

Jeffrey Dewald – Interviewer  
Brother Gerald Fitzgerald – Narrator  
Interviewed on April 20, 2006

**Brother Gerald Fitzgerald:** In the late 60's I came along and was educated at Cardinal Docherty and the Christian Brothers who practiced teaching there and I met several of the Christian Brothers there and I became a Christian brother in 1965. I did my collegiate studies here at LaSalle, graduated in 1970 so I became very active in LaSalle, particularly within the Accounting Department in the School of Business. There were very few Brothers in the School of Business. Then, from 1978 I came back here on the faculty and staff as an administrator, I was the Director of Admissions from 1978 – for 18 years and I also taught part time. For the past 12 years or so I have been on the full-time faculty in the accounting department. So I've seen an awful lot of development and change at LaSalle from when I was a child of 5, 10, 12, 15 years of age when street cars were running outside on Olney Ave up and down Broad & Olney to be replaced by buses and LaSalle taking over what was the farm across the street from 20<sup>th</sup> and Olney where the library and tennis courts presently are and the president's office; that was an operating farm with cows and chickens and farmers and fields and corn. I've seen a ton of development here on our hundred acre plus campus

**Jeffrey Dewald:** Let's go back to your original involvement with the Christian Brothers at Cardinal Docherty. What was it in particular that inspired you? What was it about the Christian Brothers that made you want to become part of it?

**GF:** Well of course my association with the Christian Brothers went back even before the time of Cardinal Docherty b/c of my older brothers going here to LaSalle and me coming along with them. I had met several brothers over the years who were friends of theirs.

**JD:** Did any of your brothers end up becoming Christian Brothers?

**GF:** No, they were all standard regular students at Lasalle. But then when I got in high school and I had had at least two brothers each year, I admired their teaching style I admired their ability to relate and associate with the students. So that attracted me to look at them a little further and then ultimately join in with the group.

**JD:** And at what point do you think that decision was made?

**GF:** Some time around senior year, freshman year of college, something in that time frame.

**JD:** So take us through the process of what it was like to join the Christian Brothers and a little bit about what the life of the Christian Brother entails and what it meant for you when you started out.

**GF:** Well, initially it meant joining up with the group. There were 40 in our group and we started in 1965. We were just out of high school, the large majority; there might have been 2 of us that had any collegiate career program at all. The rest of us all were just starting out as freshman at college, we came here to LaSalle and meshed in with the regular students. The only class we had separate and distinct unto ourselves was Religion and that was a little bit more sophisticated than the standard course that most students would have taken. Then we each did our own particular major, whichever major we chose, and I did the accounting major, which was a very strong program here at LaSalle. That went extremely well over the 4 year time frame as a college student then I went out and taught from that point on.

**JD:** What kind of extra-curricular activities were you involved in while during your time here, outside the Christian Brothers or with the Christian Brothers, while you were a student here?

**GF:** I wasn't involved in any activities at all. Actually, we had our own separate living arrangement. We all lived in a separate dorm in Elkins Park. We had our own religious activities that we were involved in. We weren't involved with the standard rank and file students, other than in the classroom setting.

**JD:** You were free to pursue whichever course of study you wished?

**GF:** Absolutely; any major you wanted to do.

**JD:** I've been told that at the time, the standard attire of the Christian Brother was a little bit different. I understand that there was a full garment?

**GF:** Yes, all the Brothers were in a very long cassock-like outfit. But in 1968 or so the rule changed and we didn't have to wear the official habit anymore, we could wear anything we wanted.

**JD:** After your graduation, obviously your relationship with the Christian Brothers continued. Tell me about how you were involved even after you left the University as a student.

**GF:** My involvement with the University was very minimal from 1970 through 1978 in that I was doing my own teaching as a full-time high school teacher and so my involvement was strictly through brothers that were here on the faculty staff that I had come to know and I associated with them. So I really didn't much of an involvement at all from 70 to 78 other than personal friends.

**JD:** Could you talk a little bit about your experiences as a high school teacher at the time? Obviously it was a very turbulent time in American history.

**GF:** Well of course it was the anti-Vietnam War era and tremendous amounts of political protests and following the Beatles and music revolutions and all other kinds of

revolutions that were going on in society at that point. I was a young teacher in an inner-city high school and I had six or seven classes a day. They were very, very large; I guess I had a tremendous amount of energy at that time so I didn't even notice that it was anything different. But I found that the students were very easy to work with, very interested in what I was teaching and tended to do very well with my material. Of course it was accounting and a lot of them were going on into the business world so they had a motivation there automatically.

**JD:** What was it in particular about accounting that made you want to pursue that as your field of study?

**GF:** I don't know exactly what got me involved with it, to tell you the truth. I had a course in it in high school and I always have been good with concepts in mathematics and problem solving and I noticed that accounting was exactly that—mathematics and problem solving. So the two dovetailed very well. I always found math as an academic discipline rather boring. I could solve the problem, get the equation, get the answer, but I never knew what the answer *meant*. It didn't do anything for me to get the answer, whereas in accounting you get an answer and you know what it means, it's about a practical reality. You've made money or you've lost money—you can increase that or decrease that and adjust. So when you get a problem solved you have an answer that is not just an equation.

**JD:** During your time here as a student, were there any faculty or teachers in particular that had a big influence on you?

**GF:** Yes, the biggest one, and part of the reason I continued to stay as an Accounting major, was Dr. John Reardon, who's still here as a retired faculty member. He helps out with the School of Business Recruiting Program. I had him my very first semester, as a freshman in college—Principles of Accounting, Financial Accounting. He was an outstanding teacher, tremendous energy level. He has been a model to me over all these many, many years since then and I intended to follow his style of how to run a classroom and it's always proven to me to be very helpful. Another fellow that made a big impact on me was a Professor Pete Sweeney. He taught me in the sophomore year, so I had two very strong and good professors in accounting in my freshman and sophomore year. Pete Sweeney is still alive and has been retired probably about 10 years now. He was an outstanding teacher. He could get the material across...He very much would remind you of "Colombo" on the television detective show. He was sort of a rough and ready, in *face* your fact-type guy. He would be constantly asking questions that he, of course, knew the answers to, but he would play that he didn't know the answer at all and he would make you solve the problem and think that you were doing all the work when he was leading you through it. It was a tremendous teaching technique that he had. So those two men really were very strong influences on my professional career.

**JD:** After your time as a high school teacher, you came back and got your M.B.A. here. Is that correct?

**GF:** During my time here, my early years here, 1978-1981, I got my MBA here.

**JD:** What made you decide to want to get away from teaching, at least at the high school level, to come back and advance your academic career?

**GF:** I loved my teaching on the high school level, I really didn't have any interest in leaving it at all, but one of the administrators here, Brother Henry Mullenhower, who was the Provost, had tried to get me to come and join the Administration in the Admissions Office area and he had been working on me for a couple of years to do that. So I came in for a 2 year time frame to work with Admissions, and I've been here ever since. But I was sort of in here as an intern just to figure out what was going on in the Administration. After that 2 year time frame I then became Director of Admissions and stayed here for another 18 years, 15 years as Director. Those years were excellent years and in the early part of those, I did graduate work concurrently with working in the Admissions Office. So I got the degree really on a part-time basis.

**JD:** So, during your time as the Director of Admissions, what were some of the characteristics that you looked for students who were coming here. What in your mind is the ideal prospect to come to LaSalle.

**GF:** In the early 70's, LaSalle was very strongly a commuter school. The major feeder schools were the Philadelphia Catholic High Schools with emphasis on LaSalle High School, Cardinal Dougherty, Father Judge and then later Archbishop Ryan. They were the major schools and most of the students would commute back and forth from their homes to here. In the late 70's LaSalle had started to acquire more property around the neighborhood here; more dorms had opened up; the farm had been purchased; and there was a plan within the Provost Office to expand the number of resident students. I don't remember exactly what the percentage of resident students was back in the late 70s but it was not gigantic. The large majority, 60-70% was commuter students. There was an intentional plan to try to get it to 50% resident students. So we then started to recruit on a much more distant basis. We had a marketing plan to get us pretty much from Northern VA up through CT. We stopped at CT in that MA has tons and tons of private particularly Catholic schools and those students wouldn't want to go by New York City to come down here. But students in CT would do that. They would go beyond NYC because they perceived NYC as a gigantic city and Philadelphia as a good-sized city, but not gigantic. So that was where we stopped, and that was where we were attracting people, from CT, North Jersey, Northern VA, Baltimore, Washington area. And that increased over the years. In the mid-80's or so we increased our enrollment to the point to where we had about 50% living on campus and the population of the Greater Philadelphia region was starting to shift and change so that the commuter population, the traditional feeder area, was drying up, but we were replacing it rather effectively with distant students. They ended up doing very well academically and very well professionally, in terms of job placement both within the city and back in their home town area. In the late 80's we acquired the property down on the south side of the campus, the St. Basil's Orphanage, and that gave us additional housing opportunity. So we then expanded our recruiting effort again and we even tried expanding to Greater International

Students. So by the early 90's there was about 60-65% resident students. The large majority no longer being from the Philadelphia area and the Philadelphia Catholic Schools. I don't know exactly what it is today but it's probably around 80% resident students. A tremendous change.

The type of student that's here today is very similar to the type of students I found in 1978 when I came back and in 1965 when I first came here as a student. They might be from a different geographic region but the same type of student. Generally middle income to slightly higher <sup>middle</sup> income socioeconomically; very strong work ethic. They may not be the strongest one on standardized tests, not that they're nasty bad on those but they're not necessarily the strongest. And they have extremely good study habits, energy level, and work ethic and that's basically the type of student that I find in the classrooms today and for the past 12 years or so.

**JD:** To go back to something you mentioned earlier, what was the marketing program like? What kind of information would you put out there that would recruit students from other places, that would entice them to come here to LaSalle?

**GF:** The biggest part of the marketing effort was the very flexible nature of our course of studies. A student would get a large basis of their course work in the Liberal Arts area and a pretty strong basis in some other specific area, it might be business or nursing or whatever their major area ended up –it could be history, or political science or economics. Whatever they ended up with, the basis of the Liberal Arts blossomed out in some other area. And then the students were extremely successful in getting internships, co-ops, and then job placements as a result of them. So we emphasized with the prospective students that the faculty are going to be dealing with you in small class settings, generally 20-25 students, which we still have. They get to know you and they work with you in terms of getting your career goals set and job placements. That was extremely effective in getting students to come to LaSalle and live here. The class setting was similar to what they experienced in high school and the involvement of the faculty professionally was there.

**JD:** You mentioned Standardized Test scores. Would you say the emphasis was more towards looking at the bigger picture of the student's academic career rather than just the number assigned to them from the Standardized Test.

**GF:** Absolutely. The third credential that was always on the list was the Standardized test. The first credential was their high school course of study and grades. And then their writing sample, their essay that they would write, and any recommendation. And then finally the standardized test score. So if a student had very, very solid grades and good course selection, that pretty much guaranteed that they would get accepted and they tended to do very well. Students who met that type of criteria were the type I was referring to earlier, they had that energy level and the work ethic to be successful and achieve. So just because they might have been a little shy on standardized test score, they were willing to make it up in other ways. And we've always been successful with that type of student.

**JD:** How would you address individuals that had concerns coming from rural areas and coming to the big city, Philadelphia, obviously in an area that is not exactly safe. There's always been a pretty decent crime rate around the campus, so how would you address that to prospective students who were thinking of coming here from rural areas?

**GF:** A very large number of the students from the outer areas...another one of those areas that we were very popular with and we emphasized was pretty much up the PA Turnpike Northeast Extension all the way up through Scranton, lower New York area. Most of the students at that earlier times, in the 80s and early 90s who were coming to LaSalle and helping us broaden that base of resident student population, they were the adventuresome type that wanted to get out of the smaller town and into the big city but they didn't want to get into the gigantic inner-city grate, more dangerous area. They perceived us as being on the outer fringe, part of but yet not a part of the big city operation. So they tended to like the setting that they would find so that when they would walk around the outside perimeter of the campus, it was a moving city but it wasn't the heart of the ghetto.

**JD:** During your time as the Director of Admissions, would you say that there was a higher percentage of either male or female that were applicants or that were accepted here as students?

**GF:** There were initially a very high percentage of males. I don't remember exactly what the percentage was but it was well over 50% of the class pushing I would say up to 65-70% males. Very slowly, through no effort, no concerted effort or picking effort on the part of the Admissions Committee, that number slowly started to change in the late 80s, early 90s and LaSalle became very popular with women. It was a growing thing, somewhere around 1970 we became co-ed. Ever so slowly from that point on we have been growing and I think it was around the late 80s early 90s that we finally came up to around 48-49% women coming in to the class. And that wasn't anything that we picked them to do, they chose us as opposed to we chose them. My evaluation of that always has been and I think it still is very much the same: the college decision on the part of the high school senior, male or female, is made by the opposite parent. If a mom says to her son, "Oh, you can't go to LaSalle, that neighborhood is too dangerous, I don't want you in that neighborhood, no no no," the son would say, "Alright, Mom," and go off to another place Mom thinks is safe. As opposed to the daughter says to the Dad, "Oh Daddy, I love LaSalle, everything's great at LaSalle, it's perfect, it's for me" Mom is in the background saying, "It's too dangerous" Dad stands up and says, "Yeah, but if we raised Suzy to be strong and she knows how to handle it she'll do well," Dad makes the decision, and that's how those numbers changed. I still think that's the case. The girls have their Dads in the palm of their hands and they make the decision and Dad convinces Mom that she'll be all right.

**JD:** During your time as the Director of Admissions, at some point there became a large number of students who didn't have a background in the Catholic Church and they were

coming to a Catholic University. How would you address that? Were there any concerns on the University's part that a lot of the students coming here weren't catholic?

**GF:** Actually that wasn't the case at all. The large majority of students, and I still think it's the case, are Catholic. They didn't necessarily go to Catholic school, but they were Catholic. Back in the 70s and 80s the large majority were Catholic. The few who weren't Catholic really never said anything. People who would come up and find out that we were Catholic, that was a non-issue. Students once they get here, Catholic doesn't seem to be an issue: if you're Catholic, that's fine, if you have to take religion, that's fine. They don't seem to make an issue out of it.

**JD:** Now I wasn't an undergraduate here, but I'm assuming that religion is part of the curriculum?

**GF:** Yes it is. Religion and Philosophy. You have to take two each to graduate.

**JD:** Do you think it's represented enough in the curriculum? Do you think that there should be more of an emphasis on religion?

**GF:** No I think it's fine the way it is. It's very obvious that we're a Catholic institution, we're very comfortable with that, every classroom has some kind of religious symbol in it. At least in the School of Business that's the case. Our Catholic identity is pretty solid.

**JD:** Since you've been here for such a number of years, talk a little bit about the neighborhood that surrounds the University and the type of relationship the University's had with the surrounding neighborhood over the years.

**GF:** Back in the late 70s when I got here, it was a particularly rough relationship with the neighbor's children and the students in our dorms and that was usually in the afternoon evening hours. Part of the understanding and rationale for that at the time, 20 years + ago, was the fair portion of those families ~~was the fair portion of those families~~ had been ushered out of their houses by Penn, Drexel and Temple in the downtown areas. When they were expanding their campuses they were taking over blocks and blocks of homes by eminent domain and just buying houses, those folks moved up into this neighborhood and the reason they moved into this neighborhood was that people in the neighborhood was predominantly Jewish, they were moving out and the homes were selling differently and they were lower priced. They were very concerned and threatened that LaSalle would do the same thing that Drexel Temple and Penn had done to them. There was an automatic antipathy. The kids 16, 18 year old kids and the resident students in our dorms tended to clash a lot.

## **BEGINNING OF TAPE 2**

The minority families that were in this neighborhood, the kids grew up and married and moved on; the parents stayed so in the late 80s and 90s, the neighborhood was pretty well settled. There were very few neighbors who were in their 20s. The large majority had

married and moved on and things calmed down considerably so that there was nobody for our students to have an antipathy with, if they were even going to have an antipathy. I'd say it seems to be in the past 2 or 3 years that now I guess those original families have died and moved on and there is a new set of younger families moving in to the neighborhood. Again, it appears to be antipathy growing between our resident students and some of the neighboring communities.

**JD:** When you say clashes, do you mean violence between them or just small instances?

**GF:** No, I can't think of any major violent stabbings or shootings, or any of that kind of thing. There were no real violent acts that I can recall over the years. It's mainly been theft and robbery and fighting, that kind of thing.

**JD:** Racial undertones to it?

**GF:** I don't pick up any racial undertone to it, I think it's just the youth and growth and hormones. It is black on white, but that's only because of the nature of who lives in the neighborhood and who lives in the dorms.

**JD:** Do you think that there's anything that the University has done or could do to improve the relationship between the University and the community?

**GF:** The University over the years has set up all kinds of community cooperation association groups. We have a house down on 19<sup>th</sup> St. with a full-time employee who works with the neighbors and the students who live in the neighborhood and in the dormitories. So over the years there's always been a great cooperation between the neighborhood association and the University.

**JD:** Can you talk a little bit about how the University's expanded? How has that changed the atmosphere for you from being here when it was much smaller?

**GF:** When I first arrived here in 1978 as a young Brother, I guess there were 50-55 Brothers living in the Brothers House at the end of College Hall. There wasn't any room in the house for me, so I was asked if I would live in the dormitories, which I did, and I still do because I fell in love with living in the dormitories. Now there's plenty of room and I don't want to move anywhere but the dorm. But at that time the dorms were just the ones on the corner of 20<sup>th</sup> and Olney and Edward and Francis across the street behind the gym. Then around 1979 or so, we got St. Theresa Court, that was up by the Good Shepherd property that LaSalle had acquired around the same time in the late 70s. The good shepherd property was a gigantic stone institution that was an orphanage for young women, juvenile agitated young women, and we got both of those properties in the late 70s. That helped us to expand our resident population. Generally the juniors and seniors lived up in the apartment complex, then this gigantic building Good Shepherd was knocked down and buried. It was buried under the parking lot there. They dug the biggest ~~hole~~ hole I've ever seen in my entire life and dumped all this stone into it and just built over the top of it, so I imagine it's useless ground there. Then the next thing we did was

hole

there was a whole row of homes along Wister Street that served as offices for the Alumni Office, the Development Office, different places like that. They were just large three-story row houses, semi-detached houses. They were all torn down and St. Miguel Court was built, and that was a townhouse community, it was about the mid-80s or so that it was put together. That helped us again to expand and it was a different style of housing from regular dorms to apartments to regular houses. Then the next thing we did was purchase the St. Basil's property, which was an Elementary School building, a large 300+ bed dormitory, and a colonial estate house with maybe 5 or 6 bedrooms. Once we got that southern St. Basil's property, that orphanage was for children, elementary school K-8, we had to modernize the facility. For example, the urinals were down around the floor for the little kids to reach, they had to be moved up for men to be going in. They fixed the shower and toilet facilities for the women—they basically remodeled the whole building to make it from child to adult and to co-ed. Then, that expanded the whole campus and it connected that south and north, so between the baseball field and that campus was a nice Green Acres walk kind of thing. Then the most recent development was the connection of the north campus and the south campus with the addition of St. Basil's Court in 2005, Fall Opening. So I don't know exactly what the number is today in 2006 but I would suspect it's probably in the neighborhood of 80% of students live here or 90%, so the change between resident population and commuter population was really drastic over the time I've been here. In my classes I will have two or three students who are commuters at best. Most of them are all residents. It's been an interesting development over the years and an exciting development, but it's nice to know that as much as all that stuff has changed and all the square yards that we've added to this campus, the students and faculty have remained the same. The same kind of person seems to choose to come here. They tend to be very energetic people. Money doesn't come easy and they have to work for their grades.

**JD:** Is it odd for you to see what the campus has become?

**GF:** No, it's not odd, it's exciting to see what it's become. Actually, I guess in a sense, even though I never thought of it as such, it might have been a street corner college. 20<sup>th</sup> and Olney, that's what we got. Now it's far from a street corner. It's a full, real moving campus that will take you several hours to get from one point to another.

**JD:** How do you think that LaSalle compares to some of the other big Universities in this city, like Temple, Drexel, Penn, St. Joe's?

**GF:** I think it will and could and does stand up academically to absolutely everybody else around town. We're very, very respectable. I think the big difference between the Penn and Drexel and Temple is our size. We're not that 20-30,000 student population; we're 6,000 students-- 4,500 undergraduates to balance graduate and evening students. So our size is the biggest differential between the other places around town that are similar to us, I think we're one of the best of them. St. Joe, Villanova, Rosemont, Cabrini, Immaculata—we're all in the smaller category, under 10,000 student category, and we pretend to be one of the best in that category. I think it's because of the types of programs that we offer and the style of education we have.

**JD:** Where do you see the University 10 years from now, 20 years from now?

**GF:** I see us continuing to grow and, move on, expand into all the new different types of majors, taking on all that technology is bringing to the classroom. You know, when I first started teaching here in 1978, we didn't have an overhead projector yet—chalk and eraser, that was it. Now you have the internet, and all kinds of connections to computers and every building is connected. We are on the cutting edge of technology in education and I think it's going to continue to expand in the next 10, 20 years. We're putting our resources into where our heart is, the classroom.

**JD:** Do you think it makes a big difference, the type of education you receive in a smaller institution like LaSalle as opposed to one of the bigger colossal machine schools, like Temple? Do you think that makes a big difference for the student's experience?

**GF:** I think it's a tremendous difference for the students to have the style of education that they get here. That style is very LaSallian, it's the case of any one of the colleges or universities that we teach in, as well as the high schools that we teach in. Size has for 300 years been a thing with the Christian Brothers—part of the source of our roots as a religious order was based on a reaction to the educational system in France at that time, which was basically one-on-one. John LaSalle saw it as that's not the way to go, gather 10, 20, 15-to-one. Not one hundred to one, but in a smaller setting. All of the schools we've conducted we've always had them in that smaller setting. We've never even experimented or tried to my knowledge with any schools to have large group instruction. It's always been on the classroom setting and I think that's what students come to appreciate, especially when we get into more complicated, theoretical, advanced, collegiate University studies. That they're not out there on their own, they're working with a professor who's experienced with guiding them in their academic pursuits. I can't say what happens at a Temple or a Drexel, but I know that it's not the same as what it is here; in terms of how a faculty member relates to a student doing research.

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**JD:** Do you think that there's ever any potential danger of that changing with the enrollment booming and there being more buildings to accommodate students, just the financial climate in the world?

**GF:** I don't think that has a chance to change in the sense that each one of the departments is very cautious in hiring faculty members who have that philosophy of education. Even if they might have gone to a large school where the style was completely different, they're interested in this kind of style, and they want to teach in this kind of style. And the department can hire people interested in that as opposed to interested in another style of education. So I don't know that it will change, I think that's part of our sphere.

**JD:** Speaking of the faculty, since you've come back in a professional capacity, as part of the administration, were there any faculty members that really had an impact on your

time here since then, that you thought made a big difference to the University or to you personally?

**GF:** Professionally, while I was in admissions, I would have to call on various faculty members to make presentations to Open House or recruitment programs and talk to prospective students and families and over the years there always were a few who were extremely good public speakers and were extremely good at conveying the message of what was unique and different at LaSalle. One of them was one of the men that I mentioned earlier who was a strong influence on me as a collegiate student, Dr. John Reardon. He was outstanding at dealing with parents and prospective students. He could figure out and understand where they were and how they were in the admissions process and the decision process. So he was always somebody that we would call on, so it got to the point that it was almost embarrassing that we were abusing him by constantly calling him. Part of his authenticity was that his own three children came here and so he understood the decision process from a familial point of view, and he understood the cares and worries while your child is in a dormitory, so that he was always excellent. Another one in the early years was Dr. Jack Segale from the English Department. He was outstanding in terms of dealing with parents and their concerns. It's easy for us in the Admissions area to talk about neighborhood security, to talk about social life on campus, to talk about alcohol and drugs and things like that, but here comes somebody who was on the faculty and also had children here, that was so much more helpful.

**JD:** I was really fascinated with something you said: that you had at the time and you still do live in the dormitories. What can you tell me about that?

**GF:** Well, initially when I moved in to the dormitory, I was 27 years of age, and they were 17, 20 years of age, so I was almost as old as them. But yet I was a Brother and I had no trouble at all fitting in to it. The style of the dorms at the time was completely different because I mentioned it was largely male—there might have been one floor of females in each building and two floors of males. The whole atmosphere was... first there was no electronics, there were no TV's in the rooms-- there were lounges, there was no telephones in rooms, there were payphones in the corridor. It was just a completely different thing. The whole social life of the student revolved around the lounge in the buildings. The lounge generally was a large room shared by two or three buildings so it could handle a gigantic crowd. They would have the television in there and they would have stereo in there, they had pinball machines. That's where they would also have the Friday night parties, and the Friday night parties included alcohol, at that time 18 was the drinking age. Part of the job of the Resident Assistant at the time was to go to the local beer distributor and get the half keg, quarter keg, for the weekend parties. So it was a completely different time, and as life has progressed along, as laws changed, people changed, society changes, now it's still interesting living with the students and they still have the same kinds of questions and cares and concerns that they had back then, but they also have a thousand and one other technological introductions in their life. There are no more lounges left, there are no more payphones left, there are no more water fountains left—people drink bottled water. Basically, there's no more telephones in the rooms—in the interim there, each room had two telephones, but now they've gone, and they're

plugged into the internet through the telephone line and they all have their own cell phones. So it's a high tech world—the kids used to play all kinds of board games and beer games and things like that, in a lounge or in a room, and 10 or 12 would be in that room. Now they still play games but it has nothing to do with any of that previous stuff, it's all internet computer games, and there might be 6 rooms on the corridor connected doing a game on a computer with each other, or across buildings playing computer games from one building to another. So it's a whole different style but the people are very similar, the people are still friendly and interesting and still have the same issues that any 18-22 year old would have.

**JD:** Do you think it hurts the social interactions of the students, that they no longer come together to be entertained, to be social in that way, that they're in their own autonomous environment? Do you think that takes something away from the experience of being there and just being able to interact with other students?

**GF:** I never thought of that—they don't seem to – I never thought of it that way to tell you the truth. They all seem to be social together, it's just that everybody might be on their cell phone on the same time. They all seem to still move around in groups.

**JD:** How do some of the students in the dormitory that you live in, especially Freshmen, how do they react to you, to the fact that you're there with them? What is their first impression of you before they know you?

**GF:** And that's exactly the emphasis, before they know you. Because the freshman move in the week before the other classmen come back, they have the orientation. And automatically when they see the name on the door, and when the parents see the name on my door, they get all happy and the parents think "Oh, good, he's here, watching over," while the kid thinks "Oh my god, I've got this ogre in here who's going to be watching me and disciplining me for everything I'm gonna do". And it's very obvious the first two, three weeks that the new students are very unnerved and uncomfortable with me being around, which is a big surprise because they think they've gone off to college, are going to be independent and gonna do everything that they ever wanted to do and no one is going to be anywhere near them. Then they see this old grey haired man there and that crashes that idea. But as the new students meet up with the returning students and people start talking about me, and me being here so long, and my reputation, what it's like in my classroom, etc. Then they start seeing the upper classmen coming up and visiting, sitting around my room, chatting, socializing, going out for pizza, and doing things with them, then they start associating with me.

**JD:** What dorm do you live in?

**GF:** I live in St. Albert, the very first dorm that was built in the 1952-53 era. The first four dorms go alphabetically all the way down to M. And it just so happened that was no great thing that somebody had mapped out, they realized after they got to Dennis, "Oh, it's in alphabetical order," so they just kept it going. So they kept building dorms they alphabetically named them after someone. The only one we didn't name was "I",

because there's only one saint that we know of whose name begins with an "I", Saint Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Jesuits. And we wouldn't want anything associated with the Jesuits hooked up with LaSalle.

**JD:** Tell me why...

**GF:** Oh, it's just a joke...

**JD:** I guess the reason I chose you for this project, I felt that your voice in particular was so important out of the list of 100 names that was put out there was the fact that you were a Christian Brother. Tell me about the Christian Brothers as an organization and their role, and how their role as changed here, since you've been here. Tell me about some of the problems that have arisen...from what I understand the number of Christian Brothers has gone down pretty considerably over the years. What can you tell me about that?

**GF:** Well, as a group, we were founded over 300 years ago by St. John LaSalle with the primary purpose of education. We're not an ordained group so our association is only in relationship to the schools. I tease upon occasion that I never wanted to work on a weekend, that's why I wanted to be a Brother. All of us are professionally trained as educators. We are the largest teaching order in the Roman Catholic Church. We run thousands of schools throughout the world. I think there's somewhere in the neighborhood of 18,000 Brothers around the world. In the United States there's somewhere around 1,000 or so, and we're in a combination of high schools and colleges. Here at LaSalle, presently there's maybe 30 brothers, and when I first got here there was in the neighborhood of over 70 brothers, maybe 80. Back in the earlier days, certainly in the 70s and prior, we were in all chief administrative posts, Vice Presidents, Presidents of Deans, as well as in each Department, not just Religion and Philosophies, in all academic disciplines. In the late 1960s early 70s, when the Vatican Council II's implementation took over, there was a large exodus of Brothers from the order, just the gist of the time, and there was a very small entrance of young men into the order. So the numbers have gone down over the years. In terms of philosophy of running an institution, people who have been hired as Vice Presidents of Deans and faculty, so on, seem to be screened on, "Is your philosophy similar to our philosophy?" And it seems as if we have been successful in continuing that philosophy along.

**JD:** Tell me about the exodus—I know you can't comment on everybody's personal reasons for leaving, but what were the general reasons that most of the Brothers gave for leaving at that time.

**GF:** The whole structure of your life both ended or changed. We had to had been an extremely regimented, almost military style existence of, everybody got up at this time, moved to this chapel event, moved to that breakfast, moved to the first period class, everybody did everything in a very regimented, structured order. The daily schedule rarely varied and it was controlled from a Mother House in Rome. After the Vatican Council, each individual Order was directed that they could establish their own individual

setting based on the type of work that you were doing: high school, elementary, university, etc. Each one is a little bit different.

### **BEGINNING OF TAPE 3**

Once that structure had changed and each individual group was allowed to establish a new structure, a new operational mode, a lot of people couldn't handle that. The comment was frequently heard, "This isn't the order that I joined." That pretty much sums it up, and it really wasn't the order that they joined. As you mentioned earlier the wearing of the official religious habit was done away with, people were showing up with ties and shirts, and we were very much more a militaristic kind of thing. People had strict haircuts; sideburns, mustaches, beards all came in. It was the hippie generation. Smoking was strictly forbidden; then smoking was allowed. All kinds of regimental things changed and the windows were wide open to set up a new structure and a fair number of people couldn't take that, they couldn't set up new structures, the structure they had was fine. But the majority were voting the structure they had out.

**JD:** So would you say that the structure became less strict?

**GF:** Oh, very much so. It became instead of the responsibility of the superior telling you how to do something, it became you making the mature decision on your own how to do something. That was pretty common with all religious orders.

**JD:** As far as how it changed here individually at LaSalle... Were there other places where the same types of things were happening?

**GF:** Yes.

**JD:** So, why then did it not make a difference to you? Why did you want to stay with the order of the Christian Brothers?

**GF:** Well, that was the late 60s, early 70s. By that point I was only in it a year or two, three years. I didn't have any roots in that history, any...it wasn't the order I joined. I didn't know the order I joined, I was joining the order. This new order was being formed by me and my peers, so I didn't have any baggage. People a lot older than me had tons of baggage and they were the ones that were the most affected and hurt, but I was too young.

**JD:** You did have the experience, though, being under that structure, so for you, what was your personal feeling, irregardless of the fact that you didn't have that same experience of living that way most of your adult life? How did it change for you personally? Did you enjoy the new order or do you ever think to yourself now that you wish it could be that way again?

**GF:** No, I didn't really know the old way, it was an overheard way, none of it was overly...I never got melodramatic about it that I wish I lived in another time. This way

was fine with me and I liked it. I think part of why I liked it when life was going on was because I was doing what I wanted to do in terms of classroom setting. And the new structure of the religious life was being formed and I was being asked about, "Do I want to do it this way or do I want to do it that way?" It was a growing process as opposed to, I didn't come in saying, "No, the past was fine, I still like this teaching stuff, but the past way was fine." I was moving along, doing what I wanted to do and then being asked about other things, so I felt sort of part of the new.

**JD:** From what I understand, there are a couple of staff members who still teach here that were at one time Brothers and left, but yet they're still on staff here. What are your feelings about that? Is there any animosity or anything?

**GF:** No, to my knowledge there never was any animosity at all. They simply all just left, they all had their own reasons. Most of their own reasons had something to do with the way things changed, and life went on. They just stayed here and it's what it was and it didn't seem to bother students, it didn't seem to bother anybody. You know, after a 3, 4 year period, the students didn't even realize that the person was at one point or another a Brother. All those students were moved out, gone on.

**JD:** So what's the regimen like now for you as a Brother as a part-time teacher and administrator. What are some of the daily things that are part of being in the Christian Brothers here? Are there any particular things that each day you're involved with?

**GF:** Two key things is we have communal prayer in the morning and in the afternoon, before dinner and we have dinner together. They're the big events of the day and that's about it. Whereas in the old it was rising, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and prayers every time you turned around, to the chapel. This is much more sane, I think, personally.

**JD:** How do you think that the involvement between the Christian Brothers and the University has changed?

**GF:** I don't think it's changed really at all. There's a lot less of us but the spirit is still very, very similar. I think the rank and file person at the University, either a paid faculty member or staff member, has always seen the Christian Brothers as equal to them, not superior to them. We teach in the same departments they do, we work in the same office they do, we do the things they do. I think the relationship has been the same all the way along, even when we were much larger in numbers, in that the staff and the faculty perceive us as working along with them, not on a higher plane than them. And they've always seen us carrying our load as much as they're carrying their load. I think that's very much the case. *them*

**JD:** Would you like to see more involvement from the Christian Brothers in the University? An increase in the numbers?

**GF:** Well, that would be great, but that isn't coming anywhere. We have two people who have joined the order in the past 3 years, so the numbers just aren't there. It's

happening not only here at the University but it's happening on the high school level, too. The brothers are there, but it's just a handful. Our other school associated, LaSalle High School, there used to be 70 or 80 brothers on the staff or faculty. Now there's maybe 10. But the staff and faculty are still up in the 100 area. It's our philosophy and presence that keeps the school going in that philosophy. And I think they do the same kind of thing, they try to hire the same kind of people who buy into our philosophy.

**JD:** What do you think the reasons are that there's been such a falloff in membership with the Brothers. Is there something that you think could be done to entice more individuals to want to join?

**GF:** No, I think it's a sociological thing. It's not just with religious life, it's also with marital life, it's the way people perceive where they're moving as they go from 20 to 30 to 40 to 50. Back in the 60s the divorce rate was next to nothing...after the 70s the divorce rate jumped up to 40%, now it's up around 50-60%...the commitment...the entrance age of people into religious life was 18, 22, 23, marriage age was 18-25. Now marriage age is 35-40. And the divorce rate is way up from where...it's just the way society is going. It'd be great if all those things weren't the way they are, but that's the way, god knows, I'll let all those sociologist, psychologists, psychiatrists, figure all that out, and it's sad to see all that happening and all the pain that all that causes, I don't know how to do anything about it.

**JD:** Do you think the students could benefit from a greater presence of the Brothers?

**GF:** Oh, definitely.

**JD:** Do you think that the average student at LaSalle knows enough about the Christian Brothers and about the foundation and the principles that LaSalle was built on?

**GF:** Yes, the "LaSallian Values", we refer to them as. I think they have a pretty good idea, I don't know that they know enough or they get an appreciation of it until they get further on, junior, senior year, or out of the place and communicate with people who've gone to other institutions. The way I know they get it is, we have incorporated into the freshman year here, I guess starting maybe 10 years ago, a thing called the "Freshman Year Experience." There are several different philosophies involved with that program. One of them is to help the 18-19 year old adjust to collegiate life. Somebody isn't looking over their shoulder, somebody isn't collecting their homework every day, somebody isn't telling them to read every page in the book, so it's different than high school. Mom and Dad aren't there, they're living in the dorm. So it's to help them adjust to that. It's also to help introduce them to the ambiance that is LaSalle. So I guess, since you're working with the archives you've bumped into Reverend Joe Reganstein. He used to in person go to every single freshman class in the Freshman Year Experience and explain the LaSallian story. It's partially history, it's partially values, it's partially philosophy. He now has that on CD, and that's shown in every class, and then the students discuss it, and upper classman discuss it with them, and I think they write a paper on their reaction to these values. So they get it introduced to them then they

experience it in the classroom, over the first 2 or 3 years, of the smaller class setting, the academic involvement with the professor, the selection of the major, the selection of courses, the movement of career objectives and internships, putting together resumes, working with faculty putting the resume together. All of that gets into their system. And it's not until they meet their buddies who went to Penn State or Fordham or wherever else they might have gone who didn't do that; our classes weren't that size, I never went for pizza with a faculty member, I didn't play softball with the faculty. And you can see this stuff that's LaSallian...one of the things the Freshmen do is they go to the Art Museum and the Stock Market. So they see both sides of the cultural landscape of the city. And then they're talking to somebody from the NY Stock Exchange. It's not until they figure out that other places didn't do what they've got here, that they realize what the LaSallian thing is.

**JD:** Where do you see the future of the Christian Brothers going? Do you see a continual decline happening? How do you think that's going to affect the University a few years down the road?

**GF:** Oh yeah, we're definitely going to have a decline. We're all getting older and there's nobody younger coming along so it's gonna have a distinct effect. I don't know exactly where it's going to lead, in terms of what's going to replace us and how that's going to function. I think our reputation is strong enough that I know that it's going to last, I trust that our spirit is going to last. Because I think it's a unique philosophy, and a good one, and they last.

**JD:** From what I understand, there have been discussions of for the first time having a President of the University who's not a Brother. Do you see that happening and what are your feelings on that?

**GF:** I think it's inevitable that it has to happen, I don't know whether it's going to be the next President but it has to be inevitable that it's going to happen. We only have two people coming to replace 15 or 28 here dying, the numbers are going to dry up. The chances of having in the core of people who are viable to be the President, somebody who wants to be President, you can't ignore the numbers. Around town of the Catholic places, it's already happened with Gwynned Mercy, Rosemont, Neuman... With St. Joe's, Villanova, ourselves, Chestnut Hill, Immaculata, we still have members of the religious order as President, but that's not going to last forever.

**JD:** When you, from the time you were a student till the time you came back as an administrator, the University went co-ed. How did that change for you? Was that odd, for you to come back to, even though there weren't a huge number of females here, was it odd for you to come back to have females here?

**GF:** No, it wasn't at all, and I taught in all boys high school, too, so I never ever taught a girl or a woman. I had no experience dealing with them, I certainly didn't have any experience living with them in the dorms or anything like that. But I didn't find it an adjustment process at all. I remember people saying, "Oh they're going to be crying on

you, running out to the bathroom, etc.” I never heard any of that, never had any trouble. I never did anything different than I always did with boys, and I didn’t have any trouble dealing with them.

**JD:** So you didn’t feel the need to make any kinds of adjustment in your teaching methods?

**GF:** No, no.

**JD:** Have there been students in particular that have stood out as being memorable to you over the years?

**GF:** Over the years I’ve had many very, very good students. Not to identify any particular one that was the best I ever had for whatever reason, and not just academically, but things they got involved with and did or have been successful in life. There’s been plenty of students like that.

**JD:** Talk about your involvement with some things outside of the University.

**GF:** The only other external things that I do is I’m on the Board of Trustees at West Catholic High School. I’m on the Finance Committee on that Board. Basically what we do is take the monies that the Alumni have donated to the Institution and invest it to make money for scholarship opportunities. But that’s the only external board that I’m involved with.

**JD:** Where do you see your personal involvement with the University and the Brothers going? Any plans to retire from teaching?

**GF:** Down the road, yes. But at this point I don’t have any specific timeline for retiring. I’ve always said I can’t be a teacher being overly successful much beyond 65-70 years of age. Just physically keeping the energy level up. And I’ve observed that around over the years here, as well as in high schools. I don’t know that it’s the mindset, that you can’t identify with a teenager or young adult. I think it’s the energy level that the professor has. The older you get, the more you slow down. Like this Dr. John Reardon that I spoke to, when he got to be 65 years of age he was still very vibrant, very good, but he retired from the classroom. He just felt that he had experienced in his fifty years here too many people who burned out, wore out, became a burden on the students, and they didn’t realize it. He wasn’t that, but he didn’t want to get that way. And he had been extremely successful, probably the #1 best loved faculty members in the history of the place. Certainly in the Business school. And again to me that was an example of how he’s been a mentor to me, right from day one. I know you might think you may be doing a good job in the classroom, but there comes a point where you just have to say it’s over. I haven’t felt it yet and I have a couple more years to get to 65.

**JD:** In 2002, you won the Linback Award for Distinguished Recognition as a teacher here. Tell me why you think that individuals chose you in particular. What is it about

your way of teaching, your method of instruction and your personality that led others want to recognize you for that great honor.

**GF:** I guess I think it has to do with ... I've always learned from a long time back, to prepare every single class. Even though it might be the same course I did last year or the last semester, prepare, prepare, prepare. The second thing is my personality is, you know to be cooped up in this office for this long is driving me nuts. I wouldn't be here this long, I can't sit still that long. I'm too kinetic, too energetic...so my style is that I can't sit at a podium and lecture for 30 minutes, 15 minutes. I can do 10, then I have to do another activity, then 10...so my style of education relates to my personality and I guess people like that. And they probably notice that I'm not just talking off the cuff, that I've prepared what I'm saying. I also try to use very contemporary examples so that reading the *Wall Street Journal* every day and the business sections of papers so see what the news is and relate that to whatever my lecture might be about. I get that a lot on my comments on evaluations: "It applies to whatever we're doing in the classroom setting, energy level, I'm never bored, I thought I was going to be bored because accounting is boring..." So that's the kind of thing I suspect that's why I got the award.

**JD:** Were you surprised by it?

**GF:** Oh, very.

**JD:** What personally would you like to add about yourself or about the University who may be listening to this 20 years down the road? What are some of the words of wisdom you can offer or other things you might want to add about the University in general?

**GF:** I guess I would like future generations to get as much fulfillment and accomplishment and feeling of worth from the students as I have gotten. I've probably learned more from them than they've learned from me. I can't think of anything better than to be an educator. My philosophy of life is: there are three professions. All of the thousands and thousands of other professions are great and marvelous and helpful, etc. But the three main professions are educators, medicine, and clergy. In a sense I hit on two of them, I'm not a cleric but I hit the religious side and the education side. Everything else spins off of those three somehow, everything that has meaning in this world. And I think LaSalle hits all three of those on the button. I hope it continues to do that.

**JD:** You said you were one of eight and four of your brothers had come here prior to you coming here. None of them were ever involved in the Christian Brothers...

**GF:** No.

**JD:** What were the reactions of some of your family that you wanted to take this direction with your life, that you chose this path?

**GF:** Back in the 60s it was a very common thing, particularly in large families, particularly in large Irish Catholic families. It was very, very common for one or two members to go into some kind of a religious operation. It wasn't anything abnormal, it wasn't anything "Wow, isn't he super" or "Don't do it, don't do it." It would be encouraged, it would be, "that's great you want try, you wanna go for it and do it, etc". That was the way the spirit was at that time. I think after the second Vatican Council, that changed a little bit, when all of these things changed. Family values adjusted or whatever happened to family values, it became a lot different. Nowadays I don't know that there's that much of a support from parents and brothers and sisters saying "Yeah, go for it, What is it you're going for? I'm not quite sure what it is that you're going for." But back then they never had anything like discouragement, not surprise...

**JD:** Were you the only educator?

**GF:** No, no. That's a profession in my family. I have two sisters who are teachers. I have six nieces and nephews who are educators, teachers. Aunts and uncles who were educators. Education is a big thing.

**JD:** So were your parents educators?

**GF:** No. And they weren't educated. My dad finished in 7<sup>th</sup> grade or something like that. My mom, high school. But they valued education.