

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Albert A. Cardoni, S.J.
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THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HISTORY

Oral histories are the taped recordings of interviews with interesting and often important persons. They are not folklore, gossip, hearsay, or rumor. They are the voice of the person interviewed. These oral records are, in many instances, transcribed into printed documentary form. Though only so much can be done, of course, in an hour or some times two, they are an important historical record whose value increases with the inevitable march of time.

For whatever reason, New England Jesuits, among others around the world, have not made any significant number of oral histories of their members. Given the range of their achievements and their impact on the Church and society, this seems to many to be an important opportunity missed. They have all worked as best they could for the greater glory of God. Some have done extraordinary things. Some have done important things. All have made valuable contributions to spirituality, education, art, science, discovery, and many other fields. But living memories quickly fade. Valuable and inspiring stories slip away.

This need not be. Their stories can be retold, their achievements can be remembered, their adventures saved. Their inspiration can provide future generations with attractive models. That is what oral history is all about.

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April 2008

Interview with Fr. Albert A. Cardoni, S.J.
By Fr. Paul C. Kenney, S.J.
June 6, 2006

FAMILY

KENNEY: Good morning, Al.

CARDONI: Good morning, Paul.

PK: Tell me a bit about your family, would you?

AC: My father came from Montecelio in Tuscany, across the valley from Tivoli and about twenty minutes from Rome. My mother came from Rivisondoli, a little town in the mountains.

PK: Do you have relatives there?

AC: Yes, a couple of aunts on my mother's side. My father's family is flourishing, because he had two older brothers and some uncles. They all were very good to me during my visit while I was studying in Rome.

RELATIVES IN ITALY

PK: What was it like?

AC: I saw the Cardonis outside Rome and my aunts down in Rivisondoli. I'd spend the night with my aunts. They had to get up early to milk the cows. One aunt was proud that she was the town's pig slaughterer. Townspeople would buy a pig young, fatten it up, then would

call on her to slaughter it.

PK: [Chuckles] How about your father's family?

AC: His brothers still lived in Montecelio, and did pretty well, working in the marble quarries near Travertine. One uncle invented a saw to cut the stone, so he was doing pretty well. Another uncle got insurance money when a horse damaged his car.

PK: OK.

PARENTS

PK: How about your parents?

AC: Lucia and Anthony. My father did lots of things. He managed a grocery store for a while. He knew how to cut meat. But during World War II his store fell apart. So he worked for Allis Chalmers as a boring mill operator until he retired.

PK: And your mother?

AC: She came from Italy as a widow with three sons, Matteo, Alfredo, and Guido, and then married my father.

PK: How many years between you and Guido?

AC: Thirteen. He and Alfred lived with us at that store. Matteo must have taken a commercial course in high school, because he was a timekeeper for B. F. Sturtevant. Alfred took a mechanical arts course, and then worked as a turbine tester for the same firm. Guido took a college course but never got to college. He did odd jobs like painting ceilings.

PK: What other siblings do you have?

AC: My younger brother, Edmund, and my sister, Delia. She seems to be healthy enough right now; she never married. He's in assisted living; he had three sons.

HOME LIFE IN READVILLE

PK: How about the religious tone at home?

AC: We went to Sunday Mass and daily during Lent. We

were pious children. We had pictures of the Blessed Virgin and Sacred Heart—sort of standard.

PK: What interested you as a boy?

AC: Well, I ran around the woods a lot, and played baseball in the streets. We lived on a private way. I played sandlot football and baseball, not basketball. But I was never good enough to make a high school team.

PK: Did you help in the store?

AC: When I got older, I would have to stand watch. Very seldom did I deal with customers.

PARISH LIFE

PK: How about your parish?

AC: We were all active members of St. Anne's Parish in Hyde Park near Boston. Fr. David Regan, the first pastor, had a tough time, because he had to put up buildings during the Depression.

The Council of Baltimore insisted parishes build the parochial school first. My older brothers would go to Mass there near the eighth grade classroom until the basement of the church got built, but they had only the lower church while I was there. Later there was a public elementary school. When most of the students went there, the parochial school closed.

The Irish from the Walker Square section were early supporters of the parish. Although the Italians came to Mass, they were not really active until Fr. Mimi Pitarro came. Maybe they had an Italian Mass, but at least the pastor made some contact with the Italian families, so they could enter into the parish.

PK: Were you an altar boy?

AC: No, the pastor would call on only the Irish boys. My uncle pushed his son and my young brother to serve Mass. I didn't learn until I got to Shadowbrook.

PK: So there was some discrimination?

AC: Maybe benign neglect. I remember the pastor often

asked for money for the new church—and make sure you contributed! But there wasn't much around anywhere.

PK: Right.

AC: He was known as a tough pastor. But it was tough for him, too. I remember him as a good pastor.

PK: Did he influence you about becoming a priest?

AC: No. The Columbans had a seminary nearby, so occasionally a Columban priest said Mass. Later Fr. Joe Valenti, S. J. stayed at the parish for a while. Jesuits began coming down from Boston College.

EARLY EDUCATION

PK: How about grammar school?

AC: I did pretty well, maybe second in the class. They had a good convent of nuns.

PK: Which ones?

AC: Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky.

PK: Any memories?

AC: My mother took me to the principal, Sr. Rose Vincent, to enroll me. Sr. Reparata, the first grade teacher, taught almost everybody. [Chuckles] But I remember Sr. Mary Hortense; Sr. Mattangela—she was a pretty nun; Sr. Mary; Sr. Clara; Sr. Domatilla. My sister knew them better than I did.

HIGH SCHOOL

PK: Where did you go to high school?

AC: Hyde Park High.

PK: How were the teachers?

AC: They were very good. But the number one teachers were Boston College grads, like John Buckley, the history teacher. Miss Ann Doyle taught Latin and knew Bob Drinan, S.J. She would hand out pamphlets on becoming a priest to the Irish and Italian boys.

PK: Really.

AC: They'd say, "Yes, I'll think about it." She must have talked to my physics teacher, because one day he asked, "Are you going to become a priest?" I said, "I don't think so." So I didn't even think of becoming a priest, but I listened. And it wasn't until I got to Boston College that I had to make a decision.

BOSTON COLLEGE

AC: At BC I hung around with George McRae. We both became Jesuits. I had only a year of college before I got drafted. I had tried to enlist at seventeen, but my eyes were not good enough, so I had to wait for the draft.

At BC they gave me an accelerated pre-med course. I got physics, chemistry, and biology. BC had an ASTP—Army Special Training Program. In September all the science majors and pre-meds were in one classroom. Mike Walsh, S.J. [later BC president] taught us biology. But each month the numbers decreased, due to the draft, until by June there were only four of us left. Then I was drafted and did my Navy time.

NAVY YEARS

PK: How did that happen?

AC: I wore glasses. At the draft office, there was a Navy officer and an Army officer. I was first sent to the Army officer, and I said, "I'd like to get in the Navy." And he said, "Go, see the Commander." He took down my name and said OK. So I got in the Navy that way. I just lucked out. That was in 1944.

PK: Where did you do your basic training?

AC: In New York, at Geneva near Lake Seneca. The year at BC helped me with the sciences. Before going to BC, when I was trying to enlist at seventeen, the chief petty officer gave me a test. He said, "Well, brush up on your physics." So I went to BC.

At boot camp in the classification test my vocabulary test helped me get a good grade. So, after I took the test for electronics technicians, I was sent to Chicago for a month. They went from arithmetic all the way up to algebra. Then you had a choice of various other schools—elementary machinery or electronics— either in Gulfport, Mississippi, or Del Monte, California. I went to Del Monte.

I spent seven months on Treasure Island next to San Francisco. When the war in Europe was over, I still had to serve time. We got a delay for a leave. Then we were shipped out to Guam. I spent about a month with a whole lot of electronic or radio technicians that they didn't need anymore. And they finally cleared out that receiving station.

And they put a half a dozen of us on a ship to Wake Island. So I took a little course down there. But they didn't need me there either, because they were just rebuilding the island communications.

When they wanted to put us on work detail, our leader said we were petty officers, and they were supposed to use us at our rates. So they sent us to Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, as they were getting ready for the first Pacific atom bomb test at Bikini. On July 1, 1946 when they did the first test, I was at sea on my way back to the States.

When we came back to the States, I got three days leave in San Francisco. Finally they shipped us back to Boston. The Navy brought you back to where you enlisted and discharged you there. I did not choose to stay in the Naval Reserve. Then I went back to BC

BACK AT BC

AC: So I had twenty-one months of education in the Navy, except for boot camp. The GI allowance made things pretty good from there on in. I was going back to BC

for my last three years, We had a large group of GI's in our section. The GI Bill paid our tuition until 1951, when I got to philosophy at Weston.

PK: What did you study?

AC: Well, I took an AB Greek course, because I thought I might become a priest. I was unsure, wriggling there, hanging back and forth. You had to get Latin, so I took the Classics—Latin, Greek, and figured I'd keep my options open there.

PK: OK.

AC: George McRae and I would hang around together. Sometimes three or four of us cut math class on Wednesday and went to a baseball game. We'd have a meal and maybe a movie.

I was with George one day looking over the bookstores on Cornhill. I mentioned what I intended to do, maybe become a priest, thinking of becoming a Jesuit. George said, "Me too." I said, "What do we do?"

We went to the BC student chaplain. Later when the provincial visited BC, somebody came to our class and said he wanted to speak to Mr. Cardoni and Mr. McRae. So I went down there.

Forrest Donahue, S. J., the provincial's assistant, brought us in to see the rector of BC. He asked me how I would feel about becoming a Jesuit. He said, "Suppose you were older and had to take orders from a younger man." I said, "Well, I'll manage that then."

PK: So you were accepted.

AC: From there on you had these clothing lists. And you had to spend a lot of time to find a black alpaca jacket and overcoat—a winter overcoat in the middle of July! I had a lot of the things at home I could have used later, but I didn't bring any of them.

SHADOWBROOK

PK: How did you find the novitiate?

AC: They were happy days. With me were a bunch of us from BC—Frank Lewis, Dave Boulton, George McRae. Art Paré and Al Morris were a year ahead of us. The novitiate was filled up in those days.

George McRae and Bob Lindsay went down to Wernersville, Pennsylvania for novitiate. The rest of us went to Shadowbrook and we all came up to Weston together, then from Weston on we went to different places.

But Shadowbrook was kind of tough. My family, I think, suspected it. When they visited, that was tense for them. One uncle kept assuring me that, if ever I wanted to come home, I would be welcome. That was not an option for me. And so I stuck it out, but I found it kind of rough.

PK: More than the Navy?

AC: Yes, much tougher than the Navy. The novice master was John Post. I liked him, though he had the reputation of being rather severe. Later on John said he might have been too severe.

I think he followed a psychologist who stressed: “You just muster the will to do difficult things.” For example, once a fly landed on George McRae. He did not try to get it off but just left it there. We were all watching that fly.

PK: [Laughs]

AC: But John Post was a good man and helped me. It was a good novitiate, so no problems at all. But it was rough.

PK: How about the juniorate?

AC: I liked the juniorate. It was relaxing. Once they got you doing studies, things were all right. I got along there pretty well. It was a good bunch of guys. Willy Carroll [Fr. William Carroll, S. J.] gave us a good course on Latin comedy.

PHILOSOPHY STUDIES

PK: And then here to Weston College for philosophy in 1951.

AC: I had enough Latin and Greek, so I was in a special group at Weston with Bob Lindsay, George McRae, and a few others. Willy Carroll had been quite a good teacher. He had told us when we were leaving Shadowbrook to have a specialty, which was good advice. I just stayed with the classics. I was excused from physics and the sciences, since I'd had done those before.

PK: Right.

AC: So I could spend more time doing philosophy. We had Frank Callahan, S. J., a good teacher on the philosophy of being. That was the kind of stuff we got, which was kind of good. I liked philosophy. It was no problem at all.

I also liked to work in the garden. I cooked on Thursdays at Brookside, one of villa cabins here [now all gone].

PK: Italian food?

AC: Yes—macaroni. Joe Tylanda would cook Polish dishes. We had a good time.

PK: You continued playing baseball?

AC: Oh, we played baseball, yes. Then you had the game between the theologians and the philosophers. Frank Nicholson pitched for the theologians for three years, and he lost every time.

PK: [Laughs]

REGENCY IN BAGHDAD

PK: Then off to regency...

AC: I went over to Baghdad College to teach religion, English, and math. I started off with fourth year, but, when I couldn't handle the courses at all, I was switched to first year. I taught English using Decker's gram-

mar. And we had a good mathematics textbook in English. It covered mathematics from addition through algebra. I found that useful, and very, very good.

PK: Had you volunteered for Baghdad?

AC: Yes. I told the provincial, Fr. Bill Fitzgerald, S. J. I'd be willing to go to Baghdad or anywhere at all. So he said, "Well, write me a note." So I wrote a letter to him. Then in third year, when they were giving out the assignments, the rector, Jimmy Coleran, S. J. called me in and said, "Look, in June you're going to go to Baghdad." I said, "Great." I didn't know what it all meant, just that I just was going to go. Stanley Marrow, S. J. [a native Iraqi] was pleased. So I went to Baghdad. That was quite good.

PK: How was it to live in Baghdad?

AC: Very good. We went over on the Exochorda, a sort of cruise ship around the Mediterranean, which was good.

PK: That's an unusual name.

AC: Yes. There were four ships of the American Export Lines. They had one class, second class. It made the rounds of the various ports. They left from New York. I think the reason we went that way was because you could have two trunks, and it was much cheaper than by air.

PK: How was the trip?

AC: I didn't find much difficulty at all. We stopped off at Marseilles and Naples, next to Alexandria and Cairo, then up to Lebanon.

It was during the summer, when the community was at Ghazir, so we spent some time there. In September you took a bus across the desert, our first experience of the desert. Getting across the desert meant that after a while you sort of crawled into a shell, because it was dusty, hot, and sticky. But it could have been worse, and we were young and fairly resilient. There was no real problem.

PK: And then...?

AC: Yes, when you got your first look at Baghdad, it was muddy. You went through customs and got on a Baghdad College school bus. When you came to Baghdad College, that was kind of good. Charlie Leoffler and his workers had made the place nice. You had a yellow brick enclosure with lots of date palm trees, grass, and so forth. So that was quite good; they did a good job building up that place from 1932 until 1954.

PK: Any particular memories of that time?

AC: The Suez crisis. And my last year there was tough, because the school closed down.

PK: Oh.

AC: When the British went into Suez, the United States made a big fuss, and so the British were out of favor. But the Americans were all still OK. Bob Sullivan, S.J. was the headmaster at the time.

PK: OK.

AC: Classes were called off until all the crisis subsided. But we had to charge the full tuition, so they wanted to keep up the full year. They had to compress everything. There was no Easter vacation. During that they gave the upperclassmen their retreat. But we had examinations for the other grades. We went to school for a long time on the condensed course until about late July.

PK: So it was a tough year.

AC: Yes. I had a couple of freshmen, who had flunked. I remember I was still getting my grades in. I'm always late in my grades anyhow. I was at it up until the day the bus left, so I missed the going-away luncheon. But I got on the bus and left it all behind me.

THEOLOGY STUDIES

PK: OK. Then back to theology here at Weston.

AC: I had no difficulty in theology. I liked it; it was better than I had thought. I was also going to see those guys I knew before. I hadn't seen them for three years or so. So it was nice getting back to theology and to seeing green grass everywhere. That was good.

I got the regular course of theology, but, during the summers, because we had been over to Baghdad during regency, we were allowed to go to Boston College. I took a course in calculus. I wasn't sure I'd get back to Baghdad, so I was taking no chances. Having taught algebra already was a godsend, because that summer was good, because I got to learn differential calculus. I enjoyed that summer there especially.

PK: OK.

AC: Then the next summer I was not too smart. I took courses in physics and differential equations. But I tried to do two at once, and that didn't work out too well. So I dumped the physics, and that was just too bad.

PK: Was the first summer better than the second?

AC: Yes. Now, when I left Baghdad I asked Tom Hussey, the rector, if there were any special studies I should take. So one day during the provincial's visit somebody came along and said, "Do you want to take some seismology?" I said, "OK."

Tom Hussey must have suggested that one of us do some seismology during theology. I think someone had heard that they had a grant. The government had some surplus seismographs to give to educational institutions.

So I went down to the Weston Observatory. Dan Linehan, S.J. gave me some articles on geophysics. I read them and other things like that. But I didn't get much out of it. I took a course in seismographs, and at BC I did the mathematics. Then on a field trip to BC while they were building some dorms up there...

PK: The upper campus?

AC: Yes. This was during the summer again. I was allowed to go into the dark cabinet and push the button and blow up the rock. But after a while, between blowing things up and working in the library up there, you know, I was getting kind of tired of that sort of thing. I did enjoy the course in geology, but it was mostly reading. Just doing stuff by yourself is not good. I think I took a couple of courses with Jim Skehan, S.J. here at Weston. But I suppose I could have gone to classes at BC.

TEACHING ETHICS

PK: After theology and tertianship at Pomfret, you got a doctorate in philosophy at the Gregorian University in Rome?

AC: Yes.

PK: We've not talked about your interest in philosophy.

AC: I just took the regular philosophy course.

PK: How did you come to the decision?

AC: In my fourth year of theology, I had a room on the fourth floor with a telephone. One day, J. V. O'Connor called up and said, "Will you teach a course in ethics to the sisters at Regis during the summer?" So I said sure. Ed Kilmartin was the dean of studies. I remember one day outside the minister's office he asked, "Are you interested in graduate studies?" I said, "Yes, I'll be interested in that, yes." And he said, "Would you be interested in physics?" I said, "No. [Chuckles] We have a couple of guys from Detroit, who are doing undergraduate physics, and also Bill Callahan."

PK: Yes.

AC: He studied physics during regency and was starting graduate studies when we were in theology. I said I'd be starting off from scratch, which would be foolish.

PK: So?

AC: I taught the sisters at Regis that summer.

PK: OK.

AC: I stayed at Weston the summer after my fourth year in a room on the third floor of the philosophy section. I went over to Regis in the morning to say Mass for the community. Then they had breakfast—they had good breakfasts, ham and eggs or something like that. Then I taught the two classes in the morning—120 girls, 120 sisters. There was a group of Dominican sisters there, and the others used to go off to Boston College for their undergraduate studies.

PK: OK.

AC: That was rough for them there. But that year Regis wanted to run a school for the sisters themselves. So I gave them a course in ethics there. It wasn't far; Regis College is a couple of miles from here.

PK: Yes.

AC: When I talked about what to do in the case of rape, they knew more about that than I did.

With 120 students I said I wasn't going to sit around grading 120 examinations. So I asked "Ducky" [William] Drummond, S.J., if he'd come down to hear orals with me. He took half the class; we did five- to ten-minute orals, which was nothing at all. So all the girls ended up with A's and B's.

PK: OK. What did you do next?

STUDYING IN ROME

AC: Originally I had been assigned to go to Rome for theology. But then one day, Jimmy Coleran, the rector at Weston said, "There's a change. You're going to study philosophy." That was OK with me. So I went to Rome for philosophy.

I enjoyed Rome very, very much. There wasn't much in the way of philosophy. I didn't realize this at the time. The idea was you go to Rome for two years, get a director, and write up a thesis. We had to have only

eleven credits. But I did have to take a course under Copleston. At least I saw him, what he looked like anyhow. But I didn't understand the Latin of teachers from France or Germany.

I did get a chance to travel around. But as far as I was concerned, the course at Rome was disappointing. I did scratch up some kind of a thesis. Who knows where it is now?

PK: [Chuckles]

AC: An Irish Jesuit read the thesis. You had to go to a special class on doing a thesis. I did all that was required and submitted a thesis. I had seen lots of others trying to choose a topic. I suggested some topic, but he didn't think much of it. There was too much written on it already.

PK: And then?

AC: So I mentioned Paul Tillich. He knew nothing about Tillich. And there was not much in Tillich anyhow as far as metaphysics went. He used the word, "being," but really didn't do any metaphysics. He came from a Protestant perspective. I probably should have said that Tillich didn't have any fully developed metaphysics of being. In the end, we managed to produce something, which I now would take exception to. Its style was also foreign to the American style of scholarship. It's mostly quotes and notes. It was written in an esoteric language common to such theses.

PK: OK.

AC: If somebody was going over to Rome for philosophy or for the biennium, he should have some idea ahead of time about the topic of his thesis. The other thing is to do your doctoral studies in philosophy at least here in the States.

PK: And then go there.

AC: The American system involves a lot of course work. So then when you have to teach, you should be able to do

so. When I was teaching at Fairfield I had had my philosophy background here at Weston. And so I taught in that style. We had a good ethics textbook. But there was an emphasis on a traditional approach to ethics.

Bill Carr, S. J. had taught ethics at Fairfield, but he branched out and got some first-hand experience at hospitals. I was just giving the old scholastic philosophy they had on ethics. What I didn't like to do was Descartes. I finally had to teach Descartes, but I didn't want to teach it.

FROM ROME TO FAIRFIELD

PK: And after your study in Rome?

AC: After I finished up in Rome and before going over to Baghdad, I wrote and asked, "Shall I come back to the States?" They said, "No, go right back to Baghdad."

PK: OK.

AC: When I went back, I stopped in Beirut. My final vows came up about that time, so I took the vows there in Lebanon. One of the Lebanese Jesuits wrote a nice little poem about the joy in heaven. I should have got a copy of it. They broke out a good bottle of wine. We had a good dinner to celebrate. So it was a nice day. I don't know what's happened to that place now. I think it's been overrun in the war.

PK: Right. Afterwards you taught philosophy at Al-Hikma and became chair of the philosophy department?

AC: Yes. Technically I wasn't named chairman of the department, because there wasn't much of a department. We had an undergraduate course in psychology. Many of the students were just learning English and were having trouble.

PK: OK. What was it like when you were expelled from Baghdad?

AC: You know the politics of Iraq. When we were there as scholastics 1954-57, we were under the monarchy.

Things were kind of good. Then the first of the revolutions began.

It happened when a colonel and his unit were called up to Baghdad, and they were given ammunition. So when they were up at Baghdad, they had the first revolution. They shot the prince regent and the young King Faisal II.

And then, from that time on politics got ever more chaotic. Some colonel would get strong and you'd have a revolution. Then it'd go back to someone else. In that way they worked out their philosophy of politics—absolutism and assassination.

Anyhow, I came back to Baghdad from Rome in 1965, and we'd been at Al-Hikma for a year or so. I was supposed to go back to the States in '67 for my sabbatical year, because I had been out of the States about ten years. But things were kind of rough in Iraq then. There were student groups roaming around. There was a communist group and some other group and then a pro-government group. And they were causing trouble so that there was a lot of destruction.

At the end of '67, I was sent back to the States with Fred Kelly, S. J. He got a chance to go to the University of Rhode Island to finish special studies in the computer. Fred had met an engineer, who was helping us teach engineering. He became a dean at URI later on and then, I think, a vice president. He got Fred there. And I went along to URI. I stayed at a parish off the campus, Christ the King.

PK: Did you take any courses?

AC: I audited a course in the problem of God or something like that by a professor from Howard University, and a course in psychology for when I went back to Baghdad. It would have been very useful. It was quite good. I took the examinations and I think I did all right. Then in August, when I was going back to

Baghdad, Joe Ryan, S. J., Dean of Al-Hikma University, asked me to stop off at Louvain for a colloquium on the missions.

PK: How was the colloquium?

AC: I was pleased by that colloquium, because there was talk about building up inculturation. At that time, we heard talk about the Vatican's plans to donate the money to build a seminary for the Iraqi clergy across from Al-Hikma. They would take courses at Baghdad University. They'd worked out a business-oriented curriculum to help them run a parish. So it sounded quite good—like the kind of things that were going on in parishes in other parts of the world.

But anyhow, I came back to break the good news to them about inculturation, to encourage them, and to affirm that seemed to be a good idea. Fred Kelly was back by then. He said, "They told me that we've been nationalized." It was Baath Party but before Saddam. They had worked out their own program.

PK: Their policy.

AC: Colleges were supposed to incorporate a strongly patriotic emphasis. I think they were like small-time Nazis—really cruel to each other. Dick McCarthy, S.J. was the rector of Al-Hikma then. They'd appointed their own president. So we had to provide an office for him with a secretary. The secretary was probably a Baath party member. And he wanted a car. I think we told him no. We had somebody go and pick him up at home.

That went on for about a year or so. I think we sort of ignored him. Then the word came out that they were going to kick out the administration and appoint their own. There were about six of us supposed to be expelled. The rest of us would be allowed to stay on and teach under the new regime.

Whenever things got tense with the government at

Baghdad College or Al-Hikma, Dick McCarthy, the rector, Joe Ryan, and John Banks would go down. They'd know somebody in the cabinet or nearby. And you'd have some kind of access. You'd get to talk to the president and get some things done, see.

PK: Right.

AC: By November, 1968, things weren't working out that way at all. So finally, we were told to leave Al-Hikma "at once"—that meant in three or four days. So the Jesuits said, "Well, we're all going. That's all." So they sent us all out that way. Baghdad College was a good place to leave all our extra things.

Then there was rather a good send-off. The students were told not to go down to the airport, but a lot disobeyed and came anyway. There was a crowd of over 300 at the airport. A lot of them are people we meet at the Baghdad reunions now.

PK: Oh.

AC: So there were a lot of loyal people like that who came down to see us off. We just got on the plane. We were going off into exile, leaving Baghdad, going to the States—to exile in the States. [Chuckles] It was not a bad sentence at all.

I went back to Rome to finish off some of my thesis. Well, I had already taken my examination during semester break one year.

PK: And then...?

AC: I still had to publish some little work. And so I went back to Rome for a while. I was at the house of writers, a nice new building. It was quite good. I typed the things up there. I got most of it done. I brought it to the printers. I got one set of proofs back. But I had to go back again.

Then I got a call from Boston, "Would you be willing to teach?" See, I think most of the men expelled from Baghdad were given a year off or something.

“Would you be willing to teach in the coming year?”
Dennis Crowley, S.J. at Fairfield was sick. So I said,
“Yes, I’ll be glad to teach.” I flew back to the States. I
called Jim Coughlin, rector at the time. I said, “Do
you want me?” He said, “Yes, come on down.”

PK: From Baghdad to Rome to Fairfield.

AC: Yes. I drove right down to Fairfield.

PK: Did you have other offers?

AC: Although Boston College had an opening, they were
not interested in me. There was no problem at all with
my starting right away at Fairfield, no examinations
to give, for example. I just began teaching.

PK: OK.

AC: I started part-time in the philosophy department in
fall ’69, then full-time in 1970. I taught three courses.
Fairfield went coed about that time. Ben Murray had
started a glee club with Simon Harak, and it was a
good club. Simon was a good musician.

GLEE CLUB MANAGER

PK: OK.

AC: The glee club was called the Ambassadors of Song. They
wore tuxedos and a red stripe and sang Fairfield songs.
Also, they were not supposed to have beards. Simon
Harak, unfortunately, died on us. So Ben had to get a
new director and a glee club manager. But he didn’t
think of me at first. He thought about two or three
other people, but maybe they were too modern. Any-
how, Jim Coughlin asked me if I’d take it. And I said,
“Yes, I’ll do it.”

PK: I see.

AC: I took over from Ben Murray as business manager. It
was right under the president. This was all quite good.
When Simon died, Ben got Paul LaMedica, the music
director at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Center,
to come up from Long Island twice a week.

PK: Oh.

AC: Paul was a good music director. I arranged the concerts, got the buses, and handled the money. I found it enjoyable. It was a good time.

I remember one concert they called the Klein Concert. Every year we would put on fancy program in Bridgeport at the Klein Memorial Theater.

PK: OK.

AC: We had to rent it for something like \$800, and hire the stage crew to run the lights and set the place up. We ran some pretty good concerts there.

I typed up a history of the club and little biographical sketches of the participants, as I did for the *Province News* for years.

PK: As *Province News* editor, I remember your humorous contributions for the Fairfield Jesuit community.

AC: Yes, poking fun at the guys and things like that.

PK: Sure.

AC: We'd also ask girls to serve as usherettes, which was kind of nice of them. We'd get them corsages and pin them on. And that was a nice night. Right.

Then after the concert there was a reception with sandwiches, rolls, and so forth. That worked out pretty well.

PK: Good.

AC: When Fairfield finally went coed, a woman faculty member became musical director. She was a good chorale director, and worked with a combined group. The women's voices added a lot to the sound of the chorale. The students could take singing for a degree program, so they were under a lot of pressure.

But when we were just a club, the guys would get their tuxedos cheaply—maybe \$50 to \$80 for a used one. Later the chorale members got good tuxedos, since the university financed them.

Well, the thing was that the glee club originally was

the president's project. But the new president was more interested in the chorale and the chapel than in the glee club. So a little bit later, they decided to end the glee club.

It was about ready to go anyhow, because the director had resigned. The glee club's funds were low, so it would have been hard to increase his salary. The accompanist was willing to take over the club and he was good. So some alumni called themselves the "The Ambassadors of Song," and they were the old glee club. They carried on for a year or so.

TEACHING

PK: Let's talk a little bit about how you developed as a teacher of philosophy over the years.

AC: Well, the classes were full and well-attended. I ended up also teaching ethics to the faculty. I had been using a more traditional approach towards such things as forming a conscience, and I kept doing it.

PK: How about your students?

AC: Well, we had quite a few Asian students—Vietnamese, South Koreans. They were quite good. They would take copious notes. And I gave lots of handouts on philosophy. I ended up teaching the anthropology of Socrates and some of the other Greek philosophers. Just survey courses—not much depth at all.

PK: How about the department?

AC: After several department heads, Tom Regan, S.J. came in as department chair. He began hiring some new teachers with varied backgrounds. Well, things were looking up, as a good department formed up.

PK: So after 32 years teaching philosophy at Fairfield, you retired at the age of 75?

AC: When I resigned, I had a going-away party. I got a chair and nice big silver platter, which I gave to my sister.

PK: I see.

AC: I had taught with just the ordinary philosophy and theology courses I got in my training. I remember a German philosophy professor once asked me what my specialty was. I didn't have one. He said, "Well, you have to have some sort of a specialty."

If I had gone to Fordham during summers, I'd have chosen to study something in American philosophy. I did give a course in American philosophy. The textbook I used was kind of interesting, but you just had a collection of their writings. And I could see where it was going.

PK: Do you regret not having a speciality?

AC: Well, it wasn't the way we did things when I was studying in Rome.

PK: Right.

AC: I had some more specialized courses in physics to teach it better. I may have been better off pursuing physics. But I don't know.

PK: I see.

AC: They gave me the doctorate on the basis of the fact that I had been through a regular course of philosophy and theology over seven years. So those were post-graduate studies I did in Rome.

PK: Right.

AC: I could still teach philosophy if I had to.

PK: But you would have appreciated the chance to focus your teaching around your special interest?

AC: Yes. So somebody else in the department would teach a particular speciality in philosophy. Take the book that we were working on. I could have done it. And I had the background for it.

PK: All right.

EFFECTS OF OLD AGE

AC: Right now, I'm marginalized in two directions: I can't

see and I can't hear. I am reduced to a fairly routine life: breakfast, Mass, lunch, dinner, and listening to music. That's about it.

PK: OK. And are you happy here at Campion Center?

AC: Yes, I'd say yes. If I had something positive to do, I would be glad to do it. So if the provincial would want me to go out and teach somewhere, good. I'd go out and teach either algebra or philosophy or theology, with a little preparation.

PK: All right.

AC: I'm still alive. I'm 80 years old, but I have to be on my guard against falling. I fell down the stairs once. So I watch out for that. I figured if I fall down and break a leg, they'll put me in a wheelchair, and then that'll really put the end to it. All right. So the challenge now is just hanging on.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

PK: Over your life, have you felt a sense of God's providence in your life?

AC: All the way through, I suppose. Things have worked out pretty well. Yes, I suppose so. I never think too much about that. I take one day at a time as you go along. That's all.

PK: What have been the blessings of your life?

AC: I have been given lots of graces, I suppose, because the things have worked out quite well for me all the way through. But the fact that I'm 80 years old, and out here at Campion Health Center, and that I've been ordained as a priest for 46 years—great. Have I used those opportunities as well as I could have? I don't know. I don't think I've done any great things. But I'm not particularly glad of the loss of my hearing and my sight.

PK: OK.

AC: As for challenges, that I don't know. One challenge, I

suppose, is trying to give a homily at Mass. I've never felt confident about giving homilies, maybe because I've never had a chance to work in a parish. It might have been interesting to work in a parish where you could develop a series of homilies or topics, something of that kind.

I certainly had a happy life in the Society, a nice one. I suppose the Society is sort of a grace, sort of blessing. Look, I started out at Readville in Hyde Park, which is nowhere important, nowhere big and well-known. I didn't even get to a big high school like BC High. I got to go to BC through the Navy, thanks to the GI bill. You could go to the college of your choice for \$250 a year back in 1946, when I came out of the Navy after twenty-one months.

PK: \$250!

AC: But that got me my schooling and also a rather lavish monthly allowance. So in the English literature classes at BC, I could afford to buy the complete works of Shakespeare. I took advantage of that. Those were graces, I suppose. Yes.

I ended up at BC and found certain good friends at BC at the right time in my life. Well, I suppose those are graces, too. But I don't count them or line them up as graces. I just take them. They're good breaks. OK. So I've had my breaks. I've had good breaks, OK.

TOUGH BREAKS

PK: And with the good breaks there have been tough breaks as well?

AC: I suppose being kicked out of Baghdad was a disruption. The only thing I have against Saddam Hussein, he screwed my life up there, because I was assigned to Baghdad and I was getting lined up to going back there to teach. I might have moved more over toward mathematics and some psychology or something like that. I

might have branched out in different directions of study.

But when I got back, I went to Fairfield. It was a growing college—just three buildings or something like that. And now it's been built up. They're getting some good teachers, good administrators, a good campus, and a lot of good friends down there who support the school.

PK: I'd like to thank you for this interview.

AC: I hope the project works out pretty well.

Pange Lingua

Sing, my tongue, the Savior's glory,
of His flesh the mystery sing;
of the Blood, all price exceeding,
shed by our immortal King,
destined, for the world's redemption,
from a noble womb to spring.

Of a pure and spotless Virgin
born for us on earth below,
He, as Man, with man conversing,
stayed, the seeds of truth to sow;
then He closed in solemn order
wondrously His life of woe.

On the night of that Last Supper,
seated with His chosen band,
He the Pascal victim eating,
first fulfills the Law's command;
then as Food to His Apostles
gives Himself with His own hand.

Word-made-Flesh, the bread of nature
by His word to Flesh He turns;
wine into His Blood He changes;
what though sense no change discerns?
Only be the heart in earnest,
faith her lesson quickly learns.

Down in adoration falling,
Lo! the sacred Host we hail;
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing,
newer rites of grace prevail;
faith for all defects supplying,
where the feeble senses fail.

To the everlasting Father,
and the Son who reigns on high,
with the Holy Ghost proceeding
forth from Each eternally,
be salvation, honor, blessing,
might and endless majesty.
Amen. Alleluia.

*Translation by Rev. Edward Caswall,
1814-1878, a Anglican convert who
joined the Oratory of St. Philip Neri.*

Fr. Albert A. Cardoni, S.J.

- Born:** June 7, 1926, Readville, Massachusetts
- Entered:** August 14, 1948 Lenox, Massachusetts, St. Stanislaus Novitiate/Shadowbrook
- Ordained:** June 18, 1960, Weston, Massachusetts, Weston College
- Final Vows:** August 15, 1965, Church of Our Lady of Consolation, Tanail, Lebanon

1939 Readville, Massachusetts:

1939-1943 Hyde Park High School - Student

1943-1944 Boston College - Student in pre-med

1944 United States Navy

October 1944 to July 1946

1946 Readville, Massachusetts: Boston College - Student

**1948 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/
Shadowbrook - Novitiate and juniorate**

**1951 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
philosophy**

**1954 Baghdad, Iraq: Baghdad College - Taught religion,
English, mathematics**

**1957 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
theology**

1961 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertianship

1962 Rome, Italy: Gregorian University - Studied
philosophy

1965 Baghdad, Iraq: Al-Hikma University - Taught
philosophy, theology; chair of philosophy
department [to 11/1968]

1969 Fairfield, Connecticut: Fairfield University -
1969-1970 Taught philosophy, part-time
1970-2001 Taught philosophy, full-time
2001-2002 Professor emeritus

2002 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center -
Praying for the Church and the Society

Degrees

1948 Bachelor of Arts, Greek, cum laude, Boston College

1954 Licentiate in Philosophy, Weston College-Boston
College

1961 Licentiate in Theology, Weston College

1969 Doctor of Philosophy, Philosophy, Gregorian
University

AMDG

Appendix

Fr. Albert A. Cardoni, S.J, died at Campion Health Center, November 2, 2011.

Introduction to Wake Service, November 8, 2011
By Sr. Kathleen Foley S.N.D.

Good afternoon, everyone. We welcome you all to this prayer vigil in celebration of the life and ministry of Fr. Albert Anthony Cardoni, and his 85 years of living, his 63 years as a member of the Society of Jesus, and his 51 years as a priest.

A very special welcome to Delia, Al's younger sister, his niece and nephews, friends, Al's Jesuit brothers, and companions along the way.

To begin, let's celebrate Al's origins. It all began when Al's father, Antonio, from Montecelio in Tuscany met Al's mother, Lucia, from Revisondoli, a little town in the mountains. And then many, many years later, as a young adult, we celebrate Al's desire to serve his country as an enlisted man in the Navy and still later we celebrate his association with good close friends like George MacRae and how together they shared their desires to become Jesuits.

Let's celebrate, as a Jesuit, his ministry in the area of education: three years at Baghdad College, four years at Al-Hikma University in Iraq, and 33 years at Fairfield University as a teacher of philosophy.

Let's celebrate Al's humorous side and how he really enjoyed his role as the *Province News* contributor from Fairfield University and Prep, which he often used as a vehicle for "poking fun" at his brother Jesuits. How he enjoyed being the Glee Club manager of Fairfield's Ambassadors of Song— welcome respites from his teaching philosophy.

Al's years of productivity came to a gradual halt when he found himself at Campion Center nine years ago as a result of severe sensory deprivation, which finally rendered him almost completely without hearing and sight. His response to this scope and degree of diminishment was gradual and then almost complete withdrawal. But even during that extremely trying time, Al displayed remarkable fidelity. Fidelity to daily attendance at the 6:30 AM community Mass—front row, middle seat—and fidelity to daily reading of the breviary—laboriously so—through the use of an incredible magnifying glass. These were the daily spiritual practices that nourished Al. Let's celebrate that kind of faithfulness.

And then last Wednesday, November 2, very early on the feast of All Souls, so early the morning star had not yet appeared in the East—God came for Al. Can we imagine God saying: "Enough Al—no more struggle—come with me." And then the shadows dispersed, the darkness dispelled, and the clouds disappeared. It was the dawn of a new and eternal day for Jesuit Albert Anthony Cardoni. Let's celebrate that!

So, now, let's enter into our time of prayer together. The theme of our service will be "Our Eternal Home." Fr. Art Paré, a classmate of Al's, will co-lead the service. Fr. Jim O'Brien will lead us in singing "Soul of My Savior," actually a favorite prayer of St. Ignatius, the Anima Christi.

Funeral Homily by Fr. Walter Pelletier, S.J.
November 9, 2011

Readings: Wisdom 3:1-6, 9; John 14:1-6

May I thank all of you for coming this morning as we celebrate the entrance into eternal life of Fr. Al Cardoni, and offer our sympathy and condolence to Delia, Fr. Al's sister.

Not far under the surface, all of us live with a great deal of fear. The fear of atomic hardware falling out of the sky. And, there are the everyday fears and worries: the thought of losing one's job; of losing one's health; of losing one's life savings; of another war and terrorism; of accidents; of misfortune coming to one's family; of being rejected, being unwanted; of growing old and dependent, of being left alone without friends or family or loved ones. And finally, of course, there is the thought of loss: the loss of one's faculties, of one's hearing, of one's mobility, of memory, of loved ones, and of the loss we call death.

The whole point of faith is that when we meet with this fear of darkness and death, we are not hesitant to call out, because the whole point of believing is the conviction that there is always someone there to answer. And, when we feel like so many mountains have fallen upon us, and like the people in the gospel, are faced with the huge, great stone covering the tomb, and we look around for help and ask: "Who's going to lift the stone for us?" God says, "I will."

It's what parents do all the time for their young children, when they get scared of something like darkness, loud noise, or nightmares. They pat them on the head, soothe away the bad dreams, tuck them in bed all over again, and say those famous centuries-old words of reassurance: "It's all right, it's all right."

It is the same way with us. When we are faced with this great anxiety called death, we tend to run the whole gamut of emotions from acceptance to anger, to disbelief, to hurt, to bewilderment, because, after all, in death we always lose a person. But, we have to remember that we never lose our relationship to God. We still have someone who says, “It’s all right.” That someone is God—God present in his word, in the Spirit, and in the Church. It is in all these ways that God pats us on the head, tucks us back into bed, and says, “Even though you have fears and anxieties, it’s all right.” Jesus made it right, because it was his kind of love that burst the bonds of death.

How often this occurred in the gospels where a loss gave rise to fear. When Jairus approached the Lord on behalf of his dead daughter, when Martha and Mary pleaded on behalf of their dead brother, Lazarus, it was the Lord who said: “It’s all right.” When the good thief asked to be remembered, and when the centurion begged for healing for his servant, it was the Lord who said, “It’s all right.” When Peter’s mother-in-law was sick, and when the leper begged to be cleansed and the blind man begged for his sight to be restored, it was the Lord who said, “It’s all right.”

A few years ago, Simon and Garfunkel introduced a popular song, “The Sounds of Silence.” Some of the words went like this: “Hello darkness, my old friend. I’ve come to talk to you again. In restless dreams I walked alone, narrow streets of cobblestone. People talking without speaking... People hearing without listening... People writing songs that voices never share... Silence like a cancer grows... But my words like silent raindrops fall and echo in the wells of silence.”

Such was the world of Fr. Al Cardoni in the last few years due to a severe hearing loss as well as a decline in vision. When you take these two things together, it’s not a nice world. It’s a lonely world. It’s a world cut off from the

conversations of friends. It's a world cut off from the laughter of friends, a world cut off from the wonderful sounds of music, a world blind to the beauty of art and nature. For one like him, who had great insight, intellectual ability, and a fantastic sense of humor, it must have been a world of great self-denial.

I would like to give you a picture of Fr. Al—a little bit different one from what many may have witnessed during the past six or seven years. These are a few of the ventures we undertook: golfing vacations in Fall River and Maine; Boston College football games (in those days they were winning); casinos in Connecticut; PGA Golf Tournaments in New York; air shows at the Naval Air Station Quonset Point, Rhode Island; a World War I aircraft show in New York; museums; sightseeing in Montreal, Canada; the Jesuit shrine in Midland, Ontario, Canada; the historic battlefield in Saratoga, New York. And, of course, his many trips with the Fairfield University Glee Club for concerts. He was not a stay-at-home. And, there was a light side to all this.

Fr. Al had acquired a solid knowledge of electronics during his tour in the Navy. I once asked him to fix my television set. He took it apart and rearranged some wires. I asked him if it was OK to turn the set on. He said "Go ahead, but wait until I get to the door of the room."

Fr. George McCarron used to refer to Fr. Al and myself as "The Odd Couple," after the TV program, as we took our Friday night shopping excursions for snacks for the community in Fairfield. I will leave it to you to decide who was Oscar and who was Felix.

One night we were at the checkout counter, removing items from the cart. I was wearing a pair of white jeans at the time. Fr. Al dropped a bottle of cranberry juice at my feet. From knee to ankle, the pants were red. I mumbled something like, "Clumsy!" He said, "I heard that." From then on I was a little more careful in what I mumbled.

As a true philosopher, Fr. Al had a ready answer for everything. On another of our shopping trips, I asked: "Would you stop hitting me in the ankles with the cart?" He replied: "Well, don't stop so quickly."

The most famous incident occurred in the classroom at Fairfield University. The bell rang for class and Fr. Al entered the room. He opened his book bag and arranged his notes for the lecture and began to teach. About five minutes later, a woman professor entered the room and said: "Fr. Cardoni, this is my class." Fr. Al, finally, looked up at the class and, not recognizing anyone, said, "This would not have happened if you were on time."

One night at dinner, Fr. Maurice Wong got the best of him. Fr. Al mentioned that in grammar school, the kids would save their pennies and put them in the mite box to buy Chinese babies. Maurice replied that they did the same in his school to buy Italian babies.

Fr. Al was an old-time Jesuit. He didn't care much for all the meetings with superiors to discern what he should do. He would say, "Why don't they just tell me what to do, and I'll do it?" And he did. When told to go to Baghdad, he did. When Baghdad closed and he was told to go to Ireland for philosophy study, he did. When he was assigned to Fairfield University, he went. When asked to write for the *Province News* for Fairfield, he did, not without much grumbling. When asked to be moderator of the Fairfield University Glee Club, he did it, without being really able to sing a note. Much like his years in the service, when he was assigned to the Navy, without knowing how to swim.

Fr. Al was quite a cook. In preparing a meal, he kept two things in mind: quality and quantity. One summer, Fr. Don Lynch, Fr. Al, and myself went to visit friends in the 1000 Islands. The parents were on a trip and they asked us to keep an eye on their teenage son. Fr. Al was our cook. When the parents returned, they asked their son how things

went and did all have enough to eat. He told them that Fr. Al cooked up a pot of beans and hot dogs, which were very good, but, the only problem was, it was our dinner for the next four days.

Even though we grieve today over his death, we have good reason to be grateful and even joyful for the lessons that Fr. Al taught us. As silent as he is now, we might imagine him speaking to us with words something like this, “One day, sooner or later, we will meet again in one of the mansions of heaven which God has prepared for us. The beauty and splendor of that dwelling place will take your breath away. In fact, that is what happens when we die. Our breath is taken away. But, our loving, creating, living God will once again, as He did at the original creation, breathe new life into us. That is why you and I will never die again. One death is enough. But, life is never enough. That is why we live forever. For this, give thanks and praise the Lord of life.”

All of us, I imagine, thank God every day for the gifts of seeing and hearing. Last week at this time, I imagine that Fr. Al, as he entered eternal life, for the first time in many years, clearly saw and recognized the faces of his family and many friends who were there to greet him. I also imagine that he heard every note of the angelic choirs and probably joined in the singing, something he would never have done here. So, Fr. Al, “It’s all right.” You paid your dues. Now is the time to enjoy the sights and sounds of heaven.