

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. William G. Devine, S.J.
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THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HISTORY

Oral histories are the taped recordings of interviews with interesting and often important persons. They are not folklore, gossip, hearsay, or rumor. They are the voice of the person interviewed. These oral records are, in many instances, transcribed into printed documentary form. Though only so much can be done, of course, in an hour or 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.

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Interview with Fr. William G. Devine, S.J.
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
May 3, 2006

EARLY YEARS

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome to our conversation.
Tell us something about your earlier years.

WILLIAM DEVINE: I've been involved with a lot of workshops that dealt with the early days of my life, especially those workshops connected with spiritual direction. These involved either learning how to give spiritual direction or help others to learn how to give spiritual direction themselves. This involves sharing things with each other. So, I'm used to pointing out that I was born to a family living in the middle floor of a Dorchester three-decker. Our home was in the Meeting House Hill area of Dorchester. St. Peter's parish was nearby, which helps us to get a glimpse of what this was all about. Our three-decker house was an archetype of architecture in that Irish ghetto.

Two days after I was born, a baby girl was born upstairs on the third floor. And a few months after that, a baby girl was born on the first floor. So my first five or six years, I had Jean living on one floor of the house and Alice living on the other. So I

always had a woman living above or below me in the house, and I think that accounts for the fact that I probably relate better to women than to men. And that's always been true in my life. I was relating to them right from the very beginning. Those two women moved out by the time I was in the second grade. But they didn't go very far. One was across the street and the other around the corner. And I still hear from them occasionally. We are still in touch, and I am almost eighty years of age.

FATHER AND MOTHER

RR: Very supportive.

WD: They certainly were part of my early formation.

RR: Now tell us a little bit about your father and mother.

WD: My father was an engineer. My mother was a strong country girl from Mayo. They were both from Ireland. They met here in the US, married here, and had other children before me: a brother, Donald, who died at the age of twenty-one when I was about six or seven. He was a saint! My early life was often in his shadow, because he was a saint. He would do whatever his mother told him! He did very well in school. And he would have been a great priest if he had decided to become one! I remember him well enough to love him myself. He was a lovable guy; unfortunately, he died very young.

I also had a brother, Joe, fifteen years older, and a sister Marion, ten years older. In some ways, I was like an only child with some extra parents. I was spoiled not only by my mother and father, who were happy to have another child, but also by my older brother and sister. I really grew up spoiled rotten! [Laughter]

I can remember my sister spending her first week's pay entirely on me. She got me a nice, big

collie puppy, which, in time, grew into a great big collie. He was one of the joys of my youth. And, in between boyfriends, she took me everywhere with her. So I had a very happy family life, and was treated very, very well.

RR: Tell us about your father.

WD: My father was an engineer. When he first came to this country he worked for a while as a bartender and as a waiter in a restaurant. But once Prohibition started, he worked as a fireman, then as an engineer at Boston Edison. He worked there for a little while, then for many, many years, he worked at the Revere Sugar Company, which was part of United Fruit in Charlestown.

He was very good at what he did. He worked on a variable shift: two weeks on days, two weeks on afternoons, and two weeks on nights. It was a tough job. During World War II, he worked seven days a week and, sometimes, they were twelve-hour days. He was a hard worker. He used to brag that he never missed a day's work in his life. That applied to when he had pneumonia or some other sickness. He was always there at work. He had an exaggerated work ethic, which he tried to pass on. He certainly passed it on to me.

PARISH AND SCHOOL

RR: Now tell us a bit about your parish and school where you grew up.

WD: Sure. It was St. Peter's, a famous parish in Dorchester. Many vocations came from that parish. In those days, it was, for the most part, an Irish ghetto. It's still an immigrant parish, but the parishioners now are mostly Asian and other Easterners. But, in those days, it was largely a big, Irish parish. For years and years it had the same pastor, a monsignor, with four cu-

rates. They never got changed. They were all highly respected. And there were loads and loads of Masses.

RR: So you must have been an altar boy at some point?

WD: I was an altar boy for many, many years, including through high school. That's where I first met some Jesuits even before BC High. They often said the nine o'clock and eleven-thirty Masses at St. Peter's. And those were the Masses that I often served myself. It made me aware of the fact that BC High was considered a good academic school.

SISTER VINCENTINE AND HER SCHOLARSHIPS

WD: The Sisters of Charity of Halifax were the teachers in my local school, and they were tough. I had one especially tough and well-known teacher in the eighth grade, Sr. Vincentine. She was noted for winning scholarships to BC High. Her boys won many scholarships. Just a year before I went there, her class had six such scholarships. Given the fact that there were only fifteen scholarships available in the whole state, getting six from her little class of thirty was quite an achievement. The year I was in her class, she announced on the very first day, "This year we are going to win seven!" And she won the seven! I was one of the seven scholarship winners. I was number one in the state.

And her expectations for me, as well as those of my family, were a big part of my whole eighth grade experience. It may have been a factor in my life even before that. It was something academic that I was expected to do, and I did it. It involved more study time. So I gave up lunch for that whole year. I would run home and grab something to eat and run back to school. I was being coached in spelling by a buddy of Sr. Vincentine, because that's what I was weak in. And I remember very well my winning of

the scholarship. It was a big deal for my family. Though it cost only \$120 to go to BC High for a year, in 1939-40 that was a lot of money.

RR: Amazing! You did very well despite the Depression.

SAINT PETER'S

WD: Yes, it was amazing. And yes, the Depression was still a factor, no question about that. It was a big deal! I loved St. Peter's parish and, in many, many ways, I love when I'm able to go back there and visit. Later on, when I was at Gloucester for seven years in a row, I had the pleasure of directing the retreat of the then pastor of St. Peter's.

RR: Giving something back, as it were?

WD: Yes. It was Fr. John Doyle. He's still alive, about my own age, and a very, very saintly person. It was a nice memory for me in my older years to be closely connected with somebody still working at St. Peter's.

BC HIGH EXPERIENCES

RR: Tell us about some of your experiences at BC High.

WD: BC High was a great place for me. I was happy to go there, and especially, of course, for the scholarship. I had been vaguely thinking about the priesthood, especially since there were priests in my family. We were a kind of priest-ridden family. I had a lot of cousins who were priests, but especially important to me were my two uncles. They were my father's two brothers: Bill and John, who was ordained in the British Isles. He had been in the British Army as a chaplain for many years.

BROTHER TIMOTHY AND IRELAND

WD: I remember, when I first got to Shadowbrook, telling Bro. Timmy [Cummins], a very patriotic Irishman, that my Uncle John was a pastor in the

IRA! I was wrong, of course. [Laughter] He was not a pastor for the IRA! He was a pastor in the British Army, and when Timmy finally learned the truth, he said, "Well, we'll never tell a soul." The idea was that he could still be a good man, despite that. [Laughter]

MY PRIEST UNCLES

RR: That sounds just like him!

WD: But my Uncle Bill was not ordained from Maynooth. In those days in Ireland, unless you went to Maynooth, the seminary for the British Isles, you found a bishop for yourself in the U.S. and joined his diocese. And that's what he did. He went to the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, because the then bishop, Bishop Drum, was somehow connected with our family. And he stayed in that diocese all his life. He, too, was a chaplain in the American Army during World War II. And when Fr. Bill visited us, as my mother told me, he indicated that he thought I was named after him. But I really wasn't. I don't know who I was named after. My parents said, "We really didn't name you after your Uncle Bill." But Uncle Bill was influential, and when he came on a visit, he was catered to by the family and always seemed to enjoy himself.

As I said, I was thinking about the priesthood. So when I got to BC High, I was really impressed by the scholastics who were there at the time. I remember that my French teacher was Greg Roy, a scholastic, and I watched him closely. He seemed to have such a good and happy life. His father died while I was there, and his whole class went to the wake. He just impressed me very much. And his example, along with that of others, had a lot to do with my thinking more and more seriously about the priesthood. And

when I graduated from BC High, and had just turned seventeen, I entered the Society right away.

RR: Let's come back to that in just a second.

WD: Sure.

ATMOSPHERE AT BC HIGH

RR: Could you give us some insight into the atmosphere at BC High both academically and otherwise that most helped you to grow?

WD: Overall, I considered it very, very good. Looking back, I can now reflect on those days in a more mature manner. At the time, it seemed to me that we were being taught how to think. I was in the Debating Society until I'd got a job. I dropped out of all extracurricular activities in order to be able to work in the Boston Public Library right after school.

But up until that time, I was involved in the Debating Society, the Drama Club, including, of course, my regular studies. I felt I was being taught by some very bright people and that we were learning all that we needed to know! I was impressed by what I believed was the best school in Boston.

RR: So it was a very positive experience for you in many ways?

WD: For me it was a positive experience, yes.

ENTERING THE SOCIETY

RR: So, as you mentioned earlier, you entered the Society after graduation?

WD: Yes, I went right into Shadowbrook. I had hung around with a really great gang of guys in high school, but none of them became priests. They're all gone to God now except for one besides myself. Also, none of my early friends went to BC High. So I gradually developed another group of friends at BC High, and they were a very positive experience for me. I liked

my teachers; I liked my friends. But once I got my job, I had to leave right after school, and missed those other dimensions there.

RR: So who was your novice master there at Shadowbrook?

THE NOVITIATE

WD: Fr. Bill Kelleher was my novice master for the first year, and I was terrified of him. I can remember standing in front of him and feeling my knees shake!

RR: Why was that?

WD: Well, I can remember saying to myself, "No, I'm not going to let this man bother me!" Many, however, were more afraid of Fr. John Post, who was his *socius* or assistant at the time. A year later he became the novice master himself, and everybody was terrified of him except me. But I loved John Post! And I think the reason why I did so was because of what happened when my mother died the January after I entered. I had been there only six months or so when that happened. There was a five-day period between her death and her funeral. I went home for that and John Post came home with me as a companion.

FR. JOHN POST

WD: I found him to be a different kind of person from what I had thought him to be, one whom so many of the men seemed to be afraid of. As a matter of fact, I found him to be a very loving person. He gave me a lot of his time at the funeral, which impressed me very much. I remember how, when he was made novice master, he was already my confessor, something very unusual. It was because he has a reputation as a strict disciplinarian. I was probably the only one there who had him as their confessor. And I remember telling him one day, "I'm going to confide

in you for everything except a couple of things that I disagree with you about. I'll tell you right out, early on, that one of them is your use the 'charity of the Society' to get men to turn in others for violations of rule. Here's what I'm going to do. I'll confess some things to the elderly priest, Fr. [John W.] 'Pop' Creedan, who is living in the house. I'll also ask him for help with my scruples. But, for the most part, I'm going to bring things to you."

Never once, however, in the next few years did he ask me about turning anybody in for anything. He just respected my position completely, and I never regretted having him as my spiritual director. And he was my spiritual director afterwards for many years. Even just before he died, he was my confidante and a very good spiritual director he was.

JUNIORATE TIME

RR: Let's turn to the juniorate. Did anything special happen to you there?

WD: The juniorate was very, very interesting for me. I loved the classical studies. It was there that I fell a little in love with mathematics. The rector [Fr. Peter McKone] was one of those people who wore many hats. When he was rector, he was the rector. In that position, he was stern and strict. But as a math teacher, he was a different person. He was my math teacher. And Jack MacDonnell and I used to see him separately for math. We loved it, because it was very different! And we loved him. I loved the classics. And I loved that teacher.

PHILOSOPHY INTERESTS

RR: What about your studies in philosophy at Weston?

WD: When I got to philosophy, one of the things that impressed me there most was Fr. John Donnelly, who

taught me my first philosophy course. He was different. I think that for the first time in my life, I, and others with me, realized that scholarship was not just a matter of routine. It's not just teacher and student linked by memorization. He made us want to be scholars, to learn something, to be able to think and to do all this because it was important. And he also had his own way of explaining Jesuit spirituality. It was rough and tumble and not over-pious, but very, very clear. So, as a scholar, as a spiritual director, and as a friend, he was important to me.

REGENCY DIRECTIONS

RR: So that influenced you throughout philosophy?

WD: Actually he also influenced me because he was with me when I was a regent. We were together at Holy Cross teaching. He influenced me through my whole life.

RR: Where did you do your regency?

WD: I spent a year of my regency at BC studying economics. I got into economics because I was interested in social matters, social events, and social ethics. And the Province prefect of studies in those days said to me, "We're going to be judging you, because you're good in philosophy and mathematics, and those are components of economics. So if this is what you're interested in, I should say that the Province is more interested in economics than social studies, because there is a real need for it now."

ECONOMICS EMERGES

WD: So it was because of the consciousness of that need that I got more interested in economics. And my first year was spent at grad school at BC, studying economics. It was a good year. I had a little difficulty with the rector there, Fr. Joseph R. N. Maxwell, how-

ever. I was the only New England scholastic in the community, and I was the only person in the community my age, so I guess he decided that he was going to form me! [Laughter] So we didn't really hit it off too well! When it was over and I was changed to Holy Cross to teach economics, I was delighted. As it turned out, I was originally on the status to go to BC, and I believe that Maxwell was responsible for my shift to Holy Cross.

MEETING IMPORTANT JESUITS

WD: I remember meeting Lou Twomey in the middle of all this. He was then famous for having done a lot of work in racial and social ethics as well as for starting a law school down South. He was one of the big name Jesuits at the time. When I met him he said, "Hello, I'm Lou Twomey!" And though I was only a first year scholastic at the time, I said, "Hello, I'm Bill Devine!" [Laughter] And he said, "Oh, I've heard a lot about you!" And I said, "What have you heard about me?" He replied, "I heard you got in a lot of trouble with Maxwell when you went to a meeting at the MEBA [Marine Engineers Beneficial Association] union." It turned out that Fr. Bill Keneally was a friend of his and that he had told him about me.

RR: Word of mouth at work. What was that all about?

WD: Oh, there was a strike going on and the MEBA was trying to get the longshoremen to honor their picket line. It was a controversial type of thing.

RR: How did that come up?

WD: As a youngster, I worked on the docks. That makes an interesting story. Many of the longshoremen were rough and tumble. And there were also some seminarians working on the docks that summer. And they were talking about what the priesthood meant to them. We were sitting, waiting for some boat to come

in. We would get hired when there were a lot of fish to unload. So I remember exactly where we were sitting on the fish pier talking about how saying Mass was the most important thing we could do. They were staying in the seminary in order to be ordained. And I can remember thinking, "No! What I want is to be available for people, in confession and things like that." Of course, that was before I was seriously involved.

RR: But that influenced you later on?

WD: Sure, but it was the question of being available for somebody's confidences, and other helpful sacraments that I was thinking about very, very early on as a third year high school kid. I found it interesting.

RR: Terrific.

REGENCY AT HOLY CROSS

RR: Tell us a bit more about regency at Holy Cross.

WD: I found BC interesting, but I loved Holy Cross. I loved teaching the students there and I loved working on the dorm corridor. At Holy Cross there were only two other New England scholastics on the faculty: John Handrahan and Henry Murphy. Fr. John Donnelly was there on the faculty, also Fr. Paul Facey, who became a very close friend of mine. And Fr. Joe O'Callahan, [Commander Joseph T. O'Callahan, S.J., 1905-1964, World War II hero of the U.S.S Franklin aircraft carrier], whose room we used to hang out in. The McCarthy hearings were going on at the time, so that when class was over, a bunch of us would go to Joe O'Callahan's room and listen to the McCarthy hearings on the radio!

REGENCY FRIENDSHIPS

RR: Never a dull moment! [Laughter]

WD: No, never a dull moment. One thing that I should

point out around this stage of the game is that we were also buddies. I was a young regent, not yet thirty. Almost everybody else I hung out with was fifteen or so years older than I. And I thought the way to be accepted was to belly up to the bar with them. So as it turned out, alcohol got to be something too important in my life, just as it was in some of their lives. Later on, we went to AA together.

RR: That was courageous.

WD: Holy Cross itself, however, taught me a lot of good things, and I enjoyed my regency years more than I can say.

THEOLOGY AT WESTON

RR: So then you went back to Weston for theology?

WD: Back to theology, yes.

RR: This took four years, a rather long period of time.

WD: Yes, it did, but I enjoyed those study years.

RR: Could you give us some highlights from those years?

WD: Since I enjoyed these studies, I was able to adapt myself to the way they were taught. In other words, I did the best I could to profit from the best teachers and the best classes. It was a good learning experience. It was only a bit later on that I learned that there were many other things going on in the world of theology, as well as in other theologates, that I may have missed out on. [Laughter]

TEACHING AT WESTON?

WD: As a matter of fact, many of the things happening at Weston were quite worthwhile. There were some good teachers, and I enjoyed learning a lot from them. When it was over, they wanted me to go to Rome and come back and teach theology at Weston. And I, a little arrogantly, said, "No, no, why would I want to be another second-rate theologian when I can be a

first-rate economist?”

RR: Strong words! [Laughter]

WD: So I didn't go to Rome. I was fully expecting that right after theology and tertianship, which was right away in those days, that I would continue my studies in economics, and settle in either at BC or Holy Cross, both of which wanted me back.

ASSIGNMENT SHIFTS

RR: That would seem appropriate.

WD: As it turned out, the Provincial was Fr. Jimmy Coleran at the time, and he apparently got tired of hearing about how BC and Holy Cross were wanting me back! [Laughter]

RR: What do you mean?

WD: It seems that every time he put my name on the Province status [the annual list of assignments], he got phone calls saying, “No, he should be here.”

RR: Both BC and Holy Cross were arguing over you?

WD: Yes. So Fr. Coleran finally said, “He's not going to go to either place, and he's not going to teach economics at all! I'm going to send him to teach philosophy at Fairfield University!”

RR: Really?

WD: Yes. I found it rather odd and a bit of a disappointment. But looking back, no matter where I was sent, everything in my life seems to turn out for the best. I noticed that God's will always seemed to make itself known. I found myself in something that was very, very helpful and good for me. In effect, I was just following my vocation.

OFF TO FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY

RR: That's a very positive insight.

WD: So I went to Fairfield without much knowledge about the place.

RR: What year was that?

WD: 1959.

RR: I was there myself in the early sixties and had taught there in the Prep in the late 1940s.

WD: That's right, you were there when I was there. I can remember very vividly many conversations with you. And you were very helpful to me in some very spiritual, confessional, and other ways. You were a very helpful person.

RR: Thank you.

IT ALL WORKS OUT WELL

WD: So there I was in 1959, going to a place I didn't know, to teach philosophy, a subject I liked but had no great desire to teach. [Laughter] I taught logic, ontology, cosmology, and rational psychology—you name it. Everything except ethics. And when the Provincial showed up for his visitation, he said something that turned out to be ironic, "I sent you here to teach ethics, because of its connection with economics!" I said, "Well, you never told anybody that." [Laughter]

At any rate, I had fun teaching those courses, and, once in a while, I still hear from some of the students I had in those interesting days. Then, after a short while, the dean found out that I had a degree in economics as well as some experience in teaching economics. So he moved me over to the Economics Department. At first, it was part-time, then later, full-time. So I started going to Fordham to do the course work for a doctorate in economics.

RR: How long did that take?

WD: About ten years; I just went year after year. I don't remember how many years exactly! I went until I took everything they taught in the grad school of economics! [Laughter] One of the guys I studied with

became President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Jerry Corrigan. Remember Jerry Corrigan?

RR: Yes.

WD: He was one of my fellow students. I had taught him at Fairfield before he went to Fordham. [Laughter] Then he and I went to school at Fordham together, and we got ready for exams together. And when I got back to the Economics Department, I enjoyed being there very much. The people at Fairfield were fabulous. I loved everything about the place.

RR: Yes, it's really a great place,

WD: I have been fortunate in loving every place I've been. I've been very lucky in the communities connected with them. I always found them helpful and interesting.

THE ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT

WD: Also, I found the Economics Department the most friendly department in the school. I thought they were most aware of Jesuits and Jesuit traditions. And I loved the people in it. All this made me happy. I was teaching a number of different courses: the principles of economics, history of economic thought, as well as intermediate economics. I was also teaching different economic subjects to different class levels. There was a lot of variety involved. And I got a lot of good support from my colleagues in the department.

YEARS OF PART-TIME ECONOMICS CLASSES

WD: Every Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, I'd get into Bob O'Neil's old Plymouth. He was a teacher in the business school who was also getting a doctorate in economics at Fordham like myself. We'd drive down to Fordham and go to two classes, one right after the other. We'd then drive back, miss dinner in the process, get a bologna and peanut butter sandwich, and

go to bed. We did that for years until all the course work was done along with some associated tasks. Finally, all that remained were our dissertations. But I never did complete that dissertation. People there would always say to me, "You're never going to be happy 'til you finish that dissertation." But they were wrong! [Laughter]

RR: You felt at peace?

WD: Yes. Given all the work I had done, I felt that I was pulling my weight in the department and was doing a good job with my teaching. I was not aiming for anything beyond tenure. And in any case, I already had tenure due to the University's grandfather clause! So as it turned out, the dissertation was not nearly as important to me as some people thought.

ACTIVE PRAYER GROUP IN FAIRFIELD

WD: In fact, the guy who was my mentor at Fordham had once been my colleague at Fairfield University. While in the Economics Department at Fairfield, he had gathered together a group of people, including a number of professors, who came to worship together every Sunday. I was a kind of pastor for that group of about fifty families. He and his wife had been among the first ones in the group. It had started as a family worship group. Then, since I had gotten into AA, some people in AA started coming to it. They wouldn't go to the local parish church, because their children were too noisy or because their own childhood faith had weakened. They were now giving it a second try in coming to our little group. I offered Mass every Sunday, and it became an important support group for me as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AA

RR: Were these people from around Fairfield?

WD: There were some. It began with faculty members and then spread out to their friends in the area. Then it spread even further because of my connection to AA. They had stopped earlier going to some church. So it was quite a mixed group. They were also interested in social action of various kinds. We did things together. Among a number of things, we used to picket outside Bridgeport GE all the way through Lent, year after year after year. There was a lot of activity connected with the group.

RR: It sounds to me that their conversations must have been quite interesting.

WD: The homily was always given by someone in the group. For example, during Advent, a pregnant woman would give a homily on Mary's pregnancy. And there were homily times when nobody over twelve could speak except myself. The children would lead the homily. As you can see, the homily was always an interesting time for the group.

FR. JOE McCORMICK'S HELP

WD: My AA background had something to do with this development. I had gotten into AA because of the influence on me of a couple who are worth mentioning here. These loving friends made it clear to me that alcohol was getting to be too important in my life. They were Joan Bolger, the wife of Bob Bolger, one of my colleagues in the Math Department. She was one of the people who, in beautiful and wonderful terms, made it clear to me that her respect for me would be much higher if I weren't drinking. And Fr. Joe McCormick, who was my superior at Fairfield at the time, was another one who got through to me about this. Other superiors had said the same thing,

but in rather harsh terms, “You should not be drinking this way.” But Joe didn’t do that.

RR: Joe was a wonderful person!

WD: A fabulous person! We both lived on the same floor and he would deliberately just leave his door open at night. So on my way to my room at night I had to pass by his room. So I would drop in and tell him everything. And before I knew it, we were talking about alcohol and AA, which I was in. He was a saint! And Joan was a saint too. The two of them had a lot to do with my getting into AA.

ADVICE FROM FRIENDS

WD: And others like Fr. John Bonn and Fr. Dick Rooney helped me in another way. It seemed that almost as soon as I got to Fairfield they urged me to go out and give retreats. And when I said, “I’m not ready,” they replied, “You never will be if you don’t just go and do it.”

RR: Which is good advice!

WD: So I did it. I got into some retreat work right off on weekends. When I went to AA, people also would come to me one by one. Then, a whole lot of them came! It turned out that, as soon as I got into AA, I started seeing people every free minute I had, especially those on a one-on-one basis. I didn’t know whether to call myself a spiritual director, a sponsor, or a counselor. I may not have known just what to call it, but I knew I was good at it. I also knew I should learn more about retreats.

STARTING RETREATS

WD: So I started going to spiritual direction workshops here and there. Eventually, I had a full-time sabbatical, which I used to pursue this. It led to my really getting into spiritual direction by taking some courses

at Weston College, which, by this time, was located in Cambridge [as Weston School of Theology].

Then I went to St. Beuno's in Wales for a three-month program of renewal, though, in reality, I was doing most of it for the first time. [Laughter] It was a very big conversion experience for me. And it also taught me how to direct a thirty-day retreat myself. When I got back home, I rounded it all out at a retreat house with an internship. So I began doing more and more retreats. And I felt, after twenty-seven years at Fairfield, that was time for me to move on to spiritual direction full-time. Then, one day, the phone rang. It was Fr. Bob Manning, the Provincial, who said, "I know you love Fairfield and everything about it, but I would like to ask you to give it all up and join my staff."

RR: His provincial staff?

WD: Yes. As it turned out, it was another step towards giving retreats. I became the Provincial Assistant in charge of the Province retreat houses. I was also given excellent supervision with the work, including my own retreats. It was beautiful. It fit in very nicely with what I had been doing. Then somebody resigned from running the Champion Renewal Center. So I said I'd take it over temporarily. So I found myself running that retreat house and carrying on my job in the provincial's office at the same time.

GROWTH IN RETREAT WORK

RR: How did you deal with the gradual change in retreat work from giving a preached retreat to a one-on-one retreat?

WD: What I was doing was mostly learning. I was really much involved in preached retreats. But a good deal of them were AA retreats. There came a time on weekends when I was either giving an AA retreat or

doing a group Marriage Encounter session. Most of my weekends were taken up with this work.

RR: How did you find that was for you?

WD: Almost all of my training was in one-on-one retreats. And my experience with those was very, very good. Towards the end of my seven years in the provincial office, a vacancy developed at the Gloucester retreat house [Gonzaga Eastern Point Retreat House], and I felt that I was ready then for that position. So when my own name came up, I had no trouble accepting the position. It turned out that these seven years at Gloucester were the happiest years of my life. No question about it!

DIRECTOR OF GONZAGA

RR: Why were they so happy?

WD: Because by this time I loved retreat work. Even now, I'm always giving a nineteenth annotation retreat. Even during my sickness, I've had somebody come in once a week! As a matter of fact, she'll be coming for it later today. She's been doing it all year. I know I'm good at it. I know that God is present in it, especially so during the seven years at Gloucester. As far as being superior at Gloucester, we talked things over in a consensus model, and, in practice, made all the big decisions ourselves

GONZAGA STARTS RETREATS FOR WOMEN IN AA

WD: There were some changes I wanted to make. For example, there had always been an AA retreat there for men who had difficulty with alcohol. But there hadn't been an AA program for women. So I started one.

RR: How did that work out?

WD: It worked out just great, because by that time I had a lot of experience in giving AA retreats to women

in Enders Island in Connecticut. Thirty or forty women came to Gloucester for the first retreat for women in AA.

CRD DEVELOPMENTS

RR: So it worked out well?

WD: Yes. It was just wonderful! I didn't ask them to come. They just did it on their own. And after many years some of them are still going there. So those years were terrific. And before I went to Gloucester, I would have liked to have had some additional training like the kind you asked about. I would love to have done it at the very good Center for Religious Development program (CRD). When the Provincial brought up my going to Gloucester, I said, "I would like to do CRD first." And he said, "Well, we'd love to have you do it first, too, but we need you there now! You can do it later on."

RR: Then you did do this training later on?

WD: Yes, after the seven years of giving retreats I went to CRD! And I still found it to be very, very good and very helpful. I was flattered to be asked to be on the CRD staff in Cambridge, and I was there for another couple of years. I lived in the Jesuit Urban Center and commuted from there to CRD.

PARKING SPACE AT CAMPION CENTER

RR: How did the Urban Center work out as a place to live?

WD: OK, but when the parking lot there was about to be torn up, I moved to Campion Center. I didn't come here because of my age or because of my health, but because it offered a parking space! [Laughter]

RR: Shows the power of parking spaces!

WD: It was also an easier place to commute from to CRD. I did that routine for a year before climbing the steps

started to get too much for me. So I settled into Campion more or less full-time. And, when that happened, it was also the end of my full-time job at CRD. So I started working in the treasurer's office at Campion. But, that's neither here nor there. Mainly, I still do some spiritual direction and some retreat work. I was sick for three or four months. I'm now coming out of it and expect to be able to do a little more spiritual direction and retreat work.

RR: Good for you! How do people find you at Campion?

WD: Some remember me from the other places I've been. Some come because, theoretically, I'm on the retreat house staff out here. So I had a double assignment: one as house treasurer and the other as a retreat master. I used to get regular assignments from the head of the retreat house here, and that remains an option. There's enough here to keep me busy. And I have nothing against becoming treasurer again. Unfortunately, I'm not well enough yet to do either justice.

RR: You do look much better.

WD: I'm afraid that I skipped over a lot of things very quickly, because I was getting conscious of time limitations, not that I minded.

PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE

RR: All right. As you look back at your whole life as a Jesuit, what is your evaluation of it all? Of course, you've already said something about your insights as a priest and a Jesuit, which has been very helpful. But let me pursue this further by asking you whether you have felt that God's personal and providential care has guided and inspired your life? Has God, in some ways, opened doors with people and guided your various ministries to help people? Have you been in some way aware of new opportunities, new directions

for successful teaching and retreat ministry? I know that's a lot of questions, but, basically, I'm asking how you experienced God's providence in your life as a Jesuit.

WD: Let me try to answer as best I can. I am aware of God's presence and providence whenever I look back. It's a kind of hindsight, which has 20/20 vision. Looking back, I can see that things happened that were clearly getting me into a situation that I not only wanted to be in, but one that God wanted me to be in.

Probably the more startling example was when I was sent to Fairfield. I was sent to a place I didn't know, to teach a subject I was not especially interested in. But, once I got there, it turned out that led me almost immediately into retreat work and spiritual direction. The initiative originally was not my own. But it was something that I was open to, and something that I found I enjoyed and have done well in. Also, academically speaking, I enjoyed the two years I taught philosophy, even though it wasn't my main interest; I was much more interested in economics. So when I was asked to teach in the Economics Department, I was happy to do so. Also, I was able to continue my degree work and develop related background resources. I felt at home in the Economics Department.

HELPING IN SCHOOL FOR WOMEN IN DIFFICULTY

WD: At the same time, I was using weekends and free time to meet people and be involved in various opportunities as they arose. I was able to do the kind of work I wanted to do outside the classroom, namely retreat work and spiritual direction. One of the places that Fr. John Bonn sent me to shortly after I got there was Longlane School, a school for those in trouble

with the juvenile court.

RR: Where was this located?

WD: In Middletown, Connecticut. And that led me into another important period in my life at Fairfield. And, as it turned out, I was involved with this for some twenty years. I went there first to give a retreat one weekend. Then, a year later, I went back for another retreat and I started going there every weekend. I met with the Catholic girls there. Sometimes I would go even twice a week. Around that time, Fr. Dick Rooney joined the faculty. He not only came with me, he also met with another group of Catholic girls. Basically, it was a little ministry for troubled girls working in partnership with the juvenile court. It happened that, as these kids got older, they sometimes got into more serious trouble.

RR: I see.

WD: I remember one of them coming to me when I was doing my doctoral dissertation and saying, "What are you doing this year?" And I said, "I'm writing a book." And she said, "Will anybody read it?" And I said, "My three professors are getting paid to read it. but, to tell you the truth, it's a pretty dull study about truth." She said, "Why don't you write about the girls. They'll read that! Don't you know the guy who wrote the book on drugs? He called it *The Junkie Priest*." So I said, "Yes, I read that." And she said, "Well, he made a lot of money with that. You could make money if you called the book *The Prosty Priest*, because you have all these people coming to see you!"
[Laughter]

HELPING THE POOR IN BRIDGEPORT

WD: Through these girls I met a lot of poor people in Bridgeport as well as people in drug programs. Through these Longlane girls, I got to know a lot of

marginalized working and walking poor in Bridgeport. And of course, a lot of AA people were in trouble one way or another. So that was another part of my life that I found very, very important.

RR: Let me add that it was Fr. Dick Rooney, whom you mentioned a couple of times, who got me to join him in the rapidly growing new ecumenical movement after Vatican II. It turned out we were pioneers and ended up as the ecumenical officers of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

WD: That's right. Dick Rooney was a very great but very humble man. He just came along to help me, and it turned out beautifully.

RR: Yes, and he was the partner of the great Fr. Dan Lord of St. Louis in the booming Sodality movement some years earlier. I think we are nearing the end of our conversation. We want to thank you for a very interesting and valuable presentation.

WD: Terrific!

RR: Thank you, and God bless you!

Fr. William G. Devine, S.J.

Born June 23, 1927, Dorchester, Massachusetts
Entered August 14, 1944, Lenox, Massachusetts,
Novitiate of St. Stanislaus Kostka/
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Ordained June 15, 1957, Weston, Massachusetts,
Weston College
Final Vows August 15, 1961, Fairfield, Connecticut,
Fairfield University.

1940 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High
School - Student
1944 Lenox, Massachusetts: Novitiate of St. Stanislaus
Kostka/Shadowbrook - Novitiate and juniorate
1948 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
philosophy
1951 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College -
Studied economics
1952 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy
Cross - Taught economics, Assistant Director and
teacher in Institute of Industrial Relations
1954 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
theology
1958 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertian-
ship
1959 Fairfield, Connecticut: Fairfield University -
Taught philosophy [1959-1961]; taught economics
[1961-1984], studied economics full time [1968-
1969]
1984 Sabbatical: Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston
School of Theology - Studied theology; St. Asaph,
Wales: St. Beuno's - Renewal program
1985 Fairfield, Connecticut: Fairfield University -
Taught economics
1987 Boston, Massachusetts: New England Province

- Office - Provincial Assistant for Social and Pastoral Ministries; Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Renewal Center - Director [1/15/1992-8/31/1992]
- 1994 Gloucester, Massachusetts: Gonzaga Eastern Point Retreat House - Superior, director of retreat house, retreat director
- 2001 Boston, Massachusetts: Jesuit Urban Center - Associate at Center for Religious Development [2001-2002]; Co-director of Center for Religious Development [2002-2003]
- 2003 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Residence - Co-director of Center for Religious Development [2003-2004], treasurer [2004-2006], spiritual director, retreat director

Degrees

- 1950 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1951 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1951 Licentiate in Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1954 Master of Arts, Economics, Boston College
- 1958 Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Weston College