

Interviewee: Michael McGinnis  
Interviewer/Abstractor: Ryan Campbell  
Date June 26, 2018  
Location: Christian Brother's Residence at La Salle University  
Running Time: 1:14:00  
Recording Equipment: Phone 5s using the Voice Memos App

## **Log**

00:00 The Interview resumes after a short break where Brother Mike met with the unexpected visitors.

Brother Mike details his relationship with his former colleague they are mistakenly referred to as a "former student" by the interviewer. His colleague's wife is the former student. He recalls how he often times runs into people that he has taught or worked with throughout his career. He also discusses how he would bump into people that his father performed medical services for.

02:45 Discusses the role of the Church in his family's life and his own adolescent life. He describes the role it played, as "hand in glove," he was also an altar boy for his church, played in CYO sports leagues.<sup>1</sup> He states that at the time "your life revolved around things related to the church," he theorizes that it was because of the close proximity of the church, which was across the street from his childhood home. He states that his family would not have been considered "exceedingly pious" and jokes that he had the requisite number of statues for the household. His family went to mass at different times and went to church together when they went on vacation.

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Youth Sports League

- 07:06 Retells his memory of the John F. Kennedy Assassination. He was sixteen at the time and sitting in a Spanish 2 class at La Salle High School. He recounts announcement of Kennedy's death, the funeral, and the aftermath.<sup>2</sup> He states that at the time he was not political, but was surprisingly reassured that the political system continued to "work" after the death of Kennedy with his Vice – President Lyndon B. Johnson assuming the presidency. He was aware of the division throughout the country around Civil Rights Issues.
- 10:23 Describes Civil Rights Issues and events that influenced him. He speaks highly of Martin Luther King Jr.'s role in leading the cause for civil rights. He was aware of the politics that led to the passing of the Civil Rights Amendments by the Johnson Administration, emergence of Martin Luther King Jr. He described the era as a tumultuous time.
- 11:32 He explains how he joined the Christian Brothers, he described it as "catching the bug" and it was the end result of a life long innate desire to be a teacher. He explains how the Brothers would approach prospective student who they thought could serve as a Brother.<sup>3</sup> He explains the process in which he assumes one Christian Brother was probably assigned to "recruit him." He says throughout the process that it was very informal until his homeroom teacher asked if he wanted to go on a weekend trip with one of the Christian Brothers along with some of his co-students. His senior year he took numerous physiological tests and two of the Christian Brothers visited his house. His parents developed close relationships with

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<sup>2</sup> The assassination of John F. Kennedy occurred on November 22 1963.

<sup>3</sup> At 12:35 he references the dinner that the interviewee and interviewer had prior to the interview with the Christian Brother Community

many Christian Brothers throughout the rest of their lives after this. After the tests he had to formally ask to join the novitiate, after that step then he had to write for vows to join.<sup>4</sup> After this time he had a seven-year period where he had temporary vows that he took and then petition to take final vows.

16:58 He discusses how 41 other potential recruits attempted to join the Christian Brothers in his class of 1965. He describes the habit of the Christian Brothers, how he chose a special name. In addition he describes the items that he was given a cross, a copy of the New Testament, a special rosary that had six decades instead of five. His name that he chose was Brother Michael Emmet, but chose not to use the name Emmet years later. He describes how the naming system worked and it was designed to allow any Christian Brother to hear a name and know where that Christian Brother was from. Although he notes that this was a generational practice.

20:00 Explains the impact that the changes of the 1960's altered the Christian Brothers. Describes the changes during the first five years of his time as a Christian Brother and how the events of the Second Vatican Council occurred at the same time. During this time there was a renewed focus on social justice and emphasis on bilingual liturgy. He details the types of men he lived with during his novitiate; in this part he tells how the Christian Brother community reacted to the changes that occurred in the religious and secular world. Homosexuality in the Christian Brother community is explored. Discusses his early career in Pittsburgh.

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<sup>4</sup> the novitiate was the initial phase when a recruit joined the Christian Brothers

- 26:30 Fully explores the early stage of his career in Pittsburgh in South Hills Catholic and how the social changes in the 1960's disoriented the community out there.<sup>5</sup> Remarks how many of the men who left the Christian Brother community stays in contact with the Christian Brothers who remained. Talks about one friend who he had a strong relationship with. Tells how by his time in South Hills Catholic, Pittsburgh he was politically aware.
- 28:48 Explores the role of social justice in the Christian Brothers and generational differences between the young and the old. He talks about during one class at La Salle one of his professors, Brother Patrick Ellis, complained about two young Christian Brothers who wanted to move into the inner city and serve the less fortunate there. Remarks how he is able to see when the younger generation of faculty replaces or in his words "supplants" the older generation. He speaks highly of an unnamed faculty member in an unnamed department that he did not want to name, who understands what it means to be "lasallian." Remarks on the changes that occurred in the United States from the end of the Second World War (1940's) to the 1960's, he states that people today are facing many of the challenges that people faced in the 1960's.
- 36:14 Discusses the role of La Salle University in helping students navigate societal issues in the modern world. Focuses on the responsibility that universities have in general in regard to social issues. He feels that universities should not take a political role but teach core values such as "respect for the individual," and

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<sup>5</sup> a catholic diocese right outside of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

“forming a community.” Tells how schools have to focus on more than the physical when it comes to treating students.

39:42 Explores the issues he had to deal with as President in of Christian Brothers University in Memphis Tennessee and the issues he had to tackle there. Explores the challenges that he faced when he returned to La Salle University to teach in 1984. He states that the area was more conservative but there were different issues that he had to deal with such as relations between men and women, drug and alcohol issues. Details how upon his return to La Salle women had a much larger influence on the university.

42:48 Looks at the issues that he had to confront at other educational institutions he worked at during his career. Lists the places he worked at and the issues they faced. They included: President at Christian Brothers University in Memphis Tennessee from 1994 - 1999, Professor at La Salle 1984 – 1994, 1979 – 1984 Taught at the Washington Theological Union in Washington D.C., Notre Dame 1974 – 1979 for his graduate work. Explores how the religious schools struggled with defining the roles that homosexuals and women could serve as in the Catholic Church.

46:00 Discusses his first year as President of La Salle University starting in 1999, says he met countless people. He remarks the feeling he felt when he “returned” to La Salle and the changes he noticed upon his return. He described the whole process as “The Grand Tour.” Remarks how he started to enjoy soccer during this time. He discusses the issues that he faced when returned, budgeting tightening and a decline in student numbers. He credits his predecessor Brother Joe Burke with

establishing new degree programs that he was able to implement, although he feels he connected more with constituents. He states that president have to connect with the public to advance their institutions.

50:00 Compares experiences at La Salle University and Christian Brother University in Memphis. Discusses the sports conference that CBU was in the NAIA National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics at CBU and pressure to advance the university into the NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association. Discusses experiences that he had meeting presidents and faculty from universities in the Gulf South of the NCAA, North Alabama, West Alabama, Mississippi College, unspecified schools in Arkansas. He details the experience as “inspiring” and “eye opening” since he was used to interacting with Presidents at catholic universities. States that during his tenure at CBU he saw many pockets of excellence at universities throughout the Southern United states that left an impression on him and helped defined what a president’s responsibility at a university is.

54:22 Retells his memory of September 11 2001. He was sitting at his computer at his house (the Presidents residence across from La Salle’s campus) when he saw an email requesting people pray. He held a meeting with his crisis committee to determine if the university was safe. Remarks how “everyone was on their cell phones” to reach loved ones. He recounts the people who were affected. He discusses the generational change in collective memory of the terrorist attack and how the attack is remembered at La Salle University today.

58:50 Discusses other problems he had to face during his tenure as president at La Salle. Physical repairs to buildings, Fundraising, Building of new Buildings, whether or

not to build a new sports arena. Another issue was learning how to work with a large faculty, he was used to dealing with smaller faculties. He talks about the property around La Salle he acquired during his tenure, gauging campus life and student government. He describes the faculty at La Salle as cooperative and that he enjoyed a successful working relationship with them. States that his experience was unique from other board members that he encountered throughout his career.

1:04:18 Describes his relationship with the board of trustees; he states, “that the board changes its composition every five years.” He discusses the changes he made to the board such as implementing term limits. He states that he interacted with “three different boards” which he described as a “cycle” during his 15 years at La Salle. He feels that if he tried to get a fourth term he could have won the board’s vote, but feels much healthier and happier now that he no longer has to handle the stress associated with the position. He also described the relationship with the board as “atypical.” Discusses the process in which board members were recruited and the commitment required of them. One of the requirements is to be an ambassador of the institution in good times and in difficult times such as the Art Sale in 2018 and the Rape Accusations against the Basketball Players in 2004. At this point in the interview Brother Mike requests to take a break to walk around and get a drink. The break lasted approximately fifteen minutes.

1:14:00