

Sister Giswalda, ex-principal, dies

HAYS — Sister M. Giswalda, 85, principal and teacher at St. Paul Mission School for 46 years, died Nov. 27 in Milwaukee where she was being treated for bone cancer.

Her funeral and burial were in Milwaukee. A memorial service was Saturday at Hays.

She began teaching in Nebraska and came to Montana in 1933 with five other nuns to teach at St. Labre Mission on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Three years later she was sent to St. Paul's on the Fort Belknap Reservation.

Sister Griswalda was distressed her first year at St. Paul's to learn that students from the school had given up taking state-required examinations at the end of the eighth grade because none of them ever pass. She implemented changes in curriculum and a rigorous system of tests and drills to prepare the students for the exams.

At the end of the year, the students were taken to Hays Public School for the tests. All eight students passed with high marks and the state superintendent of public instruction gave the school a superior rating for education.

A year later a high school was established at St. Paul's and opportunities were expanded. A typing class, a band and a student

magazine were established.

She and Sister Clare Hartman kept Mission High School certified by updating and fulfilling necessary requirements. They led field trips to places including Seattle, winning entries in state and regional fairs and an award-winning newspaper.

A fire that destroyed the school in December 1973 left 80 students without a school and the sisters without a home. After soliciting help, they were able to dedicate a new school in 1975.

Sister Giswalda's work was recognized widely. She served on a council for handicapped children in Helena, received the gold key for journalism teaching from the University of Montana, was named Woman of the Year by the Business Woman's Club of Havre, was inducted into Delta Kappa Gamma teachers fraternity in Chinook and was among 20 persons in the nation named Principal of the Year in 1987.

Among the Cheyenne she was called Histane or Kind Heart. She was adopted into the Gros Ventre tribe in 1951 and given the name Pipe Woman.

Jim Paskan, Havre artist, has been commissioned to produce a sculpture of Sister Giswalda which will be cast in bronze. Proceeds from the project will go toward a scholarship in her name.