

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Lawrence E. Corcoran, S. J.
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Interview with Fr. Lawrence E. Corcoran, S. J.
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S. J.
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RICHARD ROUSSEAU: The first question I would like to ask you is where you grew up. Tell us a little bit about that, where your family was, and who was in your family, and so on. Just a little bit.

LAWRENCE CORCORAN: Yes, I was born in Brookline, Mass., and did my education there, up to the eighth grade, at the Heath School in Brookline. And my family was my sister Mary, who was the oldest. She went to Simmons College after Brookline High, and moved down to Pennsylvania when she married John Gallagher, who was with, I think, Westinghouse. And then the next was my brother Frank; he went through the Brookline system, Brookline High, and then went to Boston College. He is living now in Sudbury, right around here. He was assistant superintendent of schools in Natick for years. Then my sister Joan, who went through the Brookline system, too, and went to Framingham

State College, and taught after that. She is living over in Needham now, and her family is pretty much grown up. I was next in line.

RR: Were you the youngest?

LC: No, there is one younger than I. And as I say, I went to the Heath School until eighth grade; then I went to B.C. High. I was the only one in the family that did not go to Brookline High, so I suppose this was a hint of vocation or something to come. My sister Janet was the youngest. She went through the Brookline system and then to Boston College. She is living out in Northampton. My father and mother were from Ireland. He was in mostly the road oil business. He had his own tar truck and things like that. And my mother was full of interest and enthusiasm for reading and everything like that. They were pretty well met. It was a good family.

RR: What parish did you go to?

LC: St. Lawrence.

RR: Was that a good parish for you and your family?

LC: Well, it was. It was quite a way from us, because we lived up near Hammond Street, and we had to walk quite a way to get down there. But it was a good parish, and I had my first Mass there, and everything. It is closed now—one of the ones that was signed out. I guess they have Sunday Mass or something there. It was a beautiful church. I think my grandfather on my mother's side helped build it.

RR: Was there a pastor there that you were close to in any way?

LC: Yes, there was a priest who had a great influence on me, Fr. George Sullivan. I recall Saturday confessions, when people would be waiting in line, and

then he would come in and go over to the other box, and I would run over there to go to him. He was a very holy man, and as a matter of fact he wrote a recommendation for me to get into B.C. High. So, it was a good parish, yes.

RR: Now, you say you went to B.C. High. Tell us a little bit about your life as a student there, what it was like to be at B.C. High for you?

LC: Yes, it was quite a haul in there. I had to take the MTA bus from Chestnut Hill down to Brookline Village, and then change there to Dudley Street, and then take the overhead MTA for a couple of stops to B.C. High. The school was very large then—fourteen hundred. It was good, a good experience. I think it was sort of a mass movement. So anyway, I did well on my grades there, and I met a lot of Jesuits who impressed me. I do not think I really came into my own until I ran on the track team, when I was elected captain going into my senior year.

RR: How did this affect you?

LC: And so I became a little big man on campus. People asked me for the recommendation of voting for president of the class, and things like that. But at that time I wanted to go into the—I was thinking of the Trappists after high school, because Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* was just out, and I read that. And I do not know whether it was an escape route or something, or just to get out of the household I lived in, sort of things like that. But anyway, my mother and my father went down to the parish priest to talk about it, and he very wisely said, "Wait a couple of years. Go into the seminary or into the Jesuits. And if you want to, then change over." So I did; I ap-

plied for the Society of Jesus.

RR: Oh, I see. And obviously, you stayed?

LC: I stayed, yes. I do not think I would have stayed in the Trappists. It was sort of a romantic thing, the cowl and the hood, and all that stuff.

RR: And it was very popular at that moment.

LC: It was popular. I went down there a weekend, and stayed there in Rhode Island where they had their place. And I still looked forward to it. They almost said, "You're too young." I was seventeen.

RR: Now, were you in the old B.C. High building?

LC: I was the last to graduate from the old B.C. High. That was 1950.

RR: That was a big change, when they made that move.

LC: It was a big move, over to Dorchester.

RR: Right. So, just following through after this, when you entered the Jesuits, you went to Shadowbrook?

LC: Yes, yes.

RR: Tell us a little bit about all that.

LC: Well, there was a big crowd there entering at that time. And some people from B.C. High, some were not accepted. So they could be selective, I guess. I think what I liked most about this was the large number of people. I mean, I think it would be difficult at the present time, you know, to see seven people or something coming. But there was a good feeling; you were carried with the impetus of the numbers. It was hard, and yet you sort of became like a child again, you know. If they had an ice cream party, you would be silly with joy, and all that sort of thing. It was a beautiful place to be. John Post was the novice master.

RR: Was that throughout the time you were there, be-

- cause there were several changes around that time?
- LC: Yes, he was there throughout my time. I used to say I was always a rather short person, but I had big feet. And I remember playing golf one time, and I had on short pants, and new white golf shoes, and they looked like canoes, they were so long. So Charlie Dunn asked me, "How come you've got such big feet for a little guy?" I said, "Well, when I entered, I was six-foot-three, except John Post finished me off!"
- RR: And then, of course, you came to Weston. Now that is a long story, many years, but were there some events, or people, or things that happened to you during that period, while you were here at Weston, that stand out in your mind?
- LC: Yes, it was wonderful to have your own room. That was the first time we had one, right here at Weston during philosophy. And of course, they had the golf course, and I liked to play golf and things like that. It was again the movement of so many people, the long black line sort of thing. I found the studies difficult—they did not seem appropriate to anything, you know. They were like medieval studies, and the way of taking the oral exams each year. But I liked the philosophy, and the theology, too. I went to regency at Fairfield.
- RR: What year would that have been?
- LC: 1957 to 1960.
- RR: So it was pretty young as an institution?
- LC: Yes. I stayed in McAuliffe Hall. That is where I had my residence.
- RR: And were you in the prep, or in the college?
- LC: The prep. They were some of the best years that I

have had, really, because you were young enough to be with the kids. I was assistant athletic director, big friend of Joe Bosley, the football coach. Of course, the teaching was so rewarding. You could move with the kids. I liked the teaching very much. So it was with regret that I came back here, because they were such good years that I had at Fairfield. I came back to theology, and when you are getting closer to ordination, you know, you can see that you can endure whatever has to be done.

RR: Right, right.

LC: I think at that time I was sort of just lost in the long black line. I was not anything special. Fr. Jimmy Burke was prefect of studies. He came to my room one day and said, "Would you like to do some graduate studies at Middlebury in Vermont?" I felt honored, you know. So I began studying during summers of theology at Breadloaf School of English.

RR: Did you like that?

LC: I did. I was a little bit intimidated by it, but it was with great teachers, and I loved English very much.

RR: So you were ordained, then, what year?

LC: 1963.

RR: 1963—it was a very large class, I assume.

LC: Yes. I remember when John Kennedy was killed, we were playing volleyball down there on the old tennis court. Someone came down and said John Kennedy was shot to death. You know, it is one of those days you remember where you were.

RR: Right, right.

LC: Everyone stopped and came back quietly. But it was good.

RR: So then, after your ordination—and was it before or

- after tertianship that you went for your master's?
- LC: It was—I finished my master's in English before tertianship.
- RR: Was Breadloaf a good experience for you?
- LC: Well, it was, yes. As I say, they were some of the great teachers; they came from all over to teach at Breadloaf; Robert Frost was even there at that time.
- RR: Did you meet him?
- LC: I did. I met him, yes. He was not teaching, but he would give a lecture every so often.
- RR: Oh.
- LC: I remember Donald Davidson from Vanderbilt. He had written many books, and was teaching Conrad, the novelist. He had a big southern drawl, you know. He said, "Now, the next book we'll be taking is the *Nigger of the Narcissus*. Now, I did not say nigger; Joseph Conrad said that." But it was a good experience.
- RR: And so then you went to tertianship at Cleveland, I believe?
- LC: Yes, I did, Parma.
- RR: And how was that experience?
- LC: That was very good, except we had some trouble with—you know, this was the time of the '60s and people were looking for individualism. We had a good long retreat director, Fr. Peters from Holland. But there was sort of a rebellion on it, especially a couple of guys. They said, "All you have to do is love. You do not need to do anything else but love. We do not need this experiment." So it sort of went up in smoke.
- RR: Did you meet a lot of people from other Jesuit provinces?

LC: I did, yes. There were people from the Netherlands and elsewhere. It was a beautiful place, Parma, even though it was not out in the woods, but in a big suburb.

RR: That is closed now, is not it?

LC: I think it is, yes. It was one of those old buildings, you know—red brick, full of shadows.

RR: All right. I would like to move then to B.C. High, and your experience there, because B.C. High has been an important institution in the New England Province over the years for so many young men. That has had, I think, a great influence even on the Province, in the sense that so many people at one point or another went to B.C. High. I think you are especially suited to tell us something more about B.C. High that I think is worth telling, some of the great things about B.C. High, what happened, and all that. So let me just—I put together a few questions that may just give you some leads, and then you can say whatever you want. What I would like to do is really try to get an overall feel for B.C. High and its importance, and your importance in it, and so on. All right? Now, how had the students changed over the twenty years since you were there as a student?

LC: Well, I think that when I came there, I was still young, and I was sort of riding on that regency experience that I could be with the kids and sort of speak their language. So I felt that there was not a big gap. But it was during the '60s, and the kids were trying all sorts of outfits, and wearing tank tops, and things like that. So there was a lot of rebellion, I guess, in these kids, much more than when

I graduated high school. But I found them very good, very teachable, and receptive. These kids really wanted to get ahead; it was basically a middle class population of students, who were trying to get into a college of their choice. So those first years at B.C. High were very good for me. I preached at a lot of the student Masses, and my work as a priest was well received. I felt that this could go on; it was almost a continuation of regency.

RR: Now, what was the ratio at that time between the Jesuit teachers and the lay teachers?

LC: Well, I would say there were ten Jesuits for every lay teacher. There were very few lay teachers there. And almost everyone had a Jesuit for homeroom or for different classes.

RR: I see. And the lay professors there—did you find that they fitted in well and were good companions in what was going on?

LC: Yes, they did. They were few and far between at that time. I was mostly in touch with the people in athletics, because I was an assistant coach in track in those years. So people like Jim Cotter, the football coach, and Arthur Bradley became good friends. They seemed very happy with the school.

RR: Just a side track here—how did your teams do that you were coaching?

LC: Well, we had pretty good teams. I was the long distance coach. Bill McNeill, a layman, was the head coach. We had a cross country team, and Bill McNeill had really worked to build it. You only need five kids to make it to a championship, good kids. Bill was trying to get the fifth kid into this; we had four good runners, I think four kids who could break 4.5

min. for a mile. We were trying to get a fifth kid in there for the cross country. But then Bill was asked to go and coach at Boston College. He was assistant coach. So I became the head coach, and the fifth kid showed up. And so we won the state championship, and took the New England championship. That was the biggest year we had. But it was really his construction of the team that carried us to the hall of fame.

RR: I see. So, looking at the academic atmosphere, what did you sense was the overall relationship between students and faculty at that time, between the Jesuits and the students, and so on? It was a time of rebellion, but on the other hand, it was also a time of progressive movement and change, and all that. How did you find yourself dealing with that?

LC: Well, I think it was different with the different members of the faculty. Some took it very personally, almost, that these kids were in a rebellious mood, and others were able to give them their leeway. So I think the older men found it hard. I was still, I would say, young at that time.

RR: Were there any other changes you recall?

LC: It was about the late '60s that four of us moved over to Columbia Point; it was an attempt to work with that sort of inner city. Columbia Point was a rough-house place at that time. I was the only priest that went over. There were three scholastics with me, and we would walk over to B.C. High to teach, and come and cook our own meals, and things like that. I was there four years.

RR: Tell us more about what was happening there at that time, with these people at Columbia Point.

LC: There was a lot of violence. You could not park a car on the side of the road; it would be stolen. But they knew we were going to be there, the Jesuits. It worked out, and a lot of people asked for tutoring of their kids, in English or math, and we did some of that, too. But you were never really there; you were not one of them. When these people got hurt, or were sick, they had no place to turn, but we always had the Society, and Blue Cross, and things like that. And any time it was too hard, we could say, "Well, I'll go back to B.C. High and live," you know. So we were sort of looked upon as intruders, even though it was a good plan. But it did not really work.

RR: So after four years you gave it up, is that it?

LC: Well, yes, there was no one coming over. I was the only one that lasted the four years. So I went back to B.C. High, and lived there.

RR: I see. What other extracurricular activities were you involved in besides track?

LC: That was about it. That involved three seasons a year: cross country in the fall, winter track, and spring track. So that took up a lot of time.

RR: And you and the others—since there were many Jesuits there—I assume were going out on weekends to various parishes.

LC: Yes.

RR: Tell us a little bit about the impact that that had on you, and the impact that maybe the Jesuits had on the various parishes you were involved in at that time.

LC: Yes, that was a nice thing, to be able to go out to parishes. I first went out to St. Margaret's in

Dorchester. That was close by. I enjoyed that. Then I had a lot of years at St. Agatha's in Milton. I was a good homilist, so you know, getting a homily together, and things like that. I wanted them to be very good. And I got, you know, a wonderful return from people. And then I went to St. Richard's in Danvers for a couple of years; Al Hicks and I would alternate weeks. So it was good, and it was nice to be really into something priestly, you know, other than the teaching, to go out there.

RR: I assume that most of the Jesuits there did something similar on weekends?

LC: Yes, they did. Very many of them went out to different parishes.

RR: Right, and so in a sense, you see a different side of the Church, or the Church sees a different side of the Jesuits, and even of B.C. High, that I think can be inspiring at times. It brings you in contact with real life, and people with real problems and real things, real assets, to give to the Church.

LC: Yes, it was very good to be able to go out.

RR: Yes, and I am sure it was appreciated very much. In the course of those years, while you were there at B.C. High, did you have the opportunity, for example, to go out to seminars, or various meetings where you could talk about English literature, and all that kind of thing? Was that available very much?

LC: Yes, one year especially, I was elected representative of the New England Teachers of English for the national English studies group. I went to a couple of different places; it would be for a whole week. I went to New Orleans at Mardi Gras time down there. And again, I did not really have much to contribute

to it; they were working on curricula and things like that. It was good. I say, I did not much ambition anything. I was chairman of the English Department; that was something that landed on me. But I just wanted to be a teacher.

RR: As chair of the English Department, what were some of your experiences about the educational program? Did you have to step in, or do things, or whatever?

LC: Not very often. I was still coaching full-time, but it would be a matter of choosing the textbooks for the different years, and going through what was offered, trying to get the best book possible.

RR: At that time, was the provincial's office still approving textbooks for schools?

LC: No, it was not. So we had a free hand.

RR: Free hand, OK.

LC: Yes, and I took a year's sabbatical, but it was not really a sabbatical. I went to Ireland, to Belvedere College, and I taught there for that year. It was a half schedule, so I was somewhat free with only maybe two classes a day. And that was a rich experience.

RR: Yes. Tell us a little bit more about it. What happened, teaching there?

LC: Yes, the kids did not know what to make of me, you know, the Yank that was coming in. They wore school uniforms and everything. It was a very disciplined school; it was a good school, a good school. James Joyce went there; he also went to Conglows school. He graduated from there. And the kids were just about the same as B.C. High kids in the sense that their written assignments had the same carelessness and the same strengths that they had. But

their spoken English was exquisite. I remember one kid, who had an essay due. He came up to me and said that he wondered if he could have a delay on it, because he was tied up with the busyness. And I said, "OK, bring it in Wednesday." He said, "That's very magnanimous of you, Father." This was not pretense, you know; it was an actual example of how they talked—they had a wonderful vocabulary. So I enjoyed that, and I got to know the whole city of Dublin, because I was a whole year there. It is a beautiful old city.

RR: Now your parents came originally from Ireland?

LC: Yes.

RR: Were there any family connections while you were there?

LC: No, there were not any there, no, no. But I went back to the place where my mother was born at Salt Hill, Galway. I looked at the different places. It was nice. And then I had another event; I went to the Yeats Poetry Festival a different year; that was a great experience. It was a month long, in Sligo, and they had different professors from all over give talks. And you would have small seminars with these people. So it was a really happy time.

RR: Did you find that this kind of experience really was profitable for you in your own classroom work?

LC: It was, yes.

RR: In what way?

LC: Well, you would hear different interpretations by so-called experts, people from Oxford or some place like that, University of Texas. So you would see different slants on the poet. And we went to different places, like the Tower of Yeats, which was sort of a

stone tower. He did a lot of his writing there, and you did see, even, from the top of the tower, the view he had of people around.

RR: Is not he buried at the foot of it, or something?

LC: Yes, under Benbulbin. We went up to there, to his grave. It was quite nice, yes.

RR: I think it would be interesting for anyone listening to you to hear your answer to “Why was B.C. High such an important place in Catholic education in Boston, and in the lives of so many people?” What was it about the place that really gave it that spirit, or whatever?

LC: Yes, I think it was largely the faculty. Even the transition to a dominantly lay faculty—these people had the Jesuit aura of it. I think having Jesuit teachers certainly developed a loyalty in the alumni. Even though they may not have taken it gracefully while they were learning there, they remembered it, and they remembered what we were trying to do. It was pretty interesting, because they came from such different places, different towns all over, and yet there was a bonding there that brought them together. And there was a loyalty to the school.

RR: Right. So, to break it into two parts, one would be the educational side of it, in the sense of: what exactly was happening there that seemed to influence so many people in so many ways, in a positive sense? It was a combination of academic and spiritual, or what was it?

LC: Yes, I think the very fact that they had such practices as First Friday Masses. These would be mandatory; you had to go to them. Hearing the homily and things like that, I think deepened the Catholi-

cism of these people. The whole spiritual side, like the Sodality and things like that—that was a big impact, I think, on their lives.

RR: Now at that time the Sodality was really more important than it became later on.

LC: It was, yes.

RR: Tell us a little bit about how it worked at B.C. High.

LC: Yes, they recruited heavily for the Sodality, and kids were interested enough. It did not have that stigma of being a women's thing, Sodality, which it acquired later on. This deeply impressed, I think, the kids. And I think the young scholastics, when they came in, this was an impact on the kids, to see someone that was twenty-five years old able to throw a football and take up dramatics with them. It was a very strong impact.

RR: And there was usually a student leader of the Sodality. Do you remember any of those particularly as standing out in your mind as someone who was kind of an outstanding person then, and maybe later in life?

LC: Yes, it was Fr. Ambrose Mahoney. He was a short man. He was very interested in the students, and very intelligent. He would help us with things like, if we were going to give a talk or something. He would go over it with you, and tell you what not to bring into it, and what to bring into it.

RR: Now, the other side to the educational experience at B.C. High, aside from the academic as such, was the bonding that you mentioned, and the impact, if you will, of that kind of bonding on the atmosphere in certain parts of Catholicism in Boston, and in other ways, to say nothing of maybe a little politics thrown

- in—but that is another question.
- LC: That is right.
- RR: Tell us a little bit about that.
- LC: Well, I think that it was my first experience—when I was going to B.C. High—of meeting kids that were not Irish. You know, we came sort of from a little ghetto in Brookline that was Chestnut Hill. That is a ritzy place, but we were not, you know. But you met Italian kids and kids from other backgrounds; you got to understand them better.
- RR: Do you recall any example of this?
- LC: I remember Joe Cappucino; he was on the track team with me. And he asked me to come to his house for dinner one night in the North End. Beautiful family! His father was a barber, and that was the middle class kids. So, kind of more accepting, more certainly than I would have had at Brookline High. I think this carried over to when I was teaching there. You would have kids who came from Duxbury and others from the South End, who were merging together. And that was well received.
- RR: At that time, too, were there still many B.C. High graduates entering the Society? Or had it started to level off?
- LC: No, it was still strong.
- RR: Still strong?
- LC: Yes, yes. But it was on the edge of tapering off, a couple of years. And I think that was the '60s.
- RR: Did many B.C. High graduates go on to B.C. itself?
- LC: Yes, but there were a large number, too, that went to other colleges.
- RR: Tell us a little bit about that.
- LC: Well, they used to have what they called the honors

- class, you know. I was never in that, but a lot of them would go to Ivy League schools. But I would say the majority went to B.C. at that time, yes.
- RR: So relationships were good between the two of them?
- LC: Yes. It was almost automatic that you would get into B.C., which is not the case nowadays. You have to be considerably good to get into B.C. now.
- RR: Right. Well, before we move to anything at all else, is there something else about B.C. High that you remember, or something that I have not even touched upon, or anything else that you want to say that you think is important for us to know about the spirit of B.C. High and what it did?
- LC: Yes, I think the B.C. High spirit is still strong in me. I always look at the sports page to see how B.C. High did in cross country, soccer, or things like that. To me the experience at B.C. High was a good one, primarily due to the Jesuit faculty. There were some really great Jesuits there: Ed Donohoe, whom I remember, God rest him, and John Chapman. Different characters, yet they sustained a sense that this is our school, we are proud of it.
- RR: Good. Let me move on to your next work, which was retreat work?
- LC: Yes.
- RR: Tell us what happened at that point, as you got into retreat work.
- LC: Well, I had had some surgery on my left ear, and it is actually dead now, this left ear. It was a cancer. And I tried to go back to teaching at that time, and it was just a hard thing. So I had been doing retreat work in the summers while I was teaching, at the different retreat houses. So I figured that I would—

you get to a certain age, when it is hard to connect with the kids. I was getting to that age, and it was—you had to drive yourself. It was really hard work.

RR: After so many years...

LC: So I went into retreat work. As I say, I had given a lot of retreats, weekend retreats. I did some eight-day retreats while I was still teaching. Then I went to Charlestown, to the Jesuit retreat center there. And that was mostly nineteenth annotation retreats, which were good. It was one-on-one.

RR: What do you understand by nineteenth annotation? How does that work?

LC: It is meant for people who cannot get away to a retreat house, say for a week, or something like that, people who cannot afford that, or are too busy, or they have children at home. So if you go away to a retreat house, they call that the twentieth annotation. And Ignatius used the nineteenth a lot for busy people who would come once a week for twelve weeks, say, or even thirty weeks, and so get their spiritual exercises. And we had about three of us doing that there at Charlestown. It was a nice little community. Fred Bailey was there—he was 82 but you would think he was 28, the quiet liveliness and enthusiasm that he had. That was a nice experience. The place was sold eventually.

RR: Were you there when it was sold?

LC: Yes, I was, yes. Tom Spillane was in charge of that.

RR: What brought about that decision?

LC: Well it was not producing financially what it took to keep it.

RR: Did it used to be financially solid?

LC: Yes, they used to have groups of men come on dif-

ferent nights of the week, like the Sodalities, and men's retreats. It was full house; the classrooms would be full on weekends. But that all tapered off with Vatican II in the sixties, and things like that. So we just had a quiet retreat house. I say, people coming in for individual direction.

RR: What kind of a building was that at Charlestown?

LC: Oh, it was a nice building. The residence, which was pretty new, was attached to an old school. I think the best room I ever had in the Society was at Charlestown. It was a spacious room. The house had a little chapel in it. It was a very companionable place to live and be.

RR: Were you consulted at the time of the closing?

LC: No, I was not. When it closed, I came out here to Campion Renewal Center, and did the same thing here—retreat work.

RR: How many years did you do that here?

LC: About nine.

RR: And did you see any changes here in the retreat arrangements?

LC: Yes, I did. I would say the place became more familiar to me. I felt some dread coming back to where I had done years of philosophy and theology, you know. Now you could see that it is a place to be received, and to be welcomed. And I enjoyed doing that.

RR: So how many were involved with you here at Weston?

LC: There were about four of us on the retreat team.

RR: And how about the numbers of people, especially in relation to what your previous experience was? Were there more people coming?

LC: There were more people coming, yes.
RR: And to what do you attribute that?
LC: Well, I think that there were a number of places that had closed down, and so people, you know, were trying to come into where they could find retreat direction. And also, at that time, they had weekend retreats here, unlike at Charlestown, and there would be twenty or thirty people coming. I would be part of that, too. Then there were eight-day retreats. We did not have any thirty-day retreats here. So there was quite a clientele keeping it going.
RR: Is that largely continuing these days?
LC: Yes, I think it is, yes, yes.
RR: So what it says, it is kind of a success story in retreats.
LC: Yes, I think John Michalowski has done a great job with that as head of the Renewal Center. He spends all his time, whatever he can do, advertising.
RR: Do you throw in a little help now and then?
LC: Well, I do, yes. Once I get my leg better, I will be able to go back to that.
RR: Are you looking forward to that?
LC: Yes, I am. It was nice. It is sort of like a semi-retirement, in a sense. It is not like full-time teaching, but you have your hand in it. I still do parish work at St. Mary's in Billerica. I have been there about fifteen years, I guess.
RR: Oh, Billerica.
LC: But again, I have not got back there yet.
RR: Well, is there anything more you want to say about retreats and so on? I asked you some narrow questions. Is there something else you think would be important?

LC: Well, I think it was very good for me, spiritually, to be giving these retreats, because I found a sincerity in myself that I did not know I had, really speaking from the heart and not just another routine of giving. I also found sort of an empathy with the people who entered into this. You know, it is an awesome thing to feel: look what I have done, and you know it is the grace of God with these people. But you can feel it, in many instances.

RR: And it comes back to you, in a way.

LC: It comes back, yes.

RR: Let me try to bring this to completion by saying, as you look back over your Jesuit life, do you feel that somehow there was a kind of providential care that led you in the right direction, that kept you going, gave you strength, gave you vision, that in a sense is something important to you, and important to the people that you dealt with at B.C. High and everywhere else?

LC: Yes, I do feel it was the providential hand of God. You know, whatever happened should have happened; but I could still see God's working in it. I was a very good teacher, and very popular, and this was the gift that I had. As long as I was able to give it, I gave it. For me teaching English was a better road to God than, let us say, teaching religious ed or something like that. Because in poetry and stories you could sort of smuggle God in, in a way that was not resented. So it was very meaningful for me. These were my best years, when I was teaching. That is what I felt I was called to do: give me a platform to bring God into beautiful things like poetry and drama, things like that. I think it was the right time,

too, to get into retreat work, because I was good at that, too. So whatever I had in giftedness, which was not much beyond that, God saw to it that I was in a place where it was very helpful to people.

RR: Well, thank you. This has been very informative to all of us, and we are very grateful that you gave us this time.

PAUL KENNEY: I would like to ask about your work with CLC—Christian Life Communities.

LC: Oh, yes.

PK: I know Journey CLC thinks very highly of you, and holds you very dear. Could you speak about that a bit?

LC: Yes, this was at Charlestown. John Surette had been taking a Christian Life Community. Then he asked me to pick it up. We had a small group, about six or seven, and it was very good. They met once a week, and then we would have our little snack. I felt that CLC was important because it was a movement of the people rather than of the Jesuits, and you had to be there for them, but not to impose yourself on them. I saw this working happily in different places to carry their apostolate towards the sick or things like that. I gave a couple of retreats, maybe two or three groups would come together down at Cohasset. That was very moving. It was like the words of Jesus: “I’ve come to bring fire on the earth, and how I long for it to be kindled.” And I found out they were longing for the kindling of Christian life. So I became great friends with many of those people.

PK: You mentioned how you had some feelings about coming back here. Do you find that this place, in the time that you have lived here, has helped change

those feelings? Has this place changed, or has it pretty much stayed the same?

LC: I find that it has changed a great deal. See, when we were going through the course of studies, you were in that funk, or, it was sort of a house of fear, although you had a lot of good times in it. But if you went too far, or something—skipped out a day or something like that—you know, that sort of cast a shadow all over. We would say to ourselves, “I cannot wait to get out for regency,” and then, “I cannot wait to get out after my ordination.” It was not that bad being here, but still, they had the upper hand. They could say, “You’re out,” or, “You’re not fit for this.” So there was a lot of anxiety there.

RR: How do you find it now?

LC: But it is much changed—it is not a house of studies anymore. Now it is a much better place to be. I think this is the right place for me to be at this time of my life. And well, you could say, well, why not just stay at Holy Cross? No, this is the place to be. It has wonderful personal care to it, and they are very kind.

PK: Your curriculum vitae indicates that at B.C. High for seven years you were a teacher of theology. Was that also with the English?

LC: Well, I just had one class. The headmaster-principal asked me to—he was stuck. I said, “Well, I’ll take it, if I can drop one of my English classes,” because that was too much to have. I did teach that, yes. But I taught the others the same thing; I teach them through poetry, you know, like “Batter my heart, three-person’d God,” from John Donne, and seeing the bind that he was in because of his sexuality, and putting it over to God’s mercy. And Robert Frost,

and things like that. So I taught theology through poetry and fiction.

PK: May I ask, in what way was that a preparation for your style of giving retreats?

LC: Well, I had always wanted to get on the retreat line once I left here. And I had put together a retreat, which I would have done in the years here. I have always loved poetry, so I worked poetry largely into the retreat. It is pretty good.

RR: How about Gerard Manley Hopkins?

LC: Yes, yes, a lot of that came in. It was different poets, you know, the metaphysical poets, John Donne and George Herbert, and "Love bade me welcome: and I drew back." And then, "Sit down, eat." Eucharistic. You could see there the receptivity of grace in these poems.

RR: Thank you.

Rev. Lawrence E. Corcoran, S.J.

- Born:** July 27, 1932, Brookline, Mass.
- Entered:** July 30, 1950, Shadowbrook, Lenox, Mass.
- Ordained:** June 15, 1963, Weston College, Weston, Mass.
- Final Vows:** November 6, 1970, Fairfield, Conn.
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- 1946 Boston, Mass.: Boston College High School - Student
- 1950 Lenox, Mass.: Shadowbrook - Novitiate, Juniorate
- 1954 Weston, Mass.: Weston College - Studied philosophy
- 1957 Fairfield Preparatory: Taught sophomore year
- 1960 Weston, Mass.: Weston College - Studied theology; summers at Breadloaf School of English
- 1964 Dorchester, Mass.: Boston College High - Taught English, Speech; Assistant Track Coach
- 1966 Cleveland, Ohio: Tertianship

- 1967 Dorchester, Mass.: Boston College High - English Department Chairman (1967-71), taught English (1966-77), taught theology (1970-77)
- 1977 Dublin, Ireland: Sabbatical
- 1978 Dorchester, Mass.: Boston College High - Taught English
- 1988 Charlestown, Mass.: St. Joseph Center - Retreat Ministry
- 1993 Boston, Mass.: Loyola House - Retreat Ministry
- 1994 Weston, Mass.: Campion Center - Retreat Ministry
- 2004 Weston, Mass.: Campion Center - Praying for the Church and the Society

Degrees

- 1956 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College, Boston College
- 1957 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College, Boston College
- 1963 Master of Arts, English, Breadloaf School of English, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont
- 1964 Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Weston College