

2007

## Interview of Thomas McPhillips, F.S.C., Ph.D.

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## Field Notes

- Narrator:** Brother Tom McPhillips
- Interviewer:** Michael Roethel
- Date:** March 9, 2007 6:24 PM
- Location:** Brother Tom McPhillips office room in Hollroyd 202
- Language:** English
- Ephemera:** Pictures from High School yearbook, article on Brother Tom's teaching experience in Jerusalem, and an article on the Lindback Award winners.

Brother Tom has been a teacher at La Salle University since 1984 in the Biology Department. Although when he first started he was an Assistant professor, he became a Full professor in 1994. In addition to his occupation as a teacher, he is the faculty advisor to the La Salle Pep Band, and his instrument of choice is the trombone. Brother Tom also heads many of the various boards and commissions that are appointed by the brothers, such as the commission for 'Summer wellness'.

I am also a member of the La Salle University Pep Band along with Brother Tom, and we play the same instrument. I have been talking with him since the beginning of the first semester and spoke to him about possibly interviewing him. He seemed pretty receptive to the idea and we set the time and place as his office sometime during spring break. Brother Tom fit my subject for the project of interviewing a person who had their lives influenced very greatly by the Christian Brothers.

Brother Tom is a tall man, and at first glance, he can be quite imposing. He always wears glasses (his eyesight is not the best) and he can be constantly seen in the Christian Brothers attire of black pants, with a black shirt, and the white flap sticking out on top. His hair has grayed with age, but is quite quick witted, as he always has some funny comment to say. Brother Tom expressed his views quite eloquently, and he often went off on tangents making him a pleasure to interview. The week before spring break, we talked about a possible interview during Jazz Band events. We exchanged phone numbers and he said that he would be available the next week. So I went to Brother Joe Grabenstein and he was very helpful in getting information on Brother Tom's past. Through his help, I obtained fifty copied pages worth of information which I then used to formulate possible interview questions. I organized the questions according to different events in his life, and going into the interview I felt that I had enough questions, but at the same time I did not feel that I had enough to garner the two hours of interview time that I had to have.

Me and Brother Tom set up a time and place, which happened to be Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM. We talked for a bit, just as we do at Jazz Band, and about a half hour later, we started up the interview. As soon as I walked into his office, there was Classical Music playing, and this can be heard on the interview CD. His desk had a computer and it seemed quite organized, but behind him he had a window overlooking La Salle High School, and by it there seemed to be a whole bunch of papers, in what he described as an 'organized mess'. The walls were a beige color and there were some pictures on the walls, with a lone clock just above the door. By Brother Tom's desk, there was a chair, and it is here that I sat down and started to set up for the interview. I set up the recording device; got my list of questions and props set up and then we began the interview.

Once the interview started, Brother Tom answered all of my questions and even went further than the question asked, often going into other stories. He seemed to enjoy the opportunity to be interviewed and close to the end, he repeatedly apologized for 'taking too much time' but I told him I did not mind, and I really didn't because his stories were interesting and he was a joy to interview. There was no technical difficulty with the recorder at all and the two and a half interview was totally uninterrupted. I thought the most interesting part of the interview was when he went to Bethlehem University in Jerusalem to teach disadvantaged Muslim and Jewish students at that university run by the Christian Brothers. We went into great detail over this, where he recalled stories and laws that he found to be quite pointless. The cultural differences were also brought up and how different our culture and the culture over in Jerusalem. (Although my interviewing technique could have been a lot better, if you plan on listening to this interview, I would recommend not skipping anything because it is filled with interesting perspectives and stories, especially on his experience in Bethlehem)

Once we concluded the interview, I packed everything up and thanked him for letting me interview him. We talked a little more, and asked him if he would be available in case I needed clarification on anything. I told him that I would see him at the next Jazz Band event, and we said our goodbyes to each other.