

Spring 2019

Interview of Margaret McGuinness, Ph.D.

Margaret McGuinness Ph.D.

La Salle University, mcguinness@lasalle.edu

Stephen Pierce

La Salle University, pierces5@student.lasalle.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/histdeptohall>

Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [American Studies Commons](#), [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Digital Humanities Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [History of Christianity Commons](#), [History of Gender Commons](#), [History of Religion Commons](#), [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#), [Intellectual History Commons](#), [Legal Commons](#), [Mormon Studies Commons](#), [New Religious Movements Commons](#), [Nursing Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Other Religion Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), [Public History Commons](#), [Religion Law Commons](#), [Religious Education Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), [United States History Commons](#), [Women's History Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McGuinness, Margaret Ph.D. and Pierce, Stephen, "Interview of Margaret McGuinness, Ph.D." (2019). *All Oral Histories*. 122. <https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/histdeptohall/122>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact careyc@lasalle.edu.

Field Notes

Interviewee: Dr. Margaret McGuinness

Interviewer: Stephen Pierce

Interview Dates: March 18, 2019 and March 20, 2019

Interview Location: Dr. McGuinness's Office in College Hall 414C, 1900 West Olney Avenue, Philadelphia PA, 19141.

Field Notes written on March 22, 2019

The Interviewee: Dr. Margaret McGuinness was born in 1953, in a highly Irish concentrated neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island. When she was in the first grade she moved to East Greenwich, Rhode Island a white middle-class town. She went to an all-girls Catholic high school called St. Mary's Academy Bayview in Providence where she graduated in 1971. McGuinness went on to major in American Studies and Civilization as an undergraduate at Boston University graduating with a B.A in 1975. She continued her work at Boston University where McGuinness earned a master's of theological studies (M.T.S) focusing on Biblical and Historical Studies in 1979. She would move to New York to work on her dissertation at Union Theological Seminary finishing with her Ph.D. in 1985 concentrating on American Church History. Her dissertation was titled "Response to Reform: The History of the Catholic Social Settlement Movement, 1897-1915." Dr. McGuinness would go on to teach at Cabrini College located in Radnor, PA from 1985 to 2006 and in 1993 became chair of their religion department. In 2006 she moved from Cabrini College and served as the chair of La Salle's Religion Department from 2006 until 2011. Her two most well-known books are *Neighbors Missionaries: A History of the Sisters of Our Lady of Christian Doctrine* (Fordham Press 2012) and *Called to Serve: A History of American Nuns* (New York University Press, 2013). She has also published numerous articles and is currently doing work on the life of the Philadelphia religious sister Katharine Drexel. Dr. McGuinness is also the first woman to be Vice President for Mission Integration where she served from 2010 to 2014. She is married to her husband Bill and has two children William and Erin. In her free time, she enjoys travelling, reading and spending time with her family.

The Interviewer: I, Stephen Pierce, (b. May 17th, 1996 in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania) grew up in a suburb called Havertown, PA. It is approximately ten miles from La Salle University. I graduated from Haverford High School in 2015 and am finishing my last semester as an Undergraduate at La Salle University and will graduate in May of 2019 with a bachelors in both history and political science, I am currently working on my M.A. in history at La Salle University and intend to graduate in the spring or summer of 2020. I am very active on La Salle's campus, being a senator in Student Government, President of the John Quincy Adams Society, and President of the History Club. I hope to earn a Ph.D. in history down the line in my life.

Background: This interview, including the log and field notes, is required for HIS 650 – Oral History, which in turn is a required course for an M.A. in History at La Salle University. At the beginning of the semester, the instructor for the course, Dr. Barbara Allen gave us a choice to interview either a Veteran or a member of La Salle University. I decided to pick Dr. Margaret McGuinness who has been a professor at La Salle since 2006. I met Dr. McGuinness in my senior year taking her Civil Rights and Religion class in the Spring of 2019. I appreciate her style of teaching as she facilitates excellent discussions in the classroom. I thought with her experience as both a professor and administrator that she would be a great candidate for this interview by giving both perspectives. I also wanted to interview a woman faculty member because the oral history archives are male-dominated. Dr. McGuinness had not been included in the oral history collection, so I thought this would be a great opportunity.

When I asked Dr. McGuinness for permission to conduct this interview with me, she was very excited and humbled to be a part of it. I talked to her about doing this interview after the Civil Rights class on Tuesday, February 12, 2019, to which she accepted my invitation. I soon started to formulate questions that went in chronological order but also focused attention on her time in academia which has been very extensive. Before we conducted the interview, I asked her colleagues in the religion department what questions I should ask her, and I was able to get Dr. McGuinness's CV which gave me a timeline of her Academic Career. She was the most comfortable conducting this in her office and doing the interview between 12 and 2 PM. The times varied because she is still on several committees which went over time.

Description of Interview: The interview that was conducted was split up into two parts, the first part took place on March 18, 2019, to which that interview in length was 1:00:18. The second part of the conversation took place on March 20, 2019, which lasted 1:04:36, and in total was 2:05:04. The interviews took place at Dr. McGuinness's Office in College Hall 414C on Monday, March 18, 2019, at 12:57 and Wednesday, March 20, 2019, at 12:36. Dr. McGuinness was in casual clothing, while I was in my usual sweatpants and sweatshirt attire. During the interview, Dr. McGuinness was drinking Diet Coke, and I was drinking water from my portable plastic bottle.

We sat in her office; I sat on a standard non-rolling chair near the office door, and she sat at her work desk with her rolling chair closer to the window. During the interview, I had my computer on my lap during both sessions, but the microphone was placed between us but closer to her. I asked Dr. McGuinness if I could have her door closed for the interview which she was totally fine with. For both sessions, I put up a "Do Not Disturb," sign and asked Dr. McGuinness if I could unplug her office which she was okay with, and she also silenced her phone. I then plugged in my laptop and opened the Simple Recorder application on my MacBook Pro. I was fortunate that Dr. McGuinness took an oral history class when she was at Union Theological Seminary because she knew what to do which made the process go that much smoother.

At the beginning of both sessions, I made sure the equipment was working okay, so I did a sound check where Dr. McGuinness. We would start every session with a testing one, two, three each. By doing this, I made sure that the volume and amplitude were appropriately set. Dr. McGuinness did not make any sounds that would have hindered the interview; the only noise

that got in the way was from cars and police cars on the street. Her office is right off 20th Street, and in part one of the interview, we had to pause because an ambulance was caught in traffic.

I wish we picked a different location, but she felt the most comfortable doing it in her office just in case someone needed to talk to her for an emergency. I made sure to give her a full introduction for the audience to know her background. I felt that throughout the interview we had good chemistry having a well-paced dialogue throughout. She did not use any repeated phrases that were noticeable. In terms of noise, the audience can probably hear some light rocking sounds from her chair, street sounds, and sometimes me just moving in my seat.

I thought it was hard not being able to sympathize with her all the time because I am a male and she is a female. I would also say stuff after she would answer like fantastic, excellent, interesting, or great. I would also sometimes repeat some of her points throughout the interview to reinforce an answer which I know as oral historians we should avoid. Sometimes I did cut her off to either make a point or do a follow-up question, but I feel I restricted myself from doing that pretty well in both sessions.

She didn't know specific dates at times during the interview so I would help by throwing up some years. Some dates I got wrong, like Saigon didn't fall in 1973 but in 1975. I also forgot some facts I should have looked into more before the interview. For example, I asked Dr. McGuinness if she faced any sexism at Cabrini College, but Cabrini started as an all-women's college, so I wish I rephrased that question. I also forgot to get the name of the hospital she was born in as well. For each section, I got her permission to record, got her to sign the legal releases, and thanked her for her time for both times we spoke. Overall, I thought we had a great, and she gave a great picture of her overall life in our two-hour interview.

Notes on Recording: For recording, I used my Blue Yeti Microphone that has a USB cord that connects to my MacBook Pro on battery power. I used the application called Simple Recorder to record the voices. I was able to export the files to iTunes where they were converted to an MP3.

Notes on Editing: Although I included some direct quotes from the interview, this is not a complete transcript. The log is a summary of the main points of the interview. I used quotes to stress something or to show importance. I used minute separations usual between two to four-minute segments to keep it organized. The interview is broken up into two parts, the first starting with Dr. McGuinness's early childhood to her hiring at Cabrini College and the second from her time at Cabrini to the present day.