

**New England Jesuit  
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Charles G. Crowley, S.J.  
Volume 16**

© Society of Jesus of New England  
2006 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 A. Paquet, S.J.

ISBN 1-60067-014-8

Distribution:

Oral History Program  
Campion Center  
319 Concord Road  
Weston, MA 02493-1398  
718-788-6800  
ohp@sjnen.org

Interview with Fr. Charles G. Crowley, S.J.  
by Fr. Paul C. Kenney, S.J.  
December 7, 2005

**EARLY YEARS**

**PAUL KENNEY:** It is good to be with you here this morning, Charlie.

**CHARLES CROWLEY:** Thank you, Paul.

**PK:** I see you were born in Bantry, Ireland.

**CC:** That is right, in Cork.

**PK:** Do you have any memories of that?

**CC:** Yes, I went to school there one year. People have told me in my old age, people who are Irish or connected to Ireland, that I still have some traces in my speech. Most people do not notice it, but I have been told that by people I ran into, in the Middle East or in Micronesia. I recall a Scot I met at the Beirut airport in the check-in line. After ten minutes he said, "You are from Cork, Ireland." I was forty-one years old, and I left there at six. I asked, "How did you know?" He said, "You have traces in your speech."

**PK:** What brought you to the United States?

**CC:** My parents immigrated here. My father got a job at the Fore River shipyard in Quincy, Mass. He decided to bring his family here, and we all came.

PK: How was the transition for you?

CC: It was all right. I was too young to be too acclimated to Ireland, although I did go to school there for a year. It was just that you felt a little strange in a foreign country for a while. But that went very quickly, as we met many friends and relatives; so it worked out very well.

PK: They had come to the United States already?

CC: Before, but not too many. My uncle, my father's brother who was a bachelor, had bought a house in Charlestown. He had become fairly well-off, and he sold it to my parents. That is why we moved there. He told my parents, "It would be better bringing up your boys near Boston than in Quincy." So we went to Charlestown.

PK: I see.

PK: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

CC: One brother and no sisters. He and his wife have died, and are buried in Georgia. He spent his retirement from the U.S. Coast Guard in Georgia, and he brought up his children there. They are living there now.

PK: Describe your father's work and your mother's interests.

CC: My father and mother were Irish from the roots up. Actually my father was not much in favor of my joining the Society, but he took me to see, I think it was Fr. Augustine Keane. He was then principal of B.C. High. My father asked him if he thought I was mature enough or too young. After that meeting he changed his mind, and I entered after high school.

PK: Did your father continue in shipbuilding?

CC: He was there until he retired in the 1960s. I was in Iraq when he retired. I wrote Fr. Joe Walsh, who was minister at B.C., to see if could he find some light labor for my father, who was at loose ends. Sure enough—it was very kind of him—he called my Dad,

and they had him sorting mail. He took on that job, just to get out of the house.

PK: How about your mother?

CC: Her maiden name was Mary McCarthy. A wonderful wife and mother, she met my father when both were traveling by boat from England to Ireland in 1913. They married during World War I, in which my Dad served in the trenches of France for four years, one of thousands of Irish in the British Army.

PK: How about life at home? How would you characterize its religious spirit?

CC: Pretty good. We were regular parishioners. Since I went to St. Mary's school in the North End, we went to Mass there; my parents would talk to the teachers. We were more connected with that than with our own parish of St. Mary's in Charlestown.

#### EDUCATION

CC: My mother wanted to get us into the parish school, St. Mary's in Charlestown, but in those days it was crowded and we could not. We went to public school. Finally, a lady across the street, who was an Emmanuel College graduate, said, "Why don't you try the North End?" She meant another St. Mary's, a Jesuit church, it used to be, in the North End of Boston, where they had a school. We went there, and they accepted us, my brother and me. That is how I became connected with the Jesuits. Notre Dame sisters were the teachers there; they came from Emmanuel College every day by bus. I got a scholarship to B.C. High and then entered the Society after graduation.

PK: Any memories of B.C. High?

CC: I liked it there.

## VOCATION

PK: How did you make the transition from B.C. High to the Society?

CC: Oh, I just applied.

PK: Was the desire present in senior year?

CC: It was earlier than that, I would say. We had very good priests there. One was my teacher, Fr. Frederick Blatchford, who was very supportive. Every day students would gather around him after school, and he would talk to us about the Society. So he, and another priest named Eugene Burns, both of whom are dead now, were very encouraging. Then I went to Shadowbrook after graduation.

## FORMATION YEARS

PK: Any particular memories about the course?

CC: I began to be interested in Iraq, when I came here for philosophy. Dick McCarthy, who later was rector in Iraq, was in theology while I was in philosophy. He offered four or five of us a basic course in Arabic on Thursday morning, our holiday. That is how I got started becoming interested in the mission. Dick was very influential, and also Frank Anderson, who had been in the Middle East. Dick and the rector encouraged my going ahead. I was expecting to go there for regency; five others of my class went. I did not go then but after tertianship.

PK: Where did you do regency?

CC: Boston College. I had a kind of fellowship in physics. I taught freshman physics and took courses in physics.

PK: You were good at learning languages and sciences?

CC: Learning Arabic was out of my life then. That only lasted during philosophy, when I had a teacher, Dick McCarthy. When I got to B.C., my life consisted in trying to get a degree in physics and teaching elemen-

tary physics. After two years of regency, I got the M.S. degree in physics, continued teaching for one more year, and then came to Weston College for theology.

PK: How did you enjoy teaching?

CC: Very interesting. Some of my students were World War II veterans, way back in the late forties. They knew more physics than I did, yet they were very polite about it. So that was fine.

PK: I see.

CC: After that, I came here for theology, and was ordained in 1951 when Fr. McEleney was the provincial. The question then was whether I would be assigned to Baghdad. After tertianship at Pomfret the next provincial, Fr. Fitzgerald, assigned me there. He said the problem, though, was that there were eight scholastics—imagine, eight!—all going to Baghdad College. He needed a priest to go with them on board the ship. But I had planned to go to Iraq via Ireland and see my relatives. So I had to go with the scholastics on the ship from Hoboken to the Mediterranean.

PK: Finally you were on your way.

#### TO IRAQ

CC: But it did not work out too well at Baghdad College where I was teaching. I had some disciplinary problems with the kids; I was too young or something. So I returned here to Weston for two years, taught physics to the philosophers, and took weekend calls. When Al-Hikma was opened about 1956 and they needed a physicist, I went back and stayed there about eleven more years.

PK: I understand that the community had a positive spirit.

CC: It did. People used to call it very strict—regular reading at table, very fixed order of the day, and all. But it was quite good. I remember we used to sleep under

mosquito netting on the roof because it was so hot in the house in summer.

PK: I recall we used to get *Al Baghdadi*, the little newsletter about the Jesuits' work in Iraq. It was always very interesting to read. What about the academic atmosphere there, and the relationship between the American and Iraqi teachers?

CC: It was pretty good. I was a naturalized American citizen, and my trouble was a discipline problem. They were afraid it would affect the school's academic standing, because Baghdad College and all the other high schools would take the annual the government exams, and the results were published. The schools would be judged by how their students did. So they were afraid my teaching problems might affect the standing of the students, although another Jesuit very kindly told me it did not. Bill Sheehan, God rest him, the other physics teacher, told me that in the exams his and my students did about the same. So he was saying it did not affect it.

PK: What about the lay teachers?

CC: We had some called Fulbright teachers, and others were hired by the school. The US Government helped with their salaries. It worked out quite well.

PK: How was the ordinary interaction between the Jesuits and the people of Baghdad, regarding the political side? I understand it got pretty tough at the end.

CC: Well, that was exceptional, though. The normal relationship worked out pretty well. There was much friendship with Muslim and Christian people, of course often with the parents of our students and also teachers. The government rule was that geography and history could be taught only by Iraqis. So we had Iraqi lay teachers, both Muslim and Christian men and women. We got along very well with them.

PK: How about with the Iraqis in general?

CC: Friendly. I recall one incident. Once we were traveling to Baghdad College. It was north of the city, and Al-Hikma south, both with Jesuit communities. Sometimes we would go back and forth for a meal or a movie. The road took us through the city and a military camp. Stupidly—I was driving—we ran out of gas right in the middle of the camp with soldiers all around us. When cars entered and left the camp, each car was examined. So we were cleared and legitimate, but we simply ran out of gas, and soldiers gathered around. They were very friendly, and they asked what happened. We spoke Arabic with them. They went to get a can to refill the tank. An officer came along, and he smelled the can—but it was kerosene, not gasoline—it was a mistake. So the officer said to us, “Well, sorry about that. We’ll go to a garage and empty the tank, so it won’t damage the motor.”

PK: What happened while you were waiting?

CC: Meanwhile we were invited to sit around and have some tea and cigarettes. They were very hospitable as they talked—the only time we could talk to an army officer. Nor were they allowed to talk to any foreigners, but this was an unavoidable get-together. One of the officers said, “We’re not supposed to talk to you. We like Americans. We hate the Russians, because they’re atheists.” Russia was very friendly to the Arabs at that time, right in the middle of the Israeli-Arab conflict. They were serving us all kinds of nice things.

PK: How about the gas?

CC: They had the tank taken out of the car, brought over to us, turned upside down and shaken, so we could see all the kerosene was out. Then they filled it with gas. They were so friendly to us! They were so delighted they had a chance to talk to us. They could not do it in the normal course of events. When I wrote a note

the next day thanking them for their help, it was returned to me. They were not allowed to receive it.

#### ISTANBUL

PK: Did you get to know other parts of the Middle East?

CC: Fr. Tom Hussey, the rector, decided we should have connections with other universities in the Middle East, and not only with Jesuit or Catholic ones. He suggested I go to the University of Istanbul to get acquainted with their way of teaching physics and math. I went there two summers, in the late fifties and in the mid-sixties. The experience had a great influence on me.

PK: How so?

CC: I lived at the Jesuit house in Istanbul, which I understand from Bro. Babinski no longer exists. There are still Jesuits in Turkey, but they are in Ankara, the capital. In that house, it was fascinating. Istanbul is on the Bosphorus, right at the crossing between Europe and Asia. Some French-speaking Carmelite nuns on the other side needed someone to say Mass for them. So I used to take the ferry from Asia to Europe three days a week, but now there is a bridge. I would also visit Hagia Sophia quite often; it is no longer a mosque but a museum, a magnificent building. The Christian people—a very few are left—told me a legend that an angel is still guarding it.

PK: Really?

CC: The church has been through earthquakes, fires, invasions, and massacres, yet it is still standing. While it was being built, the workers went for lunch into the city of Constantinople, since Istanbul was then called Constantinople. They hired a boy to watch their tools and the building, so if there were any thieves he would stop them. Then an angel appeared to the boy. “Where are the men? Why aren’t they building God’s house?”

The boy said, "Oh, they're having lunch." "Go and get them!" the angel said. "Get back on the job!" But the boy replied, "I can't leave here. I have to watch the building." The angel said, "I'll watch it until you come back." The boy went into the city, and told the workers, "An angel there says you're supposed to come back." They went to Justinian, the Emperor, who was the builder. He asked the boy, "What did the angel say?" The boy replied, "He said I'll watch it." Justinian said to the boy, "You'll never go back." He sent him and his family to North Africa, and kept them there all their lives. So the angel is still watching the building, and that is why it never has been destroyed.

PK: What a legend.

CC: The city was taken, May 29th, 1453, on a Tuesday, when the invaders conquered the city, broke through the walls. So the Christians believe nothing good happens on a Tuesday—it is an unlucky day. You do not schedule baptisms or weddings; nothing is scheduled for Tuesday. Another legend has it that a priest was saying Mass during the invasion, and the walls closed in on him. So that Mass is still going on. Hagia Sophia is loaded with legends, and they believe it will be a church again. But that is just a story.

PK: Yet a good one. How did study in Istanbul help you?

CC: I did pick up some ideas about laboratory procedures. A teacher very kindly showed me around, explained the experiments they were doing, and told me about new ideas, which I copied down. I went to Istanbul in 1958, the year there was a revolution in Iraq. King Faisal, the last king, was assassinated with all his family. The big question was whether I could get back at all. They were only letting Americans back, and I got back all right. I returned to Istanbul in the mid-sixties and studied at the University again; that was a very good experience.

#### AL-HIKMA

PK: Did you enjoy teaching physics at Al-Hikma?

CC: I did, yes, after I got over the initial trouble I had with disciplinary problems at Baghdad College. But at Al-Hikma University, the students were more mature, so it was all right. Many of the alumni are in the States, mostly in Detroit and in the Midwest.

PK: Have you kept in contact with them?

CC: They come to the reunions held every two years. They pay for the plane fare and hotel of any Jesuit who attends. I heard the most recent final banquet had 500 people, not just the alumni but their children and even grandchildren.

PK: What a reunion! How is your Arabic?

CC: I was in Baghdad for eleven years teaching physics, and after some years I was given a sabbatical to study Arabic full-time with a local teacher. Then I was able to say Mass in the language, and give occasional homilies. That was one of the big thrills of my life, to address a whole crowd of Arabic-speaking people. Although there were few enough Christians in the city, I did that for the remaining time.

PK: Did you have many such opportunities?

CC: Another priest, Joe O'Kane, and I would go every Sunday to a local convent. We would say Mass and hear confessions, and one of us would give a homily. So every second week I had a homily. That was very interesting during the last few years I was there. That was in the mid-sixties; we were expelled in '68 and '69, and it was all over then.

#### LEAVING IRAQ

PK: How was the transition when you left Iraq?

CC: Oh, it was not too bad, because the situation in Iraq was getting pretty tense, with invasions of the campus every so often by mobs of students from Baghdad

University. They carried signs: "Down with Israel!" "Down with the United States!" It was not religious antagonism but political. The Americans favored Israel, and helped them in the war.

PK: Do you remember particular events?

CC: Once a huge mob of demonstrating students from the state school, Baghdad University, invaded the campus, broke up classes, and disrupted everything. We had Muslim boys and girls in our school as well as Jewish students. Baghdad University did not allow Jews, although they were Iraqi Jews, who had lived in Iraq longer than the Arabs! Al-Hikma had about ten percent Jews, sixty boys and girls out of six hundred. So we were worried about what the mob would do to our Jewish students. The Jewish boys quite readily escaped over the walls. The Jewish girls did not know what to do. Then two of our Muslim boys said to them, "Come with us." They took them to the girls' lounge. Then they stood guard outside the door, and said, "They'll have to attack us before they get to you!" They would be there to protect them in case there was any violence. So they took care of the girls.

PK: What did the rampaging students do?

CC: Actually, nothing happened. They just went around and burst into classes. So it was not hard to leave, with daily demonstrations and growing antagonism. I also recall I was on a public bus in Baghdad. We used to wear a soutane, so everybody knew who you were. When the conductor came for my fare, he said, "And now we come to the imperialists," talking to the other people and not thinking I would understand. "This rich, plutocratic imperialist." I paid my fare in silence.

#### AFTER EXPULSION

PK: How was it for you after Iraq?

CC: Joe O’Kane and I were living at the old B.C. High and taking a course in Arabic at Harvard.

PK: Why do that after leaving Iraq?

CC: In those days the idea was that we might eventually get back to Iraq. We were young, too. Joe O’Kane was much better in Arabic than I was. He was minister his last years at Al-Hikma, and he had full conversational ability in Arabic with all the workmen and the builders. We went to Harvard for a couple of years, and then I went back to the Middle East for only one year.

#### BACK TO THE MIDDLE EAST

PK: Where?

CC: Just beside Beirut, to a Jesuit High School, College Notre Dame de Jamhour, run by the Middle Eastern Province. They wanted somebody to teach physics there, and they figured I had taught physics. There was one catch—you had to teach in French.

PK: How did you do?

CC: Since my French was somewhat deficient, it was decided that I would live at the high school, and attend—not teach yet—but attend a physics class taught by an elderly French Jesuit whose place I was to take. By listening to his teaching in French, hopefully I would pick up the technical vocabulary. Another French Jesuit volunteered to tutor me in French. I would go to his room every day for a French lesson, and then to the class for practice in teaching physics. But after several months it was decided, out of justice to the students, I would never learn enough to be able to teach physics with all the technical terms.

PK: What did you do then?

CC: The provincial, who was Lebanese, said I could teach

English at St. Joseph's University Medical School. It is run by the Jesuits in French; the other medical school in Beirut is at the American University, where everything is in English. I kept living where I was, signed up for some more Arabic courses at a community college, and taught English two or three times a week.

PK: How did that go?

CC: I would translate the French medical tracts into English, then pass out both to the students. We would go through the English and the French, and that is the way I taught the class. I did that for about a year. Then they decided that it was not going to work out, so I returned to the States.

#### ALASKA

PK: I recall you also worked in Alaska for a bit. How did that happen?

CC: When I got back to the States, I spent a few summers in Alaska. There was a Fr. Ryan from the Albany Diocese, who later became bishop of Anchorage. In his younger days, he used to visit us on behalf of Cardinal Spellman's Middle East Welfare Association, which gave a lot of financial help for the Al-Hikma buildings. When Bishop Ryan saw that we had been expelled from Iraq, he offered a job to anyone willing to work in Alaska. I went there for a couple of summers. One weekend I went to the end of the Aleutian Islands to celebrate Mass for the workers at a nuclear facility in Amchitka. Very few people had been to both Baghdad and Amchitka, the second last island in the Aleutian chain!

#### SOUTH PACIFIC

PK: How is that your work later brought you to the South Pacific?

CC: I had studied Arabic a year at Harvard University and in Beirut the next year, while working as a physics lab assistant. In 1970 I taught physics at Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine at the invitation of the rector, Joe Shea. During that year, the New York Province mission director wrote to all the Jesuits expelled from Baghdad and said that they needed a priest who could teach physics and math, and help in parishes in their mission in Micronesia. When I got the green light to go, since I had some competence in physics, the mission director had me buy enough material to stock a physics lab at Ponape Agriculture & Trade School. I did the shopping, and went there in 1971.

PK: How long were you there?

CC: Altogether I was twenty-five years out there. I spent sixteen years teaching religion, physics, and math in Pohnpei at the Ponape Agriculture & Trade School, then about seven years teaching religion at Xavier High School in Chuuk, and finally two years teaching science back in Pohnpei at the Community College of Micronesia, a public college, and living at the Jesuit residence there. That was my last job out there. I came back in 1996. I did not want to, but the superior thought I was getting too old, so I came back.

PK: What were your responsibilities there?

CC: I taught at Pohnpei for sixteen years. It is a boarding school, so I also handled the first aid. I had little experience, but I took some courses in it. Finally a young lady was assigned there who was a nurse, so she took that over. I stayed there until I was transferred to Xavier High School in Chuuk. Since the Pohnpei school was a vocational school, they did not emphasize academics much, so Xavier would be more appropriate. The first year I was assigned to teach physics and math. A young lady, who was supposed to teach chemistry—she had a degree in it—sent notice in June

that she could not come—a family problem or something. So the principal asked if I could teach chemistry—after all, physics and chemistry, it is the same thing, you know!

PK: Right.

CC: I studied chemistry from June to September, then taught chemistry, physics, and math for about three years. When a real chemistry teacher came, I kept only the physics and math, and then went to the Community College of Micronesia. Each summer for those seven years at Xavier, I would go to Pohnpei and teach at the Community College.

PK: So you already knew the place

CC: I went there full-time in 1994, and taught for about two years, living at the Jesuit community and helping out. I still had some of the local language and could say Mass but not preach. I did not know it as well as I knew my Arabic.

#### BACK TO BOSTON

PK: How did your work there end?

CC: I was getting into my middle seventies, and they thought I should terminate. In 1996 I went to Newbury Street in Boston, and tutored at Nativity Prep in Roxbury. I was still interested in Arabic. I lived near the Boston Public Library. I went there, and offered my services to help. I was taking a course in Arabic at the Boston Language Institute in nearby Kenmore Square. The teacher gave me a book to read by Khalil Gibran, a famous Lebanese writer. “You’ll find it at Boston Public Library,” he said.

PK: How did that go?

CC: I went to the library and asked for the book, and they said, “Sorry, Father, but we have hundreds of Arabic books, but they’re not catalogued.” They had no one who knew the language. So I went back to the teacher,

and said, “Sorry, sir, but they can’t find a needle in a haystack.” He said, “Why don’t you volunteer to help?” So I went back and asked, “Could I help to identify the books?” I have never had librarian training, but I would know what the title was, and who the author was. Most of the librarians could not read Arabic. One librarian, though, a Polish lady, was interested in Arabic. She gave me a little quiz: “Read this. Read that.” So she took me on. She gave me some gummed labels, little square things, on which I would write the title, author, and subject of the book in English, and stick it on the spine. They had hundreds up there. I arranged them—agriculture, biology, history, and so forth. I did that for about three years, until I had my accident and came here in 2005. When I was moved here, I could not very well commute to the Boston Public Library.

PK: Was that the end of your work in Arabic?

CC: No, I keep in touch with Arabic through Steve Bonian, who spoke it when he was growing up in Iraq, so he is quite fluent. We exchange some texts sometimes. I had notes—homilies and discussions—in Arabic that I copied from Dick McCarthy, who was my original teacher. I shared them with Steve, who has been using them. So that is how I keep up with Arabic. I had Vin Brennan ask if the Weston Public Library has any Arabic books, as he takes people there regularly. They do not seem to have any, but the Watertown library does have quite a number, he was told. So that is a possibility. I might sometime ask for a ride there, and see if I could do something, if they need any help, just to identify the books, and so forth.

#### PASTORAL WORK

PK: I know you like to keep busy pastorally.

CC: I go to St. Francis de Sales in Charlestown every week

for Mass. I have also been taking Pat Sullivan's place in Concord at Holy Family Parish and Lincoln at St. Joseph church two or three times a week. I am driven over and back. So that is what I am doing at the moment, getting a little Arabic, reading, doing a little writing, and helping out in the parishes.

#### REFLECTIONS

PK: As you look over your life now, are there particular ways that you saw God working and leading you through these various transitions in your life?

CC: Yes, I can say he was behind it; the Lord was behind it all, things which I personally originally agreed with or which turned out fine. As you know, things very often turn out in the way that God wants them to and that you did not expect. I saw places, in Iraq, for example, which broadened my outlook, not just of Arabs and Iraqis, but the city, the country itself, which is a treasure trove of ruins as well as biblical and pre-historic leftovers. I felt very close to the Bible there, where Abraham came from. Ur is in southern Iraq; it is just ruins now. We went there once; later we went to Nineveh in the north of Iraq. Those things put me in closer touch with the Bible. I actually saw the debris just all over the place, broken pottery and other things. So that was a great privilege. Nimrod is also in northern Iraq and Babylon is on the Euphrates River about fifty miles from Baghdad. We went there, too. These experiences broadened my outlook on the Bible and on my whole life, really.

PK: What did you learn from the Muslim world and from Islam?

CC: Most of the Muslims we met were very religious people. We used to visit them on their feast days, and they would bring us gifts on Christmas and Easter. Our relations were very cordial between our two faiths,

yet we had no one ever convert to Christianity during our thirty-seven years there, although there were conversions of Orthodox students.

**PK:** Any particular recollections?

**CC:** Each January we observed Church Unity Octave in religion class, which was attended not by Muslims, of course, but by all Christians. During that week, they read a prayer for unity in the religion class out of a little pamphlet. Its cover showed St. Peter's in Rome with people rushing in. An Orthodox student came to me afterwards with his father, who said, "I do not believe that is the true church, so how can I pray that people will enter it?" A logical question. So I said, "Well, you pray that everyone enters the true church," or something like that. When they said the Hail Mary, the Nestorian Orthodox there do not say, "Mother of God," but only "Holy Mary, pray for us." They do not believe she is the mother of God. That is part of the Nestorian creed. She is the mother of Jesus, but not the mother of God.

**PK:** Do Muslims honor her?

**CC:** She is the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran, more often even than in the Bible, and always with respect and reverence. One of their suras, or books in the Koran, is called "Sura Maryam," Mary's Sura. A whole sura. The story of her life varies from the Biblical account, but some is the same. She is a virgin, she conceived miraculously, but Jesus' birth is described differently. She was out in a field, and the baby Jesus came down from heaven into her arms.

**PK:** How did you get along with the Muslims?

**CC:** We got along quite well, and they were very friendly. I recall the time when the very wealthy father of a Muslim student gave a big party on the occasion of his graduation. He invited all the teachers and his son's fellow students to his estate for a feast. We were

speaking Arabic, and we wore our soutanes. They were so friendly. He served scotch, vodka, and all kinds. So I guess people were getting a little high. Then a guest asked the father in a good spirit, “Doesn’t your religion forbid any kind of alcohol?” “It does,” he replied. “It is forbidden in the Koran. Alcohol is the enemy of God.” The guest persisted, “How could you do this?” in the same friendly way. The father’s answer was what each of their prayers starts with: “God is merciful and compassionate.”

PK: I see.

CC: When I told that story to Arabs, they thought, “Oh, not a good Muslim.” Blasphemy, and so forth.

PK: You have taught in Iraq and Micronesia. How do the students compare?

CC: I found both were pretty much the same—anxious to learn and very friendly.

PK: From your broad experience of people and as a Jesuit, what words of wisdom might you have for those coming along, as they face the challenges of today’s world, many of which have roots in the world that you lived in?

CC: I am sorry, but I cannot give you any direction or anything like that, apart from recommending very wide reading, especially about Muslims, biography, and history. It is one of my favorite pastimes. It broadens your mind and opens it up. My whole life, I wondered about these Muslims. Did not Jesus die for them, as well as for all others—Hindus, Buddhists, and so forth? I would say the best thing is to become interested in other religions, in Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Islam, and that broadens you out a bit. I often hear people say Muslims are a bunch of terrorists, violent people. Well, the ones I knew and met were not.

PK: Do you recall any in particular?

CC: Forty years ago I met two women, clearly Muslim; by their dress they were married women. I was standing outside a church in Baghdad after Mass. The people had gone home, and these two women approached me and asked, "Where is Mary?" I did a double take. I thought maybe there was a woman they were looking for who had been at the Mass. But it turned out they wanted the statue of the Virgin Mary, which I pointed out to them. I left them praying before that statue.

PK: Women of faith.

CC: My experience has broadened my outlook on the religiosity of all people, whatever their religion. During a desert trip on a bus I met an elderly lady returning from Mecca. Her grandchildren had given her the gift of a trip to Mecca, which they are supposed to do if possible. She saw me in a soutane and said, "There is nothing here but God and the ground." Knowing I was a priest, she said, "You and I both worship the same God. So let's worship him together."

PK: Yes.

CC: Meeting those people, I think that is what made John XXIII the great pope that he was. He lived with Muslims and Orthodox in Bulgaria and Turkey for many years, and he was in daily contact with them. It opened his mind to the goodness of other religions. That was probably behind his calling the Council and his general ecumenical spirit. I hope to imitate that in my own life, although I do not have the influence he had.

PK: Well, thank you very much.

CC: Oh, you are very kind. You have been very patient.

Rev. Charles G. Crowley, S.J.

**Born:** February 12, 1920, Bantry, Ireland  
**Entered:** September 7, 1938, Lenox, Massachusetts,  
Shadowbrook  
**Ordained:** June 16, 1951, Weston, Massachusetts,  
Weston College  
**Final Vows:** February 2, 1956, Baghdad, Iraq, Al-  
Hikma University

1934 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High  
School - Student  
1938 Lenox, Massachusetts: Shadowbrook - Novitiate,  
juniorate  
1942 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
philosophy  
1945 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College -  
Studied and taught physics  
1948 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
theology  
1952 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertian-  
ship  
1953 Baghdad, Iraq: Baghdad College - Taught religion  
and physics  
1955 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Taught  
physics  
1957 Baghdad, Iraq: Al-Hikma University - Taught  
physics, theology (1963-64); department chairman  
(1964-65); studied Arabic (1965-68)  
1968 Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University -  
Studied Arabic  
1969 Beirut, Lebanon: College Notre Dame de Jamhour  
- Physics lab assistant; studied Arabic, French  
1970 Portland, Maine: Cheverus High School - Taught  
physics

- 1971 Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (Caroline Islands): Ponape Agriculture & Trade School - Taught religion, physics, math
- 1987 Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia (Caroline Islands): Xavier High School - Taught religion (1987-94); counseled students; taught math, physics (1988-91); taught chemistry
- 1994 Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia: College of Micronesia - Taught math and physics; pastoral ministry
- 1996 Boston, Massachusetts: Loyola House - Pastoral ministry; tutor at Nativity School (1998-2001); assistant at Boston Public Library for the Arabic collection (2001-05)
- 2005 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Center - Pastoral ministry

### Degrees

- 1944 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy and Physics, Weston College-Boston College
- 1945 Master of Arts, Philosophy and Physics, Weston College-Boston College
- 1947 Master of Science, Physics, Boston College
- 1952 Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Weston College