

2012

## Interview of James A. Butler, Ph.D.

James A. Butler

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## FIELD NOTES

**Interviewee:** Dr. James A. Butler

**Interviewer:** Nyomi M. Gonzalez

**Interview date:** March 26, 2012

**Interview location:** Dr. Butler's office located on La Salle University's campus, in Olney Hall RM 161, 1900 W. Olney Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19141

Field notes written on April 10, 2012

### **The Interviewee:**

James Albert Butler was born on May 18, 1945 in Wilksburg, Pennsylvania. The third of four sons to parents Myrtle and Ralph, Dr. Butler had two old brothers, Philip (deceased) and Lawrence, and one younger brother, Thomas. After graduating from Central Catholic HS in Pittsburgh, Dr. Butler attended La Salle College, graduating in June 1967. Just a few days after graduation, Dr. Butler married Joanne Buck. They had three daughters before divorcing in the late 1990s. Dr. Butler received his graduate degree from Cornell University and was hired to teach at La Salle in 1971. For the past forty years, Dr. Butler has held many positions at La Salle, including Assistant Chair of the English Department, Chair of the English Department, Director of the Honors Program and Curator of the Wister Special Collection in Connelly Library. Dr. Butler is now partially retired and is teaching one class in the Honors Program so he can spend more time with his grandchildren.

### **The Interviewer:**

I, Nyomi Marie Gonzalez (b. 1987, in Newark, NJ) grew up in the Forrest Hills section of Newark, NJ, earned a B.A. in History from Chestnut Hill College in 2009 and am pursuing a Master's Degree in Public History at LaSalle University. I left New Jersey with my mother in August 2007, just before starting my junior year at Chestnut Hill College. I still have family in New Jersey; however we do not see much of each other, nor do we keep in touch. I am a full time graduate student at LaSalle University, an intern at the National Archives and Records Administration – Mid-Atlantic branch in Philadelphia, PA and I am a part time associate and cash handler at Old Navy.

### **Background:**

For my Oral History class in the Spring 2012, I decided to interview a Christian Brother, Brother Francis Tri. Unfortunately, through a series of emails between myself, my teacher, and Brother Joe Grabenstein La Salle's archivist, I discovered Brother Tri had already been interviewed and I need to choose another person to interview. Brother Joe gave me a few different choices and I eventually chose Dr. James Butler. A long time teacher here at La Salle and a local history buff, he seemed like a good candidate for me. After making my decision, I asked Brother Joe if he could send me copies of anything he had in the archives on Dr. Butler, so I could do some research on him and formulate some good interview questions. After receiving the paperwork

and looking through it, I emailed Dr. Butler. In the email, I introduced myself, explained the project and asked if he was willing to let me interview him. After about two days, Dr. Butler responded to my email and was more than happy to help. We emailed back and forth discussing the best days/times to meet for the interview and set up our interview for Monday, March 26, 2012 at 2pm. We schedule a follow-up interview a week later, on April 2, 2012 at 2pm to finish the interview.

### **Description of the Interview:**

After setting up our first interview, I continued to look over the paperwork Brother Joe had mailed me and began coming up with questions. I did not set up a pre-interview session to introduce ourselves or get to know each other, so the day of our interview was the first time we met each other. The morning of our first interview on Monday, March 26, 2012 I woke up incredibly nervous. I had only performed two oral interviews before this one and since I did not know Dr. Butler, it made it all the more nerve wracking. I packed up my stuff, interview questions, background information, some snacks and my voice recorder and hopped on the train to school. I arrived at school a little over an hour before our scheduled meet time at 2pm. I decided to kill some time and hopefully my nerves by doing some more research in Wister Lab. I left the lab around 1:45 and walked to Olney Hall to find Dr. Butler's office, our scheduled meeting place. I had no trouble finding his office and arrived with a few minutes to spare. After a quick introduction and some small talk, we started the interview. I was nervous throughout the whole thing, stuttering over my words and not getting my questions out, but Dr. Butler was incredibly nice and just answered my questions, throwing in some great stories and doing his best to make me feel comfortable. After the interview was over, Dr. Butler and I talked for just about an hour about all kinds of things, which made me feel more at ease and actually excited about our next interview session the following week.

I followed the same routine when I woke up for our second interview on April 2, 2012 at 2pm. I packed up my stuff, my interview questions, background paperwork, some snacks, my voice recorder and I remembered to bring a pen with me, just in case. Again, I arrived on campus early and went in to Wister Lab to kill some time and do some more research. I left around 1:45 and arrived at Dr. Butler's office with a few minutes to spare. We talked for a few minutes, and Dr. Butler talked with a colleague before shutting his door and starting the interview. In the middle of our second interview, his phone rang and I was forced to pause the recorder while he took the call. But that was the only disruption to take place during our two separate meetings. The interview went smoothly and I felt and sounded less nervous than I had the week before. We talked again for a few minutes after the interview was over. I explained what would happen with the recorded material and what I was expected to do for my project. He asked if he could get copies as well for his family and of course I said yes. I emailed Dr. Butler a few times to ask follow – up questions and spelling questions and I send him the transcripts to look over for any corrections he felt I should make. Currently he is still looking over some of the transcripts.

Because his office is in the back of Olney Hall, near where La Salle's various sports teams practice on the field, there is one instance where you can hear voices, perhaps yelling, from the students directly outside his window. But it is not loud enough to distract the listener, in fact unless you are really listening, you really can't hear it at all. That and the phone call were the

only real disruptions during our interview. Other noises include computer sounds, chair movement, coughing, laughing and the clearing of a throat.

### **Note on recording:**

For recording, I used my Olympus VN-8100PC on battery power. I did not use an additional microphone. I did record the interview in MP3 format, which I chose from the REC Mode Menu. After the interview, I connected the Olympus recorder by USB port to my Dell Inspiron 6000 and downloaded the audio files for storage in MPEG format. After downloading, I realized the file was too big to burn on to a single CD-R. So, I divided the files on my Olympus VN-8100PC, creating one file that was a little over one hour long and a second file that was thirty – three minutes long. I then burned the files to two, separate CD-R's in the MPEG format. I used the playback option on my Olympus recorder and NCH Express Scribe software (free download) to slowly play back the interview for transcription.

### **Editing the Transcript:**

My editing decisions included:

1. Eliminating most repeated words/phrases
2. Eliminating most crutch words, i.e., “uh” and “um”
3. Using brackets to indicate laughter, whimpers, outside noises or a break/stop in the recording
4. Brackets are also used to input words/letters not heard in the recording to make reading the transcript easier, i.e., [un]til instead of just til
5. Placing time stamps at the top left corner of each page
6. Using a dash, “-“ to indicate an unfinished sentence or shift in word(s)/thought(s) in the middle of a sentence
7. Using quotation marks to indicate reported speech
8. Adding footnotes to provide additional information for the viewer (only for the first interview)
9. Adding a Picture Appendix to show pictures of certain topics mentioned during the interview