

Interview with Jean Louise Jaakola

November 18, 1987

Holy Family Home Orphanage in Marquette

START OF INTERVIEW

(Interviewer): Okay, can you tell me your full name please?

(Jean Louise Jaakola): Jean Louise Jaakola.

(I): Maiden name?

(JLJ): Quilliam.

(I): Can you spell that for me please?

(JLJ): Q-U-I-L-L-I-A-M.

(I): Okay. What is your date of birth?

(JLJ): February 19, 1918.

(I): Okay, and today is November 18, 1987. Okay, how old were you when you entered the orphanage?

(JLJ): I was nine.

(I): How long were you there?

(JLJ): Seven years.

(I): Seven years? So you left when you were sixteen?

(JLJ): Yes.

(I): Okay. Do you remember approximately how many children there were in the orphanage when you were there?

(JLJ): I'd say close to two hundred.

(I): Two hundred children?

(JLJ): There wasn't two hundred, but it was close.

(I): Close to two hundred. Can you tell me the circumstances that brought you into the orphanage?

(JLJ): Yes, my mother died the year before so we had to go to the orphanage then. My grandmother kept us for a while but it was too much for her.

(I): Did you have a father at the time?

(JLJ): Yes my father was living but he worked on the railroad – he was a _____, supervises. I was the oldest so...

(I): Oh I see. How many of you were there?

(JLJ): Five.

(I): Five.

(JLJ): Just three of us went to the orphanage, just the girls, and my brothers lived with my aunts then.

(I): Oh I see, okay. Can you tell me about your feelings or anxieties that you had?

(JLJ): Not too much. I don't think I was that anxious because I said it was just for the summer months, so I believe that. I was young enough that I just adjusted.

(I): Okay and who told you it was just for summer months?

(JLJ): My father and my grandma.

(I): I see. Did it turn out then to be all year long for you?

(JLJ): Oh yes. I stayed seven years and my younger sister, youngest sister, she stayed longer, she was there for nine years.

(I): Okay. When you found out that it was not just the summers and you found out that it was for the whole year, how did you feel about that?

(JLJ): I think it was alright. I didn't get too upset. I had adjusted to the orphanage by that time.

(I): Can you remember or tell me what types of arrangements are necessary to facilitate all the children?

(JLJ): Well for sleeping we had dormitories. There was fifty beds to a dorm and there was four dorms. There was a small children, oh I would say up to eight, were in the small dormitories. The older girls were in the upstairs dormitory, and the boys were separated of course from us.

(I): Everybody had their own bed?

(JLJ): Everybody had their own bed. They were white cots. Not exactly a cot it was really a bed. I don't know, we just had everything that we...we had a hand, and there was a general wash room, and a

bathroom, there was showers and a tub, and the toilets of course. So it worked out pretty good. The wash room...There was quite a few boys on each side. I don't remember, but, we all seemed to have a boat and washing, I don't remember somebody else taking turns or anything.

(I): Okay, what about when you were dining?

(JLJ): I forget what they call the dining room. They had a special name for it, but I don't recall what it was called. I think it was called a refectory.

(I): A refectory?

(JLJ): I think that's what they called it. We went in there and they had long tables, there was about fourteen children at each table. And boy's tables are on one side and girl's on the other.

(I): So everybody ate at once?

(JLJ): Everybody sat down at the same time, all the children did.

(I): Okay, what about your education? Did they...?

(JLJ): Well we had, the classrooms were right there and they were like first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth were all combined like that. We didn't really have a kindergarten. They were just a small group that weren't going to school so I suppose it was similar to a kindergarten hey?

(I): And what about for the high school and stuff?

(JLJ): We didn't go to high school.

(I): There was no...

(JLJ): Well, in those days it was a catholic organization, and we were all catholic and they didn't want to send us to a public school and keep us at the orphanage. If you went to public school you had to leave the orphanage.

(I): Hm, interesting.

(JLJ): It wasn't a penalty, it was just a fact that they didn't send us out. In fact I missed two years that way. I had morning classes anyway, like with math and... I don't remember ____, but we had it in the morning. But I went to morning classes and then I didn't have to go the rest of the day and I helped around the orphanage then.

(I): So did the schooling end at a certain age?

(JLJ): Eighth grade, after you graduated from eighth grade you were done.

(I): And that was it...

(JLJ): The Baraga school couldn't afford to take us, that's why we didn't go there.

(I): And this is just for the children in the orphanage?

(JLJ): Mhm. Also it was the depression so things were pretty tight at that time.

(I): Okay, can you remember what types of recreation were available to you and the other children at the orphanage?

(JLJ): Well, we had a library with books – not at the public library but we had our own library. And we had a piano in our rec room and we used to...one girl could play but most of us couldn't, you know. And we put on records and played records, sometimes we danced amongst ourselves. And we played outside of course, we played all the regular children's games – baseball and all this. I don't know, the nuns used to make up games, we played croquet a lot, and there was a large yard for if you wanted to play baseball at that time, large enough for a bunch of small children. You could go down the hill and there was a creek down there and there was a barnyard there but we weren't allowed over there but we'd go down by the creek and play.

(I): Is that where the bypass is now?

(JLJ): Yes, mhm. We did sledding in the winter. The playground had a little bit of a hill to it so we'd sled right down there. And also we'd sled down in the barnyard too. Every now and then we'd get to go down there to slay ride.

(I): Were you always with a nun or was somebody watching over the children while you were outside?

(JLJ): Yes, we were always supervised.

(I): Always, okay. Do you remember what types and varieties of food that was served?

(JLJ): Well, mashed potatoes, sour kraut, the meat was usually cooked – more like a stew –all the time. Once my sister and her friend decided we'd have pannycakes so we had a young nun in the kitchen and she was really a great sport, she would do things with us. She said, "Well, if you want pannycakes I will make them," so my sister and this other girl were out there doing the pannycakes, they didn't eat any when they got done because they were so tired. [laughs] Well we had more like the seasonal foods – they had a farm out to grow the nuns lived on the, that road out going out to Acox building. I think it was passed Acox, it was called Bishop Pittans Farm, he had given it to the orphanage. Then the nuns canned the food and we helped. We had to do it too when we were in the kitchen. Take care of the babies, we had certain hours that we had to do these things, but never interfered with our class work. That we always knew.

(I): Was it quite strict? The routine now?

(JLJ): It was very routine. You got up at six in the morning, you went to chapel and there was mass, then you have breakfast, then you did your chores and when those are done, well it was almost time for class and then you went to class. You went to class until about noon. Then they had dinner [likely means lunch], then you went back to class at one o'clock again until three I'd say. One day a week when you

were in the sixth grade then you started to iron. So one day a week you had to iron half a day. That was it.

(I): For half a day?

(JLJ): Yeah. Everybody that was old enough had a turn at it – the girls, not the boys of course.

(I): Was that for like an hour of the day or...?

(JLJ): I would say maybe three.

(I): Three hours?

(JLJ): Mhm, and I also worked in the laundry. On Saturday we had work in the laundry half a day. Sometimes more because the washes were quite large.

(I): Okay, was that, you took turns doing that or was it like every Saturday?

(JLJ): No I think I did it, well I didn't if you were in charge of babies, you went and took care of the babies. But if you weren't busy you would actually pitch in the laundry room when you were older and you had that day's work to do. I think we used to get done about two or three in the afternoon in the laundry.

(I): Okay, can you tell me about the clothing? Do you know where the clothing came from?

(JLJ): I really couldn't tell you. I think some of the business men gave things, like the stock would be out so they would give it. Well, really we each had about three dresses maybe. I'd say about three. Of course we wore the long undergarment. [laughs] So we only had about two sets of that, and they were just always issued and when you ran out of sheets well then they just issued another pair. Whatever was there that's what you got.

(I): Did anybody ever have to go without a certain thing?

(JLJ): No, no I wouldn't say anybody. You always ate and you always knew you were going to eat a meal. It might not be real fancy but you were eating.

(I): Alright. I was going to ask you about discipline. What types of discipline were enforced?

(JLJ): Well, we were not supposed to be chummy with the boys and you had to be, well you were supposed to be, if you weren't well then they'd scold you and maybe they'd make you write, "I belong here. I disobey," or something like that five hundred times. Some of the children were punished, I never did run into that. I think I was slapped once when I really tried her patience and she clocked me one finally after a few hours she sat there and thought, "Well she's never going to give in," which I didn't, really. Some of the children were punished more and some were sometimes picked on. That's normal though, because the nuns were just like everybody else. Some were cross. The little Frenchman in the bakery was cross but I always had this idea that she just got nervous and upset. She really didn't dislike us, but it was a lot for her to handle in the bakery. She baked all the bread for the orphanage and it was a lot. So the girls would say, "I don't want to go in with her," I said, "Oh go on in there," "She threw a

loaf of bread at me!" I said, "Well it didn't hurt, you go in there anyway!" [laughs] Yeah, she scold me one day, she said, "Quit your grumbling," and that's what the children always used to say, "She grumbles all the time!" and I said, "Sister, you're the one that grumbles!" [laughs] She didn't say nothing, she just let it pass. Most nuns would say, "Well you go sit in the corner, or sit on a bench," mostly it was, "sit on the bench." Oh and send you to chapel. Go to the chapel and sit there, but you really had to be naughty to be sent to chapel. They had one girl that would just go to the chapel quite regularly. [laughs]

(I): Under what circumstances were you allowed to leave the grounds?

(JLJ): Never unless your parent came to get you. And I used to go the post office when I got older to pick up the mail but that was it.

(I): Did they, I'm thinking of field trips, did they...?

(JLJ): No. Well we used to go up and over where Bothwell school is now. We used to go to Giant's Foot for walks every once in a while. Mostly on Sunday afternoon we'd walk up to Giant's Foot, but we were supervised – the nun came with us.

(I): What was Giant's Foot?

(JLJ): The Giant's Foot?

(I): The Giant Foot?

(JLJ): Yeah, they called it the Giant Foot.

(I): Oh, is that a rock or something or...?

(JLJ): It's just a hill and they always called it the Giant Foot. Everybody called it that. There was an old hotel, the first Marquette hotel was up there, and we'd go up in that area. We used to go to the farm some to pick berries, but that wasn't very often, and the superintendent, Father – the priest – took us. He'd tell us, "You get all the strawberries you want today," because we didn't get them fresh very often, we mostly canned them for the winter supply. But other than that we very seldom went any place. Once in a while we'd go to the movie downtown and we'd go to church down at Saint Peter's to Sunday mass sometimes, which I hated. I didn't like doing that at all.

(I): Did you feel boxed in at all?

(JLJ): No. I just preferred to be there and when I left I really didn't care to go because it was an all new world and coming out was much harder than staying I think. Although a lot of the children, they didn't have the same attitude I had. A lot of them resented it and were very glad to leave.

(I): Okay, was there ever any guest invited into the orphanage?

(JLJ): So to eat a meal with us or...?

(I): To eat a meal, to entertain.

(JLJ): Very little. Santa Clause came on Christmas eve. _____. I don't remember of anybody ever coming, really entertaining us.

(I): Okay, can you tell me how the children within the orphanage related to each other?

(JLJ): Well, it was just it.

(I): Instead of being just for the day, it was all day. Wouldn't it be, I guess I'm seeing it as...My own children go to school during the day and they see their friends, then they come home and they'd see that the neighbor kids were _____.

(JLJ): Oh, yes. These children were there all the time so, I don't know, you picked your own friends and you did what you wanted to do in that respect. Unless you were going to start – Sunday there was mischief all the time and the nun's would say, "Well, you break up here," because you're getting into much mischief. MISCHIEF – I can't say it. [laughs]

(I): They kept an eye on that too then?

(JLJ): Oh yes. Yeah, because sometimes one of the children would run away, you know, it would happen. They didn't want that going on because they were responsible for us. They couldn't do any different.

(I): You can hear the saw out there. [speaking of environmental sounds]

(JLJ): Yes, that's my carpenter.

(I): Your carpenter?

(JLJ): My husband, he builds houses.

(I): Okay, how did the children view children outside of the orphanage?

(JLJ): Well, just like children do. They're kind of shy around them, I think. But they'd make friends if they got to know them.

(I): Okay, that's what I was wondering.

(JLJ): We didn't have much opportunity to meet anybody else.

(I): [Speaking too quietly to hear]

(JLJ): Yeah they kept us pretty well isolated. Some of the kids would say, "Well this is just like prison." [laughs] Yeah.

(I): Yeah, I can imagine that. Okay did you see much jealousy in the children? Maybe between each other or children that are outside? Did you come across that?

(JLJ): I don't think...Well I think a lot of them wished they were outside like the other children were, you know. And they were jealous amongst each other, just like, you know, a bunch of kids would be.

(I): Can you tell me any stories, any trouble or good times that you can remember?

(JLJ): I don't really remember too much about that. We had one girl that had tuberculosis and they kept her isolated in the infirmary all the time but then they had to send to her to what would be Acox now. It was Morgan Heights then. And she died, that was a big upset for all the children.

(I): She died?

(JLJ): Yeah. Well people used to die of tuberculosis years ago.

(I): How old was she?

(JLJ): I would say seventeen maybe? Sixteen or seventeen. And some of the girls were going to be nuns. I have about five friends that are nuns.

(I): Okay, do you think that being an orphan, has that affected your life?

(JLJ): Oh yeah, the orphanage affected it a whole lot.

(I): Can you tell me in what ways?

(JLJ): You don't have the self-confidence and when you leave there, your world is so different. Like – I worked for a lady when I left there and she says to me, "Well, peel some potatoes for supper," I didn't know how many potatoes to peel and said to her, "Well how many do you want?" She said, "Just peel enough for supper!" I said, "I don't know how many for supper," We peeled two bushels of potatoes in the peeler that we dumped the potatoes in so I couldn't even start to think of how to do this other stuff.

(I): So things were so different?

(JLJ): Yeah, everything was cooked in a great big, huge kettle. Just really huge. And we did very little of the cooking because the nun was there to do it. Almost anything, and to clean a small refrigerator – we had a walk in cooler where I worked – and things like that. I didn't know how to iron, and I cooked for ____ and knew enough to dust and wipe up the floor but there were some things that were just way out.

(I): Did it take you long to learn the new way of doing things...?

(JLJ): It didn't take me so long but she didn't understand, the lady that I was working for, it never dawned on her, my situation. And I was too shy to say. I think that I lost a lot of my self-confidence there and I was too shy to speak up so I didn't know how to express it. I used to tell her mother – her mother was real old and her mother, we made an agreement because she was cross with the mother too – and she'd come out in the kitchen and tell me what she wanted to put on the table that evening, her grandmother did. Then she would tell me what her daughter was complaining about that I didn't do, so then I'd do that the next day, and she told me how to clean the refrigerator. [laughs]

(I): Okay, do you know anybody else who lives in the orphanage that might be able to give me an interview?

(JLJ): Not really, no.

(I): Okay, I want to thank you very much.

(JLJ): Oh you're welcome.

(I): Is there anything else you want to tell me or...?

(JLJ): Well, to go shopping was really murder.

(I): It was?

(JLJ): Oh, it was very hard for me to shop. I remember I earned a dollar a week _____, and after six weeks I had five dollars. I was scared to go in even to buy a candy bar. I was too shy. That was really hard, to get used to that, but I finally did, you know.

(I): When you left the orphanage, did you go home?

(JLJ): No, that was the hard...I think I would have done better if I had gone home, but my sister went to my grandmother's and I took the job, and then I went to school half-days.

(I): To finish high school or to finish...?

(JLJ): I didn't finish but I went to take a short-hand course in typing.

(I): Okay, and did that help you in the future?

(JLJ): Well it gave me a little more confidence to find that I could do things, but I didn't really join in because I was just too shy and I didn't have enough time with the other children that were going to school because I had to leave at noon, so I just didn't get to know them that well.

(I): Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW