

**July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 – Sister Ruthann Boyle speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana.**

Abbreviations

SRAB: Sister Ruthanne Boyle

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lennon on July 29, 2014 in Oldenburg, Indiana at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Francis. I am very happy to be sharing this interview with Sister Ruthann Boyle. Would you like to introduce yourself?

SRAB: Thank you, Mary Ellen. Yes I am Sister Ruthann Boyle and I was born in [19]34, January 2nd, so they tease me, I'm one, two, three, four on my birth and I was born in Saint Francis Hospital in Beech Grove, Indiana and then I went to Holy Name School through grade school and then Saint Mary's Academy downtown Indianapolis and then of course Marian University then. But it was after high school is when I felt or was during the my high school year is between my junior year and my senior year, I worked in a drugstore in Beech Grove, right across from the hospital and right across from the church. And I would go over because I would be there after school and then, so I'd be there through the supper hour, so I'd always go next door to get something to eat real quick and then I so I'd have time to get over to the church, our little church there in Beech Grove and I remember one time, it wasn't right when I first started, but I remember one time I was in there and the sun was just beaming through those stained-glass windows, it was absolutely. I was just so taken up with that, those rays just coming right in and I thought, God what are you telling me, what are you telling me and I just, you know, nothing really happened, that it was just that experience and I felt, I wonder if I'm being called to be a Sister, just wondering and then I heard somebody in the back of church and it was Sister Roseanne, one of—who's my 7th and 8th grade teacher.

Anyway, I, when I heard her back there I started—because I had to get back to work anyway so I started back because I wanted to say hi to her and I said, Oh Sister Rosanne, I wish I could stay and help you clean; she was cleaning holy water fonts you know at that, we used them in that time. Anyway I said, I wish I could stay and help you and she said, Oh don't worry about that, she said, You'll be cleaning holy water fountains for a *long* time and I thought, Oh my gosh, you know, and so I was touched.

Anyway, I got back to back to, back to the drugstore and work and then went home and then when I got back to school after that weekend, it was like I say it was in the summertime and some of the sisters, Sister Eileen Hoffman actually called some of us to come back in, some of the seniors, the new seniors coming in, calling us back in if we would come and help with the cleaning of the windows and the mopping and the all that stuff in preparation for class and I was up on the ladder in her office and she said, Ruthann. Now I'm way up on the top cleaning windows and she says, Ruthann and I looked down there, she was sitting at her desk and she says, "Do you ever think about being a Sister?" I coul—I said, I just held onto the top of the ladder and I turned around and I said, "Yes." She says, "Get down off of that ladder, let's talk." And so that's—we started talking and then, I'd meet her again and anyway, so then I entered after my senior year and we, I was only seventeen. Can you imagine seventeen years old, a girl thinking she knows what she's about, but anyway I did

and we had a we got here on September the eight and we there was a little a—a little restaurant across it's not here anymore, across from our buildings and there were about seven or eight of those girls from high school, Saint Mary's, and we all decided to meet with our parents in this little restaurant and thought, crazy, but thought we would have our last coke ever in the world.

Of course, and then we got out in the streets afterwards and thought well we better get in better get in, knock on the door, but we were, we had our graduation dresses on and we just had a good time, really good time, dancing around in the streets and you could look up and see the sisters looking out the windows and clapping hands, it was, it was really a joyous time and it was excellent for our family, our parents and families to meet other postulants you know that were going to be postulants and so that was my call to the religious life and I really thank God for how it happened and I know it happens way back in your school days and your you know what how your parents treat you and all that and work with you and encourage you and all that but so I'm very, very grateful.

Anyway, I entered in September the 8, 1951 and we were a class of 24 and we kept all members of our class there until the week before final vows one left, oh. Anyway so we were quite fortunate, but anyway after my two years of training, you know, just as becoming a Sister and deepening our prayer life you know and growing in our relationship with God. Then we had classes in how to be a teacher because our whole community life, teaching, was in teaching you know that was what we were supposed to do you know and my thought about that Mary Ellen was, I didn't think about being a teacher, I just wanted to be the sister that's all that was my deep thing. Anyway I, so I got my training and, and I was sent to teach in Cincinnati and then I'm not gonna mention all. Cincinnati and Indianapolis. Then I went out to Montana, with the Crow Indians and that was excellent preparation for Papua New Guinea. I had volunteered to go to Papua New Guinea and but they weren't sending anybody then at that time and then so I went out to the Crow Indians and I had the first grade out there and they only knew the Crow language and so they knew no English at all so I had to start with pictures, exactly what we did in Papua New Guinea, so that's why I said it was good preparation for me and learning a new culture, excellent, excellent, excellent preparation.

MEL: So Beech Grove to the Crow land in Montana?

SRAB: Can you image?

MEL: Do you know why you were called to that?

SRAB: Why I was called?

MEL: Why you decided to go to Montana or how you decided to volunteer?

SRAB: They needed someone out there and they also said the, our superiors said, it was Sister Cephas, Mother Cephas at that time, she said, You know we're going to send you out to the Crow Indians in Montana because then you'll know whether you can work in Papua New Guinea and when she said that I think I'll be okay in Papua New Guinea, I'll be okay. But, Mary Ellen I felt, I was there two years. I fell in love with the Crow Indians and so and like I say their culture I was just fascinated with their type of prayer their language their their

sing-sing dances, their, just everything, I was just really involved with them and so when the, at the end of my second year, they called me on the phone, the Superiors, Mother Cephas and said, We're sending two sisters to Papua New Guinea this year are you still willing and I said, "Oh my gosh," I said, "I love it out here, I just love the people out here" and she said, "Well you think about it and you call me back." So I said, "No I don't have to think about it," I said, "If you really still need someone else to go to Papua New Guinea, I'm willing, but if somebody else wants to go, I'm happy to stay here."

So I didn't know one way or the other which was, I just opened myself you know okay and then before I got on the train to come back to Oldenburg that summer they had called me. Actually let me tell you this I wasn't going to say this, but my mom called first in Montana and said, Congratulations. And I said, What for mom? And she said, Aww, she says, come on you don't have to keep a secret she said, We know you're going to Papua New Guinea. I said, I'm going to Papua New Guinea? And she said, Well the news broadcaster Paul Fox from Indianapolis, I think it's a Catholic paper, he called mom and asked mom about the details of it and so mom didn't know, so she called Oldenburg and then that's how she found out that I was going. So my mom told me that I was to go, can you believe it? Anyway, so when we came home on the train, my mom and dad were at the train station in Indianapolis, but we weren't getting off, we were going to go on to Batesville you know and get off there, but when we landed Indianapolis, of course people were getting off and whoever's going on had to stay on, my dad worked at New York Central Railroad and so he goes and gets permission for him and mom to get on that plane to say hi, isn't it cute?

And then anyway, they got off the plane and we went onto Oldenburg and then, Oh mom told me that it I was going with Sister Mel, who is a classmate and we're all close, we're real close, anyway, I'm touched. Anyway, we you know did all, everything in preparation for it ahead of time we were about Mel and I were getting shots and the sisters over there wanted pencils and paper and all kinds of stuff and so we were getting all that packed up and sent to them and but then we, we had our departure ceremony on September the 8, in [19]51 and we were allowed to invite all our family you know members, Grandma and [unintelligible] was even there and they had the departure ceremony in the afternoon and then they they had a luncheon, a light supper like for the family and us and then as soon as that was finished, we got, went out in the car and got in the car told our goodbyes there and got in the car with our parents and family and drove up to Indianapolis, Mel and myself. Of course we had two or three or four cars going up, but then we got to the airport and who was there is but Monsignor Goossens so you probably don't remember him, he was mission procurator at that time and of course he had heard that we were going you know and he knew me, he knew my family, he baptized me, okay, and so he knew mom and dad very well and so he came up and I was, I had my hand out you know and Sister Edgar and Sister Hortense were ready to introduce me to him without any he gave me a big bear hug. He says, I am so happy you're chosen to go and, and they said, How do you know him? I said, well he kind of baptized me quite a few years ago and so then I mean that's what that was a real happy, it wasn't sad at all it was just a real happy experience of being there and everybody was joyful for us, until we had to say goodbye.

And so we got on the plane at 9:45 p.m. that night Mel and I and so we began or I think it's about eleven thousand miles from here to Papua New Guinea, to the coast of Papua New Guinea, not up into the highlands, so the two of us get on the plane, we're fine and we found our seats sat down and Mel says, I think we'd better fasten these seat belts and I

says, okay so we fastened our seat belts and she says, Hey Ruthann, have you ever been on a plane before? And I said, No. I said, Have you? And she says, No, she said, I haven't either. And so we chatted, chatted, and all of a sudden this sign comes on seat belts on. We were ready for takeoff and so we get up into the air and we weren't talking at all and I thought, Boy, I don't know how she's feeling, but you know I'm anxious and apprehensive and so finally we started talking about our feelings the two of us, I remember it very clear and mom had given me a small box of homemade brownies okay now we get up there and as we were talking, I said, Mel, I said, Mom gave us some brownies how bout, oh she says, yeah, yeah and so I opened the brownies in there was a note on the inside from my mom. Sorry. And the note let me know, which I never knew before, that all through high school she wanted me to be a missionary. She's not Catholic, she wasn't at that time, she became Catholic when she married dad, but anyway, she she said, that she was happy that I was going and that she now feels she was taking, I was taking her place, am I making it clear?

MEL: That's beautiful, yes.

SRAB: That I was taking her place as a missionary you know something that she had dreamed of all of her life, okay, and of course, we both cried, cause she knew my mom and dad well, and anyway we got as far as Hawaii and then we stayed overnight in Hawaii and then we had a good time in Hawaii. We were fine and I think we were in Hawaii a couple days and just saw the island we stayed with some sisters and then from there we went to, directly to Port Moresby. It was a straight flight to Port Moresby and of course that was over the ocean and oh we had to pass the International Dateline so we lost a day and so and we were in, no one, not in Moresby, we were in Australia sorry first we went from Hawaii to Australia and we were in Australia about four or five days because they thought we needed to be acclimated to another culture, another climate, another you know whatever and then and that was good. Ah we had so many funny, funny stories with their Aussie accent. Oh it was funny and Mel, my companion, she, I wish she was still alive. She died about five years ago. She can tell stories just I wish she was, that you could hear her anyway then from Australia, met lots of fun people and friends and and we got them to Papua, Port Moresby and that's when we stayed there for about five days I guess and then our mission plane was supposed to come down and pick us up at Moresby, our little, and fly us up. This is funny. We found out that the mission plane needed a hundred hour checkup and he couldn't fly, so they had the plane, in, I donno, hundreds of pieces they claimed down and where they, hanger where they have the plane worked on and that we should go ahead and come up on a flight for Moresby. Well there weren't any scheduled flights, but there was an army plane that they contacted the Army, Aussie plane, that we could come up with one of their cargo planes.

Well, they, it was so funny Mary Ellen, the seats were canvas seats, like a bucket seat and they were sitting, I mean, attached to the side of the airplanes, there were about five on one side, five seats on the other, and you were facing each other, you know, the other side and the canvas seats just kind of swung, you know, it was, it was, oh I couldn't imagine what we were on and then they started bringing all this cargo in, you know, boxes and bags and I don't know what all they had in, a lot of army equipment, you know, and then all of a sudden here comes a whole bag of mesh, a mesh bag of chickens, live chickens. Well we sat there and we laughed and we laughed and then laughed and then finally they said, Do you care if, when, we have a couple that are going to go to Mendi an older couple that, can they go on with you? We said, Well sure, that's fine, it's not our, it's not our plane, so this, well this

older couple, they gone on and look so apprehensive, oh my gosh, you know, what is it, what are we getting into? And the woman was scared to death and we kept saying, It's okay, there's a seat belt there, just put the seat belt on and then so Mel gets up and goes over and helps her and then she stands over there and talks to them for a little bit and then she comes back over and she sits in her seat again and then the woman kept saying, What's all this? What's all this? And of course we talked like we knew exactly what everything was, anyway we just had a good time with them and I think they were happy to have someone who was what do you call it, who knew it all. We knew nothing, (laughs). And they didn't find that out till we got to Mendi. Okay, they found out that we were as green as they were.

Anyway, we got there and Father Otmar was there who was the superior of the Capuchins at that time and Martene was there and Annata was there and Naomi, those were, no no no no, no they weren't, no, it was, it was Naomi, no I can't, Claver, Claver was there, there were four of them and the other three were, had already gone over to Tari, to, because they were, we had started the second mission that's why I was going to go to the second mission. Anyway I can't remember who was there. It would be, we got in a tractor and a wagon. I mean a wagon pulled by a tractor to get down to the mission and I thought, oh my gosh, and then I looked around and, and I said is this the town of Mendi. And they laughed and they said, This is the town of Mendi. It was dirt roads, dirt airstrip. It was, it was something else and there were, there was one trade store there. Oh, a trade store is something else I mean the people, it used to be way back. Can I tell this history? Okay, this people, the people were way back with, they were some of the Highland people would walked down out of the highlands a little bit and meet people from the coast and they would bring up shells and stuff and fish and stuff from the coast and the Highland peoples would give them things that they have from the highlands and they would trade and so these stores when they started first selling little things you know like sugar, or cigarettes, it was always cigarettes and flour or okay they called them trade stores of course they didn't trade things they had money at that time, Australian money, not Papua New Guinea and so we, so we saw this, I saw this trade store and they told me what that was and then we there was two or three houses up on near the mission that's was all that was there until we got down to the Catholic mission and then it was there was a church there, and there was father's house and sister's house and a couple classrooms and that was it, there was nothing else, nothing else there, and it's a bi—we stayed there overnight and then our mission plane flew in the next day on October the 4th and to pick me up and to take me over to Tari.

Ah, that was really hard to leave Mel behind, really hard, but anyway I did because I knew I was going to some more of my own sisters over there. You know it wasn't like the first ones I can't imagine those first four when they first got there, oh what they went through, but anyway.

MEL: I'm curious about your feelings at this point because you didn't know what to expect, or had you heard about it before? Had you studied about Papua New Guinea or was this all brand new to you?

SRAB: Oh, no, it's not, it was not brand new to me because the sisters were here three years in Papua New Guinea three years before I came. Okay and they would send movies home. I taught in the school where Noreen Hawkin's mom and dad lived in New Albany and

every time she got pictures or a letter or no matter what she always came down to the sister's house and shared it with us and watched the movie, we could watch the you know the slide show with her and so I learned lots about Papua New Guinea before, before I went over, but I have to admit when I first volunteered to go that was back in sixty, I, I had to go to a map to look it up because I didn't know where it was. Where New Guinea was, so that, that was really new to me.

MEL: Had you been an adventurous child?

SRAB: Not really, no. No, not really, in fact when I left for the convent, Mary Ellen, my little sister who was probably in the seventh or eighth grade at that time, she's just, she shook her head and she said, Ruthann, she says, I don't know why you don't go to to a missionary order and do some good. And I said Mary, and I said, I feel like I'm being called to be a Franciscan. So maybe, maybe she planted a seed I don't know, don't, I really don't know. Adventurous? No. I like to go out on a boat, I mean bicycle rides all the time as a young kid. Played with the boys all the time because I, it was my two older brothers, uh.

Okay let's see, where was I, okay, so we were getting ready on Saturday morning, October 4th to fly with our, he was an American, Charlie was his I forget his name, Charlie was flying me over, well, he was trying to explain everything to me and we had to fly through this gap, there's just big mountains here and big mountains here and you had to fly through the gap and he so he said pray that when we get there there's no clouds that we can get through, of course that kind of ohhhhhh, but everything was okay, the sky was beautiful, and the sun was out and blue all over and so we flew right through the gap and then we got over to the Tari area and it's a great big, big, big area, oh my gosh and we landed on the strip and of course the sisters, no only on sister was up there too, because they were having a cause on the feast of October 4th Saint Francis they were having a party for the kids because that we have boarders at that time and so they had to stay down there and take care of their boarders, now maybe only one stayed and two came up, but I, I don't remember that but I know somebody was there and then the three - two brother, no one brother who was a brother Capuchin brother and two priests, Capuchin priests, they were there. One of them drove the tractor down so we got, I got in an tractor ride. That is oh that is so funny and of course then he took me around then they in they had of course they knew I was out with the Indians out in the Crow. Right before I came there, so they dressed up a little first grader, Papua New Guinea first grader like an Indian. Oh then they had a big sign standing at the end of the road, the driveway before they drove in to the house, they made me get out there and the sign said, "You sign here for four years," no for "five years" because it was five years at first. "You sign here for five years" and they wouldn't let me go until I signed for, that paper for five years and then the, the little Indian, course the little boy gave me a great big you know hug and course that's what he was told to do I guess, but it was nice and the school kids were, all left their games and came over to see what was going on it was more curiosity you know another sister coming.

And then we went in and we had lunch and then then I went over and met other teachers that were at the festival and watched them play games and you know all that kind of stuff and they were winning prizes and everybody was having fun and then that night we went over to father's house for supper and of course getting to meet those Capuchin Fathers was a lot of fun, we were, we grew up, Mary Ellen, as real brothers and sisters living together, working together as I mean they were like my real brothers and sisters they were, the bond

was just beautiful, just absolutely beautiful and we would do things, funny things to each other, you know back and forth to dinner with each other and they'd come in from the, their bush areas on their motorbike. They wouldn't even go to their place first they come over, drive right over to our, poke, park their motorbike right out in our front yard and come in and what'd you have for supper last night? Or, you know, and just then tell us, tell us exactly what happened on this bush tip you know the problems they had or whatever it was and, and, and that was always a treat and we really got to know pretty much you know from them from that time.

MEL: A real sense of community.

SRAB: A real sense of community. Real, real, deep sense. It really was. That was Saturday. Sunday of course I was with the Mass and I don't know why but I the sisters didn't prepare me for it. They have a church bush church made and I don't remember this at all. It was made like this, this part was for the men, this rectangle here was for the men, this rectangle over here was for the women and the little kids and in the middle of was were the altar was. So that men could look at the altar from this side the women from this side because there was such a segregation between men and women, the men were never seen with their wives unless they were walking somewhere together and the man would walk first the woman walked behind, he always carried a big bush knife or an ax for protection in case he needed it and so and it was always protecting the wife and the kids if there were kids. Now if the woman was walking by herself with other women and a man was walking along the road, they would have to get off of the road and get down in the ditch because they had great big culverts along these dirt roads that they made that you know and where the water could run because we had rain every day and so the water would go down in these trenches you know and so then and they the women had to get down in the trenches because a woman could not make herself higher than a man and it was be down low and that was you know I mean that's what we really had to work with in the very, very beginning there. It was really, really difficult for me to see that.

And, and I've seen women in crowds, there, like if they would have some kind of a something out in the big fields there at the school and the men were standing the women had to crawl in. Crawl in through the crowds and that all changed once we started because that was before I got there they hadn't started the school and Tari. [19]61 and I got there in [19]63 and of course the only boys were allowed in school and when the Capuchins went to try to find the sisters to come over to teach the women then, okay, that's what happened and they so it was in [19]61, now I'm just speaking of Tari the Father said no no no girls and then the sister said no boys. They said, no you have to take the boys because the boys have already started. They said no and she said—they said, Some girls come in as in prep like kindergarten, prep, preschool and then we'll take boys. So finally they let some girls come in they said you know just like about five, six girls and then there'll be a classroom of 30 or 40 boys you know, but at least it was it was a breakthrough. But until we could educate you know the girls the next year there was more girls and then when I got there, there was, it was about, not quite half and half, but it was it was much much better, and but until we could educate the people on the worth and the dignity of all of us, you know, that God made all of us equal in that women you know we're just as equal in God's eyes as we see them equal in God's eyes you know we kept saying you know as sisters the fathers and their sisters we work we worked together you know all the time and that's perfectly all right, you know and so anyway then they the parents could see the boys and the girls you know

working together playing together playing ball together they're at recess or whatever you know and we most of the time left our classroom doors open that parents could see in you know so they could see what was going on in these classrooms because they didn't they have you know classrooms themselves were Brother Mark and Father Tim made the classrooms and then made their own so milled their own wood from trees and with a little sawmill that Father Tim's family sent over in in the nice sized classrooms.

When they first started it was only the boys and the fathers were there teaching because there were no sisters and of course they just sat right on the floor and then my, when I got there Sister Annatta, you're going to meet her, Kate now was teaching prep and she had on but she had 40 or 50 kids in that classroom, oh my gosh, and she said so you know Ruthann, she said, If you wouldn't mind I would like for you to take over some of the prep and I said, take over some of your prep students? And she said yes she says, Monday. I says, Monday? This is the next day. No preparation. She said, oh I, I said, she said, Oh I'll help you with the lesson plans I'll tell you what you should do and she said and it'll be okay, okay, you'll be okay because she said you know you've worked with little kids and so you be fine. Well, she, I don't remember what I did, I guess I was showing pictures and saying words and they would follow after me and then we I member going outside with them with a stick. We sat on the brown ground it was sort of a brownish red clay ground and we drew things in the ground you know, a boy or a house, you know it was just drawing things and that was our art lesson. They had no pencils no paper no books nothing, nothing like that at all, nothing, and so we had to make everything, everything.

I really, really enjoyed it and I remember, it was, now this was October, so I only had them the rest of October, November and then December and then that was their school break, their school break is from Christmastime, maybe the week before Christmas, and then the rest of December and January and then they started school again at the end of January, so I only had those now I only had about maybe fifteen, twenty kids and she had all the rest of them, but she knew what she was doing, anyway. But, I remember telling them because, I said, You know now if Father comes, next time Father comes in the, in the classroom you stand up for him and they just kind of looked at me. I thought now, oh gosh now how am I'm gonna tell them this. I said, Father Timin, Father Paul, they come in and I, we go out the door and come in and I says, Father Paul to see you and I, they were kind of shaking their heads and I said, and I go like this, I said, You stand up so they all stood up and then I said, No no, but when he comes, comes, you do it that, I said. And then of course I had closed the door and I said now do, and I can remember this so well, "Do you understand?" They heard the word "stand" and they all stood up and I turned around to look to see if Father came in to the door and I said, "Oh." I said, "All right, sit back down" (laughs) I said, "Sit down," I mean it was all actions and drawing pictures, good, there was a lot of preparation before you know.

And I don't remember everything else I did, but I know I did some dumb stuff that you know. I made Mickey Mouse pictures. Well they didn't know Mickey Mouse or Easter Bunny, they didn't know any Easter Bunny. So I had to find you know like pigs, trees, peanuts, things that they knew and draw pictures of and that's how you started teaching, but then I didn't know what grade I was going to have when I went back, you know, after January. So Kate Annata still kept the prep class and Sister Lorena I think was in the first grade and they needed a second grade teacher. I says, Okay, that's fine because they would know a little bit of English you know and so then I was find in the second grade, but oh my, that prep



classes really interesting. Going in second day or the third day I was in at my mission station. Anyway things went on and on with teaching and it was good, it was good.

MEL: I'm curious of what you taught? So you taught second grade and then you taught all the subjects?

SRAB: No there was, it was, that was another, another whole story. We get a syllabus from the government from Australia. The syllabus is like two pieces of A4 paper you know and it's just got lines down at the top "Prep," right next to it the next column, "Grade One," next column, "Grade Two" and all that you're supposed to teach is in that first little column an about an inch long and about eight inches long. An inch to eight inches and all everything you supposed to teach is in that. Now that's what I remember, now I might be really cranky, but and it just says, you teach them to speak English because they weren't allowed to use pidgin because ours, Huli people didn't know pidgin at all, they only knew their local language. So you had to teach in English and you could teach songs and you, you have to learn how to teach the alphabet and numbers and reading starting with reading, that's what, that was, prep was more that. Just having fun together, you know things like that and then your, actually, really reading started in a second grade, but you know I would say I'd hold up a book and I'd say, or a pencil or envelope or whatever and I'd say, they didn't know envelope. I'd say, hold up a book and I'd say, "book" and they'd say, "book." I'd says, "yes, book" Okay and then I'd hold up a pencil and do the same thing or I'd, I point to a girl and I'd say "girl" and they'd laugh and they'd then I'd point boy, that's how that's how you started with them you know, but now Kate knew, had taught them you know those 20 little preps, so they knew enough, but I was another new voice for them you know and that was really difficult for them because they were used to Kate, Sister Kate or Sister Annatta.

And I don't know I just, I don't know, I'd play hopping games with them. I'd play jump the rope with them and, and everything was in with learning something you know. If it was a hopping game they had to hop from letter or color to color or and name the color or anyway it got to be in, in first grade it was, second grade it was much easier and I could I could pass a little picture around and they say, "I am holding a book." I mean they could start you know sentences by second grade already and I mean they knew they knew enough to start just reading some words, but then you just keep so it was English you had to teach and uh religion of course and reading and writing. I had phonics class, connecting with the uh, course they didn't know that and Australian government didn't know that, but I taught phonics here so I taught it over there and we did try to teach different like geography, you know, but history of, there's some place besides the southern highlands because even their parents didn't know that, you know, they didn't know that there was you know people, like, living in Tari didn't know there were people living in Mendi and that's just the next district, but it's about a five, six hour road trip away, you know, it's too far for them. But then when all these trade stores started coming in the people would come with stories they saw these people that live down by the big water and of course they had never seen the big water. They talked about during the war and this is after I've been there with the people for a while they would, we would sit down and talk with them and they would say, they remember this big bird flying in the air. They didn't what the big bird was, but it made a lot of noise and of course it was their first airplane and it was flying over the highlands just to make sure that you know there was not unrest up in the highlands like the coast was during the World War II.

Anyway and so we, and that's what we did with the, the school kids on the weekends. We would, some of the school kids and they would, the kids organize, the older kids you like the third grade by that time fourth grade they would organize, the sisters are going to come to our village this weekend and then we're going to another, every weekend we go to somebody else's village and then we would sit down with and meet the parents see their homes see their gardens hear their stories through the school kids would interpret you know that we recall it we called it turn'em talk, but interpret this the stories from their parents and then we never left unless we had sweet potatoes, that was their main food, so they called it "tommehena" in Kagua. "Tommehena" or "cowcow" in pidgin. And so we get our sweet potatoes we'd have onions. They would, greens, but they didn't happen in all this other vegetables, you know, we introduced you know carrots and cabbage and but they had oodles and oodles and oodles of greens that they ate. They had sugarcane, they had a squash. They had a squash that they ate.

But anyway like I said when the because we taught the kids to make their own gardens and so they grew their own vegetables because they stayed with us during the week and on the weekends they would go home and then they would come back on Monday and be with us for the week and we, because some of them live too far to walk and I think the sisters in the beginning thought they should stay with us just to kind of get used to being in school and some of them still ran off and got home and got some cowcow from mom or whatever and oh, the cowcow, Mary Ellen, oh God you'd love it. You like sweet potatoes? Ooh, they bake their sweet potatoes in the hot, their houses in Tari were made round, okay and their, the fire was built right on the floor on the ground in the middle of the house and then along the back part of the walls there was no windows in the house at all the back part of the house was a mat floor, just a woven mat that they made and they sit back there and then the fire, the fire and the ashes couldn't get to the, the woven mat to burn, you know, and then the ceiling probably was as high as that door about the size of the door and it was, we called it pit-pit and they would smash that and then put it in bundles and all the roof they start down to the bottom these bundles and tie them on and then they, next row, bundles and they tie this on and the men, the men build the house and the women bring all the pit-pit and stuff and the string that they use, string they, they've got a special plant that they strip off and that's string, very, very strong and they tie the bundles up and then get the bill, so the men and the women worked together in building, which is nice, but when it comes to their gardens, the men cleaned the ground, finished, then the rest of it is all for the women to do all, it's a woman's job.

Anyway so we would go out and have, meet the parents, see the villages, learn the names of the villages, and try to learn the names of the parents you know and then even parents who didn't send their kids to school came to hear and see these women with white skin, you know, and then eventually they sent their children, you know, in the years, not immediately, but it took a while, but now I think all the children go to schools now, maybe not all but pretty, pretty many of them.

MEL: I'm curious about you meeting the parents, do you remember meeting the parents the first time? Those first visits to villages on the weekends?

SRAB: Oh, yes, yeah though at the very first one we went to, I think her name was Helen and her husband's name was Ken, but I'm not real positive about that and they had this one little girl. Her name was Holy Mary. She was the last born in the family and of course, they

had been to church with the Capuchin Fathers, so they had learned about God and this, this man Jesus they didn't know what Jesus is all or Mary or you know, Joseph, no nothing at all, but they had a good spirit and that was, they said that's the God that Father Tim and Father Paul talked about all the time you know and then they learned about Joseph and Mary and then they had baby Jesus on Christmas and, and they figured out when Christmas was because they've got a certain tree. I'm really going into, there's a great big tree right outside the this big church that they had built and in December there, it's like a little nut, but they can't eat it, but it's like a little nut or a little acorn-like, not acorn. A cone, cone real tiny and they would fall down and when those things fell down on the ground that was the time that they had their big singing and that singing is their dancing and they pull, put all their food together in this great big pit under the ground and they, they dig a great big hole about oh three foot, no, two foot maybe, two to three foot deep and then they line it with banana leaves, they put their food, the meat, the pig down at the bottom and then they put more banana leaves on top of that and then they put hot stones that they have made hot and they make their own thongs to pick up the stones to put them in and sometimes they just with their hands they through them in, anyway on top of the pig meat and then they put more greens on top of the stones, the banana leaves then there are vegetables like the corn, by the time we were taught them, corn and carrots and onions, and all that, you know, then they start using all that kind of stuff, but anyway, what was I getting too? Oh to Mary, Holy Mary.

So they, these, the parents learned the fathers and you know and the fathers and the early sisters, the first sisters that were there, and, and that would have been Kate and Naomi and Lorane. Kate, Naomi, and Lorane were the ones I lived with in. Anyway we got to this this bush area, it was Helen and Ken and then their last born was Mary, a little baby, and she was about three or four at that time about four I guess and they always called her Holy Mary. Holy Mary. And I said, Where did they get Holy Mary from? And they said, they were so happy and they Father Tim said, you know, Saint Joseph was a holy man and Mary was a holy woman, so they wanted to call her Mary, but they wanted to call her Holy Mary. All her life she went through as Holy Mary. Uh-huh, it was just beautiful and then, but they would, they would, they would tell us about you know their houses and how they built it and how, how important their pigs are and who makes the gardens and what's the men's work, what's the women's work and long walks they take and they remember some of the tribal fights and they was tell us about tribal fights. I mean it was just picking up customs and traditions like you know, I mean they got, you never step over like if there's a pile of pumpkins, you'd never step over a pumpkin or you never step over food because you're like contaminating it, if you step over it and so that's a big - and they were teaching us all these things the parents themselves you know and like I said we were teaching them a lot because they we left our classrooms open or they could look in the windows the windows were, it was like a canvas that you could see or plastic, plastic not canvas, plastic that you could kind of see through and of course it would protect the, cause you could close the windows then and it wouldn't get rain in the inside. We locked them with just sticking a nail through a hole. Anyway, the windows open, you just push them over from the bottom and the bottom, top comes down and then you put a stick in it and hold the windows open, the door.

So and then we and they were bright and you know because we didn't have electricity there was no electricity there I guess you heard all that from Martine. Oh man, anyway, so that's what the parents taught us and we loved that and I think, I think that was absolutely

extremely, extremely important you know because how could we teach the children if we didn't know the parents and we didn't know where they came from or what happens in their villages, you know, and the kids just, they just run all over, every place, you know but they know that they have to be home, at when the they have to be home when the crickets, the cicadies start crawling at night - squeaking or calling at nighttime and that they if they hear those crickets well they have to be home and if they don't boy they get it. But isn't that, isn't that neat? You know the parents don't go out and call them, they had, when as soon as they hear those, they come home. And so, I mean we learned, we learned all that from the parents.

MEL: I'm curious how they thought about what the purpose of school was, cause they didn't go to school.

SRAB: Oh no, no, no, no. No, no. Not at all. The Capuchin Fathers were the very first white people they saw. There were four of them, I think. They were they went there in 1955 and I think they were the first white, I not think, I know, white person they ever saw maybe they might have seen a kiap. I didn't tell you the Australian police the house at the airport, I told you in Tari was the, just that house that was it maybe I didn't tell you that, it was a kiap's house and I said what's a keel they said it's an Australian priest, police, policeman and there's a couple, few of them that live in there and they patrol the area because it was restricted like if, where the catholic mission was in the airstrip and that kiap's house the, the police would go out to the different areas just to make sure there was no unrest going into the area. Well, we kept thinking you don't need to do that these people are beautiful, just beautiful and so we had to ask the kiaps if we could even go out to village to the villages to visit and they said, well we would take you and we didn't want that to happen and we said, no, I said we're okay, we're okay and they said, they talked to the fathers about it and they said, oh yeah, they can go out you know. But we could only go like oh maybe 10-15 miles beyond the mission places and anything beyond that we were not allowed to go because of the unrest. They didn't know because the southern highlands was so unknown at the time and, and especially when we got to, Kagua's more isolated than Mendi and then one got over, I mean to Tari, and then we got over to Kagua that was another real isolated place and, and so that's the reason that's the reason why we, oh I don't know how I got onto that,

MEL: You were telling me about how the parents thought about school.

SRAB: Thought about school you asked if they didn't, if they went to school. No they had no education whatsoever. That comes later on because they start begging for it. Now, anyway they like I said we left the windows open and the doors if we could and then sometimes we'd have like parents' days and they could come into the classroom and then the kids would show them how this letter, this something, comes from that pencil onto the paper and the color, crayons and it was, and then it was cute to watch the parents take, I mean the kids take the parents' hand and write with it or draw a picture, it was, it was precious, it was just, it was a lot of fun, it was lots of fun. But, how did they take to it I think I think they won the confidence of the fathers, first, and trusted them and then the first sisters got there and what they were doing, that they were actually taking away the classrooms from their fathers but they didn't particularly care for these girls, like I told you, but then they, they said well alright if that's what we have to do we'll do it you know. So they trusted, I think there was a lot of trust there and there was a lot of what's the word conglomer—mixture.

MEL: Camaraderie.

SRAB: That's it, that's the word, thank you. I forget my English. Between the fathers, us, and them and then they would invite us out to their villages for these moo-moo dinners and we'd eat the food with them and the fact that we sat there and ate the food right out of the pit with them they just thought this was you know and I think they were, we were becoming part of their life and of course they were ours and I think it was just trust you know and they didn't know what this was all about what education was leading to they had no idea you know that was going to be opening their area to a broader world you know and but we were mainly opening their world so they could learn more about God and their relationship and prayer and a good spirit you know and but that's sort of—

MEL: You were describing going on the weekends, visiting the parents.

SRAB: Visiting the parents, okay. I did that visiting and parents on the weekend and then I told you the school years of January to December and the next year then I taught grade two, you know, and that was that was a good experience. Anyway I stayed in the primary school there, I guess I was in Tari, until [19]80 from [19]63 to [19]80. It was [19]72, [19]72 that's when it was [19]62 to [19]70, uh, [19]63 to [19]72 and we had a school supervisor an Australian man, father, not father, Chapman, Ian Chapman was his name and he asked me if I would be willing to leave the classroom and work with training teachers you know after they've already been into the classroom and they've missed out on new, you know, like new math coming into the school curriculum. Now this is when books and papers and they started getting some supplies in because I had been there about eight, nine years already working in the school there and if I would be a curriculum advisor and I said, his, his name was Terry, I said, Terry, I said, What in the world is a curriculum advisor? And he said, well, he said, and then he explained to me and I said, Well in the holding workshops and things and I said oh I would love that you know, that would be fine. Just here in the Tari area? He says, we'll start here in the Tari area and see how it picks up, he says, so you would be going around to the various schools in you know government schools in the Tari area and plus the catholic, catholic ones, by that time we had already opened up you know a school in Parani, a school in Hadamori, school and, Catholic schools. Out in Korba.

Anyway and I says, Yeah, I'll do that and so then I would go out and visit their classrooms and all I did was go in and just observe and then I'd have a meeting with the teachers afterwards you know and then we would discuss things or unless it was something private to one particular teacher and we just talked to him after you know there was a break in the class and I got to know the schools all over the whole area, which is really good by that time they had already brought the first car in to the area it was a truck and they had to bring through that you know I told you that gap the mountain okay they had to carry piece by piece and the first thing they got together was a, no they had this, I guess that wagon because, because we came down on the you know the tract in the wagon I think that happened before yeah I did I mixed, mixed up, that happened before I got there, but they said they had to carry it piece by piece by piece and then they put it all together once they got it in and then they the people could see it moving and so and so forth. Anyway then I told Terry, I said, I would need to have a vehicle and so the government got me a white Land Cruiser and they had to drive that thing through the gap and that's another whole story maybe Susanna will tell you that story because she was part of that one bringing that driving that Jeep through the gap and the roads Oh God. They would have to carry they had

another truck with them and this Land Cruiser and they had to build the bridges by putting just DY, DY, logs down and then they would drive, tried to stay right on top of those logs and of course the men did that. The sisters wouldn't drive, right across.

Anyway, so they got my Land Cruiser in there and I could drive around to all the schools and I thought to myself, don't like this. I said, So I said, Terry I will continue the job next year if you promise to give me one national teacher who you think would be a good curriculum advisor that he works with me on the training job and so then he did that in the next year he took over in another area not in the area where I was and I said now every year I want another teacher to train as a curriculum advisor and I taught him how to hold workshops and how to do it and how to plan, all the whole thing you know course then you'd have to find out what new curriculum was just put out and get a hold of that and then learn it first, most the time we had it in our schools and cause Terry Chapman would let us introduce it and then you know then implement it and so I was very strict with anything I did no matter how I changed jobs that I always had somebody going with me walking with me, being with me and then I would do it, they would do it, you know training right on the spot in the national, national I did that the whole time there and I to me that was very very important.

MEL: I'm curious about these teachers. They were, they had lived in Papua, they were from Papua New Guinea?

SRAB: They were Papua New Guinea, but they were from the coast and see they had education on the coast for a hundred years before, we opened up in the highlands, you know and so they had good English, they could speak pidgin English. They would not know the Huli language, but by the time you know they were, the kids were picking it up enough English and they were, they wanted to learn Pidgin English so we would sneak Pidgin English in. Of course we weren't allowed to teach that according to the government, but and so these teachers were the ones that were taking over the schools in the government schools you know and most of like I say most of them were from the coast, but then eventually our highland kids got through grade 6, that was the end of grade school, grade 6 and some of them went off to a teacher training right from then because there were no high schools, but then finally we got a Catholic high school in Tari and then they had up to grade 9 from 6 to 9, grade 9, no, no to grade 10, grade 10, yeah up to grade 10 and then they would go into from after that high then they would go off to teacher training college over and in the western highlands or down on the coast and really get formal teaching training, but say some of our best teachers were those bush teachers that we had you know and who had very little English, but learned day by day, you know, Lorraine God love, Sister Lorraine, she would sit with those teachers the night before go through the lessons with them, they would go in the next day teach that the next night that afternoon she'd sit and go through the lesson plans to teach it, I mean she was really good with them, really good, but that's, that was in the early, early days.

So, we have a, in fact, he's still living is a man living in Mendi and he was called Holy Tony, now how he got the word holy to his name, but and I think the people, I really think it was the people he was a teacher, trained teacher from the grassroots it was a coastal guy but and he had enough English, but he loved the Highlands and he just stayed up there, stayed up all his life, did not go back, went back to visit, but never went back to his home and from Manus - one of the islands off the main coast of Papua New Guinea. Never went back to his own people, but he stayed up there and the people in Mendi, he worked in Mendi. I think

they started because he was such a good, good man, never married, good, good man and just loved the kids, loved the parents, just you know, was doing everything we were doing and they always called him Holy Tony and I went over there just in 2008 went back, that's later and he's still there, mm-hmm.

Are we finished with an hour yet?

MEL: Sure. We—

SRAB: Are we or not?

MEL: So we're at an hour and five minutes.

SRAB: Okay.

MEL: Would you like to stop?

SRAB: Let me see is this a good place to stop? Well yeah, I stopped after the independence. Oh I just want to say. I'll say finish that curriculum advisor and I'm glad that I did that with those curriculum advisors because it was in 1976 that was in [19]72 I started that and I was still doing it in [19]76 when we had independence of the country and that's when they asked all of the sisters or European people, teachers in a missionary to step out of the classroom and leave it for the National people, of course we were, that was fine with that, but that was, that was a little difficult, you know, for some of them because that's all they knew, you know, and but anyway we got through that and they found other jobs and you know, but that, so that takes us up to independence and I'll stop there. Okay. I could go on.

MEL: Thank you, Sister.

## **Part 2**

### **September 10, 2014 – Sister Ruthann Boyle speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana.**

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lennon in Oldenburg, Indiana at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Francis with Sister Ruthann on August, on September 10, 2014. Sister would you like to continue?

SRAB: Yes. I think I ended up with you, Mary Ellen, last time we talked with the independence of our country and so it was because of the independence is when the government asked us the Australian government we were still with Australia, but well because we got independence we were actually on our own, but they were still being guided by Australia and so I, actually, they wanted they gave me another job was gonna offer me another job in the position of writing curriculum books for the teachers and but I would have to move down to Port Moresby and I didn't want to leave the highland people who I got very attached to and friendly with and so on so forth, so I refused the job and so I took what I did was I took up pastoral work right in the Tariq area where I was working at

that time. I think I went there in [19]63 and this is now [19]76 that I'm beginning to talk today. And the pastoral work that I started was it was a program that was initiated in Australia among all the parishes or a priest had gone to a big meeting in Oceania and it was called Basic Christian Community Program and the whole idea of this Basic Christian Community, we call it BCC, so if I refer to BCC, that's what it means. It's a grassroots program to meet the needs of the people, not just go in and initiate, I think you need this and so I'll do this or I think you need this or we think you need this so we'll do it this way, no we go and sit down in the villages on the ground out in their little villages on the on the grass and just start to start talking with them, but now they know very little pidgin they know no English so the school kids would go with us and we go on the weekends and we'd sit down with the with the school children or the catechists who would know the pidgin and he they could we call it turnem talk, turn the talk, okay and we would just basically say we're here to help you we're here to do whatever we can do for you and we couldn't—we're here to learn from you, you know just we're here to be with each other sorta and what came out of those grassroots program and I didn't just come out like that it took quite a few meetings you know and we had a lot of villages gonna go to there were a good, good 25, 50, not 50, 30 villages around this whole area that we would have to get to, anyway we started with the closest ones first and then it would, kept building up.

And what they were really asking us to help them with is when they came to church on Sunday, of course this is all new to them you know the fathers had been there already, well we had been there too since [19]63 to [19]70, [19]76 so you know we, they had been hearing stories about Jesus and Mary and Joseph and the church and the saints and they said they wanted to hear more stories about Jesus and they wanted to know how to pray and so we thought, we will tell you stories of Jesus if you tell us stories, you know, from your own local area you know the traditional stories that are passed around and so we could have an exchange of stories that's how we first started out and they would sing songs and in their own local language and we'd start with a little prayer and a little song and then what we started with was the Sunday gospel, you know, preparing them for the Sunday, the next or the Sunday that was coming up gospel so there it would be a little bit familiar with them and so that's how we had started with it and we always had picture of the story that we either found a picture, we drew the picture, or somehow okay to make it more interesting for them and from the storytelling then they asked for help in learning how to learn the pidgin English so they could talk to other people who came in because they didn't know English now I'm talking about the mothers and the fathers not the school kids they knew they were learning English and there it was getting the English was giving taught to the parents too, but it was a very very slow process okay and so they wanted to learn how to read or write or just more stories, more pictures more stories or more pictures and so we sat down with them and told them the Bible stories, gospel for the Sunday, the upcoming Sunday and then if we had little pictures if sometimes we had little pictures of them and we give a picture of the story that we were going to—so they had their own little picture and then they take their picture to church on Sunday and then while father was telling the story and then talking about it they looked at a little picture and they were so proud you know that they had a picture, now everybody in the church did in have one because we hadn't been to all the villages yet you know so it was a long process but then it eventually grew and grew and grew and Sister Paulita and I Paulita Schuman, I don't whether I mentioned her, she was there with me in the pastoral work at Kagua, just the two of us and that went on for years and years and years and then that group then finally developed into it was the catechists of the place and then there was a Eucharistic minister and the prayer leaders and the church



committee and song leader. Okay so it was a group of the leaders in each little village that really developed this first of all it started out with just anybody who came you know and then it developed to this you know leadership group so that they could learn how to do what we were doing and then they would have their picture and then they would take it to the gra—actually to the gardens of the especially the women, the gardens where they were and so if they take a break during their work morning or wherever it was they all came together and hear the story, they just all sit down together and hear the story and pray and then they were told then when you go home tonight now you tell this story to your children or if your husband wasn't here and didn't hear it then he can hear the story and so it was just go-e-go, it is moving.

And so from there they the women are the ones who asked if we would teach them how to read and write, I think I talked a little bit about this in my last one but this is a much more developed like you know it was a regular, they came every week and they were kind of responsible for being there and learning and that's when we made the flashcards you know like the pidgin English or the local language which was Huli and called it Huli and we would you know draw a picture of a tree or go outside and point to a tree and say "tree" all right and then they would say "tree" and then they'd giggle and then they would say I'd say "tree" and they'd say "tree" and I said and then they told the turnem talk, what's your word for tree they said, "id-ea" I said okay, "id-ea," "yeah the id-ea" and then I say all right "English tree, tree" and then I'd point to them and say "id-ea, id-ea" you know to their language so we did that with you know the sky the moon the sun the flowers the boy/girl, you know with everything and most of the time we try to have a visual thing you know, the real thing there that we were introducing word by word and then eventually it was pictures you know we have to draw pictures of little flash cards of them and then it was matching the word after they learned the ABC's matching the word with a picture you know it was just playing games with them and then it developed into we actually taught very simple phonics to get the sounds of the letters and then how to show how to put the letters together and then try to create sounds for the letters to create the words and then when they all of a sudden they would be mumbling these words and they all of a sudden it hit them oh that's this you know it's—it might be baby, you know, and baby is pickaninny you know anyway that's how they that's how we do began to develop the local language and then from there we just made little booklets with we had a hectograph machine in the beginning and then we finally got a duplicator and we could run off our own little booklets and it would be just simple words, a picture, simple words you know just like we do here in the States. Okay and then from that we develop little phrases and they would then were they would we'd have an image of an apple say an apple and then they pass that apple around and they say, this is apple, this is, not even all the words, just this is apple, this is a pencil, pencil, well the pencil was foreign to them, but anyway that's how we kept going from words to phrases and then to sentences and then, then into writing little tiny stories. Now we had to write all these booklets, so we were very busy on the weekends if we weren't out with the village people they would be in there having these lessons. And that went on and on and on, and enjoyed it to the end of the nth degree.

During that time another big thing that came up from the village people from this BCC was they were having difficulties in their married life on understanding, how the body of the woman worked and the body of the man worked, okay. Now this came actually from one of our trained teachers from the coast. He and his wife had come up to work, to teach in January and all of a sudden I could tell the couple we were still kind of with the teachers in

school at that time and I could tell that they were having little marital problems already and they had just gotten married you know can't do that that fast, anyway it did, but what it was is he did not understand how a woman's body worked nor vice versa they didn't know and he was blaming her for that she was going around and giving her body to other men in the village and she wasn't now I knew she wasn't, oh gosh, Mary was her name. She was, I mean they were both, just a wonderful outstanding couple and finally I mean this went on and on and on back and forth between the two, Paulita and I both sat with them for a long time and she was up talking to us one day it was on a weekend Saturday and she said I have to get home I can't remember his name she said, I have to get home to him because he was very angry when I left and then I think he knew I was coming up to talk to you, sisters. We got down to his house she went down to his house and we she said ask us Pauline and I both to go with her because she was frightened of him. He hung himself in the little shower and he must have just did, he had locked the door, locked the window and the window was a screen canvas, sort of a screen, I guess I can't remember the material but anyway we she just had a knife or something in her pocket and she just ripped the screen and climbed in the window and we, because we could see him hanging and she went back and unlocked the door for us and then we got in and I just went around him and just picked up his - his legs and just lifted him up so the Rope was not you know it was taking the pressure off of his neck and Paulita ran and got one of the father's, Father Timin and he got the car he had like a Jeep Suzuki.

And we got him in the car, got him up the little hospital right there in Kagua and we saved his life he was he was ok I mean he was it took I think if it's about three days and that's when Father Timin said he said I've talked to him and he told me—he asked him you know why are you so sure that she is running around with other women men and he said because she has blood on her every once in a while and we he said, he said to Paulita and I you've got to teach them you know how this you know and so that's how it started we there was a nurse in another area of the southern highlands Joyce, Joyce Ann, she was from Our Lady of the Missions from Australia, no she was an American, but she lives with the Australians the community was and she was a registered nurse so she came over with Paulita and I, taught us the method it's called Billings method of ovulation Billings methods and it's because it's was it created by a doctor, husband-and-wife doctor in Billings, in Australia, okay, and so that was a method she was using to teach over in other parts of the southern highlands, so she came over with us and we made our charts, she taught us how, and we had practice teaching back and forth with each other and then we started going out to our teachers first in fact we use this teacher this couple first well he kept saying why didn't somebody teach us this, why didn't, we didn't know this you know and so it went from teacher to—then we got all the teachers in the school that were still there and we taught them and then it went to the catechist and then it went to these church leaders at these basic Christian community groups and we taught them well then they said we should teach everybody in the church you know we—father was going to come out for mass, da da da, Sunday or Sunday, Saturday or whatever, we should stay, go out and teach this method to them and we said, we'll do that, just to the whole group just to give him some school of what this means you know what happens to a woman's body and what happens to a man body you know when they get that age and finally individual women would come and say all right now, I really want you to teach us. And we said, No we will only work with you if your husband is here with you, you have to come together and really learn this method you know to do it together, it's not hard it's not hard at all, but we can't teach one without teaching the other you both have to come and once you learn to both learned the method and really

know your bodies, really understand how they work, then the woman can come by herself, if she just has special questions to ask or whatever you know so but initially they had that was a very general rule they had to come together and we did that Paulita and I did that along with this Basic Christian community until [19]82. Yeah, I think Paulita left Kagua in [19]80 because she was elected our Regional Coordinator at that time and so she had to go to Mendi and then at that same time around about that time, Martine's I think you've got Sister Martine's topic is and she came over and she got introduced to this Basic Community because the Mendi area hadn't, they were doing it but they really didn't go to way out like we did, sit down with the very bush people you know and anyway, Martine got very involved in it and then in 1982, I think that's when yeah, it was in [19]82 that Sister Kate Holohan who started this Franciscan Sister Mary's, I'm sure she's already talked to you about that.

She was elected as our part of the council here at the motherhouse and so she was called from Kagua away from the formation scene and she just couldn't up and go she needed somebody there, but I think Doris had gone to help her when Paulita went to Mendi, then Doris moved to Kagua to work in formation with her Sister, Kate, okay, but she was going to go off on a formation program in the Philippines just to learn the formation work okay so Kate had to leave and Doris couldn't leave because she couldn't go to that course because she couldn't leave the novices and postulants by themselves. Charlene was there, but she, you just couldn't leave them and so that's when the Bishop Furman, through Sister Paulita, who was our superior, asked me if I would go in formation. I said, Oh my gosh, oh my gosh. I mean we were just getting this whole program really on its feet well it been six years anyway then they were they were doing well and Martine was doing excellent keeping it going too, so I thought well okay.

But before I did it he was really funny because I was talking to Father Timin in Kagua, I mean in Tari and he's the one who helped us with that couple and I said, Tim what am I gonna do I said, I love it here, I love the Huli people, I just, you know this is my first station I've been here from the very beginning you know I just really was attached and he said, I said should I say yes, or should I just stay here? He just looked at me and he said, Ruthann, what would have happened if Mary had said no? And I said, Thank you, and I knew I had to say yes. So within a month, it was less than a month I—poor Martine, I had to leave her by herself and anyway I packed up and took, let's see a five, about a nine-hour road trip to Kagua over bumpy roads, oh, I guess they've—some people have talked about the roads? Yeah, oh my. Anyway we made it over there and after, Charlene was there to help with teaching you know just to help them to educate you know because many of them had been up to grade 6 level some degrade 8 level, but none of it had in the high school at all, these young women who were coming to ask to be sisters, okay. And so she was helping them with it, we call it correspondence, okay, and because they were all on different levels and then Doris was teaching the postulants and the novices and here I come in, "green," I had no training at all in formation work at all, I had a lot of training in pastoral work you know and so she said, Well, why don't you work with the junior profess sisters and teach them the basic Christian communities like you taught the people over there? And I said, Yeah I can do that, we made charts and da da and we did the whole gamut a gun by myself without Paulita though and then, then I would after they make their charts and I had the outline of how they, what they taught not word-for-word just little outlines to a basic you know outline for them and that was on the back of their picture their picture to be here whatever they're talking about and the lesson plan was on the back and then they could flip charts and the lesson plans were on the back for them if they needed it, most of them didn't,

but some of them did and then after they learnt how to teach to each other, they practiced teaching, then I would take them out three at a time to the villages around where the people were and we only use the basic leaders the community the prayer leaders, the community ministers, the church committee, those just those to teach them this basic Christian community, nothing about family planning, no nothing.

And I would teach and then we would go to the next village in the afternoon, one morning, in the afternoon we go to another village down the road, and then they, one of them would teach what I taught in the morning and so it was, you know, I would teach, they would teach, I would teach, they would teach and eventually we would just plan the lessons they would practice at home and then they would go out and do their own, most the time I'd have to drive them out because the villages are too far and so that's what I started with and then Doris says, I think I could still go on that course, you can take over, but I thought oh my gosh, okay and I saw Doris, I said the only way you can do it is if Father can get a driver for the sisters to take them out to do the junior profess, their okay to go by themselves and now this was about a month to two months that I did this and I mean that was pretty quick, but I knew that they knew what they were doing, you know, and they weren't afraid and so then I stayed when Doris left and taught the postulants, the novices in their classes okay and so that's how, then Doris I think was gone three months she came back, she took over and then I was full rein again with the junior professed and then we'll see after that Doris said, after a couple years, I don't remember all these dates, was called is religious superior for our community coordinator there. So she went over to Mendi and didn't live here with us, so I became the sort of the Mother Superior I guess of the local sisters the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and so I would take, I think I was teaching the novices and Paulita was teaching the because she came to the formation the postulants and the professed sisters, we just help them whenever they need it and because they were going out on their own, some of the villages they could walk to and they would go in different groups, you know, so it was all working pretty well okay and then this went on and on and on and on and this is how far am I, um.

MEL: Sister, I'm interested in your time with the Sisters of Mary, Franciscan Sisters of Mary, what were, when you were meeting these young women from a very different background, but also willing to become sisters, how was that experience?

SRAB: Well they are very different backgrounds because they were different from different areas, spoke different languages, have different customs and for those groups of people that like from Wabag and Anga, Eastern Highlands, Western Highlands and coming and moving into the Southern Highlands, very difficult, very difficult. Even in the Southern Highlands itself, the traditions and customs were and the language was different. Right next door to each other and they'd be different you know and that was, it was difficult to get across to them and to and for us to understand why this particular sister is doing it this way and this particular sister is doing it another way in this particular, I mean and they were to get them to, to come together and we tried to encourage them don't use your local language, use the pidgin English or English either one because if they were using the Huli language from the Tari area, or if they are used in the Imbongu language from the Hagen area or they use like a Kewa, Kewagi, Kewagi, something I forget what the name of the different languages, but if they would use because there might be two or three sisters from that area they would get together and talk their language and then you know are they talking about me from the other group you know how women do (laughs) you know they

start reading into and I mean we had to break, help them to, not break that all down but to you know but there were a lot of good things to you know that they would there are different ways of planting food you know in the southern highlands we had lots of water lots of rain I mean you know and so you had to build the cow-cow, sweet potato mounds up high, they would be good, two foot high, at least a foot and a half high, off of the ground so that when the rain came it would run and it wouldn't rotten the potatoes, okay well the people in the (unintelligible) they didn't need that because they had lots of hills, so they could grow them flat on the ground, you know, and they thought this hill business was for the birds you know a lot of work you mean you just put it right and then the water can drain off you down the hills anyway there were a lot of things they could share with each other and they would bring when they would go home for a holiday or something you come back with different greens and we have this you don't have this here so we're going to plant it here and well share this with you and it was you know we were trying to get them to we are one family you know we belong together and so we share everything together.

I mean even the little habits that they wore they chose them themselves I know I brought you a doll to see that first one and it's, it was a brown and white check blouse and a dark brown skirt or dark brown lablab and they chose it because Franciscan brown was for Saint Francis and the little Mary, the little Mary blouse that they, Mary is the pidgin word for woman, Meri, Meri, and so and they were little rounded neck or square neck puffed sleeves gathered yoke and so we made their patterns, Paulita and I made the patterns and but it was the girl it was the young sisters themselves who, who decided this is what we wanted to do, what we wanted to wear and a very interesting thing was they didn't, by that time we were not wearing our veils anymore, you know, after Vatican II and it was hot there and so it was we were glad to have the veil off. And, but the sisters, they wanted veils and we kept trying to talk them you know, you don't need it, we don't wear and we're sisters. No we want we want veils, we want to wear our veils and finally Mary Ellen I don't know how many months we were trying to get them they said once a woman marries she wears something on her head a towel it could just be a trade towel knotted at the top and hangs down the back or she put her string bag on her head and that's a sign she's married so if their hair is covered that's a sign that they're married you know why we didn't think of this I mean we had been there and we had been there a good 15 years by this time huh. It just never ever dawned us before, but anyway so they're still wearing their veils today. They'll go out in the gardens without them you know if it's real hot or whatever.

But in you know in the religious, you know, church came into the like to the Western Highlands and to the Eastern Highlands much sooner than the Southern Highlands. So we were the last ones you know, established, to establish churches to his you know for them to be introduced to God and prayer and the gospel and the whole works are Southern Highlands people and so in a way it was a very good thing that we were last because all the other the Eastern Highlands the Western Highlands had grown up before Vatican II well we had no Vatican II so we just came in right away with, after Vatican II and with all the new you know and so they didn't have to relearn well the sisters from these other areas were quite doubtful no but if sister says it's okay you know it started this thing in different types of food our people in the Southern Highlands, cow-cow, the sweet potatoes, greens, pit-pit, like a bamboo, all kinds of greens they had. Bananas, pineapple, they had, but the ones from the other had other things. And so they were bringing some of their food ideas in with them or they'd come back from holiday and they'll have, would have a pumpkin or they would have, I don't remember what, but different, different types of food. So as they were

living together they were learning each other's culture, tradition. Even though we're from the highlands it was still different and the languages were really, really different you know.

So we used a lot of pidgin once I moved into Kagua with the formation over in the Huli area it was still all Huli, it was you know because they were very cut off from even the rest of the Southern Highland people. It's a huge, huge, huge big area over and I don't remember right now the numbers in the Huli area. Anyway, that's sort—oh then I mean we also had to write books for the postulants, lessons for them, write books for the novices, for their classes, set up programs for the junior profess and all their ongoing studies there were no books there was nothing you know so we had to write everything. Eventually probably in the eighties things started popping up in simple English that we could use some of those others and we go off to vocation promotion workshops in other parts down on the coast and some of it we could use and some of it didn't fit our Highland people you know but we could adapt to it and then of course there was writing the ceremonies for the, when the postulate becomes a novice they have a special ceremony and you have to write a whole ceremony for that for the liturgy you know and fill out forms and then there has to be another one for when they make first vows and another one when they make final vows so all that had to be written from scratch you know so when we developed the church in the religious life. Now, if that answers your question pretty good. All right, we were, we're still doing okay, where are we honey?

Oh yeah, this is where Father Tim. Oh yeah it was in it was in the early I think it was maybe the late eighties or I don't know when Joan Laughlin and in Vonda Mullen you probably I don't whether you've talked to them, they, they both kind of sort of came to New Guinea to work in formation with the sisters, you know, they had to do a lot of preparation in learning all of this customs and traditions and all you know anyway they came in Joan did a lot with preparation of the sisters for their first, we call it first chapter meeting. A chapter is where the whole community gets together and they decide on goals or issues that need to be discussed or writing their, writing their rule in their constitutions and all this had to be gone through that you know because Sister Charlene actually is the one who would write the rule based on ours and then putting it to Papua New Guinea style it would go to the sisters they would say we don't know what that means, can we find a new word for this? You know, after chapter one she would go through chapter one first then it would go back to Sister Charlene and then she we try to rewrite it again, it would go back to the National Sisters and they would say yeah, know it's okay, then it would go into the Formation Board, meeting, they had to, that was that the bishop was at all those meetings all the time and of course everybody in the formation and the people that were working on the rule you know at that time. So we would have our board meeting and they would have to approve of that first chapter and if everybody approved of it then she would start on Chapter 2 and it would go through that the whole thing. And but the sisters, it was good because they felt like they wrote their own conting—constitutions and directives you know how do they rule their life. You're probably not understanding too much of this huh?

MEL: No, I do, I do. No I understand and what I've been hearing a lot of and what I appreciate is that so much was about empowering the people—

SRAB: Yes.

MEL: —to take their faith in worship and their own practices and make it authentic.

SRAB: For themselves, their families, and then go out.

MEL: That's what I'm hearing and so even describing that I hear a little bit from everyone, but don't worry because everyone tells it a little differently, which is beautiful. So no don't worry I understand.

SRAB: Okay good. Anyway that's what they, they really came over for that and then I felt it was in 1998 I think I wrote that, I felt that with myself there and I was there from [19]72 I think, [19]82, I was there from [19]82 to [19]98 with them you know more director not as much in the first couple years, but more the director of their community and I thought you know it probably would be better if Anne and Joan and Paulita were still there. Paulita was still teaching the postulants and novices and I thought it'd be better if I step out of the picture and let them you know work with Joan and work with Annie and really work on this chapter and prepare for this chapter and they gave them excellent out—you know different ideas on the vows: the poverty, chastity, and obediences and Paulita was there enough keep that grass roots you know Papua New Guinea you know to keep it there and they did an excellent job really an excellent job and that's when I moved then into Mendi and Paulita and Susanna, have you had Suzanna yet? Suzanna was in the dialysis and finance office for quite a few years, okay, and so when Paulita and Sue had decided they were gonna go it was about the same time when I was thinking about leaving Kagua and so it was and I didn't leave until I think it was [19]99 the end of [19]98-99 and they were going to home, finished, Polly and Sue, [19]99 and so Sue had asked me if I take over the finance in the diocese and I thought well we've taught you know finances to the novices and postulants and they're doing well with it and so and so forth you know community and so I thought, Okay, I'll try it.

So I go over and I worked for I think three months before Sue left and then then the bishop gets the idea that he wants all the finances on computer and of course I had used computer enough to just do programs and stuff for the novices and the postulants and their pastor work and stuff like that, but, no nothing with finances and so we get to Mendi and he says, We don't have a program and he said but they're sisters down in Medang on the coast, they have QuickBooks, they're using QuickBooks and I said, Why can't we get one of those sisters to come up to here and put it right into the computer and we watch her, learn from her, and so that's what I did and Sue sat there with me and but Sue wouldn't she wouldn't use the computer she just says okay no here's what it is and da da da da, and I would type it in it, would program the whole the whole bit into the computer and it was a good learning lesson for her too. She came home and wen finance, thank God. I didn't. So then I was in that until I left in 2001. Now the sisters were, professed sisters, Franciscan Sisters of Mary, lived right across from the diocesan finance office, so they were in and out all the time. So if they needed help of course I would be there to help them with their pastoral work or whatever because they had branched out from Kagua into Ialibu and Topangia, into Mendi, into Detsumi, into Kagua, Upper Mendi, I mean so the there would be little groups of about two or three of these sisters, by that time working in all these various places and so I stayed in the finance office.

And I thought I felt pretty good because I you know I always did what I wanted to do and my big aim was to work in whatever position I was in you know until someone was capable of taking over that position and when I was sure that they were I would step out and go into

something that a national couldn't do yet and get myself into that I mean that's what it was constantly doing, constantly doing. So, like I said, I spent my last three years with that and then when I was thinking about leaving and that was in 2001, it was the beginning of the year. Sue had already gone they left [19]99 and Paulita and one of the Sister Agnes Epi who was a Franciscan Sister of Mary she caught on to the finances really well you know and Sister Mel and Sister Doreen were still in Tari High School, I don't whether you've got those yet okay, you'll hear a lot about Tari High. Well not Mel, but anyway Mel would always send her finances over, book over to me and I would always check through her book and check her balance and you just make sure everything was balanced you know and then add it, add it to the book okay and I did that for the whole time I was in finances.

And then this last year, when Agnes Epi had come in, she got stranded in Mendi and I can't remember the reason why and couldn't get back to Kagua, where her, where she was doing her pastoral work out in the Kagua area and so she came over at the office, she said, Sister Ruthann can I help you somewhere in the office? And I says, oh Agnes, I would love it. I says, Sister Mel's got her books here and I can't get two of them, I said, I've got her checked out everything, but you check it anyway, and then just record it, record it in the book. Her handwriting was perfection, perfection I mean, I was worried that she should put it on old paper first and then I would put it back in there, but no way when I saw how her she was doing it on old scrap paper, I says put it right in the book, it was really really good and I was so pleased with her just so pleased with her I mean because she was working with a pretty good sum of money running a high school you know.

And so the this Bishop Furman came, no it wasn't Bishop Furman, it was Bishop Steve, yeah it was Bishop Steve by that time, Furman had retired and gone home and it was Bishop Steve came in and he was I don't remember we was just talking in the office and Agnes was sitting on the side over, typing stuff and Steve said, Don't you think maybe you could get one of the FSM Sisters to take over here because he knew I kept saying you have a five months Steve you've got to get somebody in this office, I'm leaving in five months okay, June and he says, Yeah, yeah, you'll change your mind. No, I'm not changing my mind and I says you need to get a lay missionary from the states. So, he says, Okay. So he did, he finally eventually got a boy from a young man from Colorado in to come but in the meantime when he was in there talk to me, he says, don't you have this, one of the sisters that would be able to take over the finances? And I says, You gotta be kidding, because it was on my hardest job oh gosh it was really, I mean it took me a lot of time, anyway and then when I looked over and I saw Agnes sitting there, I says, The closest one that I know that would be able to do this work would be Agnes, Sister Agnes and she says, "No way," you know, it is so cute, so cute. And I says, Steve, Bishop Steve, I says, Steve just look at her look at her work it is perfection and I said, And she balances all the bank statements first she has bounced all the books that she that Mel has sent over and I said, She does a fabulous job and he said, Agnes, would you like to work in the finance office? And she said, Will you be here Sister Ruthann? And I says, For five months I'll be here. And she says, Well, can I try it for a week? And he says, Yes.

So they let that when the superior heard their superior their new superior because they had just had elections came over and talked and she says, Well let Sister Agnes try it. It was the happiest moment of my life to be, to know that even the finances could be handed over that they would be able to do that and she knew a little bit about the typing, but not a whole lot yet so I kept trying to get her on to the typewriter first you know before she would go onto



the keys on the computer and but I was having her do all kinds of stuff in the finance office and then this lay missionary arrived about a month before I left. He was extremely impressed with her work and I knew, I mean he was an accountant. I mean, I went into that job blank, you know, I really did. Outside of knowing how to balance checks and you know all that kind of stuff but anyway so she took over that and then Mel and Lorraine and I left in June of that year that was really hard it was really really hard and not knowing whether you'd ever see any of them again there.

But what happened was I got home in 2001 and in 2008 Doris and Martine were still there and Doris wrote to me and said, Ruthann they are having really difficult time with their veils because their veils were cut on around the back it was the veils ah go straight across the top and then it's rounded around the bottom and to sew around hem is extremely hard and I knew that and so I told them just hand sew it, by hand. Well that was too slow for them well their veils were a mess and so Bishop Steve said, You've got to get over here and do something you've got to get back over here and do something. So in 2000 and they also wanted me to get out with them in the bush areas that they had developed and help the leadership positions that they were in oh my god anyway so I went over in 2008 and I was there I think about two months maybe a little bit longer than two months and it was undescrivable. It was just undescrivable how they had taken over and mainly, Mary Ellen, because the women are so down you know in the southern islands they were dirt under everybody's feet really you know just I think I we talked about that in the very first with you and now here they are that the men would come to the sisters, sisters, women sisters and ask them to come out and run a program for the youth because the youth were having trouble with the da da da or we need someone to come out and show someone how to do whatever you know just to get something started in their parish that was their need this basic Christian communities were still going you know they were still going. And so while I was there I went with every one of the junior and senior professed sisters to wherever they were working and I did nothing except observe and watch them. I was so proud of them you know just to see that the status and the place that they had taken in the Church of the women it was just mm-hmm really beautiful, really beautiful. Yeah.

And anyway we did we did, Paulita actually Paulita was still living at the time before I left I says Paulie you've got to come in here in the sewing room we got to make, I've gotta have a pattern of a veil before we go over there. So we had made a rectangle and that worked they could sew that and it hangs down in two points in the back instead of rounded but doesn't matter it looked really nice. Steve loved it, Bishop Steve loved it and so it went and oh and another big thing they wanted was because they were some of the older ones were gaining a bit of weight and they needed I didn't teach him how to enlarge patterns and so I had to teach them how to enlarge patterns or even to make smaller ones you know and their patterns that we had made oh they were in rags and so we made cloth patterns instead of paper and so now they won't wear out and then in some of the older ones the ones who were early had caught on to sewing, knew how to enlarge patterns so that's and they now know how to order all their own material and whatever supplies they need and so they're walking on their own two feet. So I think.

MEL: Sister, you've described this beautiful community of sisters. I'm curious about the women who wanted to become sisters, they were coming from all over Papua New Guinea, so Agnes, do you know anything about why she decided that she wanted to take vows, to become a sister? Or any of the young women that you met?

SRAB: You know I think most of them had been in all this Basic Christian Communities that we had and they saw us and they wanted to become like us I mean that doesn't sound very humbly or whatever but I you know I think I mean even ourselves, myself, it was the sisters in my high school in my grade school that I admired and they were happy people they were prayerful people they were out with the people you know even in Beech Grove you know. Saint Mary's Academy, the sisters were always involved with the girls always and I think that's where, Agnes is from a place called Margarima, it's probably, oh probably about 7,000 feet above sea level. She was up in the mountains really up she and Rita both from up there and we went up, met their parents when they first started coming asking about if they could be a sister we had little workshop we called "come and see," come for a weekend and see if you like it you know or see if this is what you're feeling God is calling you to and they would do that for about three years and then, has Noreen talked to you about that?

MEL: She started to, but I'd love to hear your description.

SRAB: Okay but I'm just telling you, she will, because she is the one who kind of initiated that "come and see" and I think a lot of them you know their vocation grew from being Basic Christian Communities into the schools because we taught in to the schools and Noreen and Susanna both taught in, and so did Loraine and so did Ruth, they were in high school, you know teaching the high schools too and so they had the sisters, but the ones we had the hardest time with were the parents because the parents they didn't know they didn't know what religious life was they just knew we were there and we were to helping to teach and we were helping this, but they didn't know about vocations so we had to go around and give talks on vocations and the sisters would go with us on these talk, we go on a bus all around, different, all over the Southern Highlands and then we'd eventually go to some of the other areas, Western Highlands, Eastern Highlands, but mostly Southern Highlands, we stayed there. And Doris, we had a puppet play on what it's like to be a, you know a sister and of course the novices and the postulants would work these puppets behind the screen, I mean the people just loved it and they could talk in their local languages or they could talk in pidgin to the people, they didn't have to use the English at all you know working with the people, but just help the people to understand why their girl thought they were being called to religious life and to help the church and minister in the church this way and I think that helped that was one of our big, big things is to help the parents and even before any time anyone ever moved from the postulant to a novice we would go out to the home villages, sit down with the people, and tried to explain to the people what was happening okay and we did that with every girl that no matter what village it was even if it wasn't another diocese we would go to the people and there would be two, three hundred people out there sitting on the grass ready to hear this what they said, "me like, me like honnum skul long sista." S-k-u-l, school. We want to hear the stories, the school, the education on what it is to be a sister. What this is all about?

And of course then when you get to this the final vows, when you have to tell the, you're giving your whole life to God, permanently, you know, this is it. You know, I won't come back anymore I'll come back to visit, but now I to this new family of Franciscan Sisters. This is my family. Just as a girl leaves her family to go to the man's village and lives with the man's line family. Her lines, she's finished with her line, but she still visits them, they're still friends, they're still family, but now she really belongs to the man's line. I said, now that's what, they would say now that's what religious life is, this is what we're doing, you know,

we're leaving our line and then they had to we had to write out their last will and testament and they had to promise that they will be buried on the grounds where the sisters are buried you know we don't go back, when she dies she does not come back to her home village. Whoa, they didn't like to hear that at all and they said, all right, what happens to a wife and the children? Where did she get buried? They'd go, they'd hang their heads because they knew she had to be buried in the man's village because she gave up her life from her own village, so she had to be buried in his village. Well and so they could understand it but they wanted to see if we maybe we'll change that rule and they'll come home, but you know, but all they needed was someone to come and sit down with them, explain it with them and just talk about it: do you have anything to ask, do you have anything to talk about, you want a story about this? And I mean it was, we would be there for hours, just on the ground, talking, sitting on the ground talking with them, yeah and then what that usually, usually ended up with, they would have a big mumu cooked for us and a mumu, have you heard that? Yeah, it's really nice when they cook underneath the ground with the hot stones that usually always ended it with it because that's a way of celebration this was their way of you know and of course then it was the girl's responsibility, when they would go home at Christmas time, they would be home for about a month with their families and they still do that even after their professed you know even after they've given their life completely you know they still go home and visit, but they always come back to their family new family and they you know just sit down with their families and story and story and story you know it's and they use a lot of the profession with traditions from their own hometown their home village on how a marriage takes place into the religious profession.

Like one of them, Maria Goretti, she had it's their way of life, their Rule and Constitutions that I said Charlene help write, okay. They called it "My Way of Life" okay that's the title on it "My Way of Life" okay on the front cover is that and it's got the symbol of the Franciscans, their symbol that it's on there with "My Way of Life" and the Bible was another so in the year that she made final vows she made them at Kagua and of course all her people from Ango came over to the celebration and for the offertory she carried up her Bible and her "Way of Life. And the Bible she had wrapped in banana leaves and rope from a vine and just wrapped round and round and round and round it. It was all completely covered up and this is a tradition that they Ango people do I think the Southern Highlands do it too, but not, ever be a little bit different, but anyway they would like their precious kina shells they would the men would wrap those up with their banana leaves and wind, and wind, and wind this twine, vines around it and they would stick it way up high where nobody the kids can't reach it, those are daddy's just leave them alone you know this kind of stuff and so, I mean this was custom to these kids, you know, they this, so this Bible was so precious to Maria Goretti and so she did this wrapped it up the Bible and it was down in her string bag it was a big string bag it was a great big thing could hold a baby in it really and then some of her relatives carried that string bag in, at the offertory and her "Way of Life" book was in there not wrapped up just in there and it was just eight by four, but it's a booklet we put together for the Rule and Constitution in that beautiful cover and they pulled out the "Way of Life" first and then father explained what their way of life was, I mean not father, bishop explained what the "Way of Life" was and Maria was standing right up there, Maria Goretti. And then she would hold the book you know and then they pulled out the Bible and oh you could see these men just kind of getting up off all sitting on the floor getting up off of their the back of their legs and looking up to see what in the world was she got in those leaves you know that's what we do and they gingerly slowly unwrapped that Bible and then Maria held it up and said, "This is my way of life, this is my way of life." Wasn't that beautiful?

Now, so they use a lot of their customs and things into the liturgies, they've done that. They're excellent in planning liturgies. Excellent, really good. And I am way past my time.

MEL: Oh sister, thank you very much.