

Interviewee: David L. George, Ph.D.

Interviewer and Interview Logger: Bradford James Morith

Interview Sessions:

- 1. Session One (March 15, 2015)**
 - a. Part One (1:05:39)
 - b. Part Two (0:59:57)**
2. Session Two (March 22, 2015)
(1:38:59)

Total Running Time: 3:44:35

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Abstract:

Dr. David L. George is currently professor emeritus of economics at La Salle University, having begun teaching at La Salle in 1979. Dr. George holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan, a M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a M.A. and Ph.D. from Temple University. He has published approximately thirty scholarly articles, twenty book reviews, and two books during his career. His first book is *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), and his second book is *Rhetoric of the Right: Language Change and the Spread of the Market* (Routledge Press, 2012). His primary foci of research include meta-preferences in the free market and economics rhetoric. Dr. George has been a longtime member of the Association for Social Economics (ASE), including being this association's president in 2005. Dr. George was also honored by this association in 2011 when he won the prestigious Thomas F. Divine Award, an annual award that recognizes ASE members who make significant contributions to social economics. Dr. George currently serves on the editorial board of *Review of Social Economy* and *Journal of Socio-Economics*. At La Salle University, Dr. George was an engaged member of the faculty senate, and he won the Distinguished Faculty Scholarship Award in 2012. Dr. George was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1947, where he was also raised. Today, he lives in Melrose Park, Pennsylvania, and has two adult children. His hobbies include classical music and Russian studies.

Interview Log: Session One/Part Two from March 15, 2015 (0:59:57)

0:00:00

Okay. We're going to focus on now La Salle University questions. We're going to start with your professorship under President Brother Patrick Ellis from 1979 to 1992.¹ Your impressions on Brother Patrick Ellis when you first started—

Dr. George thought very highly of him. He had a very dynamic personality, which is not necessarily a reason to embrace a person. He had that leadership quality. He was a very funny man. He had been an English professor—very clever with words. George thought he was a good man. Also, at that time, the school was not moving in a direction that George has had great problems—a business orientation. To George, Ellis was coming out of a liberal arts tradition—a humanities tradition. This tradition means a lot to George, so he thought well of him.

0:01:25

What do you think was the most significant contribution to the school when he was here until 1992?

The library was built in '89—the current library.² There wasn't as much focus, even then, on growth as an idea. Growth is a wonderful thing. On the other hand, if you have something truly excellent, you can continue to be what you are. George can't say that he did this or that. Certainly, the university did not feel like it was falling behind. Under Patrick Ellis, La Salle did become a university. That was 1984. In fact, very coincidentally, George officially became "Dr. George"—getting his Ph.D.—on the very day that La Salle became a university.³ (kidding) "Whoa. Spooky." It was very strange—sometime in May or April of '84. Some of us did wonder if this was a good idea. It was strategic. The school had to go beyond where it had been—the M.B.A. program and other things. He doesn't associate Ellis with selling what La Salle stands for. He doesn't sense that in the least. Was La Salle becoming a university a good idea? Probably, everybody has done that, unless you are one of the most prestigious little colleges like Swarthmore.⁴ There are still colleges. But there aren't many colleges, usually for prestige sake. "A university is better than being a college." Many people associate college now with a community college, which are fine institutions. However, they are not four-year institutions.

¹ Brother Patrick Ellis served as La Salle University president from 1977 to 1992. Dr. George began full-time at La Salle University in 1979 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

² Dr. George is referring here to Connelly Library at La Salle University.

³ Dr. George received his Ph.D. in economics from Temple University.

⁴ Swarthmore College is a private liberal arts college in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia.

George cannot say much else about this time. He was working on his dissertation going crazy, and working on getting tenure. George has no doubt that President Ellis was supportive of him.

0:03:57

1984, let's go back to that. La Salle College became a university. You mentioned some of the positives. What were some of the negatives? How did you perceive this as a whole?

George does not want to say that he was extreme, but he was the outlier on what he is about to say. George feels the humanities are the centerpiece of a good education. And La Salle has the humanities, certainly, but he thinks that La Salle wore that more proudly than it may have ever since. True of most schools, the history majors are down—philosophy, religion. George asks the interviewer to restate the question.

0:04:51

With La Salle, how did you perceive this expansion? Were there some negatives that you saw—

The negatives were putting some of the changes in the forefront as not supplementary, but in the public eye. Of course, one sees this today. Every ad for college—No one ever advertises humanities. It is always furthering your career. George is *very* sensitive to students' needs to think about their future. Certainly, everyone wants to know that they can have a decent job, career. George feels it is awful how we study to help us find a job—not the best way to think about undergraduate education. George says this continuously that we have to bring back the liberal arts.

In fact, Cornel West spoke at La Salle a few months back.⁵ George was happy to see that West got a huge turnout. He is very flamboyant, brilliant in his way, complex, but he was really speaking well of a Catholic education. This was somewhat surprising to Dr. George, but he guesses it shouldn't be. West has that spiritual side to him. West said a wonderful thing: "The purpose of a good education is not to find work: it's to learn how to die." George thinks he learned this from some French existentialists. As strange as that sounded, this quote resonates with George. Because when George looks at his own life, that's what education is—not that I have to go to college to become so close to philosophy, literature, classical music. That wasn't about George's job at all. Those were the main parts of his education; they made his life better.

⁵ Cornel West is a philosopher, activist, and author. West appears as a political and social commentator on networks such as CNN, C-SPAN, MSNBC, Fox News, PBS, and *The Colbert Report*. He was born in 1953 in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Wikipedia, 2015).

To that extent, one approaches the end of life with a better feeling about things. George feels that was what West was getting at. A good education teaches one how to live, but also how to die—to make sense of life. It is rather romantic sounding perhaps, but to George, that's what his education meant to him.

0:07:51

So, you mentioned some of the negatives here of La Salle going to a university—the importance of a liberal arts education. A number of graduate programs were also introduced with the university throughout the years. Would you like to see a graduate economics department here at La Salle? Why or why not?

George does not think there is much interest among our faculty. It would not work. They threw out some things a few years back, something that is rather unusual—for instance, history and economics. But, they would not have a great chance. We could not begin to *compete* (chuckles)—to use that word, which George has problems with sometimes. We could not compete with major Ph.D. institutions, and nor would we want to. Quite simply, the mathematical influence in graduate education is extremely intense. George was lucky to get through it. He has math aptitude, but he didn't study math in college much. He is not a mathematician. Unless, one is trying to be a real outlier institution at the graduate level, La Salle wouldn't have a chance. Nor would La Salle want it on the terms they would be given to have it. George can't speak for all his colleagues, but he thinks that would be the general sense of things. A master's program? George thinks that is quite possible. We played with that regarding the M.B.A. program. That was some years back, but that is a possibility.

0:09:34

I wanted to ask some more questions from the 1980s. In 1970, La Salle became fully coeducational, admitting women for the first time. When you started in '79, through the 80s, did you witness any issues or incidents of sexism on campus? Or was that resolved by that point?

George would have to say it was resolved. Now, George's best friend among colleagues, closest friend outside of La Salle, was Rita Mall, the 2nd woman professor.⁶ She came in '68 to La Salle.⁷ George doesn't think she ever brought up anything. He doesn't want to downplay the period, but he thinks we do an injustice to the earlier period of sexual segregation. It seems to have been rather mutual: there were female

⁶ Rita Mall was a French professor who began teaching at La Salle University in 1960 (<http://www.mocavo.com/La-Salle-University-1980-Philadelphia-Pa/206032/90>, 2015).

⁷ See footnote six above.

schools and male schools. George never went to a gender exclusive school.

When George first came to La Salle, he never picked up the sense that it had been an all-male school. He can't say there was any legacy, or any resentment, on the part of any males over the co-educational movement.

0:11:08

Another question from the 1980s—in 1970, there were thirty-seven Christian Brothers on campus. In 1980, there were only thirteen Christian Brothers at La Salle. Do you have any impressions of this decline? Was there an impact that you noticed?

The movement towards the business model certainly was not helped by the decline in [Christian] Brothers. This was so ironic. People act as though religious institutions are somehow less open. If it is a very conservative religion, it might not be attuned to liberal arts. However, the Brothers have been one of the strongest forces to maintain the liberal arts side. It is so odd to say this. People would sometimes say to George, "Do you have any sense you are somehow limited in what you can teach?" George never, never, ever remotely felt like he was being bullied or quietly bullied by the Brothers. Is that because they are less in number? There is more modesty? George cannot be sure. If there is any pressure George has ever felt in his years here, it would be from the corporate world. He hasn't reacted to it. He has had enough independence to teach the economics he feels ought to be taught. But that is where we have our new religion called free markets. (chuckles) That's the religion that is problematic to a real education. Many can't believe it when he says that, but he really feels that way. George cannot say what would have happened if the Brothers had a stronger role in the university than they did. The movement towards the religion of our age is free-market capitalism.

0:13:12

Do you think there is a connection between the decline in Christian Brothers and the shift to the university? Is there a thematic connection there?

Somewhat, but he has to say yes. He can't be sure because there are many Catholic institutions he is not familiar with. George doesn't think there was opposition by Brothers to the movement to the university. There was naturally some questioning by it by those who had been here the longest, who were steeped in the idea of a college. But George does not believe so. George recognizes his whole thing about the meta-preferences never tied that into religion, never ever. George was a non-believer from age sixteen. Now, George is a Quaker. He is spiritual and

deeply respectful of religion. George feels it is grossly underappreciated today.

To get to his point, that is one of the major things about the Catholic tradition. It is in the older Christian traditions, and other religious traditions “when it is understood, that we are puzzled by our own behaviors.” That we may do what we want, but we may not want that want. The internal struggle—that made no sense in regular economics. It made *huge* sense at a Catholic institution—with social economists who came from a Catholic tradition, which could appreciate or at least respect that whole thing. To that extent, it makes George very supportive and grateful for the influence of the Christian Brothers. Why they’ve declined in number, George does not know. This is true of all religions, except for the ones spreading now.

0:15:30

In 1984, the La Salle faculty adopted a new curriculum, with foundational courses supplemented by electives. How did this new curriculum impact the economics department?

George thinks it was after ’84. We used to have ten full-time members. When George joined the department, he was one of ten, replacing Mark Ratkus initially.⁸ He came back, of course. One of the ten was Joe Kane, who at that time, was moving towards being the dean at the business school.⁹ He was formerly a member of his department.

To get to his point, we had ten members in the department. We currently have five. Now a major reason for that was business students, who really provided our bread and butter, they took it for one year—a required course. The business school went through some real shrinkage during the 90s. That was when people were retiring, and we wouldn’t hire more. We didn’t have as many introductory principles of economics classes there to cover. As far as the events of ’84, it didn’t help. As George recalls, a student was required to take three courses in social sciences outside their major. We didn’t do very well in that regard; people did not run to economics. George doesn’t want to say bad things about other departments, but certain departments were more user friendly, so he says—more student friendly. We didn’t exactly do well in that regard. That didn’t help us. Our grading had always been tough. We don’t do it for reasons to be cruel; we are not trying to be tough that

⁸ Mark Ratkus was an economics professor at La Salle University. He passed away in 2010 (<http://studentaffairs.lasalle.edu/umas/mark-ratkus/>, 2015).

⁹ Joseph Kane, Ph.D., founded the M.B.A. program at La Salle University (<http://www.lasalle.edu/grad/content/mba/newsletter/fall2010>, 2015).

way. But, we didn't have the grade inflation that occurred. That didn't help us a lot in terms of numbers of students. George can't recall that well about what happened right around '84. He knows that in the 90s was when they had more loss of students. Economics majors have remained very steady; we usually have ten majors per class—right around forty [for all classes combined]. That hasn't changed much.

0:18:14

Professor Robison has described your teaching style as Socratic, encouraging students to argue multiple perspectives.¹⁰ How would you describe your teaching style? Do you feel he is accurate?

George thinks he is. He wrote a very good letter supporting George for emeritus [professorship], and he said some things of that kind. He didn't approach it intentionally, but he guesses that he is. He is always the one to instinctively encourage students to question, question, question. Don't just take this without seeing why you should take it. Because of George's scholarship, preferences and such, that made him a real questioner of mainstream. He approached the subject as an outsider. He thinks that this was very beneficial. Certainly with preferences, he always gets the students to play with that. Do you really do things that you want? Then, why do you smoke? Don't you wish you didn't smoke? George teases them, so to speak. It is true with other subjects, with other concepts. With inflation, he looks at what the book says, and he asks if this is the reason inflation is—There is that kind of thing. George always placated the students who just wanted to get a grade and get out. By saying the tests he gives them—He would always draw his questions. In multiple choice, they have a bad reputation. He knows. For economics, at the principles level, they are excellent. Maybe, he says that because he did extremely well on multiple choice in high school and college at the intro levels to economics. But, he says none of those questions are going to be written by him; they are written by the text authors. George lets his students know that he is there to play around with ideas, so that his students can feel more comfortable with those ideas—to ease anxiety. Some of his students say: "Well, he teaches us what's not in the book." George says, "We're here to engage." That's his whole point. Whether this is Socratic, George does not know, but he doesn't know what this stands for. George likes to say that we are in this all together. An expression one does not hear much except for elite places—to say, "He or she studied with..." "You don't hear that." For George's course for economics majors—economic history, history of thought—He would always make it a point to read exactly what his students were reading. "I thought of this," he would tell them. "Does

¹⁰ Professor H. David Robison is the current economics department chair at La Salle University.

this seem right to you?" "What's your problem here?" "What's missing here?" That was how George tried to approach [teaching].

0:21:37

Do you feel that logic and rhetoric are important in economics?

Very much so. There are economists—strangely—who come from a political direction that is not George's at all—very pro free market, the so-called Austrian economists. But the Austrian economists, see economics as primarily applied logic, which is to go from premises to conclusions, et cetera. That is what economics is very strong at. It takes the form of mathematics. That is not a useless procedure. Science isn't everything. There is logic; so, sometimes you see surprising things that follow from prior assumptions. That's really what economics does well.

Now, mentioning rhetoric, George went into that subject, not because he has a better aptitude in English than in math. He is more of a mathematician in his way of being, so to speak, but economists are so bad at English. (laughs) As economists would say, he has a 'comparative advantage' in the spoken word. George saw from very early on that they were sloppy with their language. In teaching, one sees firsthand. George would not have seen this if he had taught at the likes of Harvard or Swarthmore—very top schools.¹¹ (chuckles) Not that he would have turned down jobs there, not to get him wrong. If one teaches very elite students, one does not worry about them getting confused by words as much as one does when teaching La Salle students—students who are not that Harvard much. So, George is really forced to say, "What can I say to make this clearer?" "What might be wrong with this word?" "Why should we question this?" It took George years to see a lot of this. George would tell them, "Gee, look at this expression. Does it make sense?" George only realized this after twenty years of teaching. He can't expect them, too. Getting them to go inside things—engage, engage—This is what he likes.

0:24:14

Continuing with this thought, Professor Robison also mentioned that "History of Economic Thought" was your signature class here at La Salle. Do you agree? Explain.

Yes, very much. The person he mentioned earlier, George Rohrlich from Temple,¹² that was his area—his and Ingrid Rima also at Temple.¹³

¹¹ Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

¹² George F. Rohrlich was a professor of economics and social policy at Temple University, where he formed the Institute for Social Economics and Policy Research in 1965. He passed away in 1995 of pneumonia (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1007/BF02779042?journalCode=rfse20#.VSGWRvnF-So>, 2015).

George likes very much the history of thought. He is not himself a historian; he does not have the mind that can do that first-rate history. But, he has great respect for it. The sad thing is, the history of economic thought is not doing well at the universities. To George, that is just very sad, and he hopes that changes. He is convinced the reason he did not feel close to the natural sciences was a lack of learning the history of the subject. In many sciences the assumption is, “Well, here we have the truth. Now, why worry about the past?” To George, this is very absurd. He loves philosophy because when one did study it from its early times, one understood it. Some things are never quite resolved. One has to play around. The history of thought was a fantastic course because it puts in context what one is now learning. It has pedagogical advantages to better understand modern ideas. In its own right, George feels this is a very exciting subject.

0:25:59

Which economists, thinkers, philosophers did you study in that class? Who did you teach?

George chose texts that included what he would have included. According to economists, he feels it is fair to say that the economic world began in 1776 when Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*.¹⁴ But, we go way earlier than that.

George notes that the history of economic thought is different than American economic history. Economic history looks at the real world of things, not economic ideas. History of thought looks at ideas.

Some works George chose were maybe influenced by Joseph Flubacher.¹⁵ He taught this class originally, for years and years. We brought in Catholic thinkers and other medieval period thinkers—very fascinating writings from that period, involving such things as why interest rates are wrong—later withdrawn as a claim. But, there is much to be learned pre Adam Smith. So at least a quarter of the semester exam is that—going in fact back to the Greeks, some things by Aristotle, Plato come in. The 19th century goes from the time of Adam Smith to the late 19th century. That hundred-year period is known as the classical period. That’s when

¹³ Ingrid Rima is currently an emeritus professor of economics at Temple University. She is the author of *Development of Economic Analysis*, 7th ed. (Routledge, 2009) (<http://www.amazon.com/Development-Economic-Analysis-7th-Edition/dp/0415772923>, 2015).

¹⁴ Scotsman Adam Smith (1723-1790) is widely considered the “father of modern economics” (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹⁵ Joseph Flubacher was an economics professor at La Salle University. He has a scholarship named after him. He passed away in 2003 at age 89 (http://articles.philly.com/2003-06-26/news/25446612_1_economics-students-honorary-doctorate, 2015).

political economy was the name the subject gave itself—dealing with social issues, Marx of course.¹⁶ He taught Malthus—concerns about the future.¹⁷ The neo-classical period that began in the 1870s—that’s maybe the least popular part of the course because it is the most demanding mathematically. It doesn’t get into heavy math. It is the start of that analytic period, which became mathematical. He also brings in the ‘institutionalists.’ These are the thinkers like George who are outside the mainstream. Thorstein Veblen is a great person to read.¹⁸ They read some Marx—John Kenneth Galbraith, whom George has great respect for.¹⁹ So, these other thinkers who were not of the mainstream certainly were included. George does not know what is happening in the rest of the country as to who is included, but he could not imagine not including them.

0:29:03

Also, Professor Robison mentioned a former student named George Diemer.²⁰ I’m not sure when he is from, but Robison said that Diemer was very positively influenced by you. Could you discuss your professorial relationship with George Diemer?

George Diemer is currently at Chestnut Hill College. He’s a lot of fun. What makes it interesting with George—he does not know why he makes a student like a subject, but some students don’t like a subject and don’t like it anymore when they leave than when they came in to the room. Here is what’s odd. George and Diemer are so politically different. Some personalities, if they impress people, the people they impress immediately adopt their philosophy. He notes that some of his best students don’t adopt his philosophy, but he gets them to think. So, maybe he just likes disagreement. But, George, we talk a lot. He still has a view of the market that is far more benign than George’s view. Diemer is a fine guy, and they still see each other.

0:30:17

You mentioned that he is at Chestnut Hill. Does he teach there?

¹⁶ Dr. George refers here to Karl Marx (1818-1883), the German philosopher and revolutionary socialist (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹⁷ Dr. George refers here to Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), an English political economist who wrote about the dangers of population growth (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹⁸ Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) was an American economist and sociologist, known for his theories on ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹⁹ John Kenneth Galbraith (1908-2006) was an American economist who taught at Harvard University (Wikipedia, 2015).

²⁰ George Diemer, Ph.D., is currently an assistant professor of business at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (http://www.chc.edu/directories/faculty/George_Diemer/, 2015).

Yes, he's one of the few faculty. They have a very tiny department there. His wife also was a part-timer there. She was one of La Salle's graduates. George cannot recall her name, and he didn't have her as a student. She was a good student here as well.

0:30:38

Does he teach economics?

Oh yes, economics. He's done some very good work on gambling, among other things—the whole economy of gambling. He's very solid.

0:31:03

Next question, in 1990, you mentioned you had brain surgery. This sounds like an inspirational story. Please describe what happened.

I had that first brain surgery in 1964. From the time he was about eleven years old, George had had, what he called, his “funny feelings.” They were actually seizures—petit-mal seizures. He never knew they were that until he was sixteen and had surgery. He had surgery because he had petit-mal seizures that wouldn't go away. Normally, if he were around people and had one of these episodes, he would just go into himself and wouldn't show any obviously symptoms. But if he tried to speak, he would sometimes make no sense. It was aphasia.²¹ When he was with his friends one night, at a pep rally, he went into one of these seizures, and it didn't stop. In fact, it lasted five hours. His friends were concerned about him and noticed that he wasn't talking right. They took him home. Soon after that, he had the surgery. The surgeons didn't know what they were going in for—what they were going into his brain to find. Yet, he remembers being very grateful that they found a cause of those “funny feelings.” He could not help but think he was really crazy. They were really profound. He feels that people who have epilepsy can be really interesting—like drug experiences perhaps? Anyway, he was so happy to know that they found a physical cause. It relieved him of feeling that he did something wrong. They operated and removed the benign tumor. He went fifteen years after that with no symptoms, no seizures. But beginning in 1980, they began occurring again, and they were the same. He managed. He didn't lose his driver's license because these were petit-mal. He could always feel it coming on. He didn't think he ever had one while he was driving, but if he had, he could pull over. So, time went on. They started becoming more and more frequent. Thus, it was 1992, and he had surgery again. This time, they did a better job of removing it. [From the first surgery], they left some tissue that caused the tumor to occur. So, they removed it. It's been fine since then. He

²¹ Aphasia is a disorder to parts of the brain that control language (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/aphasia.html>, 2015).

still takes medication. That 2nd [surgery] was very, very debilitating. At sixteen, it was not at all debilitating. He was back on his feet a few days following surgery. He was back in school one week later. In the fall of '92, he didn't teach that semester, but he may have taught one class. He doesn't recall exactly. [The doctors] had warned him about this. Depression tends to go with this. Now, he had had depression in the 1970s for partial reason of being a crazy person in his twenties. But in retrospect, it also had some connection with his tumors. Post surgery, 1992, he had severe depression at the end of that year. He has been not depressed ever since. There was some medication, but he doesn't think he needs that. It was nice to know that the depression had some connection with physical things. He feels he has been really fortunate to parlay that brain tumor that wasn't removed fully. Eventually, it was removed. George wonders if this actually added to his life. He doesn't want to romanticize illness, but he has to say that both of his main ideas—meta-preferences and directional theory he mentioned earlier—may have been partially connected to that tumor. And one reason he says that is—Dostoyevsky, one of George's favorite writers—was one of the first people, George is aware of, to bring up the idea of meta-preferences.²² It was in the *Notes from the Underground*.²³ It turns out Dostoyevsky had epilepsy. Maybe there is no connection there. But George has heard that there are certain patterns that people follow with tumors, with brain disorders. Sometimes, they go into issues of moral philosophy. So, he doesn't want to just think it was about something wrong, but he can't help but wonder. Did it have some good effects? Odd as it may sound. He was very fortunate not to have had malignant tumors. He can't imagine that's a good way to go.

0:37:15

All right, focusing on your professorship in the 90s, we'll start under President Burke²⁴ and then Interim President Giordano in '98 and '99.²⁵ We'll start with President Brother Burke. What were your impressions of President Burke?

He knew Joe from his psychology professorship.²⁶ George has the highest respect for Burke, but George had difficulties with his presidency. But again, Burke was following, to some extent, the dictates of his time, which was to give more attention to fundraising and the business community. So, George wasn't really satisfied. George was on the

²² Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) was a Russian novelist and philosopher. His novels explore human psychology in a troubled world (Wikipedia, 2015).

²³ *Notes from the Underground* is an 1864 novel by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (Wikipedia, 2015).

²⁴ President Brother Joseph Burke was La Salle University's president from 1992 to 1998 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

²⁵ Interim President Nicholas Giordano served as La Salle's president in 1998 and 1999 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

²⁶ Joe, here referenced, is President Brother Joseph Burke.

senate, and he did speak of his doubts.²⁷ George had the greatest respect for Burke. George states that if he were [theoretically] president, then anyone could say, “David George shouldn’t be president.” George feels he should not be too harsh here. Following Burke—

0:38:41 *Giordano was for like a year or two—*

That’s right. He did some things from a practical standpoint that were solid. Then, Mike McGinniss became president.²⁸ At his wedding, when Patty and he were married in the summer of ’85,²⁹ they had a Quaker wedding, and they had Brother Mike as their master of ceremonies.³⁰ That was how George first got to know McGinniss. McGinniss was in the philosophy department.³¹ George liked his work.

0:39:21 *Going back to your role in the faculty senate in the 1990s, what did you do in that—in terms of—*

Well, one of my major things—To this day, I’m frustrated. I tried to encourage a new way of stating faculty raises—how to package how we express to ourselves and to the world—what the agreement was—with faculty getting two or three percent raises. He tried to say, “We’re not quite getting it.” There are different reasons for raises: 1. inflation and 2. overall real growth in the economy.

Why didn’t a professor a hundred years ago earn as much as today? We were less productive; there was less stuff out there. You can buy more with your money today, even if you are just as good as was a professor a hundred years ago. They couldn’t buy what you can [today]—partially, because some of the stuff has been invented. We have real wage growth. That’s one reason for a raise because the economy is growing. The other one is inflation. As he said, those are two reasons why everyone should get the same percent, but there is a third reason—a different one—and that is moving through the ranks. When you’re older, older people tend to earn more than younger people. Why?—Because

²⁷ Dr. George was a member of the Faculty Development Committee in the La Salle Faculty Senate from 1991 to 1994 (<http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/>, 2015).

²⁸ President Brother Michael McGinniss was La Salle University’s president from 1999 to 2014 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

²⁹ Patty refers here to his separated wife, Patricia Gerrity. Patricia Gerrity is currently the Associate Dean for Community Programs in Graduate Nursing at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (<http://www.drexel.edu>, 2015).

³⁰ Brother Mike refers here to Brother Michael McGinniss (See note twenty-eight).

³¹ Brother McGinniss’ areas of expertise were pastoral theology, history and theology of ministry, and Lasallian spirituality (Wikipedia, 2015).

they are rewarded for the fact that they are getting older. They are occupying a new position. Now, sometimes that is specifically from instructor to assistant professor to associate to full [professor]. But even when that is not the case, that happens.

George will wrap it up this way. What he saw was a problem was when La Salle announced, for instance, a three percent raise for all faculty. It wasn't noting that, in fact, La Salle might be paying *less* money to faculty than next year. Why would that be?—Because somebody at the top of the pile would have retired and been replaced by somebody at the bottom. All right? (George looks at the interviewer to affirm the interviewer understands George's point)—so the money saved by those retired. George was trying to say that we ought to package it such that we better understand how much the university is spending per faculty member. And he was trying to say that we may find we didn't get a two percent raise in those lean years. We got a decrease: Overall, faculty made less. One is only getting more because one is going through one's life cycle. The contracts we received took into account what George said, but it never went quite right. And to this day, George was on the senate just before he retired. This makes George say that this is why he is not a practical person sometimes. He tries to come up with some things—that is not easy.

Some years back, George was on the *Collegian*—faculty advisors for the newspaper.³² And he does recall there was a controversy about abortion ads. And, George strongly supported not allowing abortion ads. What George thought was you shouldn't abolish articles; you shouldn't be forbidden to write for the *Collegian* if you want to say that you believe in abortion. That is one thing. It is very different to have ads. For the same reason, George would like to see people stop having ads for Pepsi cola. George thinks if someone thinks abortion is not right at some institution, they should not accept ads for abortion. So, George remembers he was very strong on that point. He doesn't know where that all went. [Faculty] senators are a little too passive. He often brought that up, too.

0:43:39

La Salle faced economic exigencies from declining enrollments in the mid 1990s. This led to massive budget cuts with freezes in new faculty hires, deliberate vacancies in faculty positions, and eliminated faculty positions. Some faculty were bought out from their positions. Explain your perception of this time in La Salle's history.

³² The La Salle *Collegian* is a newspaper run by the students of La Salle University, serving the entire University community (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

What was happening—George again tried to make this point, but he didn't get it across. He was on the [faculty] senate. George said, "If you're going to use a financial exigency for why you're doing something, you should be prepared to go back to what it was prior after the exigency goes." But, they weren't making that commitment. George thinks most of the reasons for the changes had very little to do with student enrollment. It had much more to do with the change in ideology of the times. Where across all fields, people were not getting the raises they used to get. Although we are professionals, faculty are in the position of—we're large in numbers. We are the workers. So George was saying, it is the economic philosophy of our times—very pro free market that essentially announces that we can't give the raises that we used to. This is still with us today, by the way. As George likes to say, it is very ironic. We have to have lower wages. Now, he's not speaking of La Salle. But a private company was saying, "If we want to be competitive, we have to have lower wages." They would also say, "If we want to be competitive, we have to be sure that we don't tax profits too much." Let's think about this. Higher profits are necessary to become more competitive. Lower wages—That's not necessary to become more competitive. So, that was frustrating. Again, George is not pointing fingers here. La Salle is just part of a broad social milieu—the culture they're in, the country they're in. And he thinks what was going on [that] this has happened everywhere. Certain top administrators saw their salaries going up much more than faculty. But that is not just universities, that is true of—CEO's today make far, far more as a percentage of the rank and file. Everybody has their own reason for why they are doing that. In the auto industry, it wasn't because there were fewer people buying cars. It was because of competition from overseas. So, everybody is saying the same thing, but for different reasons. So, what George was trying to say was—let's just be clear about what's going on here. He didn't get too far with that, but he tried.

0:46:43

Starting in the 1960s, and accelerating in development in the 1990s, La Salle has encouraged their faculty to participate in national professional societies and to publish research scholarship. Through this process, La Salle has been seeking more national recognition. Explain how this has affected your professorship.

It has affected it because George knew from day one that that was what he wanted to do: research. George says that La Salle was his ideal place because it was not first and foremost a research institution. That gave him more flexibility in the kind of research he did. He probably could not have gotten the work he ended up publishing at a major research university for reasons he already mentioned. They are mathematical.

They are less critical of markets than George. So, La Salle was an ideal setting for George to do research. George will admit that he has kind of whined about not recognizing scholarship more, but he realizes that goes with the turf. Teaching means most—as it should—but, George wishes La Salle would make students more familiar with the scholarship that goes on. We tend to keep that very specialized: That is the business of the department—of those deciding whether they should get tenure. But to George, this is just an integral part of teaching, not at all levels, of course. Some might say that high school teachers don't do research—true. But, one thing that can make college different is precisely that. We get people who do research, but research may not be the best name—scholarship. It can come into their teaching. George's stuff was easy enough—not so mathematical—that he could bring it in to what he taught. So, George is happy to see that La Salle went that route, but there are some who are not so happy.

George says that he had a colleague who was not treated quite favorably because of his lack of research. But, he was an excellent teacher, and he should have had promotions that he did not get. For one thing, he had been here from prior to the idea of research as so central. So, it is easy to require research as just another requirement instead of thinking of it as something we wish to be part of—of what we are.

0:49:34

I'm going to get into your books a little bit later. I would like to continue with research and scholarship. Within your department, Professor Mshomba³³—if you could discuss his scholarship—How do you—

Richard Mshomba is a wonderful man. When George sees things like what Mshomba does and how he has lived his life, George has the greatest respect for the [Christian] Brothers. Mshomba is from Tanzania, and he was an undergraduate here in the mid 80s—older than the average undergraduate. He was in a class of George's. George thought well of Mshomba; he was so much the student. He went on to get a doctorate at the University of Illinois.³⁴ He has done a couple of books on the African economy—economies of Africa—different parts, of course. He is truly a fine man—a good scholar, good teacher. When we hired Richard—in fact, this has always been a problem—to go off on a little tangent here. George heard on the radio today that some women's groups did not want to have women appointed to corporate boards as

³³ Richard Mshomba, Ph.D., is currently an economics professor at La Salle University. He received a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His areas of research are development economics and international economics, with a focus on African countries (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

³⁴ See note thirty-three.

any kind of quota. We'd rather do it through meritocracy. In Richard's case, of course when one has an African or African American selected, one might think it is because of their wanting to have representation of all people. Richard was our best candidate—no matter how one looks at it—when we hired Richard Mshomba in 1991 or '92.³⁵ We can be proud for having Richard as a student at La Salle.³⁶

0:51:44

*And Professor Paulin?*³⁷

Professor Paulin has been with us since '88. Robison and Paulin were hired the same year—1988.³⁸ We have outstanding teachers. Paulin is just one example. George can't claim to be the most popular teacher. We have very engaging folks, and Beth [Paulin] is an example of that. She is extremely well liked by her students, and she's rigorous in what she does. Her research is not as much. She's done research, as George states not to get him wrong. She's had concerns if it is enough to get the promotion to full professor. That's why George believes that we can have different specialties—teaching and that. She's been great, and George cannot believe how long she has been here—twenty-seven years.

0:53:03

*And Professor Robison?*³⁹

Dave [Robison] is their most mainstream economist, educated in the neo-classical tradition. He's more mathematical than the rest of us. Dave has also been well suited to La Salle. Maybe it is La Salle's influence on him, but he is very much the social critic kind of a person and has done some very important research—widely cited. George doesn't think people are aware.

In the case of George's deceased former colleague, Mark Ratkus, and in the case, to some extent, Beth Paulin, Beth has done research.⁴⁰ Mark did not.⁴¹ That was not what he did. But, they both have tough folks to compare them with because David Robison, Richard [Mshomba], and Dr.

³⁵ Richard Mshomba, Ph.D., was hired in 1991 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

³⁶ Dr. Mshomba is from the La Salle undergraduate class of 1985 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

³⁷ Elizabeth Paulin, Ph.D., is currently an associate professor of economics at La Salle University. She did her doctorate in economics at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research foci include labor economics and the economics of gender and race (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

³⁸ H. David Robison, Ph.D., is currently the economics department chair at La Salle University (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

³⁹ H. David Robison, Ph.D., did his doctoral work in economics at the University of Maryland, College Park. His research interests include environmental economics and econometric methods and forecasting (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

⁴⁰ See note thirty-seven for Dr. Elizabeth Paulin.

⁴¹ See note eight for Mark Ratkus.

George—Robison in particular—have way more citations to their work than one would expect at a non-Ph.D. institution. Maybe out of a streak of vanity, we did some research on that. So, we can be proud of the scholarship. George thinks that they have. George doesn't think that if someone does less scholarship that they shouldn't be credited for the most fabulous teaching imaginable—and active minds. It shouldn't only be scholarship. He would be the first to say that.

0:54:57

Are there any other professors in the department that you want to—

Now, there's only the four of us who are full time. We have a fifth person—a very fine man—Frank?⁴² George was warned after his [brain] surgery that he would have a hard time remembering names. Frank Mallon, Frank Mallon, George remembers. He is a really good man. He was an adjunct with us for many, many years. He has been a very successful accountant. He elected to retire from that, and he has been on year-to-year appointments for the last three years. He'll be back probably next year, maybe after. We are, for the first time in many years, hiring a full-time tenure-track person this year.

0:55:51

Okay, moving forward—

George wishes to add one thing—his former colleagues who are either deceased or retired. George had a good relationship with John Duffy.⁴³ George also wishes to mention Joe Cairo.⁴⁴ Joe Cairo was the person most different than George in his economic beliefs. And yet, they got along in a very interesting way. Cairo was the one person who did not initially support George's application for full professor. George was turned down, and he went back some years later. Joe [Cairo] had the integrity to come and tell George that Joe couldn't vote for George. And they would argue, argue, argue. They were very good at disagreeing, and yet, still having solidarity. George thinks that academics can be very petty people—very egotistical in their way. There wasn't much of that in our department—none of that that he could think of. It was a very good department for just getting along.

⁴² Dr. George is referring here to Francis Mallon, M.A., of the economics department of La Salle University. He is an adjunct professor at La Salle, and is an adjunct professor, as well, at Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

⁴³ Dr. John Duffy was a former economics professor at La Salle University (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

⁴⁴ Joseph Cairo taught economics at La Salle University for forty years, beginning in 1963 (funeralinnovations.com, 2015).

0:57:15 *Moving on to President McGinniss, which was 1999 until only recently, what are your impressions of President McGinniss?⁴⁵ I know you discussed him before. Is there anything you wanted to add to that?*

Only that he has been a solid, dedicated president—Again, George is always going to be at some level of disagreement with our administration, our president, and our board—top administrators—in succumbing somewhat too much to the milieu in which they find themselves—the business world, et cetera. But, again, George and McGinniss have only had good interactions. We did not see each other all that much over the years, since he was president. But, they got along well.

The pope came out with an amazing statement about the economy last year.⁴⁶ It was really quite radical and critical of consumerism—and the concentration of wealth and power in the United States. Shocking. George cannot think of Americans who think that way—or maybe some who think that way and get published. So, George raised it to Mike [McGinniss], and he said that George should address that to his faculty. George said that maybe, we should give that to others, the board and that, too. Just be aware of this—they don't have to follow what the pope said. They should know what the pope is saying. That is a very different issue. George does recall McGinniss saying this, "Go to all the faculty, and see what you can do, if you want to." George didn't do that, but perhaps he should have. George read some passages at our annual Flubacher Dinner, which awards a student with the Flubacher Scholarship each year.⁴⁷ So, that was a fairly recent interaction. George has not met nor does he know much about our new president.⁴⁸ Obviously, since George is retired, it doesn't affect him as much. He looks forward to finding out more about her.

0:59:42 *Brad Morith, the interviewer, asks Dr. George if he would like to stop for today, and Dr. George agrees to continue at the March 22, 2015 session.*

0:59:57 Session One/Part Two Ends

⁴⁵ President Brother Michael McGinniss was La Salle University's president from 1999 to 2014 (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

⁴⁶ Pope Francis has been the pope since March 13, 2013 (Wikipedia, 2015).

⁴⁷ Dr. George is referring here to Joseph Flubacher, a deceased former professor of economics at La Salle University.

⁴⁸ Colleen M. Hanycz, Ph.D., is La Salle University's current president, beginning this position in 2015.