

Paul: Alright, welcome everybody. Today's date is March 26, it's about 9:45 in the morning. I'm here with Professor McKee. Professor McKee could you please state your name and current position at La Salle University.

Frank: I'm Frank McKee. I am an Adjunct Professor in both American Studies and History, although I also teach in the Integrated Studies program.

Paul: Is it alright if I record this interview?

Frank: Absolutely.

Paul: Excellent, so we'll start off with kind of family, basic family history. Where were you born?

Frank: I was born in Philadelphia about fifteen minutes from La Salle.

Paul: What year was that?

Frank: That was 1948.

Paul: Were you an only child?

Frank: No, I have a brother and a sister who are both younger.

Paul: Both younger, alright. What does your father do for a living?

Frank: Well my father passed away, but my father was a battery worker. He worked at Exide Storage Battery in the Northeast [Philadelphia].

Paul: Did he tell you anything about that job? Is it....

Frank: I actually worked with him for a year and a half.

Paul: Really, and what was that like?

Frank: So, I knew the job. That was a hard job. It was, it paid very well. It was back when unions had desirable contracts in the [19]60's and actually it was between college and waiting to go in to the service so I worked about a year, year and a half.

Paul: Alright, so we will kind of touch on that again when we get towards more how your college career evolved into your professional career. So what did your mother do for a living?

Frank: My mother was a homemaker and was a key-punch operator in the early days of computing.

Paul: Could you describe key-punch operating in layman's terms?

Frank: Key-punch operating was kind of fundamental from computer where literally you would punch holes in cards that would record data. The data would be then fed in to early computers based on the punch cards.

Paul: Interesting, you know I have never really heard of something like that. We've come so far in computer technologies since then.

Frank: We've come very far. When I was at La Salle one of the years we registered with those kinds of cards. They were collected and then fed in for class lists.

Paul: It seems like another time and place honestly.

Frank: It was, it was.

Paul: You said you were born fifteen minutes from La Salle. Can you describe the neighborhood that you grew up in?

Frank: I grew up in Olney. My neighborhood was- the world of my neighborhood was about four or five blocks really. I always tell people that on the street I lived which was a one block, Roosevelt Boulevard bordered it on one side and a street called Rockland bordered it on another. In those thirty houses there were probably one hundred children so you never were lost for company.

Paul: Because there was so many children was this a homogenous or heterogeneous ethnic neighborhood?

Frank: That's an interesting [question], I would say a mixed German, Irish, Italian, Polish.

Paul: So, mostly European?

Frank: Mostly European. Mostly second generation Americans, mostly blue-collar. There were a couple neighbors on the street who had gotten their college degrees by G.I. Bill. Working and then going to school at night. So, at that, to be a college graduate there was unusual.

Paul/Frank: Mostly blue collar.

Frank: Plumbers, electricians, factory workers.

Paul: Was this a tight knit community?

Frank: It was, it was. Most of the families celebrated events at one another's house. My parents had New Year's Eve at our house every year. They would go out in to the streets, you know, and then block off the street and have a block party in the summer. Turn on the fire hydrants, I mean, just what you see in films, that was pretty much it. Yeah, it was a very tight knit community. We talked about- moms in the summer would take us swimming in Willow Grove and dads would get there after work and barbecue and sit around.

Paul: That's very interesting. Did you go to public school or Catholic school at this time?

Frank: I went to Catholic school.

Paul: How was your experience in Catholic school?

Frank: I liked Catholic school and again, we had a public school right across the street but I think because of composition of the neighborhood almost everybody on my block went to Catholic school. To not have gone there would have been more socially different than it would have been religiously different. It was a, again, the parish itself was a fairly close knit, there was a social club in the school itself that once you went to high school you were members there. You played pool there, basketball, watch T.V.. It really was a nice, kind of, get out of the house before malls and things like that.

Paul: Did you have any friends that went to the public school? Did most of your friends also attend the Catholic school?

Frank: Most did, most did. I had some friends who went to public school and when Catholic schools were off, we would sneak in and have lunch at the public schools.

Paul: [laughter] So were you a good- would you consider yourself a good student in these Catholic schools?

Frank: I was. I was a good student most of the time. I had a couple of years there where [laughter] it was not quite as sterling. But my dad was very strong on education and he always found a way to bring me back.

Paul: Did he have the same attitude towards your brother and sister as well?

Frank: He did. It was always assumed, by the way my brother and sister went here.

Paul: Yep.

Frank: Undergrad.

Paul: Really?

Frank: Yeah.

Paul: So we can talk about their experience as well.

Frank: It was always, it was never openly stated but it was always expected that you would go to college. When I did not do well in those few times, he would be, "I'm not even sending you through high school. You're getting a trade, you can become a paper hanger." He was pretty strong that way and again, a lot of it for reasons of his own not being able to get an education he valued.

Paul: I was about to follow up, so did he not have the opportunity to go to college?

Frank: No, he left high school in the ninth grade during the depression because he got a job that paid higher than his father, and didn't like school. He would admit that.

Frank: He was not a sterling student but was a bright man.

Paul: There's other ways you can show, kind of, aptitude without having classes and school per say.

Frank: Yes. He kind of showed his in the military.

Paul: Did you have a favorite class?

Frank: In elementary school? Uh, I really didn't.

Paul: No? Just general.

Frank: Yeah, again, I was a pretty good student. I didn't have to work real real hard. I had good teachers. Um...

Paul: Do you remember any of those teachers?

Frank: I do, I do. I had a mix of nuns and lay-teachers, no males until I was in high school. I think the nuns were probably a little more demanding and I had almost that stereotypical early [19]60's where you had the older, you know, kind of the teacher out

Christmas Story and then you had the younger teacher right out of college with new ideas and a different approach so I had a nice mix that way.

Paul: Did you have any teachers that kind of impacted your life in becoming an educator or...?

Frank: I did but not until high school.

Paul: Not until high school so we can touch on that as well.

Frank: Yeah. I was in large classes. Most classes I was in were fifty to sixty kids so individualization there wasn't a priority.

Paul: Did that change once you got to high school?

Frank: It did, it did. They were still large classes.

Frank: They were still large classes.

Paul: Did you also go to a Catholic high school?

Frank: I did. I went to Cardinal Dougherty which is now closed.

Paul: What year did that close?

Frank: It closed, I want to say, within the last ten years.

Paul: How do you remember that?

Frank: I had a good four years there. It was a co-institutional school. That is, there were males and females separated so mostly socializing was before/after school we'd come over. Almost all of my friends went through. I did have a friend or two who went to private, private high schools. But most of them went through. A good education and that's where I had a couple of teachers, the worst year I had in school, were the best teachers I had. That, kind of, was a shock to the system.

Paul: That's interesting. Yeah, so, could you explain how some of those teachers impacted your decision to become an educator?

Frank: Yeah, I had, two of them were priests. One was a lay-teacher that was a family friend of a friend and that kind of started that. Two were English, two were History. But the English, the priest who taught English, was young and enthusiastic, had just gotten his Master's degree at Notre Dame and was very- as I look back on it now, what he did, the kinds of works that he did, and the demand that was made on us was kind of a shock to the system. Now I wasn't working hard at the time, I will fully admit that. But the demands there were demands that were far more than I had been asked, that had been asked of me up to that point so I struggled. I failed four subjects in my first marking period as a junior.

Paul: Really?

Frank: Yeah. I failed English, I failed History, I failed Math, and I failed Science. I passed German and I passed Religion.

Paul: I was about to ask, that doesn't leave too many, classes, courses to pass.

Frank: Again, the course correction took me- not so much in the English, History, that I responded pretty quickly to. But that demand really changed my life and was a teacher that would try to get- There was a Shakespeare series Shakespeare films at a film theatre and not that we went as a group, it was at night, you went on your own. Just to get exposed, for me, that was huge. Because my parents again, my mom graduated from high school, my dad never finished so I would go to Phillies games, I would go to the zoo, I would go but art museums or, you know, orchestra or things like that, that was not...

Paul: Necessarily your parents kind of entertainment.

Frank: No, that happened later. That happened later.

Paul: You mentioned that you failed English. At that point in time did you ever dream of becoming an English professor?

Frank: Um, yes.

Paul: Still?

Frank: Yes. That was the year.

Paul: That was the year? What about this priest made him so influential?

Frank: I think it was his love for literature. His ability, by the end of the year for me, for me to get it. I think we did a half-dozen Shakespeare plays that year and big time literature. There was no -and he was demanding. Very funny story, we had a student transfer in from one of the privates, the interact privates who kind of gave that, 'I'm stepping down here to go to this school and I know all of this stuff.' While he didn't humiliate him, [priest] never let him off the hook. That's the one I remember but I always remember him as demanding. You had to- you want to question this, that's fine, now make an argument. I think that, pulling that out and he- When I came to La Salle, I didn't major in education, I majored in English but still knowing I wanted to teach, I don't know anyway. I actually went back my junior and senior years and taught in his classroom even before I did student teaching or anything like that. He would just let me take- he'd go "okay we're doing *Raisin in the Sun*, want to teach it?"

Paul: Did he offer that opportunity to other students as well?

Frank: I don't know. I don't think so. I don't know.

Paul: So you must have had quite a good relationship with this professor?

Frank: We did, we did yeah. Actually, set up a program here with other La Salle students who kind of did, I guess now you would call it a writing boot camp for high school kids. We must've had from Dougherty alone, I don't know fifty, sixty, students come here on their own.

Paul: We will hold off, yeah, I want to hear more about that but let's kind of wrap up high school before we get to La Salle. You mention that the high school you went to was co-educational, how much interaction did you have with women at that point in time?

Frank: A lot but not at school so much.

Paul: Not at school.

Paul/Frank: [inaudible]

Frank: It was a hang kind of neighborhood and pizza places and places like that, corner stores. I would say a lot of interaction just by the very nature of the neighborhoods.

Paul: Sure, so, the social dynamic of the public versus Catholic high schools, did you feel any kind of anonymity, er, not anonymity, animosity towards?

Frank: No, they were publics and you were Catholics but not really. Different, only in the sense of different experiences as much as anything.

Paul: What year did you graduate high school?

Frank: 1966.

Paul: And did you go... yep.

Frank: And by the way, 1966 Cardinal Dougherty's graduating class was in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest graduating class in history.

Paul: Really? Is it still? That's something...

Frank: I don't know. I haven't looked it up.

Paul: I'm going to look into it.

Frank: I think there were 2,200 graduates.

Paul: 2,200, wow. So how many of those people of the 2,200 did you kind of socialize with. It's got to be difficult.

Frank: Fewer than a hundred.

Paul: No kidding, I had no idea.

Frank: I think it was 2,200. Well, there were sections.

Paul: Okay.

Frank: There were twenty-two...

Paul: Hundred person sections.

Frank: No, twenty-two sections on the male side.

Paul: Okay.

Frank: So think of fifty in a class and the same number on the female side.

Paul: Wow.

Frank: Maybe it was 2,100 but I remember that as being in Guinness's Book of World Records. It was that large.

Paul: That is a huge class for high school, I mean.

Frank: We graduated out of, the building's not there anymore, but Civic Center which was where- would have been equivalent today to the Wells Fargo.

Paul: Right. That's incredible. I had no idea that Cardinal Dougherty housed so many students.

Frank: It was that large at that time.

Paul: That must've also provided like a lot of people from around Philadelphia in general going to the school. How big, do you know, do you know how big the school district was for Cardinal Dougherty? Do you know how far away people travelled?

Frank: The parochial schools?

Paul: Yeah.

Frank: Yeah, I would have gone to North Catholic, which is actually where I taught my first four years. But it certainly would have been a travel to get there and so Cardinal Dougherty drew from...

Paul: A huge population.

Frank: Yes, it's before Archbishop Ryan which covers all of the Northeast [Philadelphia].

Paul: That makes sense.

Frank: Yeah, it was huge at that point and going in to Cheltenham.

Paul: Wow, so you graduated high school in 1966, did you enroll La Salle 1967?

Frank: I did.

Paul: Was the cost of college a factor in your decision to go to La Salle?

Frank: No. It was not. I wanted to go away, my parents were smart enough to know that would not be a good decision for me right away. Living at home and I had to earn some of my tuition and I could in a summer, and a part time job, earn half my tuition.

Paul: Really?

Frank: Yeah, that's unbelievable now.

Paul: Yeah, no longer today, right?

Frank: No. no, not even close.

Paul: You mentioned that you wanted to go away to college, did you have any places that you?

Frank: I wanted to go to Penn State.

Paul: Penn State. Really?

Frank: Yeah, yeah. I did.

Paul: And so, your parents decided that was not a good opportunity or not best just?

Frank: Not a good fit for me. Not a good fit for me. I don't remember, obviously with living at Penn State the cost factor was a bit different. There was no guarantee I could work at Penn State whereas, again, my family were very union oriented so through the unions I was going to get a job somewhere. I worked all four years through my college experience.

Paul: Was that, do you think was a normal experience for college, people going to college at the time to work through their...?

Frank: I think people that I knew, that were in my socioeconomic situation. Although I will say, of the hundred kids on my street, maybe five went to college. I was the first to go to college.

Paul: Wow, that's not a large percentage. At all.

Frank: No, its not. Its not. For example, my aunt and uncle lived on the same street. They had twelve children, so we pretty much dominated the street. Of their twelve, three went to college.

Paul: Wow so, and, that's much different than today as well.

Frank: Oh, very much so. Very much so.

Paul: You mentioned that cost wasn't necessarily a factor to go to La Salle but location may have been.

Frank: Location was.

Paul: Were you familiar with La Salle before coming to La Salle as an undergrad?

Frank: I was, yep. I was.

Paul: What were your thoughts about La Salle as a college?

Frank: Well I knew it also through the high school which was very competitive and La Salle had a very good reputation, especially in the areas I was interested in. La Salle had a very good English department. I think across the board in most of the areas for me La Salle really was a strong program.

Frank: I never considered anywhere else once I was here. It checked a lot of boxes for me and I think my parents were pleased.

Paul: That's important sometimes. You mentioned that you did not live on campus freshman year, do you remember your freshman orientation?

Frank: I do, actually.

Paul: What was that like?

Frank: It was interesting. I think it was, you know, I look back on it almost like the Animal House, kind of, without all of the toga parties. Yeah. That kind of, almost anonymity of you're taken here, you're taken there. Not an experience that I was familiar with. That was a little bit...

Paul: Who led these orientations?

Frank: You know, I can't remember.

Paul: No?

Frank: I can't.

Paul: You began in 1967, did you see any protests on campus as an undergraduate throughout your four years here?

Frank: Well, R.O.T.C was mandatory when I started. That protest that took over College Hall was while I was here.

Paul: I, actually, am unfamiliar with that, could you please describe that a little further.

Frank: Yeah, R.O.T.C was mandatory, with Vietnam, that was not a popular thing. I think it was how the University skirted a need for a physical education program. As a mandatory program in a liberal arts university, that was not popular. As a result a group of students, and I will admit to being one, sat in in College Hall and stopped the University for a couple days. I remember going home after a couple days and my father said, "when the hell have you been?" And R.O.T.C became voluntary after that.

Paul: The sit in at College Hall allowed for the University or the College at that point in time to change from being R.O.T.C mandatory to voluntary?

Frank: Yes, right.

Paul: Did you still volunteer to be in R.O.T.C after that point in time?

Frank: No, I had actually, was in at the time, mandatorily, and no I didn't. I chose not to do that.

Paul: How many people were a part of this sit in?

Frank: Well if you think of College Hall and think of it lined with people sitting on both sides.

Paul: That's incredible, what was that experience like?

Frank: It was interesting. You know, I think there was that feeling, I think we have that feeling now with [President] Trump, of being energized to do something but how do you channel that? It was a very minor thing in ending R.O.T.C but it was, kind of, La Salle's version of [inaudible] over Columbia you know in that way?

Paul: That's very interesting, so did this sit in, it impacted R.O.T.C, did it have any other impacts on the campus?

Frank: I think the impact was earlier, I think that politicizing was earlier. That was just a piece of that. I remember when Robert Kennedy was assassinated was final exams and we took no final exams.

Paul: Really?

Frank: I had, I had final exams only two years. Senior year was Kent State and final exams were cancelled as well.

Paul: That's very interesting, this was a very, kind of, volatile time to be on a college campus.

Frank: It was. It was.

Paul: Did you...?

Frank: I remember sitting in the dorms watching the draft lottery because I didn't want to watch it at home. It was what you would imagine, early numbers were despondent, the high numbers were thrilled.

Paul: You mentioned that you watched that on campus. Did you live at all on campus during the four years?

Frank: I didn't. I did not.

Paul: Do you have friends that lived on campus?

Frank: Yes, so I was here a lot.

Paul: Yeah? Um...

Frank: Whether it was dorms and, you know, they would do movies. I'd come play basketball in what's now the bookstore. I was on campus a lot. I was, I didn't live that far away so really it was a social hub for me even not living on campus.

Paul: Did a lot of your friends live on campus?

Frank: Number of them, yeah.

Paul: Enough where you could, kind of...

Frank: Enough where you had a place if you needed to stay overnight, sleep on the floor of the dorm you could do that. Then in apartments, you know off campus apartments.

Paul: As a student overall, what was your strongest subject at La Salle?

Frank: I would say English. I had a great English program and career wise for me, I kind of, stumbled into- As I said I was not an education major, I was an English major. I loaded all my electives, I think I had sixty credits in English by the time I graduated.

Paul: Really, wow! That's a lot.

Frank: Because I had to come back and finish my certification.

Paul: For education?

Frank: I had taken some education credits in my electives but I had to finish, so actually, I came back after a year and a half in the service and finished education credits. Then my first year of actually teaching, because it was in parochial system, I was not certified and my first semester teaching was my student teaching as well.

Paul: That's very interesting.

Frank: It wasn't the normal, but I really felt that the courses that I had and the background here was much more valuable than if I had gone the right route.

Paul: Right and you can still get there as seen through...

Frank: Yes, it just was not as clear.

Paul: At that point in time, 1967-1971, how important was religion on campus?

Frank: I think it was more than it is now. I wouldn't say La Salle was an extremely religious school. I would say secular religious.

Paul: Okay, did you have any interaction...

Frank: Maybe because it was Brothers and not Priests.

Paul: How often did you interact with the Brothers?

Frank: I only had a couple of Brothers which is odd. Most of my professors were lay, most were men. I had one or two women and a couple of Brothers.

Paul: That's interesting. Do you think, do your brother and sister have a different experience in terms of interacting with the Brothers or do you think they...?

Frank: I think probably similar to mine in terms of interacting with the Christian Brothers. I would say similar, we've had different experiences here but I would say from that perspective. I'm thinking back, I had twelve theology credits. I think I only had three with Christian Brothers.

Paul: That's interesting.

Frank: It is.

Paul: You would think the theology department would be heavy on Brothers being the professor. So do you remember when Olney Hall opened on campus?

Frank: When Olney?

Paul: Yeah.

Frank: I do.

Paul: What was that like?

Frank: It was interesting. Well it was the new, “the new building.”

Paul: Right, did you have a lot of classes there?

Frank: Now Holroyd was fairly new too. I had classes in Holroyd, I was not a science guy so I only had two classes in Holroyd but Olney I did. In Olney, I had education classes in there and my English classes in there. I also had English in McShain, you know, they actually still taught classes in there.

Paul: Do you think Olney Hall has changed since it opened until now?

Frank: No, no, I tell my students, “I sat in this room and I think these are the same chairs”. I think it’s the same room.

Paul: It feels that way doesn’t it?

Frank: It does, yeah, its almost the land that time forgot. I mean, other than the technology, the rest of the room is pretty much as it was.

Paul: Did you have any meaningful relationships with any of the professors you had at La Salle?

Frank: I did but not as close [as Dougherty]. La Salle professors, at that time, were very approachable so lunch together, you know, because they would, kind of, eat [in the cafeteria with students]. There was not, that I knew of, a separate faculty dining room as there is [today]. It wouldn’t be, it would be fairly common, you know, after class you would continue a discussion at lunch and that I always appreciated.

Paul: That seems like something that doesn’t happen quite as often now.

Frank: I think it's different.

Paul: Different?

Frank: Yeah, I think it's different.

Paul: Alright so, I just... yeah

Frank: I see students, you know, who will- you almost have to, kind of, make that happen. I always build in writing conferences even if there's really not a lot to conference about just to kind of get to know students ideas. That makes you a little more approachable. I find that it makes them more interactive in class.

Paul: I want to change gears a little bit and talk more about the social aspect of La Salle while you were an undergrad. So were there any fraternities on campus?

Frank: There were. There were. I was not a fraternity member though.

Paul: Did you participate in any of the fraternity activities?

Frank: Not really. Not really. A lot of activities, once we were sophomores, once you kind of get a lay of the land, went to basketball games, probably all of them. That was before Tom Gola Arena or Hayman Hall.

Paul: Do you remember La Salle playing at the Palestra?

Frank: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Paul: What was that experience like?

Frank: Palestra was great.

Paul: It's a great place to watch a basketball game.

Frank: It was an incredible place. To go and watch a doubleheader there. I said that to my wife the other day. They replayed La Salle Villanova [on T.V.] and the year that La Salle was good, La Salle was incredibly good.

Paul: Do you remember what year that was?

Frank: 1969, 68-69, but they were on probation.

Paul: Right, so they couldn't participate in the NCAA Tournament.

Frank: They were number two in the country. They were- they had four pro players.

Paul: Really?

Frank: Yeah.

Paul: Were athletics, in general, important to the University?

Frank: I think it was. I think basketball especially. That was a golden age in basketball for La Salle. I mean they had that [19]50's run and then that group in the [19]60's, late [19]60's, early [19]70's was a golden age. You're down at the Palestra for twenty games. I mean that was a very strong, for me, was a very strong social bond. And especially having a university there, that it was based in a university and not just a pro team or whatever it would be. I had a lot of friends who were musicians so bands and things like that and going. Whether it was they were playing here or there was a party here, that was a lot of the social for me. But as I said, I worked as well. I worked in a record store for two years, I worked at the Acme for a year, actually it was probably a year, year and a half. Then the last two years I worked for the Post Office, they had a student program that was a great program in the sense that you got a decent salary for minimum number of hours and still be able to study. As opposed to other ones where you're working from five until ten o'clock at night and then you try and study after that.

Paul: How do you think working as an undergraduate affected your college career?

Frank: Oh, I did not do nearly as well as I could have but then the other side of that is would I have been able to go to college if I didn't? So, I had the right people I learned the

right things. It didn't always translate in to grades and I think grading is a different animal right now, not right now, but it's gradually evolved.

Paul: How would you say its evolved?

Frank: I think A's are still A's, A- are the B's of yesteryear, and B's are the C's of way back. C was not an embarrassing grade back in the day. I'm not going to sit here and say we are going to hell in a handcart because we're dropping standards. It's just different.

Paul: Times change that's kind of- La Salle certainly changed in 1970 when women were admitted to the University, do you remember how that changed the University?

Frank: Yeah, it was odd but welcomed. I mean, I know at the time, there were those who were traditionalists who felt that tradition should be maintained. But I think it was a welcome change for La Salle. We came in to the twentieth century there.

Paul: Did you have any experiences that stand out before La Salle became a coeducational university or after?

Frank: Well, I think having women in class was a whole different perspective.

Paul: For the better?

Frank: I think for the better, yeah. Absolutely. I think that opened us up as well to women faculty which was for the better as well. I saw it as a very positive thing.

Paul: Do you think most people agreed with your viewpoint? Or disagreed?

Frank: I think among students, more agreed than disagreed. I think among the staff, faculty, I think there was probably more disagreement than agreement. I don't know behind it whether it was economic or social justice but I think it was a good thing for the University.

Paul: Describe your friend group at La Salle.

Frank: Those from my high school who came here and a number did. We had been friends before and were friends throughout here. Those in my major for the most part and they were bright, there were some really bright guys in there. Those, I said I played a lot of pick up basketball games killing time between this or that so people who played. It was always a nice mix of students and players and athletes so they were probably my most connected group.

Paul: Do you remain in contact with any of those people today?

Frank: From La Salle?

Paul: Yeah.

Frank: Actually Dr. Ryan and I, who was a year, year maybe two ahead of me, so we knew each other from English classes, not well, but we wound up together at North Catholic. Then we wound up together, he came here, I did some teaching here in the [19]90's, and then we're back together again so that connection remains. But that's probably- there are a couple and mostly people that I've taught with over the years that I remain in contact with. But I'm surprised how many I meet up with. Every once in a while I'll be recommended to a doctor and the doctor will go "oh yeah we were classmates" or whatever that would be.

Paul: Do you think La Salle's, you know, population that graduated around the same time you did, stayed in Philadelphia?

Frank: That's a great question. I think a good number.

Paul: Right, because you mentioned Dr. Ryan and yourself and then there are probably other people that are in the same general area as well.

Frank: Yeah, Brother Mike McGinniss who was the university, was, I think a year ahead of me in English. He didn't go very far from the university.

Paul: Do you think the professors at that point in time had some sort of impact on you all to have you return to La Salle or was that just freedom of choice?

Frank: That's a great question. Now for me, other than that four year period in the late [19]80's early [19]90's at night, my coming back is close to forty, thirty-five years, later so it was a long distance but I wanted to come back here. I had other things, possibly, to do but I wanted to come here because I felt I had got a great education here. I saw this as a chance to give back and I thought what La Salle was doing in trying to expand into the neighborhoods in the area of the city was a good thing. I found that really appealing.

Paul: That's happened more recently that they have been reaching out to the neighborhoods?

Frank: I think so. In the last, I would say, in the last ten years or so.

Paul: Before we leave being an undergraduate at La Salle what was your favorite memory?

Frank: At my time at La Salle?

Paul: Yup.

Frank: Honestly, I think it was one of my professors that I found demanding. A professor that I got an A in his class. And another professor who was also demanding and not in my area of expertise that I, I think I got a C+ but he was a phenomenal- I almost wanted to switch to economics because he was such a dynamic guy. [He] would pepper economics with film which was right up my alley and would act out Orson Welles in *The Third Man*. That had an impact. And I think professors for me, as a teacher, I think you

observe, you observe, you observe, and take, you take from here you take from there, and I don't know exactly- I wish I can tell people I do this move in class and I got it from you. Kind of like athletes or musicians I learned this from.

Paul: Good modeling techniques, probably.

Frank: Yeah, I do think that as you sit in class you're taking everything in and not just what someone says but how do they say it. How do they break it down for you and you try to file away the ones that do it well.

Paul: I guess one more question before we leave La Salle as an undergrad. Did you attend at the same time as your brother or sister at any point in time?

Frank: No, so my brother is four years so I was done and he started. My sister is nine years so when he was done there was a year and then she started.

Paul: You guys almost had like a good run of twelve to fifteen years of La Salle.

Frank: We had a good run. Yeah, we did. We did.

Paul: Do you know if they experienced a very similar La Salle that you did. Certainly your sister, probably, would not have been a student at the same time you would have been in 1967 so she experienced a different La Salle.

Frank: Right. Her experience, she had a good experience. She was an Art History major as La Salle's Art History program was really growing then. The museum was increasing. I think that was a good place to be at that point. I know for her- she wound up as a teacher and wound up as a union president so she didn't fall to far from the family tree. My brother was a science guy so we were very different in those ways. He was an athlete as well.

Paul: At La Salle?

Frank: At La Salle, he ran track and cross country at La Salle. He did live at La Salle as a junior/senior when he was on scholarship. He was a walk on and then was on scholarship his junior/senior years.

Paul: He was allowed to live on campus? A stipend?

Frank: That was his scholarship, he was on campus which was also convenient for the university as athletes.

Paul: After graduation where did you find your first job?

Frank: My first job after graduation was at Sears in sporting goods that was seasonal but my first real job was at Exide with my father.

Paul: Yep, and you stayed there about a year and a half?

Frank: About a year and a half, yeah.

Paul: Did you enjoy that job?

Frank: I did, I did. It was hard, it was really hard work physically demanding. It was a job that you were paid based on performance. You worked in a small group so you had to pull your weight in the group. As my father said; "I have a reputation here, don't screw up". But I think it was a really good experience for me. Again, I was waiting to enter the service so whatever I did was going to relatively short term since I didn't know when my classes would begin. That allowed me, I think A: to learn you can work with your mind or you can work with your hands. See what you want to do. [B] I think it- My father was a hard taskmaster, he was a no nonsense guy. I think I said to you, in the war [World War II] he was in a medical unit with Buffalo General Hospital was the main part of the unit. He had a ninth grade education but was doing surgery with a ninth grade education because they had seen so much combat. They had the most patient contacts

during the war. Started in North Africa and went all the way up in to Berlin. He demanded a lot because he knew we had capability and he knew that what he loved was medicine but he would never have that opportunity, so he really pushed us. But working with him was a whole different side of him and I think, for me, that's where you get credibility. It was almost, as if, okay you're alright and from there on our relationship changed.

Paul: For the better?

Frank: For the better, yeah, yeah.

Paul: Were you still living at home when you were also working with your father?

Frank: No, no. I had moved out so I was not at home. I got out as quickly as I could which, you know, I look back on it now as probably youth but I did. We had a house at the shore, they had a house at the shore, so I would be down summers not all summer sometimes but sometimes I did, I'd get a bartending job down there. It's funny what teachers do over time. But we got hockey tickets together, we did a lot of things together after that which I was always very grateful for.

Paul: How long between graduation and did you start the service?

Frank: It was almost two, it was year and a half.

Paul: Do you remember what it was like to enter the service?

Frank: Yeah, yeah. I was actually married at the time. My first wife worked for a district justice and so a friend drove me downtown to get the bus to go off. I remember having to buy t-shirts and stuff and getting on the bus like I had books with me, well they were gone immediately, they confiscated those. It was terrifying and all of the other, you know,

you're a fish out of water, you don't know anyone but everybody is in the same boat. It's kind of break you down and then rebuild you.

Frank: I had enough psychology classes that I always tried to figure out what was going on. This was either the smartest thing I've ever seen or the craziest thing I've ever seen.

Paul: Did you bring, besides the psychology, did you bring anything from your La Salle education into the work that you did in the service?

Frank: Um, [elongated pause] yeah.

Paul: I guess we can back track first if you briefly describe how you worked in the service and then we can, kind of, jump back into La Salle.

Frank: Sure, so after basic training. Again, I was waiting for a school that was at Fort Devens, in Massachusetts, that only started classes once every blue moon when there were enough need because it was very specialist oriented. The one thing I learned in the army from my initial testing was I had always seen myself as a very poor math and science student, just not having an aptitude. My test scores were about the same in English and social sciences as they were in math and science and I came in with a college degree. That one kind of surprised me and it gave me a little bit of confidence. But anyway, I was again fortunate to go in to what I went in to, which by title, I was an Electronic Warfare Operator Analyst.

Paul: In layman's terms?

Frank: In layman's terms. I operated a computer system, electronics network that would intercept transmissions, spy on people, satellites data. Break the data down.

Paul: You worked in a very small group at this point in time right?

Frank: Yeah, my class that went through, and again the class was about six months,- It was pretty intensive, electronics and et cetera- maybe a dozen, had one or two wash out in to infantry. In order to remain in good standing and get some free time [on the weekends] you had to be top three in your class and I had two electrical engineers from Carnegie Melon so it was can I hang on to number three throughout. I did that, that for me, was a confidence builder. I tell my kids you can study wherever you want to, I had to study in a locked safe in order to study.

Paul: When you were working with the C.I.A., um,

Frank: Well Army.

Paul: Army right, did you ever leave the [United] States.

Frank: No, no.

Paul: So you were always stateside.

Frank: Yeah, it was very little of that because you could operate from long distances but there was very little outside Germany, the Aleutian Islands, and Turkey.

Paul: At this point in time, you were working under classified information, correct?

Frank: Yes.

Paul: How many people were aware of what you did, kind of, as a day job?

Frank: No one.

Paul: Did your parents even know?

Frank: No.

Paul: What was that experience like?

Frank: You couldn't talk about it. To one another in class, yes, or instructors. But even, I lived off base and we had a medic, and people you socialize with had no idea what you

were doing. You were the guys in those places and even when you would actually operate in the field, nobody knew what you did. The machinery was pretty amazing for 1970's.

Paul: Did you enjoy that work?

Frank: I did, I did. It was higher level stuff. Soviet space program, so you knew a lot but you couldn't talk about it a lot. I think I may have said this to you the last time. When I was a Principal, one of the female teacher's husband came in for some event and we got talking and we were in the same- he did different things than I did, he was a little lower level- but he still said, I think I can't say anything until today about what I know. It was that kind of security type thing. I think I mentioned to you that the F.B.I check was intensive. It really was.

Paul: Right. Briefly describe how that, kind of, went. The FBI would show up at your parents house.

Frank: Neighbors, my parents, schools, jobs, think of now, now all of the paper trail you leave behind is easy to pick up. I have a son-in-law who went through the same security and it was much less intrusive just because most of that stuff is so readily available now. But I was shocked at what they knew about me. They only interviewed me once after they interviewed everyone else. I was honestly, I was concerned, that I would for whatever reason not get that clearance. Not that I felt I had done anything horrific but you just never know what someone is going to say about you.

Paul: Right, right. That's a very kind of tense point in time in the Cold War as well. So did your friends and family, when the F.B.I showed up at their door, did they think you were a subversive or anything like that?

Frank: They didn't know, yeah. I had neighbors who'd say, the F.B.I were here about you. I said, oh, did they say anything. [Neighbor] No they asked some questions and they left. From my side, I wasn't really allowed to say, I'm going to be this top-secret guy so you just kind of have to let them draw conclusions.

Paul: Doubling back, do you think you brought anything from La Salle to work in the Army?

Frank: I think I brought all that I had learned, kind of the sum total of La Salle. I think I said this to you, I had a great education and had to use it all in order to be successful in the Army piece of it. Had I not had, philosophy, or had I not had psychology or economics. Maybe that piece is the piece that doesn't work and maybe if I go somewhere else it doesn't work.

Paul: How long were you with the Army?

Frank: Six years.

Paul: Did you, did you, did your contract expire? Or did you.?

Frank: Yeah, I had fulfilled my commitment. Yeah.

Paul: Then, did you decide, why did you decide to leave the Army?

Frank: Well, it was stay and do twenty years. Starting a young family and teaching, I just knew that that kind of commitment would be too much.

Paul: Were you teaching at the same time you were in the Army?

Frank: Not while I was active.

Paul: Right, and where was that?

Frank: I taught at North Catholic, I guess when I left North is actually that same summer that I was discharged, 1976, 1977.

Paul: 1976. So was that your first year of teaching?

Frank: No I had taught at North Catholic for four years. So I was in the Army for a year and a half and then I taught four years at North Catholic. My time would be weekends and then a three, four week summer active duty.

Paul: That's a unique experience to be a teacher but then also be a top secret Army agent.

Frank: Yeah, it was interesting. It was interesting.

Paul: How did you, kind of,- its almost duplicitous, in the fact that you are carrying on a very public life as a teacher and then a private life. Did you have any interferences?

Frank: I never looked at it that way. No I think you compartmentalize, you know what I mean? Ok this [gesturing] here. The only time it really rolled into one another there was one year where because of a situation I had to be on active duty at this period of time and it was June in school, we had two more weeks of school. Now, legally, you know you got to be allowed to do that but they were not tremendously happy with me.

Paul: How do you explain that? Did you have to go to the Principal or Board of Directors and say I have to go take my Army active duty?

Frank: No but you have an order from...

Paul: From the United States government saying...

Frank: Saying, yes, you are on active duty and your job needs to be exactly as it is when you come off of active duty.

Paul: Right, that's very interesting.

Frank: But again, as a teacher when you go through that year and it's the last two weeks of school and you know, you are never going to see those kids again, there's a tug there.

Paul: Do you think that impacted your decision to leave the Army?

Frank: I think that was a piece of it. I think that was a piece of it. Again, with a young family and at that point, seeing twenty years with six down is a long, long period of time. Looking back the other way its not quite as long but it was then. As a teacher, I think, I worked two jobs forever.

Paul: You started at North Catholic in nineteen-seventy...

Frank: Two.

Paul: Two, 1972-3. How long did you work at North Catholic?

Frank: Four years.

Paul: Then after North Catholic, what did you do next?

Frank: I went to Lower Moreland.

Paul: How long were you there?

Frank: Thirty-five.

Paul: Thirty-five years. Can you describe, at the beginning of Lower Moreland, were you still just a teacher?

Frank: No, I was hired as Department Chair.

Paul: For what?

Frank: English Department.

Paul: English Department, ok.

Frank: Yeah, they had had a number of people leave. I.B.M. was raiding English Departments for really instructors in their technology and they raided this English Department of a half dozen teachers.

Paul: Really?

Frank: So, yeah, and it came up late. It was August.

Paul: How old were you when you became the Department Chair?

Frank: 27.

Paul: That's pretty young.

Frank: Yeah, I was pretty young. Sometimes it helps to be young and you don't think.

Paul: What was that experience like to be the Department Chair?

Frank: I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it because they gave me a free run. Here design the curriculum, we want it to be this. We trust you. So I got to write the English curriculum, I got to supervise a staff of ten at that age. The military experience and my La Salle experience all played in to that. Now in the mean time, I had also got my Master's degree from Villanova. Actually I had two of them at that point, I had one in Ed. Administration, I had one in English. It wasn't as if the Department chairmanship came purely out of the blue but it was a surprise. Let's put it that way.

Paul: Do you think, first of all, how many of the teachers that you were supervising were older than you?

Frank: Eight of the ten, er, seven of nine.

Paul: Do you think that impacted your relationship with those teachers at all?

Frank: I think it did. I think especially the holdovers, actually one I knew from La Salle. Yeah, he was a basketball player at La Salle, we had a good relationship. There were a couple that were bristly.

Paul: How did you, kind of, deal with that situation?

Frank: I don't think I had the people skills then, you just kind of plow [forward]. I think eventually one of the two we had a good relationship because I taught her son. I think that kind of breaks things down, the other we just never, it just never worked. But there was

also transition there so other people coming in and eventually I gave that up for a few years. I had a superintendent that I couldn't work with. So I went into coaching and then went back to it when that superintendent left.

Paul: So you were at thirty-five years for Lower Moreland. How did the school district change over time, first and foremost? And then also how did the students change over time?

Frank: It became- I think it was a rurality, its hard to say rural in Montgomery County but it was kind of a valley crowd there. It was what had been farm-y area, rural, and then a couple, in the mid [19]60's early [19]60's, a couple of these big housing projects sprung up so you had a lot of transplants from the city. Transplants who were professionals; doctors, lawyers, cell phone businesses, and because of the newness of it and because these were city people who were coming out you got, starting around that time, you got really good students and it was a small school. It always had the feel of a private, at most it maybe had 1200 students, usually hovered around a thousand in four grades. Fewer than two hundred in a class, maybe two-twenty, so over time it drew students and some incredible students. I have students that I taught that you would get at private competitive academic academies. I taught the guy who designed the telemetry system for the space shuttle by reinterpreting the telemetry system for the Apollo. Those kinds of [students]. I taught the C.I.A. agent who was outed during the Bush administration. The covert, Valerie Plame. You get to teach in that system. I mean I taught regular kids too, don't get me wrong but it became a desired school district for parents and kids. [It] went through a cycle, first was largely Jewish cycle that came in, and then Asian, and now when I'm leaving, eastern European/Russian. It's a fairly large Russian speaking population but it's

a small district and again, not one that there's a lot of change in terms of buildings. But my wife went there, her mother taught there, we taught together. My kids- we moved there- my kids went through there, at least two of my three went through there.

Paul: How do you think your kids interpreted the school district, compared to, I mean you can't put words in your kids' mouths but do you think they enjoyed the school district?

Frank: My oldest daughter, she went to high school there. I actually was her homeroom teacher for four years. But five minutes, all that was, was dad I need four bucks for lunch. I think it was probably harder for her because there was a strike then while she was in high school. I was in administration and so there was some animosity. She was very defending of me and would say about teachers that he's dead to me because he said this about you. I think it was harder for her because of circumstance more than anything. But she has her friends, she's a Facebook person, her friends through school she has remained pretty close with. She has friends from childhood but her Lower Moreland friends are pretty close. My youngest daughter, went all the way through and she has a couple close college friends, all of her friends are Lower Moreland. Some are in the area, but they'll get together- now again at twenty-six it's different than thirty-six- they get together quite a bit. They'll come over and its always good to see them.

Paul: What was that experience like, having your kids in the school district?

Frank: I worried for them more than me. I'd lived in the school district and I had, people would say how can you live in a school district where you teach or you are principal? And I said, I've never had a bad experience in the vegetable aisle, you know? For the most part those who didn't like me or had a problem with me had a problem with me in

my office and it didn't extend from there. I think for them, it was probably more difficult. Your dad yelled at me today or whatever. My younger daughter, we kind of flipped places, when she was in middle school, I was in charge of language arts for the district so I would be in her building a period of time every other day. When she went to high school, I became middle school principal. When she graduated from high school I became the high school principal so we never spent, while I was a principal, we never spent time in the same building so I think, for her, that was a blessing.

Paul: You've mentioned a couple times that you became a principal, did that come organically from being the department chair or was that an opening?

Frank: Now I had my principal certification for, I don't know, twenty year/twenty-five years before I ever used it. That came about as much, I needed a change I think. I had coached for fifteen/eighteen years, I had done the curriculum thing. I was the language arts supervisor, built a couple programs, team taught American Studies programs that were pretty revolutionary for a high school anyway. I was five, six, seven, years into that so that was a factor. I was tired of grading essays and I had a superintendent that was inspirational. The best administrator in any capacity that I've ever seen and wanted to be a part, a greater part of that organization. I bought into him in a huge way. And I said- he was maybe ten years in, and we had almost lost him to another district, the community came together to keep him there- and I said Dave, if you're thinking of retiring you have to let me know, unless you're going to be around for some period of time, I'm not getting into this. He said I have no intentions of retiring and wound up with a heart problem and had to retire my second year. While it was not horrible after that, you lost a cultural icon

who if you said, I think we should do this, he would go, sure you have pre-forgiveness, if you screw up I'll cover.

Paul: That's very important in a school district and administration.

Frank: And if you are going to do anything.

Paul: You have to have that backing. Absolutely.

Frank: Yeah, I remember one story. I would have to go to the school board meetings which could be tough at times, because somebody comes in angry and they are yelling at the board and the board says well... This one was over something silly like community softball or baseball, like kids baseball, that the people that ran the community program didn't like the high school baseball coach because we teach the kids everything and he screws it up totally. He was a terrific teacher, was a great teacher, he didn't stay with baseball. He was a music guy and has done incredible things. They are yelling for his head and his partner's head, two of them are great teachers, they were yelling- and they didn't win enough games that year and basically said this is a community program, we are part of the program, we should have a say in how they coach and who's the coaches here. And a board member, I don't think maliciously, I think out of whatever, said "yeah I think that's a really good idea." Superintendent said, "we are going to a private session the public part of the meeting is over, we are going to private session." Everybody cleared out except those of us and he said to the board member and the rest of the board, "as long as I'm superintendent here there will not be- we hire people to do the best job, we believe in those people we trust those people. End of discussion."

Paul: That's important to have that backing.

Frank: That's incredible, it was incredible.

Paul: You also mentioned you created the American Studies for the high school and then you kind of transferred into La Salle today, we'll talk more about that here coming up.

Frank: It's a fave of mine.

Paul: First I want to figure out what was the main difference between in a department chair position or being principal of a school in general.

Frank: [laughs] Well department chair and curriculum supervisor and that kind of thing you are building an academic program. You have responsibility for teachers and deliver them instruction. You have responsibility for curriculum and you have responsibility for scores in your area and things like that. They are all manageable, they are all quantifiable in a sense. As a principal, and especially today, it's just, its almost as if you need multiple [principals] there. You need the curricular leader, you need the human specialist, you need the P.R. person. The job has gotten to the point, I think, we've just- it's like a Rube Goldberg- put so many pieces on it that I don't know how workable it is, for most people. There are extraordinary people out there who do it really well but its just got so difficult that I don't think you get- you get people who want to be administrators but you don't get people who want to be career principals. They want to be a principal for five years and move on to that next thing. I don't see principals now who are the twenty year leaders who are identifiable, they are the school.

Paul: Right, community leaders as well.

Frank: Yeah, just, I think it's the position I don't think its persons. I don't think its how people are trained. I just think it's the position and your answerable to everyone.

Paul: Did you prefer one to the other?

Frank: Jobs?

Paul: Yeah.

Frank: Oh, yeah, I prefer the supervisor job. But as a principal I preferred middle school to the high school.

Paul: Why was that?

Frank: In one way. In one way, I really liked the kids there, they were still very genuine.

Paul: Yeah, malleable?

Frank: Yeah, and I had a really wonderful staff that was very together. If you had a parent night, everybody would get Chinese food in and all eat together. High school was much more compartmentalized that way. It was very difficult to build a faculty camaraderie. It just is so compartmentalized, that part I really loved the middle school. You would do things like we would take them up to the Poconos for three days of a science [fieldtrip] and you know [stay] in the cabins together. You know, and there was just a real camaraderie. The downside is the hovering parents in middle school. They are still- not still- that is the age where if elementary school didn't go great we're going to fix it here and we're going to fix it by doing more. As things break down, the desperation gets more desperate for the school and their role in it. By high school, generally speaking, parents back off because it is what it is. So that part was different. If I could have a staff and kids like a middle school and parents who relaxed a little bit, it would have been perfect.

Paul: You mentioned that you returned to La Salle 1980's/1990's was that in the American Studies program?

Frank: No, that was in education. I taught Ed. Psych and Foundations of Ed. Courses I liked.

Paul: What drew you back to La Salle at that point in time?

Frank: Freddy Ryan [laughter] who said- he was, at that point Chair in the evening and naturally had to separate because the evening program was really big. He said, I need somebody and I had at that point in time, I don't think I was [language arts] chair I think I was teaching and coaching and I did two nights or maybe it was one night and did, you know what I mean, the six o'clock class or nine o'clock class or whatever. I did that for four years and then my youngest daughter was born. I was still coaching and doing other things it just got too much to do. I mean, I enjoyed it. I felt, it goes back to another question you asked, I felt at the time, students got what I had but I always felt later that they didn't get as good as I could have and I think that was a piece of the reason coming back. I had to make this right.

Paul: Okay, so you wanted to return to teach at La Salle?

Frank: I wanted to return to teaching and when the planets aligned for La Salle I thought, yeah that's exactly the right thing to do.

Paul: So after that you continued to teach in the [19]90's as well as be an administrator, principal of Lower Moreland County and that kind of thing. At what point in time did you return to La Salle for good?

Frank: 2000... this is year five for me.

Paul: Year five.

Frank: 2012.

Paul: So what was La Salle, I guess I should backtrack, I apologize. What was La Salle like in the late 1980's/1990's?

Frank: Well I am teaching at night, in Olney [Hall] so it was just like it was in 1970 and now. I thought the students were strong, evening students, I really enjoyed them. I enjoyed the classes I taught because they were depth, kind of, content courses. Every once in a while I would teach, like, General Methods, hated that. I just felt that wasn't, it didn't have the substance. You were just kind of project-y and that's just not me. So I enjoyed, I think I learned a lot about educational psychology, I learned a lot about history of Ed. It allowed me to do other things with it, so I enjoyed the time here but as I said, I always felt like I was a day late and a dollar short in what I could provide kids.

Paul: Can you describe what it was like to return as an educator instead of a student. Standing in front of the class instead of sitting in one of the seats?

Frank: Yeah, that was an out of body experience at first, I think it still is when I come in the mornings. Especially now that I'm here full time where its not, yes I'm teaching at La Salle but really this is my job during the day so La Salle was really kind of an add on then but now it really is that out of body experience, same classrooms, same everything. It's a good feeling, my mother is 97, her memory is not the greatest but she'll still go, you're back there teaching right? You're a professor there! So... that one's odd.

Paul: How did the campus, was there any discernible difference in the campus?

Frank: Yes.

Paul: How so?

Frank: Very much so, it had just begun to move to the other side of 20th street at least on the Belfield [Avenue], lower side that was still all farm. Where that parking lot is on 20th and Olney [Avenue] was a parking lot. The Art Museum was back in there and there was no basketball arena. Dorms were across the street, nothing had moved into neighborhoods

at that point so it was a pretty self-contained campus. I still remember parking the car along 20th street where it was two way and a little spot to park.

Paul: Right, That's very interesting.

Frank: The south campus was not there.

Paul: Really? And so, that's an addition between 1992 or so and when you returned?

Frank: No, that was here then but it was not when I was in school. But the real sprawl over to Germantown Hospital and all that was since 1990's.

Paul: Did you return at any point between being a student and then also then starting teaching night classes? Did you return at all for alumni?

Frank: I did not.

Paul: And so, kind of, it was a new experience but at the same time it was an old experience?

Frank: Yes, yes.

Paul: And that was probably very comfortable, in a sense, to come back and nothing had really changed.

Frank: Yes and no, yes it was comfortable in the environment. But no coming back. In that sense, I'm used to teaching what I'm teaching, now I'm teaching not only different subject matter/content but I'm teaching different age and students. That's a change.

Paul: How did that affect your teaching style do you think?

Frank: I think you do what you do, I think its more collegial at the college level. I would bring in speakers and things like that because I do think at this level you need more than one voice. You approach it differently and it was different because it was evening and it

was three-hour classes and I'm locked into thirty years of forty-seven minutes so that was, took some getting used to just the timing of it even.

Paul: Do you think also that the students had changed in, kind of, their priorities since you graduated?

Frank: Well I don't want to use that [19]90's, using now... I think kids are kids. I hate to call them kids. But I do have a number that are right out of high school. My INST classes are, you know, I see them in August, they were sitting in a high school classroom in June. There is not much that much difference there in age. But the other level courses, the seminar courses, juniors, who have a single purpose. They want to be teachers for the most part. I don't know difference. I think college in general right now, and the evolution over time, has been more career oriented than learning oriented. Its not a good or a bad thing I just think it's a shift. I always saw La Salle as a really strong liberal arts school and I think its in a state of flux now. I think deservedly, you're looking at it, La Salle right now I think people tend to think nursing and business and not it's a liberal arts school. I think its identity right now is in a state of flux I guess the way I would put it.

Paul: Can you describe what it was like to start here, again, as a professor in 2000's, how much had it changed even since the [19]90's until 2000 I guess [20]11.

Frank: I think it was harder for me as a teacher than it was in any other way because I had come out of ten years as a principal. While I did teach classes, I wasn't a teacher for ten years. Coming back to the classroom full-time I think its an adjustment, and that for me, it was that adjustment and adjusting to the level of students and ages and what you're teaching. So I kind of felt it took me three years to really kind of get the audience, the content, the environment- where I am and who they are and what I need to do for them. I

really kind of felt the last couple of years that- its almost not playing a sport and then getting back into shape after being on a layoff for a period of time. I think as a principal- my wife always says, she's an English teacher in high school, she said what you have is like post-traumatic stress. Its going to take you three-five years just to work through your angst of being a principal and I think she's probably right. This has been very therapeutic in that sense. But it has taken a little time. It was easier coming off the military than coming off being a principal?

Paul: Really? Why do you think that is?

Frank: Well, probably in part because I was teaching so I had that continuity. And maybe being younger? The significance of what you're doing, I don't know I don't want to make it an ethical question but just kind of the scope of what you're doing. I don't know it has the same impact that it would as it would as an older [administrator]. Coming off that at that age where I felt like people would say, you know, you are retiring, I really don't want to retire, I just want out of this job and so the La Salle thing was perfect.

Paul: What you drew you back to La Salle the second time?

Frank: I think it was La Salle.

Paul: Anybody in particular?

Frank: Yeah, Dr. Ryan.

Paul: Again?

Frank: Yeah, we- teachers from North Catholic, retired teachers, have a lunch thing which I haven't been able to go to in a couple years. But he said, let's go to the lunch thing because I was still a principal at that point. I'm trying to think exactly what it was- I know what it was- I had already made the decision that that was it [retirement as

principal]. It's funny because my wife and I had talked it over the year before, and I said, look they are making some changes I am going to get some assistants here, this is going to change, one more year. It'll be good because we are changing this, that and the other. By October, I said to her, I can't finish. I'm a guy, I will never let go of the rope, ever. I'll hang on from the helicopter and by October I said I can't finish. I finished out the semester until February and it worked because my successor, I got to hand pick which is what I really wanted. She's terrific. And she did three years and moved on to assistant superintendent- Anyway, Fran Ryan called me and said let's go to lunch and this was maybe November/December and he said I'm going to be out on sabbatical- he was having surgery- he said, I need somebody to cover a couple American Studies classes, would you be interested? And I said, yeah I think so. So the more we talked, my initial thought was okay I'm going to teach a couple classes and then look in the future but as he said, if you like it, they like you and you know, and that's really what happened.

Paul: So you and Dr. Ryan have-

Frank: We go way back.

Paul: Way back and so that's influenced also coming back to La Salle the second time.

Frank: Yes, very much so. And come back- we started together in a sense, and to finish together there is something pretty symmetrical about it.

Paul: You got to come back to the American Studies program and so that was probably a big influence as well.

Frank: Huge.

Paul: Can you describe briefly what the American Studies program is and then also-

Frank: Here?

Paul: Yes, please.

Frank: What I love about American Studies is that its integrated, its interdisciplinary. It really is American culture as opposed to it's just English, it's just History, it's just Art, it's just Music. It's film, its social sciences. I think, for me, my deepest love still is literature. That being said, I love how things fit together. I love seeing the big picture. American Studies more than anywhere else, the big picture at least of where we live and how we exist fits together best. That's always drawn me in. Anytime I've done things, I've had grants, they were always interdisciplinary kinds of things, it was art and literature. It was history and the essay. When it was American Studies- not that I wouldn't have come back if he said it was History or whatever- because I love, I teach the American biographies class and I love that class because again it's kind of interdisciplinary, it's history but its people.

Paul: It's also the literature and the human aspect of it.

Frank: Yeah, so that kind of fallen naturally for me. And now we are talking about- he's [Dr. Ryan] retiring and I may wind up, depending on the dean and provost, heading up American Studies for the next couple years while he pulls back a little bit.

Paul: Dr. Allen did mention that. That's probably going to be one of my next couple questions, first I'd like to discuss the students in the American Studies program, most of these students are education driven, they want to become teachers, correct?

Frank: For whom, right.

Paul: To be an American Studies major is almost to imply you would like to pursue a degree in education.

Frank: Not purely, but to have it as a minor, yes. All Elementary Education majors will have American Studies minors. I think that's important, just coming at it from a former principal's standpoint. To have a teacher who's got that kind of versatility. I mean the last thing I want out of teachers, elementary or middle, is this "I know this". I've had this conversation with a former teacher, still a teacher, was my former who wanted to be in charge of the math program through the middle school and I said, that would be great but you have to teach beyond the sixth grade. If I can move you to eighth grade and you can get a sense of the whole program from there and the next year we go for it. Well she was terrified to teach algebra because she understood math up through that point. So I think American Studies is a natural for elementary teachers to have a really broad sense...

Paul: Do you try to impart that on the students in your American Studies classes?

Frank: I do. I do, especially in seminar where they are for the most part, eighty percent of them, are Elementary Ed. I'll talk to them about, as a principal in a building that housed elementary kids, here's what I look for. Here's what I would want you to be able to do and transfer this to that because you are going to get in there and you may say, I'd like to teach language arts and reading well you have to teach history too starting in third grade so you have to be ready for those things.

Paul: So, what if you become the chairperson for the American Studies department, what do you think your plans are over the course of the next few years?

Frank: Well, it's a great program. I'd love to see us expand in terms of numbers of students. If that means going out to prospective students as opposed to waiting until they get here and seeing if they are still interested. When the program underwent a study two years ago, one of the recommendations was for a digital course which, to me, I'm excited

about that. I'm a digital humanities kind of guy. So again, that one is on hold because of the core. Once the core is adopted and we get a go-ahead on that, I think that's going to be an incredibly strong project. What university doesn't want a course, doesn't want a program that has a course that has a whole digital basis to it. I think looking at American Studies at other universities, whether it's putting a program together that would bring in students who are American Studies majors either at universities in other areas of the country or abroad, Philadelphia has more history and more cultural history than anywhere. It would be a natural place, we would draw other people in. So there are a couple of things.

Paul: Have you talked to Dr. Ryan about how you...?

Frank: We've talked about a couple things. Again, I think some of it, as things start to fall into place at the university, decisions are made

Paul: Right, it will become more clear.

Frank: Hopefully, yeah.

Paul: Are you excited about the prospect of leading this department?

Frank: I am, I am. It came out of the blue, kind of. I knew Dr. Ryan was- his position was shifting and we had talked about other things, never about this. - So when Dr. Leibiger sent me an email, can you come in and talk to us? I had no idea. I called Dr. Ryan, I said, is this a good thing or a bad thing? He said, well I really can't talk about it until you go in but it was a surprise. We've talked throughout the last couple years about the program and I feel very good about La Salle, about being a part of La Salle. I think I said that to you. Coming back, I didn't want to come back and be, I'm on campus one day a week and I have hours from here and I'm out of here. I enjoy this, I wanted to be

more a part of the university coming back and this was an opportunity. They both said well you have to talk to your wife and I know me, and I will overcommit. I do that, I get excited. I called her and she was in a department meeting and kind of gave me the what?- Or I texted her because I knew she was in a meeting,- and she stepped out and I said, you're not going to believe this, here's what just happened. And she goes, oh you're going for it aren't you? So I said, well wait stop, you are the one who always tells me that I commit to things and then.- She goes, no on this one you're doing this aren't you? And it felt right from the beginning.

Paul: Sure and the support seems to be there as well from professors at the university as well as the personal, familial, support.

Frank: Yeah, I feel really- its taken a couple years but I do feel, and as an adjunct you kind of feel like, okay, I'm here- but I've felt here much more of a part of it. And that was a big piece for me.

Paul: I'd actually like to talk about being an adjunct for just one second. I've had plenty of adjunct professors in my own collegian, now my graduate, career. Do you think being an adjunct is more difficult than being a full time professor?

Frank: I think it probably is for most adjuncts because you are trying to establish [yourself]. In a lot of cases you are working here, and there, you don't have a lot of security with it. You are only as good as the last class you taught. I mean, for me, in that sense, this was not scrapping and clawing at a career. This really was, for me, a labor of love. So from that perspective, I'm probably not the right one to ask. But I will say in terms of the department here, I'm treated no differently from anyone else and that I really

appreciate. I really do. As an adjunct it can be like you're a substitute teacher, in for the day, where the kids are going, you're not a real teacher but I've never felt that.

Paul: Do you think that also has to do with the fact you have been a lifetime educator?

Frank: I think so, I think you have some credibility but that lasts until you can't teach, you know? [inaudible] when you say I'm a lifelong educator and you don't deliver

Paul: Right, that's a big problem as well.

Frank: That's a big problem. And kids know that. I tell them the studies that have been done, say you can peg the teacher within the first two minutes of the first class.

Paul: I would believe that.

Frank: It's true. Research has been done. Whatever they are going to put on that evaluation at the end of the semester, they know within the first two minutes of class. You can't hide it from them so you can be ready.

Paul: Reflecting upon teachers I've had, you can definitely see how that holds water, for certain.

Frank: It's scary but.

Paul: It provides you with the opportunity to give a first impression but it has to be an actual first impression, you can't fake it through the first. Interesting.

Frank: And they will pick it up right away. So I loved the teaching part of it and the fact that it's in, again, History and American Studies. You know, I'd still love to teach literature but this is as good as it gets. It really is.

Paul: Yeah. You are excited about the prospect of also being at La Salle in more of an ingrained personality at La Salle as well.

Frank: Right, right.

Paul: Do you have any fears or concerns about the prospects?

Frank: Sure, failure. [laughter] and you're following the guy who built the program. I said, who followed Vince Lombardi.

Paul: That's a good point. Dr. Ryan he's...

Frank: Yeah, but he will be here. And it will be very collegial. I'll say, well I'm not doing this until we talk about it. He will say, but it's your deal. But, you know, again, we've been together long enough even with a thirty year gap in there, that I don't think I'm going to do anything that we don't feel good about, or the university feels good about. I'm excited at the prospects of it.

Paul: Yeah absolutely, so have La Sallean values influenced your work and your life?

Frank: That's a great question. I think that's why I came back. I mean, the value of making a commitment, doing something that's not just for a career move or a paycheck or, you know, there's got to be some human element to it as well. I think that was a big piece of my becoming a teacher. It was a big piece maybe, mistakenly, becoming a principal, but it was also a big piece of coming back to La Salle. All those things from La Salle years and years ago while they are not in the front of your mind when you make decisions, they are really strong in helping you make those decisions. If it weren't for going to La Salle and those values I probably wouldn't be back here, I'd probably be working for ETS.

Paul: That's very interesting, so being a student here has molded your career into being, later on, into an educator and also returning to La Salle, do you think a lot of people have had the same experience at La Salle?

Frank: I think so, yeah I think so. Again I think La Salle, as I went through was a community. It really was more than in the name of the school and that's trite but it really was. And its different- I had friends who went to Villanova, friends who went Temple, it was a different vibe. It really was.

Paul: So comparing/contrasting your student experience with students today do you think they also experience having the Brothers at La Salle today the same way they did when you were a student?

Frank: Again, because of my limited [experience], I would say yes. I would say yes. And the Brothers are an older group now, it was not as grey then but that's not a good/bad thing. I think the wisdom that comes with it, especially if you still have the passion. I think students see that. I still think bottom line, you need to know what your talking about but kids, students, need to know that you care. That you are doing this because you care about what you teach about that they learn it. I always say that to them, this is about what you take away, not what I put in.

Paul: Do you think that reflects in your teaching style?

Frank: I do, I do. I've said to you, I do writing conferences in the two courses I have now, we meet a couple times during the semester. Yes they are writing conferences and yes we talk about [writing] but I think its also to establish a flow there or a trust. A) that you know what you are talking about. B) that you have an interest in them because you do ask, how's this going? What are you worried about? How's the study going? And I find most students appreciate that and do open up much more so than in class where I get that. Its much harder, you are across the aisle.

Paul: The dynamic.

Frank: Right, it's a different dynamic. I'm much more connected with students than I would have thought to be. And students are very respectful, I give them my phone they don't call – I tell them not to call but to text. I had two or three over the weekend on a question. I've never had it where a student was really abusive. They ask genuine questions and have a concern. How do you not like that?

Paul: Yeah I was about to say, that has to reflect well on what you think your teaching has done. If you have students who reach out to you like that, you probably have to think of yourself as a success in that sense.

Frank: Well yeah at least in the sense that they feel that they can ask you questions and get an answer that will help them in whatever – because again, it rarely if ever is anything other than a question related to something very specific to our class.

Paul: So, I only have a couple questions left. What has been your favorite course to teach here at La Salle?

Frank: Well, [laughter], I should say American Studies and I do! I love teaching that. But I have to say the American Biographies class is my favorite. Now part of that is because in the five years I've been here I've taught it four of the five years in multiple semesters, but I just love the dynamic of people. How people reflect themes more than events themselves and that you can blend in – I mean I do Charles Wilson Peale and I'll do local [history] because they have as much importance as Benjamin Franklin does in that sense. I really enjoy that part of it. And the people you get to do who are not the Earth shakers –kids will always say to me who are your favorites in there? And I'll say people like Eugene Debbs, a failed socialist. Not because he's a failed socialist but

because what a human being! That's why I like that course because it allows you to do those kind of themes that are so important in history but not historic maybe?

Paul: Right, more of a layman's history than the great white man's history.

Frank: Some do reflect the great white man's history but the idea of an American character and not everybody who shapes the American character shapes it well and that's important.

Paul: That's a very good point. So in terms of the students today compared to when you went to La Salle, is it more of a heterogeneous group, is it a larger group in terms of how many people come from outside of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania? What has been your judgment?

Frank: Yeah, I would say a larger group outside of even though there was a focus on inside. I think La Salle got the reputation that really developed during my family's time here where Catholic school graduates go to college. I think La Salle is changing that, not that they're abandoning that image, but a more cosmopolitan image.

Paul: Do you think that has something to do with the city of Philadelphia not necessarily expanding, but changing in the same fashion where it's a more heterogeneous group of Philadelphians?

Frank: Yeah I think so, I think Philadelphia is still a city of neighborhoods, but I do think if you take Center City Philadelphia as the example, it's becoming much more diverse and younger. That's healthier. I would hope that La Salle could kind of mirror that. My daughter, whose suburban raised – a number of her friends are down [in center city] and they're in there pretty much every weekend doing things in a cultural center and with people that are broader than her high school graduating class – and that I love.

Paul: If you had to pick out one thing you would like to see La Salle do in the next three to five years – not even just inside the American Studies department but outside, just in general, what would you like to see?

Frank: I'd like to see La Salle – not that I don't think it has cache – but I don't think it has the same cache as it did when I went here. I'm not the guy who says, "It's all gone to hell in the hand carts since we got older" but I think there was a time in there where there was a gate keeping as opposed to forward thinking – and I do think things are really happening now, and so I would say more so in the next 3-5 years that those things begin to culminate because that was another piece of taking the position. I'm excited to see where La Salle's going in the next five years because I do think we're at a very interesting point in La Salle's history.

Paul: What do you think can tip the scales towards where you think it's hoping to go, or what do you think has to change at La Salle?

Frank: Well, I think the tuition piece is a huge piece. I think the university needs to be more than the school of nursing and the school of business. I really think liberal arts can exist within the major university. I would love to see that piece of it because as I said to you – while majors and the draws of university really are career oriented, I still think it's about education, because the career you're orienting for may not exist in ten years or five years so I do think there're still foundational pieces that every university student should have. I think that debate is going on now.

Paul: Alright, I just have probably about two more questions for you.

Frank: I think I'm out of [laughter]

Paul: Yeah we are winding down. I would like to gain you're understanding of what you believe your co workers are like. Do you think La Salle has a good set of professors, do you think the adjuncts are well established, how do you think the culture of professors at La Salle molds students, if that makes sense?

Frank: I think that point of students do acquire –maybe it's by osmosis through their professors- it's kind of what I said to you. You learn to teach by watching people teach. I think that's really strong. I've had the occasion to sit in on professor's classes. I think how they carry themselves as well. I think you need to be proud of where you are, if you're not proud, if you're punching the clock, students know it, colleagues know it. When you have a love for what you do I think that shows! And I think that's one of the things I like here. I think there is a collegiality and it's not a social collegiality per se, it's not going out on Friday for a beer necessarily but it is a sense of interest in what one another do and a support there. And I'm always fascinated by other professors and what their knowledge base is, you know?

Paul: La Salle does seem to have a wide range of professors and interests and that as well.

Frank: What you've done and studied....

Paul: Even the professors I've had just in the graduate program have a wide range of...

Frank: It's fascinating!

Paul: It really is.

Frank: How smart people can be. There could only be so many smartest guys in the room but...

Paul: It seems like they're all here.

Frank: Yeah. [laughter]

Paul: So my last question is do you think – would you like to add anything that you think has been left out? Would you like to say anything for the students who will hear this at La Salle's digital commons and anything along those lines?

Frank: One of the things that has struck me is the student body. I mean I have to say, it is diverse and there are strong students, there are weaker students, but for the most part I've been really impressed at their willingness to learn. I think that's the key thing. You're smart here or you're smart here, but the willingness to learn is the key to know what you don't know. That's what I noticed the most among students. They're appreciative when they know that they don't know, and if you can make it understandable to them that knowing that is going to make them better, as opposed to this is part of our curriculum.

Paul: Absolutely. Well Professor McKee I want to thank you for this interview I think it's been a great –

Frank: It's been a pleasure.

Paul: It really has been a pleasure for me as well.

Frank: I'm surprised I had so much to say about myself.

Paul: [laughter] You know what, you'd be surprised when people start asking questions I think I could be the same way if I had the opportunity here in the future to be interviewed but I want to thank you again. I appreciate your time and consideration for providing me with this interview. Yeah, thank you!