Interview with Mr. Sidney James MacLeod

Location: LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Date: March 15, 2013

Interviewer: Amy E. Brooks
Abstract:

Mr. Sidney J. MacLeod, Jr. was born in 1933 in Chicago, Illinois. His father was a medical doctor and his mother was a homemaker. He is the oldest of three children and the only boy. He attended Saint Mary’s College in Winona, Minnesota and went to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. for graduate school. After graduate school he was drafted into the U.S. Army where he served two years on several domestic military bases. He began working at La Salle in 1959. In 1961 he married his wife, Mary Jane. They have four children (three sons and one daughter). He continues to work at La Salle full-time. When he retires he looks forward to travelling with his wife.

Index of Interview conducted March 15, 2012 at 12:45 p.m.

This interview was conducted on La Salle’s campus, at the Communications Center, in Mr. MacLeod’s office (room 214).

00:13 to 06:55

Introduction, permission, consent, birth date and place.

Mr. MacLeod also describes what he remembers about his grandparents. He mentions that his maternal grandparents lived in Missouri and his paternal grandfather was a medical doctor (and eventually his father would take over his grandfather’s practice).

06:55 - 18:54

Mr. MacLeod’s parents and siblings

Mr. MacLeod describes his parents in great detail (although he never mentions their first names). He states that his father was born in 1903, went to Bowen High School in Chicago and from there went on to the University of Chicago where he majored in pre-med and then went to the University of Illinois for medical school. He discusses how his father was drafted at the age of 40 during World War II. His father was in Patton’s army in the 12th armored division. His mother was born in 1912. He says his father and mother met when they were set up by mutual family friends. [Claude E. Griesel Funeral Home 10240 Ewing Ave.; Chicago IL. MacLeod’s mother live next door at 10242 Ewing Ave.] Mr. MacLeod discusses how his parents three children, he was the oldest. Mr. MacLeod had a younger sister Nancy who passed away at the age of fifty, and his youngest sister Ruth is still living. Ruth and her husband live in Onekama, Michigan and Ft. Myers, Florida. Nancy had five children (three boys and two girls). Two of Nancy’s children passed away. Ruth has three children (John, George and Liz). I asked Mr. MacLeod if he is able to see his family often. He said he saw them more when his mother was
alive, but she passed away a few years ago and he said she was the main impetus that brought him back to Chicago, but he hopes to plan another trip to visit family soon. He said he went to Chicago often when his children were younger and he would go for weddings and anniversary parties. When I asked if he thought his parents were strict when he was growing up, he responded with comments about him and his sisters had a good time and a “great growing up”. I asked what examples he thinks his parents set in the hopes that he would follow and he said they really showed him how to treat people, he said they treated everyone equally. He explains that his parents had an African American woman work for them (helping with cleaning and ironing) and that they treated her family like a part of their family.

18:55 – 29:39

**Daily life and childhood**

Mr. MacLeod describes the house he grew up in as having four bedrooms, a front porch, a back porch and a basement. He also mentions that his paternal grandmother lived with them in the house. He said his basement had Amos and Andy’s bar in it. He describes chores he had to do around the house growing up. He said his Saturday chore was to scrub the kitchen floor. He said he cut the grass and he enjoys cutting the grass today. He said his sisters were the dishwashers and that reminded him that his family ate dinner together every night. I asked him if his father was at dinner most of the time or did his work as a doctor take him away at odd hours. He explained that his father rarely worked odd hours. He explained that he was a doctor for industrial workers before the war (he named companies like General Mills, American Maize and Chicago Steel and Wire Company). He said the people who worked at those plants were his patients. After the war those companies hired doctors, so he joined other physicians in a joint practice and most of his worked involved giving physical examinations. He said one day his dad came home and said he gave Baryshnikov and Margot Fonteyne exams. He said they were performing in Chicago at the time. I asked him what he did for fun as a child and he said he loved to play sports, he said the boys in the neighborhood would play roller skate hockey “sewer to sewer” and he named one good friend he had, Jim Donovan. He also said that in seventh and eighth grade he started to participate in school plays and he really liked that. He said that next to his school was a girls’ high school and him and his friends asked the nuns that ran the school if they could play basketball in their gym on Saturdays. He said the nuns said yes. At one point the Sisters mentioned to the group of boys that the school had a show coming up and they asked the boys if they would be in the show (they needed boys). Mr. MacLeod said they felt like they “better do it”. He said he also participated in school plays in his high school.

29:40 – 41:38

**Neighborhood, Parish and School**

When I asked Mr. MacLeod to describe the neighborhood he grew up in, he immediately recalled the neighborhood blackouts that they had during World War II. He also remembered the
neighborhood having air raid wardens. He said his parents socialized with the families that his father had taken care of (and they did not live in the neighborhood), but he also stated that his parents belonged to the South Shore Country Club. He said his father was not Roman Catholic, but attended events like his children’s First Holy Communion and the first mass he served as an altar boy. Mr. MacLeod attended Saint Philip Neri School at 72nd and Merrill Street. He remembers playing football, basketball, baseball and even boxing there. He recalled two summers during the war (the summer of 1943 and 1944) his mom, grand mom and sisters spent visiting his father (in 1943 they went to Camp Campbell in Hopkinsville, KY and in 1944 they spent in Camp Barkeley in Abilene, Texas). He said after that his father was sent overseas and that was a tough time. I asked him why his parents chose Saint Philip Neri as his school and he did not know the reason. He described the neighborhood he lived in as mainly Catholic and Jewish. He said that Saint Philip Neri School had children from different family backgrounds (some parents were plumbers, while other parents were doctors and lawyers). He did say he remembered that the South Shore Country Club was Anti-Semitic.

41:39 – 50:00

Saint Leo’s High School

When asked what his most vivid memory from high school was Mr. MacLeod said there were many, but the first he recalls is his school playing the football city championship game at Soldier’s Field. He said he was a cheerleader. He said he played intermural basketball and basketball for a park league. He said he enjoyed being in St. Leo’s school plays and musicals. I asked him if he ever got a lead role, and he said “sort of” . . . he described being in Robin Hood Incorporated as Friar Tuck. He said he had to wear padding to look bigger, and that triggered his memory about being in a play at St. Mary’s College (The Hasty Heart) in which he played a football player . . . where he also had to wear padding in order to look bigger. He explained that Saint Leo’s was a school ran by the Irish Christian Brothers, he doesn’t know if that order still exists. He explained that Brother Ignatius Edmund Rice founded them (he thinks that they broke away from the Christian brothers). He said he did have some lay teachers but most of his teachers were Irish Christian Brothers. He said they were good guys and they had a positive influence on him. I asked him if he had any jobs during his high school years and he said yes. He mentioned his friend Jim Donovan, he said he sold ice cream bars around Soldier’s Field and he did that for a while too. He also said his dad helped him get a job at a department store during the Christmas season while he was in high school as well. I asked him what his hopes and dreams were around the time he graduated from high school, and he said at that point he really wasn’t sure what he wanted to do.
Saint Mary’s College and Catholic University

When we first started discussing St. Mary’s, Mr. MacLeod repeated several times, “I never went there, I never went there”. This confused me at first, but then I realized he meant, he had never visited there, but chose it as his college anyway. He said he thinks some other guys who played basketball for his high school visited there and said it was nice, plus he figured he liked the Irish Christian brother education he received at Saint Leo’s, so he would probably like a Christian Brother school. He said when he went there it was an all boys’ school and there was a girls’ school across the street, St. Therese’. He said he majored in business, and as a freshman he chose to minor in education. He said one summer he did his observation at South Shore High School. However, he changed his minor to Speech/Radio/Drama his junior year. I asked him if he got homesick when he went to college, he said no. He said it was fun, one fond memory he has was he was the P.A. announcer for the football and basketball games. He graduated from Saint Mary’s in 1954. He said that a Christian Brother who directed shows at Saint Mary’s told him about a summer theater Catholic University had in Olney, Maryland. Mr. MacLeod, knowing he was going to be drafted by the U.S. Army, was very interested in applying for an internship that would allow him to participate in this summer program before he was drafted. He said he talked to his parents about it and they supported him. In the summer of 1954 he decided to intern at that summer theater. It was there that he met Dan Rodden from LaSalle University. It was there that he started doing more technical, behind the scenes work (such as building sets, working the light board, etc.) Mr. MacCleod was offered a scholarship to Catholic University (for graduate school) that summer. He accepted it, which extended his draft college deferment. It was a work scholarship, he would go to classes in the morning and in the afternoons and evenings he would build sceneries and run the light board for the shows. He continued to participate in the summer theater program in Olney, Maryland. Once he finished the graduate program at Catholic University he got the job of Stage Manager and Tech. Director of a traveling group known as the University Players, however the draft board would not let him go, and so he was drafted in November of 1956.

The Army

Mr. MacLeod was drafted by the U.S. Army in 1956. He was first sent to Fort Carson, Colorado for training. He said he saw Pike’s Peak every morning and it was beautiful. The next place he was sent to was Fort Gordon in Augusta, Georgia. There he was enrolled in the Field Radio Repair School. He said he did well there and in fact applied to stay there as a teacher but did not get the job. From there he was placed in the 2nd Missile Battalion and sent to Fort Hood, Texas and made a Team Chief. He worked on sending telephone lines across F.M. Radio. He said the experience was fun and interesting. He left the U.S. Army in 1958.
La Salle University (Part 1)

After Mr. MacLeod was discharged from the U.S. Army, he moved back to Chicago with his parents. When he was there Dan Rodden called him and said they were opening a theater at LaSalle, and asked him “How would you like to come here and work with me in the theater, teach speech in the English Department?” MacLeod said sounds good, and that’s how he came to Philadelphia. [At this point he remembers something from the Army that he wanted to mention. He said he was sent to a N.C.O. (Non-commissioned Officers) school where he came in second in his class. He said he was sent to a N.C.O. (Non-commissioned Officers) school where he came in second in his class. He said he won five dollars and he thinks he saved the five dollar bill.]

At this point I almost did not ask a question because I thought I had already received its answer, but I stated “my question I had prepared was when and how did you first hear of LaSalle University?… so I guess” Mr. MacLeod quickly interjected, “Oh no through Tom Gola!” I said ok, tell us about that. Mr. MacLeod says “1954, St. Mary’s…” He describes with enthusiasm listening to March Madness; listening to LaSalle beat Bradley. He said they were excited because it was a Christian Brothers school. He thinks that was the first time he had heard of LaSalle. He then went on to say that many years later he would edit and shoot the video that was played when the Gola Arena was dedicated.

When asked if he remembered his interview at LaSalle, Mr. MacLeod immediately recalled Bill Quinn (once known as Brother Didymus John) who was the Dean of Studies at the time. He said that he is pretty sure Dan Rodden “worked a deal”. Dan Rodden had taken over the Masque and when the Union building was being built they were planning on including a theater in the building. Mr. MacLeod said his mentor at Catholic University, Jim Wearing designed the theater for LaSalle. Mr. MacLeod recalled how the plan did not include a basement, that the dressing rooms were going to be upstairs, but eventually a basement was included. Mr. MacLeod thinks that they could not actually call it a theater because of building codes, so it was really an auditorium with a platform. Mr. MacLeod returns to the subject of his first interview and recalls how he believed that Dan Rodden really created the position for him. Mr. MacLeod stated that when he first began teaching at LaSalle, teachers taught fifteen hours (a week). He said his position was set up so that he would teach twelve hours and the remaining three he would work in the theater. I asked him to describe his first year and he described it as “crazy”. He had never taught, but now he was teaching Speech. He said at that time Speech was a one hour course and everyone in the English Department taught a section of it. He said the theater was not completed until February of 1960. He remembers the first show performed in it was Guys and Dolls.
For one of my questions I first quoted a part of Rossi’s book, *Living the Promise* where it stated “the Masque would enter its Golden Age from the late 1940’s through the 1960’s under the leadership of two of the most talented faculty members] Dan Rodden and Sid MacLeod”. I then asked Mr. MacLeod if he could please tell us about the Masque and his involvement with the Masque. Mr. MacLeod said he felt it was a golden age of the Masque because of the people that were around to do it, many of them continued to go on and work professionally. He recalls how at that time LaSalle was all boys, so for the shows the female actors would come from “anywhere”. One particular person MacLeod mentions is Patrick Cronin who was a freshman when MacLeod started working at LaSalle. He said he directed him when he played Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

Rossi’s book also mentions that Mr. MacLeod built many of the sets for La Salle’s theater productions, so I asked him if there was one production of which he was most proud. MacLeod responded that they were all great experiences, and to pick one was like “apples and oranges”. However, he did recall one experience that he said was fun. He said he got a call from a doctor at Einstein whose son-in-law had written a show, and he was wondering if La Salle would be interested in producing and performing it. The son-in-law’s name was Oscar Brand. The year was 1976 and the show was in honor of the bicentennial. It was called *Sing America Sing*. MacLeod said he met with Oscar Brand and his wife and agreed to do the show. He said this was exciting to him because he was directing a show that had never been done before.

1:27:35 – 2:16:44

**La Salle University (Part 2)**

I asked Mr. MacLeod if there was a favorite course which he has taught at La Salle, and he responded that he enjoyed teaching Speech. He began to discuss how people gave interesting speeches, and how he remembered teaching Tom Maloney, who was Mayor of Wilmington, Delaware at one point. He said some speeches were really moving and that he and the students were so moved they would cry in class. One particular speech he recollects was given by a student who had prosthesis. He said for this student’s final speech he talked about it and showed it to the class. He emphasized how much this student trusted him and his classmates to share that story. This memory was so vivid in Mr. MacLeod’s memory that he started to get choked up speaking about it. Mr. MacLeod said he will be teaching Speech next semester. Teaching Speech is how Mr. MacLeod started getting into the media. He explains that Brother Richard Hawley, who taught Biology and MacLeod said was a “great teacher”, was in charge of the audio visual equipment at La Salle. At one point sent out a ditto saying “we just purchased a television camera, if you would be interested …” MacLeod said he went over to Brother Richard so fast to say yes I am interested that he thought the ink hadn’t even dried on the ditto yet. MacLeod said this was a great tool to use to teach speech because it allowed his students to see their behavior
like it someone itched their nose when they spoke, etc.). This was the beginning of Mr. MacLeod’s involvement with the media and the “video business”.

In responding to a question about how tenure has changed, MacLeod admitted the requirements have changed very much. MacLeod had his tenure certificate hanging on the wall in his office. He said it was granted to him by Brother Daniel Bernium, he said it was a “blanket”, that he didn’t apply for it. He received tenure in 1968. At that point they gave you a certificate and a wallet sized certificate. MacLeod said now you have to apply for tenure, that you are required to be here a certain amount of time, and that you go through your department and go to the committee of tenure and promotion.

MacLeod describes the Communication Department as the best department at La Salle. He said it is a joy to work with the people in the department. In asking him to describe some of the friendships that he has developed over his time at La Salle, he describes how the building of the Communication Center had a big impact on his relationships. He recalls the time when the department was in Olney Hall, but on different floors, etc. He said once the Communications Department was built, his department was brought together. However, being separated from the rest of campus is a negative aspect of it. He talked about different places on campus he had offices. He mentions his first office was in Leonard Hall (which included a cafeteria and a barber shop) but that was eventually turned into offices. Then his office was moved to Benill Hall. He said these building were knocked down and he has bricks from them. He talked about College Hall which he said was the business school. He said in those years he would see everybody throughout the day. He said the way he meets people now is doing things like being on the Faculty Senate. After this digression, MacLeod says one of the closest friendships he has made at La Salle was with Brother Richard Hawley. Brother Richard Hawley passed away, but they had started the T.V. station together. He spoke very highly of Hawley, he explained he taught not only Biology but Science Education. He described one of Brother Hawley’s teaching strategies in teaching Science Education. Brother Hawley would require the students to teach mock classes, and he would make a peer student fall out of the chair during the lesson. The purpose of this was to prepare his students for situations like that in the classroom. One student returned to Brother Hawley and thanked him, saying he saved someone’s life because he was prepared when that happened in his classroom. [This story triggers MacLeod’s on memory about a time he had a student giving a speech (in the evening division), and that student fainted. The student faked the fainting to get his audience’s attention.]

The Television Studio started out in Holroyd Hall with a mobile the cart that carried black and white Sony cameras. MacLeod thinks he has taught in every building of the La Salle’s campus. He then talks about Olney Hall, where there were two unfinished classrooms in the basement. He and Hawley built a control room in one of the rooms, in the other room they had the maintenance people put a grid up so they put lights up in there, and they painted the walls grey (because it was black and white T.V.). The acoustics were terrible, and when they had people come and look at it they found out if would cost too much money to fix. So he and Rich
put ceiling tile on the walls to help the acoustics. President Daniel Burke gave a presentation in there one time. After Olney and black and white T.V., Brother Emri and Ray Heath (Dean of Students) took MacCleod and Hawley to every building on campus, in search of where to put the T.V. Studio. Finally, they decided the lounge in Cassian Hall. They put up a cinder block wall and put two doors in, and they put in an air conditioner. MacLeod said he The Lerro Corporation electronics installed all of the equipment. Then when they built the Communications Center, MacLeod took a sabbatical in order to help install all the equipment and furniture in the new building. One of the greatest challenges of the Television Studio was the places where they had it were not built to be a studio. The T.V. Studio’s greatest accomplishment, according to MacLeod, is what it has done for the University and for the students. It’s a training ground for the students, many of whom are on air today. MacLeod recalls one student who was hired over the phone. MacLeod said this student sent out a DVD on which he had interviewed the Phillies’ owner coach in Clearwater, Florida. This DVD was so impressive to a station in Waco, Texas that they called him and hired him over the phone. This student is now the sports director at that station. MacLeod said that run the T.V. Studio at La Salle, there is only one employee (the station manager). When asked what he sees for the future of the T.V. Studio, MacLeod says the department hopes to get another position in order to help the Station Manager. He thinks this may help the programming expand a little bit.

In the early 1990’s MacLeod was both assistant and acting Chair of the Communication Department. MacLeod explains that he became the chair when Brother Gerry Molyneaux went on sabbatical. MacLeod explains how that position is a demanding job. He is grateful for the chairmen they have had, Brother Gerry and now Lynne Texter. In describing how the Communications Department has changed through the years, MacLeod recalls how first there was a film course and public speaking. Eventually the media brought more courses. Now they are four tracks: Mass Communications, Public Relations, Journalism and Communication Management.

Technological change has made MacLeod aware that he has to keep learning. He definitely feels as though the change has made editing and recording easier.

2:16:45 - 2:52:12

La Salle University (Part 3)

Recalling Major Events and Challenges Ahead

MacLeod said that a week from tomorrow is the Charter Dinner for the 150th anniversary. In 1963 Kennedy was assassinated, and for some reason that year the Charter Dinner was called off (and that was the 100th anniversary of La Salle).

Becoming co-ed: there were women here. Nuns would teach in the summer. MacLeod thinks at first the Christian Brothers had a rule that they only taught boys (this of course has
changed). Then they allowed girls from Chestnut Hill College to take classes here (at La Salle). In 1970 freshmen, sophomore, juniors and senior classes welcomed female students.

Becoming a University: the letterhead changed and we got a food truck. The campus has grown; the administrators are on West Campus now.

Back in the 60’s, Brother Daniel Bernian was the President. He told the students that they could protest all they want; just you cannot stop classes or the business of this school. MacLeod remembers both faculty and students participating in sit-ins in College Hall (then Deans Office and other offices were in there). On Saint Barbara’s day the ROTC used to march, in the 1960’s, there were protesters on that day as well.

In the gymnasium (where the book store is now), MacLeod did the lighting for the Black Student Union event where Muhammad Ali and Sammy Davis, Jr. made appearances.

Although we had already spoken briefly about the arrival of female students on campus, I asked MacLeod what was the reaction of the students and faculty. MacLeod said as far as he remembers, positive. He remembered the very first women on campus were the secretaries.

When asked about the awards he had been given throughout his time at La Salle, MacLeod says the one he is most proud of was in the year 2000; he was made an affiliate to the Christian Brothers. MacLeod names two others that have gotten the award, Jack McCloskey and Ray Ricci. When asked why he was awarded with such an honor, MacLeod says he hasn’t really thought about it, but he imagines all the things he has been involved in, like the T.V. Studio, the Communication Department, a few videos he had done for the Order, etc. He recalls spending one spring break with Brother Kevin Dalmasse going got all the Christian Brother schools in New Jersey, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. area. Another video he did for Brother Robert Schieler when the Christian Brother districts were going to be merged. Brother Dennis Malloy is the head of DENA (The District of Eastern North America) now.

Faculty Senate was explained by MacLeod to be the group of faculty that deal with issues and work with the administration on things like promotion, tenure and retirement.

The Communications Department has processes they are proud of, one is a peer review.

When asked about other roles MacLeod has held at La Salle that he was not asked about in this interview, MacLeod recalled that up until this year, he had taped La Salle’s home basketball games (both men and women’s). He said the only reason he stopped was because he had a medical problem that took him away from it.

MacLeod’s greatest LaSalle memory is hard to pinpoint. To him things could have happened forty to fifty years ago that were a big deal then, but since they have faded and blended with other memories. MacLeod says with great assurance that La Salle is a good place to work. He spoke about being “LaSallian”. To MacLeod, LaSallian is a person who treats people –
everybody – the way people should be treated. Not just them, all people. A LaSallian cares about people and meets each person where they are and helping them anyway you can, especially with education.

The community around La Salle has changed because it has been a changing neighborhood. MacLeod says that the University has been able to deal with that really well. MacLeod did a video for the Student Life organization about the neighborhood. The video included interviews of people from the neighborhood. One of them now has a show on La Salle T.V. He is a Christian Pastor and he does a show called, “Bridging the Gap”.

The challenges faced by La Salle, through MacLeod’s eyes, include enrollment, the economy, and high cost of education. He brought up online courses, saying that many schools do it because it’s a “cash-cow”. He did say La Salle has some online courses, but he knows his department tries to minimize those courses.


**Life outside La Salle**

MacLeod enjoys watching television. He laughs and says his wife complains about. He says his guilty pleasure is DIY; he loves the show “Holmes on Homes”. He enjoys the Discovery Channel and watching biographies.

MacLeod has been married since 1961 and has four children. His wife’s name is Mary Jane, and together they have three sons and one daughter: Sidney James, Bradford Peter, Mary Delphine and John Douglas.

I asked Mr. MacLeod “how important have friends been to you in your adult life?” MacLeod responded that a lot of his friends have been connected to La Salle. He recalls when he was involved with theater; he would teach during the day and work at the theater at night.

I asked MacLeod how he met his wife and he said through the theater. He said his wife, Mary, was from upstate Pennsylvania. He said she was from Exeter, and that her father was a coal miner. Mary was living with some other girls from upstate in the Philadelphia area. One of Mary’s roommates was in Guys and Dolls (Eleanor McDonough). He met Mary at a cast party.

When I asked MacLeod how transportation has changed in his lifetime, MacLeod remembered that his family had one car and his mother didn’t drive. MacLeod thinks the first time he got his license he was in the army. He said he didn’t have a car until he got married.

In describing how typical meals have changed, he said him and his wife only sometimes sit down at the table to eat together. He said he enjoys cooking. He said his youngest son, John,
lives with his wife in Conshohocken and they go there for holiday meals sometimes and that he really enjoys that.

MacLeod describes his faith as a Roman Catholic by first recollecting his education by Dominican Sisters, Irish Christian Brothers and the Christian Brother’s at St. Mary’s. He said he lectors at his parish and he does workshops for other people who lector.

MacLeod said his health has been pretty good throughout his adult life, up until a year ago. Last year he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He said he finished his treatment the Monday after Thanksgiving.

MacLeod still has some relatives in Chicago (nieces and nephews), but he does not get to visit much. He said he went to visit more when his mother was alive, but she died a couple years ago. He said she was 98 when she passed away.

MacLeod said the best thing in his life so far has been his family, getting married to Mary Jane and then La Salle would be right behind it. He said he could not have done it without Mary Jane.

When asked what has been the worst thing in his life, he said the loss of the people that he had known. His grandmother, she had a seizure and she didn’t know people and it was hard because he saw her, but she did not know him. Losing his sister, his nephew, and his niece (.to breast cancer).

In his time ahead, MacLeod said he will travel with his wife (when he retires). He mentions visiting his sister in Florida and his son in Oregon.

At the end of the interview, I, Amy Brooks, thanked Mr. MacLeod for participating.