

Spring 2015

Interview of George B. Stow, Ph.D.

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Field Notes

Interviewer: Ashley Maurer

Date: March 26, 2015 at 12:30 P.M.

Recording Location: Dr. Stow's office, 3rd Floor, Olney Hall, La Salle University, 1900 W. Olney Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19141.

Log Created by: Ashley Maurer

Recording Equipment: Galaxy S5 Mobile Phone Voice Recorded Application

* Field Notes completed on 4/19/15

The Interviewee:

Dr. George B. Stow is the initial and continuing Graduate History Program Director at La Salle University since its inception in 2004. Dr. Stow received his B.A. in Classics from Lehigh University, his M.A. in History from The University of Southern California and his Ph.D. in History from the University of Illinois in 1972. Dr. Stow specializes in English medieval history and his doctoral dissertation *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi: A Critical Edition* is dedicated to King Richard II of England. In recent years, Dr. Stow has presented papers at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, written and published a joint publication, *Patterns in World History*, a college level textbook, with Dr. Charles Desnoyers of La Salle University and Dr. Peter von Sivers of the University of Utah, and is currently conducting research on the 14th century chronicler Thomas Walsingham. In 1972, Dr. Stow began his career as part of the history faculty at La Salle University and was elected a fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1988. In 2003, he received the Lindback Teaching Award for excellence. His most notable publications are 2004's "The Continuation of the Eulogium Historiarum: Some Revisionist Perspectives" in the *English Historical Review* and 1984's "Richard II in Thomas Walsingham's Chronicles," in *Speculum*.

The Interviewer:

I, Ashley Maurer, was born in 1981 in Greensburg, Pennsylvania as Ashley Kayhart where I lived until 1997 with my parents and my younger brother. We moved then to Kennebunk, Maine, leaving our older brother to reside in our hometown. I moved to Philadelphia in 1999 and I earned my B.S. in Film and Video Production from Drexel University in 2003 and currently am working on my M.A. in History at La Salle University, concentrating on early modern English studies, particularly 16th Tudor scholarship. I first met Dr. Stow at La Salle University in the fall of 2013 while looking to change majors from Hispanic Studies to History. I then took my first course with Dr. Stow in the spring semester of 2014. Since then I have also studied under him in a seminar on 14th century England and will have him for a thesis advisor beginning in the

summer of 2015. I have lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania since the beginning of my studies at Drexel University in 1999 and currently work in admissions at the Art Institute of Philadelphia.

Background:

As I have a previous connection to Dr. Stow as his student, my original findings into his background began with my personal knowledge of him over the last year and half. After discussing the project with the Oral History professor, Dr. Barbara Allen, I decided to follow a reverse timeline approach to the interview and began my research on seven main areas: the Graduate History Program at La Salle University, change at La Salle University since 1972, the publication of *Patterns in World History*, from 2011, with Dr. Stow, Dr. Charles Desnoyers and Dr. Peter von Sivers, attendance at the International Medieval Congress at Western Michigan University, the Lindback Teaching Award and pedagogy, scholarly process and academic publication and the origins of Dr. Stow's interests in academia.

For research into the Graduate History Program I began with the Dr. Stow's previous interview in the Oral History program, conducted by Heather McGovern in 2006. I used this information as background research into Dr. Stow's thoughts on the beginning of the history program as well as my personal knowledge of the program. The McGovern interview was also used in regards to Dr. Stow's comments on the changing of La Salle over the previous thirty years.

In discussion of *Patterns in World History*, with approval from Dr. Allen, I created a short email survey (included) that I sent to Dr. Stow's colleagues Dr. Desnoyers of La Salle University and Dr. von Sivers of the University of Utah. In addition I researched the general structure of the publication and its available editions.

When discussing the Dr. Stow's receipt of the Lindback Teaching Award I used an earlier publication from the June 2, 2003 archives of the La Salle University Commons which included a quote from Dr. Stow which was used in the subsequent interview as well as a general examination into the Lindback Award from their website, www.lindbackfoundation.org.

My previous knowledge of Dr. Stow's role at the International Medieval Congress at Western Michigan was the main factor in the creation of questions dedicated to the specific topic, along with information gleaned from their website, wmich.edu/medieval/congress/index. In addition to these the use of Dr. Stow's curriculum vitae was indispensable to collect general data and dates relating to his career. This is published on the La Salle University website.

I created a four page questionnaire (included) for the interview that was approved by Dr. Allen. In it I also included quotes that I wished to discuss with Dr. Stow that contained his sentiments, those of his colleagues and reviews of his work. I used the Paul Thompson Questionnaire as well

as *Doing Oral History* by Donald Ritchie to create the substructure of my questions. Dr. Stow did not receive this questionnaire prior to our interview.

Description of the Interview:

The interview was conducted in Dr. Stow's office on the 3rd floor of Olney Hall at La Salle University on Thursday, March 26th, 2015. The time for our interview was scheduled with Dr. Stow a few weeks prior, during the course of our other discussions on current coursework. I met with Dr. Stow while he finished lunch and we had a conversation about the seminar course I was also involved in with Dr. Stow. We began our interview at 12:30 p.m. with the intent of working for two hours. As requested by Dr. Allen, Dr. Stow muted the volume to his computer and mobile phone, unplugged his office phone, and requested that Lauren DeAngelis, the administrative assistant in the history department display, a *Do Not Disturb* sign on his office door.

I began the interview by introducing both Dr. Stow and I for the tape, as well as the date (which was incorrectly mentioned at Thursday, March 27th, 2015) and letting Dr. Stow know the planned subject matter for the interview questions. Dr. Stow did not know the questions before going into the interview, only that it would be mainly focused on his academic career. I decided to follow a reverse timeline and began with Dr. Stow's knowledge and experience in the Graduate Program at La Salle University. He was receptive from the beginning of the interview with little to no short answers for his questions.

Dr. Stow was engaging and reflective throughout the two hours and five minutes of the interview. Before responding to my inquiries he would take a moment to consider the question at hand. Many responses began with the more clear cut, factual answer to a specific question and led into more self-reflective explanations.

A large portion of the interview, almost forty minutes, is dedicated specially to the Graduate History Program and how it has changed in its first ten years at La Salle University. Dr. Stow was an excellent resource for how the program was born and the challenges and alterations it has encountered over the last decade. Dr. Stow also happily discussed the scholarship of the faculty at La Salle University and how the school has changed throughout his years there.

Other notes of interest in the interview include Dr. Stow's opinions about developing, writing and publishing a college textbook (39:06), the best and worst of the college professor workload and meritocracy (1:06:21), and of greatest note, the development of his early years from a boisterous, lackadaisical young man to a Ph.D. scholar (1:28:41).

As to scholarship, the section on the International Congress of Medieval Studies (1:42:16) discusses Dr. Stow's experiences on planning, writing, presenting and eventually publishing

scholarly articles and how the connections made through the conventions such as this one are invaluable to the process of published academia.

Dr. Stow was not asked much about his private life, though occasionally his wife and daughter were mentioned. This is perhaps the weakest element in the interview, however, based off of my prior knowledge of Dr. Stow I believe now, in retrospect, that a secondary personal interview would have merit.

Note on Recording:

I recorded the interview using a pre-installed application on my Samsung Galaxy 5 mobile phone which was called Voice Recorder. The interview was then downloaded to my laptop as a .4ma file from the Verizon Cloud and imported in Audacity. The file was then exported from Audacity as a .wav file. I created the interview log and transcribed quotations from the interview using the application on my phone for ease of use. I would play, pause and type throughout the interview. When finished, I replayed the interview as I read the log to check for errors and edited for ease of use.

Editing the Transcript/Interview Log:

The interview log contains some quotations from the interviewee. Note: it is not a complete transcription. Quotes were used to emphasize the importance of content and or details throughout the interview. Subheadings are included for ease of use and the dividing of content along with minute separations which range from 2-7 minutes depending on the length of discussion. My editing deletions included:

- 1) Eliminating repeating words on occasion, though many were left to show pauses and thought.
- 2) Placing parenthesis () where visual information from original interview relates to the subject matter such as laughing or smiling.
- 3) Using brackets [] for additional distinction of comments or errors, such as places and dates.
- 4) Using *italics* to emphasize significant in the speech of the interviewee.

Dr. George B. Stow Interview Questionnaire

BASIC INFORMATION: WHAT WE WILL COVER

B.A. Classics, Lehigh University

M.A. History USC

Ph.D. History University of Illinois

At La Salle since 1972

Graduate program director since inception in 2004

LAST 10 YEARS: GRADUATED PROGRAM AT LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

Why was it decided to start a graduate history program?

- Personal attention

What was the original intention of the program?

- Importance of how to teach content, American, world and European

How did you become the program director?

- Previously referred to himself as receiving position by “default”

How do you think it has grown over the last ten years?

- Wanted better physical facility, Olney hall
- Saw growth coming in American history, needed more faculty

What plans to you have for it in the future?

LAST 10 YEARS: PERSONAL GROWTH

2011: Publication of Patterns in World History: Desnoyers and von Sivers

Dr. Desnoyers and Dr. von Sivers have mentioned that you got together after working on AP Euro readings at the College Board. Tell me more about how the project started.

- Desnoyers: “He was looking for a way to make a little extra money to help defray his daughter's college and law school expenses.”

How did the workload break down for the project?

- Both state they worked as a collaboration on most but each did their area of expertise.

How long did the complete project take as a group?

- Desnoyers: “we had some key disagreements with our first publisher, Longman/Pearson, and broke with them in 2004. It took a couple more years to hook up with Oxford and recast some of the book. The first edition appeared in 2011; we signed our first contract (with Longman) in November, 1997, so 14 years, intermittently.”
- Von Sivers: “8 years”

How long was the process for you, personally, in collecting, writing and editing?

- Each state up to 14 years of work.
- Desnoyers: “Each one was sent out to as many as 16 readers for comments, following which we would make our revisions.”

How do you think the collaborative process went?

Have you worked with Oxford University Press previously?

What were the issues for with Longman?

- Desnoyers: “... they work on a number of texts simultaneously and then push the ones they choose from their stable. We had a number of disagreements with them about content and editorial matters, and these ultimately caused them to drop us.”

Have you read any reviews on the publication?

- "Patterns of World History has set a new high benchmark for world history textbooks."--Candace Gregory, Sacramento State University

If so, how do you feel about any criticism or praise of the work? If not, is there a reason why you have not?

Tell me more about... *2003: Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching*

- Quite honestly, I wondered if my teaching would ever warrant the Lindback Award," says Stow, who has been at La Salle since 1972. "Anybody who says they don't think about the possibility of receiving it just isn't being truthful."

What did receiving this award mean to you?

Do you look for validation as a teacher? What does it mean to be recognized?

- Importance that he not just a researcher, but a good teacher

ACADEMIA & LA SALLE

What is the best thing about the academics at La Salle?

- Lots of academic freedom

What is the worst thing about the academics at La Salle?

- No merit system

Tell me about the importance of a merit system?

- Was never able to catch up to people before him.
- Merit allows for accountability and proof in raises of pay and acclaim

How do you feel about the caliber of work coming from La Salle professors?

- Stuart Leibiger George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association Award
- Barbara Allen Alexander Shlyapnikov, 1885-1937 Life of an Old Bolshevik
- John Rossi numerous publications
- Charles Desnoyers collaboration

How is the school different from when you started?

- Hard working commuter school, focused. Not like party schools.
- Small faculty. Everyone knew each other.

How is the teaching load today versus in the past?

- Teaching load: for first 30 years it was 5 courses a semester always.
- 12 hour course load, “archaic” , 9 hours normal, or maybe 6 if extreme in academic research

Do you find the program rigorous enough?

- History program as a “service department”
- Adjuncts don’t have the same level of interest in the students
- Feels students are as involved as they used to be, easier to get an A

Are there any changes you would like to see at the college today?

PERSONAL PAST LEADING TO HISTORY

Were you always planning to go into academia?

- Army as the reason he pursued history
 - The turning point in his life, says Stow, was a three-year stint in the U.S. Army following high school. He credits the Army for instilling a sense of discipline and for a period of reflection on his future. Near the end of his two-

year service in England, he had begun to read voraciously, and he knew even before leaving the Army that he wanted to someday teach at the college level.

Why history?

What made you chose medieval and your main focus of Richard II?

What publications are you the most proud of?

- Dissertation: *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi: A Critical Edition*, published 1977 University of Pennsylvania Press
- “*Richard II and the Invention of the Pocket Handkerchief*,” *Albion*, 27 (1995), 221-35

Tell me more about your work at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, University of Western Michigan.

Tell me more about ... 1988: *Royal Historical Society Fellow*

- Fellowships are awarded to those who have made “an original contribution to historical scholarship”.

How were you elected?

- Election is conducted by peer review and all applications must be supported by an existing Fellow.

THE FUTURE

Tell me more about your academic plans for the future.

- Walsingham project for 2015?

What would you like your legacy to be from your time at La Salle?

Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Questions for *Patterns in World History*: Dr. Desnoyers and Dr. von Sivers

How did the project come about?

How did you connect, or who connected you, with the other authors for the project?

What sections did you work on and how do you feel your research background contributed to the final publication?

How long did the complete project take as a group?

How long was the process for you, personally, in collecting, writing and editing?

Was there a collaborative effort among the authors?

If so, why do you believe it worked for the publication?

If not, what do you believe could have been changed to enhance the process?

Was this your first textbook publication?

If so, based upon your experience, would you be interested in pursuing additional projects?

If not, how did this project compare to previous works?

Have you worked with Oxford University Press previously?

How did you find the experience working with them as your publisher?

Have you read any reviews on the publication?

If so, how do you feel about any criticism or praise of the work?

If not, is there a reason why you have not?