

Interviewee: Sister Grace Walle

Interviewer: Cristal R. Mendez

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Hello, my name is Sister Grace Walle. I'm a Marianist sister, and I'm grateful that I have been at St. Mary's now for almost 40 years. I entered the Marianist sisters in 1971 and our novitiate is here in San Antonio, Texas, and I had met the Marianists in Cape May, New Jersey, when I got to know them as a teenager and they asked me if I was interested in being a Marianist sister. Now I was from a very traditional group that I had Catholic education all my life, but the nuns always seemed scary to me. So when I met the Marianist brothers, there was a real spirit of hospitality.

They were very engaged in work with education, with families, with youth, and I would help out. I would volunteer. And as a result, when the brothers asked me, did I want to be a Marianist sister?

I said no, but I said, Oh, if I meet the Marianists--and if the Marianist sisters are like the brothers, all joy just thinking I was pretty safe. But I met the Marianist sisters, and over about two year period, I decided that that was really true, that God was calling me into this Marianist family, and our headquarters is here. The novitiate was here in San Antonio, Texas. So I began my journey of almost now 45 years to—as a Marianist a sister and my education was completed here at St. Mary's University and I graduated in 1978.

I came back to St Mary's after a little time at our retreat house, which is now the Center for Legal and Social Justice. I made vows at what is now the Center for Legal and Social Justice, so I love the history that our building was able to be turned into what is a wonderful center that helps those who cannot afford legal services and give students the experience of outreach to clients who aren't the most organized or the most aware of what legal access they do have. But over the years, we've helped so many people, so I'm very proud of the fact that our Retreat House became the Center for Legal and Social Justice and that I was able to extend my services. The Marianist sisters at the time when we finished it being a retreat house, I came over here in campus ministry in 1981 and for ten years I worked in undergraduate campus ministry.

Most of the students are now older adults, probably in their fifties, but a lot of great stories from their early days of working on retreat programs with them and leadership development and just our Christian life communities that grew at that time.

As a result, I also was interested in helping older students because I recognized at St. Mary's University there was an older student population and they really weren't connected as well. The opportunities for them because they had families were more limited and a number of our staff on campus were also going to school, especially at noontime.

So I started helping with the then Alice Franzke. She was a sociology teacher and older student herself, having become a doctor and a doctorate in sociology. She had started a group for older

students, and then I joined her with outreach from campus ministry and created after a while a scholarship for older students, and our funds would come from Oyster Bake. So there was a day when I was involved in Oyster Bake, helping them set up their booth. It was a rainy Saturday when I was pushing a cart of brownies across the campus. At that point, I knew my days of doing booth at Oyster Bake were limited.

But as a result, the students continue that for many years and the funds were able to fund scholarships for older students. And then, shortly after Alice Franzke's death with great regard for her and her work, she donated her retirement fund so that the Alice Franzke scholarship continues to this day, and I still help with the undergraduate group to award the Alice Franzke scholarship. But as a result of getting in addition. As a result of the getting to know single parents, I had another donor come and wanted to help single parents. And so since I was already working with older adults, I started outreach to single parents and subsequently was on a committee with the law school. And so I shared with them that we had this single parent fund, the first student that ever got a single parent scholarship. Many years later, her then ten year old son became a law student and graduated and Trisha Hyle.

And I'll never forget when her son walked across the stage and she was able to put him that I could see a fund that helps somebody at the very beginning and watch her grow into a very outstanding attorney and have her son follow in her footsteps.

You can't beat those days of that kind of history of knowing people for so long that you get to see that now at the law school. I've been here so long that there are many relatives or family members of the law students when I first came down here in 1994.

So as a result of being on this committee, and I would fill in for the then father John G. Leies Marianist priest older at the time, but well-regarded, who did a lot of ministry with the faculty at the law school.

And he also helped with sacramental ministry marriage baptisms for the law students around that same time as the students. As I was getting a little older and the students programs and meetings didn't begin to 11:00 at night I realized that there was some interest in my going to the law school.

So the then Barbara Aldave, the first woman law dean, I had gotten to know her because she was very committed to justice work, very involved with the Pax Christi of Religious Sisters organization. And in the course of interacting and helping out here and there because Father John couldn't go to evening events after a while, I would be invited to lead prayer. So, so in the course of time, the invitation came for me. What I like to do Law Ministry and at the time, there wasn't really a program as such. So I still have the first paper the father, John G. Leies gave me.

You love it. It was in typed. I've been here so long that you might not all remember purple ditto and a typewriter. So yes, I had to learn the computer. Yeah. And I'll just read briefly, because it's I think it's great that I still have my files that what he told me, what needed to be done at the law school, a clear job description of a presence, well I created my own job description after a while, an open invitation, the campus minister to be present at all faculty meetings. That's true to this

day. I've had a number of opportunities to lead prayer at faculty meetings and even as our faculty members, some have passed away. The most touching thing for me has also been to lead services in remembrance of our faculty. I've traveled with our faculty. I've had many a party with our faculty, so there was more than an open invitation to be present to faculty meetings, and office with easy access.

There's a trail outside that it's pretty easy to tell how to get here because there's a lot of advertising and the famous peanut butter and jelly. For some reason, I got known I had some money left over. I put out coffee as the very first thing I did at the law school. I had an empty closet. I had a desk, but nobody knew me. So I put out coffee and I had peanut butter and jelly left over from an event. And I just put it out one day and I realized how law students were flocking to it.

And over time, it just got to be a, well, a respite for law students to find their way to the peanut butter and jelly table. In fact, they even photographed me holding up peanut butter and jelly. There's a picture somewhere of this. I thought, oh yeah, it's somewhere. And as we were doing the props and holding up and changing the pose, I put down the jelly prop and subsequently some law student thought that was a good idea and took it away because they were hungry.

So there is many a story of peanut butter and jelly. Are you up a fold over or grape versus strawberry? But just a lot of goodwill and a lot of people donate it back to the peanut butter and jelly.

And to this day, I was at an event the other night for the Women's Bar Association, awarding the single parent scholarship. They continued as I needed a matching donor way back to this other story of starting the single parent scholarship.

So I needed another matching donor. And in 1997, the Bexar County Women's Bar Association granted my request and has continued to award a single parent law student each year, and this year was very gracious of them to also increase the amount of funds.

Every law student that has been a recipient of this award has always touched because it comes at a time when they're most in need parenting, going to law school and parenting as a single parent. So it was touching the other night, but as I was on the Zoom interaction, several of the people said as part of the "get to know you" Sister, do you still have the peanut butter and jelly? And I said, well, COVID did a little number on that with not being able to have open jars and easy access as we once did.

But luckily, H-E-B creates peanut butter and jelly bars and grape strawberry and banana, so we're covered for still feeding the law students. And then luckily, Keurig came along, and so it's much easier than leaving a pot of coffee on all day.

And so anyway, yeah, so I started out with this little note from Father John G. Leies, and that's 30 years of following a little guideline that he left me a special committee of faculty members I worked with them to relay specific needs and attention to the campus minister liturgies.

I followed several of the faculty who coordinated red mass and I've since coordinated. I think it's the Archbishop, Gustavo said. How many of you coordinated? I said, I think about probably 26 or so. 26 red masses with the Archdiocese of San Antonio, with all the archbishops.

Presiding Archbishop Gustavo's especially gracious as he greets me every year, gives me a big hug and thanked me for bringing the legal community together to ask blessings on the start of the judicial and academic year. So I've been very blessed as a result of one of the first things I did, which was coordinating red mass to get to know many in the legal community.

Interviewer: Can you tell us more about red mass?

Oh, I'd be glad to. So when I first started coordinating red mass, I one of the people who was a friend of mine, said, you know, you really should get a committee together and they can be great advisors for you. And I thought, now, that's a really good idea. And I asked the then dean Aldave, who do you think we should get? And she said, Oh, there's a new justice on the fourth Court of Appeals Justice and then subsequently Chief Justice Alma Lopez.

And she is an undergrad and a law grad of St. Mary's. So she would she'd be great, see if she can come to your committee. And then several other I had several students at the time. They have since Judge Rosie Gonzalez and Janet Gonzales, who works for the mayor in his province, the United States and development.

The two of them have, I think they've been to as many red masses as I have. Having started when they were students at St. Mary's and for many, many years, Chief Justice Alma Lopez served so graciously. She was always connected to people she knew who to call.

We arranged for the judges to robe in the fourth court of Appeals, which that tradition continues to this day. And as after her retirement, she would continue to lead the blessing. We have special blessings at the end of red mass blessings for judges and legislators led by a judge.

Blessings for lawyers led by the Catholic Lawyers Guild, with whom we partner for Red Mass and then the law students and president and or dean of the law school, gives special blessings to the faculty, students, and administrators of St. Mary's in order to ask blessings on the administration.

Application and administration and advocating for clients so that it is done ethically and with compassion. Every year we have a message that the committee helps put together committee members. Some have changed over, but many have continued to help.

I was very fortunate to also get to know court reporters in San Antonio, a wonderful group that have been there every year, not only really helping in any way possible. And they always give me a jewelry piece I have on my table here a card holder that just expresses it's a red card holder on my desk over right over here by the files. And every year they give me a special. I think it must be Brighton, but a special remembrance of red mass because they were so grateful to be invited to be acknowledged as a member of the legal community.

So as a result of all of this, I've just gotten to know many judges and court reporters and members of the legal community and I guess one of my favorite stories too, was the mayor Phil

Hardberger was then the Chief Justice, Phil Hardberger, and he and his wife served on the committee.

Linda Hardberger worked at the McNay Art Museum as a curator, and she had a wonderful idea to get red banners. She said, you need color. So we started with red banners and then had the idea to get the legal organizations to put their logos on it.

One of the Marianist brothers who's helped me over the years, brother Jim Jakely, designed the banner poles in the stands. We're now at about 26 banners and the legal organizations love being represented there. Carry them in the procession.

So it was a great legacy from our early days of setting up the committee, but I'll never forget when the then Chief Justice Phil Hardberger was hosting a Chief Justice Convention in San Antonio, and he said, well, maybe a few judges will come to it.

I'm going to invite them. Maybe a few will come. At the time, the cathedral was under renovation, we were in a separate building and I looked across to the Bexar County courthouse and I saw about 50 judges in line with their wives.

A panic came over me because not only was that the number of people, in addition, but the cathedral was under construction and the windows were wide open, you could hear all the traffic. I thought it's just going to be hard to have this many people.

So I think I just ran into, as I recall, ran into the church and any law students that were in pews. I quickly got them out so that it would look like we had expected the 50 other judges to come.

So that night at the reception, I was just devastated. I thought, oh my gosh, this is just too much. We didn't prepare. I didn't know. I wouldn't have known in the early days to ask. And but at the reception, those judges not only enjoyed the reception, they stayed till the end, but they also said-

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We have the red mass booklet. Yeah. And the red mass. Every year we have, we take the photos and turn them into booklets. And anyway, so they were holding up the booklet and they said, Oh, we're going to take this back to St. Mary's.

So every year we use the photo appropriate to the occasion. The committee helps me write the introduction. The history of red mass dates back to the 13th century, when it officially opened the term of the court for the European countries and the first red mass is recorded in the Cathedral Paris in 1245, around 1310.

King Edward first began the tradition in England, offered at Westminster Abbey at the opening of the Michaelmas term. It received its name from the fact that the celebrant was vested in red and the Lord high justices were robed in brilliant scarlet.

They were joined by university professors displaying red on their academic gowns and the United States, the first red mass, occurred in 1928 and is still celebrated. You'll see it on TV. The Supreme Court justices also begin their term with a red mass.

San Antonio revived the tradition 69 years ago under the auspices of the law school and the Catholic Lawyers Guild, and so I've been able to assist in bringing the legal community together and our law students to pray for blessings on our judicial and academic year.

Recently, I was able to get the Association of Marianist Universities to sponsor a dialogue between University of Dayton, who has a law school, we have three universities University of Dayton, Chaminade University in Hawaii does not have a law school and St Mary's Law School.

And we had a representative so we could have a dialogue exactly on this question. So I think our Marianist characteristics of education, which hopefully are known at St. Mary's University of Formation and Faith, Community Development, Leadership, Service for the common good, and adaptability to change.

All those characteristics also are part of Marianist characteristics for law school. So part of what I do in law ministry is also from the earliest day at orientation. Create that spirit of an educational community. It's not that people aren't competitive at law school because they are, but to create an atmosphere that people feel regarded, respected, the dignity of the human person. All people are welcomed at the table, and the community, I guess, is an important element. So what happens then, is I create opportunities for community. So this year, for example, since we hadn't seen each other in two years, I had us each year I had a reception after their orientation program. So the first years, they had a special day for them, but for the second years we had a little event on the patio. And then the third years, I had members of our alumni community come together so that it could be a networking event.

But it was really great to see people back because last year it was just the 1Ls and I had a I mean, the question might be to how did I keep going during COVID? But since we only had the 1Ls on campus last year, I had to create some other at a distance event.

So even as I prepared this week for Thanksgiving, we created a Thanksgiving several days that students could come and sit outside and enjoy at least a Thanksgiving box, rather than the typical Thanksgiving meal that would be turkey and the fixings from Aramark.

This year, I'm happy that somebody else took it on and wanted to extend the idea to the Friendsgiving. That was a new one for me. But it was. It really fit in with some of the work we were doing to bring together the affinity groups they call them.

So all those that represent different organizations and they work together to bring Friendsgiving. And I think these are just samples of community building opportunities. My favorite one is we have a Women in Law Leadership Award as part of the fourth Court of Appeals visit to St Mary's.

They judge our oral advocacy and then they stay for lunch and award ceremony for outstanding women leaders in the law school who are nominated by their classmates. And it's a way to honor our Women's History Month and to bring together what was, as I shared before, the Chief Justice Sonia Lopez and subsequently several other judges.

They're all retired and I'm still working. But the chief justices continue to come to St. Mary's, and now we have awards and all their names that have retired Chief Justice Catherine Stone and Chief Justice Sandee Bryan Marion. So I think I also was part of the service.

Bringing service for the common good would be really some of my earliest days. Creating certain service opportunities. We had law students before pro bono legal services was as advanced as it is. We used to do--the students, I can't believe they ever did this, but we'd serve soup at the homeless shelter.

Steve Chiscano is a well-recognized lawyer in town and he and the other group of his class of '97, they would go to the Catholic worker house and we did a garden one year, we built ramps.

So whatever opportunities for the students to have a community to engage with each other and get to know each other, but then in turn to give back to the community. I still had the early pictures of Judge Karin Crump, who got one of the earliest young law alumni awards.

I still had pictures of her, with the two guys building the ramp. Now how I ever knew how to build a ramp is beyond me, but I guess I figured it out. I got some help and they had to do it, so I still had early pictures.

She's been a judge and well regarded attorney, but I love again, I just love that I have that kind of history. I was fortunate that there were other people came in, at least for part time pro bono. But currently, Greg Zlotnick is the director of the pro bono program, and he and I really have worked well together. He's taken over much of the pro bono programs and interacts with many of the legal organizations to give our law students experience, practical experience. So we move from some of the hands on Habitat for Humanity would be an early opportunity.

But now we're in any number of agencies, there's a new San Antonio legal services that's supported by the San Antonio Bar Association, it was the Community Justice Program. There are just many groups that really welcome our law students to help with wills and divorces.

I mean, sad about that, but there's a need for the paperwork for a veteran's affairs so much that they can observe and help with. That gives them a real feel for what it's like to be a lawyer. I guess I'm probably well known for the spring break service trips that originally started out in South Texas, in McAllen, Brownsville, Edinburg area and our legal community there was so helpful Judge Israel Ramon to this day, still sponsors students in his judicial office, and he was an undergrad and law grad, so they were one of the first groups that also then hosted a reception so our students would work during the week.

Several of those students, one of them, Amanda Rivas, is now our external director, and she was one of the early ones that also helped with our program in McAllen, South Texas. I knew nothing about South Texas, and then the dean said he wanted a drink and two wanted us to go to South Texas.

And I was like, again, I just lucked out that somebody had done their master's degree and worked on the border, so I went with them. I learned a little bit about what the work might be. And again, that grew into what we still do today.

By pre-COVID, that last year, 2019, it was the last thing I did before COVID hit so strongly. I was still traveling because we were at eight cities in Texas and D.C. I had a dream that our law students would experience something outside of Texas, and I wanted them to go to the where lawmaking occurs, and we were able to find agencies to support our law students for the week and giving them an opportunity to learn different in different agencies in D.C. So I just come back from D.C. through Dallas. Again our Dallas alumni network is super.

Judge Dominique Collins has regularly taken five or six students to learn the ropes, what it's like to be in the court system and continues each year. Alumni group has developed some of their own, either their own opportunities or know about to connect us with different agencies.

And then each city hosts a reception so law students can also learn about what careers would be like in that city. I fundraised for that. That's been one of my gifts is that people joke that people just hand me money.

But it's been true. I rarely like to. I'd hardly ever ask unless I have to. And the alumni board started very generously and has continued to support our spring break service trips. So I just think that's what's sad when we had to stop it.

But again, thanks to Greg Zlotnick, he knew how to help the students get into remote work. So we train them for remote work. And I knew about through another one of my judicial connections about some grant opportunities.

So thanks to Melanie Call and Greg and myself, we were able to get two grants to enable students to work in person if that was an opportunity or to do remote work. And I guess our biggest accomplishment last summer, again, partnering with our Career Services or Career Strategy Office, Robin Thorner, we were able to and thanks to Dean Patricia Roberts, we were able to offer 26 summer fellowships, 26 paid summer fellowships. So again, students got practical experiences, and the offices are ever grateful for ten weeks of law students giving them assistance to help so many clients in need.

So just returning to the original question about how I am influenced as a Marianist sister at the Marianist University in our ministry, I think those characteristics are very important and we were able to translate them into how we would perceive them at law school, especially as I've described the service opportunities our work at the Center for Legal and Social Justice not really regarding the clients serving the clients responding the needs. Especially our I guess, recently, the evictions for the homeless. Genevieve Guajardo created a program as director, as one of the clinicians at the center that was again a well regarded and well needed program for those facing eviction.

So I think working at the law school, I guess it's just second nature to me that I do what I do because I am a Marianist and I guess I translated into practical ways, whether that's community building opportunities, recognition and helping students understand their vocation as an attorney and supporting them in faith, not just red mass, but other opportunities to come to pray together. All our events have prayer at the beginning, and students will come in for a prayer, especially

during exams. It's there's a rush on prayers during that time. I had one fellow that used to come in for his Jewish prayer.

Since he was Jewish, I certainly regarded that request. And yes, so I think while we're a Catholic and Marianist law school, the ministry is to people of all faiths, as I've always said and I think, helping law students to develop this attitude of service.

Interviewer: Were you the first woman chaplain at St. Mary's?

I'm the first woman chaplain at the law school, and again, we didn't have that long of a history. Father John G. Leies had followed before me, so it's very interesting because it was a woman law dean that hired me and we're cycling back again.

And now our law dean is Patricia Roberts. So I regard being a Marianist sister. I love the spirit of our Marianist family that we're priests, brothers, sisters and laypeople. So I think it's the complementary ness of our marriage.

Marianist charism are the gift in our church is that we work together. So a number of the Marianist priests will help me and the ministry provide sacramental support. So yes, I'm the first woman I worked with--I was trying to think in law ministry.

I mean, an undergraduate in ministry, there would have been several other Marianist sisters in the early days. But I think when I went to undergrad was the first time we also had a lay woman on the staff. I mean, since then we've diversified, certainly.

But yes, I was the first woman law chaplain. I guess that's my claim to fame there. Well, certainly I love that part of our Marianist charism and the scripture we often referred to is Mary and Jesus at the Wedding Feast of Cana.

When Mary recognized the need for this couple that they're running out of wine and she tells the servants to talk to her son about it, and that's the miracle of the jugs of wine that are even better wine than they had at the beginning.

I love the story of do whatever it tells you, and hopefully that means we do listen to what Jesus tells me. So I guess if Jesus has told me I should do a party, I must have listened. So yes, there's so much need for celebration and good opportunities to do socializing.

I guess the early days I wanted to start recognizing law students and their service contributions. So in those days, Mary Stich, I'm still friends with her and she was in career services and I can remember to this day standing outside when with her and the students had just had their graduation picture.

But they kind of there was nothing happening. And some of them, I think, went to the parking lot, maybe popped a champagne cork. And I said to her, I wish we could do something. We really need to have some kind of recognition when they're getting their picture taken for graduation and this is their last time on campus. And she and I right away just clicked on this idea of Fiesta farewell. So we began the Fiesta farewell, which was how to get special permission to have the margarita machines at noon.

And we would over time, I got different people to sponsor awards. So there's now a whole award of award plaques mounted nicely over in the law classroom building to recognize students for outstanding leadership. We have one for the most advanced 3Ls who maybe didn't start out strong but really through Beth Watkins honoring her--Judge Beth Watkins honoring her father. There's the most improved law student award. The class of '77 had some money left over and they asked me what they could use it for. I said, oh, how about an award in your name?

And it'll be a fund that never runs out, which is true. It hasn't. The law alumni sponsored a Law Alumni Law Ministry Service award. Dean Cantu after he retired to the Dean Cantu's Spirit of Service award. So there's probably about St. Thomas Moore award for Outstanding Catholic Student in Leadership, the Christian Citizenship Award for an outstanding student who demonstrates the Christian faith in action. So part of the party was if you had a party and you were doing the awards, so we would have. The Fiesta was during Fiesta time, so it lent itself to margaritas, let's put it that way.

And you know, again, the last two years, sadly, that was devoid of the party. I'd say the bar last year reinvented. You just had to keep reinventing things so, so many. I go to many law alumni events, so the law students that were once were at a party with me here.

Now again, I might be well known for this, but it's not that there's that many of them, but I guess they had a good time or it was novel to have a little glass of wine with a nun.

But I, continued so many of these relationships years later, and I go to a lot of legal events. So and I'm happy to do that, and I'm grateful that the legal community gets together fairly often and they like to do a lot of fundraising events.

So there's a lot of galas. Our distinguished law alumni dinner is one of my favorites. So yes, they might start out at a reception with me here on campus, but I also continue to socialize with me. Well, after graduation.

I guess, because we didn't have many parties. You know, I think the early days there weren't. I guess it was novel to have some parties because that wouldn't have been necessarily something that the law students, they might have gatherings off campus, but to have actually a school.

Oh, I think the best one was for my 70th birthday. That was fun. I just celebrated my 70th birthday and the Dean Roberts asked me what I wanted, and I'm not really a cake eater. So and again, listening to the spirit of do whatever she he tells you, just do whatever she tells you, but I asked for a toast. I said, I just want a toast. And since we have this pub that was actually--the pub was in my day when I went to law school, I didn't frequent as much because I was in the early days of being a nun, but I knew about it.

And then so when it comes back many years later, it's been fun to have that as a venue in campus, so I can have some events where we're at the pub with law students. One of the competitions I have is for students to bring in the most Halloween candy.

We would have a Halloween festival outside. We'd bring children from the shelters and our own children, and housekeeping and physical plants, their kids and grandkids. But to get the candy, I had a competition and the competition prize is you get a party.

So the section that brings in the most candy gets a party. So I guess that's another party I would be doing. And some of the remnants are still. Yes, we this year again, we couldn't have children on campus, sadly, because we're still afraid of that.

But we took, oh my gosh, I forget 800 pounds of candy to the shelters. We made baskets for families, our own law school families and baskets for housekeeping and physical plant. So we had to reinvent and reinvent how we did the Halloween again this year.

But the agencies were so grateful because they couldn't take their kids either, so they were grateful for the candy. So I'm still awaiting the section. Sometimes we've when we didn't have the pub, I'd have the party for the section that won at Lisa's the Mexican restaurant down the street, and I still laugh with two of the fellows who are my research assistants. I'm very fortunate students work with me. And so we were sitting at the entrance of Lisa's so I could hand out drink tickets. And it was kind of--they were my bodyguards.

They were my bouncers on either side. We still laugh about it. But again, it was just, you know, it's a short opportunity because law students are really busy doing their studies, but there's a real need to celebrate, celebrate accomplishments.

We have a lot of other parties. Well, the scholar and the Law Journal would have a nice banquet, board of advocates has their banquet. So I have just a few of my signature events that again just celebrates our service.

I had never really traveled overseas, and because I was from Philadelphia, a little suburban town and my family home. We were fortunate our grandparents had a little summer seaside cabin might still exist in our family, updated. My world was Philadelphia, New Jersey.

A big big trip was to go to Boston, where our grandparents were. So I never envisioned myself. I never envisioned myself living in Texas, and I'm here all these years. But I certainly didn't envision myself going overseas. I still remember the opportunity the then dean Bill Piatt. We were at an event and in discussing about Have you ever gone to Innsbruck, I said, oh no, I just haven't. No, I haven't had the opportunity. It wasn't--I didn't even know what it was. I think because it was still the early days.

And he said, well, oh, you should, you know, get the opportunity. So he arranged it. I'm not sure that people quite understood why I was going, but luckily again, I was able to see opportunities there and over time.

But I was scared. I got to tell you I was. It was a hard summer. My mother had been in the hospital. So by the time I even got on that plane, I was I was not sure if I should have gone or not.

But my brother assured me. People assured me it'd be OK. So I went and I went to the counter and I told-- I still laugh at this being a United flyer all the time. But I went to the counter and I just told him how nervous I was about flying internationally.

And I don't know why, I told the gate agent, you know, nowadays people aren't this personable, but they said, OK, well, you know what we'll do is we'll put you in the very back of the plane. And if there's a need to balance out the plane, I had no clue what that meant.

The balance on the plane, somehow my body weight was being able to be shifted to first class. So to this day, I had no reason for doing that, except I must have looked desperate. And sure enough, I walked on that plane. God blessed, just smiled on me and said, Here's a first class ticket. So I was up in first class and had a lovely meal, went to sleep and I woke up in Innsbruck. So I was, or at least in Frankfurt, I was.

I was grateful to this day for the early opportunity to fly being easy. And then I just had such a good time visiting with the faculty and staff. So subsequently I just kept getting asked back again, I guess, two stories that are pertinent to the Innsbruck program.

I would take the faculty out for dinner and sponsored under Law Ministry because I really didn't get to spend as Father John G spent many times with them in the lunch room upstairs. That's not been something I'm able to do usually, and I so I took them out to dinner and they really enjoyed the camaraderie of each other. They knew each other over the years. And Professor Flint turned to me and he said, you know, this is so nice of you to do this. He said, I used to do this. I used to barbecue and have people over.

And so I said to him, well, why don't we do it again? And you know, we could have students come. We could have faculty come. We could market the Innsbruck programs. So more people even know about it. And he thought that was a great idea.

So as we got back, we put together and now for many years, he's been barbecuing and he brews his own beer. So this is a very popular event for students to attend. Maybe this is another party that they get to know me at.

And faculty can talk about the Innsbruck program, and then we get students who have come to talk about the program. Professor Flint also donates a scholarship as well, so the funds he raises from all of it is his own donation of cooking and buying the supplies and other students who receive his scholarship get to help with the barbecue. And so that was something born out of the Innsbruck program. And also, I just followed up every year I follow up with in remembrance. Carol Thompson, her daughter, Sarah Thompson, had gone to Innsbruck one of the years I was there and she had been at a party not sponsored by the by the law school, but just a party with some group of friends. And in in a sad tragedy as she was kind of darting across the street quickly somebody, a convicted drunk driver or drugs ran into her and she was killed.

It was a very sad time. I was around also just I was just very sad for the students who knew her. And but the family was so faithful to this day. I communicate regularly, at least often enough to keep supporting and recognizing Carol Thompson and her Thompson family and all who donated because they wanted to honor Sarah's wonderful memory going to Innsbruck. And

they've done that with creating a scholarship, and she created an ongoing one in her will for that scholarship continue. So any of the students that get a scholarship in her name and Sarah's name, I also have them send their scholarship application that we develop the criteria for to Mrs. Thompson so she can see how appreciative the students are for this support. And I was just glad to see what--it's such a hard time, and she has her faith really support of the faith community in her town.

Tyler, Texas really supported her. She went into grief counseling recently, and I've even referred students to her to talk about maybe when they've had a tragic hit and run accident. So again, that was an opportunity. Another law firm, I had gotten to know one of the students that was helping me with an event met them, and she was talking about Innsbruck. And they subsequently also asked me could they donate to an Innsbruck scholarship so that one continues and several faculty have also donated, so we have a number of, oh yeah, that was fun. Marshall Bowen.

I was sitting with Marshall Bowen on the top of what they call the lantern hike. Now you're supposed to hike up the mountain and then you go to this kind of cabin and there's German music and dancing, and I can't hike up the mountain.

So I was in the taxi that went up the mountain, but I was sitting with him and his wife and his mother and her mother's sister was all there. And Marshall was saying to me, oh, how would I go about if I wanted to donate to the Innsbruck program?

How would I go about that? And I said, oh, well, here's what I do and how we do it. And I had no idea that he was part of the Shield-Ayres Foundation family. And while he couldn't guarantee anything, he told us how to apply, and we were again fortunate that we had a three year commitment to help students attend the Innsbruck program. So I value all these connections because I went to Innsbruck just because somebody said do you want to go. And then as a result, I even bring-- I've learned I found peanut butter and jelly over in Innsbruck to give the students a little taste of home.

And I had to also live with one of the retired, now retired faculty. He met his wife over in Innsbruck and she was from America, but had taught at University of Innsbruck. And I live with them in the summer, two weeks of the summer.

So I must say that first trip really turned into so many again, so many good relationships and memories and getting to know students in a much different setting, even in the early days. I can't believe I did this, but we lived in a dorm together, so I'm grateful that I live in a house now.

But we lived in this dorm and I made somehow I got pots, I got spaghetti and meatballs and we had a spaghetti dinner. I cooked for 30 people. I couldn't do that now, but well, I probably could. Party might be appropriate question.

But now the students live in more of the Airbnbs, so it's not the dorm life as it once was. But you know, I could just I do take out students, to the German beer garden and with the faculty, and we have a very nice event celebrating just being in Innsbruck together.

So again, people have fun with these opportunities. So I guess the gift I've been given, I was able to give back to others.