Interview with Anna Solomon

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"PNG Then and Now" Conference

Sydney, Australia

July, 2002

EE. How did you get involved in journalism?

AS. OK good. My interest in writing goes back to when I was a kid. I'm in that category of a few Papua New Guineans who, at that time, (OK, I'm 47 years old now), were born in a completely different setting from the village. I was born in the city, a town. My father was a policeman. We lived up at Port Moresby at the Police Barracks and I grew up with Tok Pisin as my first language. I went to school in Moresby. So I knew Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu. I did not know my parents' language. In our household, whenever they wanted to carry on a conversation they did not want the children to understand, they went to another language.

So I grew up with Tok Pisin. When my father died in '69, June, just after my 14th birthday; my mother had to take us back to the village and then I went on to a local school. I was in Grade 8 at Marianville. I went on to the Girl's High School there. So when I was there in 1970, *Wantok* newspaper was launched and we were invited to perform, the girls' choir; there was beautiful singing from this girls' choir. If there was anything big happening, our Yarapos girls' choir would be invited to go and sing. We got to sing for the Governor General then at the time. Now, he was the speaker of the House of Assembly, Sir John Guise. Press the button and *Wantok* rolled up the press. Little did I know that, you know, later on that was where my future would be. So from there my mother was the big influence in my life at that time. Whenever we went to sing, she made it her business, because she was a widow then. My father had a pension because he was in the Police. But every Saturday morning after she sold her produce at the market in Wewak, she would always make sure that she bought one copy of *Wantok* newspaper and take it home. Ok, I was in boarding school; but then, whenever I came home, I could read it. We were allowed to come home at the end of the month, just for the weekend and then go back to school.

Yarapos High School was run by the Mercy Sisters. And again they had a big influence on my life, my reading especially. So around that time, 1970 also, we started getting the first lot of PNG writing. *The Crocodile*, Vincent Eri's book, was launched. I remember, I was so excited when I read about that in *Wantok.* I had to get a copy. So I had to get my mother to give me money to go and get it. I went out and bought a copy of *The Crocodile* there and then. It was also a thing that had a big impact on my life, writing. But *Wantok* at the time, my mother would read when we were growing up. She would read the legends. Sorry, she didn't read them; she would tell us the legends. OK. Now you'd be interested about my mother. That was a very unusual thing for her generation. She was born in Madang on Alexishafen, a big Catholic mission there. Her father was one of the carpenter's helpers with the mission. So the Church brought the people from the Sepik over to work in Madang and my mother was born there. She went as far as Grade 4 but she could read Tok Pisin. So, *Wantok* appealed to her knowledge of oral history; the stories were Tumbuna as they were called. When *Wantok* started, every edition had to have a story Tumbuna.

EE. And she would share that ….

AS. Yes, with the other little children in the village. And from there up until now the people in my little village knew that if they want to get a copy of *Wantok* newspaper they go down to Rosa Ibai, that's my mother's name, Rosa Ibai's house and they'll get it from there. But anyway I didn't think that I would end up working there. When I went to Sogeri, I had some good teachers. In those days we were very fortunate, my generation, with the Australian teachers up there. And again reading was one of the big things we were encouraged to do. Kevin Walcott, my goodness, he brought literature to life for us. And then at that time, we also started getting a bit of African literature, and learning what was happening over there.

DM. So you were getting that at Sogeri High. Who was bringing that in?

AS. Well, we had people like Kevin Walcott and contacts down at the University. I went to Sogeri in 1972-73. OK, now, Expressive Arts was also good. We were introduced to the Arts; I'm not so much for western art, but think that we should appreciate what we have here. OK, I'm from the

city. But in Sepik, we are known for being good artists, with the men with carving and other things. So my interest in writing and in literature started at home and at school. That was the basis of it.

Radio also had a big impact on us. At that time there wasn't much. You either listened to the radio, the ABC service or the PNG service. There were great, fantastic radio plays around at that time. It was a must for us. If we knew that this play would be on Saturday night, we had great people like Peter Trist and Doug Fyfe, people from the old school, you know. They brought things to life for us. It wasn't unusual to go and see a group of students sitting there with a radio on, just listening to what was happening. My last days in primary school were when they introduced the school broadcasts. That also had a big impact on us. And, I would say those years were great. You know, it made us think about our own culture.

PNG was going through that phase when we were hearing a lot about preparing for self-government. We were curious and could read about it in *Wantok* newspaper. The reason the bishops decided to go into publishing a newspaper in Tok Pisin was that there were a lot of people who were literate in that language. But there wasn't anything written in that language, other than the Bible. So the newspaper was more to educate the people, to let them know that when we get self-government there won't be a big fight. The Papuans won't rise against us New Guineans and kick out all the white people. No, it would be a peaceful thing. But, in the end, it would be us, the Papua New Guineans running our own country.

In those days, I didn't think much about that. I started thinking about making my place in the community, about what I could contribute to PNG. When I went to University, my first day there was in 1974. I wanted to be a teacher, but then I changed my mind after the first semester and opted to take language and literature, because by then I was so captivated by the African writing, Chinua Achebe, Soyinka, all these writers, my goodness. Well this was exactly, you know something that I would like to do. Write. But I didn't. That had always been at the back of my mind.

But then, like all Papuan New Guinean girls of my generation, I got married in my second year and then took 2 years off to bear my second child. And by the time I went back, I just wanted to get it over and done with. During the 2 years when I was off, I started again looking seriously at the newspapers. Because *Wantok* had always had that impact on my life, in the end I thought, when I finish from university, I'm going to go work for this newspaper. I had the option. I could have gone to work for the English language paper. But then, I thought "No," because all the people who I went to school with had either gone through the 1 year diploma program and then gone into journalism and ended at the *Post-Courier* or with the radio. I thought "No." I'll go work with publishing. And right on top, Tok Pisin, OK.

EE. So the prestigious thing to do was to go with English.

AS. Oh yes. My goodness, if you wanted to go anywhere, you know that was where you went to work, at the *Post-Courier*. See your by-line there in the paper or hear your name on the radio. There was no television at the time. It was either one of those two.

EE. Where were people taking their journalism training by then?

AS. People had been going to New Zealand. Then in '74, Ross Stephens came over to UPNG to continue that, or to open the journalism school there. But I decided to do the 4 year degree course rather than 1 year diploma. I felt very strongly that that was where I could contribute my bit to the development of our country. So Tok Pisin, as I said was my major interest.

EE. Did you start as a reporter at *Wantok*?

AS. I started as a reporter and I worked my way up. After the second year there, I was made a sub-editor and then after another 2 years later I was made the editor of *Wantok*. And I was the first Papua New Guinean editor. I felt, it was important work because a lot of people in PNG miss out on vital information from the government or from anywhere because they can't read it. It was important for a certain generation; it was the newspaper that you read aloud. Yes, the old people

will tell you that; it's the paper that you read aloud. Today that's changed. But still it is something they can always go back to.

EE. And people keep the newspaper around the house.

AS. Yes they do.

DM. When journalists are writing for *Wantok*, if they expect it to be read aloud, does that affect the way they write?

AS. When we're writing Tok Pisin… also keep in mind, we use Mihalic's dictionary -- that's our Bible. Ok and then we have our own in house style book, the "New Testament," we jokingly refer to it as that. There is urban Tok Pisin and rural Tok Pisin. Mihalic's dictionary is based on the rural. When we are writing, we have to be careful, for news stories especially. I have used Simplified English. Now one of the other areas that *Wantok* tried to get into was to help standardize the language; everybody has got their own version of Tok Pisin. People I have been listening to claim they know Tok Pisin. We, the Sepiks, claim that ours is the best, because Mihalic's is based on that. Well, this is an on-going issue.

OK, now back to training of journalists. The diploma course at the University was 1 year. Gradually they added 2 years to that and then before the school stopped, they had a straight journalism school, a 4 year degree program. The sad thing is that things have changed. When they first started, Tok Pisin was one course; that was worked into the program. It wasn't just a straightforward English language only. No, I think that, for one semester, students had to do a course in Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu. At that time, the university was set up for that. They had lecturers there you know who would teach students in those languages. But that has stopped now. And that's one thing we realize today, except for the young ones coming out of the Divine Word University in Madang. Divine Word started teaching Tok Pisin last year [2000], just for 6 weeks, I think. I don't think that is long enough. I don't know but I feel that is something we are gradually losing altogether, if people running those institutions don't take it seriously. And I

brought that up with one of the lecturers. They have to somehow whip that back into their program.

EE. Otherwise you are going to be stuck for people who can operate properly in their own language.

AS. Exactly. You know, anybody can speak their own language, but when it comes to writing the language, that's the telling part. Because again a lot of them now, you look at the way they write and that's the way they think. One thing that I never forget, Mihalic taught us that, when you're translating, you think in the language. The golden rule is "How will I tell the story to my mother?" I think about that, then write the story that way. It is a simple rule, but you get the point across at the same time.

EE. Do you have any idea why they dropped that language component?

AS. Well, after Mihalic retired and left, that was when they dropped it. They couldn't get people in there. See, that's the other big loss we had in our language department at the University. After people with an interest in Tok Pisin had moved on, the young academics just didn't have the time; they had too much on their plate. They didn't have enough time to study the Pidgins and becoming an expert in that area. The last person we had, Dr. Otto Nekitel died, and that was a big loss. We have young people like Dr. Steven Winduo and the others coming up. But it will take a long time.

Back to journalism again. In that field, we had the radio journalists. They do a marvelous and thankless job. But sad to say people tend to think that everything is centred around Port Moresby. You know we do get that criticism from our readers "Why do you concentrate on Port Moresby, Port Moresby is not Papua New Guinea." Very fair comment. Our problem is that the print media, the press, is located in Port Moresby. The three printing presses for *Wantok*, the *National* and *Post-Courier* are all in Moresby. Before the *National*, we had the *New Guinea News*. There's nothing outside Port Moresby except for small commission printers. When *Wantok* started, we were up in Wewak, but that shifted to Port Moresby because Port Moresby is the centre of business and government, etc. We had to be there.

But think about radio. We had the 19 provincial stations. They do a fantastic job and that is a story in itself: journalism and radio. It had to be fast-tracked to prepare people for self-government, self-determination at that time. And the people who were taken on board, they were just broadcasters, given a crash course in reporting, given a microphone and tape, and told to go out to the village and record the people's stories. That's another sad thing that is missing today: people taping the stories. Once in a while when I go back to my village, I will hear village stories on Radio Wewak. That is missing at the national level. It is so different, you know, like oral history being recorded as straight news. But those of us who went out into the workplace, we learnt on the job. And I would say, with hindsight, that that was a better way of learning the trade. These days, everybody wants to go back to school and get that piece of paper. But we had good people who came from that background. Rowan Callick, who I interviewed, taught us in the newsroom; he was our counsellor and he practically held our hands through the different tasks. We are very fortunate to have that kind of training.

EE. Do you still have that time yourself now to do that kind of in-house training?

AS. We have to continue, because we can't afford to employ a full-time cadet counsellor. In the case of the NBC and the ABC, it was a bit different because that was government. They had the money. They could afford to get somebody as a cadet counsellor. It was their sole responsibility to teach the young people who came into the workplace to be reporters. But I'm talking about 20 years ago; now things have changed so much. The reporting of the news, At that time, everyone --- government ministers, members of Parliament, journalists -- we were all still green. Government officials didn't know how to deal with reporters when they didn't want controversies to be made public. Although in the early days, there were no controversies. People thought that stories like that didn't happen in PNG. I joined the work force in November '79. By 1980 – 81, we started writing stories about the big scams. The first one had to do with forestry, up in the northern part in the west Sepik, where the government ministers were making their private deals with people in the Philippines. The *Times* started running stories on that. So, that was when the politicians started seriously looking at the media. Up until then, there wasn't much criticism of government; the Murdoch paper, *The Post-Courier*, was a conservative paper. They

didn't rock the boat. They were happy to take the middle road. The NBC, because it is government owned, they knew how far they could go. But our paper started that idea of digging a bit deeper.

EE. And you still do that? That's a position you still take?

AS. Yes.

EE. With the election that's on right now, there was an actual statement from *Wantok*, was there not, that you were going to address full-on corruption?

AS. Yeah. I think in April or May, we started that. We have a very strong Media Council now that developed over the years. We started meeting and talking about things back as far as '94, '95. That was when the government started toying with the idea of getting some kind of law in place to control the press. One of your wantok's here, called Stuart Littlemore, was advising one of our Ministers, who was then the Communications Minister, on how to control the press. And there was a big uproar. You know, we all came up within the community. I've been jumping up and down about that. So, if you don't want the government to dictate to you, you need to get your act together. Go back, look at yourselves and start getting some things in place -- codes of ethics for the journalists, etc, etc. And so we did that. So we have gradually built up into the PNG Media Council, which is the big force.

DM. It's independent.

AS. It is; we have to pay our subscription every quarter. Every quarter we have to pay 500 kina. I am mindful of that because we are behind 1 quarter already. I haven't got the 500 kina. But, we fund that from within. We have subscribers. And then, if we run programs, we can go and seek funding from the Australian High Com or from the British High Com, or whoever. And the PINA, the Pacific Islands News Association, has realized our Council is a fantastic thing; so, they are trying to tie the regional costs to the larger organization.

EE. I've seen that on the Internet.

AS. So that's it. It's worked well for the media in the region. But yes, corruption is a big issue in PNG and we in the Media Council decided to take a stand on that and with the election not far around the corner ….

DM. So how is the government responding? Are they trying to bring in controls?

AS. So far no. They haven't said anything about that. I guess it was too close to the election for them to say something that may backfire on them. But now, the feeling in the country is that something has to be done about corruption, which has really set our country back. We've run stories, we've done our bit. The next stage now is people what happens to people who have been implicated. Commissions of enquiry have been set up, but what then? That's the big thing people are asking us. "OK, there you are jumping up and down about corruption, leading the fight against that, what happens now? So what is the government going to do about law enforcement, the public prosecutor, the police prosecutor, what are they doing? That's the big question.

EE. What is the membership of the Council? Do you have representation across all the Media?

AS. Yes, we have the mainstream media -- that's both the press and the electronic media, radio and TV and the overseas media who have representatives out there. The ABC and AAP and others are given associate membership after that.

EE. Can I ask you a question about the publisher of *Wantok?* How does that work now? You're the general editor, but what is the role of the Melanesian Council of Churches?

AS. OK, the structure. It was called Wantok Publications when it started. The name's changed now to Word Publishing; the ownership of Word is in shares held by the four main churches: the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Anglicans and the Uniting Church. Each one of the shareholders has their representatives who come to the board meetings. There are representatives from the four churches and then others from the business community, etc. And within that company, we have

Wantok, the flagship; then we have the English language paper. It used to be *The Times*; the name's been changed now to *The Independent*. And there is a business paper that has more or less been incorporated into an insert in *The Independent*; that comes out at the end of the month. So, I am the general manager; then I also wear the hat of the publisher. In fact, I was the publisher before I became the general manager. And that's a very responsible position.

DM. Do you write as well?

AS. I do write for them. I write the opinion. I don't have time to be running around looking at other stories, as I have to run the place also.

EE. At one time, I know, Word Publishing was trying to get into the publication of school textbooks as well. Has that been pretty much abandoned?

AS. It has been. When it started, we had *Wantok* newspaper; and then, when the office was moved into Port Moresby in '74, the Catholic bishops invited (because when it started it was 100% Catholic) the other churches in. They came in with their share of the finances. Now, it is an ecumenical venture. So they started with *Wantok* and then, from *Wantok,* we went into publishing *New Nation*. That was a magazine for the young people. In our country, we just don't have the money for such things. Somebody was asking me recently what became of *New Nation*. Are you people thinking of reviving that? Well, if only we had the money, we could do that, you know. Things are so expensive now that it's just an extreme impossibility. We had *New Nation* going when we had the Education Department as the biggest buyer. But with decentralization, their priorities changed. They thought they'd rather give their money to the provinces and let them decide. Of course, the magazine wasn't high up on their list of priorities. They'd rather spend it on doing something else. So we lost that market and then we couldn't keep up any more, because we were getting subs into Hong Kong.

EE. Yes, I remember that time. Printing costs were horrific.

AS. Yes, very high. Then we went into publishing books. We had Kevin Walcott running that section. But then, when we lost that big contract with the Education Department, the costs of running a commercial print press were so high, we were losing money on that. We try to keep the cost of printing stuff down as much as possible; but, in the end, you want to break even. If you have to keep going down, it isn't worth it. They decided to get rid of all that commercial stuff and just concentrate on the newspaper side with *Wantok* and *The Independent*.

EE. What is your readership now? I should say how many newspapers do you sell and what do you think your readership is?

AS. OK, the circulation for *Wantok* is 12,000, OK. We do our own in-house survey every second year. Then we get a questionnaire in the paper that people respond to. It tells us that 8. 8 people would read one copy of *Wantok*, OK. Now from that we know for a fact what we will really sell, the money that comes in at the end, would be about 10,500 to 11,000. Well, you can just write that down. That's the average, OK. Sometimes it goes up to 14,000, but we work on a figure of 12,000. Now in the case of *The Independent* (prior to that *The Times)* is about 5,000 per issue.

These papers come out once a week, so you would think, yeah, this is small; but *The Independent* has a lot of influence with the decision makers. Since we come out weekly, it is the most serious paper that we carry and it would be a bit more in depth. We have a very popular columnist in our paper, called Sabrina. What she writes, people sit up and take note of.

EE. Do you use either of the papers to publish stories, creative stories or oral stories?

AS. Yes, oh yeah. Coming back to that. Yes, we do, We use *The Independent*, *The Times,* for that. We encourage people to send in their poems. I've got copies, I'll bring them, book reviews, OK. That would be the only publication now in PNG that is bringing that consistently. Good people like Regis Stella and Dr. Ted Wolfers have volunteered to review books for us and we encourage that. Because again now another thing about our organization, because it's owned by the church, OK, in our mission statement and in the objectives, one of them is to promote literacy. That is a very important from Day 1 when *Wantok* newspaper was launched. The other important thing that

you have to also keep in mind is that our newspapers play, and especially, is to promote literacy, to help those who missed the formal education who cannot read or write, to help them get the basics of reading and writing, so adult literacy especially amongst the women.

We still run stories in *Wantok*, just general stories, but now we know that people who run those workshop courses are better situated to help with literacy. They subscribe to the paper. So we send about 20 copies of the paper for them. They just use whatever we run in the newspaper for their classes. Not just the women's groups but even the men. If they want to be literate in Tok Pisin, they know that *Wantok* is the paper that this is for them. Again in *Wantok*, contentwise, we help, we encourage young people to write in stories. The story Tumbuna that I mentioned earlier, the legends, we still carry them, how many years later. The other day I was surprised to get an e-mail from my husband, he picked it up and sent it to me from one of the discussion groups. Some man in America, I don't know if he is in the academic circle, just published a book on stories that he had been collecting over the years, the legends from Wantok newspaper. Somebody called Thomas Sloan, I was surprised when I saw that.

DM. Where have your journalists received their training?

AS. When they come to us, it would be from the Divine Word University up in Madang or from the University, OK, but much of this would be just theory. So when they come into the newsroom, they really have to find their way around. Figure out what the real world is like. So we have to train them in the newsroom about how to go about getting stories, who to see, everything that they should know about what it's like out there. Unfortunately there's another thing that we don't have; there's no standard booklet, how you go about getting your stories. They have to find their own way around. But, yes we have to do that, mould them into the type of people we want for our newsroom. It is difficult, because a lot of the young people these days see journalism as just another job. In my time, we wanted to go there to make a difference, you know.

DM. Did you have a sense of what difference it would make?

AS. Well, my vision, as I said, is to make information available to people in Tok Pisin, information that people could otherwise miss out on.

EE. Was it also to create an audience who would think and do particular things?

AS. Definitely. What kind of leaders do you want? Do you want, after 5 years in office, for the same person to go back again, even though you don't see anything at all within your community that can show that this is a good leader? We want readers to ask questions about what he's done for them during the time he's represented them in Parliament. I mean, those days are long gone now. Because now what we see is, some people getting into parliament with just 5 years in mind. They don't think beyond that because they know that come the next election, they're out. So when people get in, there's only 5 years they're looking at. So what we want is to get the message across to the people. Your vote is important. See, that's the other thing again, voting is not compulsory in PNG; so it is up to you, if you want to go and vote, and fine, if you don't want to. Nobody will take you to court for that [Interviewer's Note: Anna's reference here is to the compulsory voting in Australia]. However, the people don't realize that their one vote would make a difference to the kind of leaders we want in Parliament, OK. That's the other thing, you see. People have become so disillusioned that they say "Oh yeah, so what."Whether I go and vote or not, the same man, or the same type of people will get in anyway. That's the thinking we have to change.

DM. So you feel that you can work through the paper to change that thinking to bring involvement.

AS. That also, and again the different points of view also. Getting academics, getting experts, you know, to comment on things. Government policy is the other area that I am interested in. In fact, when I leave [the newspaper], I'd like to go back and do a postgraduate degree and look again at that language factor, how the message has been lost simply because the government was communicating to the people in the wrong language – English.

EE. Mihalic had that famous quote, didn't he, that they produced a constitution that the people couldn't read.

AS. Exactly, exactly. We have this beautiful constitution, but how many people have seen it. Maybe, you know, in the library. Mihalic made a translation into Tok Pisin as a gift to the country. This is something for village court magistrates to use. But few others have seen it. We still get calls, asking if we have copies of that little publication available. Great goodness, now how many years later, people still want that sort of information. I believe very strongly that we will get change if we make the information available to the people. And information that they can read, that will give them an alternative point of view. Right now, there is a lot of misunderstanding about government policy. *Wantok* helps to explain what the government is doing and why. The troubles at the university last year where the student protesters were shot, is a good example. The government wanted to privatize PNGBC [PNG Banking Corporation]. The government feels that they have to get rid of that bank because it's costing too much. But that message has to be put across in a language everybody will understand. Then the newspaper can say why the government wants to do it and what the benefits are that will come out of it. But what came out was just a full page of advertisements in English. That's the only way the newspapers could run it; otherwise they'd break it up as little news stories. But no, the Privatization Commission wanted the message out the way they wanted it. So they had to pay for that, a firm full page advertisement in English. There was an attempt made to translate that into Tok Pisin. So people didn't know what was going on and starting talking about the World Bank; so, you know, people were up in arms. The students had good reasons for their protest, maybe, but the whole process was highjacked and it led into bloodshed where students were killed.

EE. Do you see government adopting that kind of strategy, using English, when they know that Tok Pisin is probably the one language that everybody more or less has in common, do you see that as a deliberate attempt not to inform people?

AS. No, it's not understanding. The people who are doing that, being given the task to do, themselves being selective about where they want to put the message and they feel that if they put it into English, everybody will read that and understand that, OK. It's a loose arrangement. The government, when that trouble happened, the Prime Minister came out very strongly and said that he will make sure to do something. He said " I am amazed, the misunderstanding behind

this. I will do something to correct it." The only way he can do something to correct it is to make it government policy that anything, any government policy, any law, for that matter, has to be presented in three languages, English, Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu. Don't forget, Hiri Motu again is ….

EE. So it is still a viable language in Papua.

AS. It's smaller, you have a smaller group for that. But it needs to be in three languages: English the official language of communication, language of commerce, etc, but the other two are just as important. Information has to be made available to the people in those three languages; otherwise you have one sector of the community, you know, missing out altogether. That's just one small thing. The whole process of coming back to centralization from decentralization, is a problem; the government now practically controls the running of the provinces also. When we had the change in local government that Act that came in was all explained in English. And they had this crazy formula x+y = you know that, algebra, algebra. I don't understand algebra. So when I saw that, I rang the National Research Institute, because that's the think tank of the government and they had that formula worked out for them. Then they took our a full page advertisement in English, explaining to the people of Papua New Guinea what a wonderful thing this is: the government is going to go right down to the grass roots at the local level. Again, as I said it is all in English. So after a fight, I got them to finally agree to put that into *Wantok* newspaper. I told them that if you have the money to pay for that, it's a full page advertisement in English papers, you can find the money to have that put into *Wantok* in Tok Pisin. So they said fine, you do that translation. I did the translation fine until I came to that thing, that formula. And I called them up "How do I translate this?" I started laughing, because I think of my mother, how would I translate it the way the ordinary Papua New Guinean knows the language, so that we get the message across. I rang them and they said "Oh sorry, we don't know, the consultants who came to help us are long gone, you know, in Sydney. So, coming back to the government, again it's usually not those bureaucrats responsible for the decision about language. Most of the time, it is just sheer laziness. They want to say "Yes," they've given that message to the media, but they forget, that maybe the message only goes through to the English speaking readers, while the rest who can read in Hiri Motu, or Tok Pisin are missing out on vital information.

EE. In listening to you, Anna, talking about your education and your early career and the way your career has developed. I don't have a sense from you that your gender was a real problem for you. You were simply at a certain age, at a certain time, the opportunities were there, if you cared to work and if you were any good at what you did, you could progress.

AS. No. I missed that bit out. We'll come back to it, yeah. Because when I went in at the time, journalism was all male dominated, OK. We had some early female reporters on the radio and on the newspapers, but again, I guess, at that time the editors of the papers were men so they would give the easy tasks to the female reporters. You know. "Go cover the woman's meeting there" or "Go to the school board meeting and get that." Whereas the hot stories they would give to the male reporters and tell them "Go down there to the Parliament or go interview the Minister for this and that." I was lucky when I came to work for Word Publishng. Those priests were men beyond their time; they looked beyond and they recognized what the women also had to contribute. So it was interesting. We had more women in our newsroom than our competitors, OK. Yes!

Now, the thinking has changed because the managers in the media organizations have come to realize that the women work harder: the woman would be the first to arrive and the last to go home. They don't give up that easily. And the women don't go down to the pub and drink with the boys to get the front page story. They get it by working with their contacts. Again, it's a tough job.

DM. How do women manage their own families and children and a job that's as tough as that?

AS. That's a big problem, especially, you know, in a culture like PNG. Those of us who have managed to hang in there are here now because we have supportive husbands or partners. But there are now more women in PNG who are single mothers again. They know that life's very difficult juggling a career and supporting a family, like everywhere else in the world. But I am proud to say that we women in the media in PNG are professional. We get the story the way a good journalist goes out and gets the story. We don't go around getting in the bedroom, or anything like that, no. That big question came up last year for us. There was a story that came out of Fiji, from the *Fiji*

Times. One of the women got an exclusive out of a close relationship with Rabuka. And when that came out, we said, well, in our case we have to be professional. At the end of the day you have to be consistently professional; then you get respect from your peers, from the male colleagues.

DM. How old were your children when you first started working?

AS. When I started, I was 5 months pregnant.

DM. You started working as a journalist when you were 5 months pregnant!

AS. With my third, I had 2 others. Lorraine was about 4 or 5, then Fiona and 5 months pregnant with Michelle. But I'm always thankful for the fact that I was working at *Wantok*. Even so, as I said, the press did not give us a soft life. When I worked, they would give me my bus pass so that I could go down there to Parliament. Parliament was down in the old house downtown. But to get down there, I had to take the bus, sit in there with my notebook, get my notes, get on the bus, come back, write my story, and give it in before I go home. Discipline!

DM. Where were the offices?

AS. Up at Gordon's, where the Catholic Bishop's Conference is located now, opposite the Australian High Com. That's where we started in Moresby, and Parliament was right downtown next to the Travel Lodge.

DM. So did you have a lot of domestic help at home looking after the children?

AS. Oh Yes. We have close family connections in PNG. I had an aunt who'd come and stay with me to keep an eye on the children while I was working, or a cousin. In those days we did not have a childminding centre. And if we did, it was expensive, for we had to pay for to get the children there. So it was a difficult time. So my children, the 3 daughters I had from my first marriage, they were newspaper children; they grew up in a really interesting way.

EE. So do young women journalists have an easier time of it now, do you think?

AS. Now, yeah, of course, now of course.

DM. Now there are childcare facilities.

AS. Yeah, but in those days it was difficult. Now, I think they have it too soft for them. Because, a lot of them come into the workplace and after the second year they start looking around to go back into public relations jobs, and you know, I say "My God, where's the drive! Why do they choose this profession?" I don't know, I guess I must be one of those from the old school, where we wanted to go out there to change the world. But this lot…. They come into our newsroom and in the other media organizations -- we give them three years at the most. Those that stay beyond the three years, I know they will stay on. So the crucial time is those three years: two years because you know they can take their leave, and take their pay and after the third year they start looking around, so ….

EE. Can you, talk about some of things that motivated you to become a journalist?

AS. I started in November 1979, so it was just after independence. One of the things that I don't like is that people have given up their independence. See, in PNG, the government has always been there; you can count on anything that comes from the government always being there. I shouldn't say we are spoiled, but that kind of mentality has developed to a stage where people think that the government will give, likely because Australia is always there to support us. Why don't we start looking back at what we have and really learn to be a bit more self-supportive, self-sufficient. That was how our people lived, you know. We could grow our own food. We have the land; why don't we utilize that. So a lot of the early stories that we did in *Wantok* went back to the land. There were agricultural programs where the agricultural extension offices encouraged people on how to look after their coffee block, cocoa, whatever. That kind of information we made available in *Wantok*. And, I believe very strongly in that, getting our own people to start looking again at our potential. We have our hands, we have a beautiful land, you know, the climate is good. Why do we have to always go to the shop to buy rice? We are so

dependent on rice now, that you'd think our ancestors were growing rice. My goodness. Why spend money on this when we can be looking after ourselves? If we go back to our villages, we have all the trees growing on our land, the timber. We can easily cut down the trees, treat the wood, cut it up and build beautiful little houses. Why do we have to keep running into the towns, the cities? What are we looking for?

You know, that was the thing that I had in mind when I started with the newspaper. It all goes back to appropriate technology. In early independence, this idea of appropriate technology, self-sufficiency, was something the government promoted. We had the Office of Village Development that started this and encouraged people that they didn't have to think big, or go and buy expensive stuff. Small things can do just as good a job, you don't need to spend more money on that. Today, this attitude is sadly missing and now the gap has widened so much, that I don't know really where we go from here. We are so used to just sitting there and getting things handed over to us that it would be a major thing to change that kind of a mentality. So obviously, that was the area that we wanted to change.