

**Interview of Brother Edward Sheehy, F.S.C.
By Lauren De Angelis
La Salle University
March 23, 2012**

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De Angelis: Today is Friday, March 23, 2012 and I am interviewing Brother Edward Sheehy for the third time—fourth time, correction. And can I ask for your permission to interview you today, Brother Ed?

Sheehy: Yes.

De Angelis: Thank you. Last time we talked a little about your early career and you getting your Ph.D. Today, I want to discuss a little bit more about your professional career. We talked about Saint Gabe's and Calvert Hall last time. What positions did you have after Calvert Hall?

Sheehy: After Calvert Hall, I went to—I moved to St. John's in Washington. And that's where I went to GW and worked as a Teaching Assistant there for two years then I had a Naval History Fellowship for the third year to work on the dissertation. The fourth year, while I was writing the dissertation, I was what would be I guess the Administrative Intern. I was learning how to be an administrator. And I also taught a class and I was a Director of Admissions in the National Honor Society and obviously involved in the sports programs too.

De Angelis: So how did you get the internship?

Sheehy: The Brother in charge, the provincial, he asked me if I would be willing to do that. At first, they wanted me to go to Jersey City to do it because I think that's where they—that's where I eventually end up being an assistant principal. But he then asked me if I would stay at St. John's and I said, "Yes, I would." I was—I would have been fine either place.

De Angelis: So you didn't seek this internship out?

Sheehy: No, I did not.

De Angelis: Did you ever think about becoming a principal/administrator?

Sheehy: No, I did not.

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De Angelis: So, why did you take the job?

Sheehy: Because I felt it was part of that vow of obedience and also when somebody asks you, a provincial asked you to do something, and also because I thought you never know if you have the talent until you try it. And so I decided to try it and I had suspicions that maybe I'd be a better vice principal than principal. Although that's my perception but I'm not sure what's the perception of everybody else.

De Angelis: So this internship was actually to get you to become a principal and not a vice principal?

Sheehy: No, an Assistant principal. First assistant principal in Jersey City and then principal in Pittsburgh.

De Angelis: And while at St. John's, what were the responsibilities during this internship?

Sheehy: Well as I said, I taught a course. I was the Director of Admissions, which really had me on the road a lot going to different schools and talking about St. John's, showing a film about St. John's. I also moderated the National Honor Society, which actually was fairly busy. And then I was working on writing the dissertation. So it was a pretty busy operation.
[cough]

De Angelis: And why did you leave St. John's?

Sheehy: Well, I left St. John's because the Provincial, the Brother, the Director of Education, asked me if I would be assistant principal in Jersey City. And so at that point, I thought I could finish the dissertation on the fly while being an assistant principal and so that's when I went to Jersey City.

De Angelis: And was St. John's a single gender school?

Sheehy: It was and at that time, it was the largest JROTC Program in the country.¹
All of the students wore uniforms and the school name was the Cadets

¹ Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

and it was a regular high school, but it was also what they— as I said participating in JROTC Program.

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De Angelis: So would your Provincial have—would he have asked you to go had you still been working on classes in your Ph.D.?

Sheehy: Probably not. Probably not. They're really, as I said, very, very supportive of pushing education and making sure you have the time and the resources in order to deal with it.

De Angelis: Okay. And from going to St. John's you go to Jersey City?

Sheehy: Seventy-seven ('77) to eighty-three ('83), yes.

De Angelis: Okay. And what was your title there?

Sheehy: Assistant Principal for Academics.

De Angelis: And while you were in Jersey City, what was some of your responsibilities?

Sheehy: Well I basically kept charge of the curriculum. I designed the schedule. I did the rostering. I met with Department Chairs. I helped the principal in hiring. I also did the admissions again so those were the kinds of things, it would be typical of an Academic Assistant Principal.

De Angelis: And do you think that internship had prepared you for all the responsibilities?

Sheehy: Obviously didn't prepare for all of them but it certainly prepared me in a good overview. I was very fortunate to have some very good administrators at St. John's who helped to give—and an excellent principal at Hudson—to give me a very good immersion into being an administrator.

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And the assistant principal at Hudson was very helpful to me in terms of setting up the intricacies of rostering cause this was all being done primarily by hand in terms of making up the roster and things.

De Angelis: Oh, this is before computers, yeah.

Sheehy: Well I mean computers were used to generate class lists but in terms of generating a roster it was basically in my mind.

De Angelis: And this was Hudson Catholic High School, correct?

Sheehy: Single at that time, single sex high school in Jersey City.

De Angelis: And what kind of school was it? Was it urban?

Sheehy: Very urban, very urban. Jersey City is one of the most densely populated if not the most densely populated cities in the country. Very vibrant. Lots of languages spoken on the street without hearing English. At one time we were thinking of putting little flags in the gym representing each of our student's countries and we stopped counting at thirty-eight and figured if we put up thirty-eight, we'd missed somebody and they might not be happy campers, so we didn't do it. But it was a real ethnic—it was extremely diverse and a lot of Italian young men, lot of Filipinos, but a very, very—you know Latinos— but very, very much a mixture. Very much a microcosm of almost the United Nations.

De Angelis: And did you ever think it was a dangerous area, the school?

Sheehy: No, it was never—we often talked about this and joked, it was never what happened, it's what might have happened. But no, no. And I was never—never felt that way and again as I said, it was very vibrant. Sometimes when I remember a soccer game, we were playing against a local rival that degenerated into a fight. I went out on the field to break it up. I'm pulling these kids off each other and they're chatting in Korean and Arabic and every other language in the world, most of which I hadn't a clue what they were about. But it was really good and it was also a school, which I think St. La Salle would be extremely proud of. I mean I think he'd be proud of all our schools but for most of these kids, they didn't have a lot of options. There was a Jesuit High School in town but

that tended to draw people from the surrounding counties and tended to be kind of a more – want of a better phrase “elite school.” We—I think of the entire eight hundred and sixty kids we had, we had like one lawyer among the parents. This is a very policemen, firemen, barbers, store owners come in paid the tuition in cash each month. So, it was—it really was a place very dear to my heart because again, it was very much what a Brother’s school should be.

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De Angelis: And so you would say it was a middle class?

Sheehy: Middle, but certainly not high. Certainly not elite by any stretch of the imagination. Middle to lower middle. [cough]

De Angelis: Do you remember how much the school charged for tuition?

Sheehy: No, actually I don't. I don't remember what it was. It didn't—Actually the school is very young. The school was only opened in sixty-four ('64). So we were really within the first twenty years of the school's existence. But I don't remember. But whatever it was, it was a real reach for the parents.

De Angelis: Yeah, would you ever turn students away who couldn't pay?

Sheehy: We would always give students a chance but ultimately we had to collect tuition. So sometimes people couldn't take it up, so they had then transferred. But of course we couldn't give up the transcript until they had paid their—paid back tuition. So it was difficult. It was—it didn't—I don't remember it being as difficult as Central was. But then again, the principal took care a lot of the money issues.

De Angelis: And you were just the assistant principal so you didn't really handle that?

Sheehy: No—generally, I did not. I mean sometimes I did but generally, I did not. That was his bailiwick, his responsibility.

De Angelis: And would you say that the students at your school, since you were Head of Academics, do you think that they were strong students?

Sheehy: It was a mix. Our better kids, our honors kids could basically play with anybody. There were a lot more in the middle, a lot more in the middle. It

was a good school but the better students would go to places like Stevens Institute, Stevens Tech in Hoboken. Lots of them went to St. Peter's, which was literally a block up the street. It would make sense for them to do that. Sometimes a kid would go to Rutgers.² Sometimes they'd go to Columbia, but most of the time, they stayed pretty local.

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De Angelis: So community colleges, would you say?

Sheehy: Community colleges, but also four year colleges like St. Peter's and Stevens and occasionally Seton Hall, for example.

De Angelis: Okay. And as you were doing your admission duties, you taught classes also?

Sheehy: Only in an emergency. Sometimes faculty would leave at odd times. That occurs all the time in high school. I remember one semester I taught Management and Marketing or Management for a semester. Talk about staying a page ahead of the kids. At other times I would teach or I taught Religion for a little bit. I taught History for a little bit. So I could pretty much plugged in the hole if somebody left. And it was something that I had a shot at. You know, if didn't have a shot—but in Management, at least on the high school level, it had a lot of common sense to it. So I basically did that.

De Angelis: Do you think that you missed teaching? That was a major part of your life prior to this.

Sheehy: I did miss teaching very much but one of the advantages of being the assistant principal, particularly Academics, is you basically have a handle on everybody in the school. One of the best things about it was I had the advantages of being a teacher without teaching because kids changed schedules this, that I really had—of the eight hundred and sixty-three kids in the school, I had a pretty good handle on most of them because of that job.

² Saint Peter's College is a four year college located in Jersey City New Jersey. Rutgers University is located in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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De Angelis: And do you think that they respected you?

Sheehy: Yes. I think they very much appreciated, very much appreciated what the school offered. And I think—and by and large, they responded the way we wanted them to respond. They conducted themselves the way we wanted them to conduct themselves. Yeah, it was very much a mutual sense of us being there for them and them knowing that and that's why I always believed that they respected me there. In fact, they dedicated a yearbook—one of the yearbooks to me there.

De Angelis: And you had been down in Washington, that area for how long prior to leaving?

Sheehy: Well I was—I guess I was five years at Calvert Hall and four years in—at St. John's.

De Angelis: So—

Sheehy: And then 6 years at Hudson.

De Angelis: Was it different moving up to Jersey City?

Sheehy: Every time I moved. Again being a Navy brat, I moved all the time anyway. I really had thought that when I entered the Brothers that would stop and it didn't stop till I came here. But it wasn't—it—not only it wasn't problem, I mean I liked the change. I liked the idea of moving and of course, since they were all Brother schools, I knew people before I got there. And every one of the places that I was at was a different challenge and then every one of the places, which is—in a way strange, but in a way really consoling. I would stay at every place I've worked for the rest of my life, every single place.

De Angelis: And when you taught in Hudson, what community did you live in?

Sheehy: It was at Hudson Catholic Community, the house was right next to the school. In fact we could go through a little tunnel, bend down, go through a little tunnel in getting to the school without being— going outside.

De Angelis: And how many Brothers were located there at the time?

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Sheehy: I guess at the time we probably had eight to ten at the time. So that way, and then we might have one or two who worked for the diocese. But by and large, all the Brothers were working in the school. One or two occasionally were retired, but for the most part, they were in the school.

De Angelis: And would say that eight to ten was a smaller community?

Sheehy: At the time, would be a smaller community. Yes.

De Angelis: And they were all affiliated with the school?

Sheehy: Almost all. Again, there was one who was involved in the diocese. I guess one or two, an Assistant Superintendent of Schools and somebody else in charge of religious activities. But for the most part, they were in the school.

De Angelis: And when you went there you stayed for—

Sheehy: Six years.

De Angelis: Six years. Where did you go after that?

Sheehy: After that in—I guess it was around Christmas of my fifth year—yeah on Christmas I guess in the fifth—five years. The Director of Education, this Brother came to me and asked me if I would be Principal at Central Catholic in Pittsburgh and I said, “yes.” I had just pretty much finished the dissertation. So and six years was about the time. Usually it's three-year terms and usually after six they move—you move and do something else. So I think it's a pretty good idea, generally speaking. And so, again, it was another challenge. It was another opportunity and once I was finished with the doctorate I said, “Certainly.” I also had in my mind now that I didn't want to be an administrator the rest of my life. That's not why I joined the Brothers. So that was kind of in the back of my mind that I would do it and we'll see how it goes.

De Angelis: And how long did you stay at Pittsburgh?

Sheehy: I was in Pittsburgh for five years. I had a six-year term but at the end of five, I said to the Provincial, “You know I think it's time for me to go back and teach.” I said “that's why I joined the Brothers.” I got a lot of very

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positive feedback when I made the decision. I remember the Director of Education come to me and said a faculty said "We want somebody just like him, you know." So, I mean I think they thought I was doing a good job, both there and in terms of the Provincial, in terms of the diocese. But it took a lot out of me. If there was any success in Pittsburgh, it was for two reasons. One of which was it's a fantastic school, in some ways, the only thing you can do is foul a place like that up. And so you push the buttons and it runs. And the other was I was extremely fortunate to have two assistant principals who were absolutely outstanding. I'd be ready to go on a rampage and they'd calm me down.

De Angelis: That's surprising. **[laugh]** When you went there, did you feel like you were prepared to be the head of a school?

Sheehy: Yes, I was thirty-six years old, which seems young and people actually said to me, "Wow, you're pretty young for this." But no, I felt I was because one, I knew the reputation of the school. And secondly, you know again, I knew the two assistant principals were extraordinary. One was a Brother who was after the first year he became principal, assistant principal. He was an intern till then. A very dear friend of mine. And the other one was the Assistant Principal for Discipline or Student Affairs. He was a lay person who I had known and felt very comfortable with. So again, I kind of pretty much had an idea. If I don't foul things up everything will be fine and that's what I thought I did. And they thought I was obviously more proactive and decisive and everything else. But it was—it's just a fantastic. All the schools I worked for was in—they were tremendous places. If I wanted to be an administrator, Central was no exception.

De Angelis: Yeah, what was the reputation of Pittsburgh Central Catholic?

Sheehy: If you're going to meet anybody from Pittsburgh and you say Pitts—and you say Central Catholic many times their eyes will open the—it's **[cough]** a diocesan school. Everybody thinks it's a private school. It's very high-powered academically. It's the only all boys high school in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Athletically, it's nationally known, particularly for football. But it's been nationally known for Forensics, for example. It is just—I

remember going there and thinking no school can be as good as its reputation. Central was as good as its reputation and I mean in Pittsburgh, no matter if people leave to go to school and things, a lot of times they come back.

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The infrastructure of the Catholic community in Pittsburgh is extremely Central Catholic oriented.

De Angelis: And were—what were some of your responsibilities as principal?

Sheehy: Well it was—at that time, it's about I guess we have a staff about seventy day budget of about three million. Keeping control of that. At the time, we were one of the few institutions that consistently was in the black when it came to—and because it's extremely difficult to do that and the Diocese gives some subsidy. So the finances is important, the hiring, even though I would have the Assistant Principal for Academics also interview, ultimately, it was my responsibility. Relations with the Diocese and also in On the high school level so much of the principal's job revolves around the athletics whether you like it or not. And especially the place like that, which is so high powered, I mean, I remember being there on the Labor Day weekend in the first football game fifteen or twenty thousand people. And then our first home game, the next week I was interviewed on local television on the sidelines. I mean it was very much in Central was out front. And again, just making sure and also being the visible presence of the school with meetings. When principal, you have tons of meetings to go to. And so, that's the kind of things that I did.

De Angelis: And did you—were you in charge of any extracurricular activities there?

Sheehy: Actually, one year I took the Student Council for one year. But generally, no. I mean generally I tried to be everywhere I could be. I think people thought I spent too much time on athletics. But again, on the secondary level, particularly in an operation—I mean if you're not any good, people don't care. But when you're national or state power, people do. So I was very involved in the athletic program. But again, only Student Council. But I also—almost every semester taught a class, taught one class. Sometimes it was freshmen. Once or twice it was a senior class. It was

never in advance placement class. It was either a middle group or a group that might need a little extra help.

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De Angelis: And do you think that you were a big presence in the school academically then to the students?

Sheehy: I think so. I think they mostly were scared of me. I think—again, it was twelve hundred and fifty of them. I think this image of the principal as being the last bastion and the one who could toss them out and things like that would come to mind. I remember a case where a woman who was on our Board of Trustees, her daughter was dating a kid that was a senior at Central. So I sent for him one day. And they thought he was dead because he hadn't—he didn't wear socks that day. They thought somehow I knew he didn't wear socks and I'm going to clobber him. I called him in and I said, "Mike, I understand you're dating Janine" and "Yeah, yeah. How did you know?" I said "I just wanted to say hello and say her mother told me that." So of course, out he goes, he guessed it was the end of the world or something.

The problem is that—one of the problems is you are the last resort. The principal many times is kind of this foreboding figure. I went back there to give a talk the year after I left. There's a fellow there who had graduated during my time and he said, "That's the first time I saw you smile the four years I was here." So I mean I had took that responsibility very seriously. And you also tended to know the really good kids and the kids who were not really good. The vast majority of the kids in the middle you didn't get to know that well, except in the class and the class that I had saw a part of me that the rest of the students didn't. Like they saw a part of me like you see in class here. So, it was very different when I walked in that door or walk out that door.

De Angelis: Do you think that it was out of character for you to act like the tough guy?

Sheehy: Yes. Yes, it was. Yes and no. Yes, but I was capable of doing it. But that's not my style. It never has been my style but I was able to adjust and do it. Again, part of it being the faculty and the two assistant principals were so helpful, so supportive.

De Angelis: And what do you think was the hardest part of your job as principal?

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Sheehy: The hardest part was telling kids—was asking students to leave for disciplinary reasons, occasionally for financial reasons. The financial reasons were probably the toughest. On discipline, the assistant principal will say, "If we don't make a move now, what's going to happen next time?" I would always pay attention to that and asked. Sometimes that was tough asking students to leave. The financial part was very tough. You send letters to home and then I would have to call the students and say, "You can't come to school on Monday until your parents would pay the tuition." That ripped at me. And the ones about telling kids, asking them to leave, every single one of those incidents took a little something out of me because no matter how much the student deserved to be told he had to leave it still was difficult.

And I, of course, every single, "how many kids just throw out of school? How many kids you expel?" Basically, none because we always gave them a choice. The parents would take them out of school and then a year after the student graduated, we destroyed all the discipline lists. So that made it easier. And then there were some very high profile cases in and around this time my first year, a fellow who had been a co-captain of a wrestling, co-captain of football we had to ask him to leave because he had done a couple of things but he grabbed the janitor and threw him to the floor. Well I mean, and I got calls from everybody and his brother about this. But like when the superintendent called he said, "Tell me about it." And I told him. And he didn't have any problem with it at all and I didn't feel under any circumstances that I had to check with him first. If I did—if there was an incident where I had to check with him, I did. For example, we had a student who was accused of rape over on a Christmas holidays. And the National Honor Society, on the football team. And the diocese and myself and the assistant principals, superintendent and a lawyer, we sat down and we talked about this about how to proceed with that particular issue because again it was a public issue out there in the sense of being in the paper. Not a big thing in the paper,

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but a little about how to proceed with him. But I felt I had a good relationship with the superintendent. He was a graduate of school. He was a priest. And generally, he would say to me, "I don't know what you're doing over there but we never get any complaints from Central." So I said, "Well, I don't know what I'm doing either. But thank you." So I mean it worked well but it was making those kind of decisions were tough. I guess the decisions financially were tough, but I knew that was my responsibility. The discipline ones, I knew it was my responsibility, but most of the time, we would give these guys tremendous leeway and until they really crossed the line.

De Angelis: Do you ever think you made a mistake as a principal?

Sheehy: I'm sure. I'm sure I made a lot of them. I think the problem is that for the most part, I didn't have time to dwell on them because you make a thousand decisions in a course of a week. And you go home from school and you say, "I really blew that one." But then there's ten more. So, yeah, I'm sure. I mean I'm sure I did. I think if I were doing things differently. **[Cough]** I would be much more inclined to put more effort into a capital campaign or fundraising—we were a diocesan school. After I left, the school set up one of these very successful auctions and made a ton of money. What had been proposed to me before I left and I said, "ehhh," but I should've moved on that. So, I guess moving into fundraising and alumni development would have been an area that I—if I were ever to do it again, that I would put more time in.

De Angelis: And do you think you made any major changes to Pittsburgh Central Catholic during your tenure as principal?

Sheehy: Well I mean I refined a lot of things. I mean we put in an open house. I basically tried to make sure that we kept the academic standards high. I think the public relations for the school was very significant and in 1987 we were—we had a Middle States in '86 which we passed with flying colors and in 1987 we were named as an "Exemplary Secondary School" by the Department of Education. They sent a team in and we received the achievement which allowed me and the assistant principal and the

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President of Student Council go to Washington and be recognized by the Secretary of Education. And then I went to the White House and with a bunch of other people. I mean there were two hundred and seventy schools in the country but if you think about the number of high schools in the country that isn't a lot. And we went and the president said some things and all.³ So it was— yes, the exemplary school thing was probably the highlight in terms of achievement and we have the sixtieth Anniversary of the school too.

So we—we made a pretty big deal with that. We marched them all down to the cathedral for a mass. Then we can go after that but we have this big cake "Happy Sixtieth". We had bumper stickers and all those kind of stuff.

So it—I was there the very, very good time in terms of things happening at Central. But again, it was all because— we were one of the few schools who brought a student to this thing down in Washington. There were a lot of superintendents in schools and I guess board members and the principals and things like that. I actually thought it was really important that student be there because that's exactly the reason why we got the recognition.

De Angelis: How did you choose the student?

Sheehy: **[cough]** He was the President of Student Council. We'd just had to pick. I had to pick somebody and actually he would not have been somebody I'd pick. There were some other kids in the school that I thought probably deserved it better—more—but that was the easy thing and the smart thing to do.

De Angelis: And you stayed there for how long again?

Sheehy: I stayed five years, eighty-three ('83) to eighty-eight ('88).

De Angelis: Okay. And what did you do after you left?

³ The president who spoke at this ceremony was President Ronald Reagan. He was president from 1981-1989.

Sheehy: Well as I said—at the moment in January I guess in my fifth year I said to the Provincial, “I just think it’s time for me to go back to teaching.” I mean I was very worn out. I poured everything into it, which I genuinely tend to do. I pour everything into what I do.

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And almost at the precise moment and a job opened up here at La Salle in History, which was the first time since 1972. For sixteen years, there had not been a job opening in History. [cough] So I took that as providential that I should apply for it, which I did. And then I was fortunate to be to be hired.

De Angelis: And what was the process going through that?

Sheehy: Well, I had to send letters of recommendation. I had to come teach a sample class, spend the whole day on campus, meet with the dean, meet with the provost. In fact I still—I remember very well it was the Monday after the Super Bowl in January. So that was—have lunch with members in the department, so, yeah, that was it.

De Angelis: And do you remember if there were any current faculty that are still here? Were on your board to get you hired or—

Sheehy: Well, I mean—

De Angelis: were present.

Sheehy: The faculty who—the faculty who are still here, George Stow was the chair, John Rossi. I guess those are the two that I remember right away as being here then and being here now.

De Angelis: Was it odd that they hired you never having taught at a college level before?

Sheehy: It was odd in a way. That was probably a little odd however, [cough] the person who really kind of helped engineer my being here was Brother Emery who was the provost at that time he went out of his way to encourage the department and so, I mean, he very—without him I would not have been here. So I really owe him and every so often I will send him a note saying that without him I would not have been here.

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De Angelis: And do you think that being a Brother gave you a leg up on the competition?

Sheehy: In terms of his support, yes. In terms of the department, mixed. I think in some way yes, but I also think I had not been able to publish because of my jobs and so in that case, that worked against me, but being a Brother and also particularly John Rossi who had taught me. And at that time, there were other people here like Theo Fair taught me, Dennis McCarthy had taught me. So I think it was a little mixed, little mixed.

De Angelis: So, prior to your interview, you had not published at all?

Sheehy: No.

De Angelis: Had you done any lectures and conferences?

Sheehy: I had spoken at different places on different issues particularly national honor society stuff and things like that, but generally no because I was again basically absorbed by what I was doing as assistant principal and principal. What I did have—I did have a letter in hand from a publisher asking me if I would submit my dissertation for consideration, so I made sure to pass that along. But clearly publishing was a significant weakness in my dossier.

De Angelis: So, all you had to show them really was this dissertation that you had completed?

Sheehy: Dissertation I had completed and also explained that I had kept my hand in teaching and had been gainfully employed and had picked up 3 additional degrees since leaving La Salle.

De Angelis: Do you remember what your practice lecture was or your test lecture was on?

Sheehy: It was on the road to World War II. It was the causes of World War II. Appeasement and the problems of World War I, the Depression and things like that.

De Angelis: Do you remember if there were students present at that?

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Sheehy: There were students present.

De Angelis: And do you remember the reaction of the faculty to your interview? Did you have an impression?

Sheehy: No. I didn't have an impression, I mean, they were extremely friendly, again and I was coming home in some way. So I mean they were very friendly and then—so I had no impression other than that, it was fine.

De Angelis: Did you ever have any other options, say going to another school to teach?

Sheehy: I didn't pursue any. I mean at that time, because I figured that this would be the logical place for me. And also it was a sign the fact that sixteen years had gone by. Now, if for example, I had not gotten this job, then I probably would have pursued one of the Brother's colleges first. But to be honest, I would have been happy going back to high school.

De Angelis: Are you allowed as a Christian Brother to teach in a non-Lasallian school?

Sheehy: You are. Generally that doesn't happen but you are allowed. And there are some, particularly on the collegiate level who teach elsewhere, Salve Regina in Newport is one. There's a Brother here who taught Le Moyne, which is in Syracuse which is another. So I could, but I think what I think my options, I would have look to Brother's colleges first and then I would have look to high schools in our province.

De Angelis: So you interviewed here.

Sheehy: [Cough]

De Angelis: In January?

Sheehy: January. Late January—

De Angelis: And when—

Sheehy: Of eighty-eight ('88).

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De Angelis: And when did you find out you got job?

Sheehy: Fairly soon after. About two weeks later I think—

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De Angelis: So—

Sheehy: Maybe a little longer, but not much.

De Angelis: So, did you finish out your year?

Sheehy: Yes I did. I moved—my term ended on July first, eight-eight ('88), I mean my—the year ended and I spent the last half of June working with my successor, going over things with him and then I think July first I jumped on the train and then in our tradition I threw the keys at 'em and off I went. Oh yeah, because when the Brother before me—he got on the train, he leaned out the window and tossed me the keys so I did the same thing to the fellow who took over for me.

De Angelis: Did a Brother take over for you?

Sheehy: Yes.

De Angelis: And—

Sheehy: A graduate at the school, which was the first time that it happened.

De Angelis: And did you—when you came here what community did you live in?

Sheehy: I lived in the De La Salle Community for about eight months and then I moved into one of the little houses on Twentieth Street for about another maybe year and then St. Mutien became available and I moved down there. So I've been in St. Mutien like twenty – I was at St. Mutien for like twenty-one years and then obviously I moved back to the big house.

De Angelis: So, you moved in to De La Salle Community. Where is that located?

Sheehy: That's the big house attached to College Hall.

De Angelis: Oh—

36:22

Sheehy: It's called De La Salle Community.

De Angelis: Good to know. And then why did you have to move to the Twentieth Street?

Sheehy: I didn't have to. One of the Brothers who live there—there were three Brothers who live there. One of them passed away and so they—the other two asked me if I'd like to come and live there. But obviously be attached to this house and I—there are still two Brothers who live in the house on Twentieth Street, Brother Emery and Brother Charles, but they're associated again with the De La Salle Community for prayers and everything like that.

De Angelis: And when you first arrived on campus, what was the impression since you had been gone for sixteen years?

Sheehy: It's interesting. Actually longer than that. I had been gone for twenty. Now, I remember I had been on the Board of Trustees here for a couple years. So I was back three or four times a year. But my impression was coming home and my impression was—actually the year book asked me what was it like coming back twenty years later, what I always say was “that while the plant has changed and the programs have changed. The people—a lot of the same people were still here.” A lot of people I remember very positively in terms of being teachers and staff members were still here. So again, it was—you can never go home, but in this case I did.

De Angelis: So, you just mentioned you are in the Board of Trustees here.

Sheehy: Yes.

De Angelis: When did that occur?

Sheehy: When I was at Central Catholic. I was on the board at least four of five years I think when I was at the Central.

De Angelis: How did you—

Sheehy: So one of the things about the board is they have a certain number of Brothers that have to be on the board. [cough]. Excuse me. But you can't

be employed by the institution and be on the board. So, that number of Brothers that were possible again, you want to

38:03 take into account across section, you want to take into account at least if someone has a doctorate that would help too, I think. So anyway, it was logical. Brother Patrick who is the president at that time got in touch with me and asked me if I would serve on the board, and I said, "Certainly."⁴

De Angelis: And what was your role?

Sheehy: A regular board member. So, I would vote, read the materials over, take part in discussions, vote on the issues, yeah absolutely.

De Angelis: And that had to end when you came to La Salle?

Sheehy: Yes. Once I became employed at La Salle I could no longer serve on the board.

De Angelis: And so you came July.

Sheehy: I came July 1, 1988.

De Angelis: And you started teaching in September? What was some of the first things that you taught here?

Sheehy: Mostly the second half of World History which at the time, I don't remember what the number was, maybe 251, World History 1500 to Present. I think I had three sections of that and maybe one section of American History.

De Angelis: And when you arrived, did you get this office that we're in?

Sheehy: This is where I've been.

De Angelis: It must have been a lot less cluttered. [laughs]

Sheehy: It was a lot less cluttered.

De Angelis: And did you—right now I know you always teach in 305. Were you always teaching in 305?

⁴ Brother Patrick Ellis was President of La Salle University from 1977 to 1992

Sheehy: No. Much of the time I was in 329 and two people complained about how loud I was. So then I was dispatched to the Hinterlands.

De Angelis: And what year, after you start teaching here, did you published?

39:38

Sheehy: My book came out in ninety-two ('92).⁵ I started doing things before that like Encyclopedia entries for example, giving papers at the conferences like at Duquesne but the book publication came out in ninety-two ('92) which was like a year before I came up for tenure. So the timing was perfect. And I think it was ninety-two ('92) that I won the Lindback also.⁶ So I mean it—everything came to head very nicely in terms of organization.

De Angelis: So, do you feel like you're "forced to publish" when you came here?

Sheehy: Yes. It—they encouraged maybe strongly. At this point, I think people are more forced to publish. I think at that time, if I wanted to get promoted, I would need to publish. Tenure I don't think they put as much emphasis then on it as they do now. But I like research. I like to do research and so it really wasn't an issue for me. I just—and it was relatively simple because this—the company basically they sent me a contract in like March and said "you could have that ready by July or something." I said "Well, I want to go back"—I went back and double check every note I had in order to make sure of things fine. But it work. It worked out very well. I mean, they came to me about publishing it and again, it worked out.

De Angelis: And what publishing company was that?

Sheehy: It was Greenwood, which publishes scholarly monographs.

De Angelis: And did you find it a challenge to go from being this administrator to now being back in the research field trying to get everything done?

Sheehy: No. No. Because again, I'm a reasonably organized individual. So I could just adapt that fairly easily and the college teaching is at a different pace

⁵ Brother Edwards book was entitled *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean, and the Cold War, 1945-1947*, Westport, CT,: Greenwood Press, 1992.

⁶ The Lindback Award is for distinguished teaching.

than secondary school whether administration or teaching. In high school you might have a homeroom, five classes a day and two extracurriculars. There's a little—the rhythm here is a little different.

42:02

De Angelis: And when you were first starting out, what was kind of like your schedule? Like from morning to night.

Sheehy: I taught all five days my first semesters. It's the only semester I taught all five days. Classes began on the half hour not the hour and they were all fifty—everyone was like fifty minutes long. So I knew I had a class on Friday from 2:30 to 3:30 for example or 1:30 to 2:30 but I had a certain number of classes each day.

De Angelis: And regarding your book, was there any fanfare in the department when it came out?

Sheehy: No, not particularly. It's an extremely esoteric book. It was very well received in the community of Naval History. And as I said, I thought of the fact that got reviewed in nine journals was fairly significant and they were primarily very positive.

De Angelis: But it wasn't—it's not a widely read book in say the non-Naval Community you would say?

Sheehy: No, it is not.

De Angelis: Since Naval History is your specialty, when were you starting to teach Maritime History? Because that is the class you teach now.

Sheehy: That's a very good question and I can't remember but sometime in the early nineties (90's), John Grady who was the Director of the Honors Program and was also my debate coach when I was here and so we were very good friends. He asked me if I would be interested in teaching an honors class and that's the one that made sense, so I started teaching in the early nineties (90's). I taught an honors class but this was the US Navy. And then in 1996 I had a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant and that's when I spent six weeks working in Mystic, Connecticut and the program there was called "America and the Sea." And so it wasn't just a Naval History so I adapted that course and then it became

other things like whaling, life in seaport towns and things like that.
[Cough]

44:18

De Angelis: And was this sort of the first class you kind of got to make your own when you came here?

Sheehy: Yes. It was, I mean, again, every class I taught I had to develop. The other one that I developed when I had a sabbatical, probably about ten years ago or so, was on the Vietnam Conflict, that's the other one that I've— and that one has been one of the most popular courses I've taught in the sense of closing early and being packed to the rafters. But that was one of the things I did on my sabbatical was to develop that particular course.

De Angelis: And you came here in eighty-eight—when did you get tenure?

Sheehy: Whatever six years—

De Angelis: Six years after that.

Sheehy: After, I guess yeah, 1994 or whatever.

De Angelis: And—

Sheehy: You go through the process in the first semester of your sixth year and you get it in your seventh.

De Angelis: Were you scared that you weren't going to get it?

Sheehy: No, I mean, I wasn't scared unless it wasn't done and get it but again, I thought as many times happens with me as frenetic as I am at peace with the—I'm almost always at peace with the fact that I gave it my best shot. If I didn't get something, it wasn't because I didn't try. And so I gave it my best shot and if the answer had been no for tenure and promotion then I would have said "Okay" but I—it was out of my control. Wasn't like I left the stone unturned because I didn't.

De Angelis: And did you ever get promoted after that?

45:46

Sheehy: I became an Associate Professor then, and at that time I made a decision that while I keep my hand in research, I was not about to spend an inordinate amount of time on research because I thought there were other things that I did that more directly affected and helped the younger adults whether it was preparing classes over the summer, reviewing classes over the summer, teaching a full load, teaching a lot of students, being involved in activities. I just thought that was more important to the institution than my studying a battleship in the Mediterranean in 1946.

De Angelis: And—

Sheehy: And that being said it's one of those things “Gee I wonder if,” but I'm perfectly at peace with that.

De Angelis: And that's how you get promoted at the university level?

Sheehy: Well, they take into account your teaching, your service and—but research. Particularly if you're going to like full professor, that research is important for—like for example, most people say you needed one book before Associate Professor, but you need to write another book to get the full professor.

De Angelis: Wow.

Sheehy: Yup. I mean I don't know. I mean that's an unwritten rule but I mean it's still is fairly significant.

De Angelis: And saying you do not get tenure, would you have to leave La Salle?

Sheehy: You have to leave they tell you the first semester of your sixth year. You get another eighteen months and in your seventh year you would have to leave.

De Angelis: And were you concerned about that—leaving?

Sheehy: No because again with eighteen months, I had plenty of time. I had enough confidence. I'm not the most self-confident person despite how I appear and I have enough confidence in myself that I knew I could get a job teaching in any high school in the province, for example.

47:41

De Angelis: So you would not have gone to another university?

Sheehy: I don't know. It would have depended. I probably would not have [Cough]. One of the things that concerns me about universities is the politics. I mean I know I'm probably—it's not a very popular thing to say but I think in some ways university faculty don't have enough to do. And so they sit around politicking. I have—I can observe that when the people go on for their doctorate in the committees and who they're working with and the person they're working with, this person doesn't like them and things like. I was very fortunate that didn't happen with me but I've heard horror stories of that. And from my observations and nothing is ever totally objective, but from my observations, the university politics is a real murky water and I just don't want to play a game of being politically correct in the sense of cozying up to people and things like that. As Popeye says, "I am what I am."⁷

De Angelis: [Laugh] And when you first came here, what was your impression of the faculty when you started working with them? Did you find this was a friendly environment?

Sheehy: Very much so. Again, I had the advantage and the advantage was that many of them knew me. Many of them—you know, I would—I mean I was—I've been a student here. I've been a pretty good student here, not as good as some others, but still a pretty good student. And I enjoyed my four years here. I enjoyed the people who were here. There were more characters then there are now. But I seem to get along very well with all of them when I was a student. And so, again, it was a very, very—and again, they were very warm and welcoming and helpful. I can't say a bad word about any of the transitioning.

De Angelis: Was it awkward working with your former professors?

Sheehy: No, no because I was twenty years older. And to some of them I was close to their age. So no, I didn't get that sense at all and I didn't get a sense at all that I was like, you know, "junior" [as if someone was talking

⁷ Popeye is a reference to a cartoon entitled, "Popeye The Sailor Man." Popeye was the main character and his catch phrase was "I am what I am, and that's all that I am."

49:52

down to him]. I mean I felt very much accepted and part of the decision-making process and—so much so in college [cough] what happens is you have a reputation in the first two weeks for better or for worst. And I remember the Chair of the department at the time, Dr. Stow was no longer the Chair, Dr. Fair was. He said to me after the first week. He said, "The students like you," and I thought, "after the first week?" But I mean, you get that reputation and then it's tough to change it either direction.

De Angelis: And what would you call your former professors? Did you call them by their first names?

Sheehy: Yes. The only time I ever had a difficulty with that and it wasn't—was the Brother who was a principal, he was principal of my high school, a very revered, sainted Brother, the one who asked me to join the Brothers. He became the Brother in-charge when I lived in Elkins Park. His name was Jeremy. Well, everybody else would say Jeremy or Jerry, but I always felt like saying Brother Jeremy because—you know, I finally got—no actually I don't know if I ever got over it honestly just simply because you have that special—and he was my sponsor in the Brothers, and again, a man who I absolutely felt so strongly about; certainly a role model and everything else. So, I mean he's really the only one. Everybody else I was able to adjust to and yeah. This—and also, it's kind of funny that sometimes new faculty—you know, "Brother Edward, Brother Edward, Brother Edward" and I'll say, "You know we're colleagues." And whatever you want to call me or sometimes they even ask me, "Do you mind what we call you?" "I don't care." But I mean I have no problem with you calling me Ed.

De Angelis: And what did you think was the hardest transition about finally becoming a professor?

Sheehy: The hardest transition was the adjustment to knowing how to assess students in terms of their efforts. For example, my first semester, my final was A. Comprehensive and B. full time with like three sections, options of essays of basically what happens since the beginning of the course. And finally when I was grading papers on Christmas Eve, I said to myself, "I think maybe I have to make some adjustments." And I did.

De Angelis: So you think you were being too tough?

52:23

Sheehy: Not too tough. Too—no, I wouldn't say it was too tough although they do think I'm too tough. I think it was just I was—I had not found the shortcuts, the logical and practical shortcuts to assessing students.

De Angelis: So, would you say there was any other difficulties in transitioning?

Sheehy: No, not really. I mean I—the teaching went well. No, not at all. I think for whatever reason I got off to a good start in terms of relationships with the younger adults. I guess one transition would be—[cough] sometimes people asked me what's the difference between high school and college. I said the difference is in the college level you have more age appropriate, mature conversations. You can have a conversation with a student on any number of topics and part of the difference is the student understands when you take off one hat and put on another. Here's the teacher hat, here's the counselor hat, here's the advisor hat, here's the mentor hat, here's the friend hat.

In college, they can adjust to that much more easily than they can in high school. On the other hand, students many times in college, perhaps more than high school, measure their worth by how well they do in class. I always say to them—when the student comes in and say, "I didn't do well in the test" and I say, "doesn't —you have to understand. It doesn't make any difference with the way I view you. It's just that you are not your grades." And as easy as it is to say that people sometimes identify themselves. Just like you have to be careful when you're an administrator and not to identify yourself with the school. That was part of a mistake that I think I made in both places, but especially at Central. If the Central did well, then I felt great. If Central didn't do well, I had a tough time saying that I didn't have the significant part of the responsibility for that.

De Angelis: Well what about you had never taught female students, had you?

Sheehy: I had taught, again, I've been at TA at GW and there was a significant female population there, but really, no. I had never been on a class where I had significant responsibility of teaching a two-gender class.

54:48

De Angelis: How was that?

Sheehy: It was fascinating is probably the word to say it because again, when I left high school, I went to an all boys college. I went to four all boy schools and worked. And a change had happened. Young ladies were demure and for the most part, not outspoken, not assertive. I get here, all of a sudden, the twenty years there's been a change. What I always say is that the women on this campus are assertive, but not aggressive. I don't see them as being aggressive. I see them—well, some exceptions. I see them as being assertive. I think the difference in the classroom in my opinion is **[Cough]** for the most part, women are more reluctant to talk than men but do better than men in terms of tests and things.

And that's not true. There are women you can't shut up in class, and then there are guys who never say anything. But it really was a fascinating experience and continues to be and I've seen the move towards equalities especially among the younger generation. But it was a great lesson for me. It's a great lesson— you can't teach an old dog new tricks. It was a great lesson for me interacting with the *gentler* sex.

De Angelis: One last question before we quit for the day. Did you feel like you had to act differently with females in the classroom now than so you had when you were teaching only males?

Sheehy: Not significantly. I mean, *yes*, but *not really*. You know, not really. I kind of pride—I guess what it is—*all* students I try to be really careful about the—and be very sensitive and try to know them so that I could tell if they're having a bad day or if I know that I can joke with this student but not with that student, and that's not a gender thing. The only thing we always joke about, which I really don't find the case, but we always joke about is that guys don't hold grudges but women do. And I just—I find it amusing because I have not found that. I mean—so I— yeah, no. I think it really has been an eye opener for me and I've been able to make the adjustment.

De Angelis: Okay. Well thank you for today.

Sheehy: You're welcome.

De Angelis: And we will pick up next time with more La Salle information. Thank you,
Brother Ed.

Sheehy: You're welcome.

57:40 End Of Audio