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OH-40-a-ac

Dear Sister Julia, some time ago you asked me to record my memories of the early years and the Ministry of music teaching at the Sacred Heart Convent. The following is my attempt to comply with your request. I fear it is just a rambling story, as what I have to say is based on memory alone. And of course, I've had to make it very personal. In July 1924, my family came from London, England, to settle in London, Ontario. I was then 10 years of age, and I'd been studying piano for about four years. My mother was delighted on being told that the Sisters of St. Joseph taught music lessons at the Sacred Heart Convent on Dundas Street. Perhaps here, I might mention a few facts, which I later learned about the beginnings of this music school at the Sacred Heart Convent. Music teaching became a work of the Sisters of St. Joseph shortly after they became established in London at Mount Hope. Here, Sister Patricia Marlon was the first music teacher. In 1873, however, Sister was asked to start a music class and Goderich. Other early music teachers were Sister Stanislaus Roach, who started a class and Ingersoll in 1879 and Sister Angelica Kanes. Mother Angela Merkel, was missioned to teach music in Bell River in 1893. When the Sisters of St. Joseph took up residence at the Sacred Heart Convent in 1914, the Sacred Heart School of Music made its debut into the musical world of London. Although it was many years before the little group of Music Studios assumed that title. During the next 10 years, no doubt a number of music teachers whose names appear in the convent history, taught at this

school. We do know that in 1918, Sister Patricia Marlon was recalled from Goderich to take charge of the music teaching at the Sacred Heart Convent, London. The school was already well established. And we have a program of what may have been the very first music recital in June 1919. It appears to have taken place right at the convent and was presented on two evenings probably indicative of the fact that it was held in a small auditorium. Another early program is dated May 20th 1921. This was held at the Catholic Club auditorium, and was a fairly ambitious program in which three pianos were used. Mother Ignatius saw that the Sisters in music received thorough instruction in piano and violin and studied for degrees in music through the London Conservatory of Music. This institution was the forerunner of the present Western Ontario Conservatory of Music. Mr. St. John Heidenreich was the head piano teacher at the London Conservatory. And a number of the Sisters, including probably Sister St. James, Sister St. Louis, Sister Norberta, Sister Lidwina, and Sister Immaculata studied piano with this eminent teacher. I have heard my-myself Sister Lidwina often referred to him as Mr. St. John. In September 1924, when I was enrolled as a student at the Sacred Heart Convent, I was assigned to Sister Lidwina for piano instruction and Sister Immaculata for theory instruction. At that time, I believe there were only three studios, the two fairly large rooms on either side of the Dundas Street entrance, and the long narrow studio behind the classroom stage opposite the Bishop's Park. Sister Lidwina was my piano teacher for about two years, I think. And then Sister was transferred to one of the then flourishing mission schools. Sister St. Gregory Slattery became my piano teacher then. On March 19th 1927, my mother died suddenly, and I had to leave school at once. I was then in first year high school at St. Angelus College. However, I did continue my music studies. Then on March the 31st 1929, though, will only aged 14 I was allowed to enter the novitiate. My father had announced his plan to return to England, taking with him the younger members of the family

when I told my father of my desire to enter the convent eventually, he agreed to allow me to remain in Canada, provided the community would accept me at once. After considerable deliberation, and I believe on the recommendations of the Sisters who knew me, I was allowed to enter on Easter Sunday. As a postulant, I continued my studies and achieved the A.T.C.M. Piano Performers Diploma in June that year. A graduation recital was held on January 24 1930. In St. Peter's home. I had just received the religious habit. Irene Gilligan, who was later Mrs. McClary, was the other graduate, and although I had won the gold medal, it was presented to Irene, and I was supposed to be henceforth dead to the world. During my novitiate period, Sister St. Gregory died of cancer. Sister was very dear to me. Her deep faith and her humility were a profound inspiration and an important factor in my decision to become a Sister of St. Joseph. When Sister was dying in the hospital, she asked for me to visit her, and I was brought to her bedside. This was quite a privilege as first year novices rarely left the house. Sister Estelle McIntyre replaced Sister St. Gregory. I recalled too, that Sister Jerome was also on the teaching staff during this period. There were other young sisters and the novitiate, who were being prepared for the music ministry, Sister Agnes of the West, Sister Othelia, Sister Ferdinand, and Sister Mary Margaret. These sisters were studying for the associate diploma, and we're beginning to do some part time teaching. After taking my first vows, on January 4th 1932, I was assigned to the novitiate study to complete the high school work, which had been interrupted by my mother's death in 1927. Only when this was finished, was I permitted to start teaching music in the fall of 1932. Sometime after this, I began to take organ lessons from the fine Belgian organist Cesar Bari, who had come to London sometime previously, to be organist and choir master of St. Peter's Cathedral. Mr. Bari was also engaged to teach music to the children of the separate schools, and was assisted in this work by Sister Magella, a very gifted singing teacher and musician of those

early days. Mr. Bari became very interested in the chapel music of the community. He was engaged to teach the Sisters Gregorian chant, and he composed many beautiful hymns and motets for our special community feasts and celebrations. We are indebted to Mr. Bari by the specially designed Casavant organ of which we are so proud. He drew up the specifications and personally supervised the construction of this instrument. My lessons with Mr. Bari he lasted only for one year, at the end of which I achieved the A.T.C.M. organ diploma. I should here mention that when the pipe organ was installed in 1930, Sister Electa Henderson, a school teacher who was quite gifted in music, studied the organ under the instruction of Mr. Bari. All during these years, the excellence of the instruction given by the teachers at the Sacred Heart Convent was becoming recognized. More studios were opened and under Sister Immaculatas's capable direction, it became established as the Sacred Heart School of Music. With the approval of the London separate scoreboard, studios were established in a number of the schools. Sisters went out to the schools from the Sacred Heart convent, once or twice a week. Usually the lessons were taught in the Sisters' lunch room, the piano and its upkeep was the responsibility of the Sacred Heart Convent. I was assigned to St. Michael's school for a few years, spending two days a week here. I was invited to assist with the Children's Choir. And so an hour of choir practice had to be fitted in between the private piano lessons. After my years of St. Michael's school, I taught at St. Martin's and later at Holy Cross School when it was first opened. I enjoyed working with schools and welcomed the opportunity to help the school teachers in any way possible. There was a fine spirit of cooperation among us, and I was encouraged to have music recitals, both in the school and in the parish hall. When other schools were opened, such as Holy Rosary and Blessed Sacrament, and then St. Peter's, the music teachers were assigned to these schools. Sister Immaculata specialized in the teaching of the violin, she continued her own study of the

instrument for many years. I can recall her traveling to Toronto for monthly lessons with a very prominent string teacher. Sister Immaculata had many talented students, some of them quite far advanced in the later years at the Sacred Heart. One of my assigned tasks was to do the piano accompaniments for these students at their lessons and at their examinations. This was a valuable experience for me, introducing me to some of the great violin literature and helping me to understand the art of accompaniment. Sister Immaculata from our early teaching days, encouraged string ensembles, and achieved a working knowledge of all the instruments of the string family. The success of these early efforts encouraged Sister to form a small string orchestra. Through the years, the players became more advanced. And as wind, brass and percussion instruments were added, The Sacred Heart orchestra became virtually a small symphony, and in the 40s, became known as the Sacred Heart Concert Orchestra. The orchestra played frequently at important civic and religious events, and gave independent concerts annually in London and nearby cities. For many years, a junior orchestra trained the students to prepare them for the senior group. While the orchestra had its own pianist, I was frequently called upon to substitute for her at rehearsals, a delightful treat for me. The Sacred Heart Concert Orchestra reached its peak in the late 40s. Because of its size, and the professional quality of its performances, and also because many members were now members of the musicians union, administrative and management problems continually arose. It was felt that we could not maintain an orchestra of this advanced quasi-professional level, and so it was reluctantly disbanded. In taking the orchestra story to its conclusion, I have had to talk about the 40s. Now I must go back into the 30s again. An interesting experience of the early 30s was a series of biweekly piano classes, with the distinguished concert pianist, Gertrude Huntley Green. Mrs. Green was teaching piano at Alma College in St. Thomas when that school was at its peak, with

many distinguished piano pupils. She was engaged to come to London to conduct a class and piano interpretation and performance for the Sisters at the Sacred Heart Convent. For many of the classes, Mrs. Green requested that I do the playing while she discussed the style and techniques of the performance. The lessons were very valuable for me and gave me my first personal contact with an artist teacher. At this period, a number of Sisters entered, who having some music experience were being trained for the music teaching ministry, these were Sister St. Gregory Hall, Sister Rose Seeker, Sister Victoria, and Sister Wendelin, who is now Sister Teresa Rock. The program of studies at the Sacred Heart School of Music was simply based on the examination requirements of the Toronto Conservatory of Music, later to become the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto. Students who wished, took annual examinations, and the examiner would come to the school. There were no written policies nor directives for teachers, the staff was small, only Sisters and Sister Immaculata's authority regarding decisions, directives and assignments was accepted without question. Sister assigned our pupils and arranged our timetables. She was, however, not called principal. Sister Sebastian community treasurer, and later Sister Rosemary handled all financial matters. Each music teacher was given a small change purse, the students paid the Sister by the lesson. The sister kept an account of payments and each night handed in her purse to sister Immaculata with a small slip of paper stating the amount of tuition received and the amount or the sale of music. Sister Immaculata emptied the purse and put \$2.00 in change in it, and then it was put back into a cupboard in the bursar's office to be taken by the Sister teacher the next day. A word about tuition fees might be interesting. In 1924, a one half hour lesson cost 60 cents. The price went up slightly as the students advanced. When I started to teach, senior students might have paid \$1.25. This gradually went up to \$2.00 later on. And actually the price was raised very little up to 1954. My own lessons with Harvey Robb in

1940 and 41 were \$3.50. Today, the average teacher of Mr. Robb's quality charge between \$20 and \$40 per hour. Recitals were not held every year because of the tremendous work entailed in transporting pianos to St Peter's Hall, and trying to find the time for rehearsals there because of the distance from the convent. When the Catholic Culture Center opened later on, recitals were held annually. In 1935, the Western Ontario Conservatory of Music was established in London, with Harvey Robb as its first principal. Monsignor Mahoney, then a member of the University Senate, was invited to join the conservatory's first board of directors. Monsignor Mahoney was very supportive of the new conservatory, which had academic affiliation with the University. He felt that London area and in fact all of Western Ontario, should now adopt the new conservatory rather than continue with the Royal Conservatory which was of Toronto. He used his influence with the various religious orders who conducted music schools, and succeeded in winning the support of the Sisters. It became our policy then, to ask students to follow the Western course, unless they insisted for special reasons for remaining with Toronto. In the fall of 1940, it was decided that I should do further work in piano performance. Mr. Harvey Robb, Principal of the Western Conservatory, agreed to accept me as his piano student, and he came to the Sacred Heart convent every Wednesday morning to give me a one hour piano lesson. Mr. Robb considered me a likely candidate for the licentiate Performance Diploma of the new Western Conservatory, the requirements of which had just been set up. Mr. Robb must have approached the appropriate authorities for permission, because at that time, it would be unthinkable for a Sister to suggest such a goal on her own. Anyway, I was told to work at the program of the pieces, which Mr. Robb considered suitable. Candidates are required to give a public recital as well as a private examination on various performance skills. I was a full time teacher during this period, and I can recall using every available portion of time, perhaps 10 minutes while waiting for the student to

work out a difficult passage. Mr. Robb requested that I give some trial runs. Accordingly, a recital was set up for the students of the Pines in Chatham, and one for the students of St. Joseph's High School in Windsor, both took place in May. Towards the end of June, I gave the final recital at the Sacred Heart convent. The location was the classroom auditorium on first floor, where there was a small stage and folding doors separating the two classrooms. The audience consisted of the Sisters of the community and a number of invited guests plus five examiners. The recital was approved or the-by the panel of examiners, and I became the first licentiate graduate of the Western Ontario Conservatory of Music. Since the conservatory now has the licentiate hood for its graduates, Mr. and Mrs. Dugan, last Christmas 1983, gave me a present of a hood so that I can wear it when I walked with the board of directors in the convocation ceremonies. The mention of public performance recalls an incident which occurred about this time in our history, which was taken quite casually at the time, but which now seems entirely amusing and even ridiculous. Sisters were never permitted to perform in public. St. Mary's school was preparing for its annual Christmas concert, which was always held in the parish hall Sister Eufemia was the principal of the school. The concert always included a number of songs presented by various choirs. Sister asked the proper authorities of the convent if Sister Callistus could come to the school several times a week to play the piano for these various choirs while they rehearsed. She felt that I was a great help to the children as I could play with a strong tone and rhythm and give them good support. When the time came for the actual concert, Sister felt that she simply could not get along without my accompaniments. So she went to Reverend Mother Constance and begged permission for me to accompany the children at the final production. Mother told her that this was against our tradition, and she could not give the permission. However, Sister Eufemia pleaded so that Mother Constance finally said that I could

play provided that no person ever saw me at the piano. Sister agreed that this could be managed. Some years before that, a bishop had died and the cathedral was draped from ceiling to floor in dark purple sateen. The material was then sent to the Sacred Heart convent to be stored. Sister Eufemia had a great idea. She procured a dormitory screen, draped it heavily with this purple material. Two boys were delegated to put this purple screen in front of the piano whenever I was to play and remove the screen as soon as I had left the stage. The year after I received my licentiate diploma I was appointed community music supervisor. This was a big shock to me and I had no idea what the assignment meant. I went into Reverend Mother and asked her what she intended my role to be. She replied that she really had no idea. I heard later that some of the senior music teachers had made the suggestion to Mother Constance, the Sisters felt a need for some uniformity and policies and structures in our many music schools. At this time we had schools in Windsor, Bell River Leamington, Goderich, St. Mary's, Ingersoll, Woodstock, St. Thomas, and Edmonton. I think this is a correct number. The number of teachers now totaled twenty-seven as two more young Sisters had joined our ranks, Sister Mercia Bondi, and Sister Mary Karen Woods. The Sisters felt that they needed someone who would recognize their needs, help them to grow professionally, and evaluate their teaching methods. At the same time, I succeeded Sister Immaculata and became principal of the Sacred Heart School of Music. There were no guidelines, policies nor job description. However, Sister Placidia, who was the school supervisor, gave me kindly advice and some general suggestions. The Sister music teachers gave me complete cooperation and support. I was truly inspired and impressed by the humility and docility of the senior Sisters, who had worked independently for so many years. I visited all the mission schools and was treated with truly Sisterly hospitality. On these visits, I would hear many of the students play, discuss any problems, and suggests methods and repertoire for the

students. I kept records of each Sisters' class, examination results, and a record of our own professional qualifications and experience. During the summer months, I conducted workshops for all the music teachers, either in London or in one of the mission houses. We used to gather in Windsor, St. Thomas, or Sarnia. I did much of the teaching myself, but I also encouraged the more experienced teachers to give papers etcetera and several times engaged outside teachers to conduct sessions. Margaret Parsons and Clifford Poole, now of Toronto, gave some excellent workshops for the Sisters in those days. All through these years, the Sacred Heart School of Music in London, continued to grow and develop new teaching programs. In 1953, with the opening of the new Mount St. Joseph motherhouse, the school of music became known as St. Joseph's School of Music. The new facilities consisted of six small studios, a small supply room, and a recital hall named St. Cecilia's Recital Hall, in honor of the patron saint of musicians. Three studios were retained at the Sacred Heart Convent. For the convenience of those students who resided in the area or who were attending Catholic Central High School. Sister Immaculata remained at the Sacred Heart and was in charge of these studios. On Thursdays each week, I taught there in a room just off the old retreat masters suite. I had quite a number of senior piano students who preferred not to travel out to the Mount. In the fall of 1953, since the music studios in the new building were not yet finished studios were set up in every available place in the old Mount St. Joseph, where we worked under considerable difficulty. At the time of the move to Mount St. Joseph, Sisters Claire Marie Paschal, Johanna Kirsten, at that time Sister while Sister St. John of the Cross, and Sister Josepha Rockledge, who since left the community, were a music students being trained for this ministry. As part of their training, each taught a number of junior students. During the next few years, there was considerable growth and development. Student recitals took place more regularly, and school policies began to take shape. Scholarships and

awards were established, and due biannual report cards were issued to the parents. The first graduation recital for six piano graduates took place in June 1954. These were very talented girls. One of them was Antonia Mazon, who really had great success later professionally. One of them was little Donna Marie Thompson, who was the most outstanding young student. She since moved to America, married, and has passed away. For this graduation recital, the former chapel of the old Mount St. Joseph was transformed into a fine auditorium and it was used by the School of Music for special such events for many years, until the new academy auditorium was built. During the 50s, a number of young Sisters began music studies to prepare them for this ministry in the community. Sister Mary Rachel Alexander, Sister [unclear], Sister Evelyn Marie Bastien. These sisters left to the community in later years. Please turn the tape now to the other side.

OH-40-b-ac

In September 1955, I was sent for a year of special study to the Pious the 10th Institute of Fine Arts in Florence, Italy. Reverend Mother Margaret had come upon this special school in Italy during her visit to Italy the year before and was very impressed with the surroundings and the atmosphere and the standard of work. During my absence from the school, Sister Victoria was brought to London to take charge. By 1960, there were a number of Sister students in the school; Sister Elaine Flood, who was Sister St. Timothy, Sister Mary Brida, Sister Rosario Hobbs, Sister Patricia Dodds, Sister Diane Batty. Of those mentioned only sister Elaine Flood has remained in the community. With the growth and expansion of the music school at the Mount, it became necessary for us to have additional music studios and two larger rooms on ground floor were assigned for our use. One had been a small classroom used by the aspirants and the other was a sewing room used by the junior professed Sisters. When group piano classes began, we took over

several large rooms on the first floor of the old Mount St. Joseph. During this expansion period, we were given a secretary bursar to handle much of the administrative work. These duties were later on, separated and we had sometimes two Sisters helping with the administration of the music school. Some of the Sisters who gave valuable service to the school in this capacity were Sister Denise, Sister St. Mark, Sister Claire Marie when she retired from teaching music, Sister Mary Helen Cansela, Sister Mary Angela, Sister Mary Phyllis, Sister Helen Noonan, and Sister Helen Wright. The School of Music Library began in a very modest way. As additional space was allotted to us, we decided to use one of the small studios to house the recordings and books, which had been acquired by Sister Immaculata at the Sacred Heart Convent. This little room was really too small to be a practical use as a library. After the initial wing was built, the music school was given two large classrooms on the ground floor of the wing. We then moved the library to one of these and began in earnest to budget for more recordings and books each year. It was not until October 1974, however, the library found a large permanent home in the location which was held until the school closed in 1982. Sister Lorraine Doyle spent the previous summer sorting and cataloguing books and records. Sister Mary Helen, the new secretary, continued the work and the library was finally ready for use in October. A number of retired Sisters gave generous assistance in the library in the afternoons and evenings, among those assisting were Sister Immaculata, Sister [unclear], Sister Agustin. In September 1975, Eileen Hornsby became a librarian and she spent the next five years working most efficiently to keep everything in order. At her retirement in 1980, Sister Vivian took over assisted by Mary Robinson, a senior student in the school who did part time work. In completing the library study, I have gone beyond the 1960s Let me now go back to 1963 to tell you about the St. Cecilia singers. Sister Mary Margaret Childs was a very gifted singer and a fine teacher. Sister and I entered the community within a

few months of each other. Gifted with a beautiful voice, it was in the area of voice training and choral work, that Sister Mary Margaret was to excel. Trained initially by Sister Magella, Sister later studied with several eminent teachers, both here in London and in Toronto. In the music school, she always had great enthusiasm for choral work. When the School of Christ radio program began, Sister was asked to form a senior girls choir which became very popular and successful. It was named the School of Christ Choristers while the junior choir was called The Little Radio Choir. In 1963, Sister formed another choral group using her own senior vocal students. Sister would only allow a small number from 12 to 20 in this special choir which she named the St. Cecilia Singers. Member of the choir was a very fine soloist in her own right, so that the quality of tone and the singing was became very excellent. The group earned numerous awards in various Rotary and Kiwanis festivals. The St. Cecilia Singers performed at many conventions, gave independent concerts, and joined the London Youth Orchestra each December for a special Christmas presentation. The group also went on tour with Catholic Central Band to Montreal, Ottawa, North and South Carolina, and other places. Since written records of St. Joseph's School of Music begin in 1967, I believe that my task is finished. I fear it is not too well organized and much has been omitted. However, I know you will accept this little account as my rambling memories.