

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese

Personal Experience

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SISTER EILEEN PENTECOST

Interviewed

by

Patrick H. Downey

on

November 19, 1992

SISTER EILEEN PENTECOST

Sister Eileen was born on April 24, 1918, in Nashville, Tennessee. After World War I, her family moved to Akron, Ohio, which was teeming with industry. She graduated in 1936 and enrolled at Kent State University to become a teacher, but she felt [that] something was missing. At that time, a nun she admired in grade school phoned and convinced her to join the Dominicans at Our Lady of the Elms, in Akron. As an eighteen year old Postulant, she was asked to substitute teach for six months at St. Joseph's, in Alliance.

During the summer of 1938, and for seven additional summers, Sister Eileen attended classes at Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania. Sister Eileen taught grade school at the following: Our Lady of the Elms, Immaculate Conception, Wooster, St. Bernard's, and St. Augustine, Barberton. It must also be mentioned that she was both Principal and Superior at St. Bernard's. For the next three years, she returned to Our Lady of the Elms and became Diocesan Supervisor for the school throughout the Cleveland Diocese; and she was elected Third Councillor to the Mother General at the convent. From 1959 to 1963, she was transferred to St. Augustine's in Barberton, Ohio, where she was Principal and Superior. Much to her sorrow, she left Barberton to return to Our Lady of the Elms, because she was elected Mother General. She held that post until 1973.

From 1972-1982, she worked full time as Assistant Superintendent and moved to an old farm house in Canfield, Ohio. As of 1982, Sister Eileen was reappointed to the Elms School Board for

a three year term. In 1987, she was appointed to head the Evangelization Office for the Youngstown Diocese. In the 1980's, Sister Eileen was Mission Education Consultant for Propagation of the Mirth Office. In 1989, she was elected to a four year term as Second Councillor of the Congregation at Our Lady of the Elms, where she currently resides.

Sister Eileen has been involved with numerous organizations: Alpha Beta Kappa, AAUW, the Rubber City Unit, and Parliamentary Law. She was appointed Novice Mistress for the Congregation at Our Lady of the Elms, 1944-1948, which had to receive permission from Rome because she had not made her final vows. Her hobbies include: swimming, walking, crossword puzzles, and reading mysteries.

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INTERVIEWEE: SISTER EILEEN PENTECOST
INTERVIEWER: Patrick H. Downey
SUBJECT: El Salvador, China, Missions, Vatican II
DATE: November 19, 1992

D: This is an interview with Sister Eileen Pentecost for the Youngstown State Oral History Program, on the history of the Youngstown Diocese, by Pat Downey, on November 19, 1992.

Okay Sister, why don't you tell us a little bit about your family back ground: where you were born, your family life, growing up and so forth.

P: As were my parents, I was born in Nashville, Tennessee. I was born on April 24, 1918, during the war. Because I was a war baby and because my father worked in the ammunitions factory outside of Nashville, he did not have to go to war. Then, he decided--even though he worked in the courthouse after the war was over, with his father--he decided that he wanted to move out of Nashville. Parenthetically, I think that was a big mistake.

However, he came with the intention of going on to Detroit, because at that time, Detroit and Akron were booming as far as cars and tires were concerned. He didn't go to Detroit. He stopped in Akron, liked what he saw, got a job here; and then, we moved back and forth several times. My roots are Southern, all the way back. To accommodate ourselves to a different lifestyle, I think, was very difficult for my parents,

especially for my mother. However, we prevailed.

There were three others born after me. My childhood was very happy. I started in kindergarten at Lincoln School, in Akron. I went there through the third grade. I was not a joy to the teacher because I talked too much. The punishment, at that time, was to sit on the stage with your head down on your knees. Everybody would go through and know that you were a bad girl because you talked. Well, when I went home and my mother asked how I was doing in school, my answer was, "I was on the stage today." My mother thought they were getting me ready for a play, and she was delighted--(laughter)--until we had a conference and she found out the truth of the whole matter. That was the end of my stage appearance, let me tell you!

In the fourth grade, I went to St. Mary's in Akron. That was my first encounter with sisters--the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters from Monroe. I loved a sister who taught me, Sister Ethel Rita. Interestingly enough--I had gone three years to the public school--I was the best reader in the class, but I couldn't add one and one [together]. So, whenever Sister left the room, which was frequently because she wasn't a well woman, I was called upon to read to the class. I made the mistake, one day, of asking them all to come up and see the picture in the book. That was the end of my reading to the class.

Then, we moved--this is 1927--to what was then called, Firestone Park, here in Akron. It is on the Southside of Akron, a new development. I started in the fourth grade to St. Paul's School. Of course, my brother, who was two years behind me, also [went] to school. My sisters were still too young. And, they also eventually went to St. Paul's. The Dominican Sisters taught in this school. And, the sister who was my fourth grade teacher, Sister Seraphina was the one who really inspired me with the idea of being a Dominican sister. She had the kind of influence over children that you think everybody would want to have. I don't know how many sisters are in this congregation, because of her influence. She was stationed at St. Paul's until I was out of high school. And so, she really was able to pull me in every now and then, and say, "What are you doing?" She really kept a string on me. That's what we used to say, "She kept a string on me."

I went through St. Paul's Elementary School, through the eighth grade. Then, I went to Garfield High School, a public high school. I had four wonderful years in Garfield High School! I did everything! I dated. I smoked. I went to parties. I went to dances. I enjoyed every bit of it, every last minute

of it! But, in the back of my head was this idea that I should do something more with my life than just frittering it away. I had already, at that time, enrolled in Kent State University, with the intention of becoming a teacher. Sister Seraphina called me in one day. She said, "What are you doing with your life?" That was a hard question to answer, because I was enjoying it to the full. She said, "How do you feel about going to the convent?" I had thought about that every since I was in the fourth grade. So, on October 4, 1936, I entered the convent at Our Lady of the Elms as a postulant. There were nine of us in the class. It's a strange thing, because--what I forgot to tell you is very important as far as my life if concerned. I don't know how I forgot it. May I back-track?

D: Sure. Feel free.

P: I was very close to my father's parents, my grandparents. I went every summer--from the time I was in kindergarten until I graduated from high school--to Nashville, Tennessee. [I] stayed until Labor Day. [I] came back on the train with my grandfather. My grandmother had a tremendous influence on me. She insisted that, no matter what happened, I had to be a lady. When I was just so high, I had to wear a hat. Naturally, every girl wore a hat in those days to church. I wore white gloves, and I carried a white pocketbook. After mass was over, I knelt like a poker beside her. If I didn't, I'd get her finger on the top of my head. But, she was such a lady. I have the fondest memories of those three months every year that I spent with my grandparents in Nashville, Tennessee.

Although, I must say that my family life was very happy. Even with all the traveling I had done and being away from home so much, when I entered the convent, I was very home sick. The whole time that I was in the novitiate, we just had company once a month. It was very difficult. But, I had graduated from high school. And, of course, in those days--this was 1936--the requirements for teaching were not as stringent as they are today, as we all know. So, because I had graduated from high school, and one of the sisters got sick in Alliance at St. Joseph's, the Superior decided that I would be the logical one to go down there and take her place.

Now, this is how I was prepared: she called me on Monday, and my given name was Rose Mary. She said, "Rose Mary, who was your seventh grade teacher?" And, I said, "Sister Constancia." "Excellent teacher!" I said, "Oh, yes. She was very good." [She said,] "Then, I think you'll do alright to go to Alliance and

take over the seventh grade. Do you have glasses?" [I said,] "Yes, but I never wear them." [She said,] "Put them on, because I think they'll make you look a little older."

D: You were eighteen at the time?

P: Yes. I put them on, and I did look a little older. Remember, we were dressed in black dresses and all that. I went to Alliance, and lived in the convent with the sisters there. I taught the seventh grade, if you want to call it teaching. Even to this day, I have contact with some of those students that I had. One of them, who was--when I looked at that class, and I saw this red headed Italian sitting in the back of the class--I thought, "This is going to be my problem." Sure enough, it was.

But, today, he's one of the best friends I have. He graduated from college, went on to become a master teacher, and is on the school board. Every now and then, he tells me how well he's done, because of his experiences in the seventh grade, [which] almost killed me; but he seemed to prosper. But, that was a very exciting six months. Every weekend I came home, back to the Mother House, and told all the novices and postulants about all of my experiences in school, which were quite exciting. My parents came down and got me in the car, and brought me back every week. So, I did get to see them; and that was, kind of, the icing on the cake.

Well then, on June 20, in 1937, we got the habit. We became novices. I took the name "Eileen," which is Irish for Helen--my mother's name. And, of course, during your novice year, you don't go out. You stay right here in the Mother House. We did cleaning. We did this. We did that. We learned all the history of the congregation and of the order. And, [we] did all kinds of manual work, and that kind of thing. [It was] a very profitable year. I enjoyed it. The nine of us were very close knit. Three of those girls were natives of Youngstown. It was just as though we were bonded as real sisters. And, I think--if I could just make this parenthetical remark--today, where we take in a girl here and a girl there, that's very difficult, from my viewpoint, because you don't have that bonding and that support that you would get from other people.

D: So, how long would a sister stay a novice?

P: One year.

D: One year.

P: One year, it was in our congregation, and it still is. And, that year ended. Then, on June 26, 1938, we got our black veils. And, that was a very interesting ceremony. It took place at St. Bernard's Church down town. We were all gathered in the lower chapel downstairs waiting for Bishop McFadden, who was to celebrate.

Now, before you make your vows, there has to be a canonical examination by the ordinary of the Diocese. That was a rule at that time. We had not had this examination. So, we knew that the examination was coming up. We had to have it before we could make our vows. Unfortunately, the Bishop was one hour and a half late for the ceremony, and it was raining like it had never rained before. Anyhow, he came in to the lower chapel. [He was] very cheerful. He passed a paper out to each one of us, and said in his dear, dear voice, "Sisters, is everybody happy?" And, we said, "Yes, bishop." He said, "Then, sign on the dotted line." That was our canonical examination. That was it! The ceremony was beautiful, and the thing I remember best about it was, we got soaked as we left the church, with the black veil fading on the white. At that time we wore the black over the white. It was a beautiful occasion.

Well, that was the 26th. Two days later, I was sent to Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania for the summer session with the Mercy Sisters. There were four of us who went. We enjoyed it so very, very much. It was a wonderful experience. We worked hard, and we learned a lot. We had a great summer. Then, that was the year, 1938, when we opened our first preschool. It was the first preschool in the state of Ohio, opened by the sisters in this community. It was down in that little building below, which we now call Beda Hall. Since I was going into college that year, I had the "privilege" of helping to open a preschool. Having taken care of two little sisters at home, I was not especially interested in getting involved in preschool, but one does what one is told under the vow of obedience.

D: And, you were still attending college at the time, at Kent?

P: Well, no. I came back from Mercyhurst. And, I was getting ready to go to, what at that time, was Sisters College, in Cleveland. So, in September before I went, I helped open the first preschool. Then, I went to Cleveland. We lived on the corner of Superior and 18th Streets, at St. Peters, in Cleveland. The Notre Dame Sisters ran a home there. They called it a home for young girls. Well, the youngest was about sixty. The sisters lived upstairs. We had rooms at the end of a

hall, and the Ursuline's from Youngstown had rooms at the other end of the hall. It was within walking distance of the college. We had a wonderful year, really, in college that year. I can't think of anything outstanding that happened during that year, other than the fact that we worked hard. And, we had a very good community life. We had nothing as far as worldly goods were concerned, because this was a very poor neighborhood, very poor college. Of course, at that time, our congregation was struggling to pay the debt on this property. So, we lived poorly. But, there's nothing wrong with that, because we were so bonded.

Then, in June of 1939, when we were finished with Sister's College, I was sent, again, to Mercyhurst College for the summer. When I came back--and again, it was a wonderful experience--I was made a teacher here at the Elms, for the fifth and sixth grade.

D: That's when you came back from Sister's College?

P: That's when I came back from Mercyhurst. I came back from Mercyhurst in August. I was told that my assignment was to teach fifth and sixth grade here, at Our Lady of the Elms. I had never taught before. And, I'll never forget this little girl who was so outspoken. She looked me up and down. She was going into the sixth grade, and she loved the teacher she had had in the fifth [grade]. She looked me up and down, and said, "Well, I guess you'll do." (laughter) I had twenty students in the first year I taught. But, the wonderful part about teaching here at the Mother House, in those days, we had so much help from the sisters. They helped us with everything we needed as far as lesson plans are concerned. I guess, I probably learned more than any of the youngsters did. But, we did have a good year.

Then, that summer--this would be the summer of 1940--I went back to Mercyhurst. And, you're going to hear that, because I went back six times. Then, I finally graduated from Mercyhurst! (laughter) I went back eight summers all told! Every summer was better than the summer before; but all during the school year, all this time, I went to Saturday School. The bus would pull up here in the front. The sisters gathered from here and there. We went up to Sister's College. I think by that time, by the early 1940's, it may have been called St. John's; but I forget when the name was changed. It was the same college, same institution.

D: What were some of your studies at Sister's College?

P: Well, we had history, biology--and, the biology teacher was outstanding, Sister Celine--French, English, the

usual. But, the French teacher was not Catholic. He was Mr. Venurours. There were sisters from the Vincention community, now in Bedford. At that time, they were from Pittsburgh. But, they were going to separate at Easter time. So, there were a number of young sisters in my class. They went back to Pittsburgh. At that time, the rule of separating from one community and becoming independent, was [that] you had to make some kind of change in your habit, so they changed their headdress. Mr. Venurours walked in after Easter vacation and saw all these sisters with the new headdress. He said, "Oh, they have their Easter bonnets on." (laughter) So, we all enjoyed that.

But, those days were wonderful days! And, I can't tell you how much I enjoyed, not only that, but my teaching here. Now, let me tell you--I don't recall exactly what year this happened--but, it happened in 1943 or 1942. Besides teaching, I was made Postulant Mistress. Those are the girls who first come in. They're called Postulants. I enjoyed being with them. I had to move down to the novitiate to be with them. And, I stayed with them. But, at the same time, I continued my teaching.

The following year in September, after school had begun and all of the assignments for the congregation were made, the Novice Mistress, who had been my Novice Mistress as well, Sister Dolores Holinran, was not up at the House for prayers. So, I was sent down to see where she was. I called here, but couldn't find her. I opened the door to her bedroom. I found her stretched out on her bed. I knew immediately that she had a stroke; so then, because there was nobody else to take care of the novices, I inherited the job. But, I was too young, and I had not made my final vows. Rome does not look on this fondly.

D: How old were you at that time?

P: I had not made my final vows. I made those when I was twenty-six. I was probably about twenty-four. I wasn't old enough, and [I] hadn't been in the convent long enough. But, this is an emergency. There was nobody else, and I knew the novices, because I had them as postulants. So, the bishop gave the "okay."

That summer--I'll never forget--it was alright with me. I can't say I was really enthusiastic about it, because this was an added burden. When I went away to Mercyhurst again that summer and came back, nobody said a word to me about the Novice Mistress job, so I thought that was over. And, the morning after I got back, after breakfast, the Superior turned and announced that they had an indult from Rome, and that I had permission

to be Novice Mistress. Do you know what I did? I cried. I burst out in tears. (laughter) I was not happy! But, I did it, and to this day, I do not regret it. It was okay. I stayed with that job until 1948, while I worked at the Elms.

Then, I was assigned to Wooster. You just saw my Superior, Sister Josephine. I was stationed in Wooster for six years and loved every minute of it! I taught fifth and sixth grade there, had charge of the choir, [had charge of] the sacristy, [I had charge of] the altar boys, plus teaching. But, I just loved those people! I still have friends there, after all these years. I was there six years, six happy, happy years! The sisters were great. There were four or five of us who lived there, and each one had double grade. Then, we had a sister who took care of the house.

In 1954, I was changed and sent to St. Bernard's in downtown Akron as Superior and Principal of St. Bernard's Catholic School. That was a very interesting procedure. I had never met the pastor; and when I went down there in August, he was on vacation. The second day I was there, the refrigerator blew up, so I called in the repair man. He said, "Sister, there's no help for these old bones. This will not make it through another day." He said, "You need a new refrigerator." I said, "Do you know what problem that puts on me?" He said, "What?" I said, "I've never met the pastor, and that's the first thing I'm going to have to tell him." He said, "Well, that's your problem." So, the pastor came home. At that time, it was Father Wolf. There were three Wolf brothers in the Cleveland Diocese, all priests.

But anyhow, he came home, and came to the back door. I invited him in. I said, "I have good news, and I have bad news." He said, "Well, lets hear it." I said, "Well, the good news is I'm happy to be here, but I don't know if you're going to be real happy that I'm here. The second day I was here, the refrigerator blew up." He said, "That's alright. We'll go out tomorrow and buy a new refrigerator and a new deep freeze." And, that's what we did. That was the kind of relationship we had. He was very, very good to us. Anything the sisters needed, we got. We had happy times there, too.

That was an old school, an old building, a beautiful church. And, it has so many memories for the Sisters of St. Dominic, because many of us received our veils and our habits and our black veils there. So, it's just full of history for us. At the end of that--and I of course, just loved it there! I did not want to be changed. But, I was made Supervisor for the Diocese of

Cleveland. I was Supervisor for three years. I traveled all over the Diocese, and in those days, we weren't permitted to drive.

So, I went almost everywhere by Grey Hound. It costs fifty cents to go out on the West Exchange, pick up the Grey Hound bus, and go to Cleveland. I knew every route in Cleveland, because I had schools in Cleveland and all over Akron, Ashland, Wooster, Barberton, and Doylestown. I went everywhere that I could by bus, by streetcar; and if people would take me, I would go that way. I worked with the sisters and the teachers and the children.

I had so many wonderful experiences with the children. One that is just outstanding in my mind at this point is: I walked into a building one day--this was in Cleveland, in the inner city. I walked in, and some little kid was getting a drink of water. He said, "Are you coming here to visit?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Are you coming into our room?" I said, "Well, what grade are you in?" He said, "I'm in the third grade." I said, "Oh, I don't think third grade is on my list today. I'm sorry." He said, "You've got to come to our room!" I said, "Well, why is that?" "We've got the best room in the whole building! You know, when it rains, we have buckets all over the floor. And, it catches all the rain through the pipes! It's a wonderful room," [he said.] I said to the principal, "You've got the best teacher in the Diocese in that room! Anybody else would say, 'Now, what do we have to put up with today? It's raining in all of these buckets.'" I just couldn't get over it.

But, those were the kinds of experiences that I had with the teachers and with the youngsters. The wonderful part about all of this is that, today--and, I'm a few years older than I was then--but, after the experience of Sisters College, St. John's, and my experience as Supervisor for the Diocese for three years, that's a bonding with the sisters in the whole Diocese. We know each other, even though we're all in our seventies or our sixties, or whatever. We know each other. We can go back and talk about good things that happened, about things in education, which is so dear to all of us. Well, in the mean time--I've lost track of the time--but anyhow, this took me up to 1957. In 1957, I was chosen to be the Third Councillor for the community, and--I'm trying to think of the dates--I was still a Supervisor. I was at St. Mary's for two years, and I was [for] three years [a] supervisor; and I was on the Council while I was Supervisor.

D: What were some of your responsibilities?

P: As Supervisor?

D: As Supervisor, and the others, also?

P: As Supervisor, I had to visit the schools, which I loved; sit in on the classes; talk to the teachers; and have teachers meetings afterwards. In many of these convents--of course, at that time, most of the teachers were sisters--big schools, too. I'm talking about 500, 600, 700 youngsters. Maybe, I could not possibly get in contact with all of them in one day. I would stay over night. We just had a great time.

That again, was a bonding with different communities. [I would] talk to the principals about the strengths and weaknesses that I found in the building, and [I would] listen to what she had to say. [I would] talk to any individual teacher who wanted to see me. I always felt that they did more for me than I did for them, because I always came away from those buildings feeling like I was walking on top of the world, because they were so wonderful. They really were. I had some very difficult experiences, naturally. That's part of life. But, those things have faded. The good things are the things I remember. They were all good, they really were.

With the Councillor job, which came in 1957, which . . . the administration of the congregation is made up of the president--and, at that time, she was called the Mother General--and four Councillors. I was elected by the congregation to be the Third Councillor. We had meetings periodically, to talk about anything that was going on in the congregation, for the good of the congregation; or if there were problems. Naturally, there were. That's part of life, too. We would take care of that at a meeting, and also make future plans. So, I was doing that and coming in here for meetings, and all that kind of thing.

But then in 1959, much to my sorrow, I was taken out of the job for Supervisor and made Principal and Superior of our convent in Barberton. We had fourteen sisters there, grades K-8. [There were] eight hundred and fifty pupils in the school. And again, I just fell in love with the people and with the children. It was, again, a wonderful experience. I had wonderful sisters and lay teachers. I really did. It was, I think, a very upbeat experience, even though I minded leaving the other job. When I think back on it, I think, "Eileen, it was because, as a Supervisor you had a lot more freedom. If I want to go here today, I went here today." Of course, I let them know I was coming. But, in the school, you go to school every day. That's it, Amen.

I still have happy thoughts of all of that. I must tell you that the little boys living across the street from us in Barberton were different. I used to say that someday I was going to open my trunk, and find one of them in there. We never knew when they were going to be there. I remember one day, these two would wait to see the lights go on in the chapel at five o'clock. They would run over and ring the doorbell. Then, when the sister would go to answer it, they wouldn't be around, of course. When the workman came to spread new concrete on the sidewalk. And, he made the mistake of asking one of these boys to watch that nobody walked on it. He gave them a nickel, or a dime, or whatever. In those days, it was a lot of money.

Well, the only one that walked on it, was this kid. Even though they were very, very different children, we enjoyed them. They had a lot of energy! We could hear the mother say, "You get over there on that playground," which was right outside the convent. That's where they were sent when they were bad. They would carry on and have a good time. I think that during my stay in St. Augustine's, we had a very active--and, I think it was something that I started--we had a very active principal's association. It bonded, again, the principals in different areas where they had problems or situations. And, just to get together and talk all these things over was good.

So, I was very happy there. I was there [for] four years. At that time, your length of stay could be six years. I had the school running well. The convent was running well. The repairs that had to be made, were made. And, I thought to myself, "Eileen, you have two years that you can kind of coast." That June, we had a meeting here at the Mother House, and we had elections. I was elected Mother General in 1963. I went back to St. Augustine's with mixed emotions. What it meant for me was, in a sense, giving up my school! That was very, very difficult.

I got in here, bag and baggage, just in time to open the sisters' retreat. We had a priest of course, but the Mother Superior puts the sisters on retreat and all that. So, I came. That, as I say, was a very . . . well, you have no choice. You're elected, and that's it. So, here I was, six years. As I look down the road, six years in this. Well, when I got here and looked around, and decided that there were some things that we had to do here, I had a good council of women to help me.

So, we started. We went up some place near Cleveland, where this particular company was going bankrupt. We

purchased those two buildings for a song and we had them moved on the property. We had a preschool there, but it was old. It had been put up in the 1940's. So, it really had to be replaced. The interesting thing about that was, it was going to take two or three months to build. [That is what] the builder told me. I said, "Let's dig a cellar or a lower level, because that would give us added space for the school." He said, "It would take a while." I went across the street and talked to the pastor at the Presbyterian Church and asked him if he could rent me a couple of rooms for the children, just for a couple of months. He said, "Fine, no problem." They had loads of room over there.

So, we moved the whole school over to the Presbyterian Church. Well, that was in September. In June, we are ready now to open the school. So, we are there the whole school year. I went to the Pastor, and said, "Well, it's time for you to give me a bill." We had classrooms. We used their paper towels, their toilet tissue, their water, the cleaning, and all that, everything. And, his answer to me was, "No bill between friends." So, when we had open house--we had open house, especially for our friends at the Presbyterian Church. One Sunday, after their services, they streamed over. We had cookies and coffee, and all the goodies. They saw the school that they had really nurtured, in a sense. Then, the other school--and, as I say, that school had been in operation--this school we opened in 1966 as a special school for special children. That was the other building that we added.

Well then, about that time, we're going on with other things inside the community with education and all the other good things that have to be done. We decided we were outgrowing our school. We had an old building that was not adequate for what we needed. The sisters had really built it in 1924. So, we razed [scraped] that, and built the present high school. That was dedicated in 1966. We added on to the elementary school. So that, we had our educational setting here, pretty well set.

So, I thought, "Well, what else shall we do?" So, I went one day, to Cleveland and met with the bishop--the bishop was a very good friend of mine--Monsignor Ritty, who was a Chancellor; and Bishop Sheldon, who, at that time, was in charge of Propagation. Bishop Issenmann said, "Eileen, we're thinking of sending sisters down to El Salvador. How do you feel about it?" I said, "We'll go." The priests were down there. He said, "Well, how do you feel about it?" I said, "I know the community will be very enthusiastic about it." I came home and talked to the community about it. I said, "If

you want to go, give me your reasons for wanting to go. Put it in a letter." They did. Everybody wanted to go! Making choices was very difficult for us. So, the bishop said, "Before any choices are made, Eileen, I want you to go down there. See what it's about. See what can be done." I did. I went to El Salvador.

D: What year was this?

P: It was 1965. So, I went to El Salvador, and [I] loved it. I was sorry that I couldn't go there myself! And, [I] had some of the most exciting experiences down there and on the way. The funny thing, the first time I went--I went several times, of course--we had air plane trouble in Miami. We were on the plane, off the plane, on the plane. Finally, they gave us a ticket and said, "You have to stay here over night. We will not be leaving until seven o'clock in the morning." All I had was my purse. Now, in those days--remember, I'm in a long habit, heavy stockings. This is at nine o'clock or ten o'clock at night, and I thought, "I'm going to take off the stockings." I washed them and rung them out in a towel; and [then, I] hung them up. And, [I] went to bed. At three o'clock a.m. the phone rings. "We're leaving in twenty minutes." Well, you try to get on those wet stockings! The funny part about it was, when I got off the elevator, there's this old Jewish woman standing there. She said, "I was not going to let them go on that plane without you. I don't know how, in twenty minutes, you ever got into all that paraphernalia!"

First, I went to Guatemala. Father St. Marie and a lay person were waiting. Then, we drove to El Salvador. I stayed for about three weeks, and I decided that that was a wonderful place for the sisters! There was much to do down there. Everybody was crazy about the United States. This was when Kennedy was President. They knew Kennedy. The kids would say, "Kennedy." They knew that. We had a big party here at the Mother House and announced the names of the three who were to go. We were sending three. We later, sent another sister. We had a big missioning ceremony at St. Bernard's. One who went, is now president of our congregation, Sister Elizabeth Ann Shafer, who is known affectionately as Sister Libby. In the mean time, St. Bernard's built a new convent for the sisters, which was a good move because the convent I lived in was rather run down. The night I went over there for the dedication, I sat next to Bishop Issenmann.

Now, you must know that, in those days, you didn't move out of your Diocese if you were a Diocesan congregation, which we are, without the permission of the bishop. I'm sitting at dinner, and I said, "Bishop, I

understand that you used to work on the Denver Register." "Oh, yes," and he conversed about that; how wonderful it was and how he loved everybody. I said, "I have a chance to go out to Denver, and let some of the sisters work out there. "Wonderful," [he said]. That was it. So, the next day, I went to Denver, and we opened a school out there, with an unusual pastor. He was very good to us! We still have sisters in the Denver area.

Then, it's time for election. In the meantime, we have studied and we have decided, much to my delight, that the term of Major Superior would be four years. So, I was reelected. I want to tell you, from 1963 to 1973, when I was in office, were the most difficult years for the church and for religious communities in the history of the church. That's when Vatican II took place. That's when sisters decided they no longer wanted to stay in the convents. We all lost a number of sisters, and that made my last four years very, very difficult.

D: What do you think are some of the reasons why the Vatican II had such an effect on the sisters?

P: Well, I think part of the thing was that they saw options that were now possible, that had not been possible when some entered the convent. They wanted those options--more freedom, more choices as far as working situations are concerned. There were some, of course, who had never felt comfortable in the convent. That was, also, part of it. There was this ring of freedom; and of course, we certainly made many changes in the convent. The changes that we have made, I think, have been phenomenal, for any kind of organization. I really believe that.

But, some people don't understand that an organization cannot run as fast as one person, and it takes time for the organization to catch up. Some people are unwilling to wait for this to happen. That's why, I think, we've lost sisters. I lost some good friends at the same time, some of my own classmates. That's very difficult. That's like, giving up part of your family. So, those last four years, as I say, were really--I spent most of my time working within the congregation.

But then, one day, I was called to a meeting at St. Thomas Aquiness, in Louisville. Bishop Hughes was there. This is my third year in office, the second term, and I had one more year to go. He said to me, that there were some changes that were going to take place in the Diocese of Youngstown. He wanted me to come in and talk to him. I went. He wanted me to become Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

However, he was not willing to wait until the year. So, my last year in office, I was Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Youngstown, and I was finishing my last year of office here. I worked two days a week in Youngstown. The rest of the time, I worked here. It worked out fine. When my term was up, I moved to Canfield. Sister Barbara, who was going to work at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, went with me. We lived on the Dr. La Manna's property in Canfield, a farm house that was one hundred and twenty years old. I worked with Jack Augenstein as Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Augenstein was a very capable person to work with! I had ten happy years there. But, I knew that the time was coming that I would have to make a change. There was an opening at the end of those ten years in Propagation of the Faith for Mission Education Consultant. This is working with Father Torok. So, I applied for the job, and got it; and I worked there for six years. Those were great years, too. All this time, while I was in Propagation--I think it was in Propagation. Anyhow--I forgot to tell you--I went back to El Salvador many times when I was in office, because our sisters were there.

But then, in 1984, I went to El Salvador again. That was a wonderful trip, a trip that the Dominicans took. We went to Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador; and also, in 1989, I went to China. And then, I went to Europe. I've been to Europe a couple times before, which I forgot to mention. This was a trip with the Dominicans, [that went] all through Spain, France, and Italy. And, China was very interesting, too. We got out just before Tinneman Square rioted. We had elections here, again. I was elected to the Council, as Second Councillor. That was a call to come home, back to the Mother house. I had to come back here, so I had to leave Youngstown behind me, not happily. I cannot say that. . . . It's a funny thing--you know, I haven't looked back on my life like this for a long time. And, I think, we're told--this is ancient. This should have never been said, but it was said years and years ago to sisters before my time: "Don't put down roots. Women put down roots. That's part of our nature." I put down very deep roots every place I was stationed. But, I've liked every place I was every stationed! I really have. I don't say that everything was ideal. Nevertheless, I liked every place I was stationed, so I've been here since 1989.

I had a very tragic thing happen in 1988, a good thing and a bad thing. In 1988, in June, I was to celebrate my Golden Jubilee. The Monday before the Sunday that I was to celebrate, Sister Barbara [and I] stayed home that day, because her people were coming from Michigan. We were going to have a real big party there and all

that kind of thing. We liked to party. We loved those mystery parties. You buy those games at the book store, dress up in different costumes and pretend, and try to solve a mystery. We loved those. We had lots of those.

So anyhow, she was working downstairs, and I was working upstairs. We stopped at noon and had a sandwich. I said to her, "I'll do the dishes." I came back in, as she said to me, "I have a terrible pain in my head." I said, "I'll get you a cold cloth." I came back, and she said, "It's not cold enough." By the time I got back, her speech was garbled, and I knew she was having a stroke. I couldn't handle her. She wanted to get on the sofa. I tried to get her on the sofa. Then, I tried to get her on a chair. In the meantime, I was afraid to leave her for fear she'd fall. Yet, I knew I had to get to a phone to get help. There was nobody around to help me. I finally got to the phone, and I called an ambulance to come immediately, which they did, plus the fire department. By this time, she was incoherent and just in terrible pain. We took her to the hospital. That was probably about two o'clock. I called her people, because the doctor did not give me any hope. It was a massive stroke, and she was brain dead in no time, comatose. She died at ten o'clock that night. That was on Monday. Thursday, we had her funeral. And Sunday, we had my jubilee.

Let me tell you about the cat. I had a cat, beautiful cat! That cat slept every night in Sister Barbara's room, on the trunk, which was by the window. I came home from the hospital with friends that wanted to stay all night. I said, "No. I want to be alone." That cat would not go near Sister Barbara's room. Knowing the sister as I did, this is the way she would have wanted to go, and I know she was ready. But, it was a loss of a friend, and it was a very difficult time for me to celebrate.

D: That was the 50th?

P: My 50th jubilee. [It was the] 50th year of my vows. And, that brings me pretty well up to the other side of Youngstown.

D: Over the years in the Youngstown Diocese, what do you think has helped, has been an aid to the Diocese, or has approved conditions in the Diocese, in your opinion?

P: I think, first of all, there's a comraderie in Youngstown that I don't find in Cleveland. I'm not being critical, but I found that in Youngstown. I loved it! I think, there's a friendliness there. It's probably

because of the size of the Diocese, but I do think that Bishop Malone has had a lot to do with that. He knows everybody, and people like him. He can associate with anybody, the wealthy or the poor; it makes no difference. I think, that has done a lot to bring the Diocese together. I really do. I always felt--I loved working in the Chancery. I did. And, I think, again when Bishop Hughes was there, he would call everybody by name. There's just that friendly spirit that I don't find here (Cleveland).

Again, I'm not being critical, because this Diocese is so much larger. See, I've lost touch. When I came back here, I called a priest. I had to call him to see about one of the sisters--I was in charge of the House. I said, "Father, I don't know your name." He told me. I said, "I don't think I know you, because I've been in the Diocese for sixteen years. So, I'm sorry." He said, "Well, by this time, your friends are either dead or retired." That was his answer. Is there anything else, Pat?

D: What do you think were some of the hindrances to the Diocese, in your opinion? I know you mentioned, perhaps, a drop in vocations after Vatican II.

P: Yes.

D: Can you think of anything else that, maybe, you would have liked to have seen done differently or were hindrances to the Diocese growth?

P: Let me think. What would be something? I think, one thing is that people have to be careful in a small Diocese. You can get very parochial. You have to always remember that you have to reach out beyond your Diocese. I think, sometimes, some of the priests and some of the sisters could never see anything wrong, because they had always been here. Those of us who came from another Diocese or have had other experiences could see that you cannot be parochial in your outlook. You have to look beyond your boundaries to find out other things and other ways of doing things.

D: So, it's kind of mixed. . . .

P: Yes. It's, kind of a mixed bag.

D: At it's best perhaps, what was your favorite--I know you liked all your different assignments--but, if you had a favorite part of working in the Diocese, what do you think it might be?

P: You mean, in the Diocese of Youngstown?

D: Yes.

P: Assistant Superintendent of Schools, because school is my bag. I really love it!

D: How about, at it's worst, the same question?

P: I can't say I had a worst, Pat, because I had two of the best bosses in the world, Jack Augenstein, and Father Torok. They just let me do my thing. They really did.

D: So, you really enjoyed the Diocese?

P: I really loved it! Oh, I loved it! I'd go back tomorrow if I could. If I could find a job.

D: Well, is there anything that you might want to add that maybe, I've left out about the Diocese or about your experiences?

P: One thing, I think, is very helpful. We're close to the Public School Board, on West Wood, there on the corner. And, I would say that the relationship is a very positive one between the public schools and parochial schools, which I thought was very good. We're all in it together, and it's true that we have a different philosophy. We have different aims and goals, but we're all in the business of educating children. I think that we can do much to help each other.

D: I have one more question. It's about El Salvador. What did you do when you would go there?

P: When I went down there?

D: Yes.

P: Well, I went down there, and I--first of all, I talked with the priests who were there. There were no sisters there, obviously, and I went around with them [the priests]. I visited all the places that they went to. I went with them when they went out to say mass. They used to go out to different areas where they would say mass, because some of the people couldn't come in. I remember this one time--and, I was told never, ever to take anything to eat away from the rectory, because they were afraid I would pick something up--I went with this priest to this ranch. This woman spoke English. She said, "You're staying for dinner after mass?" I said, "No, we're going back to the rectory." She said, "I want you to stay for dinner. I want to fix you something. See all those chickies out there?" There were chickens running all over the place. She said, "You pick out the chickie you want, and we'll have it

for dinner."

Well, I didn't pick out the chickie I wanted, because I didn't want it for dinner. One day--this must have been the first time I was down there, because there were no sisters there--I went out one night to a little community meeting, the base community meeting. The last thing Father said to me was, "Don't eat or drink anything." Well, the people were so nice, and they had this wonderful bible program. Of course, I could pick up a word here or there. After it was all over, they served little cookies in packages. There were paper cups for serving Kool-Aid. I thought, "This would be terribly rude if I didn't." So, I drank, and I ate.

After we were all finished with our paper cups, they didn't throw them away! They collected them, because they had been used before; and they were going to use them again! Well, when I got back to the rectory--I'll never forget this--this priest was also an M.D. He said, "Eileen, tell me the truth. Did you eat or drink anything?" And, I told him. He never said a word. He went to the cupboard, took the lid off of the bottle, and he said, "Drink!" That will kill anything inside!" (laughter) I'll never forget that! That was so funny. I never had any trouble. In all the traveling I had done, I never had any trouble.

But, we looked over the whole situation, and decided the work that the sisters could do. We took one of our sisters who went down there, who had graduated from Kent State in Industrial Arts. [She] taught the men how to make things that they could sell here in the [United] States. They had money in their pockets, because she had taught them all these skills. Well, of course, that wasn't acceptable to the Government. They did not want their people to have money. See, this was just prior to the war. It finally got to the point where they would not let the sisters gather a group, like they gather fifty or sixty, to talk to and catechize. They were not allowed to have more than one or two. It got to the point where one of the sisters went on down to South America and studied for a while. And then, [she] came back to the [United] States.

Eventually, all of ours came back, [after] five, six, seven, eight years. There are still sisters from the Cleveland Diocese who are going down there to the Mission. It's still in operation. It has spread out in other areas, but it's still an operation.

D: I see.

P: It was a very interesting experience.

D: Okay, that'll do it. Thank you.

P: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW