

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Rev. William D. Ibach, 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 of Rev. William D. Ibach, S.J.
By Rev. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
October 2, 2008

FAMILY BACKGROUND

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome to our conversation.

WILLIAM IBACH: Thank you.

RR: We will proceed chronologically. Just answer the questions in your own way. So, let's begin with when and where you were born.

WI: All right. I was born on February 20, 1929 in Boston, Massachusetts, to William H. Ibach and Helen Barry Ibach

RR: Could you tell us about your family?

WI: On the European side of our family, we actually go back to a family of piano-makers in Vienna, Austria. My paternal grandparents were born in Germany. They met and married in Germany in the early 1890s and moved to the United States in the mid-1890s.

They had five children: William (my father) in 1898, Albert, Charles, Florence, and Teresa. I never knew my grandparents on my father's side. I suspect that they knew me when I was an infant, but I have no memory of meeting them.

The story is much different on the maternal side of the family. In 1864 my maternal grandmother was born Mary Margaret MacDonald in Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia. In 1874 my grandfather was born David [Dave] Francis Barry, in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, 1874.

The men on the MacDonald side of the family were trainmen. Dave Barry continued the railroad tradition in the family. He was assistant baggage master at the South Station in Boston. Those were the steam engine days. My uncle, Dan, was an engineer for the Canadian National Railway before the company became Via Rail. Dave Barry and Maggie MacDonald were married at Immaculate Conception Church in Sydney Mines in the mid-1890s. They had two children, my mother Helen in 1897 and David in 1899.

My uncle David was very ill nearly all his life and died in 1937. He spent many years at a health care facility on Long Island in Boston Harbor. I remember visiting him with my mother when I was still a very young boy before grammar school days. I remember crying a lot when he died. I was in the second grade.

LEARNING BY TRAVELING

WI: Actually, Dave's position at the South Station had a lot to do with the practical side of my history and geography school lessons. Dave had passes for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad as well as for the Canadian National Railroad. He and my grandmother would ask my mother what I was studying in school. From what they heard, they would plan a train trip, usually during the April school vacation, to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, or some other area which touched my schoolwork.

Firsthand, on-site information like this was a big deal for a fourth, fifth, and sixth grader in the late 1930s. I still remember visiting Valley Forge and

Gettysburg, and seeing President Roosevelt sitting on the front porch of the White House. Every two or three years we would take a trip to Nova Scotia. Thus, began my fascination for trains and my close relationship with cousins in Sydney Mines and North Sydney.

I still have cousins in North Sydney, whom I continue to visit with some frequency. My favorite train trip today would be from Boston to New York, sitting on the Long Island Sound side, and then on to Washington, sitting on the Atlantic Ocean side of the train! My grandfather died in February 1942, just before I graduated from St. Peter School and entered Boston College High School. My grandmother died in July 1953, just before I went to Baghdad for the first time.

PARENTS

RR: Tell us a bit about your parents.

WI: My mother and father were married in St. Peter Church, June 22, 1926. I remember my mother as a very faithful housewife and mother. It was a very rare day when she was not at home to greet me as I arrived from school. A glass of milk and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich were waiting for me on the kitchen table. She always wanted to know how the school day went and then had some errands for me to get at the First National Store before going out to play. She kept a wise eye on the boys with whom I played ball in Ronan Park and had some good advice about continuing or not continuing friendship with them.

My mother enjoyed sports: hockey simply from being born into a Canadian family and baseball learned from my father. Her fidelity to the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Montreal Canadiens never wavered. She liked to go to the Red Sox games on Fridays because that was Ladies Day when Boston was home. Her favorite visiting team was Cleveland.

45 YEARS IN ONE JOB

RR: Could you say a bit more about your father?

WI: I remember my father as a faithful husband and father, and a dedicated employee at L.C. Smith and Corona Typewriter Company. He went to work for L.C. Smith at the age of seventeen and retired when he turned 62. He never worked for any other company.

He made sure that my homework was done every night. He asked the questions in the Baltimore Catechism that we had to study for the next day and made sure that I knew the answers. He was also a very creative teacher of arithmetic. I was and still am pretty awful at math. He taught me first grade math by teaching me how to play the card game called “cribbage.” I would learn various combinations which added up to 15 and 31 and beyond. The relationship formed at that point in life lasted until dad died. Every time I would be at home—even if for an afternoon— at some point we got out the cribbage board and played.

In the early days of 1982, I was living at St. Joseph Center in Charlestown, Massachusetts. My mother was in the hospital, so I would visit dad often and we would go to visit mom. During February 1982, mom had to be moved to a nursing home. When my father saw her in the nursing home, he knew that she would not be coming home and he lived only a few days afterwards. On March 1, 1982 my brother, who would stay with dad at night simply so he would not be alone, entered dad’s apartment and found him dead in bed. Apparently he went to take an afternoon nap and never woke up.

One of the hardest things I have had to do as a priest was go to the nursing home the next morning and tell my mother. Ed Hallen and Joe O’Connor went with me. My mother lived nine weeks to the day after my father died. She died May 8, 1982. That year, May

8 happened to be the day before Mother's Day. The neighbors and relatives who came to the wake and funeral expressed feelings that dad came to get her, because they just could not picture mother and dad apart. I can never be sufficiently thankful for the outpouring of Jesuit prayers and sympathy on both occasions and for the number of priests who came to both funeral Masses.

BROTHER

RR: Tell us about your brother.

WI: My brother, Paul, was born about six and a half years after me on October 18, 1935. He attended St. Peter Grammar School, as I did, but did not have the same interest in school. He was always quite thin and struggled with his health. He did graduate from St. Peter School and Dorchester High School, and, from early days, wanted to be a fireman. He was able to pass the oral exams, but was never strong enough to accomplish the practical tasks of being a fire fighter.

He did hold a number of jobs, each for only a while. His last position involved night travel around downtown Boston, making sure that companies, which depended on the insurance firm for which he worked, were secure. He eventually had to leave this insurance firm and go into a mental health facility. Alcohol also entered into his early diminishment. Today he is in a nursing home. I manage to visit him three or four times a month, while keeping up with ministry here at Campion Center.

RELATIVES

RR: How about your other relatives?

WI: My Uncle Albert, Aunt Mary, and their family along with Aunts Teresa and Florence, and my own mother and father formed a very close-knit family. Uncle Albert

and Aunt Mary were frequent Saturday night visitors. They were very good bridge players, as were my mother and father. When they were not at our house, we were frequently at theirs. Florence and Teresa never married, so they were frequent visitors for Sunday dinner at both family homes.

My uncle and my father were ushers at St. Peter Church, and both belonged to the parish bowling league, as I did when I was in high school. Aunt Mary and Uncle Albert lived about a five-minute walk from our house. Florence and Teresa were a little further away, so we would drive to their residence and pick them up. Holidays and New Year's Eve the whole clan gathered at one of the houses.

Aunt Mary and Uncle Albert had two children, Jeanne and Marie. Both are still living. Jeanne is a Sister of Saint Joseph and lives at the Sisters of Saint Joseph assisted living residence in Brighton, Massachusetts. Marie married Gerard Weidmann, a writer for the *Boston Globe*. They have three children, who have now grown into middle age and live in various parts of the United States.

EDUCATION

RR: Tell us a bit about your education?

WI: I attended St. Peter Grammar School and graduated from there in 1942. During my days at St. Peter School, my religious and general academic training blossomed. The Sisters of Charity of Halifax were excellent teachers, and my parents made sure that I did my homework every night. I have spoken above about my father as a creative teacher.

VOCATION

WI: As regards our religious home life, we attended Mass as a family every Sunday; we also attended various

novenas and services, such as Wednesday evening holy hours during Lent and occasionally Sunday afternoon benediction. I became an altar server in the sixth grade and served faithfully until the Sunday before I entered Shadowbrook in July 1946.

It was through the Novena of Grace held March 4 to 12 each year that I began to seriously think of becoming a Jesuit. I learned more about St. Francis Xavier than I did about St. Ignatius Loyola. The desire to be like Xavier grew within me during my days at Boston College High School (1942 to 1946).

But, it was in the sixth grade that I first had the desire to be a priest. I was serving Mass one morning; kneeling at the foot of the altar looking up at the priest who was celebrating. Those were the days when the priest's back was to the congregation and the language was Latin. An inspiration flashed across my mind, "Some day I want to be up there."

During my years at B. C. High the training mentioned above was further nourished by two Jesuit teachers: Fr. William Connolly, who taught me algebra in freshman year and who also was moderator of the Sodality of Our Lady, and Fr. Paul Barry, who was my home room teacher for sophomore year. Our Sodality met in the school chapel once a week before morning classes. Talks by Bill Connolly and other priests about Jesuit life and missions strengthened my attraction to the Society of Jesus. Fr. Barry's enthusiastic manner of teaching touched me deeply. I remember saying to myself while sitting in class, "That is the kind of guy I want to be when I grow up."

RR: What was a special moment of decision for you?

WI: I decided firmly to apply for entrance into the Society of Jesus on December 28, 1945. The time was 11:00 AM. A serious snowstorm had just covered the Boston area, and I was sitting in the parlor of our apartment

watching a plow come up the street. In that quiet moment the words flashed through me, “Bill, if you want to be like them, you have to join them.” That was “it” literally. Thus it was that the lived example of Bill Connolly and Paul Barry offered a practical supplement to my knowledge about St. Francis Xavier and fashioned one clear call to follow Christ as they did.

However, before coming to this decision, I had some very serious thinking to do. While I attended B. C. High, I worked during the summers to earn a little money, which I gave to my parents to help pay my school tuition. I first worked for a messenger service on Province Street in Boston. Eventually that connected me with Stone and Webster Inc., and that introduced me to the New York Stock Exchange. I was hired on a “summers only” basis at Stone and Webster.

After the summer between third and fourth years at B. C. High, I knew I had a life’s decision to make. Will I accept a position at Stone and Webster or enter the Jesuits? It took me the whole first semester of senior year for me to make up my mind. But, on that December morning in 1945, I “knew” I had to join the Society of Jesus. I cannot fully explain it. My heart just “told me” that the prestige of the New York Stock Exchange would not bring me the joy of life that I was seeking.

NOVITIATE

RR: Tell us about your days at Shadowbrook.

WI: I entered the Society of Jesus at Shadowbrook, Lenox, Massachusetts, on July 30, 1946. I traveled by train with many of my B. C. High classmates from Boston to Pittsfield, where Fr. Hector Hebert and Bro. Ed McLain met us and drove us to Shadowbrook. At the front door of Shadowbrook we were met by four “second year” novices who would be our “angels” for the

two weeks which were to follow. Three of these men have died: J .J. Bresnahan, Al Reddy, and Henry Murphy. The fourth has become famous outside the Society: John J. McLaughlin, who conducts “The McLaughlin Group” on television.

During the first two weeks at Shadowbrook, we met Frs. John Post and James Hickey. We were also introduced to the order of the day, work around the house, and a silent retreat. That silent retreat was my first silent retreat. From that retreat I remember making a “general confession” and attending Fr. Post’s conference, which introduced us to following “Christ the King.” That intrigued me. When that topic came up for a longer period of time during the thirty-day retreat, I “knew” deep down that was what I wanted to do. The desire to be a missionary was firmly planted.

UPS AND DOWNS

RR: How was novitiate life for you?

WI: Living through the novitiate had its ups and downs. Quite a few novices were much older than I was. Some were World War II veterans, others college graduates, and I felt out of place. Academically, I felt that I never fitted into Fr. Chapman’s Latin or Greek classes, either with questions I asked or answers I gave. Within me, that brought about a silence, which remained all through our years of study. Many questions, which I wanted to ask, I never asked simply because I felt they would be “stupid.”

On the “up” side, the desire to be a follower of Christ as a missionary like Xavier grew stronger the more I meditated on the Kingdom of Christ. I really wanted to go to Japan, but that was not to be, as we shall see later.

On the “work” side of the novitiate, we got plenty of work inside the house and also outside. Thursdays

were holidays, and I enjoyed playing baseball and rowing a boat out on Lake Macinack. The Tanglewood School of Music was located nearby, and students often practiced alone or as groups near the lakeshore. Sometimes two or three of us would take a boat and row over near the school. We would let the oars rest in the boat and quietly listen. My love for classical music was born. This was nourished when we were allowed occasionally to attend Sunday afternoon concerts during our days in the juniorate.

After pronouncing perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, studies of the classics in Latin, Greek, and English began. Even though I did not often partake in class discussions or ask questions, I enjoyed classes in the juniorate with Frs. Carroll, Healy, Grogan, and Murphy. The orations of Edmund Burke concerning England's relationship with the colonies still stay with me as the most captivating area of juniorate studies. I appreciated prose more than poetry. Appreciation of poetry was to come only after ordination, when we were able to read the psalms in English.

Yet, it was during juniorate studies that I discovered a new talent—the ability to write well. Written compositions and term papers came easily; oral exams remained difficult. Work on the farm as a member of the “Hay Crew” provided plenty of fresh air between morning and afternoon classes. Considering the novitiate and juniorate together, life at Shadowbrook was much more a plus than a minus.

REFLECTION ON HIS FORMATION

RR: Could you give an overview of the whole of your formation?

WI: Yes, the first thing I can say about Jesuit formation and community is that I have always been quite happy

everywhere I have lived: Shadowbrook, Weston, Baghdad, Boston, Cambridge, the City of Marquette, Michigan, and now back at Weston.

I found philosophy and theology classes at Weston very difficult. Lectures were in Latin, as were the text books and exams. However, classes with Frank Lawlor, Fred Moriarty, John Lynch, and Maurice Walsh offered some practical points of development. One particular sentence from Frank Lawlor remains with me even to today: “You do your Theology when you get down on your knees in the chapel.” Fred Moriarty’s Old Testament classes put my regency experiences in Baghdad into proper theological focus. By teaching themes of the Old Testament, he really taught me to read the Bible as an Eastern document.

Yet, the major difficulty with all the courses was that we were trying to learn *what* was in the book. Only in 1966, many years after ordination, did I hear the sentence I literally needed to hear at Weston: “Never read a book to discover what is in it; always read to discover the author.” That sentence was spoken by Gabriel Liegy. Now deceased, he was then professor of English Literature at Fordham University. Today, his sentence is so true for me whenever I read.

Quite a few years after returning from Baghdad, I got the opportunity to study again. While I was living at Newbury Street in Boston, I began to audit evening courses at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge. Later, I would move to Cambridge and live at 15 Hawthorne Street and Arrupe House. For almost seven years I audited one course per semester. Those “Cambridge Years” really made me wish that they were my formation years. Janice Farnham, Meg Guider, Dan Harrington, Stanley Marrow, John O’Malley, Kevin Burke and his sister, Maureen Burke-Sullivan, and Ed Vacek—all challenged and invited me in differ-

ent ways to discover who I am and who God is to me.

RR: So you found yourself working harder at your studies

WI: Well, yes, because we are now really talking about the development of my faith and life of prayer. Something John Post had taught me way back in the novitiate was, after many years, finally coming to light. In the novitiate I completely misunderstood what prayer really entailed. I thought that it meant dealing with a biblical passage point by point, finishing the entire passage and coming to one or more firm conclusions. I once told this to John Post, who said, "No, all that is not necessary. You need to listen to what God has to say to you." He was clearly telling me to stop talking and open my ears and heart. That has been a key lesson and often a struggle for me.

RR: Where did that lead you in your prayer?

WI: That was when I began to realize that I was just dealing with points for prayer, in what I was reading and simply doing a lot of talking to myself. So, I started to read as if I was listening to the author talking to me. It was like reading with my ears and not just my eyes. I began to feel a movement from knowledge in the brain to an understanding in the heart. Somehow the two were combining.

Individual lines in a paragraph would leap out at me, and I would realize that this was the line God wanted me to pay attention to at this moment. This is how I still pray, often pausing at one line within a psalm while reading the daily Office or while simply reading Sacred Scripture or any book.

MINISTRY

RR: Let us look at ministry. How did you get to Baghdad instead of Tokyo?

WI: My desire to go to Japan had really started in the novitiate as I said some pages back. The Japanese Province

had been almost wiped out during World War II. US bombing raids had something to do with that, but also many seminarians were drafted into the Japanese army and were killed. So, when time came to go out to re-gency, I asked Fr. Provincial, Bill Fitzgerald, for an assignment in Japan.

He told me that many vocations to the priesthood in Japan had brought about a stunning growth of that province. By 1953 we were sending men to Japan only on an exchange basis. Tom Johnson was not coming back to theology until the next year, 1954. So, he asked the question, "How would you like to go to Baghdad instead?" I said yes, and that is how I wound up in Baghdad instead of Tokyo.

Before going to Baghdad we were seriously reminded that we were going there NOT to make them Westerners, but to adapt ourselves to Eastern culture. During re-gency I taught religion, English, and algebra to first year high school students, and worked as a prefect in the boarding school.

When I returned to Baghdad after ordination, I taught New Testament theology and English as a second language at Al-Hikma University. The students there already knew some English, so I used the short story as a major platform for teaching. This tied into their Eastern culture, in which the narrative sits at the top of their methods of communicating.

However, there was a hitch in all of this: I did not have an MA or PhD in English. So the academic years 1966 and 1967 to June 1968 were spent acquiring an MA in English Literature at Fordham University.

I returned to Baghdad during the summer of 1968, but was there only a short time before Al - Hikma University was closed. Outstanding in the final seventy days was the faithfulness of our Fr. General, Pedro Arrupe, who twice came from Rome to visit us.

Two personal events struck me from our final weekend at Al-Hikma. One was very frightening, the other, a sentence I will carry with me to the grave. On a Thursday morning, we Jesuit teachers began distributing pamphlets to students and lay faculty as they entered the campus. The pamphlets stated that we would not close the school, but we would not teach as long as the students were allowed to bring guns onto the campus.

That brought the soldiers to the campus. They grabbed the pamphlets out of our hands. The one who took my pamphlets also pressed his gun firmly against my right side and said in English, "You will go the Fathers' house." I put up my hands in surrender and walked to our residence.

The second event happened as we were leaving. Travel to the airport entailed passing through the military camp on Baghdad's south side. We had to show our passports and exit visas to the soldiers at the check point. The soldier who checked the car in which I was riding returned our documents, and, as he did, said, "Today some of the flower of our country is leaving." Not everyone had the same opinion of us as did top officials.

TRANSITIONAL YEAR AT CRANWELL

RR: What did you do then?

WI: When I returned from Baghdad and before going to Cambridge I taught a semester, January to June 1969, at Cranwell Preparatory School in Lenox, Massachusetts. I then taught seven years at Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine. I taught religion and English literature, and was a school counselor.

In this last role, I found myself talking more with parents than with students, and the realization "there is a ministry here" became apparent. I actually gave some days of recollection on Saturdays to interested

parents. That brought about initial thoughts of becoming a director of retreats and a spiritual director. I reached the point of giving retreats during school vacations and summers.

CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

RR: When did you make the final break?

WI: In 1976, I permanently left high school teaching, spent that summer experiencing Clinical Pastoral Education at Mercy Hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts, with Dave Boulton, S.J., and took a sabbatical year in Toronto, Ontario studying theology at Regis College.

Then in June 1978, I went to live at St. Joseph Center in Charlestown, Massachusetts. There I taught some courses for women and men who came to our center for evening adult education classes, gave retreats, offered spiritual direction, and eventually became superior of the community.

My years as superior were the most difficult years of my life in the Society of Jesus. Bob Tobin had been running the place for the seventeen previous years, and he was not about to leave. He had a lot of support from lay people who attended classes at the center and from George McCabe who had been there almost as long as Bob. Of course, things had to remain the way “they had always been.”

I could not have survived without the humor of Fred Bailey, the support of Joe O’Connor and Marty MacDonnell, and the opportunity to give retreats away. Fred Bailey would come home from St. Mary’s Parish in the North End of Boston with a big “I’M HOME.” He would immediately come out to the kitchen to see what was for dinner and who was cooking.

Sometimes our hired cook would not be able to come and I would cook. On nights when I was cooking, Fred would sit and chat with me, and help set the

dining room table. When it came time to ring the bell which called the community to dinner, Fred would ring the big De Profundis bell [normally used for the end of night prayer]. Amazingly we all ate well, survived, and got up for work the next morning.

Eventually, Bob Tobin became seriously ill and had to move to Campion Center. But, by that time, I had run out of gas and Ed Hallen replaced me as superior. I stayed at St. Joseph Center for two more years and witnessed changes in community membership and lifestyle with the coming of John Surette and Harry Cain. The support of the entire community blessed me immensely when my father and mother died.

IN VARIOUS COMMUNITIES

WI: I left Saint Joseph Center in 1984. The next nineteen and a half years would take me to many communities in Boston and Cambridge. Four years at Immaculate Conception Residence on Harrison Avenue and eight years at Loyola House on Newbury Street provided pleasant homes and abundant opportunity to direct retreats throughout the United States and Canada. Here at Campion Center, Fr. Pat Sullivan and I offered weekend retreats for various groups of men.

When these were not in session, I traveled a lot. Directing retreats in many places has proved to be a wonderful education by experience. New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Rutland, Oshkosh, New York, Montreal, Kingston, and Vancouver all have their own cultures and differing views of life. To meet the people of these areas and have the opportunity to listen to them, just chat with them, and pray with them have provided an education which no book can possibly give.

MOVE TO CAMBRIDGE

RR: What was your next assignment?

WI: During my eighth year at Loyola House, I received a telephone call from Bob Manning, then president of Weston Jesuit School of Theology. Bob's call turned out to be an offer to replace George Drury, who was reaching the end of his term as coordinator of the residence at 15 Hawthorne Street in Cambridge. That residence was for women and men who were able to spend sabbatical time away from work or ministry.

I went to Cambridge for an interview with George, who explained the "goods" and "not-so-goods" of the position. One of the "not-so-goods" was the absence of a maintenance man. Eventually, that would turn out to be my downfall, but, at the moment of the interview, mowing the lawn and shoveling snow did not sound too bad. I said yes, and departed from Newbury Street in June 1997.

Despite the difficulties of maintenance, Hawthorne Street had some very joyful moments, one of which led to a friendship that has lasted to this day. That "moment" was the presence with us of a Jewish Rabbi, Daniel Alexander, who was studying for his PhD at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Dan is from Charlottesville, Virginia. During the semester Dan spent with us, we did not have a full house. Dan asked if his wife, son, and daughter could come and spend Passover with us. He knew that Passover coincides with our Easter and wondered if we could celebrate the two feasts together. It took me less than a second to agree. His family came, spent the feast days with us, did some college hunting for daughter Talia, and son Benjamin, and then departed for home.

We still call each other on feast days, with the most recent conversation coming when I called to wish them a "happy Hannukah" this past December (2008). While Dan was among us, he and I talked a lot. At one point he was thinking of making an eight-day retreat, but

simply did not believe that Gloucester would accept him. I urged him to pursue his desire. He called, was accepted, and made the retreat. He admits it changed his whole life of prayer—by himself, with his family, and at the synagogue. Continuing on the positive side, his wife insists, since that retreat, his preaching has never been the same.

FORMER OWNERS VISIT

RR: Did you meet any of your neighbors?

WI: Yes, our house on Hawthorne Street was once owned by the Church of the Latter Day Saints. The church building itself is situated at the end of our street. So we often had visitors knocking at our door asking, “Do you pray every day?” I would say yes, and ask if they knew that they once owned this house. When I told them that their church, the LDS, used to own it, “We did!” would usually be their amazed response.

One day the people who rang the doorbell happened to be an elder of the Church and his wife who once lived in the house. I invited them in. They accepted and I took them on a tour of the house. They had many memories, the wife especially remembering the kitchen when it was hers. We had tea and conversation during which their obvious question arose, “Now who are you and what do you do?”

I explained that I was a Roman Catholic priest and that the house was used for women and men who normally minister in parishes and during their sabbatical year have time free for prayer and study.

“Do you have a place for prayer?” I said yes, and showed them our chapel. That made them very happy, and as they departed they said they were pleased that the house was still being used for religious purposes.

I have remembered these two events and written them down, because they continue to teach me how

much Ignatius was “really onto something,” when he saw conversation as the primary source for presenting the Spiritual Exercises.

My time at Hawthorne Street lasted only two years. Being the house coordinator and guest master made for a pleasant job, but life beyond that proved to be my downfall. Over seven months we had many problems. We had a break-in one night; thieves made off with the house car; a family of skunks moved into in the back yard, and—the last straw—the telephones went out of order one evening. I walked to Harvard Square, called the help number for phones, and was told someone would come out “first thing in the morning.” That did not leave the ladies of the house happy, and I made the decision then and there that enough was enough.

So in 1999 I moved to Arrupe House, a student residence of Weston Jesuit School of Theology. There I spent five most enjoyable years auditing courses at WJST, giving retreats, and offering spiritual direction. As I have mentioned above, retreat work blessed me abundantly.

In 2001 I felt very honored to be invited to give the community retreat at Campion Center. The retreat, I think, went off well, but I also carry from it one of my saddest memories of community life in the Society.

Bill Connolly from my student days at B. C. High was one of the retreatants. It was wonderful to see him after so many years. We chatted, caught up, and went into the retreat. One afternoon towards the middle of the retreat, I found Bill sitting on a bench in the rotunda. He told me he was not feeling very well. I offered to get a nurse, but he felt that, if he paused a while and went to his room he would be OK. He actually got up and walked into the health care center and I went to my room. That was the last time I saw Bill alive.

As I prepared for Mass the next morning, the sacristan came to me and said we would offer Mass for Bill Connolly that morning. I remember telling the sacristan about my experience with Bill the previous afternoon and asked how he was doing. I thought he might have gone to the hospital.

The sacristan's words, "He died last night," went through me like a sword. I managed to get through the Mass, until I got to the prayer for the deceased, "Remember Bill whom you have called from this life...." There, I just broke into tears and cried for quite a while before I could continue. After Mass I returned to the sacristy to take off the vestments and George Collins, S.J., now preparing for priesthood at Berkeley in California, followed me, helped me through my grief, and counseled me not to be ashamed of my tears. I had shown the community how much I loved Bill and love them. Recently, George was here at Campion Center and we recalled that incident together.

WORKING IN MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN

RR: How did your retreat work develop?

WI: The Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, became a place I visited very frequently both winter and summer. There I met Mrs. Gloria Kalbfleisch, who came to a weekend directed retreat and was assigned to me as her director. After the retreat we continued to follow up by e-mail and telephone. Soon after a second retreat she became the director of the Department of Faith Formation and Adult Education and Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of Marquette, Michigan.

One evening in mid-October 2003, Gloria called me to say that she did not have a presenter for the November 7-8 weekend of the Diocesan "Lay Ministry Leadership School." Would I be interested? Indeed I

was interested, but wanted to know when this would take place and what the topic would be. It would take place from 6:00 PM on Friday, November 7 to Saturday at 5:00 PM.

The topic would be a “general theme” from the New Testament. I remember my answer to her: “Gloria, this is the 16th of October and it is 10:30 in the evening. Let me sleep on it and I will call you at your office at 8:30 tomorrow morning.” She agreed.

I slept on it and woke up the next morning with the topic, “Healing in the Gospel of St. Luke.” When we spoke, Gloria was delighted. She told me that the students were quite professional and would like a couple of things to read ahead of time. Also, she would have to see Bishop Garland, because I was coming on such short notice. I told her to see the bishop. I would shop for two books in Boston and call her back at 4:30 before she left the office. She met with the bishop. I found two books. We talked at 4:30 and the weekend was on.

I arrived in Marquette, Michigan, located on the south shore of Lake Superior, at 2:00 PM on November 5, 2003. Monsignor Louis Cappo and Fr. Alan Mott met me at the airport and drove me to the office of the Department of Faith Formation. I met the staff, went to the rectory with the priests, celebrated the 5:15 PM Mass in St. Peter Cathedral, and had dinner with the priests.

Thankfully I had a couple of days to get some orientation before classes began. Mrs. Kalbfleisch arranged a meeting for me with Bishop Garland. I presented to him the material I intended to give on Friday and Saturday. He was pleased. That meeting proved to be the beginning of a friendship which still continues.

The weekend went off well, but the main shock was still to come. On Sunday morning I was celebrant at the 8:00 and 11:30 Masses. Just prior to the final

blessing at the 11:30 Mass Monsignor Cappelletti came to the pulpit to make a few announcements. It was one of those Sundays when the Knights of Columbus have a pancake breakfast in the parish hall after each Mass. I went to the breakfast after the 8:00 AM Mass and met some of the parishioners.

Monsignor Cappelletti had mingled with the parishioners after all the Masses. He made a few announcements after welcoming me to St. Peter Parish. And then came the bolt out of the blue, "The people have told me that your presentation went off very well. Now, let me ask you: Would you like to come out and run the school?" Definitely, I was not ready for that one. Thankfully, I was not leaving until Tuesday. That gave me time to think seriously, talk professionally with Mrs. Kalbfleisch and the then chancellor, now bishop, Alexander Sample.

I told Fr. Sample that I was about to turn 75 and I might not be the priest that the department needed. If my numbers were turned around to 57, I could think of the position more easily. He said, "You are a youthful 75, and you would fit well into the department."

On Tuesday, November 11, Mrs. Kalbfleisch drove me to the airport. En route we talked very seriously. Two weeks later, I had a job offer in the mail. I also had a meeting with Fr. John Privett, Rector of WJST community, on December 5. I brought the job offer, but he asked the question first: "You have been with us for seven years now. How long do you plan to stay?" I reached into my back pocket and pulled out the offer from Marquette. John read it and remarked, "Bill you are about to turn 75. I hope somebody offers me something like this when I turn 75. Go see the provincial and go to Marquette. I will talk with Mrs. Kalbfleisch and Bishop Garland and anyone else who needs a reference."

I landed back in Michigan on January 26, 2004, walked to work the next morning and stepped into my new office at 9:00. My first task was to look at the curriculum of studies in the Lay Ministry Leadership School, keep the courses which were acceptable, and change those that required a shot in the arm. I also had to search for teachers for the new two-year cycle, which would begin the following September. As one might expect, some teachers chose to stay, some decided not to stay, and a couple needed to be replaced.

By June the curriculum and the teachers were in place, thanks to abundant help from Mrs. Kalbfleisch, who guided me into areas where more professional study of already good courses was needed for Upper Peninsula people, who tend to be very devotional but not always knowledgeable.

After a brief stay in a nearby rectory, I had the opportunity to have a new apartment at 300 Rock Street. The space became available when all the diocesan offices moved to a new location in downtown Marquette. The new office space was suitable, and because it was over a bank, total security prevailed.

The 300 Rock Street building provided three apartments; I was fortunate to get one of them. Whatever the temperature—and it could get cold—I enjoyed my fifteen-minute walk to and from work.

ADULT EDUCATION

RR: How did your work go?

WI: Mrs. Kalbfleisch, Mr. Greg Gostomski, Mrs. Denise Foye, and I formed the Department of Faith Formation and Adult Education. We met almost every morning at 9:30 to discuss upcoming projects, some of which were already in “the works” before I arrived. Eventually we put together “Come with me into the Fields.”

This was a team project, by which we went out to parishes in the diocese and offered professional days of study and practice of our faith. This went on joyfully for almost two and a half years.

Within those years Bishop Garland retired and Fr. Sample became the new bishop. Mr. Joseph Steepleton replaced Mrs. Kalbfleisch as director of our department, and Bishop Sample discontinued "Come with me into the Fields." Team work in the department had come to an end, and I began to see the handwriting on the wall. I had put together an entirely new school of theology for adults, established a faculty, and started a Pastoral Associate School as an adjunct to the theological side of our program.

BACK TO NEW ENGLAND

WI: I realized that, if I chose to stay for the 2008-2010 cycle of our school, I would be planning on staying in the department until I was 81. I felt that the time had come to let someone younger run with the ball. The thought of returning to live in a Jesuit community was attractive, and I applied for my present position as a retreat director and spiritual director here at Campion Center. I was accepted and moved here on June 11, 2008. And, here I am.

RR: Well, thank you for this.

WI: You are very welcome.

Our Father,
 who are in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our trespasses
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 Amen.

Rev. William D. Ibach, S.J.

Born: February 20, 1929, Boston, Massachusetts
Entered: July 30, 1946, Lenox, Massachusetts, St.
Stanislaus Novitiate / Shadowbrook
Ordained: June 13, 1959, Weston, Massachusetts,
Weston College
Final Vows: November 5, 1980, Boston, Massachusetts,
St. Joseph Center

1942 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School
- Student

1946 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate /
Shadowbrook - Novice, junior

1950 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
philosophy

1953 Baghdad, Iraq: Baghdad College - Taught religion,
English, mathematics; prefect in boarding school

1956 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
theology

1960 Cleveland, Ohio: St. Stanislaus Novitiate - Tertian

1961 Baghdad, Iraq: Al-Hikma University - Taught
English, New Testament theology

1966 Bronx, New York: Fordham University - Studied
English literature (to June 1968)

1968 Baghdad, Iraq: Al-Hikma University - Taught
English, New Testament theology (June to Novem-
ber 25, 1968)

- 1968 Lenox, Massachusetts: Cranwell Preparatory School
- Taught English (January to June 1969)
- 1969 Portland, Maine: Cheverus High School - Taught
English, religion
1973-1976 Chair, Religion Department
- 1976 Toronto, Canada: Regis College - Studied theology
- 1977 Charlestown, Massachusetts: St. Joseph Center -
Taught in Adult Education School
1977-1984 Retreat ministry
1978-1981 Superior
(September 27, 1978 - July 31, 1981)
1981-1984 Assistant Director
- 1984 Boston, Massachusetts: Church of the Immaculate
Conception - Retreat ministry
- 1989 Boston, Massachusetts: Loyola House - Retreat
ministry, spiritual director
- 1997 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Hawthorne House -
House coordinator, retreat ministry, spiritual
director
- 1999 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Arrupe House - Retreat
ministry, spiritual director
- 2004 Marquette, Michigan: Diocese of Marquette -
Ecclesial Ministry Institute, - Consultant
- 2008 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Renewal Center -
Retreat ministry, spiritual director

Degrees

1950 Bachelor of Arts, Weston College-Boston College

1953 Licentiate in Philosophy, Weston College-Boston
College

1959 Bachelor of Divinity, Weston College

1968 Master of Arts, English Literature, Fordham Uni-
versity