

Interviewee: Maurice Bibeau
Interviewer: Richard Foy

March 15, 2002
MHP

Maurice Bibeau

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Nancy Decker

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Summary: Maurice Bibeau gives an account of his early years in Lawrence, Massachusetts, attending elementary school and Central Catholic High School. He decided to enter the Marist Brothers after high school, and in his college years majored in Spanish. After graduating from Marist College he decided to immerse himself in the Spanish culture. Maurice Bibeau spent nine summers in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Peru, and Spain rather than pursuing a Ph.D. in Spanish. His fine recollections of his early life mention with affection his close moderator and friend, Dr. Gerry Weiss.

Richard Foy: This is an interview with Maurice Bibeau. We are in the Archives room of the Cannavino Library. It's March 15th, 2002 and the interviewer is Richard Foy.

Richard Foy: Okay, should I call you Maurice or Mo? [Laughter]

Maurice Bibeau: [Laughter] Either way.

R.F. Either way, okay. What is your full name?

M.B. That's what I go by and there's a Joseph in front of that, but often times its limited to a J.

R.F. So it's J. Maurice or Joseph Maurice? When were you born?

M.B. I was born in August nineteen thirty-two, in Lawrence, Massachusetts where the Marist Brothers had a school. Went to Central Catholic High School where I graduated from that high school and my local parish also was with the Marist Fathers, so I had contact with Marist in two ways, with the Marist Fathers and the Marist Brothers.

R.F. What did your father do?

M.B. My father came over from Canada in the early twenties; Canada was hurting financially. He tried farming out in the Midwest, he didn't like it but there were possibilities of working in the textile mills in Lawrence and that's what he did. He had an uncle who was there and helped him get a job in the mills. He worked there for twenty-eight years; worked his way up to foreman, the mills closed, he moved down south, he had to start all over again from the bottom with Raytheon, and where

he eventually retired from Raytheon.

R.F. What about your mother?

M.B. My mother came separately with her father.

R.F. From Canada?

M.B. From Canada; my parents met in Lawrence, Massachusetts and they got married there. She worked a little bit in the mills until she got married and then subsequently stayed at home.

R.F. She became a housewife, yes that's right. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

M.B. I have one brother, who is a little older than I am; who is living presently in Andover, Massachusetts, right outside Lawrence.

R.F. So you stayed local; no Florida, no California?

M.B. No, the kids, his kids, have spread out.

R.F. They move around but you stayed pretty much. You mentioned education, where did you go to grammar school?

M.B. I went to the Parish grade school, which was Sacred Heart School; this was before bilingual education in a sense, but the mornings were all in English and then the afternoons, the Catechism were Religion and Bible study and French grammar, sometimes Music and Literature was in French. The mornings were mostly in English and the afternoons in French; and then I always spoke French at home, especially with my mother who preferred.

R.F. French.

M.B. It was a bi-lingual household as such and sort of a bi-lingual school; those parochial schools did that.

R.F. You said you went to Central Catholic?

M.B. Went to Central Catholic yes for, the tuition was five dollars a month; and my brother was going too, so, we each paid five; otherwise it would have been seven fifty.

R.F. You got seven fifty on a break.

M.B. Yes, and that was the place to go and my parents wanted us to go there; it was expensive in the sense for those days for a family like ours was.

R.F. Who were some of the Brothers you had teaching, do you remember?

M.B. My homeroom teacher was Hugh Sheridan, my first homeroom teacher and then later on I had, who just died Jimmy Austin I forget his last name.

R.F. Yes MacAleer.

M.B. Jimmy MacAleer.

R.F. James MacAleer.

M.B. Then later on I had Leo Vincent Hall, in Math, Brother George and the old standard at Central, Linus.

R.F. Yes, Linus Joseph.

M.B. And then Joe Bergeron, so I had a variety of Brothers.

R.F. A lot of old timers, but some of them are pretty young, James Austin probably was in his early twenties at that time.

M.B. And I think Hugh Sheridan, I think that was his first year teaching when I was, you know he had the homeroom back in nineteen forty-six I guess.

R.F. And when you graduated, what did you do?

M.B. Well, when I graduated that was the decision; I had my application in at

Merrimack College and then the recruiter there for the Marist Brothers whose name I forget.

R.F. Adian Francis.

M.B. Adian Francis, kept calling and so forth so I decided to go to the Novitiate which was in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts and that was the first time that the Novitiate was there in Massachusetts and it was a fairly large group. It was the year that there were many vocations; I think they had a group of about forty-eight Postulants at that particular time.

R.F. Do you recall that year? Which, what year was that?

M.B. That was forty-nine, September of forty-nine.

R.F. So that was the first year that Novitiate opened.

M.B. Yes, September of forty-nine.

R.F. And who was your master?

M.B. BiBeo [Laughter]

R.F. [Laughter] That's Brother Louis Omer, a former Provincial but a very nice fellow.

M.B. I joined it then because I loved sports, so we had lots of football and baseball and basketball and that kind of thing; so I was introduced to that and I just enjoyed the mix of all the different kinds of people from New York and all of that.

R.F. Yes, by that time there was no separateness the way they used to have at the Juniorates, the French speaking Juniorate and the English speaking Juniorate, but this was a single thing; and then so you were there for how long?

M.B. I was there for two years, since I had graduated from high school I did my

first year of college during my Postulancy. We had two groups, you had the high school group and you had the college, so I did my first year of college; and then there was the Novitiate year, which was for the most part without any academic studies as such, it was just religious studies, and then in August of fifty-one, we drove up in the bus to Marian College. We were dropped off at the old St. Ann's Hermitage and that's where we lived and then I spent three years here doing college work until I graduated in May of nineteen fifty-four in the little, it was a parking lot between what was Adrian or Adrian wasn't there, between, just in front of the old gym.

R.F. That's right.

M.B. There was a parking lot. It was a basketball hard topped court and that's where we had the graduation. One of my... We all had jobs to do as Student Brothers and my senior year; people like myself and Richard LaPietra who were sort of half time students and half time workers; Richard worked with the laundry, he took care of washing clothes and ironing shirts and I took care of the pigs, under Brother Tarcisius. [Laughter] So I spent my senior year, we had some twenty pigs and we would go up to the Hudson State River Hospital there and that's where sometimes we bought sows and then we would bring them or we would connect with them.

Tarcisius made the decisions, I just had to feed them and clean the pens and when they broke out I had to chase them; sometimes in the snow in what is now the Gartland, in that general area. [Laughter]

R.F. Oh, Brother Tarcisius was your boss?

M.B. Yes and he took care of that; the barn was gone and the cows were gone, the chicken coups still existed but they were in this sort of little corner hut on the side,

there were three or four sheep roaming around but the cows were gone; the garden was limited to just a little area in the back of the St. Ann's Hermitage.

R.F. Oh, there was no garden near St. Peter's?

M.B. No.

R.F. Was Brother Aloyisus there?

M.B. Brother Aloyisus took care, near the green house, near the Hermitage, St. Ann's but the problem was just the whole agricultural thing was just going down.

R.F. Disappearing.

M.B. Just disappearing but we used the pigs a couple of times a year. Tarcisus got a group of people together and they came and we slaughtered a few pigs and cut it up and sent the meat out to be finished and frozen I guess; and kept in some kind of a refrigerator someplace and then the cooks who were Brothers, whenever they needed some, they would call it in and that was used for the meals. That was the last I guess of the agricultural, except for the chickens.

R.F. There were some chickens; there was an egg business after your time I think.

M.B. Yes, that continued.

R.F. That had got started but the pigs disappeared.

M.B. As I was thinking about it, I just remembered; that we used to have handball courts back where the chicken coups were, right out there on that whole property. We had the barn, we had handball courts, and we had the chickens and then what was left of that hill looking over where the Priest residences, Kirk House and that whole area there were just paths in the woods where cows would amble through and now they're all gone, but if you look at the Kirk House, especially from the river side,

you see it's on the top of a hill, so that was a very hilly area.

R.F. Yes, was the water wheel still in existence when you were there down at the bottom of that hill?

M.B. There was, no, there was over what was the amusement park there was some kind of a water source there, but there was just a little structure and it was sort of a little swampy in the area but I couldn't figure it out, how it worked or what it was the remnants of I'm not too sure; but I knew that was the amusement park and there was water and something connected to the amusement park.

R.F. What about the orchards. Were there any fruit trees?

M.B. Just the cherry trees that lined the road, what is in front of the chapel presently; but they were cut down when it was time to dig for the chapel.

R.F. Oh, that's where they went.

M.B. Years later, what do we do? We put up crab apple trees. [Laughter]

R.F. That's right and I think there was a bit of an orchard up where this library is now; but I don't remember ever picking apples there.

M.B. No, no, I don't remember.

R.F. I remember going off site to pick apples.

M.B. Even the greenhouse that was along the Waterworks Road, I never saw that so you know the way the chapel was, that was gone when we arrived.

R.F. That was gone?

M.B. I've seen pictures but that was gone.

R.F. Yes, we have a picture of Brother Alphonse and Brother they called him P. Joe, (Philip Joseph) standing in front of the greenhouse when I was there, that was

operational and the whole field in front of St. Peter's was planted, usually with potatoes, or something like that. So, you were like in the transition period when the farm was disappearing?

M.B. Just coming in, it was mostly the pigs and chickens and that was basically it.

R.F. What about the academics when you were there?

M.B. We did work; we talk about today, whether the new things in education, relatively a collaborative education, where you have groups work together in small groups and you work things through and so forth and that's what; the Brother's didn't have that much time and there was a lot to do. So a lot of things we would work together; someone took notes, someone typed them out and printed them. The tests must have been very boring for the teachers to read because we must have had all the same kind of information and insights into everything. But we had class in what is Greystone, that bottom where you have your computers and so forth for research; that was part of the library. You would study down there and had class, and in the Marian building, I think there's mention of it in the writing.

R.F. Yes, it's a wood frame building which is gone.

M.B. I took Physics up there on the top floor and luckily my lab partner was Joseph Marchessault, who later majored and got his Doctorate in Physics, so I had it easier because he loved the subject. He was a great lab partner.

R.F. Gregory House is named after him.

M.B. Right; so he died of cancer?

R.F. Yes, cancer.

M.B. Around sixty-six, sixty-seven?

R.F. Some place around there, yes, unfortunately. Was the Chemistry lab down below on the ground floor of the library? It was there when I was there in fifty.

M.B. I think so, I remember the Physics lab and the Chemistry lab, I don't remember.

R.F. Physics lab.

M.B. Yes, it was down below, it was down below in the Marian Building.

R.F. And the typewriters were located upstairs.

M.B. Upstairs, yes.

R.F. So it was quite similar then, the classrooms down below in the library. The reading room was the middle floor. The stack room was the upper floor.

M.B. See that's, sometimes I have difficulties in remembering things as to when I was there because I came back in sixty-four where these things still existed and so the memories, I'm not sure if they go back to the early fifties or to the mid sixties.

R.F. Or to the late sixties.

M.B. So, sometimes it's hazy as to what was what and when.

R.F. Well, you were a Scholasticate then when the chapel was being built.

M.B. Right, we worked on the chapel. There was rocks, so there was a lot of blasting and digging and my college classmate; William, his name in religion was William Arthur Bishop.

R.F. Billy Bishop.

M.B. From Virginia, from West Virginia, he loved hard work. He didn't enjoy the studies too much but he loved hard work, he just died recently and he loved to do the blasting and so forth and we had Mr. Casseta across the street on Route

9. He used to work for the railroad and he supervised the blasting whenever we; he checked to make certain all the fuses were correct and we were protecting the other buildings and so forth and that when on for sometime, until I guess he moved out and the house must have been purchased by the college and so forth. The construction went on during; we would have crews of five, six, seven Student Brothers per week and they would take off from their studies and they would work on the construction. Still there is one wall up there that I look at to make certain it's still standing because I didn't know too much about carpentry and so forth but we had to put the finishing wood pieces up there. Then I was here in fifty-four, the year that it was dedicated and Cardinal Spellman came for the dedication, so it was an important year. In this questionnaire there's little hints here; that to me is the most important building on this campus because of the construction, the dedication and then when they came back in sixty-four, the chapel that's where we always met for prayers and subsequently I've been attending church services basically there over the years, except for the recent past couple of years where the local community group has not been included; it sort of has been dissolved since the departure of Father McCann; but that was always my parish basically, so it's been a very significant building.

R.F. Yes, you live up in Hyde Park?

M.B. Right now, yes.

R.F. Where do you go to church now? I should ask you if you do go to church.

[Laughter]

M.B. Regina Coeli, occasionally I'll come here. I always thought it was important that some of the faculty would attend services with the students and that's why I did it

over the years, until they eliminated the Sunday morning liturgy. They have one at noon time but it's written mostly for the students; there's been no inclination to invite; there was a hundred, hundred fifty local people who would attend the services on Sunday morning and it formed a little community and it was enjoyable, from a place of worship because it wasn't as big and it was more personal than some of the local parish's in the area.

R.F. Yes, right and I understand some of that group began going down to, not St. Peter's, but Mount Carmel.

M.B. Mount Carmel, yes.

R.F. Father LaMorte was there.

M.B. When he was there, yes.

R.F. So, there was a group that traveled to there. That's a tradition in Poughkeepsie. Poughkeepsie had seven linguistic parishes and if you grew up in a Polish parish, even if you then moved to anyplace else, you had the right to be married or buried or the children can be married or buried in the Polish church.

M.B. St. Joseph's.

R.F. That's a German church, I don't know about a French church.

M.B. No there wasn't.

R.F. But there were a lot of different.

M.B. But I had that even at a greater level in my home town of Lawrence, Massachusetts. We had even more different groups and there was a lot in the city.

R.F. So there would be different groups. Pretty much by language and by culture than by geography; which may be coming back, who knows?

M.B. Well it is to a certain degree. Again, getting back to my hometown in Lawrence which is now another immigrant city because of the arrival of so many Hispanics working in the remnants of the textile and shoe factories and things of that nature but there are, I would say between sixty and seventy percent Hispanic in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which is unfortunate because no city can receive so many new people, immigrants, at one time and survive economically and the schools, it's too much of a blow. Besides that some of our students go there presently to Lazarus House, which is a house for the homeless and for the poor which was started by the Marist Brothers; but now it's being run by a group of lay people. I think there is one Marist Brother working there. So, they come here occasionally in the fall for the Thanksgiving to give a little talk as part of a hunger day and to alert the students to the needs of certain communities; but to hear the woman describe my hometown as an "Immigrant city," [Laughter] as "The drug capital of New England" [Laughter] and I say to myself, "I go there on vacation." [Laughter]

R.F. Of course, you hate to admit it but your folks were immigrants too.

M.B. They were immigrants but how it has changed. How the city has changed and it's just been too many at one time you know. No city can deal with that economically and educationally with any major success so but that's the nature of the situation today.

R.F. Yes.

M.B. The point I was trying to make basically is that there are churches now that are just Hispanic, there are two parishes, just Hispanic parishes.

R.F. All right, Cardinal Egan has a letter in the Catholic News about two weeks

ago saying this is a problem facing every major city, that the original Catholic churches were centered in the center of the city and the population they served has moved out and these churches can't really survive because the people outside want service but at the same time there are new people coming in who need service and there just aren't enough; so that whole notion of how a city, how it's culture and complexion changes, it is very difficult and it's true in almost every metropolitan city.

I guess you would include Lawrence as a metropolitan city. [Laughter]

MB: It's about seventy, eighty thousand; it used to be a little bigger than that.

RF: Yes good; so what was your major?

MB: Basically, we had the choice of Mathematics, English or Spanish; that was the choice that you had for my year. So, but we saw it coming because I took my first Spanish course in my first year of college in the Novitiate in Tyngsboro. So that's what I majored in but it was really a major in Modern Languages. It was simple, twenty-four credits in Spanish and six credits in French, that's what it came to. That was the beginning that was my first contact with the language. I guess if I had had an opportunity to take French that would have been my first inclination.

RF: First choice, yes.

MB: Back in the fifties, the idea was that Spanish was taking off after the war, there was an influx of people from Spanish speaking countries so that was the way to go. I'm very happy that it worked out that way because it turned out to be my teaching career and I've always enjoyed it and it's opened me up to a lot of travel and studying and living in other countries. So that was the major and I went out teaching in September nineteen fifty four at Mount St. Michael in the Bronx and I

was there for nine years and teaching. Well my first year I taught two classes of Spanish, Algebra, Beginning Algebra and Social Studies and of course Religion, that was my first teaching but then subsequently I taught more and more Spanish and a little French to go along with it and did my Master's part-time at St. John's University in Jamaica, Long Island.

RF: Did you go by train?

MB: Well we had enough people for the four o'clock car we we'd head out for business; three thirty.

RF: That was the new St. John's campus.

MB: Yes, the new campus; and sometimes we would pick up some of the Brothers from St. Helen's who needed a lift and drive out and come back immediately.

RF: You probably had Saturday classes.

MB: Saturday classes too, yes, and at least one night during the week.

RF: You majored in Spanish?

MB: Right in Spanish, and I got my Master's at that point and then that was sixty-one; then in sixty-four I was asked to go to Rome to study for a year, so I did that. It was something, it was an international place. The language was French. The school was conducted mostly in French but everything else, the cooking, we had some Spanish Nuns and so there was a chance for me to work on my Spanish because having begun my studies sort of late and in those days you didn't go abroad to study, so this was a chance also, I was able to at the end of that experience to spend a month in Alicante in Spain and taught a little English there at their summer school. It gave me a chance to learn a little more about Spain. Then I also did a little traveling in

Europe at that time, so it was a great experience all in all. But then I came back and they wanted me here in Poughkeepsie to be Assistant Director of Scholastics for the Student Brothers and I worked under Hugh Sheridan. So my old homeroom teacher from high school [Laughter] and so we did that, we did that for three years; I taught part-time for those three years, from sixty-four to sixty-seven at the college and helped out the Director of their program, the Hispanic program, Gerry Weiss, Dr. Raymond Weiss. So I lived and worked in the Scholasticate, the building that's been knocked down completely. That was a combination of the dormitory and the study hall and dining room that was there.

RF: Had that been built by the time you got back here?

MB: Yes, I had worked on the building; you know when I was teaching at Mount St. Michael, I spent three summers here in Poughkeepsie, working, living in the old St. Mary's Novitiate and working. I worked on the Donnelly Building and worked on the Fontaine for two summers too.

RF: That was tough work.

MB: Yes it was because we weren't used to it. From pushing chalk to digging holes, the first few days were difficult.

RF: That's brutal, right.

MB: Especially I remember once, putting the, working on the tar, tarring the roof of the old what was the old library, the old Scholasticate and there was brutal heat; we had to get up at like five thirty in the morning to get started at six to try to beat the heat because with the paper and we had this aluminum foil to put in and the reflection

from that. It's quite different from pushing chalk on the board but they were great experiences. I missed, there were pictures that I was looking at you know, digging the foundations that year, when we were digging foundations for the Donnelly Building, I was finishing my thesis for my masters degree in the city so I escaped that difficult...

RF: [Laughter] You were lucky. That was tough. That was brutal work. So you've had, you've worn a lot of hats, as far as hats goes.

MB: Right, you know, and then coming to and staying and working with the Student Brothers and then we saw the changes; societal changes and changes in religious life going on. Things were very difficult. The Student Brothers were trying to figure out where they were going, who they were. They were living on the campus with lay students. They were the best students on campus for the most part as a group and they were bright. When you look back at those students, you can say they were bright people. Many of them have gone on and become doctors and professors and so forth. They were very bright people, so they were good students.

RF: Yes.

MB: So now speaking to some of the... At that time, the young faculty, the Zuccarello's and the deceased Tom Casey and Jerry White and so forth, they always enjoyed having Student Brothers in their classes because they were the bright students, the young capable students. There was a question in terms of the societal changes as to what to do. Things were difficult; how could they live with vows, temporary vows in this kind of a situation. With their habits, it was becoming more and more difficult and of course we're talking about the sixties in the United States. It

was very difficult; years of change, years of protest, years of trying to figure out what's happening and so eventually the superiors decided to try a different approach and that's when they began with what we call the *Dutch Masters*. Instead of having just one person primarily responsible, they brought five of us together to run it as a team and that was Lanning and Cox and Sullivan, LaPietra and myself and we just began as a team and we were all full time teachers at the same time, so trying to assist one another and working with smaller groups and that's when we decided to build what are now Adrian, Gregory House and Benoit House. They were built primarily to try to establish better community living; because where we were living in, what was the old Fontaine was very impersonal was huge all together; the idea was to try to break it down into smaller groupings. They have greater contact with individuals, more personal; and we tried that for a couple of years and we said, "That's not working either." So that's when we decided to suggest that the Scholasticate as such be terminated. Just phased out and then to accept new applicants to the Brothers only after their college years; when they are older when they had gone through other experiences in their life; better able to make decisions and choices. So that's basically what happened, that was phased out slowly, some of the faculty and staff lived in Gregory House, I can recall; a group of Scholastics with John, what's his last name?

RF: John Bosco.

MB: Bosco, that's it, yes, went to Poughkeepsie to live.

RF: Academy Street.

MB: And then we decided that we were going to try to work out a community also.

That's when John Bosco left the community and no one knew where he had gone and we said, "This isn't community," so we were able to, with Larry Sullivan particularly, we were able to buy the house on Eden Terrace and there were nine of us who moved there for the beginning of the sixty-nine school year. We tried to establish a Christian community with prayers and living together on a more personal level at that residence, which today is still being used by the Marist Brothers although it went to a couple of other ownerships in the process, which is right near the President's home also.

RF: Right.

MB: So that, and then that evolved too. So people made other choices and there are other things happening in the lives of a number of people, so that eventually some decided to opt out of the Marist Brothers and some moved elsewhere. Hugh Turley is still involved with the Brothers in Chicago, he was with us for the whole time; he was a Fund Raiser and P.R. person for the Brothers living out in Chicago and some went in different places, different directions.

RF: Was Turley living in Eden Terrace?

MB: Yes, he was with us.

RF: He went down to Louisiana first, didn't he? I think he was working.

MB: Yes, yes he did.

RF: I was going to say in a leper colony.

MB: Yes, he gave up the teaching; he was a full time Biology teacher here and he decided I guess to do something different and he's had different opportunities, but now he's Fund Raising. So eventually that didn't work for us in a sense, or it worked

in a different way; depends how you look upon it, in the sense of community and the Brothers or when you look upon it to the individuals working to find themselves and to make other choices. So several left and got married and have continued their association in other ways, it's what we call the *Greater Marist Community*, which basically, it's through the years that there are Brothers and former Brothers together who continue to meet on the first Friday of every month except for the summers and to an evening of prayer and then socialization of getting together. So it's already thirty years that we've been doing that.

R.F. That's incredible.

M.B. It goes on, so we still, in fact we had, the last one was at my home, the beginning of the month; except the group is getting smaller because people are going to Florida; [Laughter] or the Sullivan's have moved to Virginia and that kind of thing.

RF: When did you leave the Brothers, what year?

MB: I took a leave of absence in seventy-six and left in seventy-eight.

RF: Did you, as regards to the college, did you feel any pressure for you to leave the college?

MB: No, not at that time but it wasn't new to me. Others had done it so that I sort of expected it at the time; but I didn't feel any pressure. It had been going on so I wasn't breaking new ground. That would have been more difficult I guess for the people who did.

RF: Because I don't think it's normal at a lot of other colleges. If a Sister or Priest took a leave, then they're allowed to stay on.

MB: And stay right, and that was what was happening.

RF: That's one of the characteristics of Marist because the people who leave didn't change their spots. They still have the same inner interests in education.

They didn't suddenly turn out to be devils. [Laughter]

MB: No, and you had set things up too in terms as presidenting, the economics and the salaries and the benefits and so forth so that it was an easier transition. It wasn't a situation where as years before where you were left with nothing.

RF: Nothing.

MB: Basically.

RF: Yes, good I'm trying to think of any other questions. What about today's students? You mentioned that the Student Brother's were really very excellent students.

MB: Yes, they were motivated and they were bright students.

MB: We have a lot today, you look at the SAT's, and of course you have to realize that the SAT's were staged. [Laughter]

RF: [Laughter] Adjusted.

MB: Staged, adjusted several years ago, but the students, according to the SAT's, are bright.

RF: How do you find them?

MB: Well in terms of, it's not only that, it's just a question of a different preparation and different outlook on life. In terms of languages in particular, the, you're looking at them from the speaking part, you know in the high school they're stressing more a communicative approach. That's tricky. If a lot of it is done in memory and then they really don't understand the structure of the language

or, I've had students come to me sometimes. It's not too often but when they write or say, everything is in an infinite form. They don't have a sense of present or past or future. So it's trying to build in a structure; trying to maintain that communicative situation and also give them a structure of the language to understand development of writer's linguistic changes, vocabulary changes and verb tenses which they find so difficult and it is difficult to do given that we have two and a half hours a week to do it, two classes a week.

RF: Yes.

MB: I keep pushing and saying to them, if you want to really learn the language and become relatively fluent, you have to get out of this country and I keep pushing it, perhaps too aggressively because people see me coming [Laughter] but we have eleven in Spain right now.

RF: Yes, that's great.

MB: So that's good and we should have another good group next year.

RF: I have a personal experience and I had five years of French and all my teachers were native Frenchmen but they never stressed speaking. So I know a lot about French literature and French grammar, but I can't speak it. My daughter can speak it, she doesn't know any French literature [Laughter] so the whole approach to teaching has changed tremendously.

MB: And that's what, you're hearing now what's going on in certain schools. Certain schools are trying to do away with the Language Departments and basically saying one, I guess it was a president or a dean, I'm not sure, basically saying "If you want to learn how to speak a language, don't study languages in the colleges". Then

in the University of Massachusetts is doing something just recently too. They're breaking down all the individual, they have departments according to Languages, French and Italian and so forth. They're breaking it all down and bringing it into one Foreign Language Department, so something is brewing there. They're trying to save money and cut back on things.

RF: That's what it looks like, yes. Well it's sad, my daughter is in medical school and it's almost certain she'll be dealing with Spanish and she's only had I think two years of Spanish in high school but she has to deal with Hispanics and my son is in Newark as an assistant prosecutor and we had to switch cars and I noticed he has a Spanish tape in there. [Laughter] He had no use for Languages. Now he's realizing that you have to learn. You have to, if you're going to communicate you're going to have to know at least some simple words and phrases.

MB: Maybe your daughter will be able to connect with that group that originated in French (adopte'sans frontieres) the Doctors without Borders.

RF: No kidding.

MB: They were very active. Didn't they win the Nobel Prize about two years ago, I think with that kind of work and I think it originated and I still get requests from them for funds. They're trying to raise money and they still have a couple of little French words and sayings and so forth, so.

RF: Well, it's sad that language is dying out at a time when it's most necessary.

MB: French is dying, that's a problem. In other words it's struggling because the high schools are dropping it so we're getting fewer students so the future of French is very problematic. Spanish, everyone thinks it's important and they give it a shot.

RF: Now you said, you mentioned when you had that year over in Rome, you spent a summer or a month at least in Spain. You also mentioned you have been overseas more than that.

MB: Right, I was just trying to figure out, I never pursued the Doctorate. That was a struggle for me. Today, the decision; it would be a very simple decision today because you need the Doctorate, but I never did; I opted to. Because I didn't have enough exposure to the language and culture and I felt at the time, the beginning time, that if I just spent time in research and reading and library, that I wouldn't develop language wise as much as I should. So I ended up going. I spent a total of nine summers in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Peru, two and three in Spain, and that was my approach to try and expose myself to the culture and the language and get the practice because I didn't have that experience like the students have today of two semesters abroad which is fantastic.

RF: When you went to these places, were you living there?

MB: I took courses, in certain cases I was with the Brothers, other times I wasn't.

RF: You just took courses?

MB: Took courses or worked with groups, worked for the universities and took courses there. That helped my teaching which is what I was most interested in.

RF: It also gives you a true experience of those countries.

MB: Right, you get to see.

RF: When they talk of Peru and Ecuador.

MB: I was trying to fit in, in terms of what Jerry Weiss; he wanted me to pick up certain things and then when he passed away then I had some greater responsibility,

and so I continued doing some of that to try to pick up, Latin America.

RF: Jerry had spent a year in?

MB: He had spent a year in Argentina.

RF: He also spent some summers over in Spain.

MB: Spain and Mexico, we traveled to. We were in Mexico together for a summer.

We finally had to straighten that out, because under Jerry and also it was the same situation, we were bridging Latin America and Spain. It was just too big to deal with in terms of teaching and literatures and culture and so forth. I inherited a lot of that so I officially retired in nineteen ninety-nine, then I worked full time the following year and I've been half time since. When I had an opportunity to be on the search committee for my replacement and I've also been working with him for two years and I'm very happy with Dr. Kevin Gaugler, a recent graduate from University of Connecticut. He's a good man. I was able to help the search committee in what I thought we needed, and we needed someone intimate with Spain and then someone to deal with Latin America and have two people deal with each of those areas, which is better for the students and better for the faculty members, especially today when they have to do so much research and publications. They can't be too general. They have to focus more specifically, more closely on certain areas. So I think the department now is in better shape with one peninsula one Latin America and the other person deals with the Hispanics. The Hispanic tract and with translation so there's a certain balance now although we could use another full time person. We have too many part time teachers, we still need, who are more and more difficult to obtain.

RF: To obtain.

MB: So that was the education, that's what I did. That's what I opted to do at the time.

RF: You mentioned that you liked the Novitiate because there were a lot of sports. Are you still a Red Sox fan? [Laughter]

MB: Still a Red Sox fan, but especially a New England Patriots fan. [Laughter]

RF: I remember, I think it was fifty-six or fifty-seven, you and I saw a Yankees/Red Sox double header.

MB: Right, that's when I was, I was at Hayes I think for the summer working on my Master's and yes, we went to the Yankees game.

RF: We were sitting there on the bleachers, remember Micky Mantle hitting the ball almost out to us, a ground rule double but I remember it being hot.

MB: It was hot out there. That was my first experience at Yankee Stadium but I continue, I still love sports and I am a season ticket holder for the basketball games. I have been, I don't remember when I started but I've been going to the basketball games when Marist played their home games over at the Lourdes, the old Lady of Lourdes gym and a couple at Dutchess Community College. Then eventually having the McCann Center so I've been going to the games, most of the games ever since. So I enjoy the games.

RF: Even though you're a Red Fox fan?

MB: Red Fox fan too, for basketball. There isn't enough time to do all the other things. Basketball is more contained.

RF: But you're sort of happy with the sports program at the college, the way it is now?

MB: It's a huge program, it's huge. I didn't have a chance to read it all, I just glanced at the U.S. News and World Report on college sports today and I didn't see Marist's name there. I saw a couple of listings, Siena and some of the other teams who are part of our conference. They are just talking about balancing, from what I can gather from a brief looking at it, men and women and balancing sports, some are decreasing. Holy Cross which I'm most upset, canceled last night. They used to be tough and they've moved down. They deemphasized sports. Here, sports are very important. I don't know what the total budget is in sports but it has to be huge with the baseball team going to Virginia on weekends to play games.

RF: On weekends? I thought that, when is Spring break?

MB: We have one more week of classes and then there's Spring break, but it didn't work out well I guess for the baseball team. This is when they would have been on spring break and they could have been way down south for the whole week but classes are in session so.

RF: So they go on weekends. I imagine the softball does the same thing.

MB: They are doing the same thing, yes.

RF: Wow, very interesting, but Marist consistently wins the award for the overall excellence in sports.

MB: Excellence, yes.

RF: This means that the subsidiary sports are getting good support here.

MB: I'm amazed. I stop to think in terms of total numbers of students who are involved in activities. When you look at all the sports and you start counting numbers. Then you look at the pep band at the basketball games and there are as

many as eighty of them at certain times. And then you have fifteen to twenty cheerleaders and then you have the twenty girls who are members of the dance team.

RF: The dance team, yes.

MB: Then you look at all the other sports, the softball and the volleyball. Last year a couple of the girls asked me to be the official moderator of the new water polo team.

RF: Oh yes I saw a young lady who had a water polo on her sweatshirt.

MB: This is the second year. I knew nothing about this sport. [Laughter] They just needed a figure head, a name to be legal because they are not an active sort of a club.

RF: They're a club, yes.

MB: So I learned a little bit about water polo; but when you look at that and all the numbers of students, who are involved, put aside the clubs and the other activities but just look at the athletics of it. I think the football has about a hundred players. They don't all travel but they fill up the sidelines.

RF: The sidelines.

MB: For home games; and then the music group, you know so many, the dance group, one girl told me there are about a hundred and fifty girls who are involved with this dance thing. You don't hear anything about it and you sense they have their performances on a given Saturday. They have an afternoon performance and an evening performance. You never hear about them trying to sell tickets as the theater does but I'm told that you can't get in. They don't have to, you can't get in. Each kid I guess invites parents so that the whole place gets filled with that and they put on

different dance numbers. Some of the kids have different experiences in a musical, I can't remember the title of last fall, I said, "Where did all these girl's learn how to tap dance?" There were about fifteen girls doing tap dancing, no men. They had to go outside and hire a kid to fulfill the role for the male tap dancer. I said, "Where did all these kids learn that", and then you find out that a lot of kids today, in today's society, you know, they took ballet when they could, so they do tap dancing. I was speaking to a Hispanic girl the other day and I said, "It's too bad, they don't see any minorities, There's one exception on the cheerleaders, one African American girl cheerleader but there's no Hispanic's", and she says "Well growing up we don't have opportunities to go to dance schools and ballet and so forth." They're not there yet. So, because I would have loved to see a little bit of a mix, where are the minorities, where are the Hispanics in participating in activities of this nature? So that will take a little time, but evidently, with the traditional kids are coming you know, with those experiences, musical experiences, that's another whole group, all the people in music and the chorus group.

RF: Well, it would indicate that we're drawing from a rising middle class, a slightly higher level than we were drawing in the early sixties. When you draw like a place where I live, in Chappaqua, everybody's into everything. The kid has to be in dance and music, have an instrument, do this, play sports. So the parents, see activities as an important way of getting them into college; but then a lot of the activities are things they can carry with them after, so it's not all that bad.

MB: No, there's been a lot of interest in the Our Lady of Lourdes basketball team; the girls lately, and talking. So many articles have been written about it, there are

three girls, the Viani girls, three sisters on the team. One senior has a full scholarship to Villanova. They were saying basically, that that's the focus, getting a scholarship and she's good, she has talent, getting to AAU on teams year round, and then working through Lourdes and then she has a sister who's a sophomore and she has another sister who's a freshman and three sisters are on the same team. The father is a dentist and a Marist graduate.

RF: He's a Spanish guy too, that's very interesting. Do you notice the change in the distribution between male and female?

MB: No, in languages, that was one of the best things, whenever, was it in sixty-nine or sixty-eight the women started coming to the college and I can remember this woman from Kingston, where, I forget exactly. I can't remember her name but I know she wanted to take courses here and she had asked and she might have been one of the first women students and Jerry Weiss was working with her and that was in the sixties and we had not formally accepted women as yet. Maybe Brother Belanger would remember the name, but it goes back there and then we started getting a few women but women are more naturally inclined toward languages. So in my classes presently, I'll have anywhere from three out of twenty, three to five or six males, everyone else is females. Those are the ones in Spain right now, ten females, one male. [Laughter] So for us, the presence of females for Languages was very helpful.

RF: Yes, helpful.

MB: It keeps us going.

RF: Plus you've always had that since it switched to co-ed, always gave you, so you didn't notice the imbalance campus wide.

MB: No, in the early days when we had Languages and it was mostly male. It was struggle, it was required you know, before the late sixties it was required and a lot of the Business majors hated it and had difficulty with it. It was a struggle. It wasn't pleasant for them and we were teaching a lot of elementaries and intermediates. Today we don't require a Language and that's something that some of our faculty are not happy with. They think that we should but at least the students are there because they choose to be there, they want to be there and they can use it if they are intelligent about it, they can use it to fulfill some of their requirements.

RF: I think we're almost over, I think, but I want to just, if I thought of something.

John Ansley: I can switch it.

RF: Well that's alright, we almost finished anyway I think because, I was going to ask you, before Hugh Sheridan, who was the Master?

MB: Kiernan, Kiernan Brennan.

RF: Oh, okay, so Hugh Sheridan replaced Kiernan? And he had a relatively unhappy time here I think because he was right in the maelstrom of commotion.

MB: He was in a difficult time but he was good, I mean you go back in time and he was always a very common sense, reasonable person. So he was appreciated I think, by the Student Brothers at the time.

RF: He was.

MB: But I think it was, it had grown on him and I think it was becoming a burden and making the decisions by himself at a critical time when you were responsible for some eighty to a hundred people. In terms of the religious formation and the academic formation and basically being chief cook and bottle washer of the whole

operation economics and the physical facility.

RF: Yes it was tough, very difficult for him. Okay, well thanks very much, we appreciate and you know, I think it's interesting because everybody that we interview seems to have a slightly different viewpoint, so it's really a mosaic.

M.B. It will be interesting how you put this together and when you figured out those differences and bring the groups together.

R.F. Well right now Brian and I feel our job is just to get the information, because if we don't get it now who knows? (Tape ends)