

Interview #1: Marianne Gauss
Date: March 8, 2006
Time: 2:45-3:45pm
Interviewer: James Brightman

Key to Abbreviations/Punctuation

M: Marianne Gauss

J: James Brightman

... : The use of ellipsis denotes points in the interview when the voice recognition mechanism on the digital voice recorder cut the narrator's response or when the narrator or interviewer cut each other off in the conversation.

1. Personal Data

J: Good afternoon! Before we get started, I would like to ask you some basic background questions starting with your full name.

M: My name is Marianne Lucy Salmon Gauss.

J: Where do you live?

M: I live in Fox Chase, which is a section of Philadelphia.

J: And what is the date and place of your birth?

M: I was born in Philadelphia, August 18th, 1952.

J: And what is your present occupation?

M: I'm an Assistant Professor in the School of Business at La Salle University.

J: And what key moves did you make between your place of birth, obviously you're still in Philadelphia, but did your family move at all during that time or not?

M: No, I'm actually a very typical Philadelphian. I was born in North Philadelphia and by the time I was two, we had moved to Olney, which is where I grew up. I went to Cardinal Dougherty, which was, well actually, I went to St. Helena's which was two blocks to the west. And then I went to Cardinal Dougherty High School, which was two blocks to the east. And then, I came to La Salle University in September of 1970 two miles to the west. Then, I did commercial lending at PNC. I did auditing at PNC. I stayed home raising children for a few years and tripped into a job teaching here.

J: Okay.

M: I started here in 1987 teaching.

J: Great. And what is your marital status?

M: I'm married to Siegfried Jacob Gauss, who went to high school and college with me. We're both alums.

J: And do you have children?

M: We have three children: Regina, Patricia, Matt.

J: And what are their ages?

M: 27, 25, 23.

J: So in order (Regina, 27, Patricia 25, and Matt 23). And finally, do I have your permission today to tape our interview?

M: Yes, you do. You just can't use it to make fun of my Philadelphia accent.

2. Philadelphia Background

J: So you said that you have a typical Philadelphia background?

M: Philadelphians statistically tend to live in Philadelphia. They don't tend to move real far away. I don't know how true that is now, but fifteen years ago, it was a statistic that Philadelphians were among the most likely residents to stay sort of in their birth region. It's a very parochial kind of environment. I have to think of my classmates from high school that probably all live in the burbs, but they're still within an hour of where they were born and raised.

J: What was the neighborhood like that you grew up in?

M: It was row homes, each had 3 to 5 children. They were crowded little row homes, but the neighborhood was Irish Catholic and German Lutheran. They seemed to be predominant as I go up and down the blocks. The Catholics were all of Irish descent. There were a couple of Italians in the neighborhood, but not many. And there were a lot of Germans in the neighborhood who were mostly Lutherans.

J: Okay, and was your family typical of that? Did you have brothers and sisters?

M: I have four sisters and a brother. And my parents, my parents would describe themselves primarily as Irish Catholics, but they were both mutts. They had other nationalities in their background, but I was raised Catholic in that neighborhood.

J: What was your maiden name?

M: Salmon.

J: Salmon? .

M: Like the fish.

J: Okay, so S-A-L-M-O-N.

M: Right.

J: Was your family from that area as well? I mean your mom and dad.

M: No, my parents were from North Philadelphia. They had grown up in a parish called St. Edmund's the Confessor, which is down, I think it's closed now, but down 5th and Lehigh, that area. They had met at church. They were involved in some sort of theatrical group that the parish had. So that's how they met one another.

J: And around what age did they get married?

M: My father was 34. My mother was 21 when they got married. They had been engaged, and my mother would not get married until she could sign her own papers.

J: And how about your grandparents on both sides? Were they from the area, too?

M: Yeah, they were from that general region. I don't know a lot about my maternal grandfather's family. He had been in the circus. He was a ballroom dancer and stuff, but my grandmother was from that neighborhood. Her sisters and her uncles all lived in that region. She was first generation from Ireland. My grandfather was second generation, and he was a combination of Dutch, German and Irish. My father's side, they were both from Irish backgrounds, and they were both first generation as well.

J: What kinds of traditions do remember growing up as far as your family's concerned?

M: There were all kinds of traditions. My father played piano by ear, and part of his family tradition was music. Hence, my grandmother used to give piano lessons. She'd teach piano lessons in the neighborhood, and then, once or twice a season, they would open up the house, roll the piano out to the front porch, and my uncles played, you know, violins and fiddles and tubas and so, and they would have a block party. So music was a part of my family life always. We had music every night for an hour or two, and my father would play whatever we asked for in whatever key we wanted. We always had dinner together every night, which I think made him maybe not so rare in the neighborhood, but I remember knowing that we were lucky he was home every night for dinner. Christmas was wild, you know, because there were a lot of us, and we had a lot of big family meals where my mother would set the table and there would be twenty to people to start with. That's clear, and that was not just for occasions. That was not just the holidays. Once or twice a week, this aunt or that uncle would show up and a couple of their kids. Sundays we went to my maternal grandmother's house.

J: So it sounds like both your mom and your dad were also from rather large families as well?

M: Yeah, my father was one of four. My mother was actually only one of two, but her parents did not marry until they were in their 30s. The Depression, I think, probably changed things for them, too. My grandfather spent a lot of time looking for work, but my uncle, my mother's brother, had six children. We had six children. My father had two brothers and a sister. Now, one brother and one sister never had children, but my other uncle had nine children, and they lived in the same parish we did, so there was always that. And there were cousins and friends. My mom's very social, and my father was happy to let her be happy.

J: So did both of them work outside the home?

M: My father worked for the government. He worked for the Air Force. My mother worked once I was in high school. I'd say she went back to work after my youngest sister was born, and she was always a legal secretary. That was her background and that's what she did until she retired.

3. Educational Background

J: What was their educational background?

M: My father didn't graduate from high school. My mother graduated from high school and had a college scholarship that she turned down because she wasn't interested in any more school. So her background was, I think, she was always fairly literate. They both were readers. They were both pretty good readers. She had a real knack for the language. She has a real knack for using the language, and her law experience just sort of built on it so she always did well when she worked, but her interests were more homebound.

J: What were their attitudes towards your education and your family's education?

M: I didn't need more than high school. They were very clear that if I wanted to go to college, I had to do that myself and that really they didn't see a reason for it. And there's a very fundamental reason. My mother was making more than my father at that time. My sister who's behind me in age went out and got a job as a secretary and made more money than I did. My mother never understood what the investment would be. There was not a lot of support for it, but they didn't stand in my way. There just wasn't a lot of support for it.

J: What about your elementary and high school education?

M: That was my job. When you're a child, that was your job. Education was what you were doing, and that was your role in the world and you were to do everything you were asked to do perfectly. And there was never a lot of confusion about my opinion versus what a teacher would have to say. My parents were pretty clearly in the teacher's corner. Although, they were not as bad as my friends. I remember I had friends whose parents always believed the teachers. My parents always believed that there was something at the root of it, and they would ask, and then they would explain to me who had power, and I should sort of suck it up. I mean, they didn't use those terms, but that was, I was already very clear about that, and I can remember as a high school senior, my mom met one of my teachers who was really being a problem for me. It was really a problem for me, and I had never had a lot of problems with teachers. And she said, "Everything you said about Sister. I can't disagree with a single thing you said. She's still in charge, and you're going to have to learn to deal with her." And I remember thinking, that was a really good lesson because, you know, she wasn't going to go to bat for me. She understood my problems and that's life, you know. You're going to have a boss like that some day, too, so just deal with it. But yeah, my job was to get good grades period.

J: And outside of school, what kind of role were you expected to play? And also, what kind of activities were you involved in?

M: I did all the laundry for our family. That was my chore because I was good at that. That was the chore I did well, so I always did all the laundry for the eight of us. And I was responsible for my younger siblings; like taking them to the playground, making sure they came back in one piece, which was a lot harder than it sounds. And once a week, I walked everybody down to the library, and we got library books, walked back. And it was probably a mile or so, mile and a half, back down and then another mile and a half back. But those were our activities. We played on the block where we lived with the other girls that were the same age. One of my sisters decided she wanted to take tennis lessons, and we did that at the local playground. The sports programs were mostly geared towards boys at that point.

J: And later on in high school, what kinds of activities were you involved in?

M: I was involved in the shows. I was involved in the glee club. I was involved in the newspaper, worked a little bit on the yearbook, but I always wrote for the newspaper. I was in the math club. Those types of things.

J: And when you say shows, do you mean theater?

M: Theater shows. Dougherty had 6,000 students while I was there, and they used to have huge productions, you know, 200 kids in the cast, and we would do like *My Fair Lady* or *West Side Story*. They were really very important shows when I think about it now because we were living in a neighborhood where nobody would have [seen them]...They were good for us to learn how to be disciplined. The idea of putting 200 kids out was just more faith-based than realistic, but they always seemed to work. Lots of abilities, and if you were in band for half an hour, you stood for half an hour. But we had three or four shows a year, had like one big play and then a small play and we had two musical shows, so there was always something going on.

4. Catholic Background

J: Now the name of your elementary school was St. Hillary?

M: St. Helena.

J: St. Helena.

M: Yeah.

J: And then, you went on to Cardinal Dougherty?

M: Right.

J: Where did the commitment to Catholic education come from?

M: That was my mom. Although I think my father supported it, I don't think my father disagreed, but my mother just felt that it was really important that you have discipline in school and that you have a value-based education. And her faith's important to her. I always tell a story about being in church one Sunday all six of us or seven of us were in a pew and my father was the lector, and the priest said something my mom didn't like, she said "That's it!" And she got up and she escorted us all out of the pew, and I was

probably 17 or so because my youngest sister was born. And I remember thinking, "This is humiliating. I can't believe she's doing this." And later on, we waited in church. We went to the Sacristy. She yelled at the priest, and then we walked home, and I remember saying to her, "Mom, that priest." And she said, "Him? Oh, Marianne. He's just a man. He's not going to take my faith from me, but every once in a while, somebody has to straighten them out," and I remember thinking, that was like the first time anybody had ever explained to me that my faith was my responsibility, not something that somebody was going to give me. And that, in a faith, in a church, in any kind of organization, there will be people with whom you really don't agree, and that has nothing to do with your faith. That has to do with that person's interaction. That's a very interesting moment. It's so clear in my memory. So yeah, her faith life is very important, although she seldom goes a week without having something to say about some priest that said something she didn't like.

J: Very active, huh?

M: Yeah, well, she's outspoken. Yeah.

J: Did any of that rub off on you?

M: Yes, but not right away. I prefer not to be noticed. I prefer not to be talked to, so I mean it probably all rubbed off on me. Intellectually, it's part of how I look at things and how I stew about things. But I was not the outspoken child. She had other daughters to do that job, and I was comfortable in the background, but yeah, it, you know, I may not be as confrontational as she is. I still don't really enjoy confrontation, but I seldom let somebody do something unjust. The Brothers egged me on a little bit, too.

J: (Audible laughter.)

M: Seriously, I think the Brothers were a big part of how I developed the rest of my belief structure.

J: Okay, so you kind of factor your mother in as your big influence?

M: My mother gave me permission. My mother gave me permission to question the dogma in a Church that was very didactic, very top-down, you know sort of, I mean, I'm from Philadelphia, so we always had the pay to play kind of thing, but we also had a pay to pray kind of mentality here. You know, as long as you put money in the collection envelope, the priest would tell you what to do. She just never settled for that. That was just not good enough for her. She taught me to challenge that.

J: So thinking back to I guess your Catholic education, what role did that play in your life as far as did you enjoy it or was it a chore? How did you look at going through Catholic education?

M: I guess I enjoyed it more than anything else because I was good at it. I was good at school. I was quiet, and I was well-behaved. I hardly ever got in trouble. I got good grades, and so I excelled in some of the things. I was a lousy speller and that's very...I remember that so painfully clearly, but I was good at almost everything else, and so it gave me some sort of self-esteem. And of course, I didn't have any other model against which to measure it to me. That was how school happened. In our neighborhood, that

is virtually how school happened. I don't think I knew five publics my whole life, you know. They were all in the same school that I was in, so I didn't question it a great deal. You know, I used to rail against some of the discipline issues, and I think part of what bothered me was that some of the nuns knew what was going on. Some of them didn't. Some of them would let things happen in class as if they didn't understand that a child was persecuting another child. That used to bother me. I would come home and talk to my mom about that, but for the most part, school was very predictable, and I did well in that environment, so that was fine.

5. Math and Science Education: Boys vs. Girls

J: Did teachers acknowledge your aptitude and encourage you?

M: Yes. I remember a nun I had in eighth grade who was the first person to ever acknowledge that my math ability, while a little freaky, was something not to be ashamed of. I mean, that generation of women was encouraged to be literate not mathematical. The boys were mathematical. The girls were literate, and I struggled with literature. I would read everything that I was assigned to read, but I never got that third layer of interpretation. I could usually tell you the plot and because I couldn't spell, I was not a gifted writer. Spelling was so important, but I was good at math, and I was fast. I was quick, and I remember her encouraging me in math and science.

J: Who was this?

M: It was one of the sisters. Sister? I blanked on her name. I could look it up for you because I've written to her not that long ago, but she was a St. Joe nun. She'd teach us, you know. I would once in a while say, "Well, they're making fun of me." And she'd go, "Please!" You know. "They're just jealous. Get over it." You know this kind of thing, but she was very, very clear.

J: I heard you say that boys were promoted to be mathematical and scientific and...

M: That was an expectation that boys would be good at math.

J: Was that overt?

M: Yeah, I think it probably was. I read it, and I was not particularly clever that way. I think it was even more obvious in high school. One of the reasons that Central has girls there now is that the academic community had put more science things into Central than into Girls' High up the block, and the Girls that wanted to be scientists were at a disadvantage, but it broke the Trust for Central because it was important. I think it was a real societal norm, you know. I think that's what was expected, and you know, I was going to be good at baking, and I could be good at typing, but I wasn't necessarily going to be good at chemistry.

J: And how was that communicated to you? Was it very direct or was it more subtle than that?

M: I think it was probably subtle, but it couldn't have been too subtle or I wouldn't have picked it up at all because I was just looking for direction. You know, I was as a kid, so we were often encouraged. I remember when I was in AP Math, and they had to ask me

to not be in AP English, and it was sort of like, "My gosh, how can somebody not be in AP English?"

J: How come a young lady couldn't be?

M: Yeah. So, I remember thinking, "I'm just a failure at this. So what! It won't help me anyhow." I don't know what the allegory is. I knew who the person is that you call the protagonist. I know that guy, so it just, it seems like it was probably more overt because I don't think I would have picked it up otherwise.

6. Decision to Go to College

J: And when did you first think you were going to go to college?

M: Some time in the spring of my senior year of high school. It never occurred to me before that, and I had been discouraged by a couple of teachers from going to college. I remember one teacher in particular saying that "She wasn't college material." And I now understand that she was worried about my parents economically. They couldn't have afforded it, and why should I be having a pipe dream? You know, what I really needed to do was go out and help the family work and pay rent and stuff. It was about March or so that La Salle decided to go co-ed, and I took that as a sign because I had applied to Immaculata because the science teacher had encouraged me to do that, and I had been accepted and then, one of my girlfriends' parents drove the two of us out there to Immaculata, and I thought it was in the back of beyond. I had no idea how far away it was, and I had no way of getting there. I was going to be a commuter student. I didn't drive. My parents didn't have a car for me to drive. My parents had one car, but they needed that, and I remember thinking, "Well, I guess I'm just not going to be able to go to college." And then, I saw in the newspaper that La Salle was opening to girls, and I applied knowing that I could find my way to La Salle. It was just two buses from home. It wasn't that big of a deal, but I don't remember coming here before I enrolled. I don't have any recollection of a visit or anything. I think I just took it on faith. I do know that my parents did not want me to go to college, but my mother said if I insisted on going it had to be a Catholic university, and I think, at first, that may have been her way of trying to test me, see if I wanted it enough because it was going to be an ordeal for me to go to any other college. Chestnut Hill was possible but was really far away. That was not as convenient by bus as La Salle turned out to be.

J: How typical was it of your female peers to go on to college?

M: Well, I had spent all my career at Dougherty in the first track. I think every one of us went to college, but I would be surprised if the second, third or fourth tracks had anybody go. And, I know my sister did not go to college. My next sister went to nursing school. My next sister did go to college, but she knew what she wanted. She was an athlete, and so there was another connection there for her because by the time she got out of high school, I think the rumblings of Title IX were starting, so that would have given her a different entrée, but I would think for the girls at Dougherty when I graduated, I think maybe 25% of the class went to college.

7. Cardinal Dougherty

J: Now, I don't want to get ahead...I'm not from the area, so I'm not familiar with Cardinal Dougherty's history. Was it always co-ed?

M: It was always co-institutional.

J: Okay.

M: Up until the late eighties. It went co-ed in the late, mid to late eighties. But it was a relatively new high school. It's a huge physical plant. It was built probably in like the early sixties. But by the time I went there, they had a little bit of a reputation. They had a really good band, and their band had won some kind of a world competition the year or two before the year I got there. But there were 6,000 kids there, and they were for the most part from families where education was important and discipline was important and a lot of cohesiveness. They were from all different backgrounds and all different parts of the city for the most part, but really cohesive. I don't know how else to explain it, you know. You put 50 students in a classroom and you were pretty sure they were all going to behave. And probably sad, even more to the point. As a teacher, I love noisy classes. Well-behaved classes bother me. I'm worried that something else is going on. Not healthy.

J: When you say co-institutional?

M: There was a wall in the middle of the building. The northern half of the building was the boys and the southern half of the building girls. The only time that we spent together was during activities. Things like the shows or the newspaper. And in its own way, it was a really strange situation because most of the adults were uncomfortable with it, and girls did not really develop the social skills that they needed for interacting with boys, but they were in charge of their own side of the school, so it did give them chances at leadership.

J: It was always established to be that way from the beginning?

M: It was built that way from the beginning, yeah. And I think probably it was Cardinal Dougherty, the Cardinal of Philadelphia, at that point in time. He was probably smarter at real estate than anything. He bought some pretty interesting properties, but I think he needed to use the physical space for this population of students from a growing population in the northeastern part of Philadelphia, but he couldn't afford probably to build two schools. Though he also realized the schools that were popular were single sex at that point in time, so this was sort of a...

J: Your parents selected it mainly because of geography?

M: I think they moved there because it was there, but I'm not sure. Obviously, geography yeah, but I mean, I think they moved where they moved because there were schools there. That was an important part of what was going to happen to us growing up.

8. Choosing La Salle

J: So I guess March of your senior year, you hear that La Salle's going co-ed?

M: Right.

J: Before that, any impressions of La Salle whatsoever?

M: No, no, I mean I knew there was a basketball team here. And even that was, I mean, I knew there was one at Villanova, but I didn't know where Villanova was either, but no, I had never heard of the Christian Brothers before. I didn't know anything about them, but they were my ticket. It was a school that I could get to that had a Catholic background, and they accepted me. Very discriminating student. (Laughs.) My criteria were pretty low. "Yeah, they'll take me. I can go there."

J: And the fact that it had this long tradition of being all boys, did that have any affect on you?

M: No, largely because I didn't have a choice. And secondly, I had had enough all girl education in high school, and I knew that what I wanted to do I was probably going to have to deal with men, so in a really fundamental way, I was going to have to figure out how to do this anyhow. I didn't see it as a huge, scary thing. I just saw it as something I'd have to overcome. I hadn't learned yet that was exactly how it worked for me. I went from here to banking and was in a predominantly male department there, and I mostly worked in predominantly male departments. I did not come here well-prepared. I remember thinking, "I'm never going to make it because I'm too busy being nice and making sure nobody's mad at me," and that was not the dynamic in the classroom for the most part. Classroom arguments, and the men loved fighting with one another, which was not comfortable for me, but I loved it.

J: That confrontational aspect. You had to grow into that?

M: Yeah.

J: Did you have any peers from your area or neighborhood who came here with you?

M: (Laughs.) Yeah, I'd say about 50% of the kids from Dougherty who did go to college ended up here. It was like a graduate school for the high school. I mean it wasn't really, but I always had two or three classmates in almost every class that were from Dougherty. Usually men, usually guys I didn't know because they were on the other side of the wall, but yeah, there were quite a few kids from Dougherty here. And I had a couple girlfriends who started with me. One got married at the end of freshman year and worked so her husband could finish school, and the other one moved on campus, which was just staggering to me, like "Why is she or how could she do that?" because she was from the same kind of family I was from, but she decided to take loans to live in the dorms, but there's still people I'm in touch with, you know. There were a bunch of us from my track, like from the 13 girls that I was in class with every day for four years, who came here.

J: I'd like to get their names from you at some point.

M: Yeah, I can do that.

J: Maybe at some point we can do that. It's interesting to me that you found La Salle through the newspaper. No recruitment really on their part whatsoever. I guess once you got into the network and were accepted

M: Then, I spoke to my girlfriends, found out that they were kind of doing the same thing, and I don't know which came first. Did they show me the newspaper article? Did I find it? But we found our way here, and once we were here, I mean, the first semester here, I was a work-study student. I worked for Brother Patrick Ellis, but I was struggling financially, and I had another part-time job, too, so they offered me a part-time job in the bookstore where one of my classmates from Dougherty was working. The problem is they were all interested in the arts. You know what, the other thing is that I had forgotten is, I was sort of recruited because I had won a contest as a senior for theater, and Dan Rodden was trying to build the theater program here, so he also wrote to me and asked me to come. And he had promised me money, which I don't know that that money ever materialized. Oh, I know it didn't because I told him I wanted to be a chemistry major, and I had to be an English major to get the scholarship, so I didn't, you know...a little unpractical. But another connection here was Dan Rodden. He had sought me out. He wanted the guy that was in the play with me for sure, and then, because I won instead of the guy for this contest, he decided that he would take me as well.

J: Not to get sidetracked, but what was this contest?

M: It was a drama one-act play contest. They had the show at the Bucks County Playhouse. I think I won the Archdiocesan version and then, we went on to something else. The two of us went on to the next stage, but it was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* It was a four-person cast. What a bizarre play for them to have high school seniors doing? And you know, it was years before I figured out what the play was about, but I could understand how the character I was playing felt, but, you know, I had no idea about the subtext of the play. But the guys, that was the interesting thing about the shows is that the people that were responsible for the shows had a slightly more rebellious edge to them. They very seldom did the easy things. You know, when you're doing *West Side Story* in a school in Philadelphia, there's a lot more story than just the music, you know, and how do you get the students to deal with this? To some extent, they were very subtle about it. They didn't put a lot of "Let's reflect on this stuff." But nonetheless, I think that's how we all heard. We eventually could start to hear what the themes were.

8. Motivation for College

J: And what was your motivation for going to college? You said originally you wanted to be a Chemistry major.

M: Because I couldn't do the jobs that were open to women at that point in time. I didn't spell well enough to be a secretary. I was pretty sure I wasn't going to be very good at taking direction, and teaching, which I thought would be an absolute nightmare. I wouldn't want to do that. And then, nursing, which there's just no way I could have done nursing. So those were the opportunities that were open to me at that point in time. I had already been working different jobs. I had always worked part time since I was probably 15, and I knew what I liked to do and what I didn't like to do, and I wanted to have more control over my life. I mean, my mom was so bright but always worked for

attorneys who got to tell her what to do, and that always struck me as just frustrating. Why spend your life that way?

J: How did you view the world that was before you at age 18? As far as what possibilities?

M: Oh, I had no imagination for them. I only knew what I had read about. My father was a printer, and my mother was a secretary. Every once in awhile, I'd go down to the law firm where she was working, or for awhile, she worked for the City of Philadelphia in social services, but I had no imagination. I often think that in some very fundamental way the Brothers opened a door that I didn't even see. Doors that were hidden in the wall to me. You know, things that I could suddenly see. I mean, when I came in, I came in as a Chemistry major because I knew what a chemistry lab looked like because we had one at Dougherty. I had that kind of narrow-minded focus. I had no experience, and the people in my neighborhood were all very much like my parents. Only one guy that had a college degree, he was an accountant.

J: And not to be redundant, I guess, but where was this Chemistry degree going to take you?

M: I was going to work for Glaxo or Smith-Kline.

J: Okay.

M: I was going to work for a chemistry company. I was going to work quietly in the lab without any interaction with human beings. It was going to be perfect. (Laughs.) But I was not a natural at chemistry. I struggled like crazy with chemistry and ended up changing to math at the beginning of my junior year.

J: Okay, so it took two years?

M: Of chemistry.

J: Wow.

M: Two years of tenacious agony. Because I loved it. My problem was that I could never memorize the Periodic Table, and you needed to have that to do everything else, and I just was struggling, and I was working. I was working 40 hours a week minimum while I was going to school, so no, I probably was overcommitted in a variety of ways and having fun, too. There were people to see. I always liked being involved in stuff.

J: So the fall of 1970 is when you started here at La Salle?

M: Right.

J: How were you welcomed to campus?

10. First Days at La Salle

M: I have no recollection of a welcome at all. You know, I'm going to actually probably call one of girlfriends tonight to figure out what she remembers, but I just remember

going to Claude Demitras' chemistry class. That was my first class. I think it was on a Wednesday morning. I think we met, called roll, called us all Mister. Gosh, he was a wonderful teacher, vibrant and knowledgeable and awe-inspiring and very different. I mean, I had never had a male teacher before, so it was sort of a...and a [huge] classroom, which of course, now I know it wasn't, but it seemed like a huge classroom to me. You know, one of those tiered classrooms in Holroyd.

J: How many people were in the class would you say?

M: Well, probably 50. I'm not sure how many seats it holds, but the room was full. I remember we were split into lab groups, and there were two other women who were in that department with me and we took almost all of our chemistry classes together, the three of us, and I remember them clearly, too, for that same reason.

J: So, there were 50 in the room, 47 men and you three women?

M: Well, there might have been two other women I didn't get to know as well. Maybe, they weren't in my lab section, but yeah, the number was 10%. I think we were 10% of the freshman class. I'm not really sure. That's a statistic Brother Joe can give you. There weren't a lot of us, but there were probably proportionately more women in the School of Arts and Sciences in science than our teachers would have thought in high school because it was a fairly skilled group of women. Quite a few of them became doctors from this class, kind of driven, you know. They're going to change things, and things were changing, so medical schools were looking for women that were competent. A very interesting couple of years I think, probably more dynamic than I had any idea of when I was living it.

11. The Christian Brothers

J: So academically what were your experiences like? You said you had this professor who turned out to be wonderful, but like you said, you felt sorry for him because he, the first time he's teaching women in his career probably...

M: Yeah, and he was a Brother, so I mean, the reality was, you know, here was somebody who had taken vows to sort of eschew life with women, and all of a sudden, he's stuck with them anyhow. And I don't know why I knew this, but at some fundamental level, I understood that the school had to do this for financial reasons, for business reasons, not by choice, and I think that's a shame, when a school has to change who they are because they're trying to figure out how to survive financially, but he was just wonderful. I had a number of really good math professors. I had philosophy classes that were a battle for me, but I understood what they were trying to do. I just had no life experience to bring to the issues. I had never experienced evil for instance. I ran into somebody cranky and a little bit malicious, but I had no sense for that. I had been so protected, but I had English professors who were both frustrated and thrilled by me, and then of course, I did still go to classes with Dan Rodden's group, and those were fascinating classes because they were all so theatrical. and I had not been encouraged to be theatrical. I was in classes with people who thought nothing of screaming out and having temper tantrums. (Laughs.) It was like "Oh my God." If Sister so-and-so got her hands on you, you'd be dead, so it was just very interesting for me.

J: Based on your impression, how many Christian Brothers were teaching here at the time? How many of your professors would you say were Christian Brothers?

M: Religion and philosophy were always Brothers. Science was a Brother. Chemistry was a Brother. I'd say at least half, almost half anyhow. I don't think half the faculty were Brothers, but I seemed to trip over Brothers pretty often, but maybe a third of the faculty. The Brothers were a real force. I mean, there was a Brother President. There was a Brother Dean. There was a Brother Provost. There was another Brother Dean. The Admissions Director was a Brother. The Financial Aid Director was a lay man, but he reported to a Brother. They were an integrated group of administrators, and then, of course, there were quite a few of them in the classrooms as well. Foreign languages were mostly taught by Brothers.

J: What kind of charism did they bring to the setting?

M: Tolerance. I think the one thing I learned from the Brothers was they never tried to educate me in a mold that they had. Their whole model was to be tolerant of who I was and move me to my best version of me. And that has been consistent. I very seldom, I mean every once in awhile, I run across somebody call Brother Clinker, but by and large, you know, 99% of them all share that charism that they celebrate individuality. They tolerate people wherever they are, and they enjoy what they're doing. They're having fun, you know. They're just having fun. This is going to be fun. We're going to have a good time doing this. Brother Richard Hawley and Brother Claude Demitras were both science professors, and they both had such a joyfulness of life, but I can see it in Tom McPhillips is exactly the same spirit, and his shows up by playing in the band. He has an openness and a tolerance for young people that is priceless, and that's what I would experience. They may not have liked what I did, but I never doubt that they loved me. That is helpful when you're a kid and you don't even like yourself that much most of the time. That's very powerful. I did not find that it was explicitly Catholic, and so one of the things I had to do while I was here was make sure my parents didn't understand was that that was one of the rules, which of course shifted. By the time my fourth sister went to college, she went to Temple, and so did my fifth sister go to Temple. Apparently, the rule only applied to me, but I remember one point in time having a conversation with my mother, and she said, "What are they teaching you over there?," you know, "That's not how you should question the Catholic faith." And I'm thinking, "You're in a fine position to throw that rock at me, mom." They were not explicit about Catholic dogma, except in the religion classes, but they were very, very explicit about human values and the need to be responsible to other people.

J: So you didn't feel a sense of proselytizing here?

M: No, never.

J: What about Campus Ministry?

M: Yeah; I went to mass, and the masses were so much more fun than anything I had ever done in the Catholic church in Philadelphia. They were open. They were our church. We were responsible for things.

J: Okay, so when you say that, you mean the students?

M: Uh-huh. And I think that's still explicit. That's a real decision they make is to make it the students' responsibility to find their faith, to choose their faith, to choose the music. I remember it as being almost a sit-in or something. There was such a communal quality to it rather than a structured quality. It wasn't canon law. It was human beings. That to me was always powerful. Coming to mass here was great, and I kind of remember because they had midnight mass on Saturday night. My sisters and I would come, and so my one sister has...My memory is not strong, which makes this, you know, great for you. I don't have really clear memories. I don't remember things real well. My next sister in age is really good at that. She would talk about, "Don't you remember when we used to go to such-and-such a mass because that guy was so cute?" We'd try to get there so that we could sit behind him during mass, and that was never my reason. I just didn't want to get up early on Sunday morning, but it was very popular. There was never a seat empty, but that was at a time when I guess people didn't worry so much about being out at midnight, you know. We were almost all commuters, but we'd come here on Sunday for church, Saturday night for church.

J: You said it was almost like a sit-in experience in some ways.

M: Because I was so young.

12. Atmosphere of the Early 1970s

J: So being 1970, what would you say the overall atmosphere on this campus was?

M: It was a place to talk. It was a place to think and talk and decide and discuss. The first person with clerical status that I ever heard make a comment about the war in Viet Nam was Brother Daniel Burke down at, I think at the White House, and I remember thinking we didn't make any kind of political commentary. I've often thought of that since. The Separation of Church and State was taken by too many Catholics as a way of dodging being responsible for making choices, and I never had that here. I mean here the Brothers were arguing about it. They had different points of view on the war. But they never had different points of view on the men because we had a lot of returning veterans, and even the Brothers who were very anti-war were never anti-men, never anti-soldiers. It was always about the battles, and I remember having to think about that because I had never been taught to question the government. We could trust that. So yeah, there was a lot of active discussion, and you would know that there were people on this campus who were furious about things with people that weren't furious. And they were furious because the other person wasn't furious, and yet, they were so collegial with one another. Bert Strieb is still an activist for anti-war, and I had him for physics. I mean, imagine meeting Bert Strieb for the first time when everybody else you ever had wore habits. They were all nuns, and then, I met Bert. I was like, "Wow!" It's like in that way. I mean, it was very upsetting because it was confrontation, you know. It was not only making me confront other people, but I was having to confront my own value system, but that's how you grow up.

J: Where did all these interactions take place?

M: In the Union. Pretty much in the Union.

J: This building (points out the window at the Union building) the way it exists now?

M: Not the way it exists now. I mean there was a cafeteria, but the Ballroom had tables and chairs and we would sit in the Ballroom and talk. Of course, most of it happened in class. Our professors would start a conversation. I remember Bernie Blumenthal in my German class starting a conversation in German about the efficacy of the Viet Nam war, and in the class, there were idiots like me. There were people like my husband who spoke fluent German. That was his first language, and there were kids in ROTC. Some of whom also spoke German, but it was like a cacophony of emotions, and I remember the one young man telling a classmate that he was an idiot and the war was just because he was in ROTC, and I remember because my sentence structure and all was such a nightmare, and I said to him, "But I still hope you feel that way when you come home in a box." Then, after I said it, I felt guilty about saying it to him. It's an emotion I can still feel. I can even see the room that we were sitting in. So a lot of it happened in class, but we also had discussions in the Union Ballroom, which was sort of a lounge area for us, and then I was still involved with the Masque, so needless to say, there were discussions about everything in the Masque, too. I worked for the Collegian, but I don't really remember, but I remember being in those kinds of conversations as well. But I mean, we were commuters, so once you got here in the morning, you filled the day by drinking coffee. Dottie would wait on you. I remember thinking Dottie was so old then, but my golly. No sense of reality when you're 18.

J: So your experience here as a commuter student, was it any different than—how many people commuted? How many people lived on-campus? Just from your memory.

M: I'd say 80% of the students commuted. It's almost the reverse of what it is now. Most of us commuted. The residents were sort of a foreign species. They were from Pittsburgh most of them. I'm sure that's not true, but I always thought they were from Pittsburgh because that's where the Brothers had another school, and you could tell because instead of saying, "Broad and Allney," they'd say, "Broad and Oliney," so you knew they were foreign. Yeah, most of us were commuters. I remember one time staying over in the dorm because I was late getting a lab report. My lab partner and I were struggling with a lab report, and I stayed with her in the dorm, but there was only one floor of all the dormitories that had girls in them. Though they had the six dorms, you know, Albert, E, F, and they had one floor. That's all the women who were living on campus.

13. Integrating Women into the La Salle Community

J: How intentional did the Brothers and the administrators here go about trying to integrate women successfully into La Salle? How intentionally did they do that?

M: I have no way of knowing that. I couldn't even guess. I mean, truthfully, I think they just...I had a number of professors that had to tell a joke. They didn't know how to address people. I never got that from the Brothers. I mean after that first day when Brother Claude called me Mr. Salmon, he then started to call me by my nickname, and he figured out everybody's nickname in the class. He gave them all nicknames. I was always that person instead, and so that was...I felt the Brothers did it the way they knew how, which was to treat one student and gender wasn't important, and of course, there were all kinds of physical issues. They decided to open to women. There was one toilet in this building (College Hall), but only the secretaries, I think, had a key for that. One in Holroyd, and then there was a ladies' room in the Union. Like stupid things and so the ladies' room in the Union became a place where we met, where the girls would sit and

we would have lunch there and stuff because unless there were 10 of you, going to the cafeteria was a little too scary. Yeah, it was just, you know. We had all come from single sex high schools, and I think most of us trusted our intellect, but we knew we didn't have any...

J: So interacting with men here, how did that go for you?

M: I just did it intellectually for the most part. I interacted with the guys in class. I had, when I was working for the campus store, which was the job that I took during my sophomore year, and that's actually, that's what facilitated me graduating. There were a lot of work study guys. So I mean, I would interact with them, but most of my interactions with guys were in class, you know, given a choice I'd...but you figured it out, you know. The first semester was scary. The second one wasn't so bad. By the third or fourth semester, you figured out that in every class, there would be one guy that was going to give you a hard time just because you're a woman, and there was one guy that was going to be nice to you just because you're a woman. Neither one of them was really somebody that was going to be of use to you, and so you had to figure it out.

J: How do you think the men perceived it?

M: I think the upper classmen perceived it as a betrayal of the contract they had made with the university in many cases. I think they felt like, you know, now they're going to have to dress better, and they were going to have to behave better, and it was just a hassle. And then, the other problem was that the women they admitted that first year were academically significantly stronger than the men. So now, they were going to have to compete for grades with people they hadn't had to compete with before, which is interesting, too. But there were a number of guys, I mean they were 20-year-old guys, so there were a number of guys that saw this as an opportunity. At least they wouldn't have to drive all the way up to Chestnut Hill to get a date, you know, so it ran the gamut.

J: A utilitarian value as well. (Both laugh.) You mention the Christian Brothers and their stance towards women or their approach. But you also mention lay people maybe not taking it as well.

M: I think some of the lay people had a harder time. I mean, I had a professor, and this is an old story. Everybody's told this story already, but I had a professor who used to say there's no place in his lab for a woman, except at the sink washing glassware, and although that sounds like a pretty funny line, I don't think he was kidding, and none of the women in his class felt he was kidding. And I've talked with him about it since then, and I think it was just, he was just unnerved by it more than anything else. He had not taught women. He had never taught women. He didn't understand us, and when you're 18, you think everybody's equal, and I now know that's not true. You know, there are a lot of gender differences, but some of the lay teachers had a hard time. Others didn't care, but some of them really had a hard time. They were academics, and academics are, in my mind anyhow, active, but they're not really social creatures. They're better alone in a library, and then to force them to take the one place where they have absolute comfort and turn it into a more social environment for them. That is difficult, and I don't think the Brothers ever did anything to inculcate that. I don't think that every crossed their minds because I watch how the Brothers deal with one another even on campus. They love one another, but they're not particularly attentive. I can't imagine that they had a special seminar or something where all the laypeople could feel comfortable.

J: Any other anecdotes that you can remember as far as maybe not the nicest of...

M: Yeah, I had a computer science professor who asked for a woman's opinion on the topic every day, and I was the only female in the class, and it was like every day, and I was also lost in the class. I was struggling with the material, and in the beginning, the guys all thought it was funny, but after awhile, even they kind of felt sorry for me. And what happened was I ended up always having my homework done, which was probably good, and being that I always had someone helping me with homework because they were embarrassed that I was embarrassed, you know. And this was another guy that I've since come to know as a really nice guy before he retired anyhow. I can't help but think that he must have gotten a course evaluation the semester before where somebody said... You know, those course evaluations are really, really damaging to the psyche if you pay attention to them, and he may have just been trying to make sure that nobody...

J: So you were put on the spot for five minutes of every class?

M: In a way it was perfect because when I went into banking, it was more of the same and of course, the stakes were much higher there. They did give me a skill set.

J: How much did it affect the culture here to have women join the campus would you say?

M: I don't know. I don't know what it was, so it's hard for me to compare. I don't think women joined the campus. We were just integrated, and then, if we had a particular interest, they would let us develop that interest. I remember the beginning of the sports teams. It was like, "Oh, you guys want to play basketball?" Yeah, something about the A-10, not the A-10, Title IX, "I guess, I guess we could do that," you know. It was like the same 20 girls played all the sports because they were the only ones that were athletic, but they put up with certain things, but I think we also integrated differently. I don't think most of us would consider ourselves women's libbers. We were just pretty independent, but I don't think we came to La Salle to change the world and to get our rights back. I think we wanted an education, and that may have looked like women's lib to the men, but my perception of most of the women I knew, it was there way of just getting their own.

J: So did women form any kind of social groups just for women? Or try to integrate into...

M: Probably. Well, we tried to integrate, but as I said, we always used to hide in the ladies' room, so there was a certain amount of that. But I don't remember any women's groups early on. There probably were, but I wasn't in a building where there were a lot of women. I was with the science majors, and the science majors were definitely trying to integrate. They wanted to get into graduate school or law school, medical school rather. They didn't really have an interest in being, you know, they wanted to be the scientist, but I think maybe there was a Women's Studies program developed some time while I was a student here. There were a couple women faculty that were really big on women's issues. Probably the women faculty were more interested in the female issues.

J: So how many women faculty would you say you had or interacted with while you were here?

M: I never had any female faculty members because they were teaching primarily English. I'll go through my yearbook, but I can't think of any female faculty members, and I was avoiding English because I was taking science. I had a class in "Voice and Body," so that was basically singing and dancing. I had a class in set design and hanging lights. I could do that. I just couldn't, you know, figure it out...or even worse poems. I had one poetry class with Jack Seydow. He was a great guy. He was probably one of my favorite people on campus. Poetry is a nightmare for me.

J: So overtly, you don't really remember much in the way of, I guess, what we'd consider feminism?

M: No, no, I was raised in such a female household that my mother always sort of imparted to us that feminism in a certain way could be a step backwards. Equality was not something that we should ever be willing to...Equality was...I guess it sounds strange, but there was a level of militant feminism that was trying to rewrite the world, and my mom was just trying to say you get what you need. It should be equal. You should never be denigrated because you're female, but to put a label on something, that this is the way that females would want it, that's ridiculous. The idea of feminism just never appealed to me as an ideology...Just don't get in my way. (The VCVA function really botched this response.)

14. Relationships with Teachers

J: It seems like your most vivid memories come from your interactions with Christian Brothers. At least, that's what I've heard you say...

M: Yeah, but I mean, I had a couple of Math professors that were breathtakingly wonderful to me. I had Sam Wylie, for I don't know, maybe four or five classes, and I used to have a problem when I got really, really nervous. Actually, I still have to worry about it. My blood sugar falls. It's like a stress-related thing, and so for exams, I would frequently get to class all wired, put my name on the front page of the blue book, and then, sort of, fall asleep. I can remember Sam kicking my chair to make sure I stayed awake. There were many, many teachers who significantly changed my view of the world by helping me see their image of me. Anyways, that's how I feel about teaching. I mean, I teach because I think it's just so exhilarating to be the person that holds the mirror up and helps a young person see their potential instead of seeing their flaws. People are really good at telling you their flaws rather than what the possibilities are. That's a blast. That's what the teachers here did for me.

J: How did they go about doing it? How were you able to form such powerful relationships with them?

M: I guess I was just pitiful. In some cases, I was, and I was also here on campus a lot. My sophomore year, I lost my financial aid, and I never found out until years later that it was because my sister had gone out to work, and when they turned in the income tax statements, and she was still a minor, her income was the family income, and she was making a lot of money. She was very successful right out of high school, so I lost my aid and I was working so hard anyhow. I decided that it really made no sense for me to

keep this up this way. I took a full-time job as the secretary/bookkeeper in the campus store, and I went to class at night. I switched to night school, and that's why I had to switch out of chemistry because I was still going to stubbornly get a degree in chemistry. I was being absolutely bull-headed about it, but they didn't offer labs at night at that point in time. There was something wrong with the scheduling. They couldn't offer labs. That's why I switched to math, and I remember Brother Claude telling me that everything that the nuns said about me was true, and I was never going to make it. I wasn't going to graduate. The nuns were right, and oh God, I was so hurt and so furious, and I'd hike up to his office every semester because he was still my academic advisor, and I'd show him my transcript, and he'd say, "Ahh, so you got by another one." When I graduated, he took me to dinner. He took me and another woman to dinner. He took the two of us to dinner, and thinking back on it now, it must have been such a challenge for him to do that. The clerics were not welcome in restaurants with women. That's not something that happened, but he took the two of us to dinner to congratulate us for graduating, and at that dinner, I said to him, "Why were you so hard on me? You know, I really could've used encouragement. Instead, you were always really hard on me." He said, "Ahh, you were so pathetic, that if I gave you even a window"...I can't take credit for the relationships that I built. Every single one of those teachers...Sam Wylie figured out why I was sleeping during tests, about how hard poetry was for me and found a way to make me excited about it, and Sid MacLeod taught me how to use a T-square, and Brother Albright taught me that the right answer isn't necessarily in...All those little lessons that I learned on my way through, it was because the teachers treated me...You know, I didn't back up. Every once in a while I'd ask for help, but for the most part, it was because of their appetite for helping change a life. Powerful stuff, you know, at least from my perspective. (The VCVA function really botched this response.)

J: How did things change here after more and more women came in? Did you notice anything different?

M: I think it just got to be more comfortable. I mean, it was just more comfortable. The first year I was one of two women in virtually every class, and by the time I was a senior, there were only two of us as math majors maybe, but there were very few places on campus where you would walk in and you would notice that there was just too much testosterone in the room. It wasn't that palpable anymore. There was so much change in the society around us and in politics around us that I think that this was actually a safety zone in a very fundamental way because conversation was always encouraged and disagreement tolerated, and there were too many other places in the world where that still wasn't true about what you needed to say. You had to be open to somebody disagreeing with you.

15. History of the Early 1970s

J: I guess without reading a laundry list of "in 1970 this happened, and in 1971 this happened." What were the major societal or historical things that you remember?

M: Well, the Viet Nam War was a huge issue. There were also campus issues. There was a lot of discussion about the gay and lesbian movement, and then of course, you counteract that with the fact because there was an organization called SIR, I think, Students...An acronym I'll have to see if I can figure out what it was. A student organization for homosexual men, primarily, because that would be the population, and then counter to that, the fraternities one day sat out front and held up cards with

numbers on it to rate the girls walking by, which was not particularly politically correct, but pretty funny. As a female, it was like, "Oh God, these guys are such pigs. I can't believe they're discriminating against us." You could have those kinds of conversations, but there was a part of me that thought it was pretty funny anyhow because they weren't the kinds of guys you needed to be worried about. And then, the sports teams, the soccer team started to have some predominance in the city. And the Soccer 7, which was always a competitive mix, sort of like the Big 5, but for soccer teams. The basketball team was doing well, but the war was a big part of it, and then, I guess towards the very end, there was...I don't remember when the Nixon thing fell apart because I don't remember. You know that's one of my flaws, but women's lib and the war and sort of a shift from a conservative "Leave It To Beaver" kind of household to more dynamic things. And then there was the Black Power movement. It was very predominant then. We had a number of students of color on campus. We had a number of students on campus who were very verbal, a very different kind of person than I had met. I mean, there had been black kids in my high school. That was always true, but these people were more militant, and I remember that was the first time I had to deal with feeling guilt about the issue of racism because I had never known that I had problems with racism. There's actually a woman in the neighborhood I still see who was a classmate... Sometimes, I worry that we're kind of trapped in time, and then, other times I realize that in the classrooms, students are being pushed, but sometimes in the dorms I think students are living...

J: Elaborate on that a little more for me.

M: We have a group of students in Kentucky this weekend doing Habitat work, Habitat-type work with a community in Africa, and we'll have students go to Mexico or whatever, but they're a minority, and it's the same 20 students. It's like the women's athletic teams when I was a student here. We still have an awful lot of students that are on cruises this week, and although they would never do anyone any harm, I don't know how much energy...I worry about that. I think that they're being called to do it. I think that we're pretty explicit about what we think are the relationship between economic opportunity and your responsibility...But I still think we could push more, and I often felt that when I was a student here we could have made significantly more progress against racism than we did. (The VCVA function really botched this response.)

J: Sounds like a good place to stop for today.

M: Okay.