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Interview of Emery C. Mollenhauer, F.S.C., Ph.D.

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Matt Deininger
History 650
Formal Interview Field Notes
Spring 2007

Interview With Brother Emery Mollenhauer

At the beginning of the semester, Dr. Allen presented the class with a list of interviewees to choose from for the formal interview. The objective was to select an individual from the list so that Dr. Allen could make the initial contact with the interviewee to pursue feasibility of being interviewed. On Monday, January 30, 2007, Brother Joe Grabenstein came to class to speak about the project, his role, and the task at hand: interviewing members of the LaSalle community. Interviewees were quickly being selected. After much thought, I settled on Brother Emery Mollenhauer. I based my decision on the goal of the project to accumulate information about LaSalle and the interviewee's place in LaSalle's history. Since Brother Emery is a Christian Brother, has served as an Administrator (Dean of the Evening Division and Academic Vice President/Provost) and a full time faculty member in the English Department, I thought he probably had many relevant experiences that needed to be preserved. On Tuesday January 30th, I received an e-mail from Dr. Allen confirming my interview with Brother Emery and clearing me to arrange a meeting with Brother Joe in the archives.

On Sunday, February 4th, I sent an e-mail to Brother Joe relaying the message that I would indeed be interviewing Brother Emery. I explained my work schedule and asked if we could setup a meeting in the late afternoon on Thursday or Friday. We setup a meeting for Friday, February 9th at 4:00 PM. When I arrived at the archives, Brother Joe was assisting a visitor and pointed me to the yearbooks. I flipped through a few until he was ready to meet with me. Brother Joe had a large packet of information to share with me. He walked me through the information as I made three piles: materials I wanted, materials I would look at again, and

material I did not want. After spending about ninety minutes in the archives, I left with about eighty pages of information.

On Saturday, February 10th, I sent an e-mail to Brother Emery. The purpose was to introduce myself, thank him for agreeing to participate in the Oral History Project, to ask if there were any topics or comments he might want to comment on, and to let him know I will be in contact with him again once I complete my research. The materials I obtained from the archives were a nice variety. The most interesting document was a personnel data sheet which included family members, assignments, education, and honors. Additional sources included various editions of LaSalle College and LaSalle University publications (*Explorer*, *LaSalle Magazine*, Parent Newsletters), the March 8, 1977 edition of the *La Salle Collegian*, the Summer 1960 *Lasallian Digest*, event programs from the 1990 Honors Convocation and Fiftieth Anniversary of Brothers Daniel W. Burke and Emery C. Mollenhauer, articles written by Brother Emery, news releases, the entry from the La Salle Online Phone Book, and a series of e-mails between Brother Joe and Brother Emery. I also received an e-mail from Brother Emery on February 11th. This e-mail contained a nice introduction and overview of Brother Emery's Career.

In March, I concluded my research and set out to compile my questions for the formal interview. I informed Brother Emery of my progress on March 15th, and we exchanged a few e-mails about possible meeting times. On March 22nd, we arranged to meet at 10:30 AM on April 3, 2007. On March 26th, I sent my preliminary final interview questions to Dr. Allen via e-mail. I received an e-mail the next day with comments and some suggested questions to include. By the date of the interview I managed to compile a list of approximately 130 questions.

On April 3rd, I traveled to LaSalle for the interview. We agreed to conduct the interview in Brother Emery's office, Olney Hall 167. Despite minor parking problems, I arrived to the

interview on time. Brother Emery was waiting for me to arrive. His office was in the last hallway on the first floor. Brother Emery welcomed me into his office. The office was orderly, consisting of a file cabinet just inside the door to the right, a bookshelf full of books along the left wall, one desk with a computer was straight ahead, beyond the desk was a window overlooking the field. Along the right wall was a second desk with a lamp and some papers. There was a chair set at the end of this desk for me. Brother Emery took a seat on a second chair. There was a third chair used to keep the door propped open. Brother Emery was wearing a tan sweater over his black garb; the white collar was visible. We spent a few minutes talking as I set up the recorder then we began the interview. During the course of the interview, classical music was playing from a radio that appeared to be resonating from an adjacent office. While the music can be heard in the background, it did not affect the quality of the recording. In fact, the music was soothing and helped add to a relaxed atmosphere. There were no interruptions during the interview except for the warning beeps of a truck in reverse. The interview had a great flow the majority of the duration, one hour, twenty-six minutes, nine seconds. Both of us remained seated for the duration of the interview. Our initial nervousness disappeared as the interview moved on. Brother Emery spoke with passion and excitement and exhibited a friendly demeanor. He was very animate. Throughout the interview Brother Emery spoke freely and only dodged one question, his date of birth. Brother Emery referred to his age as an unlisted number; I did not pursue an aggressive line of questioning on this issue. There was some excited nervousness at times on Brother Emery's part which added to the genuine nature of the interview. During the interview Brother Emery enjoyed some hard candy and water. There was also some laughter at various times from both parties. The interview began with basic biographical information followed by an informal overview of Brother Emery's career. We were

able to transition back into biographical information. The interview continued with family life, entrance into the Christian Brothers, career prior to arriving at LaSalle, and the physical campus upon arriving at LaSalle. Since I had plenty of questions to ask and the interview did not reach the two hour minimum, we set up another session for Thursday. We agreed to meet on the porch of the Brothers' house at 10:30. I packed up and we left together as Brother Emery had another appointment. As for the parking issue, I found out that I was parked illegally; there was a ticket waiting for me!

On April 5th, I returned for the second part of the interview. I arrived at campus quite early so I went to the Student Union until it was time for the interview. Since it was a bit cold that day, I had a cup of hot chocolate while I went through the list of questions yet to be asked. I made some notes to prioritize to be sure that I would not miss anything. I made my way over to the Brothers' House around 10:25 and waited for Brother Emery to arrive. While waiting I noticed a few maintenance men and a ladder on the porch. They were changing light bulbs and I instantly grew concerned that they might be a distraction. Brother Emery arrived and we went inside to the parlor. At one end of the room was a set of chairs, end tables, and lamps. We moved to the other end of the room where there was long table surrounded by chairs. There were bookshelves on the wall to my right and another set of bookshelves behind Brother Emery. Brother Emery turned on a lamp to give us additional light. The sun was pouring in through the windows. We sat across from each other at the table. Unlike on Tuesday, there were a few interruptions today. The maintenance men from outside eventually unlocked the door leading into the parlor and came in talking. They apologized and moved out of the room quickly. Later, there was some commotion from an adjacent room that briefly distracted Brother Emery while answering a question. Brother Emery cooperated fully and honestly with the questions. His

energy level was great and it was easy to tell he was having a good time. We began where we left off by transitioning from the physical campus to what the neighborhood looked like upon his arrival to LaSalle. The scope of this session was getting into Brother Emery's experiences while at LaSalle. This included his tenure as Dean of the Evening Division, Academic Vice President, and return to full time faculty. The session lasted one hour, eighteen minutes, and four seconds. We ended the interview with thanks for each other's participation. Brother Emery was appreciative for having been interviewed and wished me luck on completing the project. He showed me to the door and we said goodbye.

I believe the interview went well. Brother Emery was very open about his life at LaSalle. He was a bundle of energy that was eager to share his stories. Brother Emery was a quick speaker at times but that did not hinder the quality of the interview. He was animated and engaged for the duration of both sessions. His anecdotes were entertaining. His demeanor reflected his eagerness to participate. I believe the interview reveals much important information about Brother Emery and LaSalle.