

**New England Jesuit  
Oral History Program**



**Rev. Donald J. Plocke, 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 sometimes 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. Donald J. Plocke, S.J.  
By Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.  
January 15, 2009

**FAMILY LIFE**

**RICHARD ROUSSEAU:** Welcome to our meeting and our little conversation.

**DONALD PLOCKE:** Thank you.

**RR:** We would like to go chronologically. So, let's start at the very beginning. Tell us where you were born and something about your father and your mother.

**DP:** Well, I was born on May 5, 1929, just months before the stock market crashed. I was born in Ansonia, Connecticut, a relatively small manufacturing town, where my father was employed as a machinist by the Farrel Machine Company. They turned out heavy machinery for paper mills and sugar mills. During the war, of course, it was converted to other purposes.

**RR:** Did he continue with that most of his life?

**DP:** Yes, until he had to retire because of disability. He died young, in his sixties. It is hard to sum my father up. He was someone who was very concerned for our well-being, but he was not overly expressive—a lot was by indirection.

I remember the surprises by which he let us know how much he felt for us. For example, he surprised me once by gifting me with a radio when I was just in grammar school. In those days having a radio was a rather extraordinary thing—it was before the days of transistor radios.

My father was very interested in and very devoted to exploration. I remember every week he would decide where we would go for our Sunday drive, and it was always some place different from where we had gone before. It had to be within a certain radius, but it could be north, south, east, or west. So, we explored pretty much all of New England, and in summers we always went on vacation, usually to Maine

RR: Sounds very adventurous. Tell us now something about your mother.

DP: My mother lived to be nearly one hundred, much longer than my father. In her early years she got very interested in photography. I think it started with a little Kodak camera that she got. Maybe it was a Christmas gift from my father. So, everywhere that we went, pictures were taken—and not only in natural settings, because she actually set up a mini-studio at home, with flood lights and all. My sister was her favorite subject, but I got in on the act too.

My mother was interested not only in taking pictures, but in developing them and doing enlargements. She didn't have a dark room, so she used the bathroom as a dark room. We would be assigned to keep track of the time. She would yell out, "Tell me when it's five minutes!" [Laughter] That way she would gauge the timing of the particular developing or enlarging process that she was involved with.

She would send these pictures off to the local papers, particularly the ones in New Haven and Bridge-

port, maybe even in Waterbury. In those days they had photography contests, and she ended up being featured almost every week. There would be Mrs. Plocke with her favorite subject, which was usually my sister. Actually, she was entered into a national contest and got honorable mention with a picture of my sister crying. That photo was honored by being hung in the Radio City Music Hall, and of course we had to go down to see it. It so happened that the *Herald Tribune* had a rotogravure section, and there on the rotogravure was this large panel and centrally located was a picture of my sister. So, she was nationally known at an early age! [Laughter]

RR: Did she do anything else besides photography?

DP: My mother had an artistic temperament. It came out first in photography, but then later on in life she took up painting. It was mainly oil painting: she taught herself to work with oil paints. She never took any classes, but she was an avid reader. After she taught herself to do oil paintings, she would work at it for many, many years—until her arthritis and eyesight became such that she couldn't do it anymore. She would send out fifty or so hand-painted Christmas cards, each one different. It was a very great disappointment to people when she could no longer do it. That was a quality that I did not inherit in the least! [Laughter]

RR: Well, art is very different from science! So your mother's name was Stella?

DP: Yes, Stella, and my father's name was Joseph. He had three sisters and one brother, who died very, very young. One of his sisters suffered from depression, and as there was no treatment for depression in those days, she stayed at home. I'm sure that she would have been eminently treatable with modern methods,

but back in those days it was considered sort of a shameful thing. So I always felt very sad for her. My father's other two sisters had long lives: one of them lived to near ninety, and the other celebrated her one hundredth birthday.

I come from a small family, just my sister, who was four years younger, and myself. Originally we lived with my grandparents on the third floor of a house they owned, a triple-decker in Ansonia.

RR: Is your sister still alive?

DP: No, she died at home in October last year, after a rather long period of many ailments that mainly involved her vascular system, which was pretty much shot. Her death was not totally unexpected, but it was still a shock. There are two nieces and a nephew, all of them are quite grown up.

#### PARISH LIFE

RR: What was the religious character of your home?

DP: That was not very overt, but the fact that I was sent off to parochial school was an indication. My parents didn't wear their religion on their sleeve, but it was there, and it was deep.

I became an altar boy at a young age and stayed with that. When I graduated from high school, I told the pastor that that would probably be the last time I would be helping out at Mass. He said, "Nothing doing. Whenever you come home, I want to see you here." [Laughter]

#### EARLY SCHOOLING

RR: What do you remember about your early schooling?

DP: I was sent off to Assumption School at the age of five. It was run by the Sisters of Mercy. That part of my life is so far in the past. There are some memorable things, but I don't think they would be of great inter-

est to others than me. The school was traditional in a perfectly conservative sense.

The one thing I remember about the school was that there was only one classroom with electric lights, an eighth-grade classroom. There were two eighth grade classrooms, and I happened to be in the one with the electric lights. On a dark, cloudy day, the sister would go over to the switch and turn on the lights, which was not possible in any of the other classrooms. [Laughter] It is hard to imagine that today.

There was one sister, Sister Bonaventure: when she passed through the schoolyard, we would hush and say, "She's coming out of the convent." [Laughter] Hers was a rare presence. Her method of teaching was exemplified by one instance, when she asked each of us in the class, "Which is better, a flat map or a globe?" I was thinking that the globe is more true in that it represents the earth as a sphere, but then how many globes can you put in a drawer? So, I said that flat maps are clearly more convenient. So, she had the "flat map people" line up against one side of the classroom, and the globe people on the other side. The globe people were all given a piece of candy, and the flat map people had to hold out their hands and received two whacks! [Laughter] It must have been very effective, because I remember that to this day. But I still think I was right!

RR: Given the circumstances.

DP: So, it was a school with eight grades, and every grade was taught by a sister, one of the Sisters of Mercy of Hartford. That brings me up to the ninth grade, when I went off to Ansonia High School. There were two options: some people went to Ansonia High School, while those who were more mechanically inclined went to Pine Manual Training School. This was a very high-class school for those who were not thinking of college

or going further in studies.

I started high school in 1942, and the war had just begun. Around that time my parents bought their own home, and we moved to the other side of town, which was actually closer to the school. It was within walking distance—there were no school buses in those days.

I went through four years of high school somewhat uneventfully. I was a bookworm: I read everything that the English teacher suggested. In addition to reading novels, I was hooked on physics, even then. Whenever a physics book of any sort came into the Ansonia Library, I immediately got it from the new books shelf and read it. These were not technical books; these were sort of popular books on physics.

RR: So you had scientific inclinations from an early age?

DP: Yes, but I participated in a lot of the usual high school things, plays and musicals and the like. I was on the board of the local literary magazine when I was a senior in high school. I would say that I did not excel in sports. I was concerned that I was not involved enough in sports, so I was made the manager of the tennis team [Laughter], which did not involve playing tennis. It involved managing, that is to say, making travel arrangements for the team, taking care of equipment, etc.

#### DOWN THE ROAD TO YALE

DP: I graduated from high school in 1946. There was a fellowship available for students who came from Ansonia. It was endowed by an industrialist who had founded one of the factories in Ansonia. The fellowship was a substantial amount of money, enough in those days for a scholarship to Yale, Dartmouth, or Stanford.

Now, I never knew anyone who used the money to go to Dartmouth or Stanford, but there was usually someone who went to Yale. I said, "Well, that would be a good thing to apply for." My uncle, the younger of my mother's two brothers, had gone to Yale and majored in physics. I'm sure he was the inspiration for me to think about studying physics. He was ten years younger than my mother, and so ten years older than I. We were very close in the years when he was studying at Yale.

So I applied for that fellowship and was awarded it. Yale was the only place that I applied to. [Laughter] In those days the tuition was \$450 a year when I started and then went up to \$600 by my senior year. Still, that was a lot of money in those days. My parents couldn't have afforded that.

Then, during my years at college, I was able to work at the university to earn enough for room and board. During freshman year almost everyone was assigned to work in one of the dining halls dishing out food, but after that I was assigned to the physics department.

RR: So you worked to help meet expenses.

DP: Yes. That was one of those very happy circumstances in my life. First, I was assigned to work with one professor, whose name I don't remember. I was just a sophomore and was just starting my physics course. I remember the professor would ask me whether I had experience in this thing or the other, so I kept saying, "No" and he said, "Well, I really can't use you." Then I was assigned to Prof. Ernest Pollard. That was a very lucky thing, because he was very charismatic as a teacher and as an inspirer of students. He had an interesting background himself.

He was raised by parents who were missionaries in China. Since his parents tutored him, they let him go

at the pace that he was able to sustain. So he only realized later that it was unusual for a boy of ten to have gone through Euclid in Greek. [Laughter]

He went on to study at MIT and then came to Yale as an assistant professor. I'm not sure what year, I would guess in the '40s. He was very much involved with the MIT radar project during World War II. Then he built the first cyclotron at Yale. So, during my years at Yale, I was known as a cyclotron jock. [Laughter]

RR: Did he take you on and help you?

DP: Actually, his graduate students did, and they were always trying to latch hold of him. Usually they were running after him on the corridor shouting, "Ernie, Ernie, I have a question to ask you." He was, apparently, more interested in the work that was going on in a field that came to be known as biophysics. In fact, he was the one who inspired me to think about that area of research. He started the Biophysics Department at Yale. It started out as a committee of faculty members from biology, chemistry, and physics, but then it became a full department, which he initially chaired.

#### LUCKY CHOICE OF ROOMMATES

RR: You were lucky.

DP: That was a very lucky break. Another break that I recall came during the week in our freshman year, when we were supposed to choose our roommates and residence options for sophomore year. At the time I had the flu, the only serious illness in my four years of college. I went to the infirmary, and since I lived only ten miles away, they said I'd better go home. It seems there were not enough beds in our infirmary. When I was back home, I wondered about how I was going to

arrange for my roommates, so I called one of my friends—someone I’m still in touch with today—and asked if he had any thoughts about rooming. He said that he was going to room with a fellow named Don Theall, whom I had met. There was still space, so he asked if I would be interested. I said, “Sure!” Don Theall and I became very, very close friends. He later went on to graduate studies in English at the University of Toronto and studied with Marshall McLuhan.

During my sophomore year we lived together in the Timothy Dwight College at Yale, where we had a rather nice arrangement. During those postwar years at Yale, all the rooms that had been doubles were turned into quadruples; the singles weren’t turned into doubles because they were considered too small. So, my roommate and I got two single rooms across the hall from one another. One became our study and the other was a bedroom. That worked out exceedingly well. He was a very sociable person, so we had a lot of parties in our room during those years—after football games, but also at other times.

#### GETTING TO KNOW THE JESUITS

RR: They sound like happy times.

DP: Yes, those were pretty exciting times. During that time at Yale there was only one Jesuit I really got to know well, who was also a very charismatic Jesuit, John Walsh, who was studying in the theater department. But I only knew him only through the sermons he gave, which were always very exciting and stimulating. The person I got to know well was a Filipino Jesuit who is still living, Mike Bernard. He was studying in the school of education, though his real love was English. He wanted to do his doctorate in English, but his provincial thought he would be better

off studying education, because they needed somebody to be a dean. He took some English courses nevertheless, and through one of those he met my roommate, and they became close friends.

I was introduced to him, and we became very close, particularly during my junior and senior years. I spent my sophomore, junior, and senior years working in the physics department, both during the school year and during summers. I hadn't given any thought to what I was going to do after graduation, except that it would have something to do with physics. That's what I thought.

#### AN INVITATION

DP: Then something happened—one of those moments that I recall that were very, very important. I was working in the physics lab during the summer, and I remember once returning home. I took the bus from New Haven back to Ansonia. I know exactly where I was and what I was thinking about while walking back home in Ansonia. I was pondering whether I should apply to graduate school or look for a job in physics, when suddenly the thought came to me. As I recall, it was sort of out of the blue, because I hadn't been thinking about this before. I asked myself: "What if you should be a priest?" I was rather dumbfounded. I said, "Where did that come from?" It was a very striking experience. [Laughter]

So, I kind of put that the thought away. When I returned to school that fall, lo and behold, my roommate and his significant other, a girl named Joan Benedict, had decided that they were going to become engaged. Also, that they were going to become Dominican Tertiaries, which is a lay component of the Dominicans. It so happened that there was a very large Dominican church sitting right at the edge of the Yale

campus; it was the church closest to where I lived during my three years at Timothy Dwight College. In the fall of my senior year my roommate told me about becoming a Dominican Tertiary. He said, "I'm supposed to try to attend Mass as often as I can, daily Mass." Since he had an awfully hard time getting up in the morning and I didn't, he asked if I could wake him up. So, I said, "Sure."

So I figured, "Now that I'm awake, I might as well go along with him!" [Laughter] When I was at Assumption School and in high school I had been an altar boy in the local church, St. Anthony's, which was a Lithuanian parish—that's where I later celebrated my first Mass. So even as a youngster I had been accustomed to going to Mass other than on Sundays, but this was the first time that I had ever consistently gone to weekday Masses.

My roommate at that time was very much into religion, so we spent a lot of time talking about it. I reached a point where I decided that I should talk to somebody about vocation. Since I had been going to confession at the Dominican church, I decided I'd talk to someone there.

I distinctly remember this conversation. I told the priest that I was thinking about a vocation to religious life. I don't know whether he thought I was thinking of the Dominicans or not, but he started relating how difficult such a choice would be: how I would wake up at night, and it would be freezing in the bed, and the holy water fountain would be frozen, and I wouldn't have very much to eat... I remember leaving the confessional thinking, "Thank God I'm not thinking of joining that crew!" [Laughter]

## DISCERNING A VOCATION

DP: My thought was that if I was going to join a religious order, it would have to be the Jesuits, because I knew the Jesuits were involved in education in a very serious way. But the only Jesuit I really knew well was the Jesuit I met through my roommate, Mike Bernard. So I thought: if I was going to do this, I wanted to do it in such a way that I could continue to be involved in physics. Those thoughts developed through my senior year.

By Christmas time that year I think I had pretty much made up my mind that I was going to think seriously of joining the Jesuits. So in April 1950, during Holy Week, I made a retreat at St. Andrew-on-Hudson, the New York Jesuits' novitiate. Even though it was a preached retreat, not a directed one, there were only two of us making it, and we were treated like very special guests there.

I spent only three days there, but it was a very profound experience. I had never made a retreat of that type before. It had a very strong effect on me and pretty much confirmed my decision to apply to the Society, and so I did.

I remember my interviewers. The first one was William E. Fitzgerald, or W. Edmund Fitzgerald, as he was then known. He was the rector of the Fairfield community. Some of the questions he asked me were about my studying French and my ability to speak French. I told him I couldn't, since I had had just two years of French in high school. Walter Kennedy was another interviewer. I had already submitted my application. It was much simpler in those days to apply—there were no psychological tests. I'm not sure I would have passed if there had been such tests! [Laughter]

I got the letter of acceptance from Fr. James Dolan, who was the acting provincial in the interim after John McEleney was named to Bishop of Kingston, Jamaica. James Dolan had previously been provincial and rector in many places.

I can tell one anecdote involving James Dolan from many years later. We were seated at a table here at BC in St. Mary's Hall, and I had been in the community for four or five years by that time, I think. I found myself opposite James Dolan at lunch. He said to me, "Who are you?" When I told him who I was, he asked, "Should I know you?" I replied, "I don't know, Father. You accepted me into the Society. Perhaps you've regretted it since then!" He responded, "If I had regretted it, I would have remembered you!" [Laughter] So, it kind of put me in my place.

#### UNDERGRADUATE YEARS AT YALE

DP: I passed over rather quickly my years at Yale, but they were good ones. In addition to Ernest Pollard in the physics department, there were a number of other faculty who impressed me very much. In fact, two of the strongest impressions were from courses that I audited, which was sort of the best of both worlds: having the delight of someone very stimulating as a teacher and not having to do much work.

One of these was an English professor named Maynard Mack; he was a very dynamic and exciting lecturer. He always ended his lectures, especially those on the more serious plays, with something that was practically a homily. My roommate and I would say to one another, "After that lecture, should we go to the library or the chapel?" He was clearly a deeply religious man, judging from the way he presented the material.

## STUDIES AS A JESUIT

RR: How about your years of study?

DP: In 1950, right after graduation, in fact two days after graduation, I was best man at my roommate's wedding, after which he and his bride went off to Toronto, where he began his doctoral studies. I entered the novitiate at Shadowbrook in 1950. For me the novitiate was a totally different experience—I guess it was for all of us. I had never done anything like that before, so I accepted everything. I remember thinking, "The Jesuits have been at this for four hundred years, so they must know what they're doing. Even though some of the things seem a little archaic and quaint, they should know what they're doing." It was only later that I learned that our novice master, Fr. John Post, had told one of his successors as novice master, Fr. Ray Bertrand (who entered a year after I did), that he should forget everything that was done and start all over again from scratch. The times had changed.

After Shadowbrook I went to Weston, and the first year of philosophy was rather exciting with people like Paul Lucey and Reggie O'Neill. They were stimulating teachers. The second year was the most difficult, and the third year we had the promise of what was to come. These were more difficult years than the novitiate, quite frankly.

## REGENCY AT MIT

DP: I remember wondering what I was going to do for regency. I was very much encouraged to apply to graduate school, particularly by Al McGuinn, whose chemistry course I took in my first year of philosophy. I asked him, "Should I discuss this with the provincial or someone else beforehand?" He said, "No, it's only a three cent stamp." [Laughter] I did discuss it with the

prefect of studies, who was Arthur Sheehan. He got the go-ahead for me, and Mike Walsh supported me a lot on this. At the time it was thought that people in science were better off doing their studies as early as possible. The idea that people should not begin their specialized studies until later hadn't begun yet.

So, I looked around, and there was MIT sitting right across the river. Inspired by Ernest Pollard, I decided that biophysics was a field that was just beginning and I should look into that. So I applied to MIT. Again, it was the only place I applied to, and they accepted me! [Laughter]

#### LUCKY CHOICE OF MENTOR

DP: Then I had another piece of good fortune. One of the most important decisions in graduate school is the choice of mentor, and just by luck I took a course that introduced me to Bert Vallee. At that time Bert was beginning work in his laboratory, which was located in the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, part of the Harvard Medical School. He was another great influence in my life, in terms of teaching me how to do science. That was a high point.

During grad school I lived at 300 Newbury Street, which was completely filled at the time. There were not only graduate students there, but Jesuits doing all sorts of things, such as teaching at St. Philip Neri School and working at Jesuit Missions or the Jesuit Seminary Guild. I was there for five years in all. Gradually, more and more graduate students came to study at MIT and Harvard, and the house changed a good deal.

I remember one ray of sunshine was Thomas "Daddy" McDermott, who became the sub-minister and was one of the great people there. He saw that

certain things needed to be provided for the younger men. Joe Kelly was the superior, and he was good, but Daddy, I think, understood us better. I spent the five years there, got my degree in 1961, and then returned to theology.

Theology was made tolerable by the fact that we had a very good library at Weston, and the days had passed when only the beadle in the class was allowed to keep books that were not the assigned manuals for the course. We had access to the library and that was a godsend. Some of the classes were good, others were not so good, and some were dreadful. I did succeed in getting through the four years. I was ordained in 1964 by Richard Cardinal Cushing. There were about thirty-five of us. That was a very memorable and important day, the most significant day in my life. I celebrated my first public solemn Mass at my home parish in Connecticut, St. Anthony's. Bill Barry was the preacher for my first Mass.

#### BAPTIZING BIOLOGY AT BOSTON COLLEGE

DP: That brings me to the year following theology, which was an important year. I was fortunate to be assigned to do tertianship in Germany. That gave me the experience of living in another country, and it also gave me the opportunity to work in an outstanding laboratory in Germany at the end of tertianship. The laboratory was directed by Manfred Eigen, who won a Nobel Prize several years after I was there. That experience was an outstanding and important one for me.

After some dialogue with superiors, I received my assignment to Boston College and arrived there in 1965 to begin teaching. Those first few years were rather difficult. I had asked for a post-doctoral year to get back into the science full-time, but the provincial, J. V. O'Connor, thought I should get to work right away.

I remember his saying that it was time that I should come down from my ivory tower and do some work!  
[Laughter]

So, the first year at B.C. was rather rough, but after that my situation improved. I was moving along and getting research support from the American Cancer Society. I was getting my lab established, and began to attract graduate students at both the master's and doctoral levels. This was one of the transitional periods in my life. I had to accept the chairmanship of the biology department the year I got tenure.

That was not a very happy time for my research, because the needs of the biology department were so great. I spent a lot of my time and a lot of psychic energy trying to hold the department together. It was seriously divided—into as many factions as there were individuals! There were some very good people, but they all seemed to have different ideas of what they should be doing and how the department should be proceeding.

I spent nine years doing that, and finally got to the point where I felt that I had given enough time to the department. I was then able to spend a month down at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in the summer, not only to give me some break from the routine of running the department, but also to renew my psychic energy.

Woods Hole was an absolutely marvelous place for doing that. There were lecturers from all over the world, and I sat in on a number of courses that helped me a lot in my field. So the following years, when I was no longer chair, were much better, since I could direct more of my time to research. I had been away from it for so long that it was hard to become reestablished. However, I did have two sabbaticals that were very, very important to help me get back to research.

I spent both of them in Switzerland, one in 1988 and the second in 1994-95. I was able to complete a research project in an area that was new to me; it brought the research alive for me.

#### THE RELIGION-SCIENCE DIALOGUE

DP: Another thing that was very important was getting involved in science and religion discussions. First, it was through meetings that were held each year at Loyola College in Baltimore. They were organized by Jim Salmon, who was in philosophy with me and is now a physical chemist. The seminar began with about twelve people, six Jesuits and six non-Jesuits, all of whom were in science. The number grew each year, and then we started to invite prominent people in the field to be featured speakers and discussion leaders. That provided the impetus for me to think about teaching a course in that area, so for the past fifteen years or so I've taught what is now a Capstone course in science and religion, and I've enjoyed that very much.

RR: Why do you say "Capstone"?

DP: Capstone courses were developed by a professor in the theology department, Jim Weiss; they were designed for seniors, to try to help them synthesize what they had studied in different courses during their four years at Boston College. The courses gave the students an opportunity to bring together what they had learned and to reflect on how this would help them in planning for the future. So it was limited just to seniors. I have had different class sizes over the years, from eighteen to only three one year. That was the year after I had been away, so the course was out of the regular cycle, but those three people were very good—we had good discussions.

RR: Have you continued that connection between religion and science in recent years?

DP: Very much so. In fact, this past semester, I taught the course for the umpteenth time. I was unable to go to the last meeting at Loyola College because at the time I was recuperating from my second knee replacement surgery. I still have two shaky knees, and I'm trying to get them back into condition!

#### CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

RR: What has been your area of research?

DP: My field of research is in molecular biology, and I have the great good fortune of being with that field since about its beginning. Not so many people are that lucky. The field really began with the work of Watson and Crick, particularly their work on the structure of DNA. Their paper was published in 1953, which was the year I came to Weston to study philosophy and to take some special courses in chemistry and biology. I saw molecular biology develop from the very beginning, and it has been transformed enormously: nowadays the latest findings are the subject of almost daily reports in the newspapers. The field has become ever more complex. The number of people involved and the amount of money invested in projects have grown tremendously.

RR: You've been involved in all of this, right?

DP: Well, insofar as that has been my area of research and teaching. Now much of the work is done in very large groups, and it is not uncommon to have papers published in the areas of genetics and genomics with seventy authors! I say that is not unusual, but it is not the normal course—normal papers would have only five or six authors. It is almost impossible to know, in some instances, who contributed to what. That is now changing a bit, since the journals are asking authors to indicate more specifically who did what part of the work that is reported in the paper.

It's been very exciting, very challenging. Now I am at the age when I have to think about how much longer I can continue to do this. I am now eighty years old. I suppose one can continue in a field that doesn't change very rapidly, but that's not possible in this particular field. Even keeping up with the textbooks is a challenge. And you probably have to keep up in more than one specific area. It is difficult, even for the best of people. These days it is a field for young people, at least as regards contributing to cutting-edge research.

#### INVISIBLE HANDS

RR: I'd like to ask you, as we get toward the end, about how you see God's providence working in your life.

DP: I already mentioned the providence of God specifically, but there are many more instances that I could comment on, such as the experience I described earlier that led to my thinking about the Jesuits—as I said, it just seemed to come out of the blue. I experienced the providence of God in my early years, having been born of parents who sent me off to a parochial school. That was important; I'm sure it had a very great effect on my life. My grandparents, especially my mother's mother, were very important to me: she and my grandfather were very devoted church-goers. In fact, my grandfather was one of the founders of the Lithuanian parish. He met a lot of opposition in doing that, since there were many people who didn't see the need for another church in Ansonia.

There were certainly very providential events in my life that I can only see in retrospect. My eighth grade teacher at Assumption School was Sister Mary Loyola, and when I was heading off to Yale, I got a message through my sister that Sister Loyola wanted to speak to me. I thought perhaps she was going to

try to dissuade me from going to Yale, but instead she gave me some holy cards and said she would pray for me every day.

RR: Oh, isn't that nice.

DP: It sounds providential. Then meeting my roommate—that was providential. Also, meeting the Jesuit, Mike Bernard, was definitely providential. As a result of meeting those people, certain important things happened. I see my life sprinkled lavishly with these providential occurrences, and I'm very grateful for them, because they have meant so much to me: the people I've met, the particular circumstances that led me to meet these people, and the friends I made in college. I still keep in touch with a number of them, even if it's only a Christmas card.

Then, during the years of Boston College, the best things have been interactions with students. That is what I enjoy most of all. I think it is a blessing to be a teacher, because life is never static. Life is made so much more dynamic, I think, when a new group of students comes in every semester, with new challenges, new faces. The faculty members and departments stay more or less the same, except when new people are added from time to time and old members leave, retire or die. Students always change, and that has been one of the great graces of having been a teacher here. I came to BC in 1966, so it has been 43 years. It's hard to believe that it has been that long.

RR: Time goes by so fast.

DP: In retrospect, it does. I've enjoyed so much celebrating liturgy for students. Until this last year, when I had my surgeries, I was a regular celebrant during the school year for one of the Sunday Masses at Saint Joseph's Chapel. That meant a great deal to me. I think it's a great blessing that I have been given.

Though my pastoral responsibilities may seem minimal, I've found great fulfillment there. I enjoy just having casual conversations with students, and I also have formal sessions with students who know that I am a Jesuit priest. They ask me questions about topics they might not bring up with someone else. That has been a great grace and a blessing.

Our Father,  
    Who art in heaven,  
    Hallowed by thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done,  
    On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
    As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
    But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
    The power,  
    And the glory.  
Now and forever.  
    Amen.

**Fr. Donald J. Plocke, S.J.**

**Born:** May 5, 1929, Ansonia, Connecticut  
**Entered:** August 14, 1950, St. Stanislaus Novitiate/  
Shadowbrook, Lenox, Massachusetts  
**Ordained:** June 13, 1964, Weston College, Weston,  
Massachusetts  
**Final Vows:** August 15, 1967, St. Mary's Chapel, Boston  
College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

1942 Ansonia, Connecticut: Ansonia High School -  
Student  
1946 New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University - Student  
1950 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/  
Shadowbrook - Novice, junior  
1953 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
philosophy  
1956 Boston, Massachusetts: St. Andrew Bobola House/  
300 Newbury Street - Studied biophysics,  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
1961 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
theology  
1965 Münster, Germany: Haus Sentmaring -  
Tertianship  
1966 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College  
1966-2009 Taught biology  
1971-1980 Chair of department  
2009 Professor emeritus

**Sabbaticals**

1980-1981  
Cambridge, Massachusetts: LaFarge House - Private  
study in biochemistry

Fall 1987

Woods Hole, Massachusetts: Marine Biological  
Laboratory - Private study in biochemistry

Spring 1988, 1994-1995

Zurich, Switzerland: University of Zurich - Bio-  
chemistry research in Biochemistry Department

Fall 2001

Oxford, England: Campion Hall - Private study in  
bioinformatics, and in religion and science at Uni-  
versity of Oxford

Spring 2002

Berkeley, California: Claver House / Jesuit School  
of Theology at Berkeley - Research in religion and  
science at Graduate Theological Union; audited  
courses and lectures in biochemistry at University of  
California, Berkeley

### Degrees

1950 Bachelor of Science, Biology, Yale University,

1956 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston  
College

1956 Licentiate in Philosophy, Weston College-Boston  
College

1961 Doctor of Philosophy, Biophysics, Massachusetts  
Institute of Technology

1965 Licentiate in Theology, Weston College-Boston  
College

### Experience

NIH Predoctoral Fellow, MIT, 1957-1959.

NSF Predoctoral Fellow, MIT, 1959-1961.

Research Fellow, Biological Chemistry, Harvard Medical  
School, 1964.

Visiting Scientist, Max Planck Institut für physikalische Chemie, Göttingen, Federal Republic of Germany, May-August 1966.  
Assistant Professor, Biology Department, Boston College, 1966-1971; Associate Professor, 1971- present.  
Chairman, Biology Department, Boston College, 1971-1980.  
Lecturer in Biological Chemistry, Harvard Medical School, January-July 1974.  
Associate Staff, Medicine (Biophysics), Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, February-June 1974.  
Visiting Scientist, Biochemisches Institut der Universität Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland, February-July 1988.  
Visiting Professor, Biochemisches Institut der Universität Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland, September 1994-July 1995.  
Visiting Scholar, Campion Hall, University of Oxford, September-December 2001.  
Visiting Scholar, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, January-June 2002.

#### Courses Taught

Biophysical Chemistry, Molecular Biophysics, Molecular Biology, Seminar on Role of Metal Ions in Biological Systems, Introductory Biology, General Biology, Religion and Science (Honors Seminar), Science and Religion: Contemporary Issues (CAPSTONE Seminar), Graduate Core Biology.

#### Professional Societies

Alpha Epsilon Delta (Charter Member, Boston College Chapter).  
American Association for the Advancement of Science.  
Biophysical Society (Charter Member).

Society of the Sigma Xi (President, Boston College Chapter, 1971-1972).  
The Protein Society.

### University Committees

Committee on University Senate Structure, 1967.  
University Library Committee, 1968.  
Planning Committee, AAAS Symposium on Science and the Future of Man, 1969.  
Educational Policy Committee, College of Arts and Sciences, 1969-1971, 1982-1985.  
Academic Council for Jesuit Studies, 1969-1972.  
University Governance Committee, 1970-1971.  
Faculty Advisory Group, Institute of Human Sciences, 1970-1972.  
Executive Board, Boston College Environmental Center, 1971-1973.  
President's Task Force on University Chaplaincy, 1972.  
Search Committee for Director of Weston Observatory, 1972.  
Board of Chairmen, 1971-1980 (Executive Committee, 1972-1973).  
Premedical Advisory Board, 1972-1973.  
Advisory Board, Weston Observatory, 1972-1980.  
University Planning Council, 1975-1976.  
Human Subjects Committee, 1976-1977.  
Faculty Advisory Group, Search Committee for Academic Vice-President, 1977-1978.  
Advisory Committee, Program for the Study of Faith, Peace and Justice, 1983-1994.  
University Grievance Committee, 1985-1987.  
Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum, College of Arts and Sciences, 1986-1987.  
Search Committee for Assistant Dean, College of Arts

and Sciences, 1988-1989.  
Search Committee for Appointment to Michael P. Walsh  
Chair in Bioethics, 1988-1990.  
Committee on Learning Disorders, 1989-1994.  
Premedical Advisory Committee, 1992- present; Acting  
Chair, Fall Semester, 2000.  
Evaluator, Scholar of the College Projects, 1992-1994,  
1996-2001.  
Faculty Review Panel, 1998-2001.  
Advisor for Goldwater Fellowships, 1998-2002.

#### Departmental Committees

Graduate Admissions Committee, 1966-1968, 1971-1973,  
1974-1980, 1983-1986. (Chairman, 1966-1968, 1983-  
1986).  
Faculty Advisor, Mendel Club (now Mendel Society),  
1966-present.  
Chairman, Departmental Colloquium Committee, 1967-  
1969.  
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, 1967-1968, 1982-  
1983.  
Graduate Curriculum Committee, 1968-1970.  
Chairman, Undergraduate and Graduate Task Forces on  
Curriculum, 1974-1975.  
Chairman, Faculty Search Committee, 1972-1980, 1983-  
1984.  
Chairman, Search Committee for Chairman of Biology  
Department, 1979-1980.  
Ph.D. Examination Committee, 1981-1987 (Chairman,  
1981-1983).  
Chairman, Library Committee, 1981-1983.  
Advisor and Examiner, M.S.T. students, 1980-1987, 1988-  
1994, 1999-2000.  
Faculty Search Committee, 1990-1992.

Special Advisor to Freshman Biology Majors, 1996–present.  
Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee, 1998–2000.  
Undergraduate Program Committee, 2002–present.  
Executive Committee, Fall 2002–Spring 2003.

#### Non-University Service

Consultor to Provincial of New England Province, Society of Jesus, 1976–1981.  
Consultor to Rector of Jesuit Community, Boston College, 1985–1986.  
Member, Board of Trustees, Cheverus High School, Portland, Maine, 1978–1984.  
Member, Board of Overseers, St. Joseph’s College, Standish, Maine, 1984–1994. (Chair, Academic Affairs Committee, 1988–1992).  
Member, two-person visiting team to evaluate the Natural Science and General Science Majors Programs at Fordham University, April 1999.  
Member of Ecumenical Working Group on “Faith and Genetics” sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, 2004–present.

#### Activities Related to Relationship between Religion and Science

Member of Faculty Seminar entitled “God and the World of the Sciences” sponsored by the Jesuit Institute of Boston College for over ten years. This has involved monthly meetings of two hours duration.  
Participant in the annual meetings of “Cosmos and Creation” at Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, since the founding of the organization in

1982. It now comprises some sixty members, mainly professionals in the natural sciences, who are actively engaged in research and/or teaching at the college and university levels. Post-Luncheon Speaker at the June 2006 Meeting.

Recipient of John Templeton Foundation Award of \$10,000 for the Teaching of Religion and Science Course, 1996. Participant in three four-day workshops on the teaching of courses in religion and science sponsored by the Templeton Foundation at University of Oxford (England), January 1996 and July 2001 and at Gordon College (Wenham, Massachusetts), June 1996.

#### Publications and Abstracts

- Plocke, D.J. and M. M. Lauro, 1999. Synthesis and Properties of Class III Metallothioneins of *S.pombe* in Response to Cadmium and Zinc” in *Metallothionein IV* (C. Klaassen, ed.) Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 195–199.
- Whiteside, S.G. and Plocke, D.J., 1992. Selection and characterization of a copper-resistant subpopulation of *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*. *Journal of General Microbiology* 138 , 2417-2423.
- Plocke, D.J. and J. H. R. Kägi, 1992. Spectral characteristics of cadmium-containing phytochelatin complexes isolated from *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*. *European Journal of Biochemistry* 207, 201-205.
- Plocke, D.J., 1991. Cadmium-binding peptide complexes from *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*. *Methods in Enzymology* 205, 603-610
- Whiteside, S. G. and D. J. Plocke, 1988. Identification and isolation of core histones from *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*. *FEBS Letters* 226, 250-254.
- Bekele, H. and D. J. Plocke, 1982. Mercury resistance in

- Euglena gracilis*. Occurrence of heritable variability. *Plant Physiology Supp.* 69, 78.
- Iorio, R. and D. J. Plocke, 1981. The effect of iron deficiency on in vitro protein synthesis in *Escherichia coli* B. *FEMS Microbiology Letters* 11, 77-81
- Graziadei, W.D., W. J. Fimian, Jr., and D. J. Plocke, 1971. Simple and rapid procedure for chromatographic identification of multiple transfer RNA species from *Escherichia coli*. *Analytical Biochemistry* 43, 365-368.
- Graziadei, W. D., W. J. Fimian, Jr., and D. J. Plocke, 1971. Sulfur-deficient transfer ribonucleic acids in iron-deficient *Escherichia coli*. *Federation Proceedings* 30, 1271.
- Prask, J. and D. J. Plocke, 1971. A role for zinc in the structural integrity of the cytoplasmic ribosomes of *Euglena gracilis*. *Plant Physiology* 48,150-155.
- Plocke, D. J., 1969. Synthesis of RNA in iron-deficient *E. coli*. *Abstracts, Third International Biophysics Congress*, 28.
- Plocke, D. J. and B. L. Vallee, 1962. Interaction of alkaline phosphatase of *E. coli* with metal ions and chelating agents. *Biochemistry* 1, 1039-1043.
- Plocke, D. J., C. Levinthal, and B. L. Vallee, 1961. Alkaline phosphatase of *Escherichia coli*: A zinc metalloenzyme. *Biochemistry* 1, 373 - 378.

AMDG