

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Bro. Edward P. Babinski, 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 Jesuit oral history is all about.

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Interview with Bro. Edward P. Babinski, S.J.
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
February 17, 2008

EARLY YEARS: THE FAMILY

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome. Let's begin with your early years. Where were you born?

EDWARD BABINSKI: I was born in Worcester, July 28, 1925, the last of eight children in our family. My brother, Chet, two or three years older than I, and myself are the only ones left. At the time of this interview, I'm 82 and a half. I'll be 83 in July.

One of my sisters, Sophie, died of measles, of all things. In those days it was a major illness. That happened in '25, before I was born. One of my older brothers survived the influenza epidemic in 1918. My father died when I was six years old and about to start my first day at school. He died of so-called silicosis or lung disease. He contracted it from the flying dust that got into his lungs while working at Norton Company in Worcester, which manufactured abrasives.

RR: That was tragic. How about your mother?

EB: Yes. My mother's name was Michalina Targonski. Neither she nor my father were ever able to get their baptismal records. So she adopted the name of Michael

the Archangel. And my father's name was Apolinary, but he was always known as Pete.

When my father died young, he left my mother with seven children, with the oldest in high school. The company refused to admit that his death was industry-related. They didn't want to give any compensation to my mother, fearing that, if she won the case, then it would be a benchmark that would open the door for others who had the same disease.

My mother tried to get a lawyer to help her, but without success. Finally, a young Italian lawyer, named Nunziato Fuzzaro, who was just starting out, said to her, "I'll take them on." Actually, it was as if he was putting his head in a noose, because the company had a huge staff of lawyers. Among them was the father of Tim O'Leary, the LSD guru. Despite all that, my mother won the case.

THE SUPREME COURT CASE

RR: Good for her!

EB: It was due to the lawyer I mentioned. He was a really sharp little fellow. He once said, "I only made one mistake during the trial. I showed them the X-rays of your father's lungs and how they were affected. The only problem was that I was showing them upside down. But no one seemed to know the difference."

Then about fifty or sixty years later, Fr. Joe Valenti came to visit the rectory of the Immaculate. I asked him, "What are you doing in town?" And he said, "I'm going over to visit Mr. Fuzzaro." I said, "You mean Nunziato?" He said, "How do you know Nunziato Fuzzaro?" So I told him the whole story. He said, "Why don't you go over to see him? He's in his 90s." So I went over to the hospital and visited him. He remembered everything about my mother's case, everything. Valenti had said he'd be tickled pink to

relive the case.

That case was challenged and went to trial in the Massachusetts Supreme Court. The unanimous decision of the justices was in favor of my mother's case. Otherwise, as a family, we would have starved to death, because it was '31, during the Depression.

RR: It was a bad time all around.

EB: A few of my sisters and brothers had to leave high school and go to work. They had natural intelligence, but never had the opportunity to develop it.

RR: So your mother and other members of the family did get that compensation?

EB: Oh, yes. But I should add that the rest of my childhood was routine.

IMMIGRANTS FROM POLAND UNDER RUSSIA

RR: Could you tell us more about your father and mother themselves?

EB: My father and mother emigrated from Eastern Poland, which then had a very brutal Russian regime. In fact, my father was conscripted to serve in the Russian army during the Japanese-Russian War back in 1903. As a conscript he was just another body. He didn't know what end of the gun was up. That kind of military ignorance was the main reason why the Japanese overwhelmed the Russians. It was so traumatic for my father. They had to go through eastern China and Manchuria through the winter snow. It was such a terrible experience for my father that he did not want to talk about it. My sister tried to pump him about his experiences, but he simply did not want to relive them.

RR: Did it permanently affect his health?

EB: No, not to that degree. It was a short war, because the Japanese overwhelmed the Russians.

OFF TO AMERICA

RR: What led him to come to the United States?

EB: He emigrated to get away from the brutal Russian oppression. My mother could not even read her own baptismal records. You were not allowed to speak Polish and you had to study Russian. If you were found with a book in Polish, you were sent to prison as a criminal. It was so oppressive that there was a massive emigration to the United States.

When they came to the US, they were not yet married. They were married here. I think it was in 1910, but I'm not sure of the exact date or year. They lived a life of survival. I kind of envy families with a history, but we had nothing we could read. When I look back now at our homes in the '30s, I can see how everyone was hurting badly and just trying to survive.

FATHER'S EARLY DEATH

RR: And then, unfortunately, you were only six when you father died, so you never really had a chance to really know much more about him?

EB: I didn't learn much about him. My mother was a very devout person. She'd be on her knees at home every single day at 6:30 AM. She would read her prayer book. She also went to Mass almost every single day before sending us to school. Amazingly, later, when she was dying, I was able to get home with the priest in time to witness her receiving the last rites. She was thrilled that our Lord would come to her. And she went to church right up to her final days when the Lord took her.

FAMILY GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT

RR: Tell us a bit about your brothers and sisters.

EB: I had three brothers and four sisters: Jane, Sophie, Hank [Henry], Phyllis, Helen, Chet [Chester], and

Mack [Matthew]. Some had to go to work and didn't have much opportunity for schooling. It was a question of survival for all of us.

My sisters were in high school and had at least some schooling. They weren't able to finish because of our monetary situation. My oldest brother also had to go to work. The other two managed to get some schooling. One graduated and got a degree in law. The other one got a degree from Wentworth Institute. He was very smart, and the nephews are very smart too.

I had a couple of nephews who went to UMass as well as a niece. They seemed to monopolize the brains in the family. A nephew has a master's in engineering from UMass. His brother used to say that if anybody had a problem, they could go to him for help. At the same time, he hated working nine to five. So what did he do? He went to Germany and went into agronomy, shoveling manure and growing organic food! And that was to his father's displeasure, who thought he was wasting his talent by doing that. The other one is a research analyst with the Navy.

I also have a niece that's very smart. She started a computer company called Brainshark. They do a lot of really high tech stuff about communications among companies. She started the company with another fellow, and they now have over a hundred employees. She's the real brain of the outfit.

RR: Well, it sounds as if things turned out pretty well for the family.

EB: Yes. They've had good educations and opportunities. All three of them went at UMass, and one of them later got a master's degree at Babson College.

RR: It all sounds like a very American story, right?

EB: Yes. They had the opportunity and made the most of it. But the rest of us didn't have much of an opportunity for schooling.

RR: Believe it or not, I was in Worcester in the late '30s doing my high school at Assumption Prep and my first two years of college at Holy Cross, so I have good memories of Worcester.

EB: I know a fellow who went to Assumption and later became a priest. I used to go to Assumption quite often. I would visit him at the high school, but once in a while I would go to their basketball games. My home was only about five miles away.

LOCAL POLISH PARISH

RR: Tell us something now about your parish church.

EB: My parish church was Our Lady of Czestochowa, commonly known as St. Mary's. Ethnic names were popular then. For example, Notre Dame out by city hall was renamed Notre Dame des Canadiens. Now it's just about closed.

When I was growing up we had some beloved priests, like something out of a Bing Crosby movie. They were very, very lovable. But I wasn't all that involved with the church itself, though I sang in the choir for a while. The church was about a quarter mile from our home.

SCHOOL YEARS

RR: What about school?

EB: We had a parochial grammar school, and they also started a parochial high school, which still exists. But I don't know how well it's doing, given the fact parochial high schools these days are almost a fiscal impossibility. Maybe it's survived because it's so small.

RR: Was that where you went yourself?

EB: Yes. They had just started it. I was in the fourth graduating class. It wasn't very challenging academically. It was taught by a local congregation of Sisters. I don't think I could survive in today's high school. There was nothing like an SAT prior to college. Very

few went on to college anyway because of the cost.

During high school, I had a paper route. It seemed that every one in town had one. I also worked in the A&P grocery and, for a short time, in the tannery.

DRAFTED INTO THE NAVY

EB: Almost immediately after my graduation, I was drafted into the Navy. The same thing happened to [Bro.] Frank Cluff [S.J.]. I don't think he was even allowed to finish high school. At eighteen, he was two years older than I. And in those days, it was almost automatic that as soon as you turned eighteen, they drafted you and any other warm body. I had no choice. I was assigned to the Seabees [from "Construction Battalion," now the "US Naval Construction Force"]. It was all routine. In the long run, I didn't see any action as such. I went abroad to the Pacific. I was in a Seabees maintenance unit at an air base called Kaneohe. It's really what they call the "Paradise of the Pacific."

Several decades later Fr. Dave Travers [a New England Jesuit] was the chaplain at that same base in Hawaii. He loved it very much and stayed on in Hawaii; he continues as pastor in one of the local churches there.

When I was there in the service in the '40s, the area had its first ordination in twenty-three years. So we had a big fundraiser on the base to try to support the local seminary. They were rather short of priests there at that time, so I'm sure they must have welcomed with open arms someone like Dave Travers.

CONTINUING CONTACT

RR: Did you keep up your contact with the others in your battalion?

EB: I corresponded with a few of the fellows for a while. I

visited one of them after I got out of the service. There was one point in my Jesuit life, where I hadn't had a vacation for about fifteen years, so Fr. Fitzgerald said to me, "Take ten days off. Go any place you want and get some rest." So I went down as far as New Orleans and over to Florida to visit one of my friends that I'd been in the service with. He was with the police force.

I also I kept up a good contact with another fellow in North Carolina and later in Florida. Our outfit had been rather small, and I liked being with the Seabees. We had older men among us with a good, strong work background technically. So there was a mixture of young and old, and it made for a very good relationship. In fact, we even had fathers and sons in the unit. Our main task as Seabees was to do all the basic maintenance at the Marine air base. It had been one of the initial ones hit by the Japanese when they attacked Pearl Harbor.

PEARL HARBOR MEMORIES

RR: So you know something about Pearl Harbor?

EB: Yes. At Kaneohe, there is a cemetery for some Japanese who tried to invade Pearl Harbor from their submarines. They were killed and buried right there.

A funny thing happened at the end of the war. The island at that time was about one-third Japanese and very strong in island agriculture. There was a minister who, when the war ended, told his congregation the Japanese had won and the victorious Japanese fleet would be steaming into Pearl Harbor soon. They believed it, and went up on what they call Aiea Heights, overlooking the whole harbor. And there they were, waiting for the Japanese fleet to enter the harbor. And, for all I know, they're still waiting for the fleet! Generally speaking, however, things were serene.

CONTACTING THE JESUITS

RR: How long was it after you got out of the service before you contacted the Jesuits?

EB: It was just a few months. They were waiting for a group to gather to go in, and finally four of us entered together.

RR: Who was your main Jesuit contact?

EB: I had a Jesuit chaplain, who gave me some literature about the Brothers. Ironically, it was a diocesan chaplain, Fr. Dave O'Brien, who was most influential for me. Later, of course, I dealt with Jesuits about becoming one. But there was something about Fr. O'Brien that strongly influenced me. He was from the Syracuse Diocese, and later on was very closely affiliated with the Jesuits at LeMoyne College. He visited Fairfield. I didn't know him too well, but he was the chaplain of the LeMoyne basketball team. So we had a kind of quasi-reunion. He has a very, very strong character. One of his favorite sayings is, "Mothers, take down your service flag. Your sons are here at Kaneohe. There's no battle here." He used to tease us a lot.

RR: Who was the first Jesuit you dealt with seriously?

EB: As I mentioned, while in the Navy I also had a Jesuit chaplain. I went up to Holy Cross for interviews. My first real contacts were Bill Healey, Frank Toolin, and Joe Fitzgerald. But I had gone through a lot of the literature and was advised by the chaplain in the service. That was my first knowledge of Jesuits per se. I had always been leaning towards the brotherhood, whether Jesuit or some other order. The fact was, however, that the Jesuits at Holy Cross were my neighbors.

SHADOWBROOK YEARS

RR: That brings us to Shadowbrook. Did you go there with others or did you go alone?

EB: Three others entered at the same time. However, none of them survived. I got there the day after George White, a scholastic, died here at Weston. He had died on December 2 with a brain tumor. I think he had been showing signs of a brain tumor at Shadowbrook, so they sent him down here to Weston for medical attention. He was a strapping young fellow.

My own entrance to the Jesuits was routine, but I was always bothered by the fact that Brothers never got credit for the six-month postulancy. Of course, now there is no postulancy as such.

Jokingly, I asked Bro. Murphy if he would join me in a class action suit against the Society, the General, and the Pope, about our getting the six months credit we missed reinstated for postulancy. Jim McDavitt always turned us off by saying, "Look, you were slaves for six months. Don't tell us you were the same as the others. You were slaves. Be satisfied."

Then I took vows. And, at that time, there were two or three Brothers at 297 Commonwealth Avenue. But during the summer, they were away for a retreat and some R&R. So I was asked to go down for three weeks. Well, those three weeks turned into twenty-two years! [Laughter]

What happened was that Bro. Kilmartin, who had been the provincial's secretary practically since the New England Province began in the '20s, had been diagnosed with cancer. So they were looking for a successor. And since as a veteran I could go to school for at least a year under the GI Bill, I went to secretarial school. I just stayed on where I was—and all that happened just a few weeks after I took my vows. [Laughter] So that's how I got to stay there for twenty-

two years.

INSPIRATION FROM BRO. McDAVITT

RR: Could you tell us more about one of the outstanding ones, Bro. Jim McDavitt?

EB: He was a marvelous person. His versatility was legendary. When he was asked at Shadowbrook if he had ever made a habit [a simple kind of cassock], he said, "No. But give me the pattern and I'll have a habit for you." As a matter of fact he took over making habits at Shadowbrook after Franz, the layman tailor, stopped making them. He also did birettas and just about everything else—plumbing, heating, electricity—you name it. Like Croesus, everything he touched turned to gold. On the other hand, whatever I touched turned to rust. [Laughter]

For example, when he was in charge of the Jesuit Seminary and Mission Bureau, his influence extended even to the amount of our daily mail we got at the province office. I go every day except Sunday to get the mail, and it usually barely covers the bottom of the box. When he was in charge of the Jesuit Seminary and Mission Bureau, the box was always three quarters full! And the amount of money he was able to raise over the years was absolutely phenomenal.

WALK FOR HUNGER

RR: Wasn't Bro. McDavitt also involved with the Walk for Hunger, as you have been?

EB: Yes, very much so. He was a very great influence on the Walk. He did it through his tremendous organizational skills. For example, before he came, totaling the walkers' pledges took all day, but after he came, they were done by noon!

He also had a little walking shoe printed on the envelopes he sent to benefactors. He would also

include a note that said, "You will not get an acknowledgment of this gift unless you ask for it." The money thus saved on postage was considerable, since it was calculated in the thousands of acknowledgments not requested.

I had a funny experience along this line. One year a group of religious sisters asked me to make a pledge for their own walk. One of them said to me, "I raised \$600 last year." I replied, "\$600! You must know a millionaire!" But soon after that, who should walk into my office but Bob White of the J. F. White construction family, known widely for being very wise and generous benefactors.

So I said to him, "I hear your brother Tom has been very generous to those who go on the Walk, so I'll make a sacrifice and let him sponsor me." Two days later, Bob came back and said, "Tom and I will sponsor you at \$50 a mile, which comes to \$1000." For three or four years, they both gave me \$1000 for the Walk. Then they retired and no longer had that kind of money to give. However, Tom continued to give me \$200 for the Walk every year. I used to get about \$5-6,000 a year.

LOVE OF READING

RR: It's been wonderful to see how over the years you have read so many books, especially those dealing with history. Could you tell us something about that?

EB: I've had a hunger for books over the years. I especially like biography and history. I recently read a book about a Benedictine abbess, Mother Benedicta, and how her years of leadership were embroiled in controversy with church authorities over who had the jurisdiction of Benedictine women in the United States. The struggle took her case to the Vatican; she was removed from office.

It even got to a point where the Vatican felt it had to investigate her monastery. Due to that, one of the Jesuits from the Wisconsin Province was removed from office. I was fascinated by this and looked him up in the national catalog. I found him mentioned several times. The Vatican only gets involved with matters they consider serious, and in this instance, I believe they thought that they were creating a cult of some kind in that monastery.

The same thing had happened in Washington with the Carmelites there. Cardinal Boyle installed his former secretary as prioress of a new group of Carmelite nuns at La Plata, Maryland, and insisted that they were the “real” Carmelite nuns, though a pioneering group of Carmelite nuns were long established in Baltimore. This created a big fight. The abbess wouldn’t let even Carmelite priests visit the place. I’m not sure just what was going on, but I was fascinated by it all.

Right now I have a big coffee table book on the history of the United States, published by *Time* magazine. It’s very sophisticated with a lot of pictures. I find it fascinating to read about how they railroaded the Indians all through our history. It’s a horrible history. They talked about the great benefits of American democracy. It was terrible—the way they treated the Indians. I don’t know if you’ve heard of “The Trail of Tears.”

RR: Yes, the Cherokees exiled to Oklahoma.

EB: Thousands died on the way. They forced them to go West, with no food, no shelter—nothing. This is not the kind of democracy we want to have, much less export to countries like Iraq.

By the way, I was supposed to go to Iraq when I finished novitiate. They were going to groom me as an infirmarian, but then Bro. Kilmartin took sick and

they said, "Well, we better keep you here."

EVENTS DURING THE TWENTY-TWO YEARS

RR: Tell us a little bit more about what you did during those twenty-two years.

EB: It was secretarial work. I studied at Bryant and Stratton during my first year, but I never finished that program. I had only three weeks left to finish up, but it happened that just at that time, the school was moving its facilities. So they told me to come back in September.

But in the interim, Fr. James H. Dolan was made vice provincial, because the provincial, Fr. John McEleney, was prematurely announced as the bishop of Jamaica. The plan was for him to finish out his term, get his regular reports to Rome, and then go to Jamaica. But when the apostolic delegate for the Caribbean announced his appointment, they had to follow through with it. So at that point, they made James H. Dolan vice provincial. Then, just when I was ready to go back to school for my final three weeks, he said to me, "Brother, what's this I hear? You're planning to go back to school? No way. You're much too busy. Forget school." And that was the end of my studies at Bryant and Stratton.

RR: But you at least had the opportunity to take a good number of courses?

EB: Oh, yes. I was there for a whole year. The only thing I would have liked to pursue a bit more was office machines. But I didn't miss all that much. [Bro.] Cal Clarke [S.J.], who later went to Bryant and Stratton, did very well and was able to finish them all.

RR: Where were you living during all that time?

EB: I was living at Loyola House at 297 Commonwealth Ave. That was a lovely house to live in. We were very fortunate to get it, because in 1948 the housing market

was soft. The community was eventually relocated to St. Andrew House, a few blocks away at 300 Newbury Street, and retained the name of Loyola House in place of St. Andrew House.

FROM BOSTON TO WASHINGTON

RR: When your twenty-two years were finally up in 1972, where did you go?

EB: It happened a little sadly. The then provincial unexpectedly just told me, "Go get yourself another job anywhere you want to go." I looked around and there were no openings. At the time, though, Fr. J. V. O'Connor, the previous provincial, and I were very close. He suggested, "Why don't you come down to Washington? We'll find a job for you." So I did, and was there for eleven years at the Jesuit Conference in Washington, doing the basic office chores that I had been doing at the provincial's office.

Those years in Washington were my happiest; I enjoyed them very much. The city was great; I really liked it. I was there during the exciting times of the Nixon administration. There were also some very active social programs in the Maryland Province. We used to have regular meetings in different parts of the city, where we met some very impressive people working in social matters. We had such meetings every one or two months.

FR. HORACE MCKENNA SJ

EB: There was one Jesuit in the Maryland Province, Fr. Horace McKenna, who was well known for his concern for the poor in the Maryland Province and in Washington. He was a great guy. He was very active and very involved. He started a number of programs and housing initiatives specifically for poor people. The basement of St. Aloysius church, a few blocks

from the Capitol, is still used to feed and house homeless people. He made a great impression on everybody involved.

REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT DRINAN SJ

RR: Did you meet [Fr.] Bob Drinan [S.J.] in Washington during those years?

EB: Yes, Bob used to supply me with visitors' passes for the House of Representatives gallery. [He had been elected a representative from Massachusetts].

RR: That was great. He did the same for me. Just by accident the day I was using one of those passes turned out to be the same day they voted against racial segregation, with all the representatives present.

EB: He used to say, "Here's a dozen passes. Just give them to people." When he was asked by the pope to leave congress, I went to his successor's secretary to get passes to give out. But she said, "Oh, no, we can't do that. It would be a violation of security to give out House passes without knowing who the person is we're giving them to." Well, earlier on, security was not what it is today.

INFORMAL SECURITY

EB: At one point, we were involved in the El Salvador situation. I used to go to the State Department to hand deliver mail. And they'd ask me, "What's up?" And I'd say things like, "Well, I have mail here for Cyrus Vance," then Secretary of State. And they would say, "Just go down the corridor, take the elevator and go down to the next corridor, turn left, and there's the Secretary of State's office." Now you can't even get in the door of the building. Times have changed. And, of course, it's justifiable.

Also, they used to have wonderful concerts in the evenings in the summertime. They'd have them on the

steps of the Capitol Building, the East Wing, or at the Jefferson Memorial. And you could drive up right in front of the Capitol building. But now you can't even get on the grounds. It's a totally different world today.

A LONG DRIVE

RR: Yes, I remember the wonderful Kennedy Center concerts there in the summertime.

EB: I didn't go to too many of those concerts. They are now very expensive. And the latest I've been out in the Society has been two o'clock in the morning. But I had one unusual social experience. A nurse friend of mine asked me, "I've got this nun who's down at Metairie in Louisiana who is coming up to give a retreat at Faulkner. Would you take her out one evening for dinner?"

So I said I would, and drove fifty miles to Faulkner, picked her up, and drove back fifty miles to Washington. We went to dinner, then had tickets for a Russian festival of music. Then I drove another fifty miles back to her house followed by another final fifty miles back home. So I drove 200 miles and didn't get back until two o'clock in the morning. But she enjoyed it all very much.

IN AND OUT OF WASHINGTON

RR: It sounds as if there was a lot going on for you in Washington at the time.

EB: There was everything going on then. It was a good community, and I had a wonderful superior in Martin Casey at Neale House.

In fact, I think the mainland Chinese were interested in getting that house as an ambassadorial residence. They offered us another house, but it was a much smaller building and wouldn't have accommodated us. Besides, it would have been twice as far away from the

office and next to the national Muslim Mosque on Mass Ave.

Yet Neale House itself was not that good to live in. Gerry Sheehan [S.J.], who was assistant for the U.S. in Rome, said himself, "I've never been in a house that was colder than this one." That was because the windows leaked air and were not winterized. However, the residents made for a good community.

RR: I've kind of lost track of years, but as I understand it, at one time they re-did the whole building. Right?

EB: It has been improved in various stages over the years.

PLACES IN WASHINGTON

RR: Just exactly where were you working in Washington?

EB: We were on Massachusetts Avenue in a wonderful building owned by Georgetown University. The East German Consulate was in the same building as we were. They had very secure quarters on the eighth floor at the top of the building. They were very affable and even had a kindergarten on another floor. You could tell that these children were really disciplined, because when they were riding in the elevator, they didn't say a word. They were very much kept in line.

Khadafi's group from Libya also had a consulate just down the corridor from us. It was a strange place. One time they asked one of the ladies which way was east, because they're supposed to face east when they pray. She said, pointing, "This way is east." But they were never aware that they were actually facing west!

BACK TO BOSTON

RR: So then did you move back to Boston? Were you doing something different from what you had been ?

EB: No, it was pretty much the same kind of office work. But, as I said, I was there primarily in a job that was created for me when I came back from Washington. I

was told to help the provincial assistant. They already had a secretary, so I had enough to do to keep myself busy. Although it was at first a make-do job, it then started to expand, so I found it difficult to keep up with it all.

I also very much liked being in the South End. I liked going into town, and that's how I got involved with the Paulist Center. It was only a half-hour's walk away.

RR: Are you still involved with them?

EB: Yes. And I enjoy it. Someone once was complaining about kids hollering at Mass, so I said, "I find it enjoyable. I'm in a place where you don't hear any kids around." I go to the 10:00 AM family Mass, as I did this morning. Three little girls always come over to say hello to me. The children are about six or seven years old, and I feel like a grandfather.

WORK WITH THE PAULISTS

RR: Could you tell us more about the Paulists.

EB: As a matter of fact, they gave a special award, the Hecker Award, to [Fr.] Jon Fuller [S.J.]. They have been giving this award every year for thirty years to those involved in social outreach. For example, they have given it to Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Hunthausen, and the like. So I nominated Jon, and they accepted my nomination and presented him with the Hecker Award. And since I had nominated him, they allowed me to make the presentation by reading the plaque.

RR: That's all quite impressive.

EB: John has about a hundred and fifty clients that he attends to regularly. He's been doing that since HIV/AIDS was initially diagnosed. He said it was known by only a few people until about 1982, when he was probably only an intern. They weren't fully aware of it until it hit the fan with a vengeance. And, of course,

Jon's been involved in that work ever since.

RR: That Paulist Center seemed to have a sharp insight of its own.

EB: Yes, but they are suffering the way all of us are, because of the shortage of priests.

MORE CONNECTIONS WITH THE PAULISTS

RR: Do you visit the Paulists frequently?

EB: I still go there a lot. Here's where we need a bit of history about their founder, Isaac Hecker. He was a Methodist who converted and joined the Redemptorists. However, the Redemptorists who were in the United States at the time ministered primarily to German Catholics. So Hecker said to them, "Being in the United States you've got to be universal." This just didn't blend in with their theology and they expelled him. So he started the Paulists [Congregation of St. Paul]. They are celebrating their 150th anniversary this year.

RR: So it's the founder of the Paulists that you're talking about?

EB: Yes, he worked primarily in New York, but he was also in the Boston area. He was friendly with Thoreau and Emerson, and often talked with them. He had even lived at Brook Farm for a while before his conversion.

RR: There's a rather large Paulist Church right across the street from Fordham in-town, next to Lincoln Center. I used to go there from time to time when I was in New York. They seem to be doing very well.

EB: Their Paulist Press is an important work as well.

RR: And at the Paulist Center in Boston you helped them out in many ways, right?

EB: Yes, for twenty years, I scrubbed the pots in the soup kitchen where they provided a free meal every Wednesday night. That was being funded in part by the Walk for Hunger.

I also took part in that twenty-mile hike every year for twenty years. But my legs have gone, and I can't do it anymore. I couldn't do two miles, let alone twenty. The last time I did it, Kate Morency, the Province Health Care Coordinator, walked along with me. I don't know whether she was afraid I would collapse on the route!

FINAL WORDS

RR: As we come to the end of our conversation, let me ask you this. Looking back over the years, have you felt God's providence at work in your life?

EB: In these days when so many things seem to be falling apart, with so many churches closing, few vocations, I see faith is absolutely central. Faith is the big, big factor for me now. Faith is central to our survival: "Where shall we go, Lord? We go to you. You have it all, Lord. You've got it all."

RR: Good for you. It's been a great conversation. Thanks so much.

Favorite prayer: daily rosary, first thing each morning.

Bro. Edward P. Babinski, S.J.

Born: July 28, 1925, Worcester, Massachusetts
Entered: June 4, 1947, Lenox, Massachusetts, St.
Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook
Last Vows: August 15, 1957, Boston, Massachusetts,
Loyola House

1939 Worcester, Massachusetts: St. Mary's High School -
Student

1943 US Navy (Seabees)

1946 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate /
Shadowbrook -
December 3, 1946 Postulancy
June 4, 1947 Novitiate

1949 Boston, Massachusetts: Loyola House -
1949-1950 Student, Bryant-Stratton Business
School
1950-1971 Secretary, Society of Jesus of New
England Provincial Office, Boston

1972 Washington, DC: Leonard Neale House - Secretary,
Jesuit Conference

1982 Boston, Massachusetts: Immaculate Conception
Rectory - Secretary, Society of Jesus of New England
Provincial Office, Boston

2005 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Residence /
Assisted Living - Secretary, Society of Jesus of New
England Provincial Office, Watertown