

Interviewer: M.T., thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed, I just want some background information. If you could please say, and maybe spell, your full name.

- Well, my name, that I'm known by, in religion, and professionally, and through the music, is Meriam Therese Winter M-I-R-I-A-M, T-H-E-R-E-S-E, and then Winter, with no S, W-I-N-T-E-R. However, my legal name, and what I use for all of my travel documents, and anything official, is Gloria Frances Winter, G-L-O-R-I-A, glory be to God! (laughing) Frances, F-R-A-N-C-E-S, thanks be to God, Pope Frances is here, and Winter.

- I love it, that's wonderful. And when and where were you born?

- I was born in 1938, June 14th, comin' up.

- It is!

- Yeah, this will end my 77th year, the year of a double sacred, seven, seven, I'll be 78 on June 14, 1938, in Passaic, P-A-S-S-A-I-C, New Jersey.

- Happy early birthday to you.

- Thank you so much.

- (laughing) That's wonderful, ah, you are a member of the ...

- Medical Mission Sisters, officially, the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, yeah, and I entered in 1955, so, I've been there a while.

- Yeah, were you 17, is that right?

- I had just turned 17, yeah, just shortly after my 17th birthday, the November after June.

- Oh, where did you go to school?

- Well, I went to a public school, grade school, I think until about the sixth grade, then I moved to, like a Catholic school, and then a Catholic high school, Pope Pious XII, for one year, and then to, that was in Passaic, New Jersey, and then our family moved, my father was a state trooper, and he had built a little house nearer to where his barracks was, and in Morris Plains, New Jersey, so I went to Bayley Ellard High School for the last three years.

- And your college, graduate school, where did you go?

- Well, I entered The Society, with the dream, and the conviction, I wanted to be a doctor, I mean a real doctor, not a Ph.D, I mean a real doctor.

- Yes.

- I was gonna go to the missions, I wanted to go to Africa, Zulu, to work among the Africans, and I especially focused, I chose this particular community, my girlfriend and I secretly, looking at brochures, reading things, and chose it over against Marionol, because Marionol, there was an option that you might end up teaching, and the one thing I did not want to do, was teach. So, I kinda hedged my bets, you know, and came to this Medical Mission Sisters, where they had hospitals, and nursings, went everything, all over the world.

- Okay.

- So I entered in Philadelphia, Pine Road, Philadelphia, in 1955, and was actually met for the first time, I was met by the founder of the community.

- Really!

- Yeah, and here's an interesting twist, Anna Dengel, in the process, one of the big things I was doin' right now, is the final touches on a biography of her, that's telling the untold story, from documents locked up in our archives, for years. That she, she founded this community, and in a sense, to bring professional medical care to women who could not be seen by male doctors, Muslim, and Hindu, and at that time, was India, and the Peshawar district of Pakistan, northern India, and Arabal Pindi, and she, long story, and you can read it when it comes out, got medical training, and this is like in the teens, you know, 1919, 1920. She graduated from Cork Medical School, went there four years, realized she needed help.

- Oh yes.

- And, while the Protestants were doing wonderful stuff, they were the pioneers, and they did wonderful stuff, they weren't in this area, but the Catholics were doing very little, if nothing, for the women in this way, and there was this wonderful resource of Catholic Sisterhoods, you know, and if they could do, but they couldn't even participate at childbirth. When she had maternal, maternity cases, or deliveries, they had to turn their face, or be outside the door, or ...

- The men had to do that?

- No, men couldn't, the men could not touch ...

- Yeah, yeah, but the women had to ...

- The women could, the women, if they were nuns, if they were vowed religious, they were not allowed to. And there were no real lay missionaries then, in Ketalasis, I mean, it was like, you become a nun, if you're a missionary, you're a nun, you know?

- Yes!

- That was a later development, so, the long story short, in the end, she felt this calling, with a lot of support, came to the U.S.A, she's Austrian by birth, and gave rise to this community, which, from its origins, is pioneering, it's inclusive, and it was not out of a conversion principle, it is, you be there for those women. So, I was drawn to that, I was drawn to go to Africa, but I was drawn to that spirit, and in 1936, Canon Law changed, and so, immediately, now you can have women doctors, and women nurses, everything, but this was the impetus, and I felt this story has to be out, okay, so ...

- What is her name? I'm sorry.

- Anna Dengel, D-E-N-G-E-L, Anna Dengel, and she's of Austrian birth, but she came to the states, and she became a naturalized U.S. citizen, so she's an American. And, anyway, so, I, why did I go down there, well, she interviewed me, I got into the community, and it was the '55, in Catholicism, there was this kind of turbulence, pre-Vatican II, and those of us who were always like, if you're pioneering, you know, like, you're gonna do this for Muslim women, and medicine, and change Canon Law, it's no big deal to say wait a minute, we can't keep singing Latin, we gotta do, and so we began, doing English, and all this, with our liturgies, which was very important for our community, well before the changes came, and I sort of had a bent for poetry, and loved the chant, and all that stuff, and, so we were in that. And then when Vatican II came, and then they put out that liturgy decree, and in that period, the community said we're gonna need to have somebody trained, because, we don't teach, you know, we just teach our own members what they need to know. Ah, we need someone who would be an, have some expertise in this area, to help us, so they asked if I would be willing to do it. Now, why don't you just line me up against a wall, and say, "Would you be willing to be shot at sunrise?" (laughing) You know, you're where you want the bullet to go. I cannot tell you the sort of devastation, but I also have to tell you, that I'm not inclined to say no. I don't do no well.

- Yes.

- But I was given a choice, okay, so I say freely, it was not imposed on me, they knew what that was, they said, "Would you be willing?" And I said a prayer or two, and I said yeah, I would. Long story short, went to Catholic University, got my degree, and a Bachelor of Music degree. And Catholic University wasn't exactly forward thinking, you know, they were doing, teaching the Latin motets, so I loved that anyway, I love Gregorian Chant, and I love the motets. They were soon to be passe, but I loved them, and then I got my instrument, was an organ, and I gave a recital on four manuals, you know, in the Cathedral of Mary our Queen, ba bum, bum, bum! You know, with putting, with my habit on, threw up my habit, and I had pants underneath, you know, and I thought my teacher was gonna fall right over the balcony and crash, because he was so horrified. But I said, "Listen, I've gotta move my feet, don't even, you know, think about this". So, I finished, and I never played another note, because the medical mission sisters were missionary, we don't

have an organ.

- Right!

- What are we gonna do with an organ? And, within months, three, four months after I got that degree, finally, the English things we were singing became mandatory, not just permissible, but mandatory, everything went into English, so I had expertise in an instrument I would never play again, and in a whole category, and catalog of music we would not use. I was totally irrelevant, so for the second time, this devastating reality, what am I gonna do with the rest of my life, begin to teach the novices, you know, hello! And ah, what happened was ... Okay, excuse me, could you push pause?

- Sure.