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Interview of Edward J. Sheehy, F.S.C., Ph.D.


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Field Notes

Interviewee: Brother Edward J. Sheehy, F.S.C.

Interviewer: Lauren De Angelis

Interview Dates: The interview was conducted in 2012 on the following dates: March 7th, March 8th, March 15th, March 23rd, and April 3rd

Interview Location: Brother Edward's office in Olney Hall located at 1900 West Olney Avenue, Philadelphia PA, 19141.

The Interviewee:

Brother Edward Sheehy was born on May 6, 1946 to Edward and Rosemary Sheehy. His father was a naval commander during the Cold War and later became the head of an aerospace company called Hercules. His mother was a housewife and had ten children, Brother Ed being the oldest. As a child, Brother Ed moved around frequently due to his father's commission in the Navy, and went to a multitude of schools. For example, in high school alone, Brother Edward went to three schools in four years. It was in his senior year at La Salle High School that he became close with the Christian Brothers. The Christian Brothers at the school believed that Edward would make a fine Brother and asked him to consider the vocation. Although he was hesitant at first, he decided this was the life for him.

He entered his novitiate in 1963 and spent fifteen months in silence in order to foster a sense of obedience and to reflect on God. During this time, Brother Ed lived in community, worked on the grounds, and studied biblical and religious works. After fifteen grueling months, he began his college career at La Salle University located in North Philadelphia. He lived in Elkins Park, an off campus community for scholastics, Christian Brothers who attend college. Brother Edward majored in history and education during his time at La Salle. He excelled both in academics and in extracurricular activities. He was the first and only Christian Brother to be the student speaker at commencement, and was one of the first Brothers to join the debate team at La Salle. He truly left his mark during his time here.

Following graduation, Brother Edward worked at St. Gabriel's Hall for court adjudicated youths. He taught these young kids journalism and public speaking, as well as helped to prefect them. He stayed for one year and was then reassigned to Calvert Hall College High School in Maryland. At Calvert Hall, Brother Edward taught religion and history, and was extremely active as the moderator of a multitude of clubs. He also was a Dean of Discipline for both the junior and senior classes. It would be during his years at Calvert Hall (1968-1973) that he attended Johns Hopkins University in Maryland in order to earn his Masters in Liberal Arts.

He then was asked by the Provincial, the Brother in charge, to get his doctorate in history. He applied to the University of Maryland and George Washington University. He decided to attend GW and finished his coursework in two years. His concentration at the doctoral level was Naval history, and the title of his dissertation was “ The United States Navy, the Cold War, and the Mediterranean, 1945-1947,” which later was published as a book in 1992. As he worked on his doctoral work, he was an administrative intern at St. John’s College High School in 1976.

Prior to finishing his dissertation, Brother Edward was asked to be the Assistant Principal at Hudson Catholic High School where he remained for six years until 1983. It was difficult for Brother Ed to work fulltime and finish his dissertation, and therefore did not receive his doctorate until 1983. Following this accomplishment, Brother Edward was offered the position of principal at Central Catholic High School, which is a prestigious high school in Pittsburgh, PA. There were many challenges he faced as the head of this academic institution, but he maintained the high reputation of the school. Eventually, however, Brother Edward told the Provincial he wanted to return to teaching because he originally joined the Brotherhood to teach. Therefore, he interviewed for a position in the History Department at La Salle University and became a professor in 1988. He moved and took up residence in the De La Salle Community on main campus, and still lives there.

Brother Edward is more than a professor at this school; he is an active member of the community. He was the moderator of the football team for eleven years and has been the moderator of the basketball team for twenty years. He is also the Vice President of the Cooperation, which means he sits in on board meetings and makes sure that he knows the administrative side of the University in case the president of the University can no longer fulfill his duties. During his time here, Brother Ed has received many honors including, the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching (1991) and the Dr. Roland Holyroyd Award for contributions made to the community (1990 and 2012). He has also been immortalized as a bobblehead, and is the first Christian Brother to receive that honor.

The Interviewer:

I, Lauren Michele De Angelis, (b. 1989 in Stratford, NJ) grew up in a suburb called Cherry Hill NJ. It is approximately five miles from Camden NJ, one of the most dangerous cities in the United States. I graduated from Camden Catholic High School in 2007 and have since received my B.A. in history from La Salle University in 2011. I am currently working on my M.A. in history at La Salle University and intend to graduate in the summer of 2012. I currently work as an Administrative Assistant in the History Department at La Salle University. I also work as a Resident Assistant on campus in the graduate apartment complex. I have known Brother Edward Sheehy for five years and have interacted with him on different levels. I have been his student in two classes, his coworker as an Administrative Assistant, and, most recently, his friend.

Background:

I first knew I wanted to interview Brother Ed in the Fall of 2011 because I knew I would be taking HIS 650, which is the oral history class in La Salle's graduate program. Brother Ed had been a big influence in my college life and has seen me through both joyous and stressful times; he truly has been a constant voice of reason and encouragement. Since HIS 650 requires one to do an oral history of either a LaSallian or a veteran, I thought this was the perfect opportunity to get to know my mentor. I asked him permission that semester if I could interview him for the upcoming semester's project, and he was more than happy to oblige.

Once the Spring 2012 semester was underway, I again approached Brother Edward about the interview, which would occur March and April of that year in order to fulfill the requirements of the class. He again said that he was happy to be of help, and lent me his book to read prior to the interview. I also visited the La Salle University Archives where Brother Joseph Grabenstein pulled out all the materials he had regarding the life of Brother Edward Sheehy. This was an extremely large file filled with articles, yearbook excerpts, and programs from ceremonies; essentially it brought every written document that referenced Brother Ed together. Not only did I have the opportunity to read these articles to gain a better understanding of Brother Ed, but I also spoke with members of his family, including his mother, two sisters, and one brother. They were extremely nice and provided some amusing anecdotes that rounded out my research.

I then spoke to Brother Ed about where and when he would like to begin the interview. He decided he preferred his office because he lives in community and would not have privacy in his home. He also decided to break each session up into one-hour segments. Originally, the interview was set to be two to three hours; however, it wound up being four hours and twenty-seven minutes. Brother Edward was extremely accommodating in the elongation of the interview.

Description of Interview:

The interview took place over a month span, and consisted of five different sessions. The interview took place in Olney 366, which is currently Brother Edward's office. The interviews either took place in late morning or early afternoon. Brother Ed was always in La Salle sweat suits in order to be comfortable. I was always in work attire because these interviews took place during the course of the work day. During the actual interviews, Brother Ed normally sipped on a Diet Coke, which is his favorite drink. We sat in his office; I sat at his computer desk and he sat at his work desk. The computer and microphone were in between us on top of a pull out section of his main desk.

When I arrived for each session, I asked to put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on his door, so that we were not interrupted. I also asked if I could unplug his phone because I was afraid it would ring during the interview. He allowed me to do both. I then plugged in my laptop and opened the Garage Band application on my MacBook Pro. At the beginning of each session, I made sure the equipment was working by recording a brief clip of us talking about random things. By doing this, I made sure that the volume and amplitude were set properly.

Brother Ed has a tendency to cough and clear his throat throughout the course of the interview. He also became more relaxed by Part II of the interview, which is evident in his use of crutch words. It seems that he made sure he spoke properly in Part I. He tended to use the phrase “you know” when he talks, which is often omitted from the transcript. In one hour alone, Part III, he used that phrase over one hundred times. He also has a tendency to kick his desk when he is talking, which sounds like a knock on the door. One will also notice that Brother Ed’s voice may be louder and softer at times because he rocks back and forth in his chair. However, the volume is always audible.

Notes on Recording:

For recording, I used my MacBook Pro on battery power. I used the application called Garage Band to record the voices. I also used a high-tech microphone called Blue Snowball, which was a USB microphone. I was able to export the files to iTunes where they were converted to an MP3 format and then burned to CD.

Notes on Editing:

My editing decisions included:

- 1) eliminating repeated words, unless the words were repeated for emphasis
- 2) eliminating many false starts, unless the false starts were vital to the interview
- 3) using brackets [] to indicate missing words, pauses, and inaudible words
- 4) providing contextual information in footnotes
- 5) placing a time stamp at or near the top of each page and at the beginning and end of each recording session
- 6) usually eliminating crutch words, such as “you know,” “I mean,” “like,” and other similar phrases to make sentences easier to read.
- 7) using a long dash to indicate an awkward transition in the middle of a sentence
- 8) using a long dash to indicate when a sentence was interrupted.
- 10) capitalizing and using hyphens between letters of words the interviewee spelled
- 11) using *italics* to indicate emphasis
- 12) using quotation marks to indicate reported speech