

Interview with Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM.
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Interviewer/Transcriber: Ronald Martin
Begin Side 1

Martin: This is Ron Martin meeting with Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and long term faculty member at Mundelein College.
November 16 [1998], early Monday morning at the Gannon Center. Good Morning, Sister Jean.

Schmidt: Good Morning.

Martin: First, let me ask you, when were you born and where?

Schmidt: Oh my goodness, that's a long time ago. I was born August 21, 1919 in San Francisco.

Martin: And who were your parents?

Schmidt: My parents were Joseph Schmidt and Bertha, my mother's maiden name was Bowman. My mother's father and mother were from Alsace-Lorraine, but my mother was born in this country, in Philadelphia. My father's parents were born in San Francisco. Their parents came out at the time of the Gold Rush in [18]49 in California. So my ancestors did gold mining in Tulare county, and all of that kind of thing. They had originally come from Austria.

Martin: Did you have any other family members?

Schmidt: Yes, two brothers [Edward and Raymond]. I'm the oldest of three. My brother next to me [Edward] died just about...it will be two years this coming June.

Martin: Was there a strong Catholic presence in San Francisco?

Schmidt: Absolutely. It's like Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Very strong. First grade I went to public school, second through eighth I went to Catholic elementary. Then I

went to a Catholic high school taught by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Martin: Did that help you make your decision...

Schmidt: Oh, it certainly did. On my father's side I had an aunt who was in the Holy Family Order. On my mother's side, I had an aunt and a cousin who were in school, Sisters of Notre Dame. But the BVMs were the ones who influenced me.

Martin: Now Clark College, you went all the way to Iowa from San Francisco.

Schmidt: Yes. Well actually, our Novitiate is in Dubuque, Iowa. We were postulants, which is the preparatory time for becoming a novice and then a professed sister in our congregation. The sisters from Clark came to our Mother House which is about two miles away to teach us college courses. So we were making a double adjustment. We were young college students because most of us entered the community at eighteen. We were adjusting to the college set up plus we were adjusting to the fact that we were absolutely making a decision on our life and leaving home. So then really [a] triple [adjustment].

Martin: Did you feel a "calling" towards being a nun?

Schmidt: Of course. I did. Actually, when people ask me that question, I say, "Know what, I was in third grade." I knew that I wanted to be [a nun]. In those days when you asked little children what they wanted to be, in first and second grade, everyone wanted to be priests and sisters. Then in third grade maybe firemen and policemen and nurses came in there. But as you grew a little bit older, you were more hesitant to say what you wanted to do because, even now, the older you get, when you're like eighteen to

twenty-five, you think, "No, maybe there's something else I'd want to do." But then when I was eighteen I went to Mount Carmel.

Martin: At Clark, was it just religious training that you did?

Schmidt: Well we really weren't at Clark. We weren't even on the campus. It was what we called our Mother House. And that was where we - quote - formed. I mean we learned about the congregation, we learned about religious life, we learned about prayer, we learned what it meant to be a religious. But we also, at the same time, were taking basic English courses, composition I and II, western civilization, same kinds of classes that freshmen are taking today. After six months of postulancy, we received our name, our religious name, and we received our habit, except that we wore a white veil to show that we were still novices. That first year of Novitiate, we didn't do any - quote - secular studies. It was all theology and philosophy, but no history or any languages or anything like that. In our second year we did more, so that when we were professed, when we made our first vows, we went out to teach right after that. We went off to teach in our particular missions as we called them. It wasn't a missionary type thing where we were working with people in Africa or anything. We were working right in the United States all the time at that time. But we went out and taught, and while we were teaching we went to school so that eventually we were going to get our degree. So in one sense, we're very much like the Mundelein students of today, the adults who are coming back to school to get their degree. Instead of balancing family and everything, we were balancing class room preparation, talking with young students and so forth.

Martin: Then you moved here to Chicago.

Schmidt: Right. I taught at Saint Vincent's school which was about 2500 North Kenmore on the north side campus of De Paul [University]. I taught fifth grade there, for a year and a half, and I went to De Paul to school. At that time, De Paul's downtown campus was on 6400 East Lake Street. We went to school on Saturdays and then during the summers. Even though I was just there the year and a half, that's what I did. I was, at the time, taking education courses and English courses because I was going to be an English major, which I eventually became.

Martin: Then you moved back to California. Why the big move?

Schmidt: Well because in those days, in religious life you just went where you were sent. You got a little letter that told you this is where you were going. That was part of the obedience part of our congregation. So I went to Saint Bernard's school, where we actually opened the school. It was a brand new place [in] 1942. We opened that school, and actually, the parishioners were not prepared for us. The school foundation was only eighteen inches high when we arrived in August. They had no convent prepared for us, so we lived in a little bungalow. But before we could even live there, two of us commuted from Glendale everyday and two commuted from Pasadena. So we were about the first ones to be "living off campus," as it were...to be coming to our school. And that was a great place. When we taught there, the principal taught seventh and eighth grade in the dining room of the little house we were living in. The third and fourth grade teacher...I was fifth and sixth...we taught in the parish hall, but no partitions between us. The first and second grade teacher taught in the feed and

fuel store down the street from us. Our school was finished on December 7, the day before Pearl Harbor. We were the last place to get a brass threshold in any building for years after that.

Martin: You stayed in Los Angeles for twenty years.

Schmidt: Yes, well I went to different places. I was at Saint Bernard's. Then I went to North Hollywood, which was just a really wonderful place to be, a great contrast from Saint Bernard's. Saint Bernard's was very poor, the children sometimes came to school without shoes. Even though sometimes they think the BVMs taught only the rich, we didn't. We were doing the poor very early in our lives. Then I went to Saint Charles, which was perhaps the richest parish in the [San Fernando] Valley. There, we were the largest school west of the Mississippi. We had over 900 in school. There I had the privilege of teaching the Hope children, two of the Hope children. Knew the Sinatras, Nancy and the brother [Frank, Jr.], I didn't teach them, though. Knew the Crosbys, knew Anne Blyth, taught Cardinal Mahoney, who is now the Cardinal of the L.A. Archdiocese. I had lots of experiences. Then I was made principal and superior at Saint Brendan's school where I stayed for six years.

Martin: What were you teaching at Bernard's and Charles...

Schmidt: At Saint Bernard's I taught fifth and sixth grade for the most part. At Saint Charles I taught eighth grade the nine years I was there.

Martin: Any specific subject? Where you teaching English by that point?

Schmidt: With eighth grade, with elementary school, you teach about everything. But for a period of years we had a very progressive principal. We did departmental work where

I taught math to fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. We did the changing, the children stayed in their room. It was very good because - I remember one little third grader said one time, "Well I really like this," he said. And I said, "Why do you like it so much?" He said, "You know what, if Sister's mad at me in the beginning of the day, she forgets by the time she comes back that she was mad at me." [Laughs] So they really liked it.

Martin: And you were also taking classes at this time.

Schmidt: Oh yes. At that time I was going to Mount Saint Mary's. Then sometimes I went to Immaculate Heart, depending on who was offering what at the time.

Martin: And you were getting a degree in...

Schmidt: I was getting my B.A. in English. I really wanted to be a chemistry major. But they didn't offer the courses at the right time. So we just did what we possibly could. I did that all the time I was even - well I had got my degree in [19]49. Then I went to Saint Brendan's where I was principal, superior, and taught eighth grade. That was a much smaller school, about half the size of Saint Charles. While I was at Saint Brendan's, the Lady of Angels fire took place. That was in the late '50s, '58/'59. All the elementary schools were visited by fire departments the very next day. Our school was condemned because we had too many children in the classroom, not because of its structure. It was a well built building but we had too many children. So we had to go to half day sessions where we didn't hire any extra people to do it. We just did it. We asked the children who were outside of the parish to come in the afternoon. The children who lived in the parish came in the morning. The parents were wonderful.

They never had their children go out to play in the afternoon until the public school children came home. So we were actually teaching from 8:30 to 4:30 with a little break in between - the way we arranged our schedule. In the meantime, we decided [with] the pastor to build a new school. The new school was finished in '60. Since that time the old school has been demolished and the property's been sold. It's on Western Avenue which is a very busy street in L.A. But what we call the "new school" looks just as new as it ever did. I was out there about five years ago, and I couldn't believe how beautiful it still looks. The upkeep has been great. And then I was changed to Mundelein.

Martin: So, they sent you here...

Schmidt: I was sent here. When you were principal of a school, you could only be principal for six years. That was sort of a rule...well not "sort of," it was a rule. Just six years. Then I was sent to Mundelein and I thought to myself, "What will I ever do at Mundelein?" I was so scared. In the meantime I got my M.A. at Loyola Marymount and was certified in California to teach. But I thought, "What will I ever do?" I really didn't know...didn't think I knew anybody here. But I did. I knew Sister Ann Ida. I knew a couple of the sisters. I thought to myself, "How am I ever going to learn all their names?"...because there were about 80 nuns here at that time. But I found out what I was going to do pretty soon. I was assigned to the Education Department. I taught reading methods, math methods, philosophy of ed[ucation], American ed., and I supervised the student teachers.

It was just great fun for me to supervise the student teachers because it gave me an

opportunity to go into the schools. I missed those young kids, I missed those little kids. I had so much fun with them. [Back in California] I coached their teams. I coached the girl's basketball, volleyball, baseball. We went to badminton tournaments, we went to yo-yo tournaments. We went to everything. And even one time we were without a boy's basketball coach, so I coached them until we could hire one. We did well. We went to CYO [Catholic Youth Organization] quarter finals. It was exciting, and those little kids used to get so tired, they never got into mischief.

Martin: These were the young kids?

Schmidt: Yes, young kids. So when I came here, I thought, "Well, I don't know what I'll do." But going to the schools was real fun for me because I got to see these little kids again. Then one year, the Chairman of the Education Department asked me to start a reading clinic, which I did. Students I had in the reading class, the young women at Mundelein, tutored these young children from different schools. We used to have like 75 little kids come here, anywhere from second to eighth grade, where they either needed remedial reading work or they wanted acceleration. We worked both ends of the spectrum. They paid like \$25.00 a semester, but that helped us buy books and supplies. The Mundelein students [also] went out to the schools to visit them in their classroom situation. They pre-tested, they after-tested. It was a great experience for them. A lot of those little kids came from as far west as Harlem and Devon [Avenues], around that area. Their parents would bring them and just leave them here, and we'd just go off our merry way. We used all the classrooms, and they had their little groups. Each student had two or three, at the most, to be tutoring. It was very successful.

Then the public schools started after school programs for these little kids, so then we stopped. We didn't want to interfere with what the public schools were doing.

I taught in the Education Department until 1967, '61 to '67. Then I became assistant dean. It was too hard to be juggling - when I was in the office, I thought I should be teaching in the classroom; when I was teaching in the classroom, I knew there were people waiting for me in the office. [I have been in] administration ever since then. But then while I was doing all that, I went to Northwestern several summers for reading methods to keep myself updated on all that. I had a great teacher, Doctor Paul Witty, who was the best in the field. He's died since, but he was just a - I learned so much from him. Just a great man.

Martin: How did you make that jump into administration?

Schmidt: I was just appointed. Mundelein had a dean and then our enrollment at that time was beginning to increase. The administration thought the dean needed some assistance to take care of student matters. [The dean] could take care of the faculty stuff and all that other kind of thing, and scheduling with the registrar. I took care of the student matters. Then we had another, later on about '63, assistant dean who was appointed. We took care of freshmen and sophomores, and then they went into their major departments. We did all the academic advising and listened to their stories, helped them through their lonesomeness and homesickness. We worked very closely with the Dean of Students Office. Interestingly enough, the Academic Affairs Office at Mundelein always worked very closely with the Student Affairs Office ... because you can't separate them. That's one thing Loyola has to learn to do. Loyola hasn't quite

reached that. We're getting closer, with Sherry Cole-Perkins in as Dean of Students.

And I know with Samarelli we're going to get even closer. We're doing better.

Martin: During the time of the '60s, from '61 to '67, you must have seen an incredible change in the type of students you were teaching.

Schmidt: Absolutely. During that time, more minority students applied to Mundelein, especially blacks. Not so many Hispanics, but more black students applied. They became more integrated at that time than they were in the '70s. Mundelein always had some minority students, but those were mostly international students. They were from other countries. The Chicago black population had not yet tried to come into white institutions. They were gradually coming. They seemed to be adjusting. Maybe they were very hurt inside, but they were beginning to adjust.

We had more resident students beginning then. Mundelein started out as a commuter college. Then we built Coffey Hall, which was opened in '62. We ran out of space, then we bought Northland Hall. So we were becoming more residential, [but] not more than commuter. We had to change too, because we were having students around seven days a week. At that time they had a choice. They could be here five days a week or they could be here seven days a week. There were two different plans. The [residents] who lived locally, as many of them do today, went home on the weekends to do their job that they already acquired and hoped to have in the summertime. They couldn't neglect that. That's why we seemed to empty out the campus. The only ones here on the weekends, even now, are the people who lived out of state.

Martin: Were the BVMs actively recruiting minority students, or was it just that [they] were now applying to Mundelein?

Schmidt: Mundelein was actively recruiting minority students. We wanted a mixed population. We knew it would be more difficult because we were a single sex institution. Many of the minority students were not attending a single sex institution, whereas so many of our [white] young women came from our two high schools. [They] were great feeders, Saint Mary's High School and Immaculata. But also the other womens' high schools were great feeders to Mundelein. So we knew it would be more difficult. We also knew we would have to give more financial assistance because of the background of the [minority] students.

Martin: In the later '60s, how did you see the campus change further?

Schmidt: As we got into the late '60s and the early '70s, students became restless...in '69 when we had the strike and all that kind of thing. I never saw such networking as when Kent State occurred, that happened in the college and university campuses. It was just like overnight that this all happened. I happened to be acting dean that year [1970]. It was hard. It was hard for the students, it was hard for everybody. We had long meetings, students and faculty, where we filled Galvin Hall. People would say, "Well, we should strike until the end of the war." We wouldn't even be here if we did that. So that didn't happen. But we gave the faculty and students the opportunity to do *what they wished*. And that was a pretty big order.

The faculty met with their students and came to some kind of a consensus on whether they would come to regular classes, whether they would do their readings or

whatever on their own. They had to sign a contract to do this. So everybody was doing what she wanted. But everybody had to hand to me what the plan was, so I could document that in case we had any further discussion later on. I have to say that as I see those students at alum reunions, especially that class, '69/'70, some of them say, "Why did we act like that? Why did we do that?" So it was hard, [that time] was very difficult. I have to say that the faculty really adjusted to the student needs, and did what the students felt they needed at that time.

There was such a complete revolution going on in colleges and universities at that time in curriculum. Mundelein actually voted, we had a curriculum conference later, not to have any general ed., core curriculum, requirements. The people who were in the Education Department had to take what the state required, otherwise the state wasn't going to certify them. We knew that. But the others just - we have [what], I like to call lop-sided degrees because people were doing what they wanted to do.

Martin: How long did that last until? Was it just for the one year?

Schmidt: No. We went into our "Basic Studies Program" in '65 when we began the term system. We stayed that way until about '70. Then we dropped everything. Then we began the weekend college in '74. The people who started the weekend college said, "Now these adults want you to tell them 'You mustn't do this when you first come.'" They were fearful about coming to school, making mistakes. They started their little curriculum, and then by '78 we were back into a - we went about eight or ten years without core requirements.

Martin: Did you see [the core curriculum] as a part of the mission of the university?

Schmidt: Yes. Actually it [was]. Because...strong faculty working with students, and the two of us as assistant deans, tried to teach them that these basic requirements were very important to their complete development. And if they were planning to go to grad school (most of our students went to grad school), [they] had to have some kind of a broad spectrum. You couldn't be too narrow. We had a few who [did not want core requirements] - every university does. However, Loyola never stopped its core curriculum. They just stuck right with it.

Martin: Do you have any specific perceptions or recollections of the different leaders at Mundelein College during your time here?

Schmidt: Oh yes. I might not remember all their names but I certainly remember what they did. Our student body president was always a very fine leader. The first student body president we had who was black, I remember her name was Mary Thomas. Mary probably was student body president in '63/'64, around that time. Mary was one of my student teachers. [voice gradually lowers to a whisper over the next two sentences] No north side school would accept her because *she was black*. We didn't have any blacks on the north. [normal volume resumes] So Ogden school, which is down on Chicago and State [Avenues], or around that area, accepted her. But because she was student body president - the student body president was always the Madonna at Christmas time - we had a black Madonna. So you can see, Mundelein was really ahead of its time. Groups went to Selma [Alabama] for Martin Luther King. Busloads went.

Martin: Did you go?

Schmidt: No, I didn't go to that. I was [teaching] at Mundelein until '67. I was living across the

street, which is now called Wright Hall. That was then the Scholasticate, which housed 150 young BVMs who were getting their degrees. So I was assistant over there as well as doing my thing at Mundelein. So I had like two jobs. Two full time jobs.

Martin: How did you - looking at all you did, all the time - you have three or four balls in the air at any given time.

Schmidt: Yes, that's all right. My mother used to say, "A busy person gets everything done."

Always used to say, "It's better to wear out than to rust out." So I keep saying that to myself: don't let yourself sit around here and do nothing. [Laughs]

Martin: What were some of the accomplishments of these leaders?

Schmidt: When we changed the curriculum, those were the student leaders who brought that up. For some reason, the student leaders at times had more power over the faculty than anybody did. They could win their hearts and just say- For example, we used to have a pretty rigid dress code. No jeans, none of that kind of thing. In fact, the women who used to live in the residence hall could not even go to the dining hall in jeans or slacks. They had to wear dresses all the time. Many times they'd roll up their jeans and put their coats on. And we knew that. But it was the students who asked Sister Ann Ida-Sherry was her name, she said to Sister Ann Ida, "You know, we don't want a dress code anymore." And Sister Ann Ida said, "I can't change that myself. I'll give you time on the faculty meeting." And Sherry - I remember her to this day - just got up and said, "I'm just here representing the students as the Student Body President to tell you that we no longer have a dress code. You'll see us looking differently." And she walked out. Actually, the faculty shouldn't have any say in that. But she just informed

them.

Martin: And it worked.

Schmidt: And it worked. It worked! So then the faculty began to dress down a little bit too. Not too much, but a little bit. That's one of the things. But over the years, the student leaders were very helpful in helping us direct the curriculum committee. At one time we had a "College Senate." On the College senate he had fifteen faculty, fifteen students, and maybe three or four ex-officio administrators. So the students had the same voting power that the faculty did. So, for example, for several years we did not record any "D"s on a record unless the student requested it. Never recorded "F"s, no "F"s. The "D" recorded only if you wanted it there. You had to sign a paper, of course. The students naturally [were] going to vote in a block. Not all the time, but if they wanted a thing badly enough they voted in a block. They were very influential in doing that.

Martin: What would happen if you didn't deserve to pass? Did you just get an incomplete, or was it just a "C."

Schmidt: You didn't get a grade. It was just not recorded. Truly, the registrar had all those records, so that if anything would be contended later on, that would be there - that the faculty member put on the grade sheet "F." But we didn't record it. We also voted at the same time as that Senate that we would accept transfer "D"s from another institution and count them.

Martin: Was there anything the student body tried to do that didn't work? Any disappointments on their part?

Schmidt: No. They always got what they wanted.

Martin: What about some notable faculty members during your years here.

Schmidt: There were some great ones. Sister Margaret Thornton was in the history department. She was a fantastic teacher. We used to begin classes at 8:00 in the morning. Nobody was late for her class...nobody missed class. She was just great, just wonderful. Of course, she's dead now. Sister Mary Griffin was perhaps the most outstanding teacher. She was our dean from '61 to '67 or '68. Then she went to Alcorn A & M to help them start a minority program down there. Then she came back to teach English at Mundelein. She taught until she retired from Loyola, but then as a faculty Emeritus she could teach three courses a semester. She was off the semester she died. She died just recently.

Michael Fortune was from the University of Wisconsin, Steven's Point. We had been seeking Michael for a couple years, trying to lure him to come to Mundelein. He was all ready to come, had signed his contract, and they did not find a replacement for him at Wisconsin. They asked us to wait another year. But in the meantime, Wisconsin worked cooperatively with us so that he taught there Monday-Wednesday-Friday, and he taught here Tuesday and Thursday. [He] commuted between Steven's Point and here. Then the next year he came. He taught until he recently retired from Loyola. That's English and history I'm talking about. We had Sister Irene from the French department who worked cooperatively with Loyola for grants for summer institutes to teach people French. Sister Elsa Copeland- oh we just had so many. Don't ask me to mention the not so good ones. I don't want to go to court. [Laughs]

And Russ Barta, who is deceased also, was perhaps our first layman teaching here. Sister Ann Ida, by the time she became president in '55, began to hire lay people. Because we needed some new blood and we needed a diversity among the faculty.

[End of Side One]

Martin: What was Mundelein's relationship with the neighborhood?

Schmidt: Well...I think this may be a little hard for me to explain, except that we did have students who started a neighbors program where they would go out and shop for people who couldn't go. In the earlier years we didn't have as many elderly around us as we do now. But they did help there. We had [one student], Betty was her first name, interested in gerontology the four years she was here, before anyone was talking about gerontology. She had such a group working with her. They used to go visit the nursing homes. We used to have the people from the nursing home come here twice a year, in the fall and in the spring. We'd invite them to come for an afternoon of entertainment and food. Of course they loved the food. They loved the coffee with all the sugar in it because they couldn't have sugar in the nursing home. But then we were afraid we would be liable because sometimes the aides from the nursing home would just leave them here. It was very difficult to get them to the bathrooms and everything. But the students worked so hard; they loved doing that. Then there was a fire in one of the nursing homes and we brought everybody to the dorms to stay until they could go back again. We did things with Loyola because a number of the students dated Loyola men. We did a lot of activities that Loyola was involved in.

Martin: How about Mundelein's relationship with the diocese and the Catholic church?

Schmidt: Sister Carol Francis Jegan was greatly responsible for our connection there. She was the chairperson [and] founded the graduate program in religious studies. She was always interested in connecting with the diocese. Mundelein had a special film library for catechol work. The diocese used to send the people from the different parishes to sign out the materials. They paid a membership fee. In the meantime, this whole collection just recently went to the Jegan Center of the Archdiocese. Cardinal Bernadin named [it] after the Jegan family for their contributions to make this possible. So we always had a great relationship with the diocese. The Cardinal, or the Archbishop, whichever was reigning at the time, used to come for the graduations all the time. Until finally, I forget- it was after Cardinal Moyer...Cardinal said, "We can't make every one, so we won't go to any." But in the earlier days they came, the Cardinals came for graduation. But then that all stopped throughout the whole diocese, it wasn't anything against Mundelein. And of course many of our student teachers were employed by the Archdiocese of Chicago...as well as the public schools. The public schools wanted us back then.

Martin: And the relationship - I see a very strong one - between the BVMs and Mundelein.

Schmidt: Oh yes. Because it was our college.

Martin: Did Mundelein have a strong relationship with other Catholic colleges in the city?

Schmidt: Oh yes. People always talk about the competition. There really wasn't that kind of a competition. Xavier attracted a different kind of student from the southside; we attracted different students. And as I mentioned before, our two high schools were our

good feeders. People felt comfortable with the BVMs. [Their] parents would say, "Why don't you go to Mundelein?" Even if they didn't go to a BVM high school, maybe because they attended BVM grade school, they came to Mundelein.

When I keep mentioning Sister Ann Ida, she was the president when I came, so I don't really know what the other presidents did too much. Except that before Vatican II [1962-1965], there wasn't so much running around by the nuns. But Sister Ann Ida- The Chicago Tribune one time called her, "The Nun on the Run." They had this big article about her because she was going to meetings. She was the only woman on so many boards. She was the only woman doing all these things because the population at large recognized her ability. They were inviting her to do all this.

Martin: You mean boards in the larger community, not...

Schmidt: In the larger community, not at Mundelein. She's the first one. Before Sister Ann Ida's time, the Board of Mundelein was the Sisters of Charity in Dubuque. We knew we had to have a lay board to keep up with everybody else. So she made us progress that way. We had a good relationship with the other colleges. Rosary...Mallinckrodt was a good feeder to us because at that time they were a two year institution. So we had a cooperative paralegal program with Mallinckrodt.

Martin: Were they also BVMs?

Schmidt: No. Those are Sisters of Christian Charity.

Martin: Was Mundelein the only BVM school in the city?

Schmidt: No. We had over 700 BVMs in the city. We were staffing twenty-seven, maybe thirty grade schools. Plus two high schools.

Martin: But as far as colleges?

Schmidt: Only the one.

Martin: Did Mundelein have a relationship with other womens colleges?

Schmidt: Oh yes. That's the way womens colleges really coexisted. They kept networking all the time.

Martin: How did you see the relationship between your professional life, as a teacher, as administrator, and your religious life?

Schmidt: Well...the goal of our congregation when we started, we were teachers. One time we started a hospital but it just didn't work- so that was out. So we were teachers because our goal is to educate young men and women. We always taught young men in grade school. Some [religious] communities didn't teach boys at all. They didn't teach high school boys and they didn't teach grade school boys. I always thought they lost a lot because to me boys are fascinating to teach. I love it. Maybe that's because I had two brothers and didn't have any sisters. But...teaching was our primary goal in our congregation. I mean, our religious life was, but aside from that, our activity was teaching...so it worked very well. No question about that, the two melded together.

Martin: Once you got to administration, did you stop teaching all together?

Schmidt: I stopped after about six months. I had too many things going.

Martin: You were also the "nun on the run." You sat on many boards...

Schmidt: Oh yes. I did all those kinds of things too.

Martin: What was your daily life like?

Schmidt: Well, [that depends] on what I was doing. When I was doing Mundelein and the

Scholasticate - I lived at the Scholasticate - I would stay there until my class time, and then I spent most of my time in the afternoons at Mundelein. But in the morning we had morning prayers, and we had mass everyday. At noon we were responsible for our own prayer. At 5:00 we had prayers, and then again after dinner we had prayers and what we call spiritual reading and recreation. It was pretty routinized as far as we could keep it that way.

We weren't going out to, until about '67, games: basketball, volleyball, things like that. Here at home, if we had a volleyball game - there were three of us, Sister Mary Donald who was the dean before Sister Mary Griffin, and Sister Bernice, and myself. We would [laughs] go to a game, a volleyball game or a basketball game in our gym. If it started at 4:30 we'd go, then we'd go to prayers at 5:00. Then on our way down to dinner, we could just be last in line, we'd go in and see what they were doing again. [Laughs] So that we were with the community.

Later on in the '70s, we were doing things a lot differently. Then from '74 to '78 besides being assistant dean, I was also hall director of Coffey Hall which was great for me. I knew all the academic things about the students. And if they were staying in bed, I knew that too. It worked out fine.

Martin: Looking back through your thirty years at Mundelein, how did you see the student body change? Did you see large changes in attitudes? There must have been certain times...

Schmidt: Oh, yes. Different pockets - I like to think of them as pockets of change. I think when I first came, a new generation was born every four years. Now I think a new

generation is born every year. Every freshman class that comes in now is different. I see a huge difference in this freshman class from last year. But in those earlier years, as we changed from commuter to residential, we became more closely united with the students as they became residents. And they had a greater love for Mundelein. The people who lived on campus have a great love for Mundelein. The students in the early '70s - I don't think there's as great a connection because those are the years when everybody wanted to be footloose and fancy free. Maybe they love Mundelein, but they don't come back to reunions as much. I think they don't feel that special connection.

In the later years as we got more minority students, we began to change. We had our own problems on campus in 1975, '76, when sort of the "black revolution" [Narrator later said using the word "revolution" may be overstating the situation. "Concerns" is a more appropriate and accurate word] took place. I was part of it. We had a woman, we're good friends today, [who] was the director of the black students. There was a total misunderstanding going on. The students really rebelled against administration and everybody. But we had a young student - when you talk about student leaders - a young black student, Diane Allen, who helped our black students more than any single person than I can think of. She got them leveled off before they ended the year, and they had a good feeling. But we did struggle. Then I think we changed as we got more Hispanic students. I think the total college changed because we were accepting students who needed - who were educationally deprived. So we had to - something we hadn't done before was offering tutoring services and trying to

help them out. We were offering more financial assistance which was very difficult for us to do because the financial assistance that students got was the contributed services of the BVMs. We didn't get a salary, our paper salary was helping the students.

Into the late '70s and '80s, we had a group of students here who were just so interested in sports. Our sports took off like you wouldn't believe. They won our division in volleyball, in basketball; they won swimming tournaments, they just did everything. Unfortunately, many of them were the same people. But our student body was small. When you have a small student body you don't have too many people to draw from.

Then as our fulltime student enrollment declined, our weekend college program was continuing to grow. In fact, one time we were fearful that we would have an off balance and have too many adults. Of course our younger students, in the beginning, couldn't stand the adult students. [Next line spoken as if a younger student] "Oh, it was terrible...taking over *our* college." No, it's their college too. But then later on as that generation moved out and the new generation came in, they didn't know Mundelein without adults. Great relationships formed. Many of the [younger] students got jobs because of these adults who witnessed their performance in class and said, "You know, would you like to apply to our company." So it worked out well for them. But you have to go through a generation of living all the time and let them come in and know.

But then our full time population began to drop. Some of the reasons were our high schools closed, more women wanted to go to co-ed institutions and we decided

we never wanted to go to co-ed. We would have had to spend too much money in renovation. We would have to do sports for the men. We had no space for them. And why do sports when Loyola was already involved and we were living right next door to them. I remember one time...this was probably in the late '70s when we had an open forum with the students talking about whether Mundelein should become co-ed or not. Some of the Loyola men came to the meeting. It was open, so they came. They said, "Don't do it. Don't become co-ed. Stay a womens college. There are enough of us guys around,"...to have students mingle and be in class and all that kind of thing. We had an exchange program where Loyola and Mundelein students could exchange classes, so that was going on. So they said don't do it and our young women listened to them. In the beginning they were pushing for it, and some of our faculty were pushing for it. But the guys said don't do it...so that was very helpful.

I saw a change in the early '90s when we were getting lower and lower enrollment. But I also saw the students wearing out. The same students had to do everything, and that doesn't make them have a good feeling...when you have to call upon the same people everytime. Then when the '90s came and we affiliated with Loyola, we went through those special problems.

Martin: The problems of Mundelein, as far as decreasing enrollment, that was symptomatic of a lot of womens colleges at the time...

Schmidt: Yes, it was.

Martin: It wasn't a Catholic school [issue], it was a womens school...

Schmidt: No, no, no, it was womens. I think the young women, maybe some of them had been

in an all womens high school, and they just broke away from that. That's understandable.

Martin: From what I gathered, you saw the affiliation as a rather good thing...

Schmidt: I do. I know a lot of people don't, but I do.

Martin: ...almost very natural. There was that relationship formed over the years and they finally came together. Did you experience any particular problems with the affiliation?

Schmidt: No, I really didn't feel any problems with it at all. Of course I had that heartache that everybody did that we had to close Mundelein. But I was grateful that the Jesuits would take us, would take the property and all that. I even said this to a faculty member the other day: the city could have come in if we claimed bankruptcy, they could have opened a city college right there. Or some developer could have changed that into a nursing home. Even though it's a landmark building, that has nothing to do with what they would do with it. The outside is the only thing that has to stay the same on a landmark building. And even today they're destroying landmark buildings. But I think we were very fortunate...very fortunate. And that doesn't mean that I didn't have those pangs too. [It] doesn't mean that I didn't work hard, we did work hard. But I have to say, Loyola worked hard too, to make this thing move.

We never would have thought of all the problems that were going to happen after the affiliation. But then you just sit down and talk about them, and you level them out. You don't become nervous about it, you don't become feisty about it. You just sit down and say, "Yea, well we really didn't think of that fine point." One fine point - well it wasn't such a fine point - the parking lot behind Wright Hall, Loyola uses it.

Loyola thought that parking lot was Mundelein's. It wasn't Mundelein's, it was the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mundelein paid \$10,000 a year to rent that parking lot. Nobody thought to tell Loyola that when the terms of the affiliation were signed. But the congregation said Loyola can use it. Well, because...Loyola was very good to us.

Martin: It's nice to hear that you have no complaints.

Schmidt: No, I don't. I don't have any. Now, some of the things I hear today. When I hear we have to cut back on budget at Loyola. I think to myself, "Oh, don't tell me we're going to do this again." [Laughs] When they say we cut back on budget, when I'm at meetings, I say, "Well, yea, I think we can really do that." Other people look at me and they say, "Oh." [Shakes head as if in disbelief] But you can. You can do it.

Martin: At the time of the affiliation, you became Assistant Dean at Loyola?

Schmidt: Yes. I was Associate Vice President of Mundelein by that time but those were just titles. I was doing the same work. Those of us who were hired by Loyola had to go through an interview process with Human Resources. Then Human Resources would recommend where we would go. Barbara Bardes was the Dean of University College at that time, so she interviewed me. She hired me, which I thought was very nice. The day after the affiliation was signed, Human Resources occupied an office in the Skyscraper - right away - to help people go through the transition, to direct them to counseling, whatever. So, it isn't as though we were left in a lurch. The Jesuits offered their assistance to anybody who was finding this very difficult.

Martin: How did you see the student body react to the affiliation?

Schmidt: Oh, knowing young women and how sensitive they are, and how vulnerable they are, naturally they thought that this was like the end of the road. Of course we had those big rallies, and these big protest things and all this other stuff out on [the] sidewalk and in - But if they didn't do that, probably we would have been disappointed. If they just sat back and said, "Oh let's just let this happen," maybe we would've said, "Why are you being so passive?" But they had to do this.

But I'll tell you, there were - Jack Christian...Jack died just recently, maybe a couple of years ago...would come. I wouldn't say everyday, but almost everyday he was in our student dining room at Mundelein, just talking and having coffee with students.

Martin: Who was he?

Schmidt: Jack Christian was Director of Admissions for Loyola. He used to come over and have coffee with our students. They got to love him. Another one was Jim Dwyer who was in charge of financial assistance. He's retired from Loyola now. He used to come over, just casually talking to them. Helped them a lot, helped them a great deal. Those are the people we need to thank. Loyola administrators listened to our students.

Our weekend college students, ha - you think just the 18 to 22 year olds were up. We had a gal here, Mary Dell Onley, who rabble-roused everybody. They went down and talked to [Executive Vice President] Ron Walker and Jim Wiser [Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs], and just made a big noise. So much so because Loyola had said the weekend classes would last for just two and one half hours, and we would have three classes on Saturday. These students went down in the first semester

after the affiliation and said, "Two and a half hours! That's not enough time. We need a break, and we need to talk about our classes during the break. And we need three hours." The next semester we got three hours. That's more than [Loyola students] do because now classes are 6 to 8:30 pm. The weekend classes are still 8:30 to 11:30 [am], three hours.

Martin: And your responsibilities since the affiliation. What have you been doing since?

Schmidt: I was full time in the beginning. Then Loyola offered this fantastic retirement package which I couldn't resist. But, I work with the adult students. Currently, I work at the Skyscraper for Mundelein College on Tuesday afternoons and Saturdays. I'm an academic advisor, for the most part. That could be my title very easily, Academic Advisor.

What else do I do for Loyola? From about '94 to '97, I worked with the basketball team. I called myself the "Booster Shooter." I didn't tutor them but I kept them going to class, helped them raise their GPAs, and all that kind of stuff. This year I'm their chaplain - the basketball team, because their GPAs are fine. They don't need me for that.

I'm on the Madonna Della Strada Committee that meets several times a year to talk about the condition of the chapel, and how we can do things. I'm in charge of the Sunday Eucharistic Ministers. We have about twenty every Sunday. For the first five years I worked with RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults], which is the program for the adults entering the [church]. It's a rite of initiation for Christians. I'm on scholarship committees, I'm on the Athletic Committee, and all those kinds of

things now. So those are all my responsibilities.

Martin: You had been appointed liaison for Asian-American students?

Schmidt: Yes, I had been. That was during the time of Suzanne Cunningham, who was our acting dean. There was a liaison with the black students and with the Hispanic students. Hispanic mostly through Carmen Navarette, who is now moved into the Hispanic Institute, and Barbara Watson. Then we found that there was no need for that liaison. They came to all of us for advice. They didn't need one person [specifically for Asian-American students] so that's why we just stopped that.

Martin: Do you have any recollections of the Skyscraper building as a working environment: what it was like to work in the Skyscraper; to have that be your one main building instead of a large campus?

Schmidt: That was OK with me. I only lived there for a couple years. I lived across the street, I lived in Coffey Hall, I lived in Northland Hall. I had the opportunity to go out, and all the time. Some people, not the younger ones but the older ones, had a tendency just to stay in that building...which would make me feel very closed in, I think. I had enough outside activity that I never felt that. I think with some of the older people, when you live in the place in which you work, you want to keep running down to that place and do your work. And that's not good for man or beast. [Laughs] That's not good, you have to get away from the scene...otherwise you say, "Oh no, I have to go there."

It wasn't until after Coffey Hall was built [in the] early '60s that a recreation area was established on the fourteenth floor of the Skyscraper for the sisters. We used to recreate in a classroom which - same difference as being in your office.

Today, I live in Coffey Hall. Since we have a computer over there, if I don't read my e-mail here - the last thing of the day - I read it over there. I'm making connections but not forceful connections. I think before, maybe that was sort of a forced environment.

Martin: You never felt really compelled to always stay at the Skyscraper?

Schmidt: No, I didn't. I never feel compelled to stay anyplace.

Martin: But as a building, it was a great building to work in?

Schmidt: Oh! It was a great building to work in. My office changed about fifteen times in the time I was over there. I'm back where I was in 1967, back in the same area. We were so crowded at one time that I had an office in the corridor on the fifth floor, with those huge Mundelein bookcases. I was doing the reading clinic at the same time, so it was very beneficial. I had books on either side. My office was right outside Room 500. Telephone? No, I didn't have a telephone. That didn't make any difference. But that is where my office was. People say to me, "Oh, how did you talk confidentially?" Nobody was listening to me! I was talking to student teachers, asking them what their big problems were in the schools when they were there. We just felt we had a private space, and that was OK. You make your space.

Martin: Thank you very much, Sister Jean.

[End of Tape]