

Interviewee	Interviewer	Monastery	Date of interview	Keywords
Piet Bergman (1925-present)	Fenna Ijtsma (Univ. Leiden)	White Fathers	June 3, 2020	Priest; Deaf school; Tanzania; Tabora

Audio 1

Youth

Piet Bergman grew up in a Roman Catholic environment. After finishing high school, he studied philosophy taught by Missionary from Arica. Then he became part of the White Fathers in Sörenberg [?] and studied theology, partly in Scotland. After that he became a Priest. Via Tunis (where he was sent to study Islamic Studies) he arrived in the archdiocese Tabora (Tanzania) in 1955 to create a school for the deaf.

Being involved in the creation of a school for the deaf in Tabora

After 14 years, the director of St. Michielsgestel in Holland, Monsieur Van den Overbeek [?] who started a school in Indonesia and India, wanted to start one in Africa too. Because of the connections he ended up in Tabora. [Unintelligible] Three Sisters of the Congregation were sent to Dublin to prepare for the education of the deaf. Because the study in Dublin was too hard, they asked the White Fathers for help. In that way, I got involved.

Audio 2:

The Sisters went to Dublin before the liberation of Tanzania. The sisters who had studied in deaf education and from there they returned to the Netherlands. Since the Netherlands [?] paid everything. The director asked to have someone to guide the Sisters. Bergman was sent to St. Michielsgestel for preparation (1 year) and then he went back to Tabora. The school was officially opened in 1962.

Q: How did the school for the deaf start?

A: It was a [primary school?] Boarding school. Mainstream primary school in Tanzania was seven years in length. The deaf children certainly needed more time to learn the same skills. So, I made the duration of the school ten years. But I had to convince the government, of course. Therefore, I made classes 1A and 1B, then 2, 3A and 3B, 4, 5A and 5B, 6 and 7. If you add that up then you get to 10.

Q: So, you created 10 groups?

A: Yes, those children needed more time. They started from scratch and firstly had to learn how to speak.

Q: At which age did the children come to your school?

A: 5 or 6 years old, which is actually too late for deaf children. But gathering younger children was not possible in that phase.

Q: Why too late for deaf children?

A: When deaf, you don't hear the language. If you are deaf before you are 3 years old, you will remain deaf. But if you've been able to talk a little bit for this time, but you've gotten sick and lost the ability to hear, it can come back.

Q: So, children who could hear a little before they became 3 years old, had an advantage (head start)?

A: Not really but at least they had something. Look, if you become deaf at our age, well, you have the language and you know what it's about. If you are deaf before age three, you don't know what you're talking about.

Q: *Indeed. So, the children started in first grade when they were 5-6 years old. What kind of classes were taught?*

A: We started with speech therapy. But in first grade, it was much more playing than actual doing speech training [...]

Audio 3:

A: [...] You can try to get them to speak to understand what you are saying. So, when you say "stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down". Then you have to show the movement yourself. And then they should also try to say that and just stand up and sit down, et cetera.

Q: *How did you train them to speak? I assume that they cannot hear themselves*

A: We had hearing aids and we tried to use them. Per group, we had 10 children so they had to look at your lips and listen to sound simultaneously. For 3 years, they had speech therapy for 15 minutes per day.

Q: *1 on 1?*

A: Yes

Q: *Who gave speech therapy?*

A: A teacher. One of our Sisters studied in Dublin and in the Netherlands. During class, they were all offered the same language. The children sat in an arc so they all were able to see the teacher. Besides that, they had hearing aids to hear the teacher too. As much as possible of course.

Q: *Did you divide deaf and hard of hearing children in separate groups?*

A: We tried, but it was hard. During the time we noticed who was deaf and who was hard of hearing. It was not possible to separate them immediately

Q: *What did the children learn when they sat in an arc?*

A: Things they needed every day. Those children cannot express themselves, of course. Only in gestures or ... You understood what they wanted to say, but they couldn't speak the language. You taught them the words and then you immediately wrote them down. So that they could learn to read, write and speak. That went together automatically, of course. And then there were smart guys and those who were less gifted. This may also be due to the fact that some heard more than others. And we had a music room, they went there in the afternoon. Then music was made and then they started dancing or something. Then you also found out who was deaf and who was not deaf.

Q: *There was a music room? But I think "deaf children cannot hear music and HoH children only hear bits and pieces". Why was it important to have a music room?*

A: Because then they could learn rhythm. Because they felt free [?], They could dance. Furthermore, to teach them the difference between high and low tones. Just a speech lesson, in a pleasant way. You could turn the sound system up louder. Some just jumped on, so they didn't hear anything. Others stopped, so you knew "who's figured it out."

Q: *They stayed in the school?*

A: Yes, because the children came from far. Some from Moshi, others from Mwanza. They had heard about the school... Parents came to watch and then you asked doctors whether the child was deaf and if he had co-morbid disorders, yes or no, and then you accepted them. Those children had nothing else. It wasn't necessarily children from Tabora, they came from Dar Es-

Salaam, or Moshi. From the bigger cities. Those parents were more focused on education. So, we asked the parents "let a doctor of yours fill in how old the child is and when it has become or has become deaf or whether it has been born deaf. And the address. " And then they were invited and then we accepted them. But you could only take ten children, of course.

Q: *Ten children a year. And were they selected in a different procedure?*

A: No, this is it

Q: *Ok, and what about the families of these children?*

A: We didn't know. It differed per tribe: Those who came from Moshi or from Beer [?], these are tribes who liked to study and wanted their children to progress. While in others, well they believed "a deaf child, well, what do you do with it, huh?".

Q: *So, it differed much per tribe?*

A: Yes. And we became known [?]. And we received around sixty applications per year. And we could only have ten, so it became very difficult. After ten years, we thought "we can't go on like this, let's make it a double stream." So, then we asked the government if they agreed and well, instead of ten, we could now select twenty.

Q: *Okay. So, after 10 years it became possible to accept 20 children a year*

A: Yes. Look, if you select 20 per year, you can also shuffle a little bit with distinction. For example, you say "the children who are very deaf and do not get along very well, you put them in a separate class". And others that are slightly better and benefit more, put them back together. This way you can make a distinction between hard of hearing and totally deaf people. It is all focused on practice, you will work from practice.

Q: *You said, they school is focused on practice. How should I interpret that?*

A: That the selection is made in advance. In the Netherlands you can send someone to a specialist and say "to what extent is this child deaf" [?], But with us that does not exist. You have to do all that yourself. You also have to think back sixty years, huh.

Q: *So, those kids signed up for the school. But especially the first year, when the school just started, how did it start?*

A: [Piet may not fully understand this question]. They were brought by the parents. The parents also came to get them. They went on vacation twice a year and then came back. And those kids were so happy. When a child of 6 years old comes in a very strange environment. Those parents are leaving, ... [unintelligible]. Look, but once they go back home, they realize they're in a school. Just like their brothers and sisters who are also at a school at home, they are also at a school. And then they are happy. Because they understand each other like that, the deaf. How far apart they are [does he mean: live?]. And then they know that it is not forever, that it is normal to go to school. And that they can learn as well as their own brothers and sisters.

Q: *And you say that the deaf students among themselves understood each other directly.*

A: Yes

Q: *How did you notice?*

A: Everything. They made a small gesture and they know what they mean. I don't know how they do that. You notice, for example, they say ... They come from Salaam and from Mwanza, well they are about a thousand kilometers apart. And when they come back from that, you see them sitting in groups somewhere and then they are talking or doing things together. And then they have some sweets with them. And then they are very busy. They understand each other. "Joost knows how they do it". I really would not know.

Q: *Because, how did the children communicate outside class?*

A: Outside class they indeed used signs to communicate. Look, I have nothing against that. The main thing is of course that the children communicate. But we didn't teach them sign language. We try to get them to speak. And then they can explain themselves. And maybe their KiSwahili

is not one hundred percent, but they can make do. When they travel, they can go to a bus stop, they can go to the train and they can say where they want to go. And you notice that they can make do. Some are very good and they go very far, of course. And after 10 years, of course the question: "what now?" "Where are those children going?" And then we started a vocational training center, 12 km outside the city, and they came there for 3 years to learn how to sew, learn woodworking and agriculture. Then those children have been in school for about 13 years and they still feel at home with us. They spent most of their lives with us. And they still came. There were many who came back. To greet when they came by, they arrived, they just walked in and in the morning, you found them in bed somewhere. And then you said, "what's going on?" "Oh, we'll stop by. We only stay here for a few days and then we go again." They felt at home.

Q: Did the students keep in touch with each other, even after school?

A: Very much. They all have ... Everywhere they form groups. They know exactly what is going on. One is married in Finland; another went to America with the people who came to recruit and stuff. Sometimes that went wrong, of course, but yes, you cannot be everywhere. There is also one who has come back, who has been in America, came back and founded the Alumni Association of the Tabora School. So, he even set up a whole program and then he wants to help the kids whose parents can't afford it or something. To make sure they go to school. Or when children drop out of school and they don't know what to do, they can get work somewhere. And in that way, they have formed a whole club. And that gentleman also wrote a letter, which I happened to say, "You left without saying goodbye, we want you to come back to say goodbye and to help. And to try to get people to help me with that association." So, helping each other after school, after the vocational training ... He set up the entire organization on his own. And another one was a tailor and after that he ended up at the Ministry of Education. Look, those kids who actually went deaf at a little later age can get a long way.

Q: How should I interpret that? Is that a majority that gets so far, or is it a minority?

A: Well, I think that's a minority. What I say. Usually, there were two who were very good, then you had a large group of 6 who were decent but were not extra good, and then you had two or three who really couldn't keep up. But if you taught those last two a trade, they came up all the way and they were the best at organizing things.

Q: School prepares children for future life. What future did the school prepare the children for?

A: We just taught them same education as normal children. So, in the end, they took the same exam as the mainstream kids. Two or three could go to a high school. Because we didn't offer high school ourselves.

Q: Because the vocational training school... did all the children go there or only part of the children?

A: It was an exception if you did not go there. Most went there. When the year ended, they went there. It was for three years. There was a "tree-test" at the time. The second year she learned tree-test 3 and if they succeeded, practice and theory, they did tree-test 2. Tree-test 3 was usually passed. The major difficulty, of course, was language. They get questions in Kiswahili that they don't understand, they can't explain it. Eventually we were allowed to have the exam done at the school itself, so that we could explain to the children exactly what the questions were, and then they would write it down. And then you stay outside and then you send it on. So, they also got tree-test 2, and a few, but then you had to know good English, they could do tree-test 1. That was quite an exception. You have such gifted individuals who can do anything.

Q: You are talking about language for a while. What language is offered to the children?

A: KiSwahili. That became the national language. After independence, before that all those tribes had their own language. And those children all had their own language. But those children from the countryside, yes, they just sat outside, they learned nothing. And then KiSwahili was introduced and at school we had KiSwahili, but at home they spoke Kiwanesi or Kichaka [?], You go on. So, they always said to those parents, when the child is at home, for God's sake talk KiSwahili, because a child cannot learn two or three languages. And that went pretty well. Once we invited all the parents, and we had a whole week with the heads of government who let parents say what they wanted and so on. And that was a great success. Those government leaders naturally all wanted to re-establish their own party and they had nothing [...] countryside, the [Chinese?] Way. I say "there is no talk about that," we talked about what their parents think of their child and what they learned at school. And that went very well.

Q: What kind of relationship did these children have with their parents? Since they may not have been able to properly understand their parents for a long time.

A: Some good, others less well. And often when children came back, you would tell a child if something was wrong. Then you found out that parents were divorced and that fathers had found another mother. You experienced everything. You can tell by the behavior of the child. Those children have the same feeling as all other children of course. When you come home and your father has another lady and your mother is no longer there, they didn't like that either.

Q: Indeed. So, you opted for the national language, but we also studied some schools in Kenya and they mainly taught in English.

A: Yes, they wanted to abolish English here. So, I said "no, you have to keep that," because later, if you abolish it, those elementary school exams are always in English. If you omit English, those kids can never take a mainstream exam. Try as much as possible... If they get English in [...] then do so. In any case, they can register and take an exam. And the one who is gifted will make it.

Q: But who wanted to abolish English from school?

A: The teachers

Q: So, English WAS taught in school?

A: Not in the beginning. Then it was all KiSwahili. But then they introduced English. It is practically impossible to teach children two languages in a primary school. I said "well, do it". If they learn "keep left, keep right" like those ordinary things, at least they will continue to participate. And then they can also take an exam.

Q: The base of the English language was learnt?

A: The teachers, you had one per class. And then you had those special speech lessons, there were also two or three. So, there were always 13 teachers. While at an ordinary school, there were sixty students in a school. With so many benches, so many papers and exercise books.

Q: So, there were 13 teachers for a relatively small number of students?

A: Yes, it is not that easy to get that off the government. We also trained those teachers ourselves. We started with that. And then we sent them to the Netherlands, a few every year. But that didn't make a difference either. When they came back, nothing has changed [?]. Then we started sending 1 or 2 to England, well that's okay, but then they came back and then it all falls back into the same old way. And then they came from NL for 3 years, every month or so, or two months. And that went well as long as they are there, but as soon as they are gone, they continue in the old way. Changing mentality is difficult, it takes a lot of time.

Q: *Those teachers were from Tanzania?*

A: Mainly Tanzanian teachers indeed

Q: *And they were part of the congregation?*

A: No. Look, in the beginning, you have 3 sisters. You don't have enough. So, you need to have more teachers. Then there was a deaf child whose mother and father were teachers. I said "come here, you should come and teach". Well, then you get some who are interested in that. But most were interested in going abroad and trying to come. We had to deal with what we got. And the bigger it gets, the more difficult. [...]

A: What I did myself, I bought books from different departments: audiology, speech, psychology ... And those [unintelligible] and then I asked a teacher to read a chapter carefully and translate into KiSwahili and then give to the other teachers. Look, that's how you stay current. Because in the long run, there is development in the education of the deaf, just like in all other subjects, but yes, you are alone. And nothing comes in. Then the whole thing goes down, of course. And I have also suggested that older, retired Brothers and Sisters who were in education come over. To take a holiday while showing us how to teach. But then again, you will be left with all the regulations of the government, nowadays they all have to be their own people.

Q: *The school still runs?*

A: Yes, it's still active

Q: *Did the form of education change over the years?*

A: Yes, it is all changed. See, if you let people help from outside or something [?], There are often people who only want to use sign language. And they say, "That is the language of the deaf." Well. Then you cannot win, huh. Then you get another contrast of gestures and speech. [Unintelligible] ... school started in Moshi and that was all sign, sign, sign. I say "well, that's good. If parents choose sign language, they can go to Moshi and if they choose speech, they will come to us. " Then you have that separation at least between two schools. But that only half succeeds. [Unintelligible] that of other people, doesn't always get ready, huh.

Q: *Could you please repeat the final part?*

A: You can make a lot of plans and a lot of things went well. But a lot of things have also gone wrong.

Q: *Like what?*

A: Referring to speech lessons, that doesn't work anymore. See, once you start signing, yes, they don't bother to speak anymore. You can say that it can go simultaneously, but that is not possible. You have to choose. No, if you choose you will of course get some reluctantly and they will have a different opinion and then you will have trouble.

Q: *Does the school, recently, still offer speech training?*

A: Probably not. I guess they totally switched to sign language

Q: *You did not experience this?*

A: No, I was against it, but I came back [to the Netherlands] two years ago and I got sick. And I couldn't go back [to Tabora] because I couldn't see anymore and I hardly hear anything anymore. I had cataract surgery, and then my permission to go back [to Tabora] had expired. At first you only had to apply for this once every three years, but now you had to do that every year [Piet elaborates]. In other words, they would rather you to leave than to stay.

Q: *In Moshi, another school involved with sign language was created...*

A: Yes, I think there are 5 schools now. The government has started to set up small schools everywhere. But yes, then all those disabled people are together. That's not... You can't raise deaf and blind at the same time, can you?

Q: *No. Okay. Did parents had a preference to send their [deaf] children to a sign language school or a spoken language school?*

A: Our school was free. We never asked tuition fees.

Q: *But other schools might use signs, like sign language?*

A: Not in the beginning phase. At starting point, the main focus was speech because they were used to it and didn't know better. [omitted from transcript: Explanation about interference of government]

Q: *So, the influence of the government was huge*

A: Very big, very big. And now, in theory, there are several parties. In practice however, there is only one. At some point, they nationalized all schools.

A: During that last government they suddenly started all over again ... Because they gave everything back then, except the nursery schools, they did not return them. But they returned all the secondary schools that they had taken. It is a completely different way of working. You have to be horribly careful about what you say.

Q: *Let's return to the former students of the school. You already told me you were in contact with them after they left school. How did they look back on that question of sign language and learning to speak?*

A: The former students? They speak

Q: *But they have also heard of course that in the end more attention was paid to sign language ...*

A: Among each other they signed. But when they come with government officials, they spoke.

Q: *Yes, but have you ever heard them say, for example, "well, I would have preferred sign language"? Or were they very happy that they had learned to speak?*

A: I think... You sometimes feel more comfortable with each other when signing. Well, you may sign, it doesn't bother me. Because the ones who really want to learn it, they have learned it after they learnt to speak, when they left school. Or when they are on vocational training, they make signs among peers and I couldn't care less. I am not against that. But I want to give them a chance to get in touch with other people.

Q: *And when they talk to each other, do they speak in local sign language? Or is it more that they use gestures but don't have an official sign language?*

A: No, they are more ordinary gestures. A real sign language, I don't think they knew it, that it exists for them, in KiSwahili. They say so. There are some who only do that. Well, they are just indoctrinated that it is a language for the deaf, that sign language. Look, speak, at a distance, then they can't read lips, so they're gone. Then when they make gestures, I can make a good income. But yes, even with gestures, if you are far away, it will not work either. And look, if you make gestures to each other and then speak to the government official, then you are immediately ahead of them. But if someone only knows gestures, yes, then a government official doesn't understand what it's about. It was true for me: If they can speak, those who have become deaf a little later and who have a good language will go a long way. But if you immediately teach them gestures, you will have major problems at the school for the deaf and also the vocational training school.

A: At some point we didn't get anyone anymore, because everyone who was allowed to go to another school, etc., et cetera. Then I also hired deaf children who had attended another

school. I thought "well then, let's take it from other schools that don't have that opportunity." Well, they came and they only knew gestures. But, ours, who could speak and they were ahead of each other. They understood each other. But then I also found out that there were two or three who had spoken earlier. But they were sent to a school where there were gestures.

A: That child, a girl of six or seven, who had fallen and had a cerebral hemorrhage or something. And that speech was, they thought it was gone. Those parents stopped speaking and the girl became increasingly rebellious and impossible. Well, when she was with us, I found out she had spoken before. And so sweetly I started talking to her again and stuff. And it came back all the way back. And when she went on holiday [laughs], then I got a letter from the parents "if I could just let you know what medicine I had taken, they could do that for the other kids too." The behavior of the child had completely changed, at first there was no land to sail with and now she does like the other children: she helps, she weaves, she cooks, she does everything. I say "that's not a matter of pills or anything, that's just a matter of the child being tested incorrectly [?]. The child was not completely lost mentally. But you said nothing and put her in a deaf school with gestures, nobody says anything, and she should do that too. So, she just lost that language, got rebellious and couldn't understand how it worked. And she has been sitting here for a while and suddenly she finds out she can do it. And so, I have two or three that were actually misplaced, but what do you do about it.

Q: *You think it is not a good development that new schools with sign language are now being built there?*

A: No, I think... But I admit, there are children who cannot do it. You just have to try to see what the child can do. But you have to say "it can't speak" and not say "sign language is the language of the deaf" I don't believe that.

Q: *But has there ever been a discussion on this subject between teachers at the school?*

A: It starts yes. Look, but I don't believe in that [laughs]. That's just laziness.

Q: *What exactly is laziness?*

A: Teaching children to speak is more difficult than teaching children to sign.

Q: *Okay, yes. So, you think teachers think that's too much effort, too?*

A: Yes, and that's all decided at a high level. That even goes to UNESCO, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And all the time the interpreters you see on TV, well that's good, I have nothing against that. Because when you watch TV, many students who have learned to read lips, they cannot. Because often those people keep talking without coming on the screen. Just wait and see. Someone says something during such a meeting, but then does not come into the picture. Well, that deaf person is gone, of course. Or they don't speak clearly, yes, then it is gone too. So that they start signing, I understand that very well.

- So, all those things, they make it all so simple and easy. We just don't think about that. And then it is all about the disabled, the disabled ... A blind school is next to us. In the beginning we did a lot together. Then the blind came to us and the deaf went to them. When we first delivered the group, we officially held the farewell ceremony for a long time: The children who... the blind who sang and the deaf who danced to it. And everyone was watching in tears [laughs]. But yes, you have to look: What can such a child, how far can I take it, can it live in society there? It is not a question of "I'll just do that". But can a child have a life?

- You have those diehards who want to have their own thing with everything. Yes, then go on. Then you will be gone. And you get into a fight in a school. Or quarrel ... Disagreement. One does and the other does not. If you follow the same program for ten years, then it goes well. If in one decade you do it one year like this and the other teacher does it differently and the third does it differently; you won't get anywhere. Whether you agree or disagree, for God's sake, keep following the same method you chose. then it goes well. But if you change method every time, yes, pack up. If you are taught by a professor and the next goes against it exactly and the next again, yes, what will remain?

Q: And then about the vocational training, that was three years. And that was for sewing, wood and agriculture ...

A: Yes, we wanted to do more, but you need to have the people and the materials for it.

Q: And why were those three categories chosen?

A: Because most ... The girls like to sew, boys do that now too. Boys prefer to make cupboards, tables and chairs. Then you look again at the practical side: What can they do later when they leave? Because they have no materials, no business, no sewing machine and you name it. And you can't give a sewing machine as a gift to all those children who are leaving, because they will sell it.

Q: But they still got lessons in that

A: Yes, and what I did... Look, if they paid a certain amount for the sewing machine, I made a little extra. If the boys themselves bought a saw or a chisel or a hammer... and a plane and wood, that was too expensive, they cannot. Look, but if they buy something themselves, I will help to buy the more expensive things. And then they are in, then they can work. But if I give them all right away, they'll sell it the next day. [Unintelligible]. I would do the same if I get everything for free. But if I had to pay for a computer myself, I am more careful than if I just get it.

Q: Yes, that is certainly true. Did the students manage to build a future in those sectors?

A: Well, like I said, that alumni association wants to take care of that.

Audio 4:

Q: In what way they have been abused?

A: Well, and then they go again. And some come for a month and they stay put, they come to rest. And they just join in with the children as if they have always been there, while they may have gone [unintelligible]. And after a month they say "now I'm going back again". Then they have calmed down again. It is a different area from real schools. If you're too strict, you won't help them with that. On the other hand, you shouldn't get too lax. But then, after ten years or so, they hardly remember those teachers. Look, and it gets trickier. Then they can no longer easily take in.

A: Look, the deaf run away quickly if something goes wrong. Also, if they have a job, they run away.

Q: Does that apply specifically to the deaf?

A: Yes, I had children working with the Sisters and suddenly I saw them in our field. I say "what are you doing here?". "Well, I left." "Why?" "I didn't feel like it anymore." Well, and she's gone. And I had placed a boy on a woodworking course, et cetera and suddenly he was gone. And after six months he came back again, but of course they didn't accept him anymore. I say "you run away every time if not ...". They cannot speak, they cannot explain themselves or they do

not feel understood. And then they go. And then they think they can come back again. Look, if you don't have a language ... We can talk easily, we can [inaudible], and then you get rid of all the shit. Then you come back to. But they don't hear the other, they don't understand and fail. Until it gets too much and then they go, then the point is gone. They don't think about that anymore. Then they think they can come back when they are calm. I think this is all due to a lack of language. You can express yourself; you can get angry once and you can say and you can understand what the other person is saying and you can talk back and you can fall out. But they don't have that, they are locked in.

Q: *The language was offered in school, of course.*

A: Yes, of course

Q: *But that was not sufficient?*

A: It's not enough, not enough. See, if you have somebody who became deaf, say he was seven years old and has a language, he can have that frustration; what I told about that girl who just couldn't live her life anymore. But once she has that language again, she will understand much easier what those others say and those children will also explain more easily than someone who has learned it without ever actually speaking.

Q: *Could you describe the school? What did the school look like?*

A: It's ... it was built in stages. It is a building with floors; ground floor and first floor. And that's ten classes. We started with four main classrooms and some small classrooms. There is a dining hall, large kitchen. Later, we added six more classrooms, so that's ten. And a dormitory. Later we made [...]. So, we added another dormitory. Another six classrooms. A Sister house there. And a department to do all those [two?]. Plus, a building where the teachers can meet. And we wanted to start with distance learning. So, another department was put up for that. And a building to receive parents or children or people who could help in their own place. To learn to calculate and write little bit et cetera. So, all together there are about twenty buildings. And then outside, that vocational training, we put two houses there for teachers, a house for the girls and on the other side of the road again two houses for teachers and in the middle a house for the boys. Then we have an administration building, a shed, a building for cows, a carpentry school with three classrooms, sewing with two classrooms. It is all there.

Q: *Was religion important?*

A: The most important thing for me was whether a child was deaf or not. So, there were children of all religions. Muslims, Moravian, Catholics, they all lived together and went to their own church/mosque weekly.

Q: *So, children in your school were all from a different religion*

A: Yes, they were all from different religions. I never actually looked at that. Because that boy who is the head of vocational training, he is Muslim. And he is married to a Muslim woman. That's all going on ... These people can have two or three different religions in the same family and they can easily live together.

- At some point a few Arabs came [laughs], they saw the school and came in. I was there with a few children and he asked "what is our religion". There was a little boy standing there and I say to him 'tell that mister how we pray' then he pointed to me and made a sign of the cross, then he pointed to a protestant boy and bowed his head very neatly and then he pointed to

himself and I said 'what are you doing', and then he put two hands behind his ears and knelt down. Those Arabs were amazed [laughs]. I say "you see, there is actually nothing wrong". "No, no." "Bye, bye!"

Q: *The Arabs were afraid the students would learn Catholicism or something?*

A: Yes, look, you teach them religion lesson. Of course, you only teach the specific Catholicism to Catholics. If someone is specifically Protestant, which is too different from the Catholic, you only teach them, how it works, then you learn Protestant. Once an African priest came and said "my child must be guided, can you give him those rights?". I said "if you give me that book, what that child has to learn, then I will teach it, then you can form your child." Look, you shouldn't get too flexible, but on the other hand, you should also be reasonable ... They should know what they are doing themselves. I keep making crosses if you agree yes or no. But I don't oblige the kids. And for some children, I ask the parents "where do you want your child to go in the morning?".

Q: *And do you think deaf children were able to understand religion?*

A: Yes... [laughs in a sigh]. They understand that. You must not do evil things, you must be good to others. Go and explain God, we don't understand that ourselves [laughs]. You teach them the Ten Commandments that they should not steal and that they should pray in their own way. And they do that.

Q: *In an interview, I read that someone thought that deaf children might be less able to understand religion. But you don't think so. That it doesn't matter.*

A: Yes, they really understand that. Everyone understands that you shouldn't hurt. Then you get to the more specific, the confession and all that. Well, you teach that to Catholics. The others have their way of doing, sacraments, that is a completely different area.

- When the school was fifty years old, former students came over and stayed for three days
 - They came over from everywhere, even from Germany
 - Some with partner and child
 - Some spoke, some used sign language
 - Some stayed to help to repair sewing machines or teach sewing patterns