

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. John J. Donohue, S.J.
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AMDG

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 Jesuit oral history is all about.

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Interview with Fr. John J. Donohue, SJ
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, SJ
September 6, 2007

PARENTS

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome.

JOHN DONOHUE: Thank you.

RR: Let's start with a bit about your early years. Where were you born?

JD: I was born at 31 Freeland Street, in Worcester, Mass., on January 12, 1926 on the third floor of a three-decker. The third of five children, I was the only son of Florence Timothy Donohue and Helen Clara Garvey.

My father was a grocer, managing Donohue's Market on Milbury St. He was a quiet man, dedicated to the business owned by his father. He enjoyed a game of poker with the boys at the end of the work day on a barrel top in the back of the store. "Working late" was the excuse to my mother, who was the homekeeper, raising five children.

She once attempted learning to drive the family Packard but soon gave up. She feared going uphill. I recall a visit to Saint Anne's shrine in Fiskdale. The entry is a sharp rise. We stopped halfway up while she was at the wheel. After that she regained the back seat.

She was the formative force in our lives, because my father suffered a serious nervous breakdown in the mid-1930s, which left him incapacitated. He had generously given credit during the Depression to people in need. They recovered, but only a few paid their debts. Then his brother, an educated ne'er-do-well stepped in to take over the business. The result was a disaster—for my father and for the business. Our family fell on hard times, and, were it not for my mother's sisters and brother, we would probably not have made it.

HOME LIFE

RR: How about your home and its spirit?

JD: We were a normal Irish Catholic family: regular Church attendance, respect for the clergy, making all the nine First Fridays. We had a large framed image of the Sacred Heart hanging in the kitchen as a reminder. Neither my father nor my mother went beyond primary school, but they were intent on seeing to our education.

SIBLINGS

RR: How about any brothers and sisters?

JD: My oldest sister, Mary, married after high school to a fellow from Pensacola, Florida. She immediately acquired a southern accent, and settled down to raise two children.

The second, Betty Ann, went on to college at the Elms [Our Lady of the Elms College] for two years, then worked at the telephone company before marrying Worcester's top athlete, Jim Scavone. They settled in Worcester and raised eleven children, eight boys and three girls. Jim formed a very successful construction company and provided well for his family.

The sister who followed me, Helen, also did two years at the Elms and then worked at the telephone

company before marrying Tom Morris and raising five children: four girls and one boy, exactly like my family and that of my mother.

My youngest sister, Kathleen, was the sweetest and kindest of all. She was one of those rare, selfless persons who seemed to care more for the happiness of others than for her own.

I recall sitting around the family table for prolonged breakfast discussions after the nine o'clock Mass on Sundays. That was in the early 1940s before we started to disperse. My relations with everyone were always good. Being a bit remote helped me to stay above the minor spats endemic to family relations.

I suppose I was spoiled by an upbringing in such a feminine setting. I had no illusions about male superiority, but I did have a minor reaction: I was intent on not doing what girls do. For instance I would not touch a tennis racquet for a long time, because, to me, at least, tennis was a girl's game.

And I still remember being angry at a brown suit they dressed me in when I was in the second grade. They thought it was "cute." I detested it, but mother made me wear it to school. That spring day it rained. Normally whenever it rained, we were to wait for our father to come by car and pick us up. But that day I sneaked off and walked home in the pouring rain, hoping that it would shrink the suit and I would be liberated. I actually forget the outcome, but I remember the walk.

PARISH

RR: How about your parish and the priests there?

JD: St. Peter's Parish was a busy place. The pastor, Msgr. Bell, was aided by five curates. I joined the boys' choir—how I don't know. I can't sing. Then I became an altar boy. Looking back, I think it was serving as altar boy

which unconsciously influenced my choice of a priestly vocation.

The priests were excellent. Fr. Morgan McCarthy took me under his wing, and later had me as head altar boy. Fr. O'Connell used to preach against us going to the YMCA and associating with Protestants. That I never heeded.

We had Protestant cousins in Maine, and I spent a few summers with them up in Skowhegan. My grandmother's sister was Protestant, and she would ship down a salmon boxed in ice to us for every Fourth of July. Also, our gang had several Protestants, and we all turned out for their baptisms.

SCHOOL

RR: Where did you start school?

JD: After kindergarten at Freeland Street school, the family, one by one, went on to St. Peter's Parish School, a good mile away. We walked past Freeland Street Grammar School and South High to sit before the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Being the only boy in the family, I was spared comparisons, from which one of my sisters suffered: "You are not like your sister so and so." Nuns do things like that. Some were good teachers, some not so good. They instilled discipline and a bit of piety. It was coed, and I feel they favored boys a bit. As an altar boy I was often called out of class for solemn high funerals.

GREAT INTEREST IN GOLF

RR: Were you interested in sports?

JD: In high school my conscious concern was sports, especially football. I played frequently in junior and senior year. I never made the basketball team. That was not a disappointment, because I started working in a First National supermarket, and would have had a hard time

attending practice.

Earlier I had summer work as a caddy at the Worcester Country Club. My friend, Jim Harkins, and I signed up for winter classes for caddies at the Boys Club to learn the rules and etiquette of the course. That started when I was thirteen.

We would take the bus to the other end of the city and wait in the caddie shack to get the call to tote a member's bag. There was a caddy hierarchy: you worked your way up from C to B to A. Pay was according to class, and members turned in reports on your performance, which determined your promotion.

I remember the day when I couldn't find the balls my patron was spraying all over the course. He reported that I was the worst caddy he ever had. Yes, there were days things did not click. Of course, he may well have been the worst golfer on the course.

Caddies don't make much money, but the atmosphere was great, and on Fridays we could play free of charge. I was really bitten by the game, and played often, if not well. Golf was cheap in those days—all day at Green Hill for fifty cents.

SOCIAL LIFE

JD: Then there were Friday night dances at the Knights of Columbus hall or at the Catholic Girls Club. Dating was not too frequent, apart from the junior and senior proms.

VALEDICTORIAN

JD: In senior year I was valedictorian. I wrote my talk, but it was rejected by the nun in charge. She gave me a text to memorize. I have a faint memory of something about flowers and birds and spring.

As valedictorian, I was to lead the Grand March at the prom, but, since my date was from South High,

they would not let her lead it with me. Instead they chose a St. Peter's girl. Oh, well, nuns will be nuns.

INFLUENCE OF WWII

RR: How did the ongoing war affect you?

JD: The war was in the air back then in the early '40s. I remember the day in December when the attack on Pearl Harbor was announced. I was sitting in the Packard of the pastor with my namesake, a bit older than I. The pastor used to ask him to drive the nuns down to Boston to do some shopping from time to time. I would go along for the ride.

We were sitting there, listening to the bad news, and his immediate reaction was talk about the necessity of enlisting and getting into the war. The reason he gave was that after the war, if you hadn't been in the service, you'd have nothing to say when the guys sat around and chewed the fat. He graduated and went off to the army.

WAR SERVICE IN THE NAVY

RR: What was your involvement in the war?

JD: Fr. O'Connell spoke to me one day when I was in senior year to tell me, if I had even the faintest notion of studying for the priesthood, then I should immediately enter the seminary and avoid the draft. I reacted negatively, and decided there would be no seminary till after the war.

Instead I wanted to join the Marines, but the family would not consent. A family friend counseled taking the test for the V-12 Navy program. I took the exam, and tried to fail it by checking off the answers without reading the questions (true/false). I did very well and went into V-12 at Holy Cross, where I had already started studies in the summer of '43.

Three uninterrupted semesters at Holy Cross turned out to be enjoyable. The group I bonded with in Carlin Hall were mostly New Yorkers. Many would come back to Holy Cross and join the Class of '48.

MIDSHIPMAN SCHOOL

RR: Where did you go after that?

JD: After V-12, it was Midshipman School at Columbia University for four months, ending with a commission as ensign. Midshipmen were poor; their salary went to buying uniforms.

I became friendly with a fellow from St. Louis, a high jumper named Les Howe. With the little money we had we went out to eat a few times. The first time he suggested we start off with a shrimp cocktail. I vetoed that. Strange as it may seem, my background in a teetotaling Irish family led me to think cocktail meant liquor. As part of the Confirmation ritual, I had promised Bishop Thomas Mary O'Leary that I would not touch liquor until I reached twenty-one. Well, the second time he suggested a shrimp cocktail, I threw caution to the winds and said OK. Imagine my surprise when the cocktail arrived!

DESTROYER SCHOOL

RR: And then?

JD: From Columbia I went on to destroyer school at Norfolk, Virginia. My first choice was submarines. The judgment of the training officers was that I could get along with others in restricted quarters, but evidently not as restricted as in a submarine, and so I was assigned to destroyer school.

After Norfolk came gunnery school at San Diego, and finally an assignment to the Richard K. Huntington, a 2200-class destroyer, as assistant gunnery officer. By that time the war was over, and my adventures

were limited to sailing behind aircraft carriers to pick up pilots who dunked.

The Huntington was assigned to the Bikini atomic test, but, to go, one had to sign on for two more years. I signed off. After sailing a YP (a yacht commandeered for costal patrol) up to Portsmouth, Washington for decommissioning, I flew back to Boston—my first airplane ride. Before that, cross-country trips were by train, three days and more from coast to coast.

AFTER THE NAVY

RR: What attracted you to do next?

JD: Back in Worcester, I had a crazy idea that I wanted to play college football, and went up to Niagra University for early practice. After a few weeks I came to my senses and returned to Holy Cross. I had been on the team during my V-12 period, but, not knowing then about steroids, I was a bit puny for college football.

I would, however, get my letter as manager of the basketball team. I had two years at Holy Cross to complete credits for graduation. While studying, I worked as a correspondent for the *Boston Globe* and the *Worcester Telegram*, and also as news writer for an FM station, which broadcast “News from Worcester and the World.”

VOCATION

RR: How did you come to think of a vocation?

JD: Then came graduation. I had been put in touch with Fr. Pat Cummins, S.J. by some friends, and finally started to think about joining the Jesuits. There had always been a tendency towards the priesthood in the back of my mind. Then some notions in the ethics course struck me and brought it all forward.

I applied and was accepted. In September 1948 I was driven up the Shadowbrook by my family, and

said tearful good-byes. The first few weeks were hard, and I was on the point of leaving. But then came a purifying moment—no vision, unfortunately, just extreme emotion—and I decided to stay. Everything was easy after that.

NOVITIATE LIFE

RR: How did you find novitiate life after the Navy?

JD: Novitiate was a breeze—no responsibility, work outdoors on the farm, skiing on Koussevtizky's front lawn in the winter, bird-watching in spring and summer, and, of course, the Spiritual Exercises.

At the end of novitiate, a few people who had finished college, like myself, were sent directly to philosophy. I, however, was kept at Shadowbrook for a year in the juniorate: my classical background must have been lacking.

Anyway, I got into taxidermy with Jim Greenler. We stuffed a deer head and a partridge we happened to find by the road on a Thursday walk. Fr. Dan Foley approved a debate on whether or not taxidermy was an art. The fact that the deer's head, hung in one of the cabins, started to stink and its upper lip to curl into a snarl did not help the outcome of the debate.

The class that entered Shadowbrook in 1948 was oversized, so several were sent off to Maryland for novitiate. They rejoined New England for juniorate, and we all formed a closely knit group. With Jim Greenler, Bo Blanchette, and Joe Flaucher I had an enjoyable time. We tracked wildcats in the snow (we never saw one), slid down the snow-covered mountains (we almost lost Ed McKinnon on one slide), and walked across the lake just when the ice was beginning to melt (Dave Boulton dunked). All this is not an exactly spiritual journey, but it did keep me spiritually balanced.

Once in the novitiate I was delated to the master of novices for spending too much time in the chapel. I was advised to overcome that tendency; I obeyed. I had entered on September 8 with Vin Burns. We were both a bit older and perhaps less impressionable. Some accused us of having already been “formed.”

STUDYING PHILOSOPHY

RR: And then to Weston for philosophy?

JD: Yes, philosophy came just in time, and the golf course at Weston aided my philosophical studies no end. Later there was a general movement of complaint condemning the scholastic method and unimaginative teachers. In my judgment, it wasn't all that bad. We had the comic relief of fellow students, J. J. McLaughlin and Snake [John] Handrahan, as well as the provincial, known to some a “mad dog.” Yet I felt indebted to him for sending me to Baghdad.

REGENCY IN BAGHDAD

RR: Why there?

JD: Why did I choose Baghdad? In the novitiate I met Stanley Marrow, and asked him to teach me the Arabic alphabet. Although I never got much further than the alphabet, still Baghdad appeared more attractive than Jamaica. There was also a vague connection my mother had through an Iraqi Bridge Club organized by Daddy [Thomas] McDermott [S.J.] in Worcester. Hard to tell. At Shadowbrook the breezy dormitory in winter had me thinking of Alaska as a possibility, but it was really not a choice in 1953, so off I went to Baghdad.

THE TRIP OVER

RR: How was the voyage over to the Middle East?

JD: We were eight, seven schols [scholastics, Jesuit semi-

narians] and [Fr.] Charlie Crowley. The purser on the ship *Excaliber* referred to us as “Fr. Crowley and the boys.” His great amusement came when, in recompense for our having run games for the passengers, he offered us a few bottles of champagne. The “boys” said they would prefer ginger ale. That made the rounds quickly.

Grace Lines had put a bottle of sherry in each of the cabins for the Jesuits. The bottle in our cabin slipped and fell, but did not break. Instead, it rolled from port to starboard, and from starboard to port, as we rolled through the storm, tucked up in our bunks. John Cornellier in the bunk below me tried to grab the noisy bottle just as someone put on the lights. There he lay on the floor spread-eagle with his left hand on the bottle.

The trip on the *Excaliber* of Grace Lines was deluxe. (The four “Ex’s” were converted Liberty Ships with 125 passengers all one class and some cargo.) We had sun and hearty eating, once we had weathered a storm just out of New Jersey. It was actually a hurricane that we passed through.

FROM ENJOYMENT TO CATASTROPHE

RR: Did you get to see any sights en route?

JD: The ship stopped at Barcelona, which we used as a base to visit some sites connected with the life of Ignatius, such as Montserrat. From there we visited Naples with its Amalfi Drive, Alexandria, and finally Beirut.

RR: Did you have any adventures?

JD: Did we! From Alexandria we drove to Cairo. Disaster. The driver of one of the cabs hit a horse and wagon being driven by a young Egyptian boy. It was a hot, dusty early afternoon, and no one was visible, until the accident. People came out of the ground, and we were surrounded by keening women.

The boy was killed and the cab was immobile. Charlie Crowley had a dislocated shoulder and was taken to the hospital. At the Jesuit college of Sainte Famille we spent a sleepless night while strains of Arabic music floated up from the alley. It was such a shock that some of the group would not put a foot in Egypt after that.

BAGHDAD AND THEOLOGY

RR: After traversing the desert and adjusting our innards to different microbes, we joyfully joined the Baghdadis. After a year of teaching fourth high English and algebra, I opted to study Arabic—two years, full-time—a real luxury. One summer in Lebanon, another in Jerusalem, and then back to theology.

THEOLOGY AND ARABIC

RR: How did you like studying theology?

JD: They were interesting times with Frank Lawlor, John Ford, Phil Donnelly, Ed Kilmartin, and Leo McGovern. It was another enjoyable period for me.

I was bent on mastering Arabic, so I decided I would read Arabic an hour a day. That came in handy, when I was asked to go for a doctorate and ultimately join the Oriental Institute Dick McCarthy [S.J.] was planning to form in Baghdad.

ARABIC HISTORY AT HARVARD

RR: I see you studied at Harvard.

JD: Yes, I did more study in a very different ambiance at Harvard. I opted for medieval Arabic history. I knew that studying modern history meant trying to get into government archives and arousing suspicion.

H. A. R. Gibb was the leading Orientalist at the time, and [Fr. Joseph A.] Gus Devenny [S.J.] strongly advised studying under him. I started with him, but

he fell sick; I finished with an equally competent historian, George Maqdisi.

IRANIAN INTERMEZZO

RR: What did you focus on?

JD: I chose a period no one was interested in—the tenth century, when an Iranian Shiite dynasty took over what is now Iraq and Iran for a full century. Because they were neither Arab nor Sunni, they were not interesting for most Arab scholars. The period was referred to as an “Iranian Intermezzo.”

I finished in 1966, and was so fed up with study I took off early for Baghdad, not waiting for the Harvard graduation. I see now that was a bit silly, because my mother would have enjoyed the ceremony. But writing a thesis does strange things to you. For two years while doing that I met only two people, besides the thesis director, who had the slightest interest in what I was doing.

IN PRINT AT LAST

RR: Did you ever have your thesis printed?

JD: Yes, as a humorous sequel. I did not publish the thesis at once, because, when I returned to Baghdad, I was put into administration as superior of the mission. Then in Beirut I was running a research center focused on present developments.

When I reached 75 in 2001, I stopped teaching and rewrote my thesis for publication. Some friends in Beirut who read the carbon copy I carried with me urged me to publish it. They had even contacted the academic publisher, E. J. Brill, in Holland, and attempted to have it published as a surprise. Brill said no, but that, if the author wished to submit it for consideration, they were ready. I spent a year rewriting and submitted it. It was accepted.

The first copy came to me in December 2002, when I was holding the Jesuit chair at Georgetown. I gave that copy to my sister as a Christmas present. She was retired and was reading a lot. Her evaluation: nice cover, but it is one of those books you can't read. It was listed at \$125 per copy—a book you can't read at a price you can't afford. I had no choice but to make a PowerPoint presentation out of it. Incidentally, the book covers a period when all the Middle East was Shiite, so it has a certain pertinence today.

MINISTERIAL LIFE

RR: Has your academic work left you time for direct ministry?

JD: Two events stand out in my memory during tertianship when we were given pastoral assignments. The first was preaching the Novena of Grace at St. John's Parish in Worcester with Paul Power of the Jesuit Mission Band. I remember it as a lot of anxiety and nervous preparation followed by a sense of accomplishment. I enjoy preaching, but am always concerned about avoiding any hypocrisy. The second was a student retreat at Pomfret. The long discussions with doubters were tiring but informative.

Since then, I have only rarely had the opportunity to direct retreats. My pastoral activity is limited to Saturday and Sunday Masses and some personal spiritual direction. At times I regret that I have not been more involved in retreat work.

RETURN TO BAGHDAD

RR: So, after Harvard, back to Iraq?

JD: Yes, I arrived in the Middle East in June when temperatures mount. So I decided to go to Beirut for retreat in the cool of the Lebanese mountains.

I took a bus from Baghdad across the desert. I was the only foreigner on the bus. Around midnight we arrived at the Jordanian frontier. We were stopped and sent back out in the desert. A cholera epidemic had been announced in Baghdad just after we took off. Five days quarantine in the desert. I made some friends as we hung around with nothing to do.

The people on the bus had a meeting. The majority were convinced that, even if we stayed five days, the Jordanians wouldn't allow us through—they don't like Iraqis. They voted to turn back to Baghdad.

I took my bag and decided to go it alone. Nights were cold sleeping on the ground, but the five days passed, and I headed out in the car of a new-found friend, a Palestinian. When we arrived at the Syrian border we were told that the quarantine in Syria was seven days. So we headed back to Amman, and from there took a plane to Beirut.

A Lebanese contractor who was stranded there had two Yugoslav engineers with him. One kept on moaning that he needed a whiskey, but package stores are hard to find in the desert. The Lebanese arranged to get into the nearby village and call his cousins. They drove down from Beirut with a car full of eats and drinks. We had a banquet on our last day. But the Yugoslav said he couldn't drink whiskey without ice. Where do you find ice in the desert? The Jordanian officer in charge of the camp, an MD, came up with some ice, and joined us for a drink that last night.

APPOINTED SUPERIOR

RR: How did you go from being a researcher to a superior?

JD: The superior of the Baghdad mission, John Williams, was named consultant to Fr. General for Islamic Affairs. He asked permission to leave his post in Iraq early to prepare. I was appointed temporary superior until a

permanent one be named.

On June 5, 1967, just as the Six-Day War broke, a telegram came telling me that “temporary” was now “permanent.” I must admit I was not very happy, and in my first meeting with Fr. Arrupe [Fr. General], I found it hard to smile.

But I got over that, and set to work on the evaluation of our works ordered by the General. We did our best to prepare for the future, but the future never came. In 1968 and 1969 we were expelled from Baghdad by the Baath Party. They are opposed to private education, and we were an “eyesore”—some sixty American Jesuits at Baghdad College and al-Hikma University. Also the 1967 “set back” did not help. We had come to the end of our usefulness.

We were caught between two factions of the party, the one out of power was looking for something to embarrass those in power. They found us. We made visits in attempts to stall the decision. We saw the president, who had no idea who we were or what we were doing. We tried to get to Saddam, who was an *éminence grise* at that time, powerful but behind the scenes. We never managed to get to him.

The Minister of Education, a Muslim Brother, opposed our expulsion. He told me that he knew none of the accusations in the press had any truth. We had done nothing but good for Baghdad and its youth.

I was on the list for the first expulsion in ‘68 but I was allowed to stay. I finally left the following summer just before the second wave in the fall of ‘69.

DECISION TO START CEMAM

RR: How did CEMAM come to be?

JD: Back in Boston in 1969 a second choice had to be made: stay in the US or go to Beirut, where the Jesuits at St. Joseph University were anxious to receive reinforce-

ments. I preferred to go to Beirut.

Consultations with Fr. Arrupe, the provincial of the Near East Province, and a few of us from Baghdad led to a joint project for a research center at St. Joseph's staffed by New England and the Near East. A protocol was drawn up laying out the details for collaboration of the two provinces. In 1969 and 1970 there were seven or eight New England Jesuits in Lebanon. For various reasons the numbers went down; now we are three.

The research center got underway in 1971. It is called the Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World. The acronym from the French title, CEMAM, was used; that from the English was unpronounceable. The center started with three New England Jesuits: Joe Ryan, Joe O'Kane, and myself. Later Bob Campbell, another New Englander, joined.

The focus was on socio-cultural development in the Arab Middle East. I recall the reactions to the first trial volume we issued for comments. Richard Mitchel, who wrote the definitive volume on the Muslim Brothers, criticized us for focusing too much on Islam. He considered his volume was an epitaph for Islam. Islam was dead.

At CEMAM we followed the Arabic press closely, and slowly built up a database of socio-cultural information. We published yearly volumes of CEMAM Reports. The war in Lebanon took its toll, and we ended up with two Jesuits, Bob Campbell of New England and myself.

When the project started, monthly discussions were held among the Jesuits at the university and a few others until the project took form. At the request of several, the meetings were continued on a regular basis. Discussions centered on current problems and tendencies in the region. Each session was summarized and a four-page bulletin redacted and distributed. The bul-

letins make an interesting collection, which I put in form to be placed online. CEMAM also sponsored fairly regular talks and discussions by local professors and academics passing through.

I also kept a hand in teaching, first at the American University of Beirut, because my French was weak, then later at St Joseph's. I taught history for a while, then limited myself to teaching translation from Arabic to English.

Lebanon was an inviting place up until 1975 when civil war broke out. That lasted some fifteen years. People left. The university stayed firm. We never lost a year, but at times we were forced to hold classes elsewhere, way back from the dividing line. One year ended in November and the new year began in December. There were always rumors that the Jesuits were going to move to Africa or somewhere, but we lasted it out.

For the first time I got an inkling of what shell shock must be. After a long pause in firing one day a shell exploded not too far away, and I instinctively began to tremble. At the start of the war they were using mortars, which are deadly, because they can slide into any corner. Later, when they turned to cannons, we were a lot safer, because we were too close to be in their range.

WRITING

RR: What did you do after retiring from teaching?

JD: As I mentioned, I stopped teaching in 2001 and turned to writing. Besides my thesis I also published a volume of Islamic texts with John Esposito in 1982 and a revised edition in 2007 entitled, *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, Oxford University Press. I also collaborated with a member of the German Orient-Institut Beirut, Mrs. Leslie Tramontini, in putting out a two-volume work on contemporary Arab authors. It

is an updated English version of the Arabic volumes published by Bob Campbell.

I like to write, and over the years I have published a few articles in *America* and *Commonweal*, in addition to academic articles. In fact, it was Dick Rousseau who encouraged that strain. When we were philosophers he held weekly sessions for writing. We would submit what we wrote for common criticism. I have a desire to attempt a historical novel based on tenth-century Baghdad.

CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES

JD: When I finally retired from the direction of CEMAM, the university gave me a small office on the top floor of the faculty of letters where I could do my own thing, while continuing to reinforce the Jesuit presence at the university. I am involved in a master's program in intercultural mediation, set up in collaboration with four European universities. I arrange for weekly talks by outside speakers. The talks are open to the public, and certain subjects draw a good crowd. The best was a panel discussion on the American Greater Middle East Project. I found an apt title: Dictating to Dictators.

PHOTOGRAPHY

RR: Do you have other interests, such as a hobby?

JD: I have not considered this question. What is a hobby? Something which is not a duty, or is it a distraction? Growing up, I was interested in photography, and developed films in the cellar of our three-decker. A friend and I had a project of taking class pictures in public schools. We had an interview with the superintendent of schools, but the job never materialized.

We did photograph weddings of friends. The big killing we made was when two sisters married in the

same ceremony. At Weston I used to photograph those being ordained, and in Baghdad I kept up the hobby. At present I dabble in digital photography and attempt to learn the vast possibilities of Adobe Photoshop.

COMPUTERS

JD: One of my nieces bought me a small programmable Texas computer way back, and I spent many hours making programs in Basic. At the university, CEMAM was the first to have its library on the computer. Now, of course, programming is a waste of time, since there are so many ready-made programs. I am still very much into computers and followed courses offered to the faculty in Adobe's software, Dreamweaver for making websites and Photoshop for editing photographs.

SWIMMING

JD: For several years I used to swim every Sunday morning, year-round, in the Mediterranean with two other Jesuits, but this past year I have stopped. I had a knee replacement, and I am not up to leaping over fences, as they do.

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

RR: I know what you mean.

JD: I doubt that there is anything very unique about me. Sometimes I think I am generic Jesuit, a bit cheaper than the real thing, because here several people have told me I am not a real Jesuit. I think they mean that as a compliment. I would like to be seen as friendly and unthreatening, and hope that when I do encounter people, that the encounter leaves them happy and positive.

I once participated with a group in Beirut, which was working at the American Community School. It was when T-groups and that type of encounter groups

were in vogue. I was really amazed to see how lonely these people were, and what little kindness it took to make them feel they had a friend. In comparison, living in the Society I have never felt lonely, even living in a multi-national community. I guess what I am trying to say is a variation of “spiritual conversation,” of which we heard much in novitiate formation.

When I told someone that I hoped that everyone I encountered went away feeling better, they riposted, “Who do you think you are, God?” But that remark really missed the point. I know many people who are anticlerical precisely because of the impression their encounters with priests leave.

I guess that may be my spiritual development. My early tendency to chapel, corrected by the master of novices, probably blocked my mystical tendencies. Of course, it is never too late.

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

JD: I am also rather independent. In Beirut I have several friends. Up through most of the civil war here, I was part of a group of AUB profs and couples, but that broke up in the ‘80s. People left. More recently I am close friends with a Lebanese lawyer and professor, Chibli Mallat. We both worked on the thought of a Shiite cleric, assassinated by Saddam. Chibli had been at the School of Oriental and African Studies in England, and when he came back, we met and found we were on the same wavelength.

Also, the German lady, Leslie Tramontini, I worked with on the dictionary of Arab authors, is a close friend. Her previous sojourn in Iraq and her competence in Arab literature gave us something in common. In her years in Beirut she formed a regular group of friends, which met frequently. The two, the lawyer and the German lady, put out a volume in my honor, pub-

lished by the German Orient-Institut Beirut.

When I finally published my thesis, I dedicated it to these and several other friends who came across my path. I found a quote which sums it up: "Ask not where glory most begins or ends; my glory was I had such friends." I forget who said it, but for me it is true.

In the Society, especially when you find yourself in a situation which reminds you of Benetton Colors, almost everyone is a friend, but a few even more so. There are people you get along with more easily than others, but everyone is a friend.

CONCLUSION

RR: How do you find retirement?

JD: I am retired but still working, taking much more time to do a lot less. No major health complaints, and that worries me a bit, since do not want to go on forever. I am not happy, when people greet me saying, "May God prolong your life!"— a standard Arab greeting.

Speaking of greetings, in Lebanon someone middle-aged or older is addressed as uncle. I am used to that, but one day in the elevator a young mother with her son in her arms said to him, "Say hello to grampa." That came as a shock.

I decided that I should stay in Lebanon as long as I can be useful. I should also admit that it is enjoyable living in Lebanon.

Presently I am working on an edition of some tenth-century letters from Baghdad. I am minister and treasurer for a small Jesuit community. I still say Mass in English on weekends at the Capuchin church at Hamra. Sunday is standing room only. Mostly Filipinos make up the congregation.

RR: Well, thank you for telling us so much about yourself and your work.

JD: You're welcome.

O Deus, ego amo te,
Nec amo te ut salves me;
Aut quia non amantes te
Aeterno punis igne.
Tu, tu, mi Jesu, totum me
Amplexus es in cuce;
Tulisti clavos, lanceam
Multamque ignominium,
Inumeros dolores,
Sudores et angores,
Ac mortem, et haec propter me,
Ac pro me peccatore.
Cur igitur non amem te,
O Jesu amantissime ?
Non ut in caelo salves me,
Aut ne aeternum damnes me,
Nec praemii ullius spe;
Sed sicut tu amasti me,
Sic amo et amabo te,
Solum quia rex meus es
Et solum quia Deus es.

St. Francis Xavier, S.J.

Fr. John J. Donohue, SJ

Born: January 12, 1926, Worcester,
Massachusetts
Entered: September 7, 1948, Lenox, Massachusetts,
St. Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook
Ordained: June 13, 1959, Weston, Massachusetts,
Weston College
Final Vows: February 2, 1965, Boston, Massachusetts,
St. Andrew Bobola House

1943 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy Cross
Student
1944 United States Navy
1945 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy Cross
- Student
1948 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/
Shadowbrook - Novitiate, juniorate
1951 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
philosophy
1953 Baghdad, Iraq: Baghdad College - Taught English,
math
1954 Baghdad, Iraq: St. Joseph Residence - Studied Arabic
1956 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
theology
1960 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertianship
1961 Boston, Massachusetts: St. Andrew Bobola House -
Studied Middle Eastern Civilization, Harvard
University
1965 Baghdad, Iraq: Al-Hikma University -
1965-1966 Taught philosophy
1966-1967 Prefect of Studies, taught Arabic
1967 Baghdad, Iraq: St. Joseph Residence -
January 28-June 5 Vicesuperior, Iraq Mission
June 5-August 10, 1970 Superior of Iraq Mission

- 1969 Boston, Massachusetts: St. Andrew Bobola House -
Private study (fall semester)
- 1970 Beirut, Lebanon: St. Joseph University - Taught
Islamic studies, American University of Beirut
- 1971 Beirut, Lebanon: Residence S. Jean-Chrysostome -
1971-1982 Consultor to New England Province
for Mid-East affairs
- 1971-1986 Taught Islamic studies at American
University of Beirut
- 1972-1983 Researcher, Center for the Study of
the Modern Arab World (CEMAM)
- 1973-1979 Superior of Residence Jean-
Chrysostome
- 1982-1995 Liaison between Provinces of New
England and Near East
- 1983-1989 Superior of Region of Lebanon
- 1983-2007 Director, CEMAM
- 1986-2007 Taught political science, translation,
St. Joseph University
- 2002 Washington, DC: Georgetown University -
Sabbatical, Jesuit Chair for Muslim-Christian
Understanding
- 2007 Beirut, Lebanon: St. Joseph University - Researcher
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Master's Program in International Mediation
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Degrees

- 1948 Bachelor of Arts, English, College of the Holy
Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts
- 1953 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston
College
- 1960 Licentiate in Theology, Weston College
- 1966 Doctor of Philosophy, Middle Eastern History
Harvard University

Professional experience

- 1971-2004 Director of the Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World, St. Joseph's University, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1977 Associate Professor, Religion and History at College of the Holy Cross - one semester
- 1980 Associate Professor, Religion and History, College of the Holy Cross, one semester
- 1980-1990 Professor of History, Saint Joseph's University, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1980-2002 Professor of Translation and Interpretation, Saint Joseph's University, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2002-2003 Jesuit Chair, Georgetown University, Washington, DC
- 2004 Director of the Observatory for Master's Program in Intercultural Mediation at St. Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon

Publications

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