

Interview of Brother Joseph Grabenstein

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History 650 - Oral History Theory and Practice

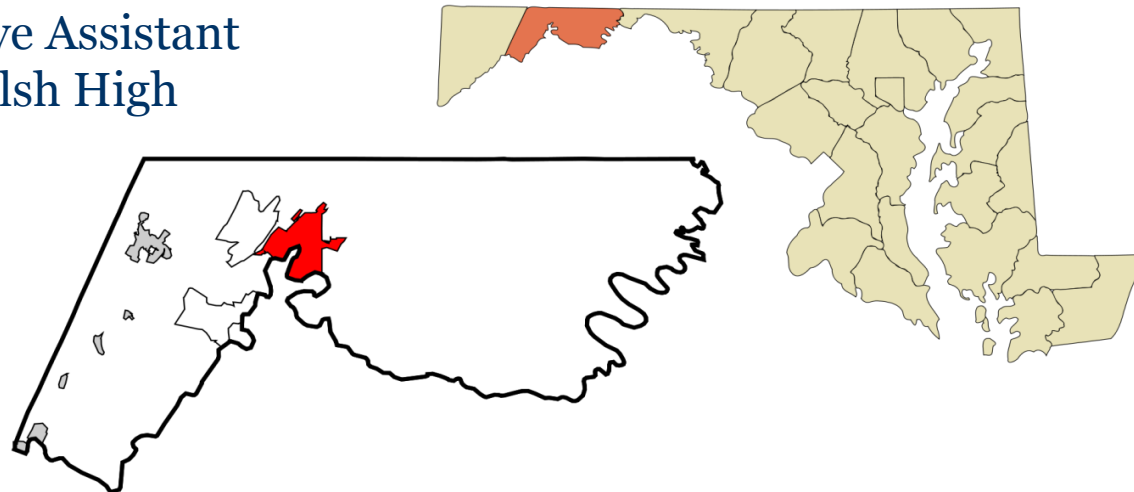
April 16, 2013

Born: January 6, 1950
Cumberland, Maryland

Parents: Herman Grabenstein Jr.
Irene (Ley) Grabenstein

Father's Occupation: Assistant
Manager at S. T. Little
Jewelry Store

Mother's Occupation: Homemaker,
Secretary at La Salle High
School
Administrative Assistant
at Bishop Walsh High
School



- Attended St. Peter and Paul Parish School taught by Sisters of St. Ursula
- Graduated: Bishop Walsh High School in 1968
- Attended novitiate in Ammendale, MD for one year
- Came to La Salle College was known as a scholastic
- Lived in the Brothers' Residence at Elkins Park
- Joined the History Club
- Graduated in 1973 with Bachelor's Degree in History

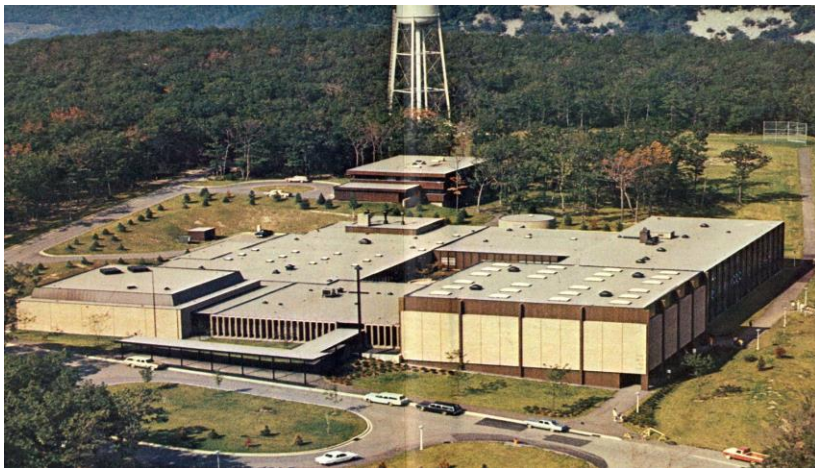


Joseph Grabenstein



- Calvert Hall in Towson, MD for six years (1973-1979)

- St. John's College High School in Chevy Chase, D.C. outside Washington for 7 years (1979-1986)



- Bishop Walsh High School in Cumberland, MD (1986-1991)



- Master of Library Science from University of Maryland, College Park
- Assistant Archivist: 1992 to 1994 under Brother Thomas Warner
- Head Archivist: 1994 to present
- 11 to 12 hours dedicated to work

What to collect?

Does it mention La Salle, if so, it fits!

How to acquire items?

Ask the staff or administration
Collecting things that could be trash
Purchasing items on eBay
Taking pictures

Preservation?

Acid-free paper
Stainless-steel paper clips and staples
68 degrees with 50 percent humidity
Special lighting to block ultraviolet light

2007 Explorer Yearbook Dedication



"Brother has afforded me the chance to not only learn about La Salle, but to share it with other generations."



Brother Joseph Grabenstein

Deep in the lower level of College Hall sits a man with 130-plus years of history, man who artfully arranges and carefully maintains the wealth of documents recording important and unimportant events of life at La Salle, a man who is dedicated to not only his job but to the La Salle community as well. It is because of this deep passion and caring that the 2007 *Explorer Yearbook* is dedicated to Brother Joseph Grabenstein.

"The history of La Salle University is inextricably intertwined with the dedication and passion of Brother Joseph Grabenstein," said Suzanne Guerin, a senior Public Administration major who worked in the Archives with Brother Joe.

Anyone who has ever had a question about La Salle's history is sure to have met him. Lucky are the people who have had the pleasure to sit even five minutes in his company and hear him regale students of La Salle's past to curious students and staff.

"Brother Joe is La Salle...he embodies the spirit and nostalgia of the school, not only because he collects it, but because he acts upon it. He allowed me to share in the La Salle experience more than I ever thought I would when I first came to La Salle," said Tim Smalarz, a senior History major who worked on a documentary with Brother Joe.

As archivist, Brother Joe is responsible for keeping track of every event that has ever taken place at La Salle as well as maintaining the archives for the La Salle Christian Brothers. Organization is key for a man like Brother Joe; it is no easy task storing and keeping track of such a large amount of information in such small quarters.

Brother Joe became interested in history at a young age, growing up in Cumberland, Maryland. He joined the Christian Brothers two weeks after graduating high school. His first love is teaching; he taught junior high for 18 years before taking the position of assistant archivist in 1992. He took full control of La Salle's archive department two years later.

"Brother Joe to me is La Salle. For the past 3 years, I have had the honor to work with one of the kindest and most dedicated human being to their job. I could never imagine my La Salle experience without Brother Joe in the picture," said Nick Smalarz, a senior who also worked in the Archives. "We have worked together on so many great projects. We spent one whole summer together, working on the documentary *Together We Remember: The Legacy of La Salle*. I know that for years to come, Brother and I will stay in touch and head out to Chubby's every once and awhile to enjoy a nice pizza steak. As the both of us would say jokingly, 'Get your own.'"

The Smalarz brothers worked with Brother Joe and fellow student, Suzanne Guerin, to create a documentary explaining La Salle and making incoming students feel like they are a part of La Salle's history. Nick and Brother Grabenstein compiled over 200 hundred pictures and documents and turned them over to Tim, Nick's twin brother, who edited them with the film footage shot by the Smalarzes. Brother Grabenstein and Suzanne wrote the script for the documentary and Brother Grabenstein narrated.

"As graduation approaches, I cherish every time I run into him down in the archives or on the quad as he lugs something across campus," Tim said. "Brother has afforded me the chance to not only learn about La Salle, but to share it with other generations. I am greatly indebted to him for everything he has done for me and my family. God bless you Brother Joe."

Many people in the La Salle community depend on Brother Joe for information and for friendship.

"The one thing that I will miss the most from La Salle is Brother Joe and working for him down at the Archives. Brother Joe is not only my boss but he is my friend for life," Nick said. "Life at La Salle could have been different if I had not walked down to the Archives during a clear sunny September day of my sophomore year to ask if there were any job openings. To me, Brother Joe is La Salle!"

"Brother Joe is not only my boss but my friend for life"



"To me, Brother Joe is La Salle"



Words of Wisdom from Brother Joe

His famous 11 words that he begins and ends every presentation with:

“You are an important part of something much bigger than yourselves.”

