


Spring 2013

## Interview of Michael R. Dillon, Ph.D., J.D.

Michael R. Dillon, Ph.D., J.D.  
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### Recommended Citation

Dillon,, Michael R. Ph.D., J.D. and Prendergast, John A., "Interview of Michael R. Dillon, Ph.D., J.D." (2013). *All Oral Histories*. 43.  
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## Field Notes

**Interviewee:** Dr. Michael Richard Dillon

**Interviewer:** John A. Prendergast

**Interview date:** March 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 (6pm)

**Interview location:** Dr. Dillon's residence in Lafayette Hill, PA.

\*Field notes written on the evening of March 14<sup>th</sup>. Additions and edits made on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Interviewee:**

Dr. Michael Richard Dillon, (b. December 17<sup>th</sup> 1942 in Evanston, IL), grew up in two suburbs of Chicago—Skokie and Wilmette. His mother, Rita Dillon (nee Hanley), worked at a bank for a number of years while also tending to six children, and his father, William R. Dillon, who went by Richard, worked as an attorney. Dr. Dillon is the oldest of five siblings, with four sisters and one brother.

He spent his early childhood in the town of Skokie, IL before moving with his family to Wilmette, IL at the beginning of fifth grade. Dr. Dillon enjoyed many hobbies as a child, particularly riding his bike and playing pick-up baseball games with friends. He went to high-school at Loyola Academy, a Jesuit institution, where he continued playing many sports, notably tennis. Dr. Dillon was well-rounded in terms of academic interests, finding English, Science, and Latin all fascinating.

While preparing for college, Dr. Dillon applied to only one university—the University of Notre Dame. For him, it was the *only* choice. His father was a Notre Dame graduate and his entire family immersed itself into the entire Notre Dame culture, cheering on their athletic teams and loving everything about the Notre Dame community. Majoring in Political Science, Dr. Dillon had nothing but the very best experience as an undergraduate.

Despite his acceptance into the very prestigious graduate program at the University of Chicago where he could have studied under Leo Strauss, Dr. Dillon chose to remain at Notre Dame for both his Master's and Ph.D. because that is where his soon-to-be wife resided. They eventually married and, while in the finishing stages of his Ph.D., Dr. Dillon learned of a position that would be opening up at La Salle College in Philadelphia before it had officially opened up—thanks to the connections of one of his Notre Dame mentors, Dr. Paul Bartholomew.

Dr. Dillon went to Philadelphia, interviewed for the position, was hired and began in the Political Science Department at La Salle College under then Chair, Dr. Robert Courtney. Moving his family to Philadelphia went as smoothly as Dr. Dillon could have hoped, helped along by an accidental living arrangement in which they moved into a residential complex co-occupied by many La Salle College faculty and staff, including Dr. Jim Butler, who still teaches in the English Department, and the now-deceased but long-time Director of the University's Honors Program, Dr. John Grady.

Dr. Dillon continued at La Salle throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, while simultaneously completing post-graduate work at Duke, Princeton, Harvard, and Wisconsin. He also made the decision in the early 1980s to apply to Temple University's Beasley School of Law, which offered a night program so that Dr. Dillon could attend law school at night. Needing a new challenge and further financial means to place his children through school, Dr. Dillon accepted an invitation into the program, graduated in 1985, and chose to leave La Salle to be a part of the Litigation Section of the law firm Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP .

After practicing law for twenty-two years, most of which included environmental law cases, Dr. Dillon saw an opening for Chair of the Political Science department at La Salle for the 2006-2007 academic year and he decided to apply. His wife sadly passed away in 2006, and his children were now through school, so Dr. Dillon looked to get back into teaching.

Since his return, Dr. Dillon has observed much success as the Political Science Chair. He added two faculty members, Dr. Michael Boyle and Dr. Miguel Glatzer, each highly regarded in their respective fields of study, and he participates in many activities around the University—notably serving on the Faculty Senate and as the moderator for the student-run Mock Trial team.

### **The Interviewer:**

I, John Anthony Prendergast, (b. 1990 in Upper Darby, PA), grew up in the Southwest section of Philadelphia before moving to the Northeast section of the city at the age of ten. I graduated from Roman Catholic High School, located in Center City (Phila.) at Broad & Vine Sts., in 2008. I have since achieved my B.A in Political Science and History from La Salle University in 2012, and I am currently working on my M.A. in History at La Salle. I intend to graduate at the conclusion of the spring 2013 semester. Concurrently, I work full time for the Philadelphia Phillies as a Marketing & Events Representative. It is my hope to attend law school within the next couple of years.

### **Background:**

In accordance with the guidelines and expectations of my graduate class, HIS 650-Oral History, at La Salle University, I was required to perform a two-hour field interview for

the course's final project. In light of La Salle's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the project called for an interview of a La Sallian, and that person could be an alumnus, faculty member, or a member of La Salle's surrounding neighborhood. Despite the numerous possibilities, I chose to interview my former undergraduate faculty advisor and current Chair of the Political Science Department, Dr. Michael Richard Dillon. I was not only a student in many of Dr. Dillon's courses, but I was also a member of the Mock Trial team to which I was a founding member and Dr. Dillon moderated. We naturally developed a great rapport over the past few years and, thus, selecting Dr. Dillon as my interviewee for this project seemed an obvious choice. I informed him of my assignment, and I alerted him that our dialogue would be recorded. He happily agreed.

### **Description of Interview:**

After talking with Dr. Dillon over the phone, we decided that it would be best to conduct the interview at Dr. Dillon's residence in Lafayette Hill, PA. I arrived at his home just before 6pm on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 and we first discussed some preliminary matters. After catching up and taking care of the appropriate legal paperwork, we began the interview at approximately 6pm. We were the only two present in the entire house. Dr. Dillon owns a dog, but the dog "Maggie" was kept outside in the backyard. She barked six times over the course of the interview, so one may detect a faint bark in the background of the audio at those moments.

In terms of positioning, we sat across from one another at Dr. Dillon's dining room table—both dressed in business-casual clothing. We also both had beverages in hand throughout the interview: a couple glasses each of white wine (Pinot Grigio). One may detect at several points in the interview the sound of pouring a glass.

Before we commenced, I placed my Apple MacBook-Air in between us, and used the application called Garage Band to record the interview. I chose to use the internal microphone on the computer because, upon multiple audio tests, the internal microphone proved to be good-enough quality.

In total, the interview lasted three hours and seventeen minutes. I was careful to keep the focus on Dr. Dillon, and we covered much of the major highlights of his life including his recollections of childhood, his parents, family life, education, and his professional experience. The interview culminates with a discussion of Dr. Dillon's second, and current, term at La Salle University after having previously both taught at the University in the 1970s and early 1980s, and having litigated for the law firm Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP from 1985-2007.

As one will obviously note while listening, Dr. Dillon's telephone, located in the kitchen, rang four times throughout the course of the interview. I figured at the outset that this was inevitable—Dr. Dillon lives by himself but has many family members who call him and check-in from time to time. I was not prepared to ask him to unplug the phone or anything like that. With that said, the telephone rings did not disrupt the flow or pace of

the interview. We proceeded the conversation as if the phone was not ringing, which did not inhibit the quality.

### **Notes on Recording:**

I recorded this interview using an application called Garage Band on my MacBook Air (on battery power). I did not use an external microphone since I was satisfied with the quality of the internal microphone after several tests. Upon saving the audio file to my Garage Band folder, I was able to export the audio to “iTunes” where it was converted to an mp3 format and then subsequently saved to a flash drive.

### **Notes on Editing the Index:**

My editing decisions included:

- 1) Organizing the index topically. New time-stamps were inserted when the discussion shifted.
- 2) Writing in both fragment and sentence form.
- 3) Placing a time-stamp at each moment the phone rang.
- 4) Placing a time-stamp at each moment the dog barked.
- 5) Using footnotes to further elaborate or contextualize a statement.
- 6) Using *italics* to demonstrate emphasis.