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## Mount Marty College: Surviving And Thriving

Born In An Uncertain Age, MMC Continues To Meet Challenges

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
The Press & Dakotan

Born in the midst of the Depression, Mount Marty College has known challenges from its very beginning.

In fact, Mother Jerome Schmitt found doubters in her midst when the Benedictine Sisters sought to establish a Catholic college in 1936, when many people were seeking to survive.

Some of the early detractors were quite blunt, according to Sister Ann Kessler in her historical account.

"When the people of Yankton learned about the Sisters' plans to build, they were amazed anyone would risk construction during the Great Depression," she wrote. "Mother Jerome recalled later that some people viewed the project as so unrealistic that at first they questioned our sanity."

But the college took root and has seen numerous changes, including a change over the years to a co-ed, four-year institution.

The college is named in memory of Martin Marty, a Benedictine missionary to the Indians, and who invited the Benedictine Sisters to establish a religious community in Yankton in 1880.

For the first 15 years, the college functioned as a junior college for women. In 1951, it awarded its first Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. In 1969, the college became coeducational. Associate of Arts degree programs were introduced in 1975 in areas compatible with already existing programs. Graduate study was begun with the first Master of Science degree awarded in 1985.

Throughout the years, the college campus has expanded to meet the needs of the faculty and students.

In the 1940s, the new residence wing and fine arts wing was added to the original Bede Hall. The Bishop Marty Memorial Chapel was dedicated in 1950 and stands tall on "the mount" dominating the Yankton skyline for miles around.

Other new structures built in the 1950s were Whitby Hall and Marian Auditorium. In the 1960s, three additional buildings were completed: Roncalli Center, Corbey Hall and the Mount Marty College Library-Gymnasium. Spring 1987 was marked by ground breaking for the Laddie E. Cimpl Arena, which was dedicated in January 1988.

The most recent addition to the campus was the Scholastica Learning Center.

### A TIME FOR REFLECTION

MMC's 75th anniversary, and Yankton's 150th anniversary, bring a time of reflection for Sisters Evangeline Anderson, Cynthia Binder, Wilma Lyle and Marie Helene Werdel.

Sister Wilma said she remains amazed that the college was begun during the Depression, when people fought for survival.

"They tried to get money to build in 1934, but no one had any money," she said. "Mother Jerome and the Sisters went three times to St. Louis to convince the bankers to loan them the money."

The path remained difficult even after the college was opened, Sister Wilma said.



PHOTO: MOUNT MARTY COLLEGE ARCHIVES

RIGHT: A painting depicting Bishop Martin Marty, the namesake for Mount Marty College. Marty, a Benedictine missionary to the Indians, invited the Benedictine Sisters to establish a religious community in Yankton. Those sisters founded MMC in 1936. (From the book "Yankton: The Way It Was" by Bob Karolevitz) ABOVE: A 1935 photo of the construction of Bede Hall, the first building on the Mount Marty College campus. BELOW: A photo of nursing students in the anesthesia program.



PHOTO: MOUNT MARTY COLLEGE ARCHIVES

"Most of the students at the time couldn't afford to pay their tuition," she said. "They were turning in produce in place of money and also doing work at the college. That's where the live chickens came for use at the fall dinner."

Mother Jerome was also running the college during war years, filled with rationing and supply shortages, Sister Marie Helene said.

"For the pipes, Mother Jerome was looking for all the surplus items that she could find," Sister Marie Helene said. "Bede Hall was solidly built, but the plumbing was horrible and had to be replaced."

Sister Evangeline served as MMC president from 1957-73. The period brought new challenges, she said.

"Mother Jerome appointed me (as president) because she wanted me involved with the other private colleges," Sister Evangeline said. "She wanted us to get busy so we could seek North Central Accreditation. It was really important for the colleges to be accredited."

The private colleges worked together in other ecumenical ways, Sister Evangeline said. Their various academic departments would gather for seminars. The

private colleges tended to have the support of their denominations and local communities, but they often needed to look elsewhere for additional fund-raising, she said.

"The church colleges went for their money in the cities," she said. "Around here, they primarily went to Minneapolis."

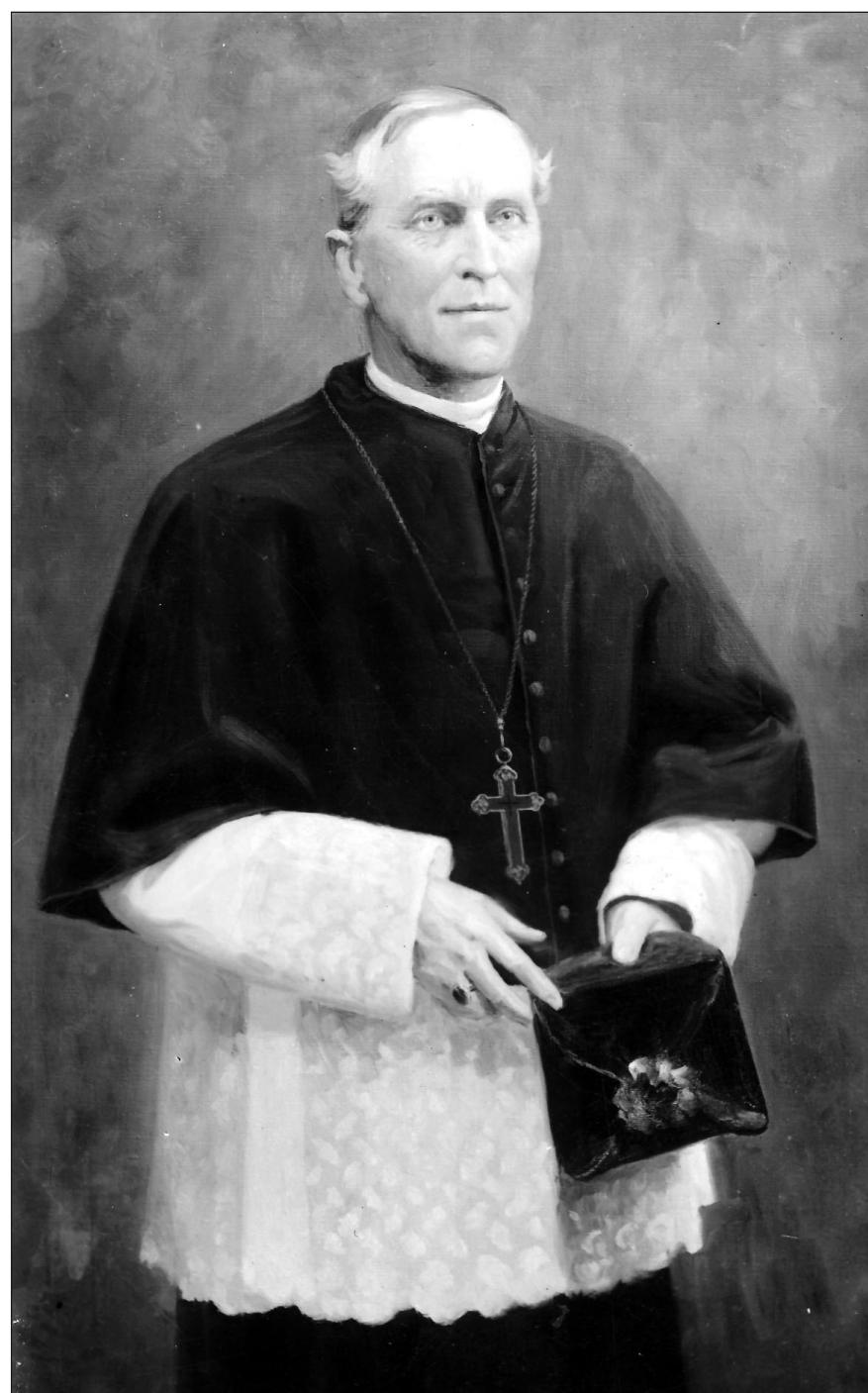
MMC made other changes through the years, such as transitioning from two-year to four-year and from all-female to co-ed.

"While I was president, the decision was made to build Corbey Hall, because we had more men and we needed it for the faculty and staff," Sister Evangeline said. "We also hired Dean Specht as an administrator, as a dean of men and as a coach. Intercollegiate sports was a new venture for us."

The faculty and staff also underwent changes as it moved from primarily nuns, Sister Cynthia said.

"We added more lay persons because we needed more faculty who were qualified for certain majors," she said. "With more lay staff, it has given us a different flavor. It's been good for us and brings an exciting exchange of ideas. They are also

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P&D ARCHIVE IMAGE

## MMC Students Share Their Experiences, Hopes For Future

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
The Press & Dakotan

Mount Marty College brings with it a proud past, but the Catholic college is also looking to its future as it celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2011-12.

Three MMC students offered their experiences while at "The Mount," sharing why they chose the college, how it is shaping their lives, and their hopes and predictions for the school's future.

### KYLIE GROSS

For Kylie Gross of Yankton, attending Mount Marty was not on her radar screen. If anything, she was determined to move away.

Instead, she chose to remain at home and went on to enjoy a stellar athletic career with the Lancers.

"It's funny looking back at my senior year of high school, because I was 100 percent against going to Mount Marty College. I wanted to get out of my hometown and had no interest whatsoever in playing sports," she said.

"My mother, however, had high hopes that I would end up a Lancer, so she guilted me into applying to the Mount. She made me attend Scholarship Day and take a tour of the school, and (then-women's basketball coach) Chuck Iverson was more than happy to talk with me about playing basketball."

In the end, Mount Marty gave me the best scholarship package, and I actually really enjoyed the visits I had there. My conversation with Chuck played a significant part of my choice as well. And as it turns out, it was the best decision I could have made."

For Gross, attending MMC was a chance to get away while still enjoying her hometown.

"I like all kinds of things about Mount Marty. People constantly are asking me how I can go to college in my hometown; it's really actually pretty convenient," she said.

"I know where everything in Yankton is and get to keep all my same places, like my hair salon, dentist and doctor. Yet the Mount Marty campus

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