

# SENIOR LIFESTYLES

## Retired teacher's classroom now TV audience

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

In a studio of WENY-TV Newschannel 36, an ABC affiliate in Horseheads, Bob Lagonegro, 75, sat across from Dominican Sister David Marie Beikirch, 59, as she described what was happening on the TV screen in front of them.

The screen displayed the June 8 ceremony during which Dominican Sister Mary Margaret Benedicta was making her profession of temporary vows at the Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen in Elmira.

"This is where we change her veil," Sister Beikirch said as she and Lagonegro watched Sister Benedicta on the screen. "She gets a black veil like us instead of the white veil she was wearing."

Lagonegro and Sister Beikirch were not just making idle chatter between themselves. Their conversation was being taped for a July 13 broadcast of "Senior Notebook," a program that airs every Saturday at 10:30 a.m. on Newschannel 36. Information on the show can be found on the Web by going to [www.weny.com](http://www.weny.com) and clicking on "Senior Notebook."

A magazine-style TV show, "Senior Notebook" usually consists of four segments running from four to seven minutes each.

Program topics cover such areas as seniors' health as well as their money and travel concerns; community events; religion; entertainment; and interviews with interesting seniors.

After the taping, Sister Beikirch said that the monastery maintains a church that is open to the public, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on a weekly basis. The monastery's community is "totally consecrated to God," she said, and does not engage in teaching and social work. As prayerful monastics, "we hope that this witness given over to God gives an actual sign that God is good."

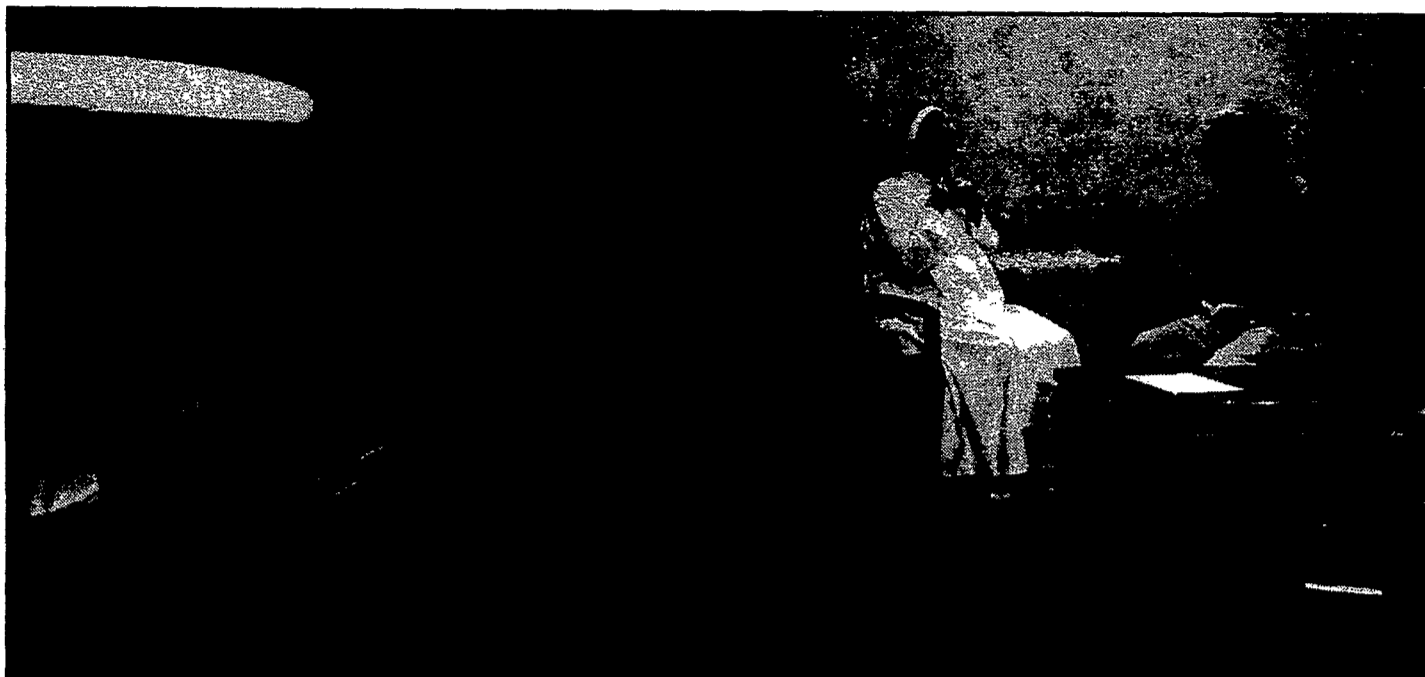
The monastery is just one of numerous topics that have over the years caught the interest of Lagonegro, a member of the production team. An occasional host of "Senior Notebook," he is also a parishioner of the St. Anthony/St. Patrick's Cluster in Elmira, and has served on St. Patrick's parish council. He's a passionate advocate of programming aimed at seniors.

"I think we cover topics that you don't see in depth (elsewhere)," he said, listing as an example a program that was devoted to cheap recipes for seniors on fixed incomes.

He added that he's also worked to produce such Catholic-oriented fare as a recent program on Mount Saviour Monastery in nearby Pine City.

A retired junior-high teacher, Lagonegro said his background comes in handy when he's interviewing a guest.

"Ninety percent of what you do in front of a class is ad lib ... and I think what works best in TV is off the top of your head," he said.



Karin von Voigtlander/Staff photographer

Dominican Sister David Marie Beikirch and host Bob Lagonegro attach their microphones before taping an episode of "Senior Notebook" at WENY-TV Newschannel 36 in Horseheads June 21.



Karin von Voigtlander/Staff photographer

Scott Iddings, a Newschannel 36 producer, counts down the final seconds before the taping begins.

He added that he has no illusions about being a polished TV broadcaster.

"I do a lot of stuttering and stammering," he said, adding with a chuckle: "Network TV would probably kick me out the door."

Lagonegro hosted the show on the Dominican Monastery, but the show's usual host is Earl Barfoot, an 85-year-old retired United Methodist minister. Barfoot was one of a half-dozen area seniors who came together in 1994 to create a radio program of entertainment and information targeting seniors on WENY's radio station, which has since been sold.

Barfoot said the radio program's purpose was also to be an advocate for seniors, a mission the TV program has continued.

The "Senior Notebook" production team currently has volunteer members

who are drawn from area senior clubs, councils and agencies.

"Senior Notebook" went from radio to TV in December 2000 after WENY sold its radio station. The show is part of the station's overall effort to become the area's premiere news channel, according to Scott

Iddings, a WENY producer who works with the "Senior Notebook" team.

"Seniors are an important constituency to us as a station," Iddings said, adding that he enjoys working with seniors such as Barfoot and Lagonegro.

"They're very enjoyable, professional and always unpredictable," he said.

Both Barfoot and Lagonegro had nothing but compliments for the station, which provides the show as a public service to its viewers.

"We have a lot of freedom," Lagonegro said, adding that the show's committee also encourages its producers to chase as wide a range of stories as possible. "The station's been good to us."

Lagonegro joined the production team more than six years ago after Barfoot interviewed him when he was a member of The Barbershoppers, a local singing group. Since then, Lagonegro said he's been on about 75 radio broadcasts of "Senior Notebook," as well as about 30 TV broadcasts, primarily as a roving correspondent.

Lagonegro said "Senior Notebook" has allowed him to feed his curious appetite and enrich his retirement.

"I suppose the biggest thing would be who would've believed it? I'm on television. I'd say that's the biggest kick."

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