG- She looks really young in this...

SJ- Well she was, we were all in our thirties.

MG- That's remarkable to be in charge of a hospital at thirty something.

SM-She was a very capable individual.

Unidentified male- This other picture of sister is more recent.

MG- This one?

Unidentified male- The one all in blue.

MG- Right, right, she still looks young.

SJ- I wouldn't know her if I saw her.

MG- It's the gap in the teeth I can tell.

SJ- The gap and the , these two were in the order together.

MG- Together.

SJ- One was Matthew and one was Christopher. I wouldn't know her with the white hair, she had very dark hair. Well I never knew her with the hair.

MG- Except in the habit (?) yes.

SJ- Because I was probably stationed in Syracuse when she entered so I wouldn't have seen her except in a habit. Well you can see how young we all were.

MG- What was it like when the ambulances, you were in this area of the hospital, when the ambulance pulled up and were dropping off the victims, what was those rescue workers, what was their demeanor?

SM- I don't recall the only thing there seemed to be a terrific urgency just to get the patients in and go off and get some more. That's all I remember.

MG- When I read the transcripts of the firemen that's exactly what it sounds like. Like it's this frenetic searching for victims and get them to help.

SJ- Some of them were underneath debris in the houses.

SM- As far as we're here and somebody grabbed a cart and put them on the carts that were all over the emergency room and out in the corridor and everything. That's all I remember, I don't remember...I think we all were so stunned I really believe that you just went into a rote...

MG- How long did you work non-stop that night?

SM- I have no idea.

SJ- Well, I did to the next day, I remember about 5:15 I went home for supper.

MG- So from six to 5:15.

SM- It was twenty-four hours.

SJ- My two head nurses had gotten in and they were the same they didn't, no one went home. You don't with children.

MG- You stay there with them. Were the children that came in were they aware of the seriousness of their injuries?

SM- There was a terrific silence, there was just a lot of

SJ- Weeping, crying. The parents were... A lot of the children were unconscious. Crying of course, especially the ground glass in their faces cause all that was going to have to be removed. The children I'm sure were frightened. The fact that we remember so much for forty years in itself is remarkable.

MG- I think those kind of events make that profound impact to remember it. You were in the midst of it and working not as if you were injured, there might have been some forgetfulness from that.

SM- We weren't reporters, reporters would be looking for reactions and everything.

SJ- And you'd have that all down pat what to say.

MG- I think we will conclude.

Transcribed by Tom Suhs September 27, 2013.

