
PAST FORWARD

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Everything Old Is New Again! Historical Exhibit at The System Office

One function of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Sacred Heart Province is to educate people about the history and mission of the Sisters of Providence in Sacred Heart Province. Since the establishment of the Province in 1856, Chronicles, manuscripts, personal papers, photographs and artifacts documenting the history and achievements of the Sisters in the Northwest have been collected and preserved.

The Archives staff has always longed to display its archival treasures which explain, illustrate, and enliven Sisters of Providence history. Recently, Sister Kathryn Kurtz, S.P., Provincial Superior, has been instrumental in the attainment of this goal through her support of an exhibit at the System Office to educate, inform, and interest office staff and visitors in the rich history and continuing mission of the Sisters of Providence. Prior Provincials also supported an historic exhibit, however, an appropriate location was not available until recently. The System Office remodeling project supplied the opportunity, exhibit space was designated, and with it the goal of sharing the rich history of Sacred Heart Province is taking shape.

Exhibit cases will be located in the System Office's 24th and 25th floor lobbies. There will be three cases on the 25th floor and

two on the 24th floor, each measuring 4'X 5'X 18". Current plans are for the 25th floor exhibit to be a permanent exhibit telling the story of the Foundation and Scope of the Sisters of Providence; Mother Joseph and the Northwest; and Ministries in Sacred Heart Province. The 24th floor exhibit will change periodically to highlight themes, events and individuals.

To ensure well planned and designed exhibits, an Exhibit Advisory Task Force was created. The members are Sister Kathryn Kurtz, SP, Provincial Superior; Sister Helen Brennan, SP, Provincial Secretary; Ralph Bufano, Director of the Museum of Flight, Seattle, WA; Al Camosso, Director of Corporate Services; Joan Silling, Director of Administrative Services and orchestrator of the System Office renovation project; Cheryl Sjoblom, Director of Public Relations; and the Archives staff: Loretta Greene, Sister Rita Bergamini, SP, and Margaret Gardiner. Mr. Bufano provided valuable suggestions on exhibit case construction, environment, security, and principles of exhibit design. The Task Force prepared a mission statement for the exhibit, selected exhibit themes, and began identification of artifacts for display.

This is an exciting step in sharing the vast wealth of archival treasures which bring the history of Sacred Heart Province to life. The Archives staff invites everyone's questions and suggestions and we hope that you enjoy and learn from the display!



Recording Sacred Heart Province's History

Oral histories have always been collected by the Sisters of Providence Archives. The Archives' collection policy, to collect documentation of the Sisters of Providence Community and its sponsored ministries, embraces all media formats: institution records, manuscripts, personal papers, photographs, textiles, artifacts, videotapes, and oral histories. Recently, the Archives launched a new **Oral History Program** designed to add significantly to its oral history library. This exciting and much needed project will involve the staff and interviewers directly in documenting Sacred Heart Province history, adding an exciting new dimension to the long established collection policy.

Oral History is different from other types of archival media and its value lies in its difference. Oral history is the method of collecting historical documentation by recording an individual's remembrances through interviews. It fills in the gaps; adds significant historic detail; broadens studies on peoples; and gives us a more full, diverse picture of groups, events, and issues.

In preparation for undertaking the Sacred Heart Province Oral History program, a ten member Oral History Committee formed to define, plan, and launch the program. Its members are Sister Helen Brennan, SP; Sister Louise Gleason, SP; Sister Kathryn Kurtz, SP; Sister Louise Lebel, SP; Margaret Nevins; Cheryl Sjoblom; Joan Silling; and the Archives staff. Committee members drafted lists of suitable narrators, interviewers, and topics to be covered and identified the most

pressing interviews. In May, the Committee participated in a comprehensive Oral History workshop in Vancouver, WA, conducted by Oral Historian Sharon Boswell, co-director of **Partners In Time**. The workshop covered interview techniques and the fundamentals of a program. The Committee is also networking with Christine Taylor, Archivist for the Archdiocese of Seattle and Director of the Archdiocesan oral history project.

The urgency of conducting oral histories moved into the forefront with the rapid passing of years. It is an exciting and much needed project. Participants will be interviewing individuals who can recall significant historical events affecting province life or people who shaped these events. Young women who entered the Community in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s experienced Community life in a different era. They lived through economic and cultural changes and changes in religious life and the Church. They have been an intimate part of the education, health care, and social welfare history of the West Coast. Documentation of others who ministered along side the Sisters of Providence is equally important. Their stories are the history of Providence in the West. They add to our understanding and appreciation of the Community today, and to the broader historic context: of the Church, of women, of women religious, of health care, of education, and of the Northwest.

After careful planning, the initial interviews are underway. The Committee is grateful to the Provincial Superior, the Provincial Council, the Sisters and all who minister with the Sisters of Providence for their cooperation and support.

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