

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Richard T. Cleary, S.J.
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Editor: Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
Associate Editors: Paul C. Kenney, S.J.

Assistant Editors: William J. Cullen, S.J.,
Joseph V. Owens, S.J., Joseph A. Paquet, S.J.,

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Distribution:

Oral History Program
Campion Center
319 Concord Road
Weston, MA 02493-1398
781-788-6800
info@jesuitoralhistory.org
www.jesuitoralhistory.org

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. Richard T. Cleary, S.J.
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
December 4, 2007

EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome to our conversation.

We'll try to proceed chronologically.

RICHARD CLEARY: It's good to be here.

RR: Let's begin with your early years, your birthplace as well as your parents and any siblings.

RC: I was born in Melrose, Massachusetts in 1932. I lived there for two days, and then we went to Winchester. My brother is a year and seven months older than I. We were a very small family: Herbert, my father, Teresa, my mother, my brother Herb, and myself.

Winchester was a nice town to live in. And my mother and father were just wonderful people. My father began as an insurance salesman and then became a turret lathe operator at Gillette in South Boston. My mother did clerical work at Raytheon for about twenty-five years. She died when she was sixty-five.

RR: Which part of Raytheon was that?

RC: The one in Waltham. My brother and I always came home to an empty house, yet it was a great place to grow up in with many very pleasant and happy memo-

ries. My father lived fourteen years longer than my mother and got married again, which turned out to be very helpful for him. So my brother and I inherited a large step-family [laughter], which now makes a big difference in our lives.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL

RR: How about school?

RC: I started school when I was four years of age. That was a huge mistake, because, when I got to Winchester High School, I was the youngest in my class of 175 students. This meant that I got out of high school when I was sixteen and immature. I wasn't very socially adept at that time nor was I athletically inclined. But, in later years, I did become a bit more adept. [Laughter]

RR: Where did you start school?

RC: My grammar school was St. Mary's in Winchester. It was part of the parish. The grammar school was quite good, so much so that in high school I was the top student all through it. Despite that, however, I wasn't the valedictorian, because the other students were all children of wealthy Anglo-Saxon executive types from Boston. [Laughter]

We lived in what we called the Plains, where mainly Irish and Italian blue collar workers lived. It was my first experience of rejection. Though I was the best student, they engineered things so that my best friend, who was the second-best student, was the valedictorian. My mother was very incensed. But I didn't know any better and went along with it. However, my early years were very, very happy ones. I was twelve years old when I started high school, the result being that everything was just a little too early for me.

HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

RR: What high school was it?

RC: I went to the public high school in Winchester. It turned out to be another type of rejection. I wanted to go to Boston College High School, but didn't go there because my parents didn't have the \$200 needed. In those days, that was a lot of money. I worked hard to get a scholarship, but the eighth grade teacher tutored the second-ranked student whose family had all kinds of money. So I didn't get the scholarship and he did. My mother was very upset, but I was happy to stay in Winchester, because all my friends were there.

But I did get a very good education. I did well with my studies and got interested in science, especially chemistry and biology, which I followed up on later. I also was a co-editor of the school newspaper and president of the math club, to say nothing of my job in the local library. I was too young to be able to really participate in many things. On the other hand, I was not athletic at the time, though, later on, I loved athletics.

But they were good years. I should add that, early on, my brother and I had both thought about joining Maryknoll or some other religious order. We looked at some of the literature, but we never did anything with it at that time.

TIME IN COLLEGE

RR: What about college?

RC: Even though I could have gotten a scholarship to Harvard, I just didn't want to go there. So I decided to go to Tufts. And it turned out at first to be a good decision. Tufts was very unusual in those days. It was a 90% commuter school. And I was one of the commuters, going back and forth, back and forth, every day.

We also had Saturday morning classes, so I got really exhausted. I was there for only two-and-a-half years and just stopped going to the school with all its com-

mutes. But I didn't tell my mother and father that I had stopped, and I stayed home during the day. When they came in, I'd get up and say, "Hey, welcome home. Did you have a good day? I had a good day myself." Of course, I was fudging it!

ST PAUL AND MY VOCATION

RR: How did this make you feel?

RC: Very depressed. Then I had a very great experience that I'll never forget. I was lying on top of my bed one evening asking myself, "What am I going to do?" Then suddenly I fell over the side of the bed onto my knees and felt a great peace. I knew just what I wanted to do. I had been fighting against becoming a priest for a long time, but now I felt very happy and peaceful about the priesthood. It seemed that He had literally cried out to me from out of the blue. I've often said it was like St. Paul falling off his horse and changing his life. I know most people get vocations gradually, but mine came in a moment that I'll never forget. Though I had just been elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Tufts, I basically decided to leave school to enter the priesthood.

RR: Were the unsatisfactory surroundings at Tufts a factor in all this?

RC: Yes. There was little real religious life there. It was very secular. And, of course, there was all that ongoing heavy commuting and little or no community on campus.

VOCATION DISCERNMENT

RR: What about the positive side of things?

RC: Speaking positively, I went out to Boston College that January and talked to Fr. Edmund Walsh about entering the Jesuits. He was the BC Director of Admissions. And he said to me, "Since it's January, you'd be better off waiting. There's a school downtown, called Philip

Neri School, where you can catch up on your Latin.” I had taken some Latin in high school, so I went downtown and saw Fr. Edward Murray, the dean of the school. He said, “You can enter in September.” [Laughter] I got a job at Raytheon where my mother worked. For about six months I pushed cathode ray tubes around the factory as a hand trucker. At the same time, after work, for several days a week, I took the trolley into Boston to the Newman School to study more Latin. But, guess what! When I went to St. Philip Neri School that fall, I was better in Latin than anyone from BC High. We studied Latin for two hours, five days a week.

JESUIT CONNECTIONS

RR: So you found it fairly easy. Did you have any other helpful connections?

RC: Yes. Besides Fr. Murray, I knew two Jesuits who grew up in my neighborhood, Fr. George Kilcoyne and Fr. John “Blondie” Murphy, but I didn’t know them all that well. The Jesuits had been a mystery to me and I thought they were rather stuffy intellectuals. But I went through Philip Neri School, where it turned out that I met Fr. Mortimer Murphy, who was the real source of my vocation. He used to stand on his desk while pronouncing various nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech. He was just a joy. A good example! He used to tell this fellow in the class, who was himself quite a clown, not to jump out of the fifth floor window. I loved Fr. Murphy. He was a regular guy, and I really wanted to be just like him.

RR: He made quite an impression on you?

RC: Yes. So much so, that later on, I actually asked him to preach at my first Mass, but unfortunately, he had been sick at that time and died just about the time of that first Mass.

VOCATION FAIR

RC: Representatives of some religious orders and dioceses used to come to school on a Friday afternoon to talk to us and make us aware of all the vocational possibilities there were. I considered the Edmundites and the Paulists, as well as others. And I thought to myself, "But not the Jesuits, no way." However, when I had Fr. Mort in class, I said to myself, "I really like that guy." So I decided on the Jesuits. And sometime in April that year, I had my interviews with Fr. Edmund Fitzgerald and others. It was over very quickly. [Laughter] In July, two months later, I entered the novitiate at Shadowbrook.

NOVITIATE AT SHADOWBROOK

RC: I went to Shadowbrook by train with three other candidates. We were picked up at the station and driven to Shadowbrook.

RR: Then you met the Master of Novices. Who was he?

RC: Fr. John Post. At the door we were met by Bill Russell, who was our welcoming archangel, but the Master of Novices didn't show up for several more days. [Laughter] In any case, Bill was a great person to meet.

RR: So then, you settled in?

RC: That's right. I thoroughly enjoyed the novitiate. I fitted right in, and didn't mind the disciplinary arrangements. We had meetings and readings every night. But, in general, I found it a very positive experience. I enjoyed my life in the novitiate. I was down at times, of course, but in general, I found it very good.

RR: And it seems that you had quite a good group of fellow novices there with you.

THE GREAT FIRE: A CLOSE CALL

RC: Oh, yes. I entered with thirty-one others, and many of them are still in the Society. Those were happy years. I

was going to do one year of juniorate there, but it was cut short by the great Shadowbrook fire of March 10, 1956.

RR: Tell us about that.

RC: Three priests and a brother died in the fire. Actually, I was the last scholastic to get out from the juniors' dormitory alive. Bro. Frost came in and shouted, "Everybody out! Everybody out!" John Mullin, whose bed was next to mine, constantly apologized later for not waking me up before fleeing himself. I was a heavy sleeper and I didn't wake up at Bro. Frost's shout. So, I'm still there, left behind, when Bro. Frost came back and shouted, "Is everybody out?" And that's when I came out of the fog and started coughing and said, "That's not fog." And so I whipped on my pants and ran down the back stairs about ten minutes after all the other juniors. I couldn't talk for the next few days because of smoke inhalation.

RR: A real close call!

RC: So, I've often said to members of the province when I was provincial, "Wasn't it lucky for the province that I got out of the fire!" [Laughter] Some of them nod, while others cough and say nothing!

CONFLAGRATION

RR: Could you describe for us a bit more what that scene was like?

RC: When I got out, the fire was raging on the faculty side of the house where it started. I had earlier heard people say things that turned out to be ironical, "There's a firewall so don't worry about anything!" Of course, the firewall didn't hold at all. I do remember the rector, Fr. Corcoran, coming down a ladder fully dressed in a black coat and homburg, and saying, "There seems to be a problem here." [Laughter] Tragically, it turned out that there was only one hydrant on the grounds.

There was nothing the fire department could do, and the place just burned literally to the ground.

RR: What did you do once you were safely out?

RC: We stood there and shivered while we worried whether there were others still inside. Finally, we were taken that night to the Red Lion Inn nearby, where we were put up for a whole weekend. The next day some of us walked back just to see the ruins. We found there was nothing there but ashes. And no trace was ever found of the bodies of those who were caught in the fire. All that's left now is a memorial in the cemetery—actually the cemetery in Weston!

RR: I didn't know that. What a tragedy. What surprised me when I visited the site some time later, was how small the outline of a building was that had held a hundred people.

RC: It was a firetrap, no doubt about it. By the way, not too long ago, those of us still alive had a fiftieth memorial get-together.

TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

RR: So where did you go from there?

RC: We were all sent to different places, but the four of us who had only one year of juniorate were sent to St. Andrew-on-Hudson. They called it the Rock, and it was a very tough place. We New Englanders had a hard time adjusting, particularly those who were younger, because the New Yorkers were often older and quite different in many ways.

INVOLVEMENT WITH SPORTS

RR: How did you fare yourself with sports?

RC: I was happy enough and actually enjoyed it. I scored thirty-three points in a basketball game and hit two home runs in a softball game.

RR: Quite a record!

RC: I had never done much in athletics earlier, largely because I was always too young and too small. [Laughter]. I remember that the rector, Fr. Lincoln Walsh, who had been watching the basketball and softball games, said to me, “Just because you can shoot baskets doesn’t mean you’re good at the spiritual life.” So I said to myself, “What has that got to do with anything?” [Laughter]

RR: Right. Good point.

SETTLING IN AT WESTON AND SCIENCE

RC: After three months, I was sent in June to Weston and right into summer classes. We started our first year philosophy there at Weston. I found it difficult. Though I was later to love theology, I never liked philosophy. Despite that, I at least got good grades. These were what I called my “tunnel years.”

RR: Were there a few high spots during that time?

RC: Yes. I was given science as a specialty. I didn’t really want to go back into science, but that’s where I was put. So that’s what I obediently did. I had a one-on-one class with George Drury, who taught me for forty-five minutes of lecturing. I’d get a little drowsy at times, and every so often he’d look up and say, “Will you repeat what I just said?” And I’d have to say to him, “Sorry.” But, anyhow, he went on teaching until both he and Fr. Jimmy Burke said they and the provincial wanted me to go on to get a doctorate in science. The idea was that this would allow me to be eventually, in ten years or so, in charge of a science at Holy Cross or BC.

RR: Quite a long-range project.

RC: I don’t know exactly how long it would have taken. In any case, I believe that I was the first priest to get a National Science Foundation Fellowship in the United States. It was a fully paid, Johns Hopkins scholarship.

RR: That's quite an achievement.

TRIPLE DROPOUT

RC: So I said to myself, "I guess that's God's will for me."
But it was the biggest mistake I ever made.

RR: Really? Why?

RC: Because I'm not a scientist, and deep-down, I knew that. But I was being pushed into it. My good friend, Eddie Howard, said to me, "Cleary, get out of science." And to this day, I remember that very clearly, because Eddie, in his own way, was a very perceptive, good scientist himself. And, finally, I did get out of science. I was at Johns Hopkins for four very difficult years.

I became a triple dropout. I dropped out of Tufts, I dropped out of Johns Hopkins, and, as I'll tell you later, I had a third dropout, which I somehow survived. [Laughter] As you can imagine, I had some personal problems at Johns Hopkins. As requested by John Vincent O'Connor, the then provincial, I went to a psychiatrist for a while. Fr. O'Connor was a wonderful provincial, who understood the problem I was going through and was very helpful to me. After just a few sessions with the psychiatrist, he said to me, "You'll be fine. Just get out of science." And that was exactly what Eddie Howard had said to me, as I mentioned earlier.

LIBERATED

RR: You were in the wrong place at the wrong time. [Laughter]

RC: I know it. By dropping out of science, I was liberated. All of a sudden, I was free.

RR: You were turning in the right direction.

RC: And from that point on things were much, much different. The difficulties were gone. It was just totally better.

RR: Where were you when all this happened?

RC: I was still at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore at the time. While there, I lived first for two years at Loyola College, then for another year and a half, I lived at St. Ignatius, a downtown parish in Baltimore.

MOVING ON FROM SCIENCE STUDIES

RR: So what were your next steps?

RC: When I then asked JV, the provincial, about what to do, he said, "Why don't you come back to Boston and we'll talk." And that was when he gave me permission to drop out of Johns Hopkins. I went to BC High for three months. One of the tragedies of my life was never being formally assigned to a school as a Jesuit teacher. But for a short while I became a substitute teacher at one of our high schools.

GOING TO THEOLOGY AND NEW DISCOVERIES

RR: I imagine you were anxious to move on to something more solid?

RC: I was happy at BC High, doing a little substitute teaching, helping out the principal or the prefect of discipline. I was involved with dances and breaking up fights at Columbia Station in Dorchester. Some people thought I was coming back as some kind of basket case. So when Fr. John Higgins picked me up at the airport, he looked disappointed when I looked at him and said, "I left the basket back at Baltimore." [Laughter].

Anyhow, that's when I was given approval to go to theology at Weston. People were very good to me despite all the internal problems I was having. I have to say that there were some people who helped me a great deal, and I was very, very grateful for their help. In any case, I enjoyed my theology years.

A NEW SOCIAL MINISTRY TEAM

RR: What did you like most about theology?

RC: I liked the people best of all and their camaraderie. Rather quickly, we went beyond just teaching religious education on Sundays. Instead, we developed a tutoring program. John Williamson, a third-year theologian, asked about my future plans. But I really didn't know what I was going to do. I was told that when I left Weston that I could go to Baghdad to replace Fr. "Star" Gerry as a teacher of biology for just a couple of years. And another option for me was to go to tertianship.

RR: So what happened?

RC: Well, when I was at Weston we had started a social ministry program, something which had become a big thing at the time. There were four or five of us. We started it at the old Immaculate Conception rectory on Harrison Ave. in the South End. There was a mixture of about a hundred inner city kids from Roxbury, South Boston, and Dorchester. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience. It opened my eyes to another side of the world. Growing up, I think I knew only three black families in Winchester. So, all of a sudden, I was immersed in an entirely different situation. It changed my life.

SUMMER MINISTRY

RR: Could you be a little more explicit about what kind of social ministry you did?

RC: Basically, we were doing tutoring on Saturdays and in the summer. We also took them on expeditions to the science museum and other places in the afternoon. Sometimes we took them out to our swimming pool at Weston. For instance, I was teaching the kids some Latin and a little biology. I even cut off a frog's head one time, and when it jumped into one kid's lunch, he threw up. I still remember that kid's name! [Laugh-

ter]. But, once again, I gave up biology.

RR: Where did they come from?

RC: They were seventh and eighth graders. We were preparing them for good high schools. And we were successful in getting a number of them into BC High and a few of them to a good public high school like Boston Latin. The numbers weren't large, but we still made a difference for a lot of these "ghetto kids." I remember what one of them said excitedly one day, "Hey, Father, look! The trees are all red." He had never seen the leaves change before, because he had lived in the inner city his whole life!

RR: Did this program you described continue on or did it peter out?

RC: No, it continued for a while. Bill Cullen was one of the people with me in our efforts, and we changed the leadership each year. I led it my fourth year of theology, then Jim Talbot led it for two or three years. Then, somehow, it did peter out. Since I was no longer there myself, I'm not sure what happened. In any case, we were at the same time mainly involved with our theology at Weston.

TERTIANSHIP AND CONTACTS

RR: What about your tertianship?

RC: Fr. Coleran had made me the "beadle" of the tertianship. There were twenty-four of us there, and one of them was Peter Hans Kolvenbach, and I, as his "director," assigned him to keeping the house clean. He was a wonderful man, and, I must say, very good about it all. He also got along well with the rest of us. And, of course, he later on became General of the Society of Jesus for twenty-five years.

RR: Remarkable. How about your pastoral ministry during tertianship?

RC: I asked Fr. Coleran, the tertian director, whether I

and some other tertians could develop a special program at Columbia Point housing project in Boston. He agreed and gave us permission to do so.

There were several of us living at Columbia Point, including tertians Bill Mulligan, Larry Corcoran, Al Hicks, and Tom McCormack, who taught at BC High. We spent the better part of five months there doing nothing special. We were simply there. We walked the streets, mingled with the people, and went to some religious functions at the local parish. But we had no formal program. What we did have was a realistic experience of how the people in those housing projects really feel.

One day, when everybody was out, I was at the window feeling very depressed on a gloomy day, when I saw a big, heavy, black woman in the next big high rise across from me, who was looking out like I was. Suddenly, she looks over at me, waves, and smiles. And I said to myself, "I guess we both know what it's like to live in one of these projects with nothing to do."

We were both bored. I could really experience what the poor face every day! I've never forgotten that day.

RR: And did this have any effect on what you did afterwards?

RC: Yes. It led me toward some of what I did later on.

ACTIVE LIFE: A NEW BEGINNING

RR: We have been dealing with your life during the Jesuit course. So let's move into the "active" or "professional" side of your life after tertianship. Please lead us in the way you think best.

RC: Sure. I'll be happy to do that. After I got out of tertianship, as I said earlier, I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Before tertianship I had been approached about Baghdad, but instead had gone directly to tertianship from 1967-1968.

FIELD EDUCATION

RC: During tertianship, the provincial, JV O'Connor, and "Gus" [Joseph A.] Devenny, the dean of Weston College, visited us. Gus was very interested in getting students into this new area of field education, as the Protestant divinity schools had been doing. It meant going out and getting involved outside the classroom. And I guess he thought I'd be good at that kind of thing. It was about that time that I got an assignment, actually a double assignment. At Weston College I was Director of Field Education, and on the province level, I was an assistant to Jack McCall, the Province Director of Pastoral and Social Ministries.

RR: An important start in an important area. You mentioned Gus Devenny who was then dean of Weston School of Theology. Was he still out here at Weston College in Weston while you had that job?

RC: No, he had already moved to Cambridge with the other Jesuits associated with the new Weston School of Theology. He had been, and continued to be, very much involved in those major changes in the province and the Church.

DIRECTOR OF BTI FIELD EDUCATION

RR: How did your work in field education go?

RC: It was a welcome change, because being Director of Field Education at Weston College connected me with the type of work I found natural after my experiences at Columbia Point. But the faculty had not been too happy with me, because they didn't want anybody to do anything but study. Yet we were the first of the ten US Jesuit provinces to send people into Clinical Pastoral Education, even though I never made it myself. Later on, of course, it would become quite common.

RR: Were you satisfied with these developments?

RC: Yes, and it must have been a pretty good initiative,

because when the Boston Theological Institute schools were looking for an overall director of field education, they asked me to take the job. So I moved over to Andover-Newton Theological School in 1970, where I had been taking courses in pastoral theology since 1968. I had an office there for about a year and a half. I was working on several programs along with other field education directors from the seven member schools. It was a great ecumenical experience for me.

RR: How did things go working for such a large group?

RC: Things worked out very well, and we had a lot of fun together. At the same time, it involved a good deal of hard work. For a couple of years, I went to a meeting every week, which, over the long run, added up to over a hundred meetings.

RR: That's a lot of meetings!

RC: In a sense, it was an incredible number, but it was great and worthwhile work.

NEW FORMS OF PROVINCE LEADERSHIP

RC: While I was working at Andover-Newton, involved in all kinds of activities, the province had suddenly begun looking for a vice-provincial. I was going along, happy doing what I was doing, when I was asked if I was willing to be considered for the vice-provincial job. So I said, "Are you crazy? I've only been ordained a few years. Almost everyone else is older than I am." So I was very surprised when I was appointed as vice-provincial for formation. It was a new job in the provincial office. And shortly afterwards, there were three vice-provincials. The reason behind all this was the large number of men in the province.

RR: How did the Jesuit leadership in Rome react to these new arrangements?

RC: At the time, Pedro Arrupe was the General, and he had some reservations about the way our whole sys-

tem was set up. He was concerned especially about how the account of conscience would fit in and how the provincial would be able to know all his men. And in reality, he was right. It wasn't possible for a provincial to see that number of men each year in any significant way. Accounts of conscience are difficult to handle. I was able to do it in the limited area of Jesuit formation. Later on, when I became a provincial myself, I had vice-provincials hearing them on a local basis.

RR: I can see that it could get rather complicated.

RC: I'd have to go on a lot of trips all over the place, but when possible, that personal touch was very much appreciated.

RR: As I understand it, this new system didn't last very long?

RC: It lasted about nine years. Paul Harman was the last director of formation. The two other vice-provincials for high schools/colleges and pastoral ministries lasted maybe another year or so.

RR: Did any other province try this system?

RC: Oh, yes. California and New York each had four vice-provincials, and New Orleans three. They're all gone, too. But the numbers were so high, 950 or so men in our province when I became provincial, that it wasn't possible to hear all those accounts of conscience. It was a stop-gap measure. As a matter of fact, there were a lot of such stop-gap measures in those days.

RR: How did you find the job?

RC: I enjoyed being vice-provincial and visiting the younger men. My style has always been to try to support people in different jobs and help them get into leadership roles. I didn't feel it was right for superiors to just say, "Do this. Do that."

RR: That's a very supportive and encouraging approach.

RC: Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But that was what I always tried to do myself.

RR: It depends on individuals or on their particular circumstances.

BECOMING PROVINCIAL

RC: Yes. So, lo and behold, suddenly sometime in September of my second year as vice-provincial, people were talking about finding the next provincial. I was a province consultor, of course, and so we drew up a list of three possible names. The group put my name on the list in the third and last place. Usually the number one suggestion is the one who gets appointed. So I'm sitting there saying, "Whew! That's good. It's good I'm last."

Then, one night, I had a dream and heard myself saying, "Oh, my God! The two on the list ahead of me are not going to get appointed for different reasons. What's going to happen?" Then, the very next day, George Nolan came into my office and said, "Well, a young child will lead us!" I had been appointed provincial, and I was only forty-one years old. That's how I became provincial of the New England Province! I wondered what the future would hold.

RR: I'm sure it was a key moment in your life!

RC: For the time being, of course, I continued to be Vice-Provincial for Formation. So I started a term as provincial that would have all kinds of issues. And I'm sure that you and many others have a really good idea of what they were.

A MAJOR CHALLENGE

RR: Well, let me just ask you one specific question about the major problem faced by the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge.

RC: You were dean there at the time, weren't you?

RR: Yes, I had been dean for only a week or two when it happened. The board of American provincials had just

closed three of the five Jesuit theologates in the US, and one of them was ours in Cambridge. This came as quite a shock. Three of us—Joe McCormick, Bob White, and myself—got together to appeal the decision to the provincials.

We argued that most of the developments and accomplishments claimed by Woodstock and the New York Province were in a much less developed stage than ours were at the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge. We explained that we had a fully working connection with both Harvard and the Episcopal Divinity School, to say nothing of the other divinity schools in the Boston area. We said that we had been teaching several theology courses for some years and they were all flourishing. We felt that, at the time, we were a considerable way ahead and more fully developed.

On the other hand, we said, it was generally believed that Columbia would never open itself to Woodstock in the way Harvard had opened itself to the Weston School of Theology. In any case, we were soon surprised to hear that the provincials had reversed their decision in favor of Weston. We felt that we had helped at least somewhat to bring that about.

RC: Actually, I didn't know anything about the provincials' meetings. Bill Guindon was still provincial at the time and he intervened strongly himself. And he had said, "Don't even tell your formation people." So I knew nothing about it until the decision about Weston and Woodstock had been made.

RR: That's the time I'm talking about. And, in any case, it was a great moment for all of us in the province.

RC: I think there were also formation rather than intellectual reasons involved, because Woodstock had an excellent academic faculty, including Gus Weigel, John Courtney Murray, and several others.

RR: No one ever questioned that.

RC: So that's why I didn't think that Woodstock would be closed, but it was. I've told people that the announcement was going to be made in the various theologates while Bill Guindon was on his way to India. So I was delegated to go over to Weston and tell people there that Weston was going to survive. And, as you can imagine, they were all very nervous.

RR: Very much so.

RC: So I said to them, "Did you really think that Weston wouldn't survive when Bill Guindon was off on a trip abroad?" So they were all excited about Weston's survival. But I felt sad about the Woodstock people, too. I really did.

OTHER PUBLIC CHALLENGES

RR: What were some other interesting things that happened when you were provincial?

RC: There were a number of exciting things that happened.

RR: Could you give us an overview?

RC: Well, I had to deal with John McLaughlin in one way and with Bob Drinan in another. Both were involved with the media, and their problems were resolved in different ways. And, of course, we were all impressed and proud of Bob when he did what the pope asked him to do, that is, to resign from the congress, as well, of course, for all his good work as a congressman.

RR: Right. We were all impressed.

RC: Then, of course, beside the difficult times, there were some very good ones. I also did a lot more traveling. I went to many Jesuit provincial meetings and other meetings as well. And I tried hard to visit a lot of places where members of the province were to be found. If I couldn't get there myself, I would send a representative.

RR: Would you agree that both you and Bill Guindon were

involved in a time of major change both in the Church and in Society?

RC: Very much so.

DEALING WITH THE FUTURE AND ITS CHANGE

RR: There was first a tension in both areas between practices of the past and challenges of the future. And people had strong ideas about both. As you remember, there were some major meetings in the province that dealt with all these challenges. How well do you think the members of the province dealt with all this?

RC: Well, Bill Guindon was very much a spearhead. He took all kinds of criticism. He was forthright in saying, "We're going with these changes, all right?" But a number of people, especially the older ones, were unhappy with him. I think I succeeded in being "the healing provincial." I came in, intending to follow through on what Bill did and had planned to do. I was involved in a new, more mutual way of making assignments after discussion. Lots of people thought that what Bill had done was a wonderful thing. I tried to make good assignments for many people. But one big problem was increasing, namely the large numbers of people leaving the Society.

RR: And the priesthood in general.

RC: Yes. Bill got caught up with a lot of that. I inherited a lot of them myself. Bill helped about forty people to leave the Society, while I helped thirty or so. It was sad for everyone. In all honesty, I felt a number of them should not have left. They were very good people. I did my best to help them feel good about the Society after they left.

RR: Yes, that's important.

RC: Well, I thought we could do it gradually if not perfectly. It was a real challenge. Of course there are a lot of other stories around, but as a former provincial, I

would rather not go into them in a public way.

RR: Yes, I understand.

RC: But I very much enjoyed those years, both as a vice-provincial and as a provincial. So I would like to give you an overview of what happened after that.

RR: By all means. Go ahead.

EIGHT DIFFERENT MINISTRIES

RC: I like to say I've been in eight different ministries in the course of my priesthood. And they were all very different, because, after leaving office as provincial, I didn't have a job. An outgoing provincial is usually asked by an incoming one what he would like to do next. People usually think to themselves, "After all, as a provincial he must be all set for the future. He can even assign himself." However, I made sure I wasn't going to assign myself to anything.

So the first thing I did was to take a sabbatical. I went out to the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and enjoyed the time out there very much. I then saw the provincial who succeeded me. He brought up all the different things I could be doing, so at that point I said, "Wait a minute. You know me. What do you want me to do?" And I got no really clear answer, so I finally said, "I know that we're working on Campion Center, something Bill Guindon had a lot to do with. And it has been something you have followed through on. So I know that you're looking for a rector, because George Drury is going to be leaving there soon."

So he said, "Oh, would you like that job?" I said, "I didn't say I'd like that job. but, as you know, you need someone there." So the next thing I know, I got a letter from him saying, "I assign you to Campion Center as rector." And that's how I got to Campion Center. A number of people were happy that I did this and said, "Here's a provincial who is not going to our

Washington office. He's coming to do something for the older men of the province." So I continued to work with Jesuits and was back at Weston for eight-and-a-half years.

NAMING CAMPION CENTER

RR: Am I correct in saying that you were the one who actually gave it the name of "Campion Center"?

RC: Yes, I did. Various names were being considered. At the time we were closing Campion Hall in North Andover as a retreat center, and those involved were upset by the closing. So I realized it would be nice to call this house Campion Center to save the title, especially since the title had a nice ring to it. It reminded us of the martyred English Jesuit, Edmund Campion. And, since a lot of people don't know what Campion stands for, this gives us a chance to tell his story.

RR: Yes, even to this day. Could you tell us more about Campion Center itself and what developments you were able to introduce?

RC: That was difficult to do, because we no longer had the wonderful facility that Weston College had been, nor did we have enough money to do much of anything. I didn't even have a budget director, and I had to manage the yearly budget myself. We had nothing. I was in charge of the residence, the renewal center, the cemetery, and other administrative matters, i.e. "the whole ball of wax." So it was difficult. We struggled to find which way to go. And I did the best I could to make people feel comfortable coming here.

RR: Quite a handful!

RC: I remember telling one sick Jesuit, who really didn't want to be at Campion Center and never smiled, "Now, just relax and enjoy yourself and allow yourself to be pampered." But even that couldn't get him to smile!
[Laughter]

RR: All this is interesting in the sense that some other provinces gave up on their larger houses and sold them.

RC: I should add that after leaving Campion Center, I had another brief sabbatical, not very successful, in Shropshire County in England at Hawkstone Hall.

SPREADING THE WORD

RC: Then, after I left Campion Center in 1988, I went to Oregon and New Orleans to talk to them about Campion. I also had inquiries from several other provinces as well. I think I helped Oregon deal with their three largest communities. I made some suggestions about how to deal with some of their problems and their communities. I worked especially with the Jesuit communities in Spokane, and urged them to at least try the suggestions. And, as far as I know, it worked out well for them.

RR: It was certainly a positive approach.

RC: These were my enjoyable years, my good years.

FRUITFUL YEARS AS BC CHAPLAIN

RR: What did you do next?

RC: All right, I haven't mentioned that when I left Campion Center, Fr. Don Monan, BC President, asked me if I would consider being head chaplain at Boston College. I said, "I would really like that, because it would finally get me out of the Jesuit world and let me deal with some young people." I accepted his invitation, and "got the job," and worked there for eleven years. And, if anyone asks, I tell them that those years were my happiest ones.

RR: What did you do as head chaplain?

RC: Well, I had a staff of nine with whom I got along very well. My job, in many ways, was to encourage my staff to come up with good ideas to help students in various ways. I would then say to them, "Go ahead. Give it a

try. If it doesn't work I'll let you know. And, if it goes well, and you're on the right track, everyone will profit from it."

EXCELLENT ASSISTANTS

RC: They were wonderful people. We had a great program. We had a great time. I would get involved myself with some of these programs. But I always did so through them. We were good friends. We did a lot of things together.

RR: Who were these assistants? Where did they come from?

RC: They came from all over the place. At any given time, I had at least one other Jesuit who had been there for years. I had a religious priest and a religious sister. I had three lay women. I had two or three married men with children of their own. It was a great combination of people who liked each other and worked well together for the sake of the students.

We developed a program for the first-year students in which, in one year at least, we had some 800 first-year students. We would meet on weekends at a hotel. Our purpose was to introduce them to life at BC, and help them avoid the serious pitfalls of drinking and sexuality on campus. We tried to get them to concentrate on their studies, because if they didn't, they could ruin their whole lives. Of course, we also dealt with their spiritual life.

RR: Having taught college freshmen myself for a number of years, I can vouch this is an impressive achievement by you and your BC staff. It was obviously a large operation. Did you have any budget problems?

RC: No, the President, Don Monan, saw this kind of student development as having a high priority. So we were able to work out budgetary matters pretty well. That freshman program was, for me, the highlight of my time there.

SINGING WITH THE BC CHORALE

RR: I understand that you also found time to do some singing, right?

RC: If you're talking about the University Chorale, yes, I took part in it for eleven years. Most Jesuits don't realize that I've done a lot of singing. I was the faculty advisor for the University Chorale for seven years. Working with them gave me many great, even delightful times. I set up many of their spring break trips and often went with them.

And I was able to arrange for a special audience with the pope on one of our trips to Rome. It was a wonderful experience. We used to practice twice a week. Rehearsals went an hour-and-a-half from 4:30 to 6:00. I made a point of being at almost all those rehearsals.

RR: I can see that you were very much involved personally.

RC: Yes, but that's another story. I'd like to turn to what happened after I left BC.

RR: Sure.

CHAPLAIN AT UMASS

RC: I first had a wonderful sabbatical with the Redemptorists at Marianella in Dublin, Ireland. I didn't know what I was going to do after that. But then I was asked if I'd be willing to go up to UMass in Amherst. A friend who had a friend been appointed Director of the Newman Center there, and he was looking for another priest to join the group. So, when asked, I said, "I'll give it a try." So I went and worked there for four years. It turned out to be a very difficult situation for all of us. We hired about fifteen people, but when I left, all of them were gone.

RR: Really?

RC: I stayed as long as I did for the sake of the students. The last two years were especially painful. Then I got

sick. I had a brief heart problem followed by a serious prostate problem. In any case, I said to myself, “Hey, I’m not going back there.”

TO SALEM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

RR: I understand that you then went to St. Joseph’s parish.

RC: I came back to Campion for a short time. And the provincial, Tom Regan, asked me to be pastor of a diocesan parish there. Foolishly, I said yes. I guess I’m one of those people who, when asked to do something, just do it. But, I really wasn’t up to it, health-wise. So I was pastor for exactly six months to the day, August 15 to February 15. The new pastor who took my place was John Michalowski, who had been in charge of Campion Renewal Center.

RR: But you stayed on there at St Joseph’s?

RC: Yes, as associate pastor. But my sickness has brought me back again to Campion Center for the time being.

RR: Yes, we’ve had the chance to get reacquainted.

RC: The plan is still that I will go back there if and when I get better.

RR: I hope so.

LIVING OUT THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

RR: As we approach the end of our conversation, I would like to ask you a general question. As you look back over the years, do you feel that you have experienced providential guidance in some important areas of your life?

RC: Oh, yes. I think I’ve mentioned some of them. I used to give a talk to the students during our weekend programs that emphasized the importance of the Spiritual Exercises. A number of them were not Catholic. I felt that this spirituality was part of me and I wanted to pass it on to them.

You start out with the First Week of the Exercises by looking at the struggles we have with our sinfulness, to say nothing of our inclination to depression. Then I tried to get them to experience and deal with the decisions they were facing. I tried to show them how I had experienced the call of Jesus to the priesthood, a call which I had accepted.

At that point, I went into the Second Week of the Exercises, which is the longest part, dealing with our ups and downs. I tried to show them how they are following the path of Jesus who had his own ups and downs. My own experience has always been that I was living out that Second Week through my various ministries. I remember the last time when I did this seven or eight years ago I said to the students, "Without the cross, there is something lacking in your lives." And it was just around that time that I developed a prostate problem, so I said to the students, "It looks like I'm entering the Third Week." Through all this, I was on a roll and it was wonderful.

RR: You must have made quite an impression on them.

RC: Yes. But as my prostate problem increased, I'm now trying to move more towards living in that Fourth Week, as are so many here at Campion.

RR: Yes. We need to remember that there is a Fourth Week, when retreatants contemplate the resurrected life of Jesus.

RC: That's right. So I used to end my words to the students by saying, "I'm in the Third Week, but I'm trying hard to get into the Fourth, and I hope you will as well." I try to see all the spirituality involved in our Jesuit ministries.

RR: Is there anything else you'd like to say in conclusion?

RC: Just a word to everyone who has dealt with me. I want to thank you for your patience with me over the years. I'm grateful to you. And, Dick, I hope this interview

of mine hasn't given you too much paper work to do!
RR: It's a job we like to do. I want to thank you for giving us, and many others, an inspiring insight into your Jesuit life.

A LAST WORD

RC: I share with you a beautiful poem, written by John Henry Cardinal Newman in 1833 (when he was an Anglican) and put to music in 1860. Although the language may seem a bit "stilted," the words speak deeply to me and get to the core of my own religious journey: "The distant scene, one step enough for me!" Pray for Cardinal Newman's beatification. One miracle is needed.

Lead, Kindly Light

Lead, kindly Light,
amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead thou me on:
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that you
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will:
remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since,
and lost a while
Amen.

Fr. Richard T. Cleary, S.J.

Born: September 24, 1932, Melrose, Massachusetts
Entered: July 30, 1953, Lenox, Massachusetts, St. Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook
Ordained: June 11, 1966, Weston, Massachusetts, Weston College
Last Vows: November 6, 1971, St. Mary's Chapel, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

1945 Winchester, Massachusetts: Winchester High School - Student
1949 Winchester, Massachusetts: Tufts University - Undergraduate studies
1952 Winchester, Massachusetts: St. Philip Neri School - Studied Latin
1953 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook - Novitiate, juniorate [to March 10, 1956]
1956 Poughkeepsie, New York: St. Andrew-on-Hudson - Juniorate [March 12-June 1956]
1959 Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University - Studied biology
1963 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied theology
1967 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertianship
1968 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College
1968-1969 Studied pastoral theology part-time, Andover Newton Theological School
1968-1970 Assistant Director, Province Pastoral Ministry
1969-1970 Director of Field Education, Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

- 1970 Brighton, Massachusetts: 18 Radnor Road/ Weston College School of Philosophy at Boston College - Director Field Education, Boston Theological Institute
- 1972 Boston, Massachusetts: Campbell House/418 Beacon Street - February 2, 1972-February 2, 1974 Vice-Provincial for Formation. New England Province February 2, 1974-September 1, 1979 Provincial, New England Province
- 1979 Berkeley, California: Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley - Continuing education
- 1980 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Center - Superior
- 1988 Marchamley, Shrewsbury, England: Hawkstone Hall / Redemptorist International Pastoral Centre England - Sabbatical
- 1989 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College - Director of Campus Ministry
- 2001 Dublin, Ireland: Marianella - Sabbatical
- 2002 Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts - Campus Minister
- 2006 Salem, New Hampshire: St. Joseph Parish - Pastor, Assistant Pastor
- 2008-Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center - For treatment

Degrees

- 1958 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1963 Master of Arts, Biology, Johns Hopkins
- 1967 Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Weston College