

Spring 2015

Interview of Margaret "Peggy" Emme

Margaret Emme

La Salle University, emme@lasalle.edu

Carlos M. Contente

La Salle University, contentec1@student.lasalle.edu

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FIELD NOTES

Interviewee: Margaret “Peggy” Walsh Emme

Interviewer: Carlos Manuel-Maciel Contente

Interview Date: Thursday, March 26, 2015 and Thursday, April 2, 2015 (both afternoon)

Interview Location: The interviewee’s office in the Transfer Admissions Office on the third floor of the David L. Lawrence Administration Building at LaSalle University, 1900 W. Olney Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19141

Field Notes were written on Saturday, April 25, 2015

The Interviewee

Margaret “Peggy” Walsh Emme was born in Philadelphia, PA on August 22, 1957 at Nazareth Hospital. Her parents are Marita A. Dunphy and Richard J. Walsh. They both owned business while Mrs. Emme was a child. Her mother owned a small boutique in the basement of her parents’ house (Mrs. Emme’s maternal grandparents) and her father owned a local tavern. Mrs. Emme would help out at both of these businesses. Mrs. Emme is the oldest of five children. Her four younger brothers are: Richard, Michael, Brian, and John. She attended Catholic school as a child, first attending St. Bernard’s Parochial School and then St. Hubert’s Catholic High School for Girls. Mrs. Emme graduated from St. Hubert’s in 1975. She was married twice. She married her first husband, Mr. Eddie Laurer in 1975. Mrs. Emme remains married to her second husband, James L. Emme, whom she married in 1984. She has mothered two children: a daughter, Jamie Emme, and a son, James “Foz” Emme. Both of her children graduated from LaSalle University. Mrs. Emme herself graduated from LaSalle in 2008 and 2011, respectively. She received an AA Liberal Arts in 2008 and a BS Business Administration in 2011. Throughout her life, Mrs. Emme has spent time working in both the corporate world and the academic one. She worked at Film Corporation of America, General Accident Life Assurance Corporation of America, Inter Space Interior Design, and Spiegel. She has also served as a lunch mother at St. Matthew’s Parochial School and has held various positions at LaSalle University. For example, Mrs. Emme worked under three separate university presidents as their back up secretary. The presidents were: Br. Joseph Burke, FSC; Mr. Nicholas Giordano, and Br. Michael McGinnis, FSC. Mrs. Emme claims to have a close relationship with several of the Christian Brothers. She also worked under two Vice Presidents of Enrollment Services: Mr. Ray Ritchie and Mr. John Dolan. Currently, Mrs. Emme is the Assistant Director of Transfer Admissions at LaSalle University. Mrs. Emme had not been interviewed previously and she offers valuable insights since she experienced LaSalle as a student, employee, and mother of alumni. Furthermore, she has interesting takes on the differences between corporate and academia and she speaks freely of her experiences here at LaSalle University.

The Interviewer

I, Carlos Manuel Contente (b. 1992 in Philadelphia, PA), grew up in an urban area of Northeast Philadelphia, primarily in the Rhawnhurst neighborhood. I graduated from Manor College with an AA in Liberal Arts in 2012 and then graduated from LaSalle University with a BA in American history in 2014. I am currently enrolled in the MA history program at LaSalle

University and expect to graduate in 2016 and then pursue Ph.D. in Early American history or a second Master's in Secondary Education. I am employed as Supplemental Instructor classes in American history and World history to Chinese foreign exchange students at Archbishop Ryan High School and I coach the Model United Nations Team at St. Hubert's High School. In addition, I am a Sacristan at the parish church of Resurrection of Our Lord and am an Editing and Research Assistant for Mr. Norman Donoghue. His manuscripts focus on the American Revolution and Quakers in Colonial America.

Background

As aforementioned, I am enrolled in the MA history Program at LaSalle University. A required course for completion of this degree is HIS 650 Oral History: Theory and Practice, taught by Dr. Barbara Allen, Ph.D. As a part of this course, we are required to perform a field interview with a subject of our choosing, so long as this subject is cleared with the professor. The subject must either be a LaSallian or an American military veteran. At the start of the course, Dr. Allen had mentioned that the Digital Commons at LaSalle lacks female voices. As such, I decided that Mrs. Emme would be an excellent choice since she currently works here, graduated from here, and her children did, as well. I E-mailed Dr. Allen and she approved the subject. I had previously worked with Mrs. Emme in Transfer Admissions while I was an undergraduate student. I was a work study and was referred to as a TrACE (Transfer Admissions and Campus Explorer). At the time of the interview, I was still employed as a Graduate Assistant in Undergraduate Admissions; as such, I went to Mrs. Emme's office and personally asked her if she would be willing to be the subject for this interview. After I explained the goals of the project and where the interview and other relevant materials would be stores, she quickly and enthusiastically agreed.

After Mrs. Emme's initial agreement, we exchanged E-mails choosing dates. Mrs. Emme was going on vacation in the beginning of March, so we aimed for the end of that month. We agreed that the first session would be Thursday, March 26, 2015 at 1:30 PM. Mrs. Emme stated that she had an appointment coming in at 2:30 PM that day. We left the date of the second session up in the air, but soon agreed on Thursday, April 2, 2015. Session II also took place at 1:30 PM and it happened to be on Holy Thursday. It was exactly one week after Session I.

Prior to Session I, I asked Mrs. Emme to think about anything that was off-topic and if she would want to put any restrictions on the interview. Mrs. Emme is an extremely talkative and friendly person and she was quick to dismiss both suggestions.

To prepare for the interview, I looked over the Paul Thompson Questionnaire and developed a preliminary list of questions and E-mailed them to Dr. Allen for feedback. She replied with a few suggestions, which I implemented in my final questionnaire. In addition to this, I researched past yearbooks and campus newsletters and requested Mrs. Emme's CV, which she graciously provided. Furthermore, I sat down with some of her co-workers to garner information regarding her personal narrative and her time at LaSalle. The co-workers that I spoke with were Mrs. Deborah Massimiani, Administrative Assistant in Undergraduate Admissions; Ms. Ashley Strobel, Administrative Assistant in Transfer Admissions; Ms. Erin Carroll, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions, and Mrs. Christina Foley, Assistant Director of Transfer

Admissions. However, given Mrs. Emme's various experiences at LaSalle, I was remiss to not interview co-workers from other departments, some of whom she mentions by name in the interview.

Finally, I looked over the reading assignments for HIS 650, paying particular attention to the questions asked by the interviewers. The books that assisted me the most in this matter were: *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk About Their Lives* by Donald J. Raleigh, *After the Fall: New Yorkers Remember September 2001 and the Years that Followed* by Mary Marshall Clark, and *A Revolution of Their Own: Voices of Women in Soviet History* by Barbara Alpern and Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck. I also reviewed my field notes and self-critique from my practice interview and looked over *Doing Oral History* by Donald Ritchie as a refresher on proper etiquette and protocol during a field interview. Finally, I looked through *Living the Promise* by Dr. John Rossi, Ph.D. in order to garner pertinent information on LaSalle University and reviewed the transcript of the interview Dr. Barbara Allen, Ph.D. conducted with AB Barbour. I wrote out my final questionnaire in my class copybook and brought it with me to both interview sessions.

The Interview

As mentioned previously, the first interview session occurred on Thursday, March 26, 2015. After finishing work in Undergraduate Admissions, I went to Mrs. Emme's office in Transfer Admissions. This is located on the fourth floor of the David L. Lawrence Administration at LaSalle University Building (At the start of the second interview session, I state that we are on the third floor. This is incorrect, though it is the third floor from when one enters the building on ground level). I was a few minutes early and Mrs. Emme was still on the phone with a prospective student; as such, I used the restroom and then waited in the lobby. Mrs. Emme came out when she was ready and welcomed me into her office. She has windows running along the western wall of her office and has a variety of family photos and plants on the ledge. She has an "L" shaped desk which is parallel and perpendicular to this wall. She sat behind her desk, which also features a computer with a large monitor. I sat in one of the two black leather chairs across from her desk. Mrs. Emme's office also has a small refrigerator, a microwave, and bookshelf near her door on the eastern wall. Mrs. Emme has her BSBA in a LaSalle University frame behind her desk. Prior to the interview, I had asked Mrs. Emme's co-workers to not interrupt us. They agreed, though one of them would do so during the interview session. Mrs. Emme was professionally dressed with a black skirt and a white sleeveless blouse. She also had a turquoise necklace and bangles on her right wrist. I was wearing grey chinos and a dark blue oxford. I placed my messenger bag on the empty chair and my copybook, with questionnaire, on my lap. I then placed a water bottle on the floor next to the chair in which I was seated and I placed the Olympus recorder on Mrs. Emme's desk. It was closer to her than it was to me, but it did not have any difficulty picking up either of our voices.

The first session began with me asking Mrs. Emme to sign the legal release form, which she graciously did. I then asked her if I could begin recording and she replied in the affirmative. I tested the recorder and then told her I would begin recording. The very first thing I did was state the date and time, our names, and where we were. I then received verbal permission from Mrs.

Emme to record her and moved right into asking her about her family history. Mrs. Emme was at ease, though some of her early answers are somewhat short. Mrs. Emme and I have a good rapport since we worked together for two years and because we are from the same general area in NorthEast Philadelphia.

I had hoped that the two interview sessions would split evenly amongst the topics; as in, I wanted the first session to end with Mrs. Emme's arrival at LaSalle and then the second session be about her time at LaSalle and what she thinks the future holds for the university. Thankfully, this is how it ended up and the division makes it easier to navigate both the interviews themselves and the log that was created afterward. However, during the first session, I discovered that Mrs. Emme had been married prior to her current husband and this was not divulged through any of my prior research. As such, I had to adjust my questioning appropriately and I feel that I did do so. Although Mrs. Emme stated that nothing was off-topic and that there were to be no restrictions placed on the interview, she seemed rather ill at ease when answering questions regarding her first husband, due to this, I decided not to press on those questions as much as I possibly could have. We concluded the first session amicably and Mrs. Emme's appointment was indeed waiting for her when we ended.

The next day, Mrs. Emme came to my desk in Undergraduate Admissions and informed me that she greatly enjoyed our session the day before. We established a date for the second session, Thursday, April 2, 2015 at 1:30 PM. To prepare for the second session, I listened to the recording from the first session and looked over the notes I had taken and also checked off the questions which Mrs. Emme had already responded. On the date of the second session, I left work at Undergraduate Admissions and went up to Transfer Admissions. I once again used the rest room and was then directed into Mrs. Emme's office. Nothing major had changed in the office since the last session; however, this time we would be interrupted by one of her co-workers retrieving a beverage from the refrigerator in Mrs. Emme's office. This time Mrs. Emme was in a white floral blouse, a grey skirt, and a black blazer. She still had the bangles on her right wrist. I was wearing a red plaid button shirt, brown khakis, a blue sweater vest, and a navy sports coat, which I removed. Once again, I placed the recorder on the desk, closer to Mrs. Emme, and I had my notebook on the chair next to me, with a bottle of water and my messenger bag on the floor. Having the notebook in the chair and not on my lap made the setting a little more casual and I think that might have contributed to the freer flowing discussion which followed, though the placement of my notebook might also have made no difference whatsoever.

I once more began the interview by requesting verbal permission and Mrs. Emme was informed that she would have to sign a second legal release, which she did do on a different date. Prior to the interview, Mrs. Emme stated that she had forgotten to discuss her time as a model. Therefore, I brought that up at the start of the interview and then shifted back to Mrs. Emme's arrival at LaSalle University. We discussed her various positions at the university, as well as her time as a student, but less so on being a mother of students. Mrs. Emme received her AA the same year that her son received his BS and the *NorthEast Times*, a local Philadelphia newspaper, ran a story on the mother-son pair. As reflected in the interview, Mrs. Emme is a proponent of "bringing corporate to academia" and cites her own experiences in the corporate world, as well

as working under Mr. Nicholas Giordano, as molding this belief. We concluded the interview with a brief discussion about Mrs. Emme's plans for the future and what she thinks the future holds for LaSalle University. She was extremely grateful and thanked me on several occasions, after the recording ended, for taking her "on a trip down memory lane." The total run time of both sessions is 1:59:25 and Mrs. Emme signed the second legal release on Wednesday, April 22, 2015. Both legal releases were handed into Dr. Barbara Allen, Ph.D. on that date. Mrs. Emme has received a copy of the in-class presentation and will also be receiving copies of these field notes, the log and index, and the two interview sessions.

Note on Recording

As mention in the log, I utilized an Olympus WS-400S Digital Voice Recorder on battery power for both sessions. This was the same voice recorder that I had borrowed from LaSalle University IT Services. I had actually procured a Windows phone prior to the formal field interviews, but was not extremely confident with the technology; therefore, I decided to use the voice recorder. In retrospect, I should have used both, if for no other reason than to also familiarize myself with the phone technology. The voice recorder had no problem picking up either of our voices and actually picked up the jangling of Mrs. Emme's bangles and laughter from the lobby outside of her office. I should have asked Mrs. Emme to remove the bangles and will keep that in mind for any future oral history interviews that I may conduct.

After the second interview session, I took the recorder to IT Services and had them upload the interviews and convert them from VLC to MP3. The employee at IT Services informed me that they did so, although when I click on the files it states that it is a "Windows Audio File." I took my USB with the interviews to Ms. Lauren DeAngelis, Administrative Assistant for the History Department, and we checked that the files worked on her computers. I have since had no trouble playing the files on any computer I have attempted to do so on; this includes the computer at the front desk in Undergraduate Admissions and in the Connelly Library.

I did not utilize any kind of playback software when writing the log and index. I did not have trouble following the pace of the interview and simply replayed the portion of audio I needed to check if I had any misgivings. However, this process is not advisable for everyone.

Creating the Log and Index

Some of my decisions in the creation of the log and index are:

1. Using the log of the interview of Domenic Gallante by Mr. Lewis Mladjen as a model from which to develop my own log.
2. Using brackets to include pertinent information not directly mentioned in the interview.
3. Utilizing footnotes when deemed appropriate.
4. Including addresses for future research purposes when deemed appropriate.
5. Avoiding the use of ellipses as they can be interpreted as representing missing information
6. Using direct quotes from the interview when deemed appropriate and using quotation marks to indicate this.

