

**New England Jesuit  
Oral History Program**



**Bro. H. Francis Cluff, S.J.  
Volume 44**

© Society of Jesus of New England  
2007 All Rights Reserved

Editor: Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.  
Associate Editors: Paul C. Kenney, S.J.  
Thomas J. Sheehan, S.J.

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

ISBN 1-60067-042-3

Distribution:

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

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HISTORY

Oral histories are the taped recordings of interviews with interesting and often important persons. They are not folklore, gossip, hearsay, or rumor. They are the voice of the person interviewed. These oral records are, in many instances, transcribed into printed documentary form. Though only so much can be done, of course, in an hour or some times two, they are an important historical record whose value increases with the inevitable march of time.

For whatever reason, New England Jesuits, among others around the world, have not made any significant number of oral histories of their members. Given the range of their achievements and their impact on the Church and society, this seems to many to be an important opportunity missed. They have all worked as best they could for the greater glory of God. Some have done extraordinary things. Some have done important things. All have made valuable contributions to spirituality, education, art, science, discovery, and many other fields. But living memories quickly fade. Valuable and inspiring stories slip away. This need not be. Their stories can be retold, their achievements can be remembered, their adventures saved. Their inspiration can provide future generations with attractive models. That is what oral history is all about.

## LIST OF NEW ENGLAND JESUIT ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM BOOKLETS

1. Fr. George W. Nolan
2. Fr. John F. Broderick
3. Fr. Joseph S. Scannell
4. Fr. Joseph G. Fennell
5. Fr. James F. Morgan
6. Fr. John V. Borgo
7. Bro. William J. Spokesfield
8. Fr. Lawrence E. Corcoran
9. Fr. John J. Caskin
10. Fr. William F. Carr
11. Fr. Alwyn C. Harry
12. Fr. John F. Foley
13. Fr. Leo F. Quinlan
14. Fr. Patrick A. Sullivan
15. Fr. John J. McGrath
16. Fr. Victor F. Leeber
17. Fr. Charles G. Crowley
18. Fr. Wilfrid J. Vigeant
19. Fr. James T. Sheehan
20. Fr. Francis X. Sarjeant
21. Bro. Italo A. Parnoff
22. Fr. Dudley R.C. Adams
23. Fr. Martin P. MacDonnell
24. Fr. Robert E. Lindsay
25. Fr. Ernest F. Passero
26. Fr. Walter M. Abbott
27. Fr. James P. McCaffrey
28. Fr. Aram J. Berard
29. Fr. Joseph F. Brennan
30. Fr. James W. Skehan
31. Fr. Joseph P. O'Neill
32. Bro. Calvin A. Clarke
33. Fr. Edward J. Murawski
34. Fr. Paul T. McCarty
35. Fr. Edward F. Boyle
36. Fr. Joseph H. Casey
37. Fr. Joseph E. Mullen
38. Fr. Joseph A. Paquet
39. Fr. William G. Devine
40. Fr. Philip K. Harrigan
41. Fr. John J. Mullen
42. Fr. James B. Malley
43. Fr. John F. Devane
44. Bro. H. Francis Cluff
45. Fr. William J. Raftery
46. Fr. John J. Mandile
47. Fr. John W. Keegan
48. Fr. William A. Barry
49. Fr. Robert G. Doherty
50. Bro. Edward L. Niziolek
51. Fr. Albert A. Cardoni
52. Fr. David G. Boulton
53. Fr. Alfred O. Winshman
54. Fr. Paul J. Nelligan
55. *Coming*
56. Fr. John F. Mullin

Interview with Bro. H. Francis Cluff, S.J.  
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.  
May 17, 2006

**RICHARD ROUSSEAU:** Welcome to our conversation about your personal life and your professional life as a Jesuit.

**FRANK CLUFF:** Thank you.

**EARLY YEARS AT KENNEBUNKPORT**

**RR:** Let's start back at the very beginning. Tell us when you were born and something about your family.

**FC:** Sure. I was born on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1923, in Syracuse, New York, and, as I understand it, that hospital is no longer. My father was a chauffeur, so we moved around from place to place. He was born in Kennebunkport, Maine. My mother was born in New Hampshire, and my brother was born in Brooklyn, New York.

**LOSING YOUR MOTHER**

**RR:** Was your mother involved in anything outside home?

**FC:** Yes, she was the organist in the Methodist Church in Kennebunkport. Her father was the Methodist minister.

RR: Interesting.

FC: There were only two children, my brother and I; we were born eleven months and one week apart. My mother was a rather frail person to begin with, so having two children so close together as she did was probably just too much for her. She couldn't cope with it and passed away when I was a three-year-old.

RR: That must have been hard.

FC: Yes. My brother Ralph was only two. So we were put out in a home in Kennebunk. It was the home of a sea captain with his wife, son, and daughter. We were boarded there.

#### MY FATHER ON THE ROAD

RR: Where was your father at this time?

FC: He was in New York City. He drove for an administrator in the Holland Export Line. So they would go to New York City in the winter and up to Kennebunkport in the summer. My father had started working for him in Maine. While my brother and I were living at the sea captain's house, there was a crisis. My paternal grandmother, Jane, who lived in Kennebunkport, heard that those at the sea captain's house claimed, among other things, that I had lied to them, and that they had burned my fingers and put me down in a pigsty out in the field.

#### MY GRANDMOTHER

FC: So she just pulled us right out of there and took us to her home in Kennebunkport. So we were brought up in my grandmother's home until about the sixth grade.

RR: You hadn't had an easy time of it.

FC: No. I was very, very fond of my grandmother. She had come over from Ireland when she was eighteen and worked for a family in Pennsylvania. This fam-

ily summered in Kennebunkport. There were a number of beautiful homes along the seacoast high up from the water. It's really lovely there. It was while she was there for that family that she met my grandfather; they got married and settled down in the town. My grandfather's name was Herbert. He had two brothers, one of whom was named Ivory and the other Obed. [Laughter]

RR: Those sounds like French Canadian names

FC: That's right. They're both deceased now.

RR: What parish were you associated with growing up?

#### THE CHURCH IN KENNEBUNKPORT

FC: In the winter months the local pastor had a small chapel out on the lawn of his parish. There were very few Catholics in the town. The chapel could hold about fifty people. However, in the summertime the main church was usually packed with visitors. It was there in Kennebunkport that I was baptized to be on the safe side, not knowing if I had been baptized before.

RR: That was prudent.

FC: As a matter of fact, my godmother is still alive at 98 and I went to see her a year ago. She's really very spry and lively. She doesn't show her age, and still looks like she did years ago. It's really wonderful.

RR: She sounds like a remarkable person. Were you an altar boy at that church?

#### THE PASTOR AT KENNEBUNKPORT

FC: No. In the summer, several priests, including Jesuits, used to help the pastor. Fr. Kenneally also said Mass up in Kennebunk, which was just a few miles away. He used to say to those priests, "You keep preaching until I get there to take up the collection." [Laughter]

RR: I see he had a sense of humor.  
FC: When he died he left over a million dollars to his housekeeper.  
RR: So that's where that happened. Very interesting!  
FC: Yes. And when he wrote my baptismal record, he spelled the last name as C-L-O-U-G-H and not C-L-U-F-F. So I remember how, when I was being interviewed for the Society, I brought my baptismal record along. When they saw the name, they said, "You'd better go back and get that misspelling fixed." So I went back to the pastor to get it corrected. Though Fr. Kenneally was a very odd duck, he did change it for me.

#### EARLY SCHOOL DAYS

RR: So where did you go to school?  
FC: I went to school for the first six grades there in Kennebunkport public school with its old-style classrooms. There were about eight students in each year, and there were three grades. So we'd move from the first section of the years to a second section a few feet away. But it was a nice arrangement, because you could hear what was going on in the other year.  
RR: A little bit like the old one-room schoolhouse.  
FC: It gave me a good idea of what was coming up, creating a kind of leg-up situation. In the meanwhile, my father had remarried to a non-Catholic woman who had been divorced. Because of this marriage, my father was separated from the sacraments for years. He and his second wife decided that it was time for us to get on with our lives. So my brother and I we went right from our Kennebunkport school to school in New York City. What I remember is that I cried most of the way to New York City—and, in those days, that was quite a long trip.

#### SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK CITY

FC: The first school that we went to there was St. John the Baptist on East 76<sup>th</sup> Street.

RR: I know where that school is.

FC: We would winter there and summer at the Rangeley Lakes in Maine, way up near the Canadian border. I had played golf earlier in Kennebunkport and done some caddying there. I caddied daily at Rangeley. One important thing that happened to me was that the caddy master was a Catholic. But since there weren't many Catholic boys caddying at that golf club, I had an in with the caddy master. [Chuckles]

RR: So how did the school in New York work out?

FC: I went first to St. John the Baptist for one year, then to a public school for the next. And we did our eighth grade at St. Monica's School.

#### OFF TO SCHOOL IN MONTREAL

FC: But then my father and stepmother, Ardelle, decided that we should broaden our education, so they sent us to school at the Collège Notre Dame in Montreal, Quebec.

RR: An interesting development.

FC: That school was right across the street from the Oratory of St. Joseph. Blessed Brother André Bessette had died that January, and we arrived in September.

RR: An historic connection for you.

FC: We used to go across the street to the basilica, which was still under construction and the dome was not yet finished. It was amazing to see the number of pilgrims coming there from all over. I was fascinated by it.

RR: I've been there a couple of times myself. It's very impressive. Tell us a bit about your school.

FC: It was French-speaking, but there were other English-speaking people there. The Holy Cross Brothers were

bi-lingual. It was a good school.

In fact, later in 1970, when I and some other Brothers finished our tertianship in Ohio, some colleagues wanted to go to Canada. So, while we were in Montreal, we stopped in at the Collège Notre Dame, and I mentioned that I had been a student there. So they looked me up and found my records. [Chuckles]

RR: That was very thoughtful. How long were you there as a student?

#### CATCH-UP IN A U.S. SCHOOL

FC: My brother and I were there about two years. I finished grammar school at Notre Dame. However we had to sit in first-grade seats built for six-year-olds. [Chuckles] By that time we were easily twelve or thirteen. We had to learn the French alphabet and everything about French. And one thing the Brothers did was to put us down at the end of the dining room table with the food at the other end. So you learned pretty quickly how to ask for food if you wanted to eat. [Chuckles]

RR: Then where did you go to school from there?

FC: From then we went back to New York City and to St. Anne's Academy run by the Marist Brothers on Lexington Avenue and 76<sup>th</sup> Street.

RR: Just what grades were you in by then?

FC: Normally we would have been in second-year high, but we were put back into the first year because we had been in Canada. And of course, we hadn't had many of the subjects you would normally get in American high schools.

RR: Two different cultures?

FC: That's right. And one interesting effect of having learned our French in Canada was that we were dealing with a different French tradition, which made it

hard for us in our American French classes.

RR: How did you deal with that?

FC: They had us take all the exams in French. Fortunately, we passed. The result was that we didn't have to take any more French courses. We went to school there until December of '41, when World War II started.

#### MY FATHER'S NEW JOBS

FC: At that time my father lost his chauffeuring job, because gas was getting scarce. So we moved to Quincy, Massachusetts. My stepmother had had as a classmate Howard Johnson, the famous ice cream man. So she was able to get my father a job driving a truck for Howard Johnson's. This worked out fine, until there was a wildcat strike, which led to his losing his job.

RR: Was that a blow to the family?

FC: Yes and no. He got a job at the Fore River Shipyard for the whole of the war years. And, when the war was over, he then went to work for Raytheon and stayed there the rest of his life.

RR: And just where was that?

FC: It may have been in Reading.

#### ENLISTING IN THE ARMY: THE CAVALRY

RR: So during the war, you went into the Army, right?

FC: Let me add one thing. When I was going to Quincy High School and earlier at St. Ann's Academy in New York City, my grades were very good. That was fortunate for me and will tie in when I talk about college.

RR: Sure.

FC: On Flag Day, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942, I'd gone to take a physical for the Army. I figured that they would not accept me because of my glasses. But that was no prob-

lem at all. I went right through the tests with flying colors. They said, "Are you ready to report now?" And I said, "No, I want to finish high school first." That was the 14<sup>th</sup>, and I graduated on the 24<sup>th</sup>. So on the 25<sup>th</sup> I enlisted. [Chuckles]

RR: Didn't waste any time!

FC: I had a very active career. [Laughter] They allowed me to choose whatever branch of the armed forces that I wanted to be in. So I selected the cavalry. And right off, as I recall, they wanted to take us to the ballparks and other places to show the public those of us who were ready to join the armed forces. But after the ballpark we were ushered into trucks and brought to Fort Devens. I went from Fort Devens to the cavalry school at Fort Riley in Kansas.

#### REAL HORSES

RR: Did they still have real horses?

FC: Oh, yes. Our guard duty at nighttime was in the horse barn. And sometimes a horse would break away and be hard to find in the gloomy barns. That really frightened the life out of me. I had to track them down and get them back into their stalls. But we really didn't do much with the horses, because we had recently been mechanized.

RR: Quite an experience for a city boy.

FC: We continued doing guard duty. But we stopped dealing with the horses, when it was decided the army was no longer interested in them. From that point on, we were mechanized. Then just as we used to go around and check for various things on the horses, so we had to go around and check things on a Jeep.

#### OFF TO AFRICA BY BANANA BOAT

RR: So how long were you in training in the U.S.?

FC: From June until December. We left on December

14<sup>th</sup> and got to our destination in North Africa on the 24<sup>th</sup>. We traveled the high seas on what they said was the biggest convoy ever to cross the Atlantic. The convoy ships were so spread out that we couldn't see another ship on the horizon. We were on a huge converted banana boat. We went over with half of us on deck at night and half of us down below. The whole front half of the ship was taken up with ammunition. And if we had ever been hit, that would have been the end of all of us, though maybe the people up on deck might have had a chance to survive.

RR: Thank God you all made it safely.

#### HARD DAYS AT SEA

FC: I should add that some of us, including myself, got very seasick. It was awful.

RR: You hadn't been out on the high seas before.

FC: No. There was a PX on board where they sold candy bars, and that's what I existed on during the trip. When I was finally able to eat something, I went down one flight to get some food. As I was going down to the food line, I could hear men in the bathroom throwing up from seasickness. It sent me right back up the stairs!

RR: It got you started again. [Laughter]

#### ASHORE IN CASABLANCA

FC: We arrived in Casablanca on Christmas Eve.

RR: Wasn't that one of the first American military actions of the war with a large number of troops?

FC: Yes. And it started in North Africa. We were bivouacked in an orange grove, and were told by our officers not to touch the oranges, because they might have been poisoned. But after we'd been there a week or so and were looking at these beautiful, huge or-

anges [chuckles] we gave in to the temptation and started eating them. Fortunately, there was nothing wrong with the oranges.

RR: Were you in any danger?

FC: We had a couple of air raids while we were there. One of the convoy ships, with our equipment on board, hit a reef off Casablanca. That meant that we had no vehicles to move around in, which forced us to wait for a replacement from the States. That meant that we had to wait around Casablanca while this was straightened out.

RR: So where did you finally go?

#### CLOSE TO YALTA MEETING

FC: It was during that period that the big Yalta meeting with President Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin was held, and some of our unit went there to provide security. But I had to stay behind with some others to protect our equipment. It would have been nice to have gone to that historic meeting, but the fact is that I didn't.

Before our vehicles finally arrived in Casablanca, we had pulled dock duty. We had to drive people to their work on the docks in big half-track vehicles. Despite their size, they weren't too difficult to drive.

RR: When did you meet any action?

#### NEXT STOP SICILY

FC: At first the action was rather limited in North Africa. I remember the days as being blazing hot, while the nights were as cold as could be. I found out that this is typical of desert areas. We also had a few air raids there near Algiers.

RR: So you were on the road.

FC: It turned out that I was in the supply section and not on the front line. Our outfit spent most of its

time trying to find the enemy and report their positions as well as what weapons we would need to deal with.

RR: What was the next step?

FC: The next step was to land in Sicily aboard LSTs (Landing Ship Tanks). So we went over at night with planes overhead. We would cut the engines so no exhaust would be visible overhead or on the sea that would give away our position. We landed on what I believe was D-Day plus three.

#### FINALLY INTO ITALY FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS

RR: What was Sicily like?

FC: We were in Sicily for about a month. I remember that on the last day we were there, we bivouacked at the base of Mount Etna. And the soot coming from it was so thick that we were walking in a pile of lava dust up to our knees, there was just so much of it. The next day we went on barges over to the toe of Italy. From there we went all the way up to Naples. We had no camp to stay in, so we were living outside, even in the rainstorms and everything else. It was a wonder I didn't catch pneumonia.

RR: What time of the year was that?

FC: We were in Italy for two years and went through two winters. At times we were entertained by shows and events put on by the USO. We also had some movies, which I went to on the back of a motorcycle.

#### CHASING GERMAN SOLDIERS THROUGH ROME

RR: Would it be correct to say that during the course of those two years, you marched up the whole the peninsula?

FC: We did. We were the first troops to enter Rome—and leave it right away. Our job was to be out in front to pinpoint the enemy positions ahead. At one

point the Germans were retreating north out of Rome at thirty miles an hour or more. We were never able to catch up with them. We went quite a way out of the city before we stopped to bivouac for the night. We stayed for the second winter where we could see the leaning Tower of Pisa, which the Germans were using for observations. We later pushed up to the French border; when the war ended we were in Turin. Our first winter was down around Cassino.

#### DUCKING BOMBS NEAR MONTE CASSINO

RR: Do you mean Monte Cassino?

FC: Yes. It was on one mountaintop, and we were on another facing it. What happened was that U.S. planes suddenly appeared and began dropping bombs on what they thought was Monte Cassino. The problem was they were dropping them on us!

RR: Really?

FC: Thank God, however, the big holes they made were out in the middle of the fields, while we were all ducking down into trenches for our dear life. We were also under our camouflaged netting. It was not fun.

#### BACK TO SEE THE VATICAN

RR: Did you have a chance to visit the Vatican while you were there in Rome?

FC: Yes. The people themselves were very friendly. After the war, we went back to where we had stopped earlier north of Rome. We were given five-day passes, which gave us a chance to visit Rome. We were able to visit a number of places there, including the Vatican. Since we were combatants, however, we couldn't go to the top of St. Peter's. That was forbidden. So one of the first things I did when I got back to Rome after the war was over, was I went up to the top of St Peter's to see what I had missed. [Chuckles]

#### PATROL DUTY ON THE YUGOSLAVIA BORDER

RR: What did you do at the end of the war?

FC: Right after the war ended, our division went over to the Yugoslav border to take up patrol.

RR: Why did you do that?

FC: Evidently there was still some action going on there. They had been trying to join up with the Germans.

RR: I see.

FC: So we took up positions right along the border. While I was there, I had a chance to visit Venice. And I was even able to get a ride on one of the gondolas.

#### SEVEN HUNDRED GOING HOME BY SHIP

FC: Just at the time we were going to the Yugoslav border, the Italians were stringing up Mussolini in Milan. So we couldn't go through that city while that was going on. We had to go south of it.

RR: So you were close to all that.

FC: We were close, very close. My outfit came back home on a Liberty ship. On board were 700 men and their equipment. That's all that was on the ship, and as you can imagine, we were bouncing around on the deck. But despite that bouncing around and watching movies on screens that were flapping back and forth, we never got seasick.

RR: You were seasoned veterans by that time.

#### A GI AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

FC: Right. So I arrived back home in 1945, and took a month's vacation. And that was it for me. While I was on that leave, I went to Boston University to take a test with some three hundred people competing for seventy-five course places. I was one of those chosen. I think one of the reasons I got in was that I had such great high school grades.

RR: Good for you!

FC: So I started in October at BU, and by January we had finished our first semester and had caught up with the others in freshman year.

RR: And that would have been your first year of college?

#### COURSES IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

FC: Yes. I was taking the business administration course. So we went on and finished the first year. Then I went to summer session and intersession. This meant that I had one month off that whole year.

RR: A considerable achievement and a heavy load.

FC: I also had a part-time job. I finished the four-year program in two-and-a-half years and graduated. It was an endurance trial, and at the end of it I had to be treated, because it had taken so much out of my system.

RR: This was all paid for by the GI Bill, right?

#### LIVING WITH A NEW FAMILY

FC: Exactly. Plus, I got a whopping check of \$75 a month for personal expenses, which was very nice. I had a job for a paper company doing accounts payable that kept me busy. And I had moved out from my father's and stepmother's house to get into a place where I could have more peace and quiet.

RR: Where did you go?

FC: I moved in with a local family, who had a couple of children while I was living with them. And I was very, very much a part of that family. It was very nice.

RR: Now, at what point did you come into contact with the Jesuits?

#### CPA PROBLEMS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

FC: After I finished at BU, I was looking for a job. A friend, who worked at Ernst & Ernst, made it pos-

sible for me to go there. When I was working at Ernst & Ernst, I took the CPA exam four or five times, but didn't pass it. So I began to wonder what sort of life I had in store for me. The Ernst & Ernst people told me that I couldn't go any further with them without the certificate. So that's when I started to think and pray about my future. My church at the time was Sacred Heart in Weymouth, which burned down not too long ago. The first time I saw the pastor, who was a monsignor, he said, "We do need good Catholic laymen, so you have to take into account that this may be a passing fancy."

#### FIRST JESUIT CONTACTS

FC: When I saw him a second time, he suggested that, though I was already a member of the Holy Name Society, I should join some other groups as well. So I joined the Third Order of St. Francis and the Knights of Columbus. But the third time I went to see him, I said, "I think I did pretty well in school and am ready to make a leap toward a higher goal." The turning point happened during a Novena of Grace. A Jesuit priest from B.C. was giving it, but to this day, I have no idea who he was. He told me about going into 297 Commonwealth Avenue to talk to someone there. So I did.

RR: Your first full contact?

FC: Yes. And they gave me some books to read on St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius. It happened that just about that time I lost my job. So for a while I enjoyed some free time.

#### ACCEPTANCE

RR: So you gathered a good bit of information.

FC: Yes. Of course, I didn't know whether or not I would be accepted. The monsignor suggested that I should

look at some other orders. So I went to see the Passionists and made a laymen's retreat there sponsored by the Holy Name Society. They first asked me, "Have you tried the Jesuits?" So I said, "It just so happens that I have." So the Passionists lost interest. Then I made an appointment to see the Franciscans, and they didn't show up for our meeting. So I thought, "I guess that puts the Franciscans out of the picture." I then went to see the Redemptorists, and they told me, without getting any real information from me, that I should think of becoming a priest instead of a brother. And I thought, "I'm not thinking of the priesthood at all."

#### ARRIVAL AT ST. ANDREW-ON-HUDSON

FC: Finally, I got word from the Jesuits that I was accepted. And I arrived at St.-Andrew-on-Hudson in New York on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1956.

RR: Did you go there because of the Shadowbrook fire?

FC: Yes. Some of us New Englanders went there. I remember vividly throwing away a cigar at the gate to St. Andrew, because in those days I was smoking cigars pretty regularly. [Chuckles] And I knew then that it was going to be long Lent for me. [Laughter] So I thought they were supposed to greet me as a guest for six months as a postulant, but I said to myself, "You have a fine way of treating your guests. You dress us up in black suit coats. You have us work in the kitchen, you have us doing odd jobs all over the place." But it all turned out to be good in the sense that I was able to help in return for what was given to me. Actually, not much went on until I went from postulancy to regular novice life.

#### THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

RR: Different steps along the way.

FC: The first Christmas was just great. They woke us up about midnight with singing. It really impressed me a great deal.

RR: So how long were you there at St. Andrew's?

#### AFTER FIRST VOWS

FC: From '56 to '59. I finished by taking my first vows with my family present. And then some new things began to happen. We Brothers now had a study period. We were now being called Junior Brothers. One of the Brothers taught us English and history among other things. Another Brother, who sat next to me, did football scores back and forth because our English course wasn't even on a high school level. It was helpful, however, for some older Brothers.

Then we left St. Andrew and moved to the new Shadowbrook. We were still in a Junior Brother Program. It wasn't too long before we completed that stage and became regular Brothers.

But once my superiors at Shadowbrook were aware of my background, the first regular job they gave me was working in the treasurer's office. I did all sorts of things there. I was working on the final stages of the Shadowbrook Drive, keeping track of income. I had learned speed writing at Berkshire Business College. For the bookkeeping we were still using great big books up on high desks, with us working with green visors. But little by little, we were able to move into the more modern world of computers.

RR: Was that your only work at Shadowbrook?

FC: I also worked in the kitchen on weekends, as well as out in the garden with Bro. Glennon. I was very, very impressed by Bro. Glennon.

RR: Your business background was appreciated.

### THREE WEEKS LEAVE

FC: Yes. While I was at Shadowbrook, three of us Brothers—Donald Murray, myself, and Tony Picariello—were called down to the Provincial’s office, where we were given three weeks to visit our families at home.

RR: That was very thoughtful.

FC: I stayed at the Provincial’s residence while on the three-week visit to my family. That’s when people heard about my background. The Province Treasurer at the time was very, very impressed by it. I could see his eyes light up talking about it. [Laughter] So just shortly before the annual status came out [July 31], the rector back at Shadowbrook said to me at coffee, “What’s this I hear about you? You’re going to be working in the treasurer’s office in the Provincial’s residence.” That was nice, but I thought no more about it.

RR: I guess that was a surprise?

### ASSISTANT TO PROVINCE TREASURER

FC: I was assigned as assistant to Fr. Tom McLaughlin, the Province Treasurer. Little did I know that I was a sort of middle man. I would get everything ready with Fr. Tom McLaughlin in preparation for Fr. Frank Miller from Holy Cross, who succeeded him as treasurer. Fr. Miller is now with us here at Campion Center.

RR: So you were there in the Provincial Treasurer’s office for some time?

### BREAKTHROUGH: PROVINCE TREASURER

FC: Yes. I worked in Province finances until 2003. When Frank Miller went to do some studying in Ottawa, Canada, I believe, the Provincial, Fr. Bill Guindon, started looking for a replacement. He said to me, “I don’t think, if I asked Rome to let me appoint you as

Province Treasurer, that they would let me do it. So I'm going to name you the Province Treasurer, and then I'll write to the General about it." And just about the same time, in the New Orleans Province, Bro. Joe Remich became their Province Treasurer.

RR: Did you like being the Province Treasurer?

FC: It was a lot of work. Before I was appointed, Frank Miller handled the investments and I did all the rest, but after being appointed I did all the rest plus the investments. One of the things that I did was to create a working committee to assist me. It included someone who was here at Campion quite a while, Fr. Tom Fleming, who is now deceased. And it worked out well, because they had experience in these matters from other communities that I wasn't familiar with. Up until that time most of my work had been on the Province level and not in investments. So we had to pull all these things together to get them on an even keel.

#### NEED FOR MORE HELP IN THE OFFICE

RR: That seems to have been very workable arrangement.

FC: One thing became clear: there was too much work for me to handle by myself. We advertised for help and got a few replies. Among the applicants was Gerté Daigle, who was the one hired. She worked for us for a good many years. She was of German descent. We had some great years, because she was able to do things with Jesuits that I couldn't do. A woman like her, and especially a Germanic one, could manage them very well. Things began to happen. [Laughter] She was really wonderful help. We still share each other's birthdays and still meet occasionally for lunch.

#### COMPUTERS MODERNIZE THE OFFICE

RR: She helped you organize the office quite well?

FC: Yes. And, little by little, we made progress in bringing the records up to date. And while we were doing all that, computers came along. So we wanted to computerize the budgeting. But that meant that, even with Gerté, we needed more help. By that time, Fr. Francis [Frank] Donovan was with us. He took care of the Mass stipends, the payroll, and some other Province matters a bit removed from our ordinary work. That working association lasted for several years.

#### CALLED TO ROME

FC: A couple of things of interest happened around that time. Rome was thinking about going into a mutual aid program for Jesuit works, and the Jesuit General asked for me to come over to Rome to help with setting it up. It happened that Gerté Daigle's brother was a Benedictine Brother in Ottobeuren in Germany. So on my way to Rome, I stopped by to see him. He had a German/English dictionary. And his English came mostly from reading *Popular Mechanics*. He was really something. Among the things he did was make schnapps, though he wasn't a drinker. I enjoyed it all while I was visiting him. We had some really good conversations.

RR: Did you go anywhere else in Europe?

FC: Yes. On my way home I visited Ireland for the first time. I had with me some family pictures and memorabilia to show my relatives in Ireland. But that's another story.

#### ONE OF THREE CONSULTANTS

FC: I got to Rome and found myself working with a priest from Ireland, one from England, and another from Spain. The two who spoke English were fine, but working with the Spaniard was hard. The General

asked me if I would become the group's secretary and keep the minutes. That turned out to be difficult when dealing with the Spaniard, so my translations were pretty rough. I'm not really sure just how well I did with record keeping under those circumstances. But, thank God, I was able to keep a reasonably good record of the discussions. Our recommendations were later put into effect.

RR: What was this for?

FC: We helped design an annual Jesuit mutual aid fund. Every Lent, a call goes out to all Jesuit communities in the world to donate money to a common fund for those in need. Funding requests go to a committee. They examine and rate these queries, and then reply whether the applicants can or cannot go ahead with their proposal. So the system really isn't too difficult to deal with.

RR: So that system is pretty much still in effect?

FC: Oh, yes. It's still in effect and doing marvelously well.

RR: That's great and a tribute to you.

#### BECOMING PROVINCE TREASURER

RR: So what did you do then in the Provincial's office ?

FC: The next step was my replacement in 1992 as Province Treasurer by Fr. Tom Gibbons. I didn't know what was in store for me. I stayed around for a while. But it soon became very obvious to Tom Gibbons, who had never been in a Provincial office before, that he needed help. His financial experience had been only at B.C. High. But he was a very, very capable man. And he decided it might be better all around to keep me on, which he did. [Laughter] And that's the way it was since 1962. I was involved with that office for some forty years, but was Province Treasurer for only twenty-two of these.

#### AN AVID GOLFER

PAUL KENNEY: What about your golfing? [Laughter]

FC: I am what you might call an “avid golfer.” [Laughter] I love to play golf. It really started when Fr. Dick Cleary was the Provincial. I went in to see him about something, and at the end of the meeting he said, “You don’t happen to play golf, do you?” And I said, “Oh, my, I sure do.” And that was how it really got started. A few of us would get together each year for a golfing trip. And it has gone on for years.

RR: I heard that you were playing regularly with Bro. Vin Brennan and Fr. Bill Rafterty.

FC: Yes. They were a part of the group. As I said, I love golfing. [Chuckles]

#### LIKE TYING YOUR SHOE

RR: Your work, in any case, has been a great contribution to the Province on your part.

FC: People used to say to me, “Don’t you find this work difficult?” And I would say, “Do you have difficulty tying your shoes in the morning? [Laughter] That’s pretty much the way its been for practically everything that comes up in the office. So it’s not as if I were looking off into space and asking myself what next to do with my life.

#### SUMMING IT ALL UP

RR: How have you found these past few years?

FC: Summing up, I’m still doing essentially the same kind of things, but working two days a week at the old Province Treasurer’s office. Until recently I was working four days a week in the treasurer’s office here at Campion, but now have moved to working three days a week in the Campion book store. But I enjoy everything I do.

RR: So as you look back over the years including your

time in the cavalry during WWII and the years in the treasurer's office, do you have the sense that some kind of providential help from God has guided your life?

- FC: I feel that, with my background of seven years of experience in public accounting, I was really right for the jobs that I came into. And I have been very, very happy to be able to contribute what I could to the Province. And the people that have supported me have been an enormous help. I feel very happy about their encouragement. As they are moving along in life, I hope that they, too, are doing well.
- RR: This interview has been very interesting and I hope you enjoyed it. We certainly learned a lot and we want to thank you very sincerely for telling us so much about yourself. Thanks again and God bless you.
- FC: Thank you!

**Bro. Francis H. Cluff, S.J.**

- Born:** March 26, 1923, Syracuse, New York  
**Arrived:** August 1, 1956, St Andrew-on-Hudson,  
Poughkeepsie, New York  
**Entered:** February 2, 1957, St Andrew-on-Hudson,  
Poughkeepsie, New York  
**Final Vows:** August 15, 1967, Weston, Massachusetts,  
Weston College of the Holy Spirit
- 1938 Montreal, Canada: Collège Notre Dame - Student
- 1940 New York City, New York: St. Ann's Academy -  
Student
- 1941 Quincy, Massachusetts: Quincy High School -  
Student
- 1942 U. S. Army - 91<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron
- 1945 Weymouth, Massachusetts: Boston University -  
Student
- 1949 Boston, Massachusetts: Ernst & Ernst Public  
Accountants - Accountant
- 1956 Poughkeepsie, New York: St. Andrew-on-Hudson -  
Postulant [8/1956-2/1957], novice [2/1957-2/1959]
- 1959 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate /  
Shadowbrook - Accountant, clerical work, kitchen  
work, assisted in garden

- 1960 Pittsfield, Massachusetts: Berkshire Business College  
- Studied secretarial skills
- 1962 Boston, Massachusetts: Society of Jesus of New  
England Province Office - Assistant to Province Treas-  
urer [1962-1970], factotum
- 1970 Parma, Ohio: St. Stanislaus Novitiate - Tertianship  
[January - May]
- 1970 Boston, Massachusetts: Society of Jesus of New  
England Province Office - Province Treasurer [1970-  
1992]
- 1981 Boston, Massachusetts: Society of Jesus of New  
England Province Office - Provincial Assistant for  
Finance [Assistant Province Treasurer - 1992-2007]
- 1992 Boston, Massachusetts: Ignatius House / Provincial  
Community - Treasurer [1992-2003]
- 2003 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Residence and  
Renewal Center/ Campion Health Center - Assis-  
tant Treasurer; Province Treasurer emeritus
- 2007 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Center - Assistant  
at Campion Renewal Center Bookstore

#### Degree

- 1948 Bachelor of Science, Business Administration,  
Boston, Massachusetts, Boston University