

1 **INTERVIEW WITH SISTER FRANCIS CABRINI ROHR**

2 **Friday, 2/04/94**

3 **Interview Taken By Connie Smith**

4 *Smith: Okay, today is February 4, 1994. This is an interview with Sister Francis*  
5 *Cabrini Rohr, and we're going to do an oral history on her and her*  
6 *involvement with the Sisters of Providence.*

7 *Cabrini: Are you writing up the Sisters of Providence, sort of?*

8 *Smith: Well, it's Doing Community History is the project, so I need some historical*  
9 *background starting with the Mother House in Montreal, Mother Gamlin and*  
10 *then...*

11 *Cabrini: That's great.*

12 *Smith: ...Mother Joseph coming to the Northwest and all the hospitals.*

13 *Cabrini: Oh, I'm so excited that somebody's doing that.*

14 **Tape Counter 015**

15 *Smith: But that'll be, the main focus of the paper will be St. Peter Hospital, South*  
16 *Puget Sound and you, because of your long time involvement with St. Peter*  
17 *Hospital and the School of Nursing there. So that's...*

18 *Cabrini: You know, I, one of my big gripes is, now we do have Sisters and usually*  
19 *School Sisters do things like this, but we do have a history of the schools,*  
20 *plain ordinary schools of the Sisters of Providence. But I don't think that*  
21 *anybody has ever written a story of the Schools of Nursing.....of the Sisters of*  
22 *Providence. And when I think of the thousands of nurses that we have*

1 educated and, I had the only school of practical nursing in the State of  
2 Washington, a Sister school. What do they call it now? A private school, I  
3 guess they call it.

4 *Smith: Well, your school was a practical nursing, right? The LPNs...*

5 *Cabrini: Yeah, so that one and then I had a professional school too.*

6 *Smith: Oh. Yeah, so the three year diploma school...of which I am a graduate, not of*  
7 *that one but a three year diploma school.*

8 *Cabrini: I did that, I was about, let me see... I taught one year in Olympia and then I*  
9 *taught two years in a school of professional nursing in Vancouver, Washington*  
10 *and then one academic year in Walla Walla. So, and then I came back to*  
11 *Olympia, Washington and they closed that School of Professional Nursing.*  
12 *And while I was running that, finishing that last class... You know, I wish you*  
13 *had done this two, a couple of years earlier, I'd remember better. But I've been*  
14 *sick a lot you know and it kind of knocks things out of your head. And uh,*  
15 *like probably losing your memory I guess. But anyway, then I came back to*  
16 *Olympia and I*

17 **Tape Counter 040**

18 was asked to start the School of Practical Nursing and while I was doing that, I  
19 was supposed to finish the last year at the School of Professional Nursing. So  
20 I had two schools, two graduations in one year.

21 *Smith: You had two major projects going at once.*

1      Cabrimi:      And then I had to get that School of Practical Nursing accredited, and I had to  
2                    keep the School of Professional Nursing accredited because it was well, let me  
3                    see... We had, we didn't have... at one point I can remember when there were  
4                    only 19 doctors on the medical staff and our census would go down to like 50,  
5                    you know and we'd have a school of nurses that you were supposed to rotate  
6                    and see to it that they got experience here or here or here. You've got an  
7                    awful thin ground and that's why they closed, wanted to close the school.

8      *Smith:      And not enough experience for the nurses, huh?*

9      Cabrimi:      No, uh huh. Not a, not well... You had this... And then also at that time, you  
10                    were supposed to..., you were a nursing service also. See, we had nursing  
11                    education and that was a big fight at one time, in the Sisters of Providence.  
12                    Well, it wasn't just the Sisters, it was the general thing in nursing education. It  
13                    was understood that the Director of Nurses, she was the person who had to take  
14                    care of the nursing service. Well, then there was the - like this, nursing  
15                    education versus nursing service.

16     *Smith:      Well, because you actually used the nursing students to staff the hospital.*

17     Cabrimi:      Right, they... It was, I think it was a good theory, because you know there's so  
18                    many (at that time especially) there was just no money to finance the  
19                    University of Washington or Seattle University or whatever. And so, the  
20                    nurses got their room and board, tuition and uh... Let me see, room and board,  
21                    tuition and lodging, bread and board, bread and butter too. It was all one and  
22                    uh...

1 *Smith: Yeah, plus they got lot's of practical experience.*

2 *Cabrini: Yeah, that was it. They got their practice, while they were getting educated.*

3 **Tape Counter 070**

4 *Cabrini: And they had a lot of hands-on experience and you really... Well, like the*  
5 *doctors. One of the doctors, I remember a remark that an elderly doctor made*  
6 *once - he says, "you know, we have, now a days, we have so many tests, we*  
7 *can't diagnose a case unless we have all this battery of tests". He says, "It*  
8 *used to be, you'd put your nose into a 10-bed ward of patients and you'd sniff,*  
9 *and you'd say well there's Typhoid Fever in here, there's dysentery, there's that*  
10 *in there". They knew it because of themselves, not because of all the... And*  
11 *usually, they were right. Because those were the diseases they knew about at*  
12 *that time.*

13 *Smith: And that's all they had to rely on, were their senses.*

14 *Cabrini: And they knew how to, how to treat them. And, but we've gotten ourselves so,*  
15 *and it didn't cost so much. But now, health care has just gotten ridiculous.*

16 *Smith: Well, and don't you think part of that is because of the legal system?*

17 *Cabrini: The legal, legality of it and the red tape we go through to do a thing before we*  
18 *can do it, before they can do it. Of course, I've been out of it now for about*  
19 *three, three or four years, a few years and so I'm not shouldering those*  
20 *complications. And, but I remember what it was like to a certain extent, but I*  
21 *couldn't you know give a minute detail on it.*

1 *Smith: Well, it hasn't changed so much yet. I think it may with President Clinton and*  
2 *his health reform. I don't think anybody has a good picture of that yet.*

3 *Cabrini: Why, poor Bill Clinton, I feel for him. I feel so sorry for that man. I think*  
4 *he's trying so hard, and then he's got that Dole in there no matter what he does,*  
5 *and he's got...*

6 *Smith: Yeah, he kind of keeps him in line doesn't he?*

7 *Cabrini: Huh, well, I don't think Dole makes sense a lot of the time. I think he just... I*  
8 *think his behavior ... I don't go along with everything Clinton says. I think*

9 **Tape Counter 095**

10 maybe it's a little that of being 84 and him 46 or something like that. I've had  
11 a little bit more experience with life than he has, but he's had a lot of other  
12 experience that I haven't had and so...

13 *Smith: But, as far as the health care industry goes, I think your perspective is much*  
14 *greater, much broader than his.*

15 *Cabrini: Well, I think he's been tumbling with people in the know, a lot, and I think he's*  
16 *brought a lot of peace. I think he's open for knowledge. I think that's one*  
17 *thing I give him credit for. I really appreciate people who want to really know*  
18 *things. Not just take what somebody else said when they know in reality of*  
19 *the thing, and so. Some of the things I've come through in my lifetime, I say*  
20 *half of these people that are homeless. They have lived the sort of life that I*  
21 *did, the frugality. I don't mean as a Sister of Providence, but if they have lived*  
22 *that life of facing reality, instead of the high life that everybody lives today.*

1 They wouldn't be homeless, because they wouldn't have spent money on  
2 alcohol and cigarettes and well whatever, traveling. I mean, I love travel, as  
3 far as that's concerned. I did, that was one of my highlights I wanted to do,  
4 but I didn't get as much as I wanted really, but...

5 *Smith: Well, let's go back and start from the beginning.*

6 *Cabrini: Okay.*

7 *Smith: Where were you born?*

8 *Cabrini: Well, I was born in Apache, Oklahoma. And I was the 11th present*  
9 *miscarriage of my mother.*

10 *Smith: 11th?*

11 *Cabrini: Yes, my cousin tells me that my mother wanted children very very badly, and*  
12 *every time she would get pregnant, she would miscarry. So, what she did - we*  
13 *have in the Catholic Church - you aren't Catholic?*

14 **Tape Counter 122**

15 *Smith: No.*

16 *Cabrini: What we have in the Catholic Church is what we used to, it used to be*  
17 *highlighted, are the nine Fridays. And, what this meant was that supposedly at*  
18 *one time, Jesus appeared to St. Margaret Mary and he said - I can't remember*  
19 *the story exactly - but he suggested this nine months of Mass Communion in*  
20 *honor of the Sacred Heart, so it's honored as a Sacred Heart. Nine months of*  
21 *that; the first Friday of the month, they would go to Mass, receive the Holy*  
22 *Communion. And so my mother, when she got pregnant with me, decided she*

1 was determined to have a baby, so she made her nine Fridays. And you can  
2 imagine what a heroic process that was down in Oklahoma, Apache, Oklahoma.  
3 My father had homesteaded a half-section of land, we lived on a huge farm and  
4 so she lived down there with him. And she managed to make her nine Fridays  
5 for me, and on Holy Thursday, at the appropriate ninth month, I knocked on  
6 the door. And came in. And, they were so worried about my living, not that I  
7 wasn't a healthy baby I guess, but they had me baptized on a Holy Saturday,  
8 the Holy Saturday.

9 *Smith: Right away.*

10 *Cabrini: Right away. They were going to fix it up. And so, I lived all my first few*  
11 *years, well... I lived on Apache awhile, and then somehow they got to*  
12 *Oklahoma City and I lived in Oklahoma City for... Well, I was probably about*  
13 *four years old, and I remember a little friend I had, Helen Cosack. And well, I*  
14 *even then, I had a pension for going to the store and buying things. So at*  
15 *about four years old, I went to the store - there was a store that we were used*  
16 *to trading at and you know, how dusty and everything things were in those*  
17 *days and small.*

18 *Smith: Uh hum. They didn't have paved roads, did they?*

19 *Cabrini: And everybody knew everybody, so they knew this little kid. The storekeeper*  
20 *knew this little kid, four years old. And if I made it, I hung around the store.*  
21 *I didn't want any candy. She offered me, but should I would want. And*  
22 *finally, I said I wanted a sack of flour, four years old. So, they had little sacks*

1 of flour in those days of two pounds I suppose. And she gave me that. She  
2 figured my mother must want it, or she

3 **Tape Counter 159**

4 wouldn't have sent me. And so, she didn't really... And anyway, I got cold  
5 feet on the way home. So, I stopped at my little friend's house and I played  
6 and played and played. And finally, Helen's mother said, "You know Francis, I  
7 think your mother must be in a hurry to get that flour, you better get home".  
8 So I went home and my mother, well naturally, she was puzzled why I bought  
9 a sack of flour. But anyway, they didn't scold me too much, they may have  
10 questioned it, but waited until Daddy came home at night from work and then  
11 he took it back to the store. But, she'd want a good size sack if she was going  
12 to bother... But anyway, I don't remember how we got back to Apache to the  
13 big farm anyway. And...

14 *Smith: Did I read something about some Indians? There were Indians around when*  
15 *you were...*

16 *Cabrini: Oh yeah, yeah, there was, it was Indians, yeah. Yeah, Indians and once in*  
17 *awhile a band of Gypsies would come through and... Oh yes, it was just, it*  
18 *was so normal to have Indians. And the blacks too, you know - they were*  
19 *Niggers. And if you called them anything besides Niggers, like if you called*  
20 *them Negroes, you were, you know, it wasn't the right thing to do. So, we had*  
21 *on the farm, we had what we called the "Big House" in which we lived. It*  
22 *wasn't very big, but it was good size, good house for those days. And, I have*



1 a picture of it, I think. And then, we had a little house on that same farm for  
2 the help. And at one time we had a Negro couple there. And I was out, we  
3 lived about 8 or 9 miles from town and I was always happy when my folks  
4 went to town because I got to go stay at Auntie Bill's. And she was a good  
5 cook too, you know, and they just loved me to pieces. And, I was always  
6 sorry when my folks came home, because I liked Miss Auntie Bill and Uncle  
7 Bill. And, but that was the way we did things in those days. We never  
8 thought about paying for it or anything, it was just what happened. Well, we  
9 had a dog named Bruno. I liked Bruno very well. While...

10 *Smith: Did you have any other brothers and sisters?*

11 *Cabrini: No, I was the only child, and she was adopted as a matter of fact.*

12 *Smith: Oh, Sister Agnes?*

13 **Tape Counter 197**

14 *Cabrini: Uh hum, Yeah. Well, let's see what I was going to... My father had big fields,*  
15 *you know like we had Maize, we had peanuts.....and corn, capped corn. And,*  
16 *we had all kinds of animals, farm animals. He always had his hogs, and he*  
17 *had his mules. He had four, let's see six mules, I think it was. Uh, let's see,*  
18 *Tom and Jerry, Pat and Mike and one was Oscar and I can't remember the*  
19 *other name.*

20 *Smith: That's awfully good Sister, to remember those.*

21 *Cabrini: Those were, those well, they were kind of special to me, those mules. They*  
22 *were different and then he had horses. And then of course, we had cows.*

1 And, we always had offspring, you know somebody was always having a calf  
2 or a pig or a herd of pigs. And then, my mother, she used to... We had lots of  
3 chickens, she always had her chicken coup. And she had a coup full of  
4 chickens always, and then she would well, to get the chickens, she would set  
5 her incubator and probably 100 or 200 eggs in the incubator and I got a real  
6 good lesson you know in raising and how little chickens got born. And my  
7 mother used to be the mother hen, of course and she'd keep the incubator  
8 warm. And I've been thinking lately, how did she do it anyway? Because they  
9 didn't have electricity. Oh, I guess it was a coal oil lamp. And then I think  
10 there was a water circulating in the incubator to keep it... And I can remember  
11 my mother faithfully turning those eggs, just like mother hen does, and three  
12 weeks of that, and then the little eggs would be, the eggs would begin to pip.  
13 And I used to get so excited watching those little chickens come out. You  
14 know, they were all wet and nasty and my mother taught me, you know. And  
15 I remember my first introduction to possums. We periodically, you know -- oh  
16 we had a huge coup of chickens and periodically at night when we'd all be  
17 quiet, the chickens would start raising a raucous. Well, my Dad took me out.  
18 I remember one night, my Dad took me out and he says, "Come on Francis,  
19 we'll go out there". And he had a shotgun too, and he says, "I'm going to  
20 show you something". So, the chickens were just sitting on the roost you  
21 know, kind of upset. And he said, "When we came in, you know, the possum  
22 were playing possum". And he says, "I'm going to show you something, I'm

1 going to show you the possum. Come on Francis". And he showed me the  
2 possum lying there, and of course their teeth kind of open up. I don't know  
3 why, but they're laid there and so my Dad pulled out a match and lit it and he  
4 put it in the teeth of the possum and it came alive.

5 **Tape Counter 240**

6 *Smith:* *Oh yes.*

7 *Cabrini:* And saved the chickens. And well, I became very fond of animals. I know  
8 you know. And then my Dad used, there was an Indian that veterinarian, that's  
9 somebody that, yeah veterinarian - takes care of animals. Yeah, and my Aunt,  
10 Mr. Jerod was his name. And he, my Dad used to go visit with him quite a  
11 bit. And I used to love to go with my Dad to visit the vet. And, well my Dad  
12 had all these cows and horses and things and critters. And, I just, and I liked  
13 to listen to him sometimes because Mr. Jerod, the Indian, had Indian  
14 knowledge and my Dad got something from him. And, they also had a wildcat  
15 in a cage, and I used to go and loved to watch that wildcat. And, well, then  
16 there was the bachelor... Jim, Jim was his first name, I don't remember his last  
17 name. But anyway, then there was the story of the town doctor. There was  
18 only about one doctor in a town, I think there was kind of a second rate doctor.  
19 But there was only one doctor that my mother thought knew anything. And, I  
20 think his name was Emspatch(?). Not quite sure of his name though. But  
21 anyway, we thought an awful lot of that doctor and he took my tonsils out too.  
22 I was four years old when my tonsils came out, and I could remember going to

1 his office - they didn't have such a thing as a hospital. I went to his office and  
2 I was put on a table, and they put - I thought what they put over my face was  
3 something like when we had a coal oil stove that we used in the summer for  
4 cooking, and the wick, it was kind of like a good size cup, only it was wiry,  
5 with a mesh around, netting around the inside. And that would get soaked with  
6 coal oil and that would, they'd use that in the stove. But, this, what they used  
7 for my anesthetic, looked like a wick. And I thought they soaked that with  
8 whatever it was, anesthetic or something and they put that over my face, and  
9 they made me keep talking. I couldn't have counted, but they made me keep  
10 talking until I went to sleep. And he did a marvelous job of taking out my  
11 tonsils. And that was probably 80 years ago, and I think, I have doctors yet  
12 that have looked in my throat and complimented on the job that was done.

13 *Smith: That's very good Sister.*

14 Cabrini: So, I think that was a real compliment to that doctor. Well anyway, he  
15 eventually died and he had one of these contraptions called a car, an old  
16 *Overland*. And, nobody wanted the old, his wife wouldn't have anything to do  
17 with the contraption. And my father was one of these people who can make  
18 anything run. He was just a

19 **Tape Counter 289**

20 mechanical man. And, so he took the car, he took the old *Overland*, and we  
21 were one of the first people down in that area to have a car. There were,  
22 altogether there in that neighborhood, which was oh much, many, many acres,

1 he, my father had one of the three cars that were in that neighborhood, an old  
2 *Overland*. And I've been trying to find an old *Overland* at these car shows you  
3 know, and I never find an *Overland*.

4 *Smith:* *This would be about 1915?*

5 *Cabrini:* It had to be about, well let's see, the war ended in 1918, so it... And we drove  
6 to town, and I thought it would have been 1915 at least. I don't know how old  
7 it was. But anyway, it was pretty good running for that day and age and the  
8 dust, you know. Roads were just that deep in dust.

9 *Smith:* *How did you get fuel for it, they didn't have gas stations?*

10 *Cabrini:* I don't remember putting in gas, but they must have put in gas. I think  
11 probably, they had a big tank of it at home and filled their own, because they  
12 didn't, they weren't the smallest gas stations. I remember the close of the first  
13 World War. Everybody went to town, the town of Apache. We lived about 9  
14 miles out, so we drove to town. And I remember there was a big hill, you  
15 cross the railroad track and the horses would get scared and there would be  
16 many runaways, you know. And, we'd cross the tracks. Of course, by that  
17 time we had a car. We'd cross the tracks and kind of drove up the hill, going  
18 in Main Street, going into Apache. And, I can remember parking by the, I  
19 think it was the old - there was one theater, by the theater or the hotel,  
20 probably a combination. And they watched, they had the wires strung up  
21 across Main Street and the Kaiser was hung in effigy and they burned him.  
22 And I can still see that burning Kaiser hanging up way up above Bubble Street,

1 you know. And, then when we, we started a school, a township school, a  
2 public school and we uh, let's see. We went to school in a this uh, I don't  
3 think they called it a bus - a school wagon, that was it. It was a wagon, a  
4 horse drawn wagon, and it used to come by the house out in the country and  
5 pick up the kids and take them to school.

6 *Smith: Now, was this like a country school? All 8th grades?*

7 **Tape Counter 334**

8 *Cabrini: It was a country school.*

9 *Smith: In one room?*

10 *Cabrini: Yeah, well they weren't all in one room. I can remember my first grade*  
11 *teacher was Miss Wickham. She had beautiful blue eyes and very pretty, and I*  
12 *just, well at least I thought she was. She, I just loved Miss Wickham. And*  
13 *Miss Olive was the second grade teacher, and as I remember her, her hair was*  
14 *quite bouffant. And she also took her paddle to me, because I used to, I didn't*  
15 *like to just stay in my own seat. I went around to see the neighbors. And I*  
16 *remember her running me back to my seat with her paddle. And then the third*  
17 *one, third grade teacher was Miss Susan, and she was more of a primpy little*  
18 *lady. And I can remember her making us make Valentines's and that's about*  
19 *all. But anyway, in the meantime my mother decided that... Well, I think*  
20 *compared with what you get in public schools, what I hear you get in public*  
21 *schools nowadays, it was quite a religious school really and it was public, you*  
22 *know. And well, they taught us all the hymns. I learned the Battle Hymn of*

1 the Republic and all of the Christmas songs that I still remember. And we  
2 used to go on the stage and yap out the Christmas songs and we had nice  
3 Christmas programs too - I remember that. But, my mother decided I should  
4 have a Catholic education.

5 *Smith: And your whole family was Catholic?*

6 Cabrini: Yes. So, she sent me from Apache to Lawton, which was about 25 miles away  
7 and that's a long, long distance in those days. And by that time, we had the  
8 *Overland* and I used to drive my folks, and I went to boarding school there.  
9 And the Sisters were very good to me, but I did not want to cry, because I was  
10 used to the wide open spaces and horses and cows and chickens and all of the  
11 critters. And I loved animals, I still do, I'm just crazy about animals and dogs  
12 especially.

13 and, I went there, cooped up in the boarding school, it was awful, I think I'd...

14 *Smith: Just during the week, or could you go home on the weekends?*

15 Cabrini: No, I slept there.

16 **Tape Counter 371**

17 *Smith: For all seven and all week long, you didn't go home on weekends?*

18 Cabrini: No, I can remember them coming to see me on weekends. They'd drive down  
19 to see me, and they always brought me a box (it seems to me it was about like  
20 this), of butterscotch all day suckers. That would pacify me and I would pacify  
21 the other kids with them too. And I think, I went there about two months.  
22 But, when I look back on it, I think wasn't it funny I got there in the middle of

1 a school year, and they didn't have any new books, at least no Bible histories.  
2 But we used that old Bible history books, and they had one old shredded,  
3 ragged Bible history left around and they just gave it to me, and that was one  
4 book I wanted to take home with me. And then I think it was that year that  
5 my folks sold the ranch, the farm. Everybody called them farms down there.  
6 And, we had the car, we packed up and we drove as far as Oklahoma City,  
7 which was about 100 miles I think from Apache. And, we lived there for a  
8 few months. My little sister came, and my mother couldn't have any more  
9 children. And I cried and cried for a baby sister. So, she wrote to some  
10 orphanage and told them just exactly what she wanted. And I guess they had  
11 so many orphan children, you know, that it's very hard for the orphanage to  
12 take care of them. So, my mother described just exactly what she wanted and  
13 she came by train and we went up to Chickashaw together, which was about 50  
14 miles from Apache. And, she found it very hard to live in a family, you know.  
15 She was so used to cry, she did a lot of crying.

16 *Smith: How old was she when she came?*

17 *Cabrini:* Well, as far as I know she was 18 months, and she was afraid of any of my  
18 toys. I wanted to share everything with her. Oh, and back up too a little bit. I  
19 think, kind of a funny little incident. Well, we had, you know usually you  
20 think that no matter what church you belong to now, it's every Sunday. Well  
21 in those days, Priests were scarce and so we had Mass only every two Sundays,  
22 every other Sunday. And, I didn't, I really didn't know that there was such a



1 thing as church every Sunday. You know, that was a getting a little bit too  
2 much. But, anyway, in the meantime, I used to like to say Mass. But I  
3 thought, and I think back now isn't that funny, now they're wanting women to  
4 be Priests, and I was?

5 **Tape Counter 425**

6 *Smith: You were ahead of your time Sister.*

7 *Cabrini: And what I would do, was I was alone and I would get all my dolls sitting*  
8 *around in the room, and well I had about 18 of them I think of that you know,*  
9 *I was so spoiled. And, that wasn't enough. So, I would get the pet chickens*  
10 *in, and my mother made pets of every cripple chicken. So, I would put my*  
11 *doll clothes on the chickens and you know, you put them in a doll buggy or a*  
12 *cradle, and they'll go to sleep and they'll just be as quiet as a mice. And so, I*  
13 *used to bring the chickens in and I used to bring in the cat or dog, and all my*  
14 *dolls and I'd round up my mother's white buttons and we'd have Communion,*  
15 *and so I'd said Mass. At the age of five, I guess it was, 5, 6, something like*  
16 *that. Then we moved out to, we sold out.*

17 *Smith: Do you remember why, why they left?*

18 *Cabrini: Oh, my father was ill. And they blamed it on the work, and it was really, it*  
19 *was hard living. And he was, was quite frail I guess. And, well anyway, we*  
20 *lived in Oklahoma City for awhile, and we decided we wanted to leave*  
21 *Oklahoma. Everybody was leaving Oklahoma. And, the dust - oh, the dust!*  
22 *No, no paved streets or anything like that. I can't even remember paved streets*

1 in Oklahoma City. There may have been some. But I can remember that it  
2 was awfully hot and the Ice Cream wagon used to come through, and I always  
3 wanted to run after the Ice Cream wagon, and I'd run after the Ice Cream  
4 wagon and my mother wouldn't buy any usually because it was all melted  
5 anyway. So, anyway that didn't work out, Oklahoma City wasn't right. So,  
6 then we moved... My mother had a sister out in Tacoma, Washington and our  
7 little car broke down in Oklahoma City, so we didn't go any further with the  
8 car. But we packed everything in the train and came out to Washington, and  
9 that must have been about 19... Well, it was after the first World War, so it  
10 must have been about 1919 or 1920. Uh, we lived with my Aunt for awhile,  
11 but that wasn't good, so we moved out. I can remember my first Christmas out  
12 in Tacoma, and the first time I'd ever seen a Christmas tree. And my cousins  
13 had a Christmas tree, a real Christmas tree and real candles on it. And, well, I  
14 think they lit those darn candles. No wonder they had fires, but they didn't  
15 have any more fires then than they have now, that I can remember.

16 *Smith: It's a wonder.*

17 **Tape Counter 485**

18 **Cabrini:** It is. Well anyway, we moved to 1102 South "I" Street in Tacoma, and lived  
19 there for awhile. And Agnes was too young to go to school. But anyway, I  
20 started school, the Visitation Academy. I was, I can remember being in the  
21 fourth grade there.

22 *Smith: And this was a Catholic School?*

1 Cabrini: Yeah, this was the Academy, the Visitation Academy in Tacoma. And you  
2 know, the Sisters left that and they went to the Visitation out on the lake in  
3 Federal Way. Around the Sound, I guess it was. Well anyway, there were,  
4 those were those Sisters and the Academy... It's kind of, I think it's kind of  
5 interesting too, because that was a huge building, it was a boarding school, and  
6 the Visitation Sister's were questioned. So, they had a highboard, whitewash  
7 fence around the place. I'm mean literally. And, I took music lessons, but my,  
8 I remember my fourth grade teacher was Sister Betsy and I didn't like her. We  
9 had to sit in double seats, you know. And of course, a lot of talking went on  
10 and I always blamed my sweetmeat and she blamed me. And then they *suite mate?*  
11 decided there would be a retreat, and all I heard was treat. I wasn't that  
12 religious minded.

13 *Smith: In the early days.*

14 Cabrini: And we, I kept waiting for the treat. They marched us off to the Chapel and  
15 we had lectures and prayers and so forth, and I was where's the treat? And we  
16 had to keep silent. That was a heck of a retreat, heck of a treat.

17 *Smith: No treats.*

18 Cabrini: We lived there for oh, my father got a job too, and he worked, once in awhile,  
19 he worked for some kind of a warehouse. But, for a farmer, that wasn't the  
20 right thing. So, Tacoma really didn't last too long. Agnes wasn't a, she didn't  
21 start school yet. We had some friends over in Yakima and well, he always kind  
22 of blamed them a little bit, but anyway they made a deal on a ranch. And, it

1 really cost him more than it should I think. And so, and when they moved to  
2 Yakima, we always had a mortgage on the place, it was a 5-acre tract. And it  
3 had apples and pears, peaches, and quite an acreage under cultivation too.

4 Well, my mother wanted me to go into town to school, so she wanted me to

5 **Tape Counter 547**

6 go to St. Paul's school in Yakima. And, the Dominican Sisters had it. And,  
7 we lived about a mile and a half, two miles out, so they got me a little bicycle.  
8 And I learned to ride a bicycle. And, so I would bicycle into school, and took  
9 music lessons there. But, I started the Dominicans fourth grade. And well,  
10 for my tuition at least, I used to take milk in on my handlebars and my father  
11 started a small dairy out on this acreage. We had several cows, white cows I  
12 guess it was.

13 *Smith:* *So, you got your animals back?*

14 *Cabrini:* Oh yeah, and then my mother had the chickens. And I had a coupe of  
15 Bandy's, oh Bandy's were darling. Are you familiar with them?

16 *Smith:* *Uh huh. But, I've never had any, but yeah, I know what you're talking about.*

17 *Cabrini:* Oh, I had them. They gave me a little coupe, and I had a dozen Bandy's and I  
18 had two roosters. And those two roosters were so darn cute. They were both  
19 red, you know Bandy's are, and one was Reddy. Let's see, one was Reddy and  
20 the other one was Micey. Micey had spurs this big, and he would take on  
21 anybody. But Reddy was the handsome fellow, and I had about 12 hens and  
22 they all liked Reddy. But Micey, he would pick a fight with you if you looked

1 at him. And I had those two characters have followed me through life and I  
2 have seen Micey or Reddy in so many men.

3 *Smith:* *That was a good lesson, even though you never knew how valuable it would be*  
4 *later.*

5 Cabrini: As a matter of fact, when I was in Olympia in Pastoral Care, there were two  
6 Priests, and I could see Reddy in one of them and Micey in the other one.  
7 There was, I told somebody that once and they laughed. There was that little  
8 fellow with the big spurs, and well anyway, I went to school.

9 *Smith:* *So, you continued at that school?*

10 Cabrini: At St. Paul's...

11 *Smith:* *And graduated from there?*

12 Cabrini: Through the 8th grade. That was nothing too eventful, I guess. Of course, I  
13 had some

14 **Tape Counter 601**

15 good little friends you know, girlfriends you know, and a couple of boyfriends  
16 too. One of the things we used to do was you know, this trick or treat  
17 business. We never thought about treats, we'd, we had tricks. And, it was the  
18 routine every Halloween, let's see it was Isabell, Helen, myself, Bob, Ray, and  
19 I think there was another fellow. And we went in the, on Halloween night, in  
20 Yakima and we'd go out, we didn't do tricks, I mean treats. We did tricks.  
21 You'd get yelled at for. But anyway, that was Halloweens.

22 *Smith:* *Do you want to give me an example of one of your tricks?*

1      Cabrini:      Well, like taking an outhouse and putting it on the wagon. I'm with the boys  
2                    and all of us, we uh... We had, well, when we moved to Yakima, we didn't  
3                    have electricity, and we had an outhouse and that was about 1918, or 1919. It  
4                    must have been 1919 because 1918 we were in Apache. I think it was grade  
5                    school alright, I used to, my folks used to bring in produce like we have.  
6                    They'd raise a big garden, like a lot of tomatoes and we'd have surplus and so  
7                    forth. And, we'd take them into the Sisters and I'm sure that's what paid my  
8                    tuition, because we were very poor. We always had a mortgage, and I  
9                    remember the \$25 we had to scrape up every month. And later on, I got a job  
10                   and my father died and we all found out that it was \$13 for, but see only \$10  
11                   of that paid on the mortgage out of the \$15. And so, he'd blame this family  
12                   and like that he felt that they could have you know, managed the money  
13                   better. But anyway, we went on.

14     *Smith:        So then, you went to high school?*

15     Cabrini:      Graduated grade school, and for the first year (oh, I remember it got awfully  
16                    cold that year). I have, in my memory, it seemed that it was 28 below and  
17                    that, oh, it was awfully cold. But I know it was awfully cold, and it stayed  
18                    that way about two weeks. But, I did have to walk about a mile and then I  
19                    started the Academy, St. Joseph Academy.

20     *Smith:        High School?*

21     Cabrini:      That's where I met the Sisters really. And, well I walked about an hour and a  
22                    half to get a ride. And there was a lady who worked in the office at Burrow's

1 Motor Company, and she lent me a ride into town with her and then I would  
2 walk on to the Academy in Yakima. And, that went on for my Freshman year,  
3 part of the

4 **Tape Counter 670**

5 Sophomore year and then my mother heard about working your board, working  
6 your way through. So then, she saw to it that I got introduced to the Sisters of  
7 Providence and they took me in and I got, I worked for room and board. And  
8 there were about six of us who worked for our room and board. We waxed the  
9 floors on Saturday, we scrubbed and waxed the floors. And we helped in the  
10 kitchen and helped get the meals and that sort of thing, and served them and  
11 just regular janitorial work was what it amounted to, it was. Went through  
12 high school that way, and I was really quite a... I wanted to learn a lot.

13 *Smith:* *Were you a good student? Did you have high grades and...?*

14 *Cabrini:* Yes, I got pretty good grades. Yeah, I took, I took three, I liked the languages.  
15 So, I took three years of Latin, three years of French (which was extraordinary  
16 for a high school student).

17 *Smith:* *Yes, very.*

18 *Cabrini:* Latin and French and I got good grades in that.

19 *Smith:* *What about the sciences?*

20 *Cabrini:* Oh, I love sciences too. I took, I got through high school, thank goodness I  
21 did too. You had to take Chemistry, and so I was taking Chemistry, but I  
22 really liked oh a, a Physics teacher and I was attracted to Physics too. Our

1 Physics teacher was very attractive. I mean she taught you a lot of things  
2 besides science. And, as a boarder you know, she could take you out at night  
3 and show you the stars and constellations and so forth, up on the roof of the  
4 four-story Academy, St. Joseph Academy in Yakima. And she, well anyway,  
5 and she also made good candy. So I learned to make candy, basics.

6 *Smith:* *Ah, I read that about you in your, some of your bibliography stuff, that was*  
7 *your hobby.*

8 *Cabrini:* No, that was the basics, the basics. She'd take you to the Chemistry room and  
9 made you make candy.

10 *Smith:* *Ah, I see.*

11 **Tape Counter 728**

12 *Cabrini:* And I said, then we've got the... You know, when you know the Chemistry of  
13 making candy, it means something a little bit more to you than just cooking up  
14 a bunch of sugar. But anyway, she taught Physics, that particular, Sister  
15 Margaret teaches. She taught Physics and I wanted to take Physics too,  
16 because... But, running Chemistry along with Physics was really a pretty big  
17 bite, and I was flunking. I was, yeah, I was flunking in Chemistry. No, wait  
18 no, I'll back up a little bit. That was back when I was a Freshman. I was  
19 flunking in Algebra, that was it. And, in there some place, I was the school  
20 librarian too for part of my job.

21 *Smith:* *As well as doing the floors and...*



1      **Cabrini:**      High school librarian, yeah. And I read a book, "That Football Game". I was  
2                            more of a Tom Boy, than a girl. And, I read "That Football Game" by Father  
3                            Pin. He wrote a whole series of boys' books, and I liked them. And, that  
4                            changed my... And, the football game was centered around the Trigonometry,  
5                            and Trigonometry, is that what they call it? Or Geometry, it was, one or the  
6                            other. And, I associated that Algebra and as I say, I was flunking. At mid-  
7                            year, I really had to... I read that book and my grades went up to 90s, 98, way  
8                            up.

9      **Smith:**            *You just needed to find some way to apply it.*

10     **Cabrini:**         Well just the association of the math and the sports, really appealed to me. I  
11                            love baseball and the boys... they called me catcher, I used to like to catch. I  
12                            could catch anything.

13     **Smith:**            *Did you play sports?*

14     **Cabrini:**         Yeah.

15     **Smith:**            *Did girls play sports back then?*

16     **Cabrini:**         Oh yeah, uh hum. Oh yeah, we played other sports too at that time. Back in  
17                            the 8th grade. But, well anyway I made it through high school that way,  
18                            boarding, working for my room and board.

19     **Tape Counter 789, End of Tape 1, Side 1**

20     **Smith:**            **This is Side 2 of Tape I the Interview with Sister Francis Cabrini.**

21     **Smith:**            *So any, so going to high school and you were a boarder and the Sisters of*  
22                            *Providence were right there.*

1      Cabrini:      Oh, when I got the job as librarian, there was a sister, she was in charge of the  
2                    operating room at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Yakima. And that was clear  
3                    across town from St. Joseph Academy. And, Sister Mary DeSalles, who was  
4                    the Chemistry teacher, she was charge of the high school. And she says,  
5                    "Francis, Sister Binoza has such and such a book out overdue, and she's not  
6                    returning it, and it's your job to go out and get that book. So, I was scared of  
7                    that, because Sister Binoza was really an awesome person for me in those days,  
8                    in charge of the operating room at that. And, Sister Binoza... So, I took a  
9                    bodyguard and we went up to see Sister Binoza. She was pretty, you know  
10                   and a very strong person, you know? And she was so gracious to me, to us,  
11                   and she had the book ready to return. And she says, "Would you like to see  
12                   the operating room?" And so, she took the two of us and took us through the  
13                   operating room. Well now, you don't get your nose in it.

14      *Smith:*      *No.*

15      Cabrini:      But, in those days, she took us up, she showed us the instruments and she  
16                    showed us everything, what the doctors do and what they wore and all that sort  
17                    of stuff and demonstrated. And, I tell you, I think that was probably the start  
18                    of my vocation to the Sisters of Providence. She was so gracious. I did like  
19                    the others too, but some of them were really special, you know. But, I kind of  
20                    had it, my mother was a nurse, and you know, quite primitive back in those  
21                    days. But anyway, she delivered the neighborhood babies.

22      *Smith:*      *So you have some history here.*

1 Cabrini: So, she, so anyway, I got introduced to nursing and more or less, and then I  
2 went on and graduated from high school, and...

3 **Tape Counter 030**

4 *Smith: So after you graduated, where did you go?*

5 Cabrini: Oh, in the interim there, a big part of my life was working at the Cannery.

6 *Smith: While you were in high school?*

7 Cabrini: Yeah, oh yeah, during vacations. It was seasonal see. And there was the  
8 Cherry time, and then there was the Pear time and the Apple time. Well, I  
9 started, I was the first girl stamper at Libby, McNeil and Libby in Yakima.  
10 Well, women's lib.

11 *Smith: That's right. Women's history is important here too.*

12 Cabrini: Well anyway, I didn't like the mess, I didn't like that messy stuff. So, I got to  
13 work out in the warehouse, I guess you'd call it. And, there's a lot of just  
14 dusty work to do before you get to the fruit. The cans, now I did this during  
15 my vacation, high school vacation and I did it on Saturdays after I went back  
16 to school. And that was when I was well, I went there when I was about 16 or  
17 17. And then I was a ....

18 *Smith: The job that you did?*

19 Cabrini: No, I mean a minor, I was a minor when I went to work there. And, then the  
20 second year, they put me out in the can department warehouse. And the cans  
21 used to come in by the freight cart full, and they were stacked on the floor, on  
22 up to the ceiling. And it looked like a bee hive, one row of cans right after

1 another. You'd look and you'd just see a bee hive. And, you'd have to break  
2 in. And, oh there were several of them, you know. And they made this sort of  
3 a temporary table for us and we'd have what we'd call trays, which was a piece,  
4 couple of pieces of board about yay by yay. And they had an edge around  
5 them, and you'd get a 2 1/2 tin, you'd get a dozen on one of these trays. And  
6 then, you would stack them and they'd stack about 18 high of trays. So, you  
7 got way down on the bottom, way down.

8 *Smith: Yes, this is good for the waist line...*

9 *Cabrini: And, I remember going out in those box cars, and traying cans. I liked to do*  
10 *that. It was one of those*

11 **Tape Counter 064**

12 fun things. They were all older, a little bit older than I. And, but boy the  
13 second year I went back, I had sense enough to say I was 18, then I could  
14 work 10 hours a day, whereas it turned out most of the time it was 11 or 12  
15 hours a day. And, oh you were so tired. We'd start early in the morning and  
16 sometimes they'd keep you. I mean, depending on the need.

17 *Smith: Yeah. As a minor, how many hours a day could you work?*

18 *Cabrini: Only eight. And you got 27 1/2 cents an hour and the guys got 35 cents an*  
19 *hour.*

20 *Smith: Oh, discrimination even then.*

21 *Cabrini: Yeah, yeah. And...*

1 *Smith:* *And so then, at 8, at 18, then you could work 10 hours and how much were*  
2 *you paid then?*

3 *Cabrini:* You could work 10 hours and if they needed you overtime, I was always glad  
4 to work 11 hours, because then it made an even \$3. You'd get awfully tired.

5 *Smith:* *Yes, I bet.*

6 *Cabrini:* My Dad would pick me up and take me home. That's the way we worked for  
7 awhile, while he was still living. And, well, the guys always got to stack cans  
8 and it was so much fun, you know .... And, so one day, I got in good with the  
9 can boss, and he used to call me "Kiddo". He says, "You're not 18", and I  
10 says, "Ohhhh".

11 *Smith:* *Oh yes.*

12 *Cabrini:* So, he just smiled and went on. His name was Mac. And, so one day, we  
13 were short of a stamper and I says, "Mac, I'd like to do that". And he says,  
14 "Well Kiddo, do you think you can do it?", and I says, "Sure I can do it". "Can  
15 you truck(?) the cans?" I said, "Sure I can truck". You know, they had those  
16 trucks you know... They balance the stack, they balance against the handles so  
17 that .... Well, I says 'sure I can do that', I tried it. And he says, "Okay girl".  
18 So, I got the stamp pad and the stamper and I played out a tune just like  
19 everybody else. Um, there were 2 1/2 tins, there were 24 on a tray

20 **Tape Counter 091**

1 and the, let's see the what did they call them? Number ones, there were 20, 24  
2 of them on a tray, so you really get it. And, I was the first girl stamper at  
3 Libby, McNeil and Libby, and I...

4 *Smith: Alright.*

5 Cabrini: And, by then, after the Pear season was the Cherry season and the Pear  
6 season.... Then you had to work in the mess. And I got a job peeling apples,  
7 but I was running the peeler and it really wasn't all that bad.

8 *Smith: Yeah, you didn't have to put your hands in it.*

9 Cabrini: Yeah. And you had to peel, in 8 hours, you were supposed to peel 28,000  
10 apples. But, the peeler took, it was like this... and you put an apple there, it  
11 will get peeled. This one came down, you put an apple over there, that one got  
12 peeled and then this one and that went on for 8 hours.

13 *Smith: Did you get a lunch? Did they let you? They had breaks?*

14 Cabrini: Yeah, we got lunch. Oh, you know, we got breaks. You got to go to the  
15 bathroom. I think there was 10 minutes for that. And then you got a half hour  
16 for lunch. And the big thing in those days, uh, when you got a long enough  
17 lunch hour, if you could make it. Go down to the store and it was frozen  
18 Milky Ways. That was the thing, 5 cents, 5 cents for a Milky Way. And that's  
19 what we, a bunch of us did ... So, well anyway, I graduated from high school.  
20 I did a post graduate course because I couldn't afford to go to college. And, it  
21 was the latter part of my 18 years, part of 19 years old, during the summer I  
22 stayed with two of the Sisters, Sister Isabell and Sister Cecilia Mary. I just

1 spent the summer with the Sisters. And, I got my room and board. And, of  
2 course my folks, my father fell ill in the meantime. But it used to give me  
3 something to do. And, I did have a, I think it was a two week scholarship to a  
4 business college, Yakima Business College. And I wanted to see what  
5 bookkeeping was about. So I took that, that was

6 **Tape Counter 123**

7 part of what I took with, when I stayed at the Academy. And, they were glad  
8 to have my help too, of course. One year, well it was only a couple of years,  
9 we canned 160 half gallons of apricots. And we canned them on a stool you  
10 know. We had to get them prepared and cold packed. Sit them on the stove,  
11 was cold packed you know, and bring that to a boil. You had to stoke up the  
12 stove and oh, the temp was 108 part of the time that summer... It was so hot.  
13 And, I'd look at Cecilia in there and she'd be sweating. I'd look at Isabell and  
14 she'd be all a'sweat. We'd look at each other and we'd just laugh. We had a  
15 great time.

16 *Smith: And this was at the St. Joseph Academy?*

17 *Cabrini: See I was living with them, the Sisters, and when my father got sick... They*  
18 *found out that he had cancer.*

19 *Smith: So this wasn't related to his illness from Oklahoma then?*

20 *Cabrini: Huh uh. No, this is after moving ... I was called home, and my father was*  
21 *dying of cancer. And, it was out in the count, we were out in the country and*  
22 *my mother was trying to take care of him by herself and she was having kind*

1 of a bad time. You know, it's emotionally and by that time, he had sold the  
2 cows, and the critters. So, it was just the ranch and herself, and she called for  
3 me to come home, Papa was dying. And, he lasted about two months I think.  
4 I was with him when he died. I was just sitting there, holding his hands and  
5 he just turned his head, just like that. And it was like a candle going out. And  
6 he just died, no struggle. Thank goodness. Well my Uncle, my father's brother  
7 came from Oklahoma, my Uncle John. He came to help Mama with the  
8 business and so forth, because she was no business woman at all. My father  
9 had tried to teach me. When I went to school, he made me pay the taxes and  
10 did things like that, so I knew a little bit. Well then, my father died, we broke  
11 up housekeeping. My mother went to live with her sister in Gig Harbor, with  
12 Agnes and it really didn't last too long. My mother wanted a job and so she did  
13 get a job

14 **Tape Counter 162**

15 housekeeping with the Sisters in Tacoma. And she took Agnes and stayed with  
16 her. And, in the meantime, I was floating around. They found a job for me  
17 running a switchboard and elevator. It was altogether different at St. Peters, in  
18 Olympia. So, I went there to work for awhile. I did it for a couple of months  
19 I guess. And I can remember Sister Ethel worked at the School of Nursing.

20 *Smith:* *So, this was your first time to be at St. Peters?*

21 *Cabrini:* Yeah, that was, I think I stayed there a couple of months, three months maybe.  
22 But in the background, I wanted to be a Sister, I wanted to enter.



1 *Smith: How did you know that? What...?*

2 **Cabrini:** Well, I just had the feeling that I wanted to. I just knew, you know, kind of  
3 kids stuff I guess. And, then I felt wasn't when I entered, it was months later.  
4 Well, my uh, I took time off and went to spend Christmas with my mother.  
5 And she was in Convent, you know the Sisters, school Sisters. And, I think  
6 then, they knew I had a vocation. And so, we decided I wouldn't go back to  
7 St. Peters, that I, I would enter. So I entered then...

8 *Smith: Was this...?*

9 **Cabrini:** That was about when I was about, I guess I must have been about 20, 21  
10 maybe.

11 *Smith: And this was the Sisters of Providence?*

12 **Cabrini:** And it's really foggy, just.... Uh, that was in Tacoma, but I entered in Seattle.  
13 And, I did it almost what they call a "postulate". You know, that's the first six  
14 months. And I put in, I put in that full time. And I was getting ready to get  
15 what they call Holy Habit, that's when you come in as a postulant, they put on  
16 something you know that covered you up and sometimes it was too long and  
17 sometimes it was too short. Sometimes it was big and sometimes it was tight,  
18 but it was something that somebody else wore. But then you got to make what  
19 they called Holy Habit, and that was something

20 **Tape Counter 196**

21 that you had and that was the first part of the starting to be a Sister. Well, I  
22 got that far and my mother, in the meantime, she had the ranch to take care of

1 and she was just no business woman at all. I guess she knew the basics. Uh,  
2 my Dad turned the place over by way of a Quick Claim Deed, so there was no  
3 mess there. No mess. That's a neat way you could do it in those days. And,  
4 so I knew all about that too, because he saw to it that I would know.

5 *Smith: That was very wise.*

6 Cabrini: It was, and he did the best he could. He did very well, I think, considering, to  
7 make it simple for my mother. Well, she came over to Yakima spent few  
8 months there, to make a visit. Well, it was supposed to be rented out, and the  
9 renter was just no good - wouldn't pay his rent, and wouldn't keep the place up.  
10 And really did a lot of damage. Well, my mother had a massive stroke and  
11 that was the end of my mother. So, I had to come home and take, leave the  
12 Sisters, come home and that began a kind of a sad chapter in my life, I guess.  
13 My mother had a stroke and she stayed in the hospital for awhile, I think. In  
14 those days, you know, they let them stay longer. But then she got, so she  
15 needed to leave. And, I had a very dear friend who lived at the hospital with  
16 me, in the same house. You know, they had a house for the girls who worked  
17 there. And, between us, she helped me out. We all worked together. They  
18 found somebody for my mother, a family that could take care of my mother in  
19 their home. And so, in the meantime, I was trying to manage that Agnes  
20 would be able to go to high school, like I did. And, that my mother, Agnes,  
21 the house, the school, the farm would be taken care of and so on. That went  
22 on for a few years I guess. Families would take care of her, I'd pay a certain

1 amount. I'd get the money from the farm and... Then I worked during this  
2 time, I did various jobs...

3 *Smith: While you were taking care of the farm.*

4 Cabrini: Yeah. Well, I didn't really. I had a good renter for that. Thank God. After  
5 the other one went, we kicked him off. Well, that was a good one too. I had a  
6 friend who was a,

7 **Tape Counter 239**

8 Judge Lynch, and of course you know, he packed a lot of authority in those  
9 days, you know. People aren't scared like they are now. I mean, they were  
10 scared more like, they aren't that scared nowadays. Well anyway, he wouldn't  
11 pay the rent and he wouldn't get off the place and he was doing all this  
12 damage. And here I was left, a 20 year old. And so I went to Judge Lynch  
13 and he says, "Oh, I'll take care of that for you Francis". So all he did, on his  
14 letterhead, he wrote him a threatening letter and he was gone the next day.

15 *Smith: All right.*

16 Cabrini: Anyhow, I was lucky enough to get an engineer who worked at St. Elizabeth's  
17 in Yakima. Uh, was lucky enough to get him and his family to rent the place.  
18 And he stayed out there for a number of years, and he was really a good man.  
19 Uh, being an engineer, he had some smarts too. Well, my father, when my  
20 father was there, he could you know, make anything run. So, we needed  
21 irrigation. This was back in uh... Uh, we needed water on the place, and so

1 my father instead of fooling with the public irrigation ditch, he just dug a well  
2 and got an engine and pumped the water. He took care of the place.

3 *Smith: He did what he needed to do.*

4 *Cabrini:* Well, my father died of course, and so we had to do something else about the  
5 water. Well, by that time, the ditch had you know caved in and it really  
6 wasn't... The right of water was about a mile or away, 20 acres across and 20  
7 across, and 20 acre tract.... Well, of course, my renter was a good one. He  
8 had a good head too and he had a business in town. Um, he didn't have a  
9 business in town, but he worked at the hospital. And he had a friend who had  
10 a business in town and a coal yard, and he had an acquaintance, acquaintances  
11 and so forth in business. And so, among them, among us, we got a right of  
12 way over the 20-acre tract and a right-of-way down on the 10-acre tract so we  
13 could bring the ditch of water over. And then we had to think about putting in  
14 a pipeline, because the water was gone. And, there was a question of whether  
15 we'd use concrete pipe, which would take a bigger pipe and be heavier, or  
16 galvanized pipe, which would be smaller but might be a little more expensive.

17 Well

18 **Tape Counter 279**

19 anyway, I've forgotten what we decided on, but... And then there was also an  
20 18 inch drop that you had to take in, all that stuff you know.

21 *Smith: All that engineering stuff.*

1      Cabrimi:      Yeah, well anyway, with their help, we finally decided what kind of a pipeline  
2                   to put in and got the right-of-way and the place got water again. And then,  
3                   when I left the Convent, I had to have a place to live. So, Sister Margaret,  
4                   who kind of looked after things at St. Elizabeth's got me a job in housekeeping,  
5                   baby-sitting. Well, I have never done housekeeping or baby-sitting and I didn't  
6                   have any experience with kids. Well, this was housekeeping, taking care of  
7                   three kids, one wasn't going to school yet. And, so I went to their home,  
8                   wondered what I would do with the kids. Of course, I figured out how to  
9                   housekeeping, she showed me how. I did the housekeeping, the washing and  
10                  the ironing, baby-sat the three kids, and I think I got \$25 and my room and  
11                  board. Well, I did that. I didn't really like that. I liked the kids and I liked  
12                  the family, but I really wanted to be with the Sisters again. And so, the man in  
13                  the cafeteria, the nurses cafeteria, they had 100 student nurses in those days at  
14                  St. Elizabeth's School of Nursing. They ate three times a day, you know. Well  
15                  a man that was working in there, doing the scrubbing and all of that stuff and  
16                  serving the nurses, cleaning up after them with the help of a little girl who did  
17                  the dishes, did the dish washing, he just quit (smack) just like that. Well,  
18                  Sister, I wanted to be with the Sisters and Sister Margaret knew it. So, she  
19                  called me and told me that Gilbert's job was empty and was waiting to be  
20                  filled, and wondered if I'd come help out. And she knew that, all of a sudden,  
21                  I'd have these 100 nurses to feed three times and day and no help. That was

1 the end of my job at the campus. And the kids all lined up and cried, so I,  
2 when I told them goodbye. So I thought, well I guess I did a good job.

3 *Smith:* *You must have done a good job.*

4 *Cabrini:* I must have. I must have converted the kids. And, Mrs. Candle wasn't too  
5 happy, but anyway. That one worked out. Then I took Gilbert's job and did  
6 that. Oh, you know, it was... In those days, it was a tile floor, you had to pick  
7 up the chairs and put them on the table and use of that great big mop you  
8 know, to mop the floor. Take care of the cockroaches at night.

9 **Tape Counter 327**

10 *Smith:* *Oh, how fun!*

11 *Cabrini:* And they would come out in droves, you know at night. Turn off the lights for  
12 awhile and then turn on the lights (whew!!). You could hear them going across  
13 the  
14 floor almost. They don't show up in the day time. Well anyway, I did that for  
15 about three years. And, then one day, the Superintendent of Nurses came and  
16 said, "Francis", you know, "We're so glad to have you". She says, "You know,  
17 if we get somebody in here who has the brawn, they don't have the brains. If  
18 they have the brains, they don't have the brawn". She says, "But you've got  
19 both of that". I, do you know how much money I got for that job? My room  
20 and board, and \$12 every two weeks. Well that's, that was a fair wage in those  
21 days. And, well I learned a lot too on the side. There was an Ida Klinge who  
22 was an old maid who had raised her family and she could do anything, sewing

1 or just, she was a perfectionist. And she kind of took me under her wing. She  
2 was kind to me because she knew I had the worry of my mother and my  
3 mother got so difficult. She went on for about three years, I guess.

4 *Smith:* *So while you were at St. E's, she was still out, being...*

5 Cabrini: I was working, I worked at St. Eve's quite awhile with the Sisters, you know.  
6 And, I was happy with that job, because I could well, they had 6:00 Mass. I  
7 could get up and go to the cafeteria and start the coffee and all that stuff by  
8 5:30 and then I'd go to 6:00 Mass and then I'd dash down and finish the  
9 breakfast and then serve the kids. Well, then I'd have about a two or three  
10 hour break in the morning. Then, I'd come back for dinner, for lunch. And,  
11 set up the lunch and do all those things with the kitchen and argue with the  
12 Japanese cook to get enough food to serve. And we had probably, oh probably  
13 a quarter of a block down the hall, you know to push the food wagon. And I  
14 was always running out of food and they would come in with their trays and  
15 some of the nurses would be mad, you know and some would be yakking.  
16 Well, you know, how they are?

17 *Smith:* *As nurses are.*

18 Cabrini: Uh kids. Yeah, they were good, kids. We'd serve between 120, between 80  
19 and 100 a day I guess it was at a meal. Well that went on for about three  
20 years, and then we got a new Director of Nurses and she decided that I'd had  
21 enough working in the cafeteria, that I was

22 **Tape Counter 373**

1 getting older and that I should do something else. So, she took me over and I  
2 was to do the sewing for the nurses. They, you know, they had the starched  
3 uniforms in those days, and I said, "Oh my gosh, I don't know." And they  
4 were just starting to get those electric machines in too and I didn't know, let  
5 alone how to thread one. But, Ida Klinge came to my help. She was a  
6 perfectionist with a sewing machine. And she patiently taught me how to  
7 handle that. Then I got so, and she taught me how to make square patches and  
8 patch those uniforms, so that they looked, they still looked decent even though  
9 most of them was a patch and they were patched with old sheets and whatnot.  
10 Oh, you know we really practiced poverty in those days, without knowing it.  
11 And, we did that for about a year, and in the meantime we could buy. I  
12 learned to sew for myself. You know material that you pay about \$2 a yard  
13 for, you get for 19 cents, you know the cotton stuff and the polyester. Well, I  
14 guess it was more \_\_\_(?). And the wool, you could always buy a nice wool  
15 for \$1 a yard. 54" blind wove, the best - 100%. So, I learned to make me  
16 suits and coats. And in the meantime, during my spare time, I learned to play  
17 tennis, during the hours off you know. There was always somebody who liked  
18 to do those things, and so Hope Whiteneck, she taught me how to play tennis.  
19 We had a big bash. Right after breakfast, we'd go and run down to the tennis  
20 courts at the Lion's Club. There was a swimming pool, of course in the  
21 afternoon, I would swim. And, let's see. Oh yes, and then I decided I had to  
22 learn something. I knew I was getting to be an old lady.



1 *Smith: You must have been all of what, 24?*

2 Cabrini: Over the hill. And so they, well, I did what I could do. They had those WPA  
3 classes at night and so I took a... Whenever there was one available, I would  
4 take it. I took acting once, and I was supposed to be in a play. Part of it, I  
5 was supposed to kiss a guy or the guy was supposed to kiss me. But I didn't  
6 like him, I couldn't stand him, so I dropped out.

7 *Smith: That was the end of her acting career.*

8 Cabrini: Yeah. Then I took up story writing, I think. But one thing I did take and  
9 finish, I was always kind of inclined to shorthand and typing. And so, there  
10 was Torell's School of Shorthand, and I found that I could take a course in  
11 shorthand at this Mrs. Torell's School of Shorthand during my break. And so, I  
12 finished that. I was working on 125 Words in Shorthand, I think. And

13 **Tape Counter 427**

14 then, of course, you have to type. So, that's what I really... But really, what  
15 kind of got me started at that, was here was...medical records, which is a big  
16 thing nowadays was coming into being, Sister Peter - there was a Sister Peter -  
17 who was trying to learn shorthand. Well, I happened to have a, know a little  
18 bit about Gregg and I can't remember why I knew something about Gregg. But  
19 anyway, I happened to have a book, and it wasn't connected with Torell. But I  
20 think maybe I was just studying it on my own, because I did things like that.  
21 And, poor Sister Peter was struggling without any help and so, I said, "Well,  
22 I'll help you as much as I can" and so Sister Peter and I studied shorthand.

1 And maybe that was why I got interested .... But anyway, she learned, she was  
2 given a job in medical records and of course, they took shorthand you know.  
3 In those days, I don't know what they do nowadays, I guess it's dictation  
4 nowadays. But, when the doctor used to finish a case, then he'd come out and  
5 tell you what he did and you were supposed to...

6 *Smith: Yeah, no tape recorders, no dictation machines.*

7 *Cabrini:* And then type it up afterwards for the records. And poor Sister, well she was  
8 trying to do that and so I, I guess that maybe that's why I got interested in the  
9 business part. But I, it was, it has served me in good stead, that odd course  
10 that I took, because oh my gosh, I used it so much. You know, as...

11 *Smith: Well because, then you went back to school, right?*

12 *Cabrini:* Well, not yet. I couldn't afford it. I had to work for a living. Then after, I got  
13 so I thought I was pretty good at sewing, at least I found I could make coats,  
14 suits, dresses, as well as sew the uniforms. Then they decided I should be a  
15 house mother. And so, gosh, all these kids.... Yeah, well anyway, I was house  
16 mother for awhile. And then I don't know what happened. I can't remember  
17 the breakdown exactly, but I know that while I was going, while I was still  
18 working at the hospital. When it was time for working on the fruit, I used to  
19 take a long vacation, because I could make more money. Because I got 27 1/2  
20 cents an hour. And so, I did that. Well, I took a break and I was staying  
21 with... a lady, who ran sort of a boarding house down near the Cannery, and

1 she had different girls there. But I used to go visit at the hospital, you know  
2 when I was, oh, I was coming down, coming back from the

3 **Tape Counter 484**

4 hospital one night and it was about oh, 12 blocks from there and about 10:00  
5 in the evening. I had been visiting in the hospital until about 10:00 at night,  
6 10:00 in the evening and I was walking home. And, I saw this guy and it was  
7 the day of the white cords and dark tops. He was walking on that side of the  
8 street and I was aware, but I just kept on walking. And he came across the  
9 street, and he came around me and he poked a gun in my ribs. And he says,  
10 "Got any money on you?" and I said, "No". I always carried about 25 cents  
11 and you know, that was big money in those days. Pretty good. And, he said,  
12 "Is that all you've got?" I gave him the 25 cents, and he said, "Is that all  
13 you've got?", and I said yeah, that's all. He searched me a little bit and kept  
14 poking the gun a little harder back here, and anyhow so finally he said, "All  
15 right, go on, get going and keep going", and punched me real hard. So, I kept  
16 going.

17 *Smith:* *Yes.*

18 *Cabrini:* I thought it was kind of a roar, because I was thinking it was one of the guys  
19 playing a trick on me from the Cannery. And then I got home, and the lady  
20 (Mrs. Barley or Marla) was sitting there with the girls around the table, just  
21 playing cards or something and I said, "Well, I just got held up", you know,  
22 kind of flippy. And she turned pale and the girls... And she says, "Well, I'll

1 call the police", so we called the police. The police came and I gave them a  
2 description, they didn't find him. But anyway, do you know that little thing  
3 had made three papers, in two Yakima papers and even a Seattle paper. A  
4 bandit gets 25 cents. Boy that was funny. Well anyway, I went back to work  
5 at the hospital then. And in the last year that I worked there, uh by that time, I  
6 had a... Oh, I remember, I owed a bill from my father to the something  
7 comparable to the Memorial Clinic, bunch of doctors. And, it was \$215 and  
8 that was a lot of money. But, I would always, no matter how little I got. I  
9 only had a savings deposit box, I never had a bank account. But a savings  
10 deposit box, \$2.50/mo. And, I'd put something in that see, and I accumulated  
11 like \$200, close to \$200... No, I accumulated half of that amount and it was  
12 during the depression and I'd heard about this 50% off business. So, I rolled  
13 the bill for a couple of years, several years. And, so I saved up half of it and I  
14 says, boy I'm going to try it. So I went to the office, and I says, "I'd like to  
15 make you a deal", and she says, the office person says, "What could you do?"  
16 and I said I could pay you 50% if you give me a clean bill. I says, "I'm tired

17 **Tape Counter 547**

18 of this and I want to start saving up money to go into nurses training". That  
19 was \$350 in those days. And uh, she says, "It's a deal". So, I handed over  
20 half and then saved, then I started saving my \$350 to go to school for nurses  
21 training. That included your uniforms, your tuition, your room and board,

1 books, everything for three years. And if you behaved yourself, well you had a  
2 profession at the end of this three years.

3 *Smith: When did you know you wanted to become a nurse?*

4 Cabrini: Well, I kind of wanted it all along, really. You know, but I thought it was,  
5 that's beyond me. But anyway, I kind of kept it. I, I was over the hill. I was  
6 27 I guess by the time I had enough saved up. I was 26 at that time. I'm way  
7 over the hill here. And in those days, you know, that was over the hill. And,  
8 didn't marry, didn't become a Nun, depressing.

9 *Smith: So, you decided to do that first?*

10 Cabrini: Oh yeah. I said...I'm over the hill, because if I go into, if I become a Sister  
11 now, uh they have to begin at the beginning to educate me. And, I knew that  
12 the Sisters always got their education piece meal. Like they'd, they'd go to  
13 college during the summer and teach all through the year. Or you'd, if you  
14 weren't in the teaching business, you'd get a job cooking or something like that.  
15 And uh, studying to be a nurse and a Sister was kind of uh something you  
16 didn't well...

17 *Smith: So, it was better...*

18 Cabrini: I could tell you some funny stories about that.

19 *Smith: So, you knew you had to get your education first?*

20 Cabrini: So, I knew what, I said before I do anything, I'm going to be educated. I  
21 always kind of had that wanting to be **Tape Counter 588**

1 a Sister way ahead, but then I went to... I finished going to three years of  
2 nurses training in Yakima School  
3 of Nursing. Any School of Nursing, any three year school, any program they  
4 called it Program School, so. Any three year program anyway. You had to  
5 work, and you really earned what you got during those three years. But, you  
6 were in their schooling, and you got credit for it. So...

7 *Smith: And you had a profession at the end.*

8 Cabrini: So, I saved up enough and got through, and all that time I was taking care of  
9 the ranch.

10 *Smith: Yes, and Mom. Where was your mother?*

11 Cabrini: Well Mom, oh yeah, the story of Mom. She got so impossible mentally, that  
12 nobody could take care of her and so that was a hard thing. So, I had to hold  
13 court and I went to my friend, Judge Lynch and he made it as easy and  
14 sensible as possible. He understood the situation and it wasn't too much of a  
15 deal. We had a few witnesses, and so forth. And, I decided that she would go  
16 to Medical Lake. She went to Medical Lake. Western State wasn't available,  
17 in this area. And so, she went to Medical Lake and she was there a couple of  
18 months and she passed away. And then, I happened to have some friends in  
19 Spokane who had relatives or somebody from there. And so, I had a base in  
20 Spokane. And then when they called me from Medical Lake and told me that  
21 she was in bad shape, I went right away. I went by bus, and I could remember  
22 the bus driver, he drove me up into that Medical Lake yard and he says, "Now

1 be careful, these people are nuts". So, I got directed to the Superintendent's  
2 office and I talked to him about it and he says, "You know" he says, "She's  
3 bad" and I said, "Well, can I see her?" So, he took me and he says, "Now, do  
4 you want her?" and I says, "What do you mean, do I want her?" And what he  
5 was asking me was, and I guess some people just give their family up. And he  
6 wanted to know when she died, if I wanted to take her. So, I said, "Oh yes".  
7 And so, when she died, they let me know and they told me that they had called  
8 a Priest and so that was as much as I remember in those days. And, then I got  
9 instructions. I made connections with a undertaker in Yakima for I wanted her  
10 buried next to my Dad. And, I found out what to do. And, a lot of it was, I  
11 just gave the word and it was done. And, they took her body, embalmed it,  
12 took her to a train and I had to buy a First Class ticket for her to ride in the  
13 baggage car

14 **Tape Counter 665**

15 and a had a First Class ticket for me to ride too. And I got her from Spokane  
16 to Yakima and then we had a funeral for her. And, and that took care of her,  
17 and uh...

18 *Smith: And then, sister Agnes, where is your sister Agnes?*

19 *Cabrini: Well, Agnes in the meantime, I was lucky with her too because she was ready*  
20 *to go to high school. And I, I was beside myself. What in the, poor me, I'm*  
21 *not too grown up myself. And, she's just 18. And so, I uh, I was fortunate. I*  
22 *had a Sister friend who got named Superior at St. Vincent Academy in Walla*

1 Walla. And she wrote me and said, "You know, I'm going to take boarders  
2 this year, and I can take Agnes and she can work for room and board during  
3 high school, just like you did".

4 *Smith: Wonderful.*

5 Cabrini: She was the type of person who uh, she was a little rascal and she didn't go for  
6 staying at the Academy. But, she did make friends. Well too, and she made  
7 good friends with the engineer's family, Pop McAllister and he just took her in.  
8 They just took her in and she became one of the family.

9 *Smith: Well, good.*

10 Cabrini: And then, so she graduated and she entered.

11 *Smith: She entered right after high school?*

12 Cabrini: Uh huh. She did it before I did.

13 *Smith: She didn't have to go through all the searching and all the round about things  
14 that you had to do?*

15 Cabrini: Well anyway...

16 *Smith: Well you know what, I think we've done an awfully lot for today. And, I think  
17 let's next week, let's pick up at St. Elizabeth and the start of your nursing  
18 career and when you entered the Sisters again. And then, we'll follow that on  
19 to St. Peters. It's been a very productive day, and I thank you very much.*

20 Sister Cabrini continues...

21 Cabrini: Well, that was. Well, I'm painting my house now and it really needed it very  
22 much.



1 *Smith: This is the farm in Yakima?*

2 **Tape Counter 716**

3 Cabrini: Yeah, uh huh. Well, where the renter was. And he was willing to help me  
4 you know, as much as with the big heavy stuff. And so, I checked around to  
5 see how much it would cost to paint a five room house, and they said \$50.  
6 And \$50 dollars, that's a tremendous sum. And so, I said well, for that I can  
7 do it myself. And so, I borrowed the renter's boys' bicycle for transportation. I  
8 could ride a bike, I did a lot of that. And I went to the store with  
9 transportation, and he made a deal. He says, "I'll see that you get the paint,  
10 and I'll do the big heavy stuff and see that you know, you're getting the  
11 quantities that you can handle and so on". And so, I took three days off, five  
12 days I guess it was. And uh, I painted the house.

13 *Smith: Oh my goodness Sister!*

14 Cabrini: Five room house. The first day, I got sick, and uh, I guess I was allergic to  
15 paint. Anyway, I was sick to my stomach and I painted the house.

16 *Smith: Never mind the sickness, you just went ahead.*

17 Cabrini: Well, I took a day off. Then after that, I took it to business. And then, the  
18 roof started coming off and I said, "Oh, what'll I do?" I rang Sears, and Sears  
19 Roebuck in Yakima, and they said well, for \$100, we'll put a good roof on it,  
20 any color you want and we'll use the best shingles we've got. So I said, it's a  
21 deal. So, they tore the old roof off and put a new roof on for \$100.

1 *Smith: I thought you were going to tell me that you went up and you put the roof on*  
2 *yourself too.*

3 *Cabrini: No, I didn't try that. But I knew I could paint.*

4 *Smith: It's still a big job, a five bedroom house..*

5 *Cabrini: Oh yeah, I was so tired.*

6 *Smith: I bet.*

7 *Cabrini: And riding the bicycle to boot.*

8 *Smith: To pick up the paint, to get it out...*

9 *Cabrini: Yeah, clean the brushes and I didn't know much about painting, but I learned.*

10 **Tape Counter 788,**

11 **End of Tape 1, Side 2**

12