

**LOCAL LEGACY 2000 --- THE WOMEN OF ST. ROSE**

*tape of Rod A. Davis, President and CEO, St. Rose Dominican Hospital*

Rod Davis:

“It is my pleasure to introduce to you *The Women of St. Rose*, a special project of the St. Rose Dominican Hospital Women’s Committee. *The Women of St. Rose* is based on a series of audio-taped interviews conducted over the past three years. It features both women and men sharing their memories of the early history of the hospital. The presence of the Adrian Dominican Sisters and other women who were so influential in establishing and maintaining what is now known as St. Rose Dominican Hospital is especially highlighted.

The Women’s Committee of St. Rose was established in 1996 for the purpose of documenting and celebrating the many accomplishments of women affiliated with the hospital. The Committee sponsors an annual celebration in March for the International Month of Women. It also produces an annual booklet developed with the assistance of area schoolchildren that honors an individual who exemplifies the quality, compassionate healthcare for which St. Rose Dominican Hospital has become known.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the unwavering dedication of the Adrian Dominican Sisters, who founded this hospital and who continue to be at the heart and soul of our healthcare ministry. I would also like to extend my thanks to the members of the Women’s Committee for the countless hours they have spent on this project over the years, particularly those individuals who have served as volunteers.”

St. Rose Dominican Hospital is pleased and honored to participate in the Library of Congress Local Legacy Project. I hope you enjoy reading and listening to the many wonderful stories told by the project participants and celebrating with us the outstanding achievements of *The Women of St. Rose*.”

*Narrator:*

The committee's theme, *Women of St. Rose: Past, Present, Future*, is reflected in the poem, SEASON'S OF A WOMEN'S LIFE, by Nancyann Turner, OP.

Our lives grow richer  
and more beautiful  
from season to season and year to year.

We women live in the present  
while building on the past  
even as we prepare for the future.

New life begins before old life has fallen.  
Each new life grows and flowers  
in the soil of past experiences.

As the past is recalled and oral histories recorded, interesting themes, such as, the pioneering spirit of the women of St. Rose and their service to the community, continue to emerge. Archival materials from the Adrian Dominican Motherhouse in Michigan trace this spirit to the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Order of Preachers was founded by Dominic Guzman, canon regular who lived in Osma, a city on the frontier of Spain.

**(The Pioneering Spirit of the Adrian Dominican Sisters)**

Before the Preachers were confirmed as an Order by the Catholic Church, however, Dominic called together eleven women to form a monastery in Prouille, France. These women devoted their lives to prayer for the spread of the gospel and the success of the preaching ministry throughout Europe. In 1853, four women were sent from Europe to teach in the New World. These pioneering women began the foundation of eleven Dominican congregations in the United States. Later, in 1879, filled with their founders spirit of risk and response to need, six sisters were called from one of those early American foundations to begin St. Joseph Hospital and Home for the Aged in Adrian, Michigan .

In the mid-1940's, members from the Adrian Dominican Congregation accepted a new mission. This time it was to the Las Vegas Valley where their legacy of service to the community was to become firmly established at St. Rose Dominican Hospital.

The Basic Magnesium plant, built 10 miles southeast of Las Vegas, employed a workforce of 4,000-6,000 persons. As part of the war effort to provide health care to the area's industrial workers and their families, the government founded Basic Magnesium Hospital in 1942. When the war ended three years later, the government then began looking for a private buyer in order to prevent the closing of the hospital. Thus, out of a need in the local community of what was then the township of Henderson, Nevada, a new ministry was to be born.

Bishop Thomas K. Gorman, from the Diocese of Reno, Nevada wrote his first letter to Mother Mary Gerald Barry, OP superior of the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan. The letter, dated May 20, 1946 simply states:

*Voice over:*

“This hospital is the last word in equipment, including even dental facilities. The whole plant would be turned over to begin with at a nominal lease of one dollar per year, which would include free water and power...As time is an element in this matter-other private parties being interested, we would like to present the government representatives with an accomplished fact...”

*Narrator:*

Bishop Gorman included his itinerary so Mother Gerald could reach him. She answered immediately by Western Union: “Interested. Would like information on number of beds, wards, and private rooms.”

Mother Gerald's swift response to Bishop Gorman was the first of many letters, telegrams and negotiations followed up by Father Peter Moran, pastor of St. Peter's Church in Henderson.

Hospital volunteer Peggy Vaughn relates the following story:

*Oral tape of Peggy Vaughan*

“In 1946, I was a student at Siena Heights College, the same campus as the Motherhouse of the Adrian Dominicans. My connection with the hospital at that time was that the Dean of Women, Sister Benedicta Marie, posted a little notice on the chapel door...’Will you please pray for Mother Gerald,’...who was the Mother General of the community...’She is going to Nevada to investigate the Adrian Dominicans setting up a mission in a hospital”

*Narrator:*

In May of the following year, the government announced its agreement with the Adrian Dominican Sisters to accept ownership and responsibility for the hospital. In their agreement, the sisters committed to assume all debts of the hospital and to pay \$1.00 yearly to the government for the next twenty-five years..

On June 27, 1947, Basic Magnesium Hospital became **Rose de Lima Hospital**.

Community leader Louis F. LaPorta, whose son was the first baby born at the Hospital, summarizes the transaction:

*Oral tape of Louis F. LaPorta*

“When the hospital became available, there was a movement as to who would really operate it. Father Peter Moran was very instrumental, as well as Senator Pat McCarran, to entice the Sisters because some of them were nurses, to come out to Henderson and run the hospital. Of course, with lack of great resources, financial resources and all, the plant site, which is the Basic Management Inc. and the State of Nevada, the Colorado River Commission, which was an agency of the state, sold the hospital for \$1.00 to the sisters and there was also a utility consideration, granted to them, and because, early on, there just weren't the kind of finances that anybody could run it. There were only 5 or 6 doctors in this area. So it was the beginning of something.”

**(The Adrian Dominican Sisters' Ministry Begins)**

*Narrator:*

Mother Gerald selected seven members from the Adrian Dominican Congregation to travel to the small desert town of Henderson, NV. These early pioneer Dominican women were Sisters Marie Angelita Wasco, Marie Joyce Smith, Mary Carolyn Harrison, Marie Daniel Lundy, Felicia Haidysz, Daniel Therese Smith and Marie Augustine Seissinger.

Mother Gerald was known as a very influential, visionary woman and prepared the sisters for their missions. Sister. Brigid McDonald remembers:

*Oral tape of Sister Brigid*

...she was a very dynamic woman. Reached out to other communities, helped educate other sisters from other communities and what we had she shared. She was great for education. You couldn't go into a job unless you had the education....she was for the most part pretty fair and square, but very well thought of in all the religious communities across the nation.”

*Narrator:*

Sister Anne Wasco, formerly known as Sister Angelita, reads from her written memories.

*Oral Tape of Sister Anne Wasco*

“Mother Gerald sent four sisters to nursing schools... Sister Madonna, into anesthesia. All at different nursing schools. Sisters Augustine, Daniel Therese and Charlyn had their RN. degrees before they entered the convent. So all had different training when they came together. Each had a lot to offer.”

*Narrator:*

During a telephone interview, Sister Anne further states:

*Oral tape of Sister Anne Wasco*

“I did not have a degree and I was swept off my feet when Mother Gerald called me to the office and said, ‘Sister, I need you.’ This was her way of telling you that you are important. So then she said, ‘I’m going to change your mission and send you to a hospital...And so it was just a matter of a week or so that we were on the train and going west. I was scared. I was really scared. I’ll admit that.”

*Narrator:*

Mother Gerald had full confidence in the group of women that she sent out to the Las Vegas Valley. Sister Felicia, who later became the second administrator of the hospital recalls:

*(Oral Tape of Sister Felicia)*

“Before we left Adrian, she gave us her blessing and said, ‘Now just do God’s Will in the new place.’”

*Narrator:*

Mother Gerald is remembered as a woman with a sense of humor, as evidenced in this letter she writes to the pioneering group:

*Voice Over:*

“I don’t want you to be floorwalkers—as though you were in Marshall Fields of Chicago...I expect the sisters to do the nursing and the work that is to be done there...taking hold of the various duties in the manner that will give glory to our Father who is in Heaven.”

*Narrator:*

The pioneering group of religious arrived at 1:30 A. M. on June 27, 1947. In the words of Sister Felicia, that first day is recalled:

*Voice Over:*

In the morning when we awakened, we took stock of our surroundings: the sand, the sagebrush and tumbleweeds. We were enraptured by everything. It was so different from Adrian, Michigan. We had trees and bushes, some native wild flowers, and, of course, the cacti, which were tremendous. We loved the sunrises and sunsets, and it seemed strange to have no dusk. It was daylight, and then it would be night so quickly. We could see Mt. Charleston in the distance, and we loved the rocky hills that surrounded our valley.”

**(The Early Years: 1947 – 1960)**

*Narrator:*

The sister’s dedication became apparent as the Adrian Dominicans filled positions of responsibility at the hospital. Sister Carolyn, the first administrator, is described by Sister Anne Wasco:

*Oral tape of Sister Anne*

“She was a very good negotiator. She was gentle but stern. Knowledgeable and never asked of others to do what she herself would not do.”

*Narrator:*

All the Sisters worked long hours and fulfilled many responsibilities. Once again Sister Anne reads from her memories as she describes a typical day:

*(Oral tape of Sister Anne )*

“We rose at 5:00 a.m. in the morning. Said our morning prayers in the little Chapel followed by mass and breakfast so the sisters had to be at their stations at 7:00 a.m. to get and give reports and I would slip out between prayers to get the breakfast going and then get back for mass.

Many times the sisters would be called out for emergencies or for some other reasons and there would only be one or two of us left to continue the prayers. And that is what got us through the difficult times.

*Narrator:*

Sister Anne continues.

*Oral tape of Sr. Anne Wasco*

“We had a lovely chapel made out of one of the wards. We did take out time out and prayed everyday and that’s how we were able to stay on our feet.

I have a funny story. I remember we had a lab technician, a young man, a Catholic, also. He would see that the sisters would be running back and forth and he would just stand there in awe wondering what could be going on. And then one day he worked up enough nerve to come up to a couple of us and said, ‘My vision...my understanding of sisters is they walk in the garden with their Prayer Book and I haven’t seen that yet!’

*Narrator:*

Sister Anne once again refers to her written memories as she tells of those early days.

*(Oral reading from Sister Anne)*

The beginning was hard and we had to build our reputation for the hospital. At first the patient count was low.

One day Sister Carolyn came and asked, ‘Do you need that many people in the kitchen to work?’ Well, I looked and thought for a while and before I knew it, I was the only one left to cook, to buy, to set up the trays, to dish out the food – all the kitchen chores. The other sisters were helpful when they had a free minute. That was for the week or so before things picked up and we were able to call some of the employees back.”

*Narrator:*

In addition to Sister Carolyn as Administrator, Sister Felicia worked in the nursery and in Medical Records; Sister Marie Daniel served as the hospital’s first Director of Nursing and was on call 24 hours a day. She is described by Sister Anne

*Oral tape Sister Anne :*

She was the pharmacist because there was no pharmacist on duty and she loved being busy. Whenever we were busy to the hilt, she was in her glory. She was loved by all the doctors and the staff and the patients...she had a great love for new babies and she was in her glory whenever a new mother came in. She would sit with her until the baby came."

## Narrator:

To honor Sr. Marie Daniel, the Women's Committee produced its second booklet, "A Woman in White," in 1999. The book is included as part of this project.

Recognizing that the work of the hospital could not be done by the Adrian Dominican Sisters alone, they built solid relationships with the hospital staff upon their arrival and began to build bridges with individuals in the community. Bettylou Anderson, one of the original employees of the hospital and close friend to the sisters, recalls the influence of the Dominicans regarding racial discrimination.

*Oral Tape of Bettylou Anderson*

"We had Carver Park for the blacks and Victory Village was for the whites....Now, for myself, coming from Montana, I had neither been exposed to nuns or blacks, so I had no preconceived feelings toward either one of them. But it was natural to segregate the blacks it seems because the housing was segregated. So if a black patient came in we usually put them in a room by themselves or something. Sister Carolyn put an end to that. If you were a medical patient you went to a medical ward."

## Narrator:

Clara "Buckie" McCoig recalls her years as a nurse at the hospital.

*Oral tape of Buckie McCoig:*

"I was the first nurse anesthetist in the Southern Nevada area. After Rose de Lima got started, I got acquainted with Sister Madonna, who was giving the anesthetics here; and at certain times, she'd need a day off or some time away from the hospital. I would come in and fill in for her....It was a small hospital but a very friendly hospital. All the departments worked together. It was a nice place to work. They had a sister in charge of each department....The staff always seemed to be happy and work together real well..."

*Narrator:*

Nurse Eleanor Cunningham came to the hospital in 1955. She remembers one of the religious ceremonies during her tenure at the hospital:

*Oral tape of Eleanor Cunningham, R.N.*

“One thing that was interesting was at communion time in the morning. You received a list the night before of the people that wanted communion. Communion was brought down and the bells would ring. They were hand bells. The bells would ring about 5:30a.m. – 6:30 a.m. each morning. One sister would get the list and they would set the table with a white cloth and candle. The doors would be shut for those not receiving communion and were not to be disturbed.”

*Narrator:*

Nearby, in Boulder City, Sister Faith Mary, one of the Episcopalian Sisters from England, was serving as an administrator to St. Jude Ranch for Children. Sister Faith Mary recalls her early days in the desert and the start of what was to become the beginning of deep relationship between the Episcopalian Sisters in Boulder City and the Dominican Sisters at St. Rose in Henderson.

*Oral tape of Sister Faith Mary*

“We had no idea it was going to be like this – so hot, but we survived. The cottages were just being built. So we had to sleep on the floor, to make a cup of tea we had to boil the water in a frying pan. We thought this is America. America has everything. Anyhow, I just don’t know for certain how the Sisters at St. Rose de Lima heard about us. But, it was the very early days because we didn’t have any children and then we got a phone call from them to say who they were, where Henderson was and that they’d like us to go over and have a meal with them.”

*Narrator:*

Sister Veronica Gonthier shared many pleasant times and meals with the sisters from Boulder City. She also recalls some of the more difficult times during the growing years of the hospital.

*Oral tape of Sister Veronica:*

“Getting any doctors who would come and live in Henderson was very hard at that time. The sisters have told me that everyday they prayed for doctors to come. It was a risk for a doctor to start up a practice here. Would the people who had come to work at the plant stay? Would the plants succeed under private management? And what opportunities were here for them? Some came and went. It was hard.”

*Narrator:*

In 1950, there were three physicians living and practicing in Henderson. One of these physicians, Dr. Miller, recalls a few special times in the hospital’s emergency room, as he describes in a written history of his time at the hospital:

*Voice over:*

“One evening in the E.R. we had a man come staggering in with the odor of over-indulgence of alcohol, silently and desperately pointing down his throat—it was not from choking in a restaurant, or from any respiratory distress because his color was a beautiful pink—even a bit of flushing. Upon looking in his throat we were able to see a bright red poker chip standing on edge vertically, at the opening entrance of the vocal chords; leaving him able to get air, but unable to make a sound. He had been playing a game with his young granddaughter by holding the chip in his mouth and then sucking it in as she would grab for it. His reflexes had been slowed with his refreshments, and he had inhaled and sucked in too vigorously. With the aid of some anesthetic spray and some children’s tonsil instruments, I was able to present him with his red poker chip with a little advice, “Grandfathers should not drink, and play poker with their younger grandchildren—unless you use only cards!”

*Narrator:*

Clearly, over the years, the Adrian Dominican Sisters have had and continue to have a tremendous impact on the hospital. Elsbeth Andonov, R.N., currently a nurse manager at St. Rose and formerly manager of the surgery department, describes what it was like to work with the sisters:

*Oral tape of Elsbeth Andonov, RN*

“One of the good things for me and why I love St. Rose are the sisters. Over the years, there have been sisters here who were so supportive and so caring, human beings. You want to stay, you didn’t want to leave. You knew if something would happen or if you needed a shoulder to cry on or if you needed some advice, you knew where to go.”

*Narrator:*

One patient’s story exemplifies the dedication of the sisters. Anne Rosenzweig recalls:

*Oral tape of Anne Rosenzweig*

“I had been working at the Sahara Hotel at that time and I took leave of absence, not knowing how bad I would be afterwards. I had lost quite a bit of blood and weight and anyway, we didn’t have a car.

My husband worked at the Sands and he was working swing shift. He had no way of getting out to Rose de Lima...no buses at that time where we lived. We lived near the bus stop and he was able to go to the bus stop because the buses ran along Las Vegas Blvd. He would thumb a ride every night to Henderson. The sisters allowed him to come in at 2 o’clock in the morning just to see me...just to look at me for awhile. And when he did come, I was quite ill and a sister would be sitting at my bed watching me all night long. That’s what I can remember and think about and always talk about. It is how beautiful they were to me.”

*Narrator:*

The spirit of the hospital in the 1950’s and the need to reach into the community for resources beyond reimbursable care is exemplified in what has become one of the most cherished St. Rose stories – that of the Angel Bread. Excerpts from an article which appeared on June 15, 1958 in the Las Vegas Review Journal summarizes this story. The article begins:

*(Voice over)*

Sister Felicia, the hospital superintendent, was making her usual rounds and asked a particular patient for money to build surgical facilities and add a 40-bed wing. The patient, a public relations director at the Sands Hotel, was not at all satisfied with the food at the hospital and offered little encouragement until the day he tasted the toast from the kitchen.

When Sister Felicia came in his room, he said, “You have a gold mine right here. Put this bread on the market and make money. This is truly angelbread.” This was the beginning of the first fundraising campaign for the new medical wing at Rose de Lima Hospital.

The press agent enlisted the help of Jewish show producer Jack Entratter and Catholic lawyer John Mowbray who formed the Angelbread Foundation.

*Narrator:*

In 1998 the Women's Committee produced a booklet commemorating Sister Angelita and the Angelbread story. The book is included with this project.

**(Rose de Lima Begins to Grow: 1960-1970)**

Many citizens from Henderson still hold fond memories of Angelbread. Many also refer to the hospital by the name it was originally christened, Rose de Lima. The "Saint" part of the name was omitted so people of all faiths would feel comfortable in seeking care at the facility.

Under the guidance of the second administrator, Sister Helen McGinley, the hospital worked to increase the effectiveness of operations and became the first hospital in Southern Nevada to receive accreditation. Shirley Lane-Smith talks about some of these changes:

*Oral tape of Shirley Lee-Smith:*

I was asked to set up the medical record department. It was necessary for certification. I visited the hospital for several days in Santa Cruz to see theirs and I would compare what I knew with what they were doing and get some advice from the administrator there as to how to get started. Then I went back to St. Rose and spent the summer setting it up. After it was set up, I trained a woman who took over. Then I would work with her getting started at it and in future years I would still look in on it."

*Narrator:*

In time, the hospital and the sisters gained respect as business women by including the citizens of Henderson in the decision making process.

With John F. Kennedy as the new Democratic contender for President and the Singing Nun topping the charts with the No.1 hit song, *Dominique*, in the autumn of 1960, Rose de Lima Hospital unveiled its new three-story patient wing on October 28. Included in it were a new emergency room, surgical suites, obstetrics unit, and additional patient beds to better accommodate the growing community.

In August of 1965, Sister Georgann Duggan became the fourth hospital administrator. Despite difficult financial hardship for the hospital, the Sisters continued to operate it and serve community needs. Sr. Veronica comments on this continued dedication:

*Oral tape of Sister Veronica Gonthier*

“Also, the thing that moved the sisters to always go ahead and to do was, ‘Is it a need in the community’.. meaning the civic community...’If so, we have to see what we can do to provide it.’ See, right from the very beginning there was a need here...somebody needed a hospital and the sisters felt they could provide. All through...every time there was a new program to be initiated or when they were to build an addition, it was always, ‘Is there a need here and one we can fulfill.’”

*Narrator:*

Sister Georgann and Sister Brigid, also at the hospital in the sixties and seventies, had outstanding relationships with community members that often gave them inspiration to continue during hard financial times. Sister Brigid recalls:

*Oral tape of Sister Brigid and interviewer:*

“In fact our Mother General, at that time, Mother Rosemary Ferguson said – she looked at the place and knew what we were going through and she said, ‘Now you know, you don’t have to stay there. If you think we should close this place you let me know and we will do it.’ And why didn’t you? Well, we said, give it another chance. We always felt that Henderson some day would move. And we got a lot of that courage and stamina from Selma. Selma Bartlett. She was our strong rod and she knew that the community needed a hospital. She was like the dog with the bone and she was not going to let us give in and she supported us and I think if it weren’t for Selma we probably would have said, who cares. And yet the people were very good to us there. We had wonderful support from most of the people there.”

“Well, Sister, let me ask you all of this, each one of you, what was your greatest personal success during your time out here. Sanity, would that count?”

What were your greatest personal regrets during your tenure? Or did you have any regrets? Are you kidding? I don’t think, you know, there was hard times, but you know we didn’t have the things that hospital administrators have now. It’s the government and the DRG’s and all the regulations and the HMO’s, in many ways we were blessed and didn’t know it, you know. We were fortunate to be in the hospital business when we were.”

*Narrator:*

Community leader Barbara Greenspun and her husband Hank were early supporters of the hospital during difficult financial times. Mrs. Greenspun speaks fondly of the sisters:

*Oral tape of Barbara Greenspun*

"I always had a great deal of respect for the sisters. They didn't have the emotional problems that nurses had with families and so forth. They're dedicated to whatever they do. That's their whole life. I always felt very comfortable with them and you know my background is from Ireland. I am not Catholic but I've always been very warm to the sisters and what they do and I appreciate what they do."

**(Continuing Growth: 1970-1980)**

*Narrator:*

By 1972, as Rose de Lima celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, nearly 67,000 patients had been treated and 9,950 babies had been born at the hospital. On July 17, 1974 the word "Saint" was added to the hospital's name and it now became known as St. Rose de Lima. That same year, the hospital received final title to the property from the government. In 1978, Sister Maureen Corner arrived to succeed Sister Georganne as administrator.

Sister Maureen believed strongly in the future of not only of the hospital, but the City of Henderson as well. She brought a strong business sense to St. Rose and had to make some very difficult decisions about its future. In a telephone interview, Sr. Maureen speaks on the issue of hospital finances:

*Oral tape of interviewer and Sister Maureen Corner:*

"Sister how did you overcome some of your financial---your lack of financial resources?"

Hard work, a lot of hard work. We worked hard at collecting our bills. Part of it was to look at our management skills. Part of it was building our image in the community. We had been there a long time and people felt endeared to us. It didn't have a poor quality image, it was just a more of a warm and fuzzy image as opposed to a high-tech image. . And warm and fuzzy is very important but we needed a little bit more on the high-tech side, a middle ground on that. So that was one of the things we had to work out.

Building the basic management systems needed to be done and management expertise needed to be enhanced.

We needed to get a focus in a strategic direction, and we needed to develop systems to be sure that we were being faithful to that focus in strategic direction

I remember meeting with the consultant, after they did this draft of the strategic plan, and we spent about half a day or a day going over their plan.... And then we called the consultants back to meet with us and said, 'Okay, here's the plan you gave us, here's what we've developed as an implementation plan. Now is this what you had in mind? Is this going to work? Just testing what we planned to do. They stared at each other and I thought, 'I wonder what I said. It's obviously something. And they said, 'You can't do all that in the timeframe you talked about.' I said, 'We have to.' They said, "Well you just can't. It can't be done that fast.' I said, 'It's got to be done that fast. We don't have a choice.' And we didn't get it all done in that timeframe, but we got a lot of it done.

*Narrator:*

On a lighter note, Nurse Rita Maestas has recollections about several of the Las Vegas Strip entertainers visiting the hospital:

*Oral tape of Rita Maestas*

"And there's a lot of celebrities come to this hospital. . . Like Bing Crosby's son. And Elvis came out here.. .To entertain the patient. I remember it would be a patient that was dying of cancer and his wish was to meet him, and he came out and brought him a terrarium, you know.. .And then w~ had the Newton's what is it—Wayne Newton? Yes, his family came to this hospital in the early 70's. I've taken care of them. And I've seen him here, he's never been a patient here but he has been here visiting. And then Sister Dolores and Wayne Newton were very close."

Okay, what was this about Bob Newhart? Oh, one day we were just—the emergency door rang so we ran over there to see what was coming in, because that's what we did. We took care of the floor. We took care of the emergency room This was in 1975. So we opened up the door and there's Bob Newhart with a great big bunny. The Easter Basket must have been this big—.. .About two and a half feet. It was this Easter basket and this chocolate bunny that must have been four feet high. Brought it to the nurses in the pediatric ward He just came and he looked around and he says, 'This is a gift from me for the nurses in the pediatric ward.'"

Narrator:

On a more serious note, in 1988, the hospital was part of one of Southern Nevada's largest disasters—the explosion at the nearby Pepcon Chemical Plant. Once again, the community rallied around the hospital to help them meet the community need. Nurse Lori Mann was part of the team in the emergency room on the day of the blast:

*Oral tape of Lori Mann, RN*

“The biggest comment I can make is the way the hospital staff, the residents of not only Henderson, Las Vegas, surrounding areas, clear from Arizona, the local grocery stores, just came out for this hospital to help us in a way none of us would ever have expected. Albertson's grocery store sent over chicken and ice cause they knew we wouldn't have any way to cool. We were all expecting a lot of burns because of the fires. Arizona sent up a helicopter for our use if we needed it. I have a friend who works at Sunrise Hospital.

They had organized and set aside a couple of dozen nurses that they could spare, that either lived out here, or had family out here that they might be concerned about...Somebody showed up at our back door with a truck full of oxygen...All the surrounding doctor's offices in the medical professional buildings were here to help us...People just bent over backwards to help us through that crisis, and as big a crisis as it was, I don't think it could have run any smoother.”

*Narrator:*

Community leader Dorothy Vondenbrink adds her thoughts on the Pepcon Explosion:

*Oral tape of Dorothy Vondenbrink*

“Well they always knew the hospital was important, but to have a hospital right here when you had an explosion and people were hurt and St. Rose was wonderful. They opened their doors, people came in and volunteered; it was just a really great experience for the City. Everybody in the town pulled together during the pepsin blast. Not only was the hospital like the center with everybody coming here and having it readily available for all the emergencies, but also the people came together as almost a family. Anybody that's home was damaged or store fronts damaged with the windows blown out, people went around and boarded up for them.

Everybody helped each other and to me that's what Henderson is all about and that's the reason I like having a hospital here and St. Rose particularly the Dominican Sisters have a commitment to caring and there's a love there that you don't get in other hospitals.”

**(A Decade of Change: 1980-1990)**

In 1988, the hospital in Henderson, Nevada joined in co-sponsorship of Catholic Healthcare West. Known also as "CHW, this health care organization united the efforts of the Sisters of Mercy of Auburn, California, the Sisters of Mercy of Burlingame, California, and the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan. This unification of a shared commitment to provide quality, compassionate health care would place St. Rose de Lima on the threshold of becoming a primary health care resource in southern Nevada

Community leader Louis La Porta speaks of the decision to affiliate with Catholic Healthcare West:

*Oral tape of Louis F. La Porta*

"I don't remember what year it was, but it was probably in the 1980's that we decided to form a task force and that task force, of which I was a member of, went back to Adrian. We were in Denver, we visited a number of areas as a committee to find the best course the hospital should take. From that point, we decided that we would have to look for a group that we could merge with, a Catholic group. We looked more towards associating with non-profit Catholic hospitals here in the west. And after the consideration was given, there were two or three groups, the final determination was to cooperate with Catholic Healthcare West."

*Narrator:*

While Catholic Healthcare West has paved the way for St. Rose to expand services and collaborations, the original mission of providing, quality, compassionate healthcare has not changed. The sisters, staff and volunteers have worked together to insure that patients and their families receive spiritual support that strengthens and supports their faith. Nurse Lori Mann remembers a case that describes this goal:

*Oral tape of Lori Mann, RN*

"A very young couple lost a baby to SIDS. The paramedics brought the baby in, had done CPR on the baby, we did everything we could and we could not save the baby. Sister Veronica was with the family. As I was getting the chart together, there is a box that says what their religious preference is I noted that they were LDS. I know one of the paramedics, in fact he was the paramedic to first use CPR on the baby, and is a Mormon Bishop. I took him aside and said 'Do you mind if I go down and ask them if they need your services as a bishop? Maybe they need a blessing.'

He said 'Not at all,' so I went into, entered the quiet room where Sister Veronica was, asked the mother if she would like to see him and the expression I got from her, and I have talked to her since cause she has another child that I've taken care of here in the emergency room. That was the thing that she was most grateful for, that somebody recognized the fact that even though they weren't Catholic, there was a religious need that they needed that we were able to provide for them.

*Narrator:*

Taking care of the whole person, not just the physical being is deeply rooted in St. Rose Dominican Hospital where chaplains of all faith minister. Sister Marge Mehigan, board member of St. Rose Health Foundation and former director of Sponsorship for the Adrian Dominican Sisters describes the essence of pastoral care:

*Oral tape Sister Marge Mehigan, O.P.*

"Pastoral Care from the patients perspective—can be a connection with the mystical, a connection with the deepest dimension of one's being and the Higher Power. It's the ability to be with the patient to reflect on unfinished business, help mend the difficult parts, maybe arrange the meeting of family that hasn't been possible, comfort and soothe the anxiety."

*Narrator:*

One of the original physicians associated with the hospital, Karl Hazeltine, talks about the impact of pastoral care:

*Oral tape of Karl Hazeltine, MD*

"Helping them establish the-- sort of the art of medicine you might say, rather than the down to earth practicing of medicine. They have people that will come and help people get over grief and work with them and I think that is probably very nice. Helps people in a bad time of life to get through a psychological thing rather than the nuts and bolts medicine."

*Narrator:*

Sister Veronica, who came to the hospital in 1980 writes about the beginning of the pastoral care department at St. Rose and the relationship between this care, the patients, hospital employees and physicians. In her writing, she shares:

*Voice Over:*

“...like all new ventures, it was hard to convince the nurses and doctors of our services. They were satisfied with the status quo....They felt we were invading their territory and then, what doctor readily admits he could use help! There was a struggle. Here I would come and the nurse would be thinking, ‘What are you doing in my room? What are you doing with these patients?’ So we planned and we seized every opportunity we could with meetings and with one-on-one encounters, anytime we could explain our services.....Nurses have always tried to support the dying and their families but their nursing roles took priority. When the nurses were not busy, they could take time to sit with a patient. But when they were pressed with nursing duties, they couldn’t.

*Narrator:*

During an interview Sister Veronica relates an interesting narrative.

*Oral Tape of Sr. Veronica:*

I remember one case. This woman came in with a terminal case of emphysema. She was extremely sick and I forgot what the doctors then discovered that she had but she needed surgery at once. She talked with me about it privately and then she said to the doctor, ‘I do not want surgery.’ And the doctor said, ‘Well, I have to tell you that if you can’t have surgery, within the hour it will be too late to do it and you’ll die of it.’ And for her to be able to say, ‘Yes, doctor, but I’m going to die anyway and I’m not going to have surgery. They’ll end up putting me on the respirator and I won’t be able to talk and I’m going to die anyway.’ The doctor respected her decision completely and sat by her bedside and held her hand. I was on the other side. The doctor waited and he would sigh and say, ‘Now are you sure you don’t want to change your mind? What does your husband say about this?’ She looked at him and said, ‘It’s my decision and when he comes, I’m going to tell him. He’ll back me up.’

So the doctor canceled the surgery. But he came back to be with her and to see the husband. When the husband came he was heart broken and asked, ‘Are you sure?’ And again she replied, ‘I’m going to die anyway and this way we can talk until I do.’ And then the doctor promised her, ‘I will keep you out of pain. Now that you tell me you’re not going to go into surgery, I can give you heavy medication because it doesn’t matter anymore.’ And so he did. He followed her closely. She made all her preparations. She prepared her burial services even chose the hymns she wanted.

I was with her and she said, 'This is what I want you to do and this is what we're going to do.' She remained peaceful and calm to the end. And her husband, said, 'I'll be by you.' And he stayed with her. She died the next morning, very early in the morning..."

*Narrator:*

Many who speak about the hospital over the years recall the "womenspirit" and the strong values and commitment to mission inspired by the early Adrian Dominicans and carried out by the nurses and other women who worked and volunteered at the hospital.

Sister Veronica summarizes what many of the individuals interviewed for this project have also described:

*Oral tape of Sr. Veronica and interviewer:*

*John* "Sister, will you give me the first word or phrase that comes to your mind when you think of St. Rose? It's the caring. Not the care of making beds, passing out pills but the true concern. It goes beyond good care that is given to the patients, their families and the employees. It's a special feeling...a special caring...a special spirit. You really feel that spirit when you walk in the hospital, don't you. Yes, the volunteers have it, the employees have it. It's everywhere. Our whole orientation of new employees is based on our values, philosophy and mission. The dignity of each person, the respect due to each person, the need for compassion for all are emphasized. We look at each new employee as a new co-worker joining us to carry on the philosophy and mission of the hospital. Hopefully they are not hired for a job but for a mission. In time we see the employees carrying out our mission and philosophy without us."

*Narrator:*

Sandra Cromwell, RN, currently Vice President of Nursing for St. Rose Dominican Hospital, adds her comments about the special culture at St. Rose:

*Oral tape of Sandra Cromwell, RN*

"I see St. Rose as not changing. I think part of that is our values and our mission. I see that not changing because that is the bed rock of not only our existence but it should be the bed rock of any health care assistance."

*Narrator:*

In addition to providing traditional healthcare, St. Rose has developed a strong program of outreach into the community. From her reflection, Sister Marge Mehigan writes of this larger mission and the importance of the non profit hospital:

*(Voice Over)*

“I think that non profits need to collaborate more and need to come together around shared values of quality, compassionate care, and they need to strengthen their services for each community served. We’re just inundated with investor owned hospitals. St. Rose continues to strengthen its market share and position with increased community support. There is a lot of effort, time, money and energy being put into meeting the changing healthcare needs. Hopefully, we’ve always been conscience of the people that we serve in each geographic area, but it’s a much higher priority today.

For instance the Health Clinic across the street, the mental health resources, and perhaps transitional housing for low income women and children are just some of the ways St. Rose has responded to the needs of the community. Other outreach efforts, too numerous to list are up and running – bringing “good news” to at high risk children, expectant mothers, the homeless, poor, etc.

## **Future Frontiers**

*Narrator*

Over the many years, the spirit and mission based values inspired by the original seven Dominican Sisters, continues to be a hallmark of service at St. Rose Dominican Hospital. This legacy of the pioneering women whose lived spirituality developed deep roots here will continue into the new Millennium

Dr. Joel Bower, Medical Director of the hospital reflects on how that spirit is to be evident in leadership at the hospital now and in the future:

*Oral tape of Dr. Joel Bower:*

“It is very important because it comes from the top down. This is not something you learn from the bottom up. But it comes from the top down so that if the CEO or whomever or the Board of Trustees did not espouse the same philosophy and were leaning more towards the materialistic side as opposed to the mission side where we are, I think we would have a much more difficult time.”

Narrator:

We, *the Women of St. Rose* recognize that spirit of care and compassion, of collaboration and excellence, of dedication and devotion that was brought to our community by the early pioneering Dominican Sisters. It continues to flourish today in all who serve at St. Rose Dominican Hospital. As we work together to immerse ourselves in our local communities and the times in which we live now, we seek to answer the following:

- Where will the new frontiers call us to respond?
- Who will be invited to collaborate with us as we attempt to reach these frontiers?
- Will we trust that God will continue to give us a generous pioneering spirit also?
- What shall our future be?

We trust that the Spirit will continue to lead us and be with us as we go forward!

**Closing – Rod A. Davis**

*tape of Rod A. Davis, President and CEO, St. Rose Dominican Hospital*

“Thank you for reviewing *Women of St. Rose*. I hope you found the storytelling both meaningful and inspirational. Documenting our past history and the people who have walked the path before us paves the way for confronting future challenges in our healthcare ministry.

I trust that St. Rose Dominican Hospital will continue to be a leader in confronting the challenges of health care we face in our community every day. As we work to build a healthier community, we can draw inspiration from those who have come before us, ever mindful of the visionary and pioneering spirit of the Adrian Dominican Sisters and others who joined them in a shared ministry of quality, compassionate healthcare.”