

August 1st, 2016 – Sister Angela Betsch speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana.

Abbreviations

SAB: Sister Angela Betsch

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is August 1, 2016 in Oldenburg, Indiana at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis. I am very happy to be here with Sister Angela Betsch. Thank you Sister for your time today. Would you like to introduce yourself?

SAB: Well, you're most welcome. Yes as she said, I'm Sister Angela. I'm from White Oak, Cincinnati, Ohio and real proud of that little town because it was a wonderful country town in my day, now it's quite built up. And that's where I grew up as a little girl and we had nine children in our family, so you know there was a lot of give-and-take and I guess, maybe that's where I got the idea of working with children. I was second oldest, there were seven under me. Unfortunately now for me because they're all gone and I'm still alive, but uh, but we had wonderful life. We didn't have—we always had a theme song. We don't have much money, but we sure have fun that was ah, whenever we had a feeling we would sing that song and, but we did have a lot of fun. We had our own ball team, neighbors would come to our house because it was more fun and we play kick-the-can. Probably some of you never even heard of that and we just had our own fun and it was very inexpensive and when mom would want to really treat us she'd send us down to the creek in the winter and get ice off the creek and it was those old-time ice cream makers and you chop up the ice and put it around the little tub that had the ingredients in it and in about an hour we'd have—and we'd all take turns churning it and about an hour we'd have homemade ice cream and it was so good. So we did have a wonderful life; compared to today you know, it's so, uh well so many families aren't families really, mom's here and dad's there and something else, but we always knew where our mother and father were and that was wonderful.

Well, I went to Saint James School and I had wonderful Sisters, pardon me, the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, and I always loved the Sisters and I had an older sister of my own about a year and a half older, always wanted to be a Sister, but that really never struck me too much. Well first of all, I wasn't very smart like she was, secondly, I didn't write pretty. All the sisters wrote pretty, pretty handwriting and I didn't, so I thought, Whoa I don't have the qualification. So I was just strumming along there and finally—well then I graduated from St. James went to Colerain High School. My sister went to the Academy and that was really special that she was going to be a Sister, so she was an aspirant, she could go there.

We just couldn't, I didn't think we could afford it. We had seven little ones at home you know, so I think the decision was I would go to the public school and go to school there and it was a good school, we had good teachers and I graduated there and enjoyed it and uh, it was a nice time in history, I would say. Well then I went to, uh, um, a representative from the Pentagon building came to our school to hire girls especially for um, (unintelligible) for secretaries, whatever you want to call them and you could go down to Cincinnati and they had a building, Duttenhofer Building, if you know where that is on 6th and Sycamore and that was like me, like the kids going to Poland today, you know me going to Cincinnati

downtown and I was scared too. And uh, but anyway I thought, I did, everybody said, that's a nice idea. You could come home every day.

So I started at the Duttenhofer Building. Well I wasn't too happy with some of the things that went on with their public, their private lives really, and it was just different than what I grew up with at St. James, so I was getting a little disillusioned about life.

Well by this time my sister was entering the convent and we would visit. We had certain days we could visit and I always looked forward to that. We had to take turns because nine, what was, eight children, eight children, and two parents in a car well you need a bus so we had to take turns. Well this time went on and we visited and wrote letters and one day I was in a certain mood I guess and I wrote, I said, "Do you have a habit that would fit me?" Well now if I were on the other end of that letter, I think, well, I think this girl wants to be a Sister. But I never heard from her and nothing happened. I thought she'd send back the next day you know, so happy to get me.

Well anyway, then, then it was visiting Sunday and it was not my turn, so I didn't get to go. But anyhow when mom came home I said, "Did Mary said anything about me?" and she said, "No." I was kind of crestfallen. She said, "Oh yeah, yes she did. She thinks, *you* think the whole world should change for *you*." Well, I was dumbfounded. I was dumbfounded that she thought that and I thought, Well, I guess she ain't got a very good memory of how I was or what. But, I let it pass.

Then it was ah, she got her white veil. It was big ceremonies, *big* ceremonies, like 60 people would go out to Oldenburg for her to get her white veil and her black veil. So was my—then we *all* went. We went with neighbors and everybody so we all get there. And at the end, she had all kind of little gifts and she said to me, "would you like to help me carry these over to the novitiate?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah I would love to go over there." I love the novice mistress and she liked me. She'd always come in when I was there, always come in to talk. She saw something that somebody else didn't see, you know. And so, over we went, oh she was thrilled I would go with her. Oh and then she stopped by the Oratory, I know the very spot and she said, "Wouldn't you like to come too?" Oh, I said, "Yes." Well we almost ran over to the novitiate to tell the novice mistress and she was very happy and she gave me a book to read. She said, "When you read this, then you write to me." So I read it all one night probably and I wrote to her and then we start rolling, I start shopping for things that we were supposed to bring and doing what I was supposed to do and I remember Sister Mary Katherine Steer was at St. James and she said, "You come up some night, I want to measure you." And I thought, She's going to give me an IQ test and then I won't be able to go after all.

So she came up, so I went with pencil and notebook to take this test. She pulled out her tape measure. She was gonna measure me. So she's gonna measure me for a dress, a postulate dress. Oh.

Well October 4, 1944, Father Rumult helped me find the day, I didn't know what day to come, he thought that the Feast of Saint Francis would be a good day. So on that, it was a beautiful day and my dad and mom and sister, Steven, and my sister Ruth got to go and myself and the rest went off to school, all crying. When I woke up in the morning I could hear them crying out loud and I couldn't believe that, that they cared that much, I'd thought

they'd be happy I was going maybe. But anyway, we had a very cheerful goodbye and they all went to school. Well then we went up to school to get Sister Steven, and I went around the rooms to say goodbye again, left them all crying up there. I'm sure the Sisters were thrilled you know to have all these tears.

But anyway, I entered and there were 17 of us there already and I don't think I made a happy welcome because they were going on a walk, but they couldn't go until I came. And by that time it was too late, but then they promised they'd go the next day. So, it all worked out. But I enjoyed, for the most part. Some of it I thought was antique, you know, in the hand of thinking you know, some of the things we had to do, you know, I thought, Why are we doing this? But, you, everybody did it. You didn't care, if everybody's doing it. That's all right then you know. So I lived a very happy life in the novitiate for the most part and then I went out on mission to Old Monroe's, Missouri.

That was my first mission. And my sister was three years ahead of me. She was at Holy Trinity, Missouri. So I could go over there. She was going to teach me long division, how to teach long division, and how to teach different things, and if you remember or see pictures of her habit just our face showed and we looked alike. People said we looked alike and sounded alike. So she was in the front of the room, her classroom, and I was in the back and I was to observe. She would talk and they'd look at each one. They didn't know who's doing the talking. They'd look to her and she wasn't talking. They'd look at me and by that time I wasn't talking. They didn't know. They were so baffled. "Sisters, you look alike." Well anyway and I was there two years and loved it, was real country kids and good behavior. Parents were right behind you. You didn't see parents too often. There were never complaints. It'd be more like they bring a pie or a cake or chicken or something like that and then I went to St. Anthony's Hamilton and I was there about nine years and they were more, I was afraid, then it was, "Will I be able to handle them city kids?" more like ah city kids. Oh but they were precious. I had second grade and I was there about seven years I might have these numbers a little mixed up.

And then I went to Holy Trinity, Indianapolis. I loved it there. I was there six years and then the principal was put in high school, we started high schools then, and I was made principal after I was there six years and that was a little difficult cause that, they weren't used to, you know, that, but it worked and I enjoyed it and I was young enough. We could play ball with the kids and things like that and they really enjoyed that. And then I went to St. Anthony, Dayton and I only stayed there about part of a year and I went to Middletown to finish that year at St. Mary's, Middletown. But at Middletown, they were pining for the Sister that left and that wasn't an easy place to follow and I wasn't, I didn't have her personality or anything. She was so darling, Marilyn Brocamp, Sister Marilyn Brocamp was a very good person.

Well then that summer, in the summer and Mother Marie met. She was the Reverend Mother we called them Reverend Mother then and she met me in the hall and she said, "Oh Angela I got a big favor to ask." At that time you were principal and then you could have two years off and then that you would be principal again and she said, "There's a Sister leaving the convent and, oh, St. Bernard's Taylor's Creek and I would like for you to go there." And she said, "I want you to think about it and pray about it." I said, "Oh, Mother I don't have to think about it, pray about it. I'll go." My mother's in that parish, my mother and dad, my two

sisters have children at school there, and my home is about three miles from there. I said, "I'll be glad to go." So I did, and oh that was just wonderful.

I really did enjoy I have enjoyed every mission. I can't say—maybe that year, half-year was a botch-up, but otherwise that was, it was always nice. People were good and anyway, so.

MEL: Sister, for somebody who might not understand, what was it like to get a mission? You received a card at a Mass, is that—?

SAB: Oh, oh yeah, we called it—a Father, a priest asked me that one time. What, why are you calling that a mission? Well we considered it in our early stages that we were missionaries because our Reverend Mother came from Austria, so we, that was a mission for her, so we, well, when we went out, they just start calling it, that's "our mission" you know to do this our mission, my mission was to go to St. Bernard's and you got a little card telling you that's where you were going and you considered yourself sort of like a missionary you know sort of, I think that's a kind of an explanation.

MEL: What was it like to open up the card?

SAB: Ohh, there would be screaming and crying and laughing. "Oh, I'm going with you" and uh, you know we'd all open it out—we'd go outside. For a while there we opened it in chapel, but we also went outside and there at the grotto yard and opened it and then you'd find out where you were going and who you're going with. (laughs) It was exciting (laughs) and new. Especially if was the classmate or somebody you really enjoyed being with, you know.

Well then at St. Bernard's one night, I get a call from the pastor and he said, "Your sister died." Well I have five sisters. I said, "None were sick." I said, "Which *one*?" He said, "Mrs. Whistle, she lives right up the street." They lived right up the next street, up Taylor's Creek. So I went up, sure enough, she had just died and they had four children. One had been killed by a driver going through the parking lot, the child run in front of him. He said there were two boys, then he said, "I had hit one or the other." And that was tragic. It really undid my sister, I'll tell you. But anyway, the whole family felt it, you know, the little boy was eight years old and uh yeah that's the one I was killed. But now they had four and the youngest was three and his mother's dead and he didn't understand that at all, you know. So it was summer and I thought, Well these poor kids, they won't, will they know what to wear to a funeral? Of course they went to Mass on Sunday, I don't know why I thought that. You know they came looking nice. But I went up just trying to get things settled down a little and I said, "I'll stay all night to get him settled down." So I stayed there, but the next morning when I got up, I went out to the bathroom and the dad was standing there. Jim was the father, and John, the little boy three years old, was standing there vomiting into the toilet.

"Where's mom? Where's mom?" I could hardly take it. Oh, but before that, I forgot that part, the day before we were all at my mother's and all my sisters and brothers, you know, how you gather and they said, they we were saying, What are they gonna do? They got kids in different schools: high school, grade school. What are they gonna do and no nobody knew what was gonna happen to those poor kids. Jim had to go to work and my sister says, points to me, "Why don't *you* go, why don't *you* take care of them? You run around in the inner city taking care of kids you don't know?" We laughed, we all laughed, that was kind of

funny but it was, you know we laughed and it was finished, but when I saw John standing by that toilet vomiting and Jim like that, like he was hit with a brick bat or something. That voice came back, Why didn't you do something? As clear as you could be talking to me and I said, "Jim, I want to do this. Let's go to Oldenburg and get it, until, get the right papers, do it right, you know." So, oh, he said, "I wouldn't hear of it, except I don't know what to do."

So a way we went. The dad and John and I. The rest were in school and oh Mother Marie almost had a stroke. My sister had just left the convent after 26 years and here's me wanting to go to do this for a year. I said, "I just want a year to get their feet on the ground, something, what happened, it'll be okay, you know." So she—oh she just didn't want to do it and I said, "Well I'm going to do it and I wanted to do it right." So she finally got the papers out. All her helpers were at a picnic some country mission was having a picnic and invited all the Sisters but she didn't go. I bet she was hoping she went that she didn't go but she finally, she's got the papers out and I had to fill them out and then I would I guess, I guess I stayed there right away I wanna think of, I'm sure I stayed right away. I couldn't wear my habit but, it was, but when I look back on it now I think it was strange because here I'm staying in the same parish, as a lay woman you know. It was different, but I call it the grace of God. It didn't bother me, I just went right on and did what I had to do, did what I thought I should be doing and some people thought it was wonderful and some people didn't see any reason for it and I couldn't worry about that, you know, but it finally—well and then I did, you know, try to do your job and those children are wonderful today and they're my best friends, you know, now that all my sisters and brothers are gone and they're so good.

Well, later, well the day came—oh John, he just came to me. He didn't know his mother anymore, he really couldn't remember her, but when we passed Neidhard Funeral Home, he said, "There's heaven." and I didn't say anything but then I thought, I was thinking, John why'd you call that heaven? He said, "Because they said mom went to heaven and that's where I saw her last." You can imagine how I felt, tears, but anyway, we got so close because he was home all day with me and we do things together. If I'd make a cake or something he'd want to be there putting the egg in. I mean we really had a wonderful friendship. I called him my precious child. And they kind of made fun of me, the rest, you know other people, but, but he was my precious child. And we were always—but I was nice to him I think, but I was strict, I mean they had—they were running around the baseball field all the time and I said, "We're gonna do a little dusting around this house." (laughs) And a few other things, you know, and they went to it and they did whatever I said and the dad was behind me a hundred percent. It was beautiful.

In fact, my brother-in-law even commented, he was there one day, he said, "She made some good soup." They were worried I didn't know how to, that I never cooked in the convent. They were worried that I wouldn't know how to feed him and all that. He said, "Well this is good soup." And then a lady came with her children, she wanted to take these girls out to play and I said, "Well there, they didn't do their dusting, they have to do that first." And my other brother-in-law was waiting, what's Jim gonna do? Is he gonna let them go and say oh they could go? Stuck behind me 100%. He said, "They have to do their dusting first." That was the clue there that it worked so well and he was wonderful.

He took a lot—and I was just learning to drive. I pulled out of the garage and took the mirror off, took the piece of the wood off the garage. I mean, took a mailbox down. They had a lot of fun with my driving. One day I drove in and they had a great big red ribbon on the

mailbox, so I would see it (laughs) and then so—they went along with it in a teasing way. You know, but I guess it was great. It wasn't what do you call it? You know you had to do everything you didn't, it didn't, I forget what you call it, but it drives by itself practically wasn't that kind. I was driving around that big thing. Well, anyway, so the year was up, okay so we went out for a big supper that night and John said, "Who will take care of me?" Oh it's just like yesterday, you know, now he's like 50.

And he got hurt when he was a senior. Oh, he was a handsome kid. Girls were wild about him and he's real heavy now, well not real heavy, you know, but heavier. Cause he hadn't exercised, he's quadriplegic and he can't. From a football game, at La Salle. La Salle was playing Xavier, I think it was, and he got hit a certain way and broke his neck and they, they called the boys off the field. His dad was there, called the boys off the field one by one and John didn't get up and John didn't get up and he was finally, he was the only one left. Oh that was so hard to take in.

I visited him in the hospital, but we always had hope it would cure him, but he's so wonderful, he's got the nicest disposition that his nurses are—everybody's so kind the neighbors, but he's a nice person too and he has visitors, his friends still keep up with him. They started a golf tournament for him. He needs beds, it costs thousands, like a thousand dollars. And they support him, they help him and it's so wonderful that way. So I knew all that, you know, so I was close enough I'd go up pretty often, but I was also teaching, so I couldn't be running on the road all time. But he'd call up and he'd say, "Sister, will you come up?" and I said, "John I can't, but you can come down." After ten messages, I'd hear a door bang and it would be the car, bringing him down. There was John. He'd stay all night.

MEL: Oh sister, so you're talking about after, so you'd stay there for a year and then you went back to the convent?

SAB: He's still a little boy when, yeah he's still a little boy, I'm getting—but you know he's a little boy and if that had happened when I was there I probably would have stayed and no it didn't, it was fine when I left but this was like his senior year see and he was only three or four when I was there. So, but we still kept a very close companionship what you would call it, relationship. And now at that golf tournament last year, they invited me to lead the prayer and I was so honored and my nephew, his brother, John's brother, Danny, was so proud of that and he said they're still talking about it how I led that prayer, but I can't do it now. I can't do it, you know, so I don't know who they have. But it's different, it's nice to have different people too, you know.

But as far as another teaching, after I left there, oh I went to St—(unintelligible), Illinois. Yeah, that was nice and then I went to Troy, Missouri. Ended my, on the roost, at Troy, Missouri and I just found a letter from 1986 from this little girl. "I'm mad," she said, "They took you away." Second grader. (laughs) "I don't learn anything anymore, I only learned when you were here." And she's a darling girl and she said, "I want to see you, I wanna talk to you." But I never got there and now I'm trying to track her down, but it's so hard. She's got a different name probably. And I hope that—she might not even be living anymore, but I'm trying to make contacts with some people there, but anyway that was the last and it was such uh I had 20 I think. They'd sit outside, we go out in our backyard, we had a real big backyard, there was nothing around it and we do our reading, you know, and they'd love that, something different, second grade, you know.

So then I came home and I always wanted to go to Papua New Guinea. Then I went, but I worked in the infirmary first. I worked in our infirmary here. But then they liked to call it infirmary, now they call it St. Clare Hall, but when you said infirmary you knew what it was. Anyhow, then I also, oh I had worked in the communication office for six years and then I went to Chicago, this might not be in the right order, but there were men that were recovering from alcohol and drugs and all that and they were so wonderful. They were so respectable. Sister Jayla Cook and myself went. We were the only women there and she had a check on them, you know, they loved her too, but there was the different because she had to be their boss and I could be their grandmother and I would make cookies and bring them on their birthdays or just any day you know and they'd say, they'd watch me get out of the car. They'd look out the window and they'd say, "Is she carrying anything?" and I had cookies. So they'd meet me at the door and they were wonderful and they gave me gifts, which I never made one idea that I wanted something, you know, and here they would give me—I still wear the scarf and different things I still use, you know, cause it reminds me of them. They were wonderful and once in a while they would relapse and oh that was heartbreaking when that happened. But and then I taught them, I helped them with their reading, some need just to read, you know, nobody ever listen to them read and some of them needed help with the driver's license or something that I could help them with the reading part of it, or just talk. Let them tell their story and we had a, we had a real nice time that was about two years.

So then I finally came home and I went to Papua New Guinea. Always wanted to go. And I was in Sister Cecilia Houlihan's room, she was in the infirmary and she was looking at pictures of New Guinea. And she said—and I said, "Oh I always wanted to go there." I was 60. "I wanted to go when I was 30." She said, "Well you could still go." I said, "Oh they wouldn't want somebody that's 60." "Why they, there's lots of things you could do." And boy did I find out there were and uh, so I thought, Well this is it or forget it, this is it. So what Reverend Mother and she said, I could tell, she didn't exactly think—was hip-hip-hooray you know, she wants to go. So, but she was going to give me a chance to find out that I was not meant for there, you know, so she said, "But you have to go to Maryknoll for a year, no, no not a year, a month I had to go to Maryknoll. You know Maryknoll Submission Order? They prepared people and they prepare you for the date, they sort of tell you, "you ought to go or you ought not to go," so I didn't know what—and nobody went with me. Boy was I a brave country gal.

And I got there, and it was nice, nice people, all, all nice people were there, you know, that wanted to go on mission somewhere and I was about the oldest; I guess there was a couple older ones, but they watched. I didn't know this, they watched you to see if you always wanted the same people. That was not a person for a mission work if you always went with the same people. You blend in with whatever's there, you know, I didn't know that but that's what I did cause I didn't know anybody. I don't know any of them, so I wanted to know everybody and that gave me real high points and I got to go. They gave me a high recommendation and age meant nothing to them. You know that I was 60. I didn't think I was so bad, I think some of them were 60, (laughs) maybe older but anyway I went and oh it was wonderful. And the little seventh graders especially, I was like their mother, they'd walk around on Saturday, kind of lost, you know, they couldn't go home, they lived too far away in the bush. So finally, I couldn't take it much longer, seeing these little orphans walking around the bush. I said, "what if?" and they love art. Now he drew that picture over

there. Did I show you that, that big frame? You wanna go over and get it? I'm so proud of that that big one, yeah. Now—

MEL: Would you describe it Sister?

SAB: Teachers were to give homework and they had about six subjects and everybody pile them down with homework, they'd do like thirty math problems. I said, thirty! If they know twenty, they know thirty. Don't give 'em thirty. I don't know if they thought I was coo-coo or what, but I just, they just had so much, they couldn't, it's called study hall, but they couldn't study because they had to write all the time and when you're writing you're not exactly studying it, you might get a little more out of it, you know. But anyway, I gave him this, this was, I think this was Economics, which I had never even had and but I always stayed a page ahead, "page ahead" was my motto and they thought I was brilliant. Oh, the sisters from America's, they're the best teachers, oh they're such good teachers. But anyway, I gave them, I gave them just a little piece of paper, it wasn't even real nice paper, but you know every night they got that paper. And they drew a picture, now, we must have been talking about how their homes were and how they went out hunting. Here's the hunter. He's got his bow and arrow up, he's got the New Guinea, what they would wear of hunting tradition in their tradition. They have this like straw hut and a beautiful background of mountains and trees and clouds are just in the right place. What would you add? Would you anything to that? That's about it.

Well, so he came with that little piece of paper the next day and I would put them up in my room and the kids would fly over there at dinnertime, the other kids in the other grades, to see what I had up and all of a sudden another room would have pictures of another—so I was happy for that and some did anyway, but they talked of that because that was their work, but that night, that *night*, he brought that little picture. I raved and carried on so much. I said, "It looks like he's gonna take another step. It's so beautiful." I just went on and on and on.

That night he brought this, a great big piece of paper of his own and watercolor. I guess that's watercolor, some kind of paint and he painted that for me and it's a treasure beyond measure and you know, I just—I'm overwhelmed and I would love to know what that—Ama Dabulle—I would love to know what he is doing. I don't know what he was doing at that time, you know, he was a smart boy and it was a real nice, nice looking guy. I told him, I said, "Some of you will come to America, I know you will and I would expect that they will. But I was, I'm just happy to have that to show and I have some others. I have a bird I think that's in my cupboard somewhere, but, I put that up once in a while, a Bird of Paradise. But my sister, she lived in California and I would stop over there on my way home and she gave me 25 dollars for that bird, the Bird of Paradise, big picture. Then she gave it back to me, she gave the picture back to me and she sent me all the paints and the watercolors and pens and markers that they—that they would have some. They didn't have a lot of that, to just do on Saturday, and it was for art class, you know. So she supplied all that. So she gave me 25 dollars, but I didn't know how to get it to that boy.

Twenty-five years later, the sisters going to Papua New Guinea. I said, you know nobody knows Joseph Mendos nobody knows—I said do you know Joseph Mendos? She says, oh sure. He teaches that our school. I said, if I gave you 25 dollars will you give it to him? And

she took it. Well his eyes almost popped out of his head. And he wrote right away. He said, "Sister to think you remembered after all those years"—that I owed him 25 dollars. He was so grateful for that, but, but he was funny. Now he teaches for our school over there.

Well, I stayed about three and a half years and all of a sudden—I guess it was the altitude, or my heart maybe, my heart was weakened—but, I got a hundred percent health report, you know, when I left. But anyway, I would just fall over, faint you know, but no warning, scared the girls half to death. I'd just plopped down in front of them and they'd run to Sister Mel, she was the headmistress. "Sister Angela died, Sister Angela died." But that's just meant she fainted. "Sister Angela died, finished," oh then that meant, "she's dead, she's gone." But they didn't put the "finished" on it. So they thought, the doctor said, she better get back to America. She needs an operation, she needs a pacemaker.

There were English doctors there in Australia and they were looking at—you, you ever see a movie and they've got this paper and they're looking at it or a doctor and they read this paper that comes out of that machine, tell about your heart? Well then a doctor was looking at that. Then he called his wife in who was a doctor. She looked at it. Then it called in the other doctor that was—one was from Australia, one was from England—and they looked at it and I said, "Well I might as well going home and pack my bags. I see the writing on the wall." So sure enough, "Sister you better get home, you better get back to the United States where there are doctors that can do that." So, it scared Sister Mel, I think she thought I was gonna die on her. What would you do with me, you know. It's kind of hard, you know. It was sad days for me and I was determined to have everything in order. It's always cleaning like a Turk, you know. I shouldn't have been doing all that, but by the time I got to California, an old bird, I was ready to run. Fun time (laughs) and I went to. Oh, there was some kind of festival I went to and Christmas, I went to something else. I was feeling pretty good, but when I went to the doctors he said it wasn't so good, you know. It wasn't good at all.

So I got a pacemaker and then, I just went to Tari High School. No I wasn't there, I guess I stayed in Oldenburg then. I should have written this down. I probably ended my career kind of then, you know. It's a Papua New Guinea and then Oldenburg. So I just worked at Oldenburg and did things. And I taught religion over at Holy Family, but I loved that too and ah—

MEL: I'm thinking of you over at Papua New Guinea. It must have been a big change to go teach there—

SAB: Oh, yes it was. Although they were smart and artistic. Every child was, the pictures they would draw. Oh, when they would come, oh I said it count—I forgot that paragraph—I said, "If I would come over here on Saturday and bring crayons and they—would you like to draw?" "Oh," that was—I said, "Well, you come on Saturday, anybody wants to come on Saturday." I thought it might be one, might be five, the room was like a classroom. They were all there. (laughs) They all wanted to do—they were tired of walking around the bush. They want to see what this was and he did some beautiful work. Fact, I brought a box of some of their drawings. I never got to the bottom of that box and some of their math papers and things, you know, to show how neat, how neat some of them could be. They were smart kids, for the most part, I mean, any class you're gonna have the different levels, but for the most part they were—they caught on fast and they were right up there. Maybe they're a couple, a year or so behind Americans, what the best American would do, you

know, but ah, considering there's a lot of them have their own teachers now, you know and some, they're really going ahead, fast. So it was a wonderful experience.

MEL: And you would, after teaching all day, you would live in the convent with other sisters?

SAB: Yes, yeah, it was a normal convent life and then we took turns like with study hall. We'd go for study hall and on Saturday night it would be like fun night. Lorraine, Sister Lorraine was good at that. She's always have some kind of game or maybe a dance. It was fun to watch them dance you know. And they enjoyed that. We try to make it, like, that they couldn't go home, make up for that, you know. And it was so different, when you think that they were away from home so long, but they were—oh when I left, then I had to tell them I was going to leave. That one boy held onto my hand. He said, "Don't go, don't leave us, don't go home." And the one said, "It's like my mother, you're like being my mother, don't go home." I cried all the way from Tari to Mendi and at Mendi my—no, Mendi to Tari—two cities, anyhow we passed over Tari, that's where I taught and my first class was graduating. Now I couldn't stay because the planes don't run like they do here, you know, and I saw them graduating as I passed over.

The tears flowed all the way to Mendi is what I should say. That was the main, the big town where a lot of sisters were, but it was a great experience and I got it out of my system, and for the most part it was very good and I lived with nice sisters. It was a nice home and we had a nice home, too. I expected real primitive things. It wasn't so primitive. There would be men from Switzerland and Australia building things too and they knew what they were doing you know and they would ship the wood in.

MEL: For someone listening to this a long time from now, how would you describe the Sisters of St. Francis's mission in Papua New Guinea? Why were you there?

SAB: Oh, well a priest, Father Gallagher, Father Otmar Gallagher, a wonderful priest, he was our chaplain and he saw the need for some further, you know, something for the girls. The girls were down here, no girl could be higher than a boy, she had to crawl, you know. You heard that story?

MEL: No.

SAB: Oh yeah, they had to crawl past them, so they'd be lower than the boy. One time I was on a step, steps going up to my room and I dropped my pen, then it went down under the steps and I asked the boy coming by, oh I said, "Would you please pick up my pen?" Oh, they would do anything you asked, but he stood there. He knew he wasn't supposed to get lower than the woman. But he got it, but he did it, and I didn't know that I didn't know that then. Sister Mel said, "Oh boy." I said he wouldn't do it, such a nice kid, but at first he just didn't want to do it. She said, "Oh, we never told you that. That's how it goes." And the women are always second. You know, the husband's walking real proud. She's behind, carrying the kids and the corn and doing all the work. They're playing cards when they get home. She's cooking corn. They're happy with it. But I think they're changing. Oh, but, I think there's a big change going on in the country and none of us are there now, but they have Sisters of other orders, and we started as more or less, started an order over there, but they're not our Sisters, they're their own Sisters.

Well then I came home and it was sad leaving, yeah. But I found a niche here, you know, and I was happy here too. So I would say all-in-all, I wouldn't have changed anything. I love my life. I really enjoyed my life as a Sister of St. Francis.

MEL: Sister, I would love to ask you how your prayer life has changed over your lifetime?

SAB: Well, if, you know, when you've first entered you always got a prayer book. And you're reading the prayers from the prayer book. But all of a sudden you find out, well, through instruction too. You have teachers, a religion teacher. They teach you that you don't need a prayer book all the time, you can pray anytime. Well you kind of learned that as a child too, that you can pray anytime and that sort of takes over and you spend more time in meditation, thinking about the mysteries of the rosary or thinking about our Lord's life and how you fit in it and so forth. And I would say that does change. You wish you had more time for it, really, but they try you know, it's on the agenda. And I would say and I lived with wonderful people. They all had the same idea in mind. Every story is different.

MEL: I'm curious about that idea of when you become a sister you are committing your life to God, but you're also committing your life to other Sisters. What is that like?

SAB: Well we have a rule, you know, the Rule of Saint Francis and we try to follow that, in fact, we have classes on it and, like, if we have a big celebration, we'll always take something maybe from the rule and read it or like at your funeral. That's what I'm planning now, my funeral. (laughs) I'm not planning it, Sister Lorraine's helping me, she's doing most of it; she's been here 40 years. She's really got her hand in things, you know, really good and sensible and she's a sacrosanct so she knows. But get that question again.

MEL: Committing your life to other sisters as well—

SAB: Oh yeah, that's right, yeah. You always should think, how does this affect the whole group, not just, I like to do this so I'm gonna do it, but how does it affect everybody else and if you're if you're a little selfish, you know, that kind of breaks up things you know. But well we had 880 or something at one time you know there's going to be some that we're not all going to be St. Agnes or somebody, you know, St. Angela. (laughs) Not all gonna be there or St. Clair or some of our patrons. Claire and Francis we're not going to be—we can't all do that, you know, what they do and sometimes I wonder why you're doing it, but they had a purpose, you know, there's a purpose.

MEL: Thank you Sister. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your life?

SAB: Well, I've certainly enjoyed it. I've made such wonderful friends. Now I'm going through this, no oxy—you know that I don't have enough oxygen, I have to wear this hose. It takes me all over the place and yesterday. So I don't go out much, if I go out I'd take the hose along and I got a little case for this one, you know. But yesterday, I had to go to hospital. I've been going to doctors and hospitals on account of my heart, and they said, I have to think now what I was gonna. See, I'm 90 now, you have to know this, I'm 90. And it doesn't always work right up here, um, I start telling something and then I kind of forgot what I'm talking about or where I'm going with it.

My niece was there at the other day—I knew she—I was telling a story and I knew, I had, she had heard it about three times, so I said, "Finish the story. And she finished it! To a tee! Every word!" (laughs) So they got the story, but I would say if I had to do it over again, I'd sign my name tomorrow.

And then the first time we got to go home—see when we left, I took a good look around our house, and our dog, even our dog was sad. (laughs) You could tell he was sad, you know, and um, made me kind of sad too, cause we loved our dog. He was like that, family, but you knew you'd never see it again, but that changed, so we didn't know it would change. So what I think I think it's pretty heroic for an 18 year old, some were 17 or 16, that was too young, but um just to, you know to walk away and say I'll never see, but then, I was about 25 when my mother and dad had their—no it couldn't be, I wasn't even 20, I was about 22 when they had their silver jubilee and we got to go home and the sisters, I'll never forget this, the spirit and the rest of the sisters they were so happy for us, you know, not jealous or anything, but so happy for us and she and I got in my brother's car and the way we went thrilled to death and everybody waving you know. That's such a happy memory.

MEL: You were going home, so you were leaving the convent at Oldenburg?

SAB: Yeah, leaving the convent to go to this jubilee. And they were going to have a Mass the next day. Big dinner and all the rel—my mom and dad were both from a big family—so big rela—the church was filled. I knew everybody, yet, I was only gone maybe three years or four, so I still knew everybody at home, and it was fun.

MEL: Sister, you mentioned that your sister was in the convent, but you had a sister that left the convent after a long, after a while.

SAB: Yeah, she was the one who was in it—yeah, she, I don't know uh what. Times were changing around the sixties, they just left like hundreds from all different convents, you know, they were—whether I donno what. They were good people, they weren't people that drifted along you know and there was some kind of action from the Holy Spirit I think. Because that many *good* people wouldn't have paid attention to it. But I didn't feel the urge to do that, you know, I was happy I was there and I wanted my sister to stay there too. But when she told me she was going, "Oh," cause she was an excellent teacher and—look people loved her. She's walk in that door, she'd have friends immediately. Everybody loved her, you know. That's how she met her husband. He saw her at a party and he said, "Well I wanna marry her." And he did. And they lived happily ever after. Both dead now, but she was very dynamic, very good, very good. She made a kid feel important. That they were worth something. Even if they were wrong and she corrected them.

Now she had this fellow, this was at that high school. He wore shorts on graduation day and a gown over it, you know, a cap and gown. But he sat like this that you could see the shorts. She was so mad at him and so, but he you know getting his age, you know, getting of age, so she just ignored him. Twenty, must have been 20 years later she met him in town or something and he said, "Miss Frankie, I want to apologize for that, for how I acted that day." So that's the influence she had on people. She was so marvelous. And oh by the way, I did get to have pretty handwriting. I went to the blackboard on Saturday and practice and practice and finally people were telling me how pretty my writing was. Not anymore though. I'm getting shaky, the "90's shakies," you know. (laughs) But at one period in fact people

would comment on it. How nice it was and what else I did I think the Sister had to be oh, well they had to be smart. Well the smarts, the smarts didn't catch up, but I've settled for the handwriting, (laughs) which in second grade we're doing. (laughs) But we had fun, I always had fun with kids, you know, and sometimes they'd know. This one girl, she says, "I knew you were bad at it" but I'd see this lips curl up, that you could hardly control that you were laughing. And funny things would happen you know. Oh my, it was a great life and I would surely recommend it.

It's very different today, you know, smaller groups. We had eighteen and you know, eighteen girls from all over the—well mostly Indiana, Ohio, and it's around the area, you know. It had to be hard on my parents I think in a way you know, but my dad was always so proud, my mom too, I think, but my dad was always so proud that we were there, you know he loved the sisters. You know, you know, we were poor we didn't have money to throw around like some do today, but I saw my dad walking with the—like a thing with ice cream cones in it—and I thought, Oh well goody that's for us. Well he went over to the Sister's house. For the Sisters. It was for the Sisters. But that's the kind of person he was, you know. He saw the Sisters sitting out in the yard and thought, "Well they would like an ice cream cone," you know. (laughs) But we gotta our—we got a certain amount, fifty cents, I think and then fifty cents, boy, you had that last nickel, when you went home to, you know, you weren't going to save it for what's coming yet, you know. But those were fun days, and we worked hard at home too, we picked berries.

Now I was just telling a story yesterday to the Sisters. And tell me to stop anytime, oh, and that this man knew we had a big family and mom was a good cook and canned a lot and she said that this man called, well got in touch with my dad, we didn't even have a phone then yet, and he said, "Bring your kids over and you can have all the peaches." They just fell off the tree. There wasn't anything wrong with them and you can have all that you want that's on the ground." Well my mom thought that was a call from heaven, you know, so when we went in the car and brought the peaches home my dad said, "Do not stand up, under, where they're low and try to knock them off with—" you know, getting those peaches off. Getting the good ones, you know. And boy we didn't, we didn't walk under there, if my dad said it. He was so honest, you know, that he wouldn't—And I remember another time that we were in church and the priest came out and walked down the aisle to get to the confessional and my dad stood up, all the while he was walking down the aisle because he was the priest. That made such an impression. My dad doesn't dream that he made that impression on me you know.

So that's kind of home we had. We had a nice home and nice brothers and sisters. If I could find the family picture, I'd like to show it to you. I'd been showing it and don't put it back where it was. That's my problem. But I'll show it to you some day when you're here. See it was with these all the while. So we'll have to do a little digging.

MEL: Sister, thank you so much for your time today.

SAB: You're surely welcome. I've enjoyed it. You stick me with a phonograph needle and I'll go on forever. (laughs)

MEL: Thank you

end of Part One

MEL: Sister Angela Part Two

SAB: Oh yeah when I went to Whistles then, about the first days, they said, uh, women would come from the neighborhood. "Do you have something I could do? Is there something I can do?" And usually they say it, but they don't kind of really mean it, you know. You won't give them something to do, you know, but I said, "Yes, I said, there's the basket of laundry, would you mind taking it home, and doing this laundry?" And when I thought later, I thought, What does that laundry look like? You know, the kids turning their stuff in, wet, dry? Well, I didn't look, came back nice. The second lady came and said, she said, she's kind of a fancy lady too. She says, "Can I do something?" I said, "Well, yes I said, there's apples under that tree. Would you pick those apples up under the tree? And make an apple pie?" (laughs) Can you—where was that coming from? And the third one came, I think the word was getting around, "Don't go, don't go there." The third one came, oh yeah, she was right across the street. I said, "What?" She said, "Is there anything I can do?" I said, "Well yes," I said, "You could have supper for us tonight." I didn't know where anything was in the house, the food or the dishes, you know, six people! Me and four kids, six people walk in your house some night, I mean some morning, and say, you'd like to have supper that night. (laughs) And she did. (laughs)

And then later, later when we got to be really good friends, she's such a--I was so nervous that night; I didn't know what to do. Well first of all the woman just *died*. My sister and she were friends too and she didn't know what to say to Jim, she know what to say to the kids, she didn't know what to say to my sister. She didn't know what to say to me and we were all chompin'. And that was the end of requests. So we had funny things like that going on, funny things were always happening.

But when I went to St. Bernard's, like I'd go to Mass on different days, or Sunday, every child that I would meet, I was Sister Angela. They would say, "Good morning, Sister Angela," they never, and I had lay clothes on then, I couldn't wear my habit, and, but I was always Sister Angela.

Then when I came back, I was Sister Angela again. With my habit. Oh and Father was so happy to see me, come in my habit and he had a special Mass for me. It's sort of a gathering of the family and Mother Marie came she said, "Sister I would only do this for you" and she was so proud that I would come back because she really, she was honest, she said, "I really didn't think you would," you know, a lot of people thought, That you're excused, you get out, you know. And uh, I didn't wanna get out, I liked what I was doing. I worked hard trying to get *in*! I have since--I think the world's changed for me. And that was true though in a way though, she was speaking the truth. Yeah we had incidents like that.

With the car, oh my, when I knocked that mailbox down. It was at my sisters' and there were three on a pole, there wasn't just one, there were three. And then I went to the three houses and I said, (laughs) "I don't know how I did all this," I had the nerve, it was like, you know, nothing bothered me, you know, I said, "I knocked your mailbox down," I said, "my brother-in-law will fix it for you." Each house got that story and the brother-in-law came home and

he said, "What darn fool was here today that knocked that mailbox down?" and he said, "Brow—" they called me Brownie then, "—Brownie, and she said, 'you would fix it.'" (laughs)
"So don't you ever let our children get in her car." (both laugh)

MEL: Sister, that's wonderful, thank you so much.

SAB: You're welcome.

end of interview