

Memories of Sacred Heart told

By LAUREN PRINGLE

It was my first day of school at the Academy of the Sacred Heart on East Jefferson. The wide mahogany staircase leading from the St. Antoine entrance to the junior school's second floor study hall looked longer than the staircase to the stairs.

My mother had been told to come no further than the first step. I was to mount the stairs solo - a feat I would do many times in the next two years, solo and in ranks and at various speeds.

Up I went toward the black-clad figure waiting at the top. My six-year-old legs were acting by the time I reached her. I'd come a long way - and frankly that scene is the only totally clear memory of my two years at East Jefferson. Blurry others are of the stained glass windows in the chapel that were moved each time the community moved - of an outdoor spring festival at which my cousin did a solo dance and I basked in her glory - of a Thanksgiving bazaar (proceeds to the foreign missions) to which some boys sneaked in and threw the faculty into a mass coronary. This was the time of life when males were non-existent to nuns and little girls. Fathers and brothers didn't count. But the older girls were well aware that I'd High was across the street. Happy placement.

DURING MY FIRST two years, the biggest flap was produced by the announcement that the school was going to be moved to a new building on Lawrence and Twelfth Street. In that time no building received closer inspection. As a reward for good behavior, whole classes went on tours of the new premises. We traveled to the outer limits of North

west Detroit by father-driven cars. On the spot we drove chaparrons and workmen quietly road-today the word would be "bananas" - by climbing ladders, running up and down across lumber piles, and tight-rope-walking exposed beams.

Strange behavior for little persons who had ground into their dear little heads that "A lady is never seen on the street without gloves."

If I would pick one statement that would sweeten the end-of-the-summer announcement of the reopening of school it was the information that next year we would have new uniforms - a style change that came every two or three years.

Uniforms were the great levelers in the school society. They caused a great deal of static because as one nun explained, "It's practically impossible to find a style that looks well on all the shapes and sizes we have here."

As the years went by, long pleated skirts and shirtwaists were replaced by Peter Thompsons in dress that looked like a sailor suit (but wasn't), by blouses and skirts that met when they were put on in the morning and then separated for the rest of the day by jumpers and blouses, and now "kitties" and "appropriate tops."

The major and everlasting accessory to all these outfits was a pair of rubber-heeled shoes. Convent housekeepers have a fetish for waxing floors and could produce not only a blinding sheen but a lethal footing if one was not well-grounded.

While the students' uniforms changed from time to time, the nuns' habits stayed in their original form - adaptations of the weeds of the Burgundian widows. The order was founded in Burgundy at a time when religious activity was not popular with the French government, therefore

widow's attire was inconspicuous.

Nowadays, some of the teaching nuns wear secular dress and even the traditional habit has been streamlined and fashioned of more practical fabric than heavy serge. A former Detroit schoolmate, now a member of the order, told me, "now we're all drip-dry."

Memories of Lawrence Avenue come on a lot stronger than those of Jefferson Avenue.

They are faded by a booklet written years ago by the late John Conway Cook who was not only the son and grandson of Sacred Heart girls but who married an alumna and fathered three girls who are graduates of Grose Pointe. John called himself "a step-son of Sacred Heart." He never did master the "lingo" of primes, cache-cache, guder and few other hold-overs from the French traditions that are second nature to Sacred Heart girls. He did have several cousins who were en-

rolled at Lawrence Avenue and thereby an excellent opportunity to smooth the way for his U.S. buddies actually. He writes, "My fellow students and I would wait at Lewis Drugstore." It was still at the corner of Hamilton and Lawrence Avenues the last time I went by, but I doubt it still serves what was the best chocolate fudge sundae ever concocted. They were so good we had to give them up for Lent which did our complexion and figures as much good as our souls.

At Lawrence Avenue basketball was the big game. There was the annual game between LA and Grose Pointe that engendered rivalry that, at times, felt quite a bit short of Christian charity. We played with all the spirit of a Little League parent and some of the tactics.

Our sportswear - blousing bloomers and muddy blouses - were considered daring but modest. Those were times to remember.



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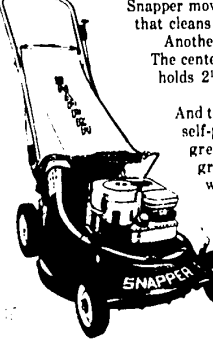
Monday, May 3, 9:30 am



Twirling lessons start

Would-be baion twirlers get help from Marta Scharrenburg in her class in the Farmington Community Center. The instructor is a champion, national fancy-struttr who passes on her know-how to Elizabeth Lutes (left), Lisa Tucci and Kelly Sparrow. The spring session is set to begin in the center on Saturday, May 1, and registrations are being taken now.

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- 1st prize \$1,000 passbook savings account
- 2nd prize \$750 passbook savings account
- 3rd prize \$500 passbook savings account

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