

Appendix E

Transcript of Dr. John P. Rossi Interview #1

Interviewer: Gregg Pearson
Narrator: Dr. John P. Rossi
Date: March 8, 2006
Location: La Salle University, Olney Hall, Room #340, Dr. Rossi's Office
Duration: 1 hour, 12 minutes
Equipment: Sony ICD SX25

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Pearson: I am here today with Professor John Patrick Rossi and we are conducting, it's March 8th, and we are conducting an oral interview of some of his experiences at La Salle University. So first off Dr. Rossi, when and where were you born?

Rossi: Born in Philadelphia, April the 7th, 1936.

Pearson: Are you married and if so, for how long? How did you meet your wife?

Rossi: I've been married since January '66, so forty years. I met her at a wedding, but I knew her before that. I used to see her in the neighborhood. I found out by accident, just by accident, that she was going to the same wedding I was going to, so that was my excuse.

Pearson: What is your wife's first name?

Rossi: Frances, with an E.

Pearson: Do you have any children and what are their names?

Rossi: One child, Monica.

Pearson: What does Monica do?

Rossi: She is director of development for Saint Basil Academy.

Pearson: Where is Saint Basil's?

Rossi: That's located in ... right outside the city ... in Montgomery County. Right on the border of the city and Montgomery County.

Pearson: What were your grandparents names?

Rossi: My grandfather on my father's side was Angelo ... and I can't remember my grandmother's name. I hardly remember her although she lived longer. My grandmother on my mother's side was Rose and my grandfather was John.

Pearson: Where did they live and what was their ethnic background?

Rossi: My grandfather and grandmother on my father's side were Italian. They had come to the United States around 1909, 1910 and my grandparents on my mother's side were Irish who came, ... who were born here and who's parents came here probably about 1850 something.

Pearson: What did your grandparents do for a living?

Rossi: (sighs) ... My grandfather had a number of jobs. The last about fifteen, twenty years of his life he was a guard down on the Delaware River, ... on the piers. My grandmother, she died right after the flu epidemic in 1919, so I don't think she ever did anything. And my grandfather and grandmother on the Italian side who I don't know very well. He was a rather talented man, but he had serious health problems. I don't think, certainly by the time I was born, he wasn't working. And my grandmother I don't think worked either. I don't know how they supported themselves; I think their children supported them.

Pearson: What was you mother's name and her occupation?

Rossi: My mothers name was Muriel, she was a housewife.

Pearson: And when and where was she born?

Rossi: She was born in Philadelphia in 1915 sometime. October 1915.

Pearson: What was your fathers name and his occupation?

Rossi: My fathers name was Gabriel Rossi, but when his sister took him to school for the first grade, she was born in Italy and didn't handle the language very well and couldn't spell Gabriel, so she told the teacher his name was Al (louder voice). So he was Al Rossi the rest of his life (interviewer smiles). Yeah, I know.

Pearson: When and where was he [Al Rossi] born?

Rossi: He was born, he was the only one in his family, he was born in 1915 also here in Philadelphia.

Pearson: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Rossi: I had five brothers and sisters. I had three brothers and two sisters and one brother is still living and two sisters.

Pearson: Are they older or younger than you?

Rossi: No, I'm the oldest.

Pearson: What were your brothers and sisters names and occupations?

Rossi: After me came Angelo. I was almost Angelo. It was a toss-up whether I'd be named after my father's father or mother's father. Thank God my mother won that argument. And I had my brother Angelo and after him came my brother Raymond and then my brother Vincent, and my two sisters Mercedes and Rose.

Pearson: I understand that you're a native Philadelphian and grew up in the local area. Where did you specifically live while growing up? Did you move around as a young man?

Rossi: Well, that again figures right into, ... the opening chapter of this thing (gestures to manuscript on desk) I'm working on is called Ruscomb Street. When I was born, my mother and father they had gotten married in 1935. It was a ... not exactly a happy moment for the Irish relatives because my mother was marrying an Italian. In those days, in 1935, an Italian was kind of frowned upon. So they got married against the wishes, not so much of his family but of my mother's family. They lived in an apartment down around oh (thinking) ... 5th and Cuyahoga in that area, around 5th Street around Erie Avenue. It was an Italian neighborhood down there and my father and mother moved in there. Then I was born maybe fifteen sixteen months later. When I was about, I guess, six, seven, eight, nine, ten months old, my mother got pregnant again with my brother Angelo who was born in November, '37. Around the same time, my father got sick. About when Angelo, by the time Angelo was born, my father was rushed to the hospital. He had appendicitis. Of course he had stomach pains, but he never went to the doctor, "who went to the doctor in those days?" he just went to the local druggist. The result was he almost died. He was in the hospital for over a month. My mother has Angelo and she goes to live with his [Gabriel (Al) Rossi's] parents and I sent to live with my aunts and uncles on Ruscomb Street. By the time that my father had recovered, and everything was returning to normal, they got an apartment, this time around just below 5th and the Boulevard [Roosevelt], my mother gets pregnant again. So instead of me going back with them, I stayed with the aunts and uncles. And then my brother Raymond was born. Then they moved again, somewhere in the same general area. My father didn't have a job; he was out of work you know. He finally got a job at a gas station around 1939. They were looking to stabilize the situation and so I stayed

with my aunts and uncles while they stabilized the situation. In 1940 he got his good job with the railroad, he worked for the ... I think it was the Reading Railroad. Eventually he was a dispatcher and he ran the tower. Anyway, by this time they're kind of settled down, but they don't have any room for me. So I stayed [with aunts and uncles]. Then Vincent was born and they moved finally to a house in 1946 – 47, in Port Richmond. It was a little tiny house and they had no room for me so I stayed with aunts and uncles. Now I would see my mother and father once a week. Usually my mother would come up for dinner and she would bring my brothers, when they got a little older, or I would go like on a Sunday down there to see them. So we were in constant contact, it was just that I lived somewhere else.

Pearson: All right, umm. In terms of, can you describe the area in which you grew up? In terms of ethnicity, culture, social, community groups, class structure, that type of thing?

Rossi: I grew up basically about five miles from here [La Salle University] in Olney, I call it lower Olney, on a street called Ruscomb Street, R-U-S-C-O-M-B (spells out). It was a fairly big street, wide street. It had thirty houses on one side, thirty houses on the other side. It had been built around 1922. One side, the south side, was developed in 1922 and the north side around 1923 – 24. I lived there from when I was about six, seven, eight, nine months old until I moved 46 ½ years later. So I lived in the same house 46 ½ years. I've only lived in two houses, other than when I lived abroad. So I lived in two houses my entire life; Ruscomb Street and now in Jenkintown. The neighborhood, when I grew up, had been an old, German, protestant community, when it opened in the 20's. It had gradually started to change in the 30's. The biggest group moving in were Irish, mostly Irish Catholics. By the time I was growing up, most of the German families had moved out or had died out, so the neighborhood would be, I would say, 60 – 65% Catholic, mostly Irish Catholic, scattering of German Catholics, a couple of Italians. There were only, as far as I knew (counting to himself) one, two, three ... three Italian families in the immediate area. Most of them were Irish, as I say, so it was mainly Catholic, Irish community, somewhat in transition. There were a handful of Jewish people because they owned a lot of the businesses, except the bars. The bars were owned by the Catholic Irish. Almost all your butcher shops, grocery stores, those kinds of things were owned by Jewish people. Except for my favorite grocer, ah butcher, who I never forgot, Grover Cleveland Trautwein. I thought that was one of the great names (laughs). He was German, not Jewish.

Pearson: Now would you say, that in your neighborhood, you were better off or worse off than your neighbors?

Rossi: It was a lower, it was an upper working class, lower middle class neighborhood, but we were probably better off because my uncle had a good job. In the house where I was raised, there were four adults. There was my married aunt and uncle, Aunt Betty and Uncle Ray, an unmarried aunt, Aunt Mary Rose and my grandfather. Now we all lived together, right. With typical perversity, I called the unmarried aunt “mom”; not the married aunt, I called her Aunt Betty. This, of course, led to a lot of stories that I was her child, but all you had to do was see my brother Ray and I and you know we were like twins. Anyway, we were probably ... because my grandfather had a job, my Uncle Ray had a job, my Aunt Betty had a job. My Uncle Ray had a car. There were only three cars on the street, so we were probably better off; although, nobody was rich. There were no doctors, no lawyers, nothing like that.

Pearson: Could you describe the character of those that raised you a little bit?

Rossi: Yeah, my grandfather was born in 1888, the one aunt in 1890, the other two in 1892. So they were in their forties or fifties when I arrived. They had ... my grandfather was a wonderful man, but totally incompetent. When his wife died in 1919, he was left with three girls; my mother and my two aunts. He couldn't handle them, he couldn't raise them, so his mother took them in and that's how he got to stay on Ruscomb Street. He was a good hearted guy, a heavy drinker and ... I guess you would call him a functioning alcoholic, although he didn't function too well for a long time. He got it [drinking] under control and continued to drink. He was hard working and a wonderful guy in many ways. The one aunt, my Aunt Mary Rose, who I called “mom”, she was the kindest person I ever met. My friends used to say that when they would come to visit and she didn't die until 1980, ah ... 1960, they would say “I think if Adolph Hitler came, she would have something nice to say about him like he dresses well or something.” She was real soft hearted. She got mad in 1956-57 when a couple of my friends got cars and she said that I should have a car. Well, I didn't have any money, I was working, but didn't have any money. She said “I have some money; I'll give you the money to buy a car.” She had about \$2,000 and wanted to give me \$1,500 to buy a car. Anyway, the aunt and uncle, the uncle was like a substitute father; he was the one who really raised me, the male one who raised me. The aunt, his wife, was more the boss in the family and she really ran things. She made the decisions. So in a sense, my Aunt Mary Rose doted on me, my aunt Betty though raised me and you now, if I got out of hand, I got whacked by her [Betty]. My Aunt Rose never laid a hand on me all those years.

Pearson: Now what values did they stress growing up?

Rossi: Well they were old fashioned, very good people. The grandfather and the two aunts were Catholics. My uncle was Protestant and married into a

Catholic family. He was a tremendous needler. I used to tease him and I used to say on your death bed we we're going to bring the priest in and we're gonna convert you. He would say, some how I'll come back if you do that. He was old fashioned. His family had been Quaker; believe it or not his last name was Penn. His family was Quaker, but his father came from Germany, so they weren't of the old English Penn's. There was no Quaker Meeting House where they came from, so they joined the Baptist Church. So he was a Baptist. He was very, very, down the line. You had to do things the right way. There was a right way and a wrong way and you didn't cut corners. The aunts and grandfather didn't have much impact that way, along those lines. The two aunts were old fashioned and good hearted people, very kindly people. I never heard ... I never heard a curse. My uncle hit his thumb, with a hammer once doing some work and he said "Son of a bitch" and I remember what he said "If I must use that expression", I remember that, so I got a classic good boy upraising.

Pearson: It sounds like you had a little bit of a mixed religious background. Was religion important in your family while growing up?

Rossi: Yeah, I was raised Catholic. My uncle had no say, but he didn't care. He sent me to private school, La Salle High [La Salle College High School] and he paid for that. So, it was kind of mixed. Although, he was so crazy about my aunt Betty that anything she wanted was OK. He even said that you know. I used to tease him and say "How the heck did you ever marry this Catholic?" because my uncle was actually pretty anti-Catholic. When he was married he had to get married in the chapel because in those days you could not get married in the church if you were not Catholic. You had to get married in like a chapel. You had to sign all kinds of embarrassing things and he had kind of an anti-Catholic element in him. And I used to say "How the heck did you do it?" and he said, because he lived until 1979, and he said "Well, I would do anything for your Aunt Betty.", which is kind of an interesting commentary on America. I mean, it's so common especially today.

Pearson: What did they want for you growing up? What did they want you to become or what did they want for you?

Rossi: They didn't really talk a great deal [about it]. My uncle did, but the others didn't. I mean they stressed getting a good education; I was a bad student until about the 4th or 5th grade. In those days, believe it or not, they had a thing when you were promoted "on trial". So, I remember I was promoted from the 4th to the 5th grade "on trial", which meant that if I did not do well, I would go back to the 4th grade. Well, I never went back, but around 5th or 6th grade I got to be a better student. They liked that, but they never put too much pressure on me. I never had that pressure that you had to do well, you had to do better than so and so. They wanted you

to do well and they were proud. My Aunt Mary Rose; I mean the sun rose and shone on me. Anything that I did was OK. My uncle was the one that kind of instilled ambition. Now he, he worked in the insurance business and he headed the burglary department of a pretty big insurance company because he knew jewelry; he had once had a jewelry store. He was the only non-Jew on Sansom Street at one time. He had a booth about half the size of this (motions to his 10 foot x 20 foot office). Even in the fifties he had a partner, a Jewish guy named Sam Katz, and he and Sam would buy and sell jewelry and things of that nature. But anyway, he thought I should be a lawyer so he talked that up and he stressed education, but the others didn't.

Pearson: Were there any talks of politics or unionism growing up?

Rossi: The family they were right wing Republicans. They were all, in those days the city [Philadelphia] was all Republican. My Aunt Mary Rose was active in the Republican Party. She was actually president of the 42nd Ward Republican organization. My uncle was a raging right-winger, that's probably where I got some of my stuff. ... I'll tell you one thing which I think is very important; they treated me as an equal at the conversation. At the table, my comments were taken seriously and I was allowed to talk. So we talked about almost anything. I don't remember particularly unionism, but certainly ... as a younger person I was a little more to the left than they were, which wouldn't have been hard, but it was basically kind of a conservative family background.

Pearson: Why do you think they gave you an equal voice at the table?

Rossi: You know, I don't know. I'll bet they never read a book on how to raise a child. I don't think they had a clue on how to raise a child. They didn't understand anything about that, but they were very kindly and kind hearted. My aunts ... my mother and my two aunts also lived in that house, when they were little in the 1920's. So they knew something about kids. My uncle kind of treated you like an adult. That is, whatever he was talking about, whatever he was reading, he'd pass it on to you. The aunts ... my grandfather doesn't fit in because he did not pay much attention to that stuff. But my aunts, I just think they liked me so much that whatever ... They used to call me "junior" for a long time; that whatever junior wants is OK. I had an aunt that used to be a nun and she used to be scared to death, she was an older aunt, and she said she was scared that I would grow up to be the most horribly spoiled person. I said "Why?" and she said because the way they doted on you. So I said to her, in a way, there was so much love in that house, it would have been pretty hard for me to have been distorted that way. Of course the other thing was that I had my mother and father, they were coming up, I saw them, so it was like I had

two families. Instead of confusing me, I just thought, well ... I was twice as lucky as everybody else.

Pearson: Did you ever have any disagreements with those that raised you growing up?

Rossi: Oh yeah, the usual things, typical kid things. Until I got old enough to pick my own clothes they would buy them for me and I wouldn't like what they bought; you know I wanted this or that. There were the usual things. The only thing that really caused trouble was ... up until about the age of fourteen, I hardly ate anything. I had no appetite at all, plus I had a list of foods I would not eat (emphasis). Literally, I never ate pork, I never ate lamb, no seafood; I still don't eat any seafood. That used to drive them crazy. They would prepare a meal and I would pick at it. I had this one phrase, I remember it used to drive my Aunt Betty crazy; "I don't like the smell of that." and that would really get her. On the other hand, my uncle could eat anything; he would eat anything. I mean, you put it down, he'd eat it. So I was skinny as a rail and had no appetite and they were really concerned. They used to take me to the family doctor who was an old friend also, a man named Leo Kane. Doctor Kane, who grew up with my aunts and my grandfather, and I can still remember him [Dr. Kane] used to say to them, my Aunt Mary Rose, he used to call her Mae, "Mae is he going out and playing?", "Yeah" [Aunt Mary], "Is he sleeping alright at night?", "Yeah" [Aunt Mary], "Is he missing school?", "No" [Aunt Mary], "Well then leave him alone." I remember my aunts; being Catholic they ate seafood on Friday because on Friday they couldn't eat meat and I wouldn't eat it. They would try, they would try fried this, they'd try that. I remember Dr. Kane saying that people just have different taste buds. He said that those taste buds may change as he grows older; he may be just different, so just leave him alone. I [Dr. Kane] checked him out and he's OK. That kind of got them, but it would still get on their nerves, so that was an issue until about age fourteen when, all of a sudden, everything started to change. Although, believe it or not ... this is hard to believe, one day I went over to have lunch and they had a soup; ... corn chowder. I love corn chowder. I opened up the thing [soup kettle] to take it (sniffs) and I said to one of the waitresses, a real nice woman, "Joanne, that's got seafood in it." And she said "No, that's corn chowder, its not seafood." So I said "No, that's got seafood.", so she went back and checked and said "You know, you're right." and she had to change the thing [label] on it (laughter). My wife was at an affair on Saturday and she brought me home a meal from the affair and it was chicken, but it was chicken cooked with crab. They put a crab cover over it you know. She didn't tell me, because she knew and she cooked it and I walked in and as soon as I sat down and I said there's seafood in this, I can tell it.

Pearson: You have a highly developed sense of smell.

Rossi: Obviously, and that's really amazing.

Pearson: Now did you have any jobs as a young man?

Rossi: They didn't think I should work. I did odds and ends; you know ran errands and things like that. But getting a newspaper route, they didn't want me to have a newspaper route or anything like that. I didn't really work until I was about seventeen.

Pearson: Now you have written on a wide variety of topics throughout your life and seem to have a multitude of interests. When you were a child, what were some of your interests outside of school, growing up?

Rossi: I became a baseball fan at about age ten. I really got hooked on baseball. I loved the movies. I liked to read. They bought me ... a series called The Book of Knowledge. It was like an encyclopedia, there were ten volumes. Actually twenty volumes; two in each book. They paid a lot of money; about \$350 in 1964, 1946 for that and that's a lot of money. I'll tell you it was a good investment because I went right through that. I loved reading about history, I liked poetry. I read, I read almost anything I got my hands on. They were smart in some ways, for example, one year my uncle said what do you want for Christmas or my birthday, I forget which one, and I said I wanted a subscription to Time Magazine. Now I might have been thirteen or fourteen, so he said "Fine", so he gave it to me, so that was a great opening. Plus we had four newspapers a day at the house, so I read the newspapers.

Pearson: Now you mentioned the movies. Do you consider yourself a movie buff?

Rossi: Yeah, but of the older stuff.

Pearson: What's your favorite movie?

Rossi: Geez, - it's hard to say. I don't know whether I could have one I liked ... a lot of pictures. I liked "*Citizen Kane*"; that impressed me the first time I saw it. "*Pygmalion*" impressed me the first time I saw it. ... Last night they had one of my favorites on "*His Girl Friday*". I also liked, when I really became a movie fan, I got hooked on what were called film noire; kind of mysteries, people being haunted by something and trying to find out what's happening, that kind of thing. I liked those; "*Murder My Sweet*" was one of the first ones I saw that I really liked, "*The Big Sleep*". Up until about 1970 I went quite a bit, then I started to slack off. For example, I did not see a single movie that was mentioned in the Oscars this year. That's the first time, some years I'll have seen one, maybe two, but that's the first time, I'm not just talking about the nominated pictures, everything (emphasis). I didn't go once this year that I remember.

Pearson: Did you play baseball as a child? Is that where your interest developed? How did you develop your passion for the game?

Rossi: That all goes back to my uncle. My uncle was a fanatical baseball fan. With me he wanted a baseball buddy. He wanted somebody to go to the games with. He tried to get me interested; he talked up baseball, I played it as a little kid, you know the way kids did. He tried to encourage my interest. Then he started to take me to the games when I was eight. I can still remember, he took me in 1944 to see the A's [Philadelphia] play the St. Louis Cardinals and after about five innings I was so restless he had to take me out. But he didn't give up. The next year he took me to see a game with the A's and the Detroit Tigers and the same thing happened. It was OK, but I got bored. The next year it was May 1946. It was a cloudy, rainy Sunday and we went to see the Phillies play the Cincinnati Reds in a doubleheader and it clicked. I got caught. I was a baseball fan it just happened almost like ... it didn't happen when I was eight, it didn't happen when I was nine, but it clicked when I was ten and I've been a baseball fan ever since.

Pearson: What clicked?

Rossi: You know, I don't know. In writing this (points to unfinished manuscript) I'm trying to figure what that made me. A couple of things. Part of it was the basic interest was there, I just had to be a little older to be able sit and watch a whole ballgame. In '46 also, the Phillies signed a guy from Olney named Del Ennis. I don't know whether I was just fascinated with the idea that there was somebody from my neighborhood who was playing in the major leagues and he used to play at Olney High field which I could walk to with no trouble and I actually played at Olney High field and all that. I don't know whether that was it or simply, you can't use the word maturity for a ten year old, I was just old enough to understand. And we went, he had a friend at Budd Company who had some kind of box seats, and my uncle would call the guy up and say is anybody using the seats. The man would say "No" and we would just go. So I thought everybody went to the ballgame and sat in the fifth row or sixth row behind the visiting team dugout, you know and we would go twenty, thirty times a season. He encouraged this, because anything I wanted connected with baseball, any magazines, any books; he would buy them. My uncle was not fast with the dollar, but he would do that.

Pearson: Where did you attend grade school?

Rossi: I went to Incarnation of our Lord school, 5th and Lindley; Inky.

- Pearson: What were some of your academic interests when you were in grade school?
- Rossi: As I told you, I was a very poor student for the first four or five years. My wife and I, we have a dog and we walk the dog and we talk. I said to her, because I'm writing this (points to manuscript on desk) you know I realized I was a very poor student, I was pretty smart, but I just did not like school I didn't do the work. Then around the fifth or sixth grade it started to click. I said to her, I was thinking later by the time I got to the eighth grade; I may have had the highest score in the entire eighth grade. If I didn't, I was pretty close. It certainly wasn't from working hard because a lot of it came easy then. I liked history right from the first. I was always one of the best in that. I liked almost everything. I didn't like math, but I did well in math until I got to high school; then math and I parted.
- Pearson: Do you have a particular memory that you are very fond of from your early childhood education?
- Rossi: No, not really. Most of the teachers were pretty good; I had nuns. The eighth grade nun was the best; hands down. She was a wonderful woman and put up with a bunch of thugs. Imagine, she had 34 boys and managed to do a good job. I don't know how the heck she did it. I found out later, about thirty years later, that this nun, who was then transferred down to ... what's the girl's school in center city, the Catholic girl's school ... whatever it is ... she was 21 when she taught us, but of course to us she was an old woman us because of the habit and everything 21 years old, she was the best. Most of the nuns were pretty good; the seventh grade nun was not. She was unfair and played favorites. She prepared you for the cruelty of the world. But I don't have any particular memory, no.
- Pearson: You are a graduate of La Salle College High School.
- Rossi: Right.
- Pearson: Why did you attend La Salle College High School instead of a public school?
- Rossi: Well, the normal route for people from Incarnation was to go to North Catholic, but I didn't want to go to North Catholic. Everything I heard, it was one of the biggest high schools in the country. A couple of fellows from my neighborhood went to La Salle, which was only 20 blocks away. My Aunt Mary Rose or my Aunt Betty made the decision. She said to my uncle "I want him to go to La Salle, not to North." The other option was that I would go to Olney High. In those days it was rare for a kid from a Catholic school to go to a public high school. It just didn't happen that

often. My uncle, who as I said was tough with the dollar and didn't like to spend any more money than he absolutely had to, he put up a fight, but he always lost; whatever she [Aunt Betty] wanted she got. It cost the ridiculous sum of \$240 a year for high school. It now costs maybe nine, ten, twelve thousand a year.

Pearson: You have written and I was told by Dr. Jack Reardon that you were the first in your family to attend college and you are La Salle College Class of 1958. When did you first start thinking about attending college and how did your family feel about that?

Rossi: I always thought that I'd go to college. I just assumed it. My uncle probably encouraged that, talking about law and all that. Because of his position, he had, he was in charge of a big department in his company. It was called Aetna Insurance, so he handled the burglary department; jewelry would be stolen, watches would be stolen and there was a lot of give and take. He would come in contact with lawyers as a result. He would introduce me to lawyers and judges and things like that. He had a friend who was later a justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court who my uncle actually did some legwork for. He really admired this guy. His name was Samuel P. Orlando. I asked my uncle to ask him what the "P" was for. He said "I know what it's for; he doesn't like it." This man, Orlando, was a very aristocratic Italian, very "Pasqualli"; he didn't like that "Pasqualli". So anyway, I met Mr. Orlando and he showed me around his office and all that kind of stuff, so I just assumed that I'd go. That generation, the post Second World War generation, the kids around my time, about half my class went to college. It wasn't as rare as it had been before the War [WWII]. It was kind of you went to college, high school then college. High school wasn't the end. I was pretty determined that I would go to college.

Pearson: Your friend, Jack Reardon, said that he selected La Salle because he finished in the top quintile at La Salle College High School, therefore he did not have to take the standardized college entrance examinations. Did you pick La Salle for a similar reason?

Rossi: I think I picked La Salle because it was the only place that I probably could have gotten into in those days. As I told you, when I was in the eighth grade if I didn't have the best record, I probably had one of the best records in the whole of my eighth grade. I went to high school and Jack Reardon and I have had this discussion. He thinks that the high school made him; that shaped his life. But for some reason, it was not that I didn't like it, it's just simply that (sighs) I could not apply myself. First of all, the math really threw me because you moved from general math; I could always do all the general math. Once we went into algebra, I started to get really intimidated by the math. So I was in trouble after a week.

My sophomore year I did very well. Other than that though, I barely got out of the high school. I must have been in the bottom twenty percent. In those days you could go, you could go from La Salle High to La Salle College without taking any tests. Now if I had taken a test I would have done OK because I tested very well. They would let you go. There was a Brother in the high school [Christian Brother] Brother David Albert who was a saint. He was supposedly a disciplinarian; he was the last person in the world who should have been a disciplinarian because he couldn't see anything bad in anybody. He encouraged me and he would say "Yes John, I think you should go." and he had my record in front of him. It must have been one of the worst records in the school. I just thought that I wanted to go to college and I'll do better. Whereas high school made Reardon, college made me.

Pearson: Were many of your peers at La Salle also the first in their families to attend college?

Rossi: Yeah, yeah, it was very common, yeah.

Pearson: Where did you live when you were at La Salle?

Rossi: Same place; Ruscomb Street.

Pearson: Did you have any particular feelings about, what was it like attending an all-male institution?

Rossi: I didn't think anything of it because I had attended an all-male high school. My grammar school separated the girls and the boys. Like Reardon's didn't, my wife's didn't, but they did. I don't know if that particular religious order The Immaculate Heart of Mary Order, I don't know if that was just their rule or what. So I went to all boys' schools right through ... I never thought anything of it.

Pearson: Now what was the student climate like at La Salle when you were an undergraduate in terms of being certainly all-male, commuter school, and all Catholic at that time? Predominantly Catholic.

Rossi: Yeah, I would say that about 85% Catholic, yeah. I really enjoyed my college experience. I really blossomed and learned in college. I had a handful of very good teachers, which I cannot say that I had in the high school. In high school I had maybe two or three that I would say were really good teachers; now Reardon and I have argued about this. In the college I was really lucky. First of all, when I found out that you could major in history and take mostly history courses I thought that was just a treat because I just loved it. To me, to have a history assignment was no work. I had a couple of very good history teachers. The person, other

than my Uncle Ray, the person who made the most and my father I guess, the three males that made the most impact on me were my father, my Uncle Ray and one of the teachers at the college here, a man named John Lukacs. When I got exposed to him as a sophomore because I had an option to take an extra history course and I took his course. It was like an eye opener; it was exactly what I wanted to do. What this man is doing is what I want to do.

Pearson: I was going to ask you, could you expand upon your relationship with Dr. John Lukacs?

Rossi: Yeah, well what happened is that I had him as a sophomore and all the students were juniors and seniors. I did as well as almost anybody. He was pretty shrewd and he spotted me; he must have known that this is a young kid. Well in my junior year, I ended up in two of his classes and he kind of made me one of his pets. In other words, he drew me aside. He had a great capacity of treating students with a kind of ... serious interest. In other words, when you said something, he was interested in what you said. I was a voracious reader and around this time, about the same time we're talking I had some more money than I normally had because I was now working almost full time; I joined the history book club. Every once in a while Lukacs and I would talk and I would tell him what I was reading and he would say "Where did you get that?" One time, two books that I read back to back were books that he was reading and that kind of impressed him. He kind of made me his acolyte in a sense.

Pearson: How big was the enrollment at La Salle, when you were here?

Rossi: Geez ... I don't really know to tell you the truth (pause). It was growing every year because that's when La Salle boomed. That was when the school really boomed after the Second World War. They added a night school somewhere in the late 40's and so between the day school and the night school, the place was packed. They didn't have this building [Olney Hall] half the buildings that are here now weren't there; no Union. The high school moved in 1960 and the college took over that building, so the high school was here while I was in the college. Almost all my classes were in College Hall. The place was packed (emphasis)! I don't know what the numbers were.

Pearson: What was social life like as a student?

Rossi: Well there wasn't any social life, unless you were interested in being in the ... like The Masque or the newspaper or something like that. They tried to encourage [social activities]; they had dances. They would bring girls down from various girls' schools or La Salle would go up to the girls

schools. Basically, you were on your own. As a commuter you made your own social life.

Pearson: What activities were you involved in as a student? Anything in particular?

Rossi: The one that I got really most involved in, I was a member of a couple of clubs ... involved in the History Club from my sophomore year and I was president of it my senior year. That was the one activity that I really got most involved in. The problem was I was working from my sophomore year on I was working full time in the summer and I had a job in the winter; I worked for the Department of Recreation. In the winter I was supposed to work thirty hours, as it turned out I had a boss that worked out a deal where I worked twenty and was paid for thirty. So, I would leave La Salle and often go to work. Now I had the kind of job where I could do almost all my work at work. I had an advantage over guys who worked other jobs because I could literally do school work at work.

Pearson: Were there any graduate programs at La Salle when you were an undergraduate?

Rossi: There might have been one in religion; I don't know for sure. If there was, that was the only one.

Pearson: Now speaking of religion, did you have to take religion classes and attend Mass?

Rossi: No you didn't have to ... you had to take religion courses; if you were Catholic you had to take three religion classes freshman, sophomore and junior year. If you were non-Catholic they had other classes for you. They didn't have much in the way of compulsory; like the high school had. It was there and they tried to encourage you, but it wasn't like in the high school where you had to go. In other words, they would set aside a whole week for religious activities, whereas in the college they would have those things, but it was not compulsory. It was kind of encouraged.

Pearson: What percentage would you say was Catholic at La Salle when you were a student?

Rossi: I would say 85%. I am not sure; that could be a completely (emphasis) incorrect figure, but I would guess ...

Pearson: The vast majority.

Rossi: Oh yes, the overwhelming majority.

Pearson: Did you spend any time abroad as a student; as an undergraduate?

Rossi: No.

Pearson: When you were a student what was the role of the Christian Brothers at the university?

Rossi: They were a much bigger part of the school, not as big in the college as in the high school. The high school was overwhelmingly run by Christian Brothers with a handful of laymen. In the college, the Christian Brother influence was much greater than it would be today because there were more of them. I had many, many Christian Brothers, some of them pretty good. I had a couple very good Christian Brother teachers. They put this stamp on the place because their numbers were so great and what you had was a school, a college that took a lot of its character and a lot of its coloration from the Christian Brothers. In a sense, you felt the Brothers presence. Even if you weren't interested, you felt it.

Pearson: Was the faculty primarily composed of Christian Brothers when you were a student?

Rossi: I wouldn't say primarily, but I would say a great number. I'll take a semester (starts counting to himself) ... I had three Brothers one semester ... two another semester. So if you know if you had five courses you might have two Christian Brothers.

Pearson: Is it fair to say that there was a mix [Christian Brothers and lay faculty]?

Rossi: Yeah.

Pearson: What was the role of the non-Brother faculty? How did they get along with the Christian Brothers?

Rossi: I don't really know; they seemed to get along pretty well. La Salle in the 50's and early 60's was a strange place. You got a tremendous education, but it was all like the basics. It was no nonsense. You had guys who were here to improve themselves. Not like you get today; kids who are here because mom and dad said you gotta go to college. You had mostly very ambitious, serious, driven people. The result was you didn't have as much frivolous crap that you would have today. So the result was what you saw were people who were here to improve (emphasis) themselves; to better themselves and they knew that. Unlike the kids today who are here because they are here and they don't know why they're here.

Pearson: So you see a difference; a generational difference?

Rossi: Oh yeah, a big difference. You see, there were a lot of Korean War veterans when I started in college and those guys used to think we were all

nuts. Even my crowd and I was a pretty serious student by then. The vets would sit in the back [of class] and we sat in the back, so we got to know some of the vets. I remember one guy said to me “You guys don’t know what the hell you’re doing.” and basically what he was saying is that this is really a chance to better yourself and you’re not taking advantage of it.

Pearson: What was your best memory of La Salle as a student?

Rossi: The college?

Pearson: Right.

Rossi: Well I really enjoyed myself. I had a lot of good friends. One of my best friends I still stay in touch with, he was friends from college. He lives out in California, but we touch all the time. I got a great education. I made a lot of good friends and we had a great time. Mostly we made our own good time, but we really had it. I was also real lucky because the job I had was a fabulous job. I mean the Department of Recreation was like not having to work.

Pearson: Did you have any bad memories as a student?

Rossi: In the college?

Pearson: In the college.

Rossi: Not really, no ... in my freshman year I had a little trouble getting adjusted my freshman year. I didn’t do well in the freshman year. Somewhere in the freshman year I guess they had a way of tracking some of the people they thought were questionable. A fellow named Tom McCarthy, who was later vice president of student affairs. He’s a friend of mine now and he’s retired now; I got to know him after I came aboard. He called me in and said “You know John, looking at your record you know what you ought to do is drop out for a semester or so and then come back. I think you have to rethink what you’re doing.” and I said “No, I’m not going to do that”. I always remind him of that and say “Gee, you know, if I had listened to you Tom I’d have probably been a trash man or something.” Other than the freshman year, which was a little bit of ... I can’t say exactly say why I didn’t make the adjustment as well, but from the sophomore year on I just had a great time. I didn’t like every course. I didn’t like philosophy for example; I thought it was a waste of time. Basically, I enjoyed myself.

Pearson: La Salle College was your first step on a distinguished academic career ...

Rossi: (sarcastic) ... Yes, yes, very distinguished, yes (laughter) ...

Pearson: Your parents must have been very proud.

Rossi: Oh yeah, God.

Pearson: How did they feel when you graduated from college?

Rossi: Oh my God. My Aunt Mary Rose, for whom of course I could do no wrong; even when I was a miserable student I was still OK. The aunt who was a nun, she [Mary Rose] stayed very close to her. And this aunt, we would talk about this later, said that every time she would call my Aunt Mary Rose she would brag about me. I [the aunt] would say "Oh, there she goes again." And she [the aunt who was a nun] said [to me] that she was not very impressed, quite honestly when I met you and I could understand why. Sometime my aunt [Mary Rose] calls her and said that he [Rossi] has a fellowship to Notre Dame and she says I couldn't believe it; when I went on to Penn, the same thing. My aunt [Mary Rose] bragged unmercifully about me. I once went to vote and my aunt was the judge of elections and one of the women sitting there, when I came in to vote, said "Boy, have I heard a lot about you." I said "yeah, from Aunt Mary Rose." and she said "I think she thinks the sun rose and shined ..." Anyway, my uncle was very proud, my father was very proud. My uncle, when I got my PhD in '65 and I brought home the diploma and I put it in my drawer. I didn't think anything about it and a couple months went by. I went to look for it for some reason and I couldn't find it. What the hell, I put it in there I remember So I went to Ray and said "Ray, do you know where I put my diploma?" and he said, "Yeah I took it.", "Where is it?" [Rossi]. Well he took it and got it framed and hung it in his room (laughter). I still have it. He went out and went to get it framed and the guy said we have this new glass, its called non-glare glass. I had never seen it before and my uncle, as I said, was tough with the dollar. He went to the top on that; the best frame they had, non-glare glass, but it's in his room. My father ... I graduated June '58 and he died July of '58. He was thrilled, plus he worked for the railroad so that meant that he could go anywhere by train and he loved Notre Dame; he was like a subway alumni. So he was thrilled beyond; he was going to go out for all the Notre Dame football games and the poor guy; he didn't live to see that. So they ... oh yeah, I was a prince.

Pearson: Now you had mentioned your fellowship to Notre Dame. How did you earn your fellowship to Notre Dame?

Rossi: Well I was a pretty good student. I took the Graduate Record Exam and did very well in history. I finished in the top 10% in the nation in history; not as well in other areas but in history I did very well. Lukacs had contacts at Notre Dame and he was sending a stream of La Salle students out there. So I got a fellowship there and I got one to Niagara [Niagara

University in New York] and one to Marquette [Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin]. Niagara and Marquette were better deals than Notre Dame, but Notre Dame was the better school. At the same time, I got a free ride to Penn [University of Pennsylvania], but that was not an academic, that was what was called in those days a senatorial scholarship because of my family's political connections. State senators could recommend somebody, so I could have gotten a free ride to Penn. But I decided if I did get a free ride to Penn that way, it wouldn't have been academically, it would have been because of political connections, you know a political gift. Penn [inaudible], state senators, both parties they did that. So I went out to Notre Dame and I went out to Notre Dame and I enjoyed it very much.

Pearson: Now ...

Rossi: Except the climate. I could never stand the climate.

Pearson: I was going to ask you; you grew up in Philadelphia. How did you adjust to life in the Midwest?

Rossi: I wasn't ready for how cold it was, I'll tell you that. We lived in an apartment with no heat in the bedrooms and I'd wake up in like December and January and there would be a couple of inches of snow that had come through the window. It certainly got you out of bed (laughter).

Pearson: Was it common in the late '50's to go directly from undergraduate to graduate school?

Rossi: Yeah, it was more common than it ... yeah, it was pretty common. I mean I certainly didn't think about taking time off. I wanted to get that Masters ... first of all I had a free ride so I was going to take advantage of that.

Pearson: Your academic interests at Notre Dame were obviously history.

Rossi: Yeah, you had to pick a major and my major was history. I was there for not quite two years; I finished a little earlier. I finished in March of 60.

Pearson: What did you like about the school? What did you like and dislike about Notre Dame?

Rossi: The only thing I disliked was the climate. I made another good collection of friends; they were nice guys. I was incredibly well prepared. The chairman of the history department was a crotchety old Irish priest named Father MacAvoy and he loved La Salle people. He used talk ... he was one of these guys that would talk with his hand in front of his mouth (motions with hand) ... "ahh, ahh, ahh". He said that everybody coming

from La Salle was well prepared and we were. I mean, I had fifty something hours of history as an undergraduate. MacAvoy, when he took over the history department at Notre Dame, he wanted to build it up. The two ways he built it up were one, he hired really top notch, young scholars; paid them pretty well to lure them to Notre Dame. Not just Catholics either, he wanted good scholars from all across the board. The second thing he did was to try to get good students, to encourage good students; he created an exam you had to pass in your first month there. My first month there I had to take a test in ancient, medieval, modern Europe, American and historiography. If you didn't pass them, you weren't admitted to the program. Now you could take ... you could pass three, and not two and have to take them again what have you. Well, I passed all five. Out of the fourteen people in our Masters program, only three passed all five areas. He [MacAvoy] called me in one day and said "You people from La Salle are always prepared.", when he told me I had passed all those. There were a couple really top notch teachers there. A guy named Fitzsimons, a fellow named Shanahan. They were the two best teachers I had. A fellow named Bernard Norling, who just died. They were good; they were traditionalists in the teaching methods. A lot of the things I am influenced by comes from Lukacs, from Fitzsimons, from Shanahan and ... they gave you a real good well rounded, grounded course. I enjoyed ... and I met a handful of real nice guys who I stayed friendly with until even today.

Pearson: You mentioned that your professors at Notre Dame felt that as a La Salle student that you were very well prepared. Why do you think you were well prepared compared to other students?

Rossi: When I found out what other courses ... for example, there were guys that I started with at Notre Dame who had thirty six hours of history. I had over fifty some. There were people didn't have a course in ancient history, people didn't have a course in medieval, didn't have a course in this I mean, I had a course in you name it; Russian history, American history in a couple of areas; ancient history, medieval history, modern Europe in three different breakdowns. La Salle gave you a pretty good grounding. A couple of the teachers here [La Salle] were people who taught history as a drill; they drilled you. It was basic; you read the text; they questioned you. What happens is that you build up a real tremendous factual background. I don't know whether you can do it that way today, I think that you would drive the students crazy. It was the way they did it in those days. I have my notes from high school (corrects himself) college and you should see some of the notes. They are unbelievably detailed.

Pearson: Did you work when you were a graduate student at Notre Dame?

- Rossi: No ... I had a free ride and they gave me a job to kind of rationalize why they were paying me money. My job was to compare the resources of the Notre Dame library to one of Harvard's libraries; compare what Harvard had to what Notre Dame had. If there were gaps, those gaps would be noted and Notre Dame would fill it in, but it was kind of a make work thing.
- Pearson: Was it more work than the Department of Recreation job?
- Rossi: Ahh ... it wasn't much work, no (laughs). It's funny too. The job ran out in December of my second year there and I knew I was going to finish early. I told them that, so I went back in January, after Christmas and I didn't have any money. Instead of having that job [library position] which I would have normally had in January, February and March I didn't have it. Imagine running a place like; a university, like this ... I went to this man who ran one of the business ends and I told him that I was only going to be here until March and I was short of money and was there anything he could do. He said "How much do you need a month?" and I said "\$100 a month.", so he wrote me a chit for \$200 (laughter).
- Pearson: Did you still follow the Phillies when you were at Notre Dame?
- Rossi: Yeah, although it was hard because they didn't have a Philadelphia paper which pissed me off to no end. I remember going to the librarian ... when I went to Notre Dame I saw they had a gigantic library which dwarfed ours and I went over and said great. I saw the magazine and newspaper section and I looked around. I went to the P's and they had a *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* but no Philadelphia paper. So I went to the guy and I said "Why don't you have a Philadelphia paper?" and he said "Who wants a Philadelphia paper?" and I got really mad. If you had a Pittsburgh paper ... anyway, yeah I was still a baseball fan. I tried to follow them the best I could.
- Pearson: You must have missed Philadelphia because after you finished in the cold Midwest you came back to Philadelphia to go to the University of Pennsylvania to get your PhD. When did you decide that you wanted to pursue a PhD and why?
- Rossi: Well, somewhere in my undergraduate days I decided that I wanted to teach at the university level and of course the requirement was that you had to have a PhD. Somewhere in my undergraduate time, probably sophomore or junior I figured out what was required. Therefore, I understood that if I wanted to do this, which I really wanted to do, meaning teach college, I was going to have to get a PhD. It so happened at Notre Dame ... one of the reasons that I wanted to come home is my Aunt Mary Rose, her health had started to deteriorate and the family

doctor, Leo Kane, who was an old family friend. When I was back somewhere in '58 or '59 I went to see him for a check-up, I asked him "How is Aunt Mary Rose doing?" and he said "Her heart is bad. It's very weak." I said "What do you mean?" and he said "She doesn't have long. Her heart is bad. She could just go any second." That determined me that I wanted to be back with her sometime, so I went back in March and she died in November, so I was glad that I did it that way. That was one of the reasons I wanted to come back. I probably ... all things being equal ... I might have stayed at Notre Dame and got the PhD. But as it turned out I'm glad I came back because I got a PhD from an Ivy League school, which enabled me to rub it in to Stow [George] (motions to Stow's office) and to Reardon [Jack] and so on and other people I'll tell them I'm willing to associate with you, even though I have an Ivy League PhD (laughter).

Pearson: That did come up in the conversation with Jack Reardon.

Rossi: Oh yeah.

Pearson: "He's an Ivy Leaguer" [Reardon comment].

Rossi: Yeah.

Pearson: What were your fields of interest in history prior to starting your PhD and did they change during your course of studies?

Rossi: I loved British history and I did that as an undergraduate in my senior essay was on the Munich Conference. I went to Notre Dame. You picked somebody you wanted to work with and I worked under this guy Fitzsimons until he got sick and Shanahan took me over. I wanted to work in British history there and I did, eventually I did a piece and my Masters essay was on a British Foreign Secretary named Lord Roseberry. Then when I went to Penn, I went to Penn ostensibly to work under a diplomatic historian named Lyn Case. I did, I taught in his program and about a week or two with Lyn Case made it clear that I didn't want to work under this man. He was a fuss-budget, a knit picker and I thought to myself that he and I are not going to hit it off. So I told him ... I was supposed to work on this British Foreign Secretary because his field was diplomatic history. He had somebody working on German diplomacy, Austrian diplomacy, Spanish and he wanted somebody in British. I said to him I don't think I want to pursue this Roseberry business anymore; which I actually I didn't have a clear idea on what I wanted to do at that point, but I just knew that I didn't want to work with him. He surprised me and said "Oh, OK. See if you can find somebody." so I wanted to stay in British history and the only man in British history was a wonderful man named Holden Furber. I spoke to him and he said what do you want to do and I told him I had worked in Lord Roseberry and he said how about something along

Gladstone. He said I'm interested in that. I picked my thesis topic after a while. I worked on the period when the Liberal Party was out of power in the 1870's; from 1874 to 1880, so I did the Liberal Party out of power. Actually, I didn't know it, but I had filled in a gap. Somebody had written up to '74 [1874], somebody had written from '80 [1880], so I filled a gap.

Pearson: Was it kind of serendipitous on how you settled on your dissertation topic?

Rossi: Slightly. I find that almost everything in life is serendipitous, to some extent. Anybody who plans too much usually finds that the bottom falls out. But, yeah I think it was serendipitous to some extent. As I say, influenced somewhat by the fact I just ... as much I liked Case, he was a nice man, he treated me well and I worked for him for a whole year. The idea of doing a dissertation under him seemed that this man would drive you crazy. Furber, on the other hand, when I got to know him I worked for him for a year, I was his student assistant for a year. Furber was just a gentleman. He was a wonderful guy. He was the kind of person you could talk to where as Case, everything was serious. Furber was kind of like "Well, don't worry about that. We'll work on that."

Pearson: What did you like and dislike about student life at Penn?

Rossi: I enjoyed my time at Penn. Again, I had some very good friends; I still hear from a couple of people. I was a student assistant ... I was a teaching assistant so there were about ten of us. We had our own room about as big as this whole wing here (motions to La Salle history department offices) and you formed friendships. I taught in European history and then in British history (coughs), some taught in American, so we had a lot we would sit around and chew the fat. You and I might be at the same stage and the next one was a year ahead of us, the girl over here was two years ahead of us. You learned a lot, you learned some shortcuts, you learned some insights. It was a good experience, yeah.

Pearson: A very collegial type environment.

Rossi: Yeah, very collegial. Penn, Penn acted on the premise ... Penn's premise was that if you were part of the Penn program, you must be good. Notre Dame didn't have that; you had to prove you were good. So Notre Dame was actually harder. I did better academically at Penn. If you look at my academic record, unfortunately Notre Dame went to this strange grading system. They decided for a couple of years to have ... most schools had A, B, C, D ... 4,3,2,1 even in graduate school. But Notre Dame decided to go to 6, 5, 4, 3, 2. Don't ask me why. If you look at my record at Notre Dame and compare it to Penn; I had some 6's, which means exceptional, but I also had a couple 4's; it all averaged out to an "A"; to a 5. But at Penn, it was all 5's, it was all "A's" again, I got this impression that you

we are Penn, so you must be good because you are here. Some of my colleagues were not as good as my colleagues at Notre Dame. On the other hand, the most brilliant person I met, as an historian, was a woman who had the desk next to me. She was hands down the best and she ended up, she is retired from Brooklyn College and she had the lead article in the American Historical Review one year, which is pretty good.

Pearson: How did you ... was there any comparison between your experience at Penn and at La Salle College? Obviously, undergraduate, PhD that's going to be different.

Rossi: No, not really. As I said, I enjoyed the last three years of my college. I certainly enjoyed the two years of class work at Penn and my two years as a teaching assistant down there (coughs). No, by that time I had become pretty self confident. One thing, when I got to Penn, I realized, I looked around and said "Geez. I'm as smart as these guys." That sounds kind of arrogant, but I don't mean it in an arrogant sense. There was a couple of guys that I was really impressed by ... this is a bright guy, I admired this guy, that girl was, you had to be in awe of her she was such a great person and all. It's funny ... she had such a great sense of humor. She was incredibly plain, you know, gave new meaning to the word plain and she knew it. She met her husband going over to Austria. I said oh, that's interesting. She said she called her family and [told them] I met this fellow and we were going to get married. I said; I bet they were shocked. What did they think; you only met him for a couple of months? She said, are you kidding, they never thought I'd get married. They were thrilled (laughter). What I realized was hey ... you see at Notre Dame everyone was pretty much like me; same kind of background Irish Catholic, Italian Catholic. Then I get to Penn and there is only one other Catholic in the whole place; there were fourteen of us and only one other guy was Catholic. I said wait a minute; this is the cream of the crop? If this is the cream of the crop then I must be pretty good because I'm as good as most of these people.

Pearson: Did you work when you were at Penn?

Rossi: No, in the summer. Actually I stopped after the first summer because Penn gave me ... they gave me a deal where I had free tuition and they paid me about \$120 a month. Now that doesn't sound like a lot, but let me tell you I was living at home, I had no expenses and I had money all the time.

Pearson: Now you were at Penn during the '64 baseball season when the Phillies collapsed ... did that affect your studies?

Rossi: No, I was here [La Salle]. I was working on my degree though.

Pearson: You were working on your dissertation at the time.

Rossi: What happened is that I finished my class work in '62, then I roughed out a thesis idea began working on that. In the summer of '63 I went to England to do the original research. That's a lot of the notes that I gave to Joe [Brother Joe Grabenstein]. So I came back in say August, September '63 and sat down to write the dissertation. I had a couple of problems which I worked out with Furber, most of which he was really nice about. So the question was just to write the dissertation. Now the thing that held me up was that I teaching full time here [La Salle]. I started teaching here in '62, September of '62 after I had finished at Penn. I had to prep classes and then work on the dissertation. Fortunately, I wasn't married, so what I would do is, most evenings, about 7 o'clock, I would sit down and I would start working on the dissertation. I'd work until about 10 o'clock. One of my friends had a bar about three blocks away and around 10 o'clock I would go down there and sit with him and just have a beer or two and sit and talk.

Pearson: So you were here as a lecturer. Is that the level?

Rossi: They started me as a lecturer and I was promoted to ... when I became full time I went to instructor after a year. The deal was that once you got your PhD, they would move you to assistant professor. What happened is ... I wanted to get my degree. I figured that I couldn't finish in '64; that was not going to work. I figured I had a real good chance I could do most of the summer of '64, I could break the back of the dissertation; I had a couple of chapters written. That's when the baseball season came along. I was always a big fan of that Phillies team. In '62 and '63 I really got interested because that was a great Phillies team, I loved the manager, Gene Mauch and that summer of '64 I was trying to write a lot of the dissertation and I got side tracked. Then of course the whole September thing [Phillies collapse], so I really got slowed down. Then I met my wife in August of '64 and you know I was pretty serious by early January and I knew if I could convince her I would want to marry her. I was working and I actually I finished in January, just about January. I probably finished just about two months later than I normally would have.

Pearson: How did you get a job here teaching here at La Salle?

Rossi: Oh yeah, you talk about serendipity. One of my former teachers, a fellow named Dennis McCarthy I stayed in touch with. He called me one day and said how about coming over for lunch. I walked over because I lived at 2nd and Lindley and this is 20th and Lindley, in effect. So I walked over one day and I had lunch. We were talking; this was ... right after I finished at Penn, the month after I finished at Penn, about May or June of '62. After lunch, he took me up to show me his office and introduced me

to a couple of the colleagues. I'm walking down the corridor to leave and thanked him for the lunch and he said by the way, we have a couple of openings and would you be interested? I said, "I might. What is the deal?" He explained to me the deal was I got paid \$4,500 for teaching three classes. I thought that was great, so I started that September. The next year they brought me on full time for \$5,400, which was big money. My uncle said to one of his friends "They're paying him a hundred dollars a week to do that." and I have been here ever since.

Pearson: Did the neighborhood around La Salle College change from when you were here as a student?

Rossi: Yeah, it was starting to change. When I was a student it was kind of a white working class neighborhood or lower middle class. By the time I came back in the early '60's it was starting to change, although the big change doesn't really come until the late '60's. Yeah, it was starting to change, but it really didn't bother me because I parked on campus. Sometimes I took public transportation.

Pearson: It's been a pretty long day and what I would like to do is for our next session is kind of cover your time from the early '60's through the rest of your career here at La Salle and cover some other topics; baseball, a little bit more social change in the neighborhood, those kind of things, so I thank you very much for your time. It's been very, very interesting.

Rossi: Good. Sure. Alright.