

Spring 2013

Interview of Dominic Galante

Dominic Galante

La Salle University, galante@lasalle.edu

Lewis T. Mladjen

La Salle University, mladjen82@gmail.com

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FIELD NOTES

Interviewee: Mr. Dominic Galante

Interviewer: Mr. Lewis Mladjen

Interview Dates: First interview session conducted March 18, 2013. Second interview session conducted March 25, 2013. Both interviews began around 4:00 p.m.

Interview Location: Both sessions were conducted in Mr. Galante's office (Office of the University Registrar) located at LaSalle University in the David L. Lawrence, Administration Center 301, 1900 West Olney Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19141.

The Interviewee:

Mr. Dominic Galante was born August 29th, 1944 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The youngest of three children and a first-generation Italian-American, the majority of his life, both professional and private, was spent in Philadelphia. As a child Mr. Galante was raised in a devout Catholic home and attended Catholic grade school in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia. Upon graduating from Northeast Catholic High School in 1962 he planned on joining the workforce, as attending college was not financially possible. In the fall of 1962, with the help of his high school typing teacher, he was interviewed and hired at LaSalle College as an Administrative Assistant to the Office of the College Registrar. Mr. Galante spent the next seven years attending the evening school at LaSalle College. He received a B.A. in Management in 1969 at which time he was promoted to Assistant Registrar. In 1983 he was again promoted, this time to head the Office of the University Registrar. November 5, 2012, marked his 50th year of employment at LaSalle University but his decision to interview at LaSalle in 1962 also impacted his private life. In the summer of 1963 he met Ms. Mary Walter while she was working in the Admissions Office and on June 25, 1966, they were married. The Galante's raised their three children, Michael, Patricia, and Christine, in the Juniata Park neighborhood of Philadelphia; all three attended and graduated from LaSalle University. In 1990 he and his wife moved to Abington, Pennsylvania, where they presently reside.

The Interviewer:

I, Lewis Mladjen (b. August 16, 1982 in Bristol, PA), am the third and youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Mladjen of Levittown, Pennsylvania. As a child I attended Queen of the Universe Elementary School in Levittown, Pennsylvania, and in 2000 I graduated from Conwell-Egan Catholic High School. In 2004 I graduated from Gettysburg College with a B.A. in History and minor in Secondary Education although the highlight of these four years was the semester I spent in Copenhagen, Denmark, attending Denmark's International Study Program affiliated with the University of Copenhagen. Upon graduating I moved back to the Philadelphia area to pursue a career in secondary education. After two years of substitute teaching in lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania, I was hired at Bensalem High School. For the past six years I have taught 20th Century

American History, American Government, Studies in Popular Culture, and Contemporary Issues in Society, while coaching Varsity Girls Soccer. I am currently working toward an M.A. in History at LaSalle University and hope to graduate in the summer of 2015.

Background to the interview:

The interview of Mr. Dominic Galante was completed as part of Dr. Barbara Allen's graduate-level Oral History course at LaSalle University. As I have no personal connection to LaSalle University and only enrolled as a graduate student in the spring of 2013, the time of this assignment, the list that Dr. Allen provided us of possible interviewees was foreign to me. By this I mean that the list of possible interviewees all were connected to LaSalle in some fashion; some were current professors, some were Christian Brothers, some were office staff, and yet others were notable LaSalle graduates. As the interviewee, this presented me with a few challenges, both positive and negative.

First, having no prior relationship with any of these individuals, it was apparent that I would be choosing an interviewee blindly from the list. On the positive side this meant that no matter who I chose, neither of us would have any preconceived notions of the other. In a way this allows for a more authentic oral history to be constructed. At the same time, it also means that in order to pull enough usable information out of the interviewee a significant amount of research needs to be conducted in advance. Even so, without any prior relationship, many details and personal stories can easily be overlooked or missed by the interviewer.

A second hurdle that I had to consider was the challenge of the unknown. Although you might speak with an interviewee or share a few emails before the actual interview, you never know what you are going to get the day of the interview. For example, all the planning in the world cannot prepare you for someone that is not talkative or answers "yes/no" to your questions. Preparing for the unknown or unexpected is never easy but it is certainly magnified when the individuals have no prior experience with each other.

Considering all of these factors I chose carefully from the list that Dr. Allen provided. The short description that followed Mr. Galante's name stated, "50 years in the Registrar's Office." After a quick Google search yielded an article from the Philadelphia Inquirer highlighting his 50 years of service at LaSalle University, I was convinced that he was individual with a story to tell. I was not disappointed in my selection, as Mr. Galante proved to be a wealth of information.

Description of the Interview:

I first attempted to contact Mr. Galante via email. After trading three emails and two phone calls we finally coordinated a time and place for the interview that suited us. From the start Mr. Galante was a willing participant, it was just a matter of coordinating schedules. The numerous emails and phone calls, while initially burdensome, were actually quite beneficial. In these conversations I explained the goals of the interview and outlined the topics that we would cover. I also gathered much needed biographical

information that built upon the article I had originally read in the Philadelphia Inquirer. This biographical information in turn helped me to construct the major themes and topics of discussion for the interview. On Mr. Galante's side, he had questions about my life, education, and experiences, and in the process we built a foundation on which the oral history interview could stand.

From the start I asked Mr. Galante if we could break the interview into two sessions and he obliged. Breaking the interview up proved advantageous in many ways. First, this allowed me to reflect on the weaknesses of the first session and improve in those areas for the second session. Breaking the interview into two sessions also provided us with a logical stopping point in his story. The first session generally covers the years leading up to his hiring at the university whereas the second session generally covers his 50 years at the university. Lastly, breaking the interview up helped minimize distractions, interruptions, and fatigue for both of us, while minimizing the stress placed on his already busy schedule.

For both interview sessions I arrived a few minutes early in the David Lawrence Administrative Center. The Office of the University Registrar is on the third floor of the building and we mutually decided that his office would be the ideal location to record both interviews. On both occasions Mr. Galante was wrapping up meetings as I arrived and so the office staff politely directed me to wait a few minutes while he finished up for the day. With a few minutes to sit and observe the office, I noticed his staff was well dressed and busy at work answering phones and helping walk-in students with their questions.

Session 1

I heard Mr. Galante before I saw him. Even though the door back to the offices was shut, I could hear his distinct voice and hearty laugh coming. Upon meeting in person for the first time, we shook hands, shared a few niceties, and without hesitation proceeded to his office. I noticed that someone in the office had a radio on; a Beatle's song was playing. Entering Mr. Galante's office the first thing you would notice is the scent of a burning candle. I mentioned this to him and he said that he likes the scent and ambiance that candles give off. Mr. Galante sat down behind his desk, I sat across from him, and we spoke for a few minutes before starting the recording. I had to stop Mr. Galante because he was already starting to talk about things that I hoped to get on record and so we did not waste any more time. During the interview we spoke without any interruptions. On a few occasions you can hear police sirens in the background but overall the sound quality is excellent. Both of our voices come across clear although we occasionally speak over each other. I was happy to develop a rapport with Mr. Galante in this session, knowing that it would only make things easier the second time we met. After completing this session we spoke for another 35 minutes, for the most part just getting to know each other, although in one instance he elaborated on the story of his father fleeing Italy. I included this more detailed explanation of his fathers' "ordeal" in brackets in the log that follows. Unfortunately there were a number of instances in this first session where I did

not ask follow-up questions when it would have made sense, especially when names and places were alluded to. To correct this issue Mr. Galante and I shared numerous emails to fill in these gaps. This information was included in the log in brackets along with the date of the email that contained this information. Some of the questions in this session were developed with the help of the Thompson Life Story Interview Guide but the majority of questions were tailored to the information Mr. Galante provided me in our initial contacts. The information in this session would be very useful to a Historian looking at the social history of Philadelphia in the 1950s and 1960s.

Session 2

The second session was much like the first. Again a candle was burning but I realized more patently this time how everything in his office seemed to have a place. For example, one might assume that the Registrar of a large university could be overwhelmed with paperwork, however Mr. Galante clearly liked to keep his personal space organized, his desk was clean. Behind him was displayed the basketball that the 2012-2013 team signed for him in recognition of his 50 years serving LaSalle and all around it felt more like you entered someone's living room at home than an office. As I came to find out in this second session, Mr. Galante thinks of LaSalle as a second home and therefore it is understandable that he treats his office and staff as such. There were a few differences in the two sessions however. The most obvious is that this second session ran about 30 minutes longer than our first session one week earlier. Regardless of length, neither was interrupted at any point. A second difference is that nearly all of the questions in this session were designed by me to specifically elicit information about his 50 years at the university. I therefore consulted the Thompson Guide but rarely incorporated any of its suggestions. Finally, the follow-up questions in this session added more depth to the conversation and allowed for a better flow to this part of the interview. I believe that in the future this session would be useful to anyone researching the changes at LaSalle in the second half of the 20th century.

The interview of Mr. Galante was a rewarding experience. He was a candid participant but more importantly he had a valuable lesson to share. His story reminds us that life is full of experiences and decisions that shape the person we become. For Mr. Galante, taking a position at LaSalle in 1962, admittedly for financial reasons, became a defining moment in his life. It was through LaSalle that he met his wife, received his degree, and watched all three of his children graduate from college. After listening to this interview, even the most objective listener would be hard pressed to disagree with Mr. Galante when he states towards the end of our second interview that, "I think things happen for a reason."

Note on recording:

For recording, I used my Apple MacBook Pro laptop. I did not use an additional microphone and the interview was recorded in MP3 format. The interview was recorded using GarageBand software provided on the laptop. Playback and resulting abstract/log

was completed using this software. Upon completion the interview was placed on a flash drive while the abstract/log and field notes were typed using Microsoft Word. The original files are stored on this laptop while copied files can be found in the LaSalle University Archives and LaSalle University Digital Commons.

Editing the Log:

My editing decisions included:

- 1) Adding, in brackets, the year when clarification was necessary
- 2) Use of headings in bold type font to indicate changes in topic or conversation
- 3) Placing a time indicator at the top left of each log entry and at the beginning and end of each recording session
- 4) Including, in brackets, additional information received through email
- 5) Placing information about pauses and visual cues or nonverbal sounds in parenthesis
- 6) Using quotes when directly recounting conversation from the interview