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Oral History Program**



**Fr. Robert E. Lindsay, S.J.
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Interview with Fr. Robert E. Lindsay, S.J.
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
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RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome, Bob.

ROBERT LINDSAY: Thank you.

RR: How would you like to do this interview?

RL: I am not very comfortable with a chronological approach, simply because some parts of my life are much more interesting, and/or deserving of note. So I am going to try a couple of things. First, I would talk about the most important, happy, and joyous parts, and then the worst and darkest. You might call this more the light and darkness in my life. Then I would do more of a stepping stone thing, just going through my life and saying what I think are the ten most significant things that have happened to me, or that I have been involved with.

RR: Very good.

RL: All right. On the list of the most significant: Phil Donnelly's course on grace in second year theology, by far the most important event in my whole life. My friendship with Frank Miller (Fr. Francis X. Miller, S.J.), particularly in philosophy, where he not only saved my sanity but my life. The founding of the

Center for Religious Development, which is the most significant thing, I think, in the history of the Province as I know it. The influence of the piano in my life, where I began to understand that creativity is really tapping into what is there. The planting of the garden at Mammee Bay, where I realized the power of living things, and I touched into why that has been so important to me all through my life.

RR: Right.

RL: Next, a facility with spiritual direction. That is what my life has been all about: finding out what spiritual direction is, particularly understanding the rules for discernment. Coming to Campion Center. And finally every once in a while really experiencing that phrase, "the unbearable lightness of being." That was a movie I guess. I did not see it, but it is a beautiful title. At seventy-six, on and off, in the last couple of years, I have really felt that.

RR: These are the light parts.

RL: Yes. The dark side: By far the darkest part of my life has been accepting my sexuality. That was a great struggle for many years. Second, was my disappointment with the way tertianship was done. I have always envied the tertians here now, because their tertianship experience feels much more real. Third, my mishandling of success when I was chaplain at Holy Cross College. Fourth, the extrinsic quality of my training in my life and in the Society. It was a long time before it came from the heart; it felt imposed from the outside. And finally, I did not have the need or the discipline to study, because I was a bright Irish boy, with a certain amount of talent in using languages. So I have never really learned to study.

RR: Your list of the dark side.

RL: Yes. For stepping stones, I guess I would call my life a journey around intimacy. First, alcohol as a member

of my family. Second, the influence of the piano in my life. Third, my fear of my sexuality. Fourth, Phil Donnelly, by far. Fifth, the founding the Center for Religious Development. Sixth, dealing with the darkness in my own post-midlife crisis. Seventh, facility with spiritual direction. Eighth, gardening at Mammee Bay. And ninth, my life at Campion Center. So, if these two lists of light and dark, and singling out the stepping stones are a helpful approach, let me know.

RR: Yes. It would be helpful if you developed one of the key ones. We can take off from that. I noticed that you repeated the items.

RL: In the stepping stones, I was talking more chronologically about the stages in my life. The two lists of light and dark gave an overall feel for the events that had an impact on me. Now, some of them were the same. Some hit me harder than others, or influenced me more than others.

RR: I see. I would be interested if you could start with Phil Donnelly. Apparently he had a great impact on you.

RL: Tremendous impact. It was not so much the man, although he was one of the great characters around our time. It was his class on the grace tract. It was the first time in my life as a Catholic—I was about twenty-seven years old—that I got to understand the effect of sanctifying grace. I learned that the formal effect of sanctifying grace was that we shared in the very nature of God. There was an intrinsic change in us, because of God's love, because of the Incarnation. That just blew me away. Being loved was a tremendous need in my life, always has been, and that this gift was totally gratuitous, totally unearned, from a transcendent God—it just reduced me sometimes to tears. It has been the basis of my own spiritual life,

and really of any spiritual direction that I have given. This efforting and trying and scorching my soul with self-examination is for the birds, and I believe is straight out of hell. Yet I have met too many people, including myself, who use this extrinsic way of “growing in holiness,” or in knowledge of God. It never worked with me, and I realized why in Phil’s course, which is still, as I look back over my life, the single most significant event. If that had not happened, I would not have such peace and gratitude toward God at the age of seventy-six.

RR: He was also a kind of a pleasant and amusing figure, apart from everything else, right?

RL: Oh, yes. He was the best storyteller in the Society of Jesus. He would have you on the floor laughing at his nonsense.

RR: Right.

RL: He was the best storyteller I ever heard. No matter how many times you heard his stories, they were still hysterical.

RR: Right. Tell us a little bit more about Mammee Bay, and the planting, and so on. That is very interesting, because I remember being with you there for a short time on one of your trips.

RL: Thank you. It was practically the last assignment that I had. Orville Shields, whom I was seeing for spiritual direction when he was a theologian, suggested that I might be a good person to run the villa/retreat house at Mammee Bay.

RR: It is quite a place.

RL: Yes. The beauty of it was it was indoor/outdoor living. You could bring the outdoors inside. I find confinement in a building—this one, for instance—very discouraging. It gets stuffy, whereas at Mammee Bay there was no fourth wall. The fourth wall looked out to the grounds and the ocean. The back yard was a

big, beautiful yard, where things grew very easily. An old tree had been taken out just before I got there, so I got the idea of planting.

RR: Right.

RL: Now, I have planted gardens all my life. When I was at Hawthorn Street, I did it there. I did it in Africa. But there at Mammee Bay, the ground itself was inviting. That was the point of it, I think: it drew me, as the piano drew me. The only problem at Mammee Bay was what I would do with the ridge of rock in the very middle of it. I got the insight of planting a map of Jamaica and using that ridge of stone as the Blue Mountains. It was very exciting. I had such fun selecting different plants for either the desert or the mountain zones. When it was done, I remember standing there in my scrubs—I always wore scrubs down there—and feeling about nine years old, and just being so delighted at what this looked like that I just wanted to share it with everybody.

RR: Right.

RL: There was a feeling that I have sometimes had in prayer since then, a feeling of joy, a feeling of transparency. I love that word, transparency. It is part of what God is, I think. And jubilation, exaltation—I just felt like singing, and just dancing, because it was so lovely. Not because I had done it, but because I finally realized what creativity really is: tapping into what is already there. I did not do anything, I just got in touch with it. It was very exciting.

RR: You had the opportunity, I am sure, to be involved in some of the parishes and with the Jamaican people.

RL: Yes.

RR: What was your overall impression about the church in Jamaica?

RL: Oh, a great charm. I had very little experience in Kingston. A couple of weeks before I left Jamaica, I

was at St. Ann's Bay, but my experience of the rest of Jamaica was non-existent. On the north shore, where I lived, it was paradise. It is the only part of Jamaica where you feel safe. It is the only part of Jamaica where the people have not trashed themselves as in civil war. And it is tragic. There is great joy. There were two churches there: the one in Ocho Rios (Our Lady of Fatima) that was absolutely charming. It was kind of an upscale thing with a lot of tourists, yet many of the more educated Jamaicans would also come. It was such delight to preach with them. There was not a lot of sacramental life, as almost everybody went to Communion. But more "Jamaican" was the church in St. Ann's Bay.

RR: On the north coast?

RL: Yes. St. Ann's Bay (Our Lady of Perpetual Help). That was a real Jamaican church. Everybody there was Jamaican, was black. It was just marvelous to see the ladies all dressed up, usually in a green hat, green suit, and green shoes, that they probably got in 1933. There were little boys who had shoes only for church. They were there because they wanted to be there, and they sang because they wanted to sing. It was jubilant. So I was at one or the other church almost every week, and that was really a high point. I went to a couple of the tourist traps, those elegant hotels. I was there for one day and had to get out, because they were so artificial.

RR: How so?

RL: The high walls around the entire complex—you could be anywhere you wanted to be by just going into them. You could have been on the Riviera, you could have been in South Boston. It did not make any difference, because those hotels create an artificial atmosphere. The thing about where I was in Mammee Bay was it felt so real. It felt very, very genuine.

- RR: You were involved with the Jesuits?
- RL: Yes.
- RR: Did you have much to do with St. George's College in Kingston?
- RL: Not with the school at all. We used to have our regional community meetings there. It was a tough ride from Mammee Bay to Kingston over the beloved Blue Mountains. I did not have the nerve to drive it, so the driver often picked me up. I knew the men down there very well, and sometimes was involved in setting up community meetings.
- RR: I see.
- RL: There were a lot of very interesting men down there, Moe (Maurice) Walsh, for instance, or (Archbishop) Sam Carter, who always attended the meetings, and would get up and make a speech. But then you could disagree with him. I had very little to do with St. George's. I knew nothing about it, except the Jesuits who taught there. Meeting some of the novices that came down on trial was very exciting. They lived in Kingston, and then would come up to Mammee Bay. Most of them are ordained now, because that was in the nineties. I was over sixty years old when I went, and the provincial thought that was very generous of me at that age. I loved every minute of it, although I did not make any money as villa director. I did not know how to advertise and let people know it was there. George Mahan, when he was working with Jesuit Missions, always had a list of people.
- RR: Right.
- RL: When he retired, that source dried up. There were some relatives of Jesuits, but most were religious sisters or Jesuits from Kingston on retreat. A couple of times I was asked to give a retreat to candidates. There was a lot of coming and going, but the place was not filled enough.

RR: Right.

RL: The first year it was very good, because George Mahan was sending me people, so it was filled most of the time. There were only about thirteen rooms, so the most you could have at a time was twenty-six people, and that was a dream. They all got along very well. Dealing with the sisters down there was very exciting, because there were not that many people who were willing to try giving a directed retreat. Certainly, John Banks was, but outside of him, there were few who did it.

RR: One of the important things was giving retreats and spiritual direction. This runs like a thread through much of your life.

RL: Yes.

RR: Could you tell us about that?

RL: I did not realize it was the question I was asking at the time, but almost from the very beginning I was fascinated by what happens when a human being prays. I said prayers, but it did not do very much. The training I got gave me a sense of: "Do it!" Especially the Jesuit notion of the Kingdom, that the strong will make the Kingdom meditation, those who really had strength of personality and perseverance.

RR: I see.

RL: But those of us who did not have that much confidence in themselves felt like camp followers. The sense was that, if you tried hard enough, you could do it, although we did not have any directors after the novitiate, which I did at Wernersville. I had a wonderful year of the juniorate at Shadowbrook, but only one year, and during philosophy there was no spiritual direction. We had a man we called the spiritual director that we had to see once a month. Keeping the rules was what it was all about.

RR: Right.

- RL: Let me talk for myself. I would not even have thought of talking of what was going on inside me, certainly what happened or did not happen when I prayed. Regency was a snap, nothing was very demanding in teaching French at Cheverus. When I came back to Weston to theology, especially when I hit on Phil Donnelly's course on grace, the whole thing opened up about one's experience of God. I knew that is what I wanted to do. It was as clear as a bell. It was the most fascinating thing I had ever heard, so that when I finished the course, I said to J.V. O'Connor (the rector at Weston College 1956-62), who was a wonderful friend, "I think I would like to do something in spiritual direction."
- RR: That is how it started?
- RL: He said—what was this, 1962?—"There's no place you're going to get courses in that. You could go to Rome, as I did, but you would do better to go to Catholic University." He was beautiful with me. I know that a lot of people thought that J.V. was kind of rigid. Ray Bertrand and I were big buddies of his, because we kept the theologate light. You know how it could be a very heavy place.
- RR: So that is how you got to go to Catholic University after tertianship?
- RL: Catholic University was available. The only interesting part of that was I wanted to do a thesis comparing St. Paul's notion of our life in Christ as God's adopted children with what I understood was Ignatius' suggestion of our imitation of Christ, which had always felt to me like something cosmetic. It felt like monkey business: you see Jesus do it, and you do it. You see Jesus being humble, and you be. I felt I was taking stage directions, but it never came from the heart.
- RR: A comparative study of life in Christ in St. Paul and St. Ignatius.

- RL: St. Paul's notion of our life in Christ Jesus, of our being adopted children of God—the whole notion, especially in Peter and John, of our new life in Christ—was not a growing in holiness, or a growing in perfection, or any of that moral stuff, but a truly intrinsic happening, where one's life, one's whole outlook on life, was transformed, and one could live from the inside out. I thought: That is what I would like to do.
- RR: Were you able to do it?
- RL: Yes. Now, interestingly enough, the man who directed my thesis was a Carmelite and the master of novices. I was very intrigued by Carmelite spirituality, but he was very much intrigued with Jesuit spirituality. He said, dealing with the novices, it was much better, easier, more trustworthy to use the Jesuit model, "Because if you start out with Carmelite spirituality for novices, they all think they have visions after the first month."
- RR: Ha-ha.
- RL: He felt, I guess, the order, the discipline, the sensibility of the Jesuit approach pleased him very much. It was great hearing it. A book that I really have loved over the past couple of years is *The Impact of God*, by a Carmelite, Ian Matthews, a provincial in London, talking about the approach of St. John of the Cross. He starts out with: "God is an outpouring God, who continually seeks us, who continually wants to fill us with himself." Again, bingo! That is it—Donnelly again. The initiative is with God, and what he wants us to do is accept him. We either could, or we do not have to. That is just thrilling to me, that the initiative is not with us.
- RR: How did you see all this working out in the system of these retreat houses? I know you were involved in them.
- RL: The provincial heard I was working with young adult

groups in Boston. There were a Protestant minister, a Catholic Cenacle sister, a diocesan priest, and myself. We were attempting to do something in the Back Bay that was not very successful, because it was more entertainment than anything else, since a lot of the college students were not much interested in spirituality. Then somehow I heard that they were going to start a center for religious development in Cambridge.

RR: Yes, you mentioned that as a key thing. Tell us about that.

RL: That was very exciting, mainly because I began to realize what spiritual direction really is, mostly from Bill Connolly, whom I did not know really at all. He had a sense of brilliance, I think, and could listen as nobody I have ever experienced.

RR: Right.

RL: He and Bill Barry were getting together to begin this thing on how to train spiritual directors. I had been doing some of that since I went to Holy Cross with my brand-new degree, but there was something missing. I asked, "Can I be part of that?" They said, "Yes, you can." Then Dan Lush and Bob Doherty joined us, and we began the Center for Religious Development to consider: "What is spiritual direction?" "What do you do in spiritual direction?" "How do you train a spiritual director?"

RR: Right. That was its focus.

RL: Bill Connolly insisted the essence of spiritual direction is what happens in prayer. If you are not praying, there is no such thing as spiritual direction. You can have counseling, you can have therapy, you can have friendship. Whether you agreed with him or disagreed with him, he had a point that you could bounce off. The other factor was that Joe McCormick (Weston Jesuit Community rector 1970-77) thought it was a great idea.

RR: Right.

RL: All the theologians were our laboratory. The first year they came in for direction. The second year we started bringing associates in to direct them and to teach them how to direct others. It was an ideal setup with the theologians being in Cambridge. As we supervised these associates' direction of others, I realized I had a talent for that. I have been babbling here, but I am not a bad listener. I liked to hear what happened, and I can be patient if people want to tell me about their lives, or explain what a Scripture text means to them, or what they got out of it theologically, or even when they are beating around the bush and avoiding talking about their personal relationship with the Lord. But when they really do talk about their relationship with the Lord, wonderful things happen.

RR: Right. Where were you located?

RL: Weston Jesuit Community had several houses in Cambridge, and we took over 40 and 42 Kirkland Street, which had housed the Cambridge Center for Social Justice until they moved to Washington. 42 Kirkland became the Center for Religious Development, and three or four of us actually lived there. 40 Kirkland was basically a residence for theologians. We started off living at 40 Kirkland while 42 was being prepared. When 42 came into existence as the Center, the first two or three floors were for offices, and people lived on the fourth floor.

RR: How did the Center for Religious Development shape up? How did it grow along these lines?

RL: It is changed; it is developed. What came out of it mostly for me was transforming the retreat house at Gloucester into a place for directed retreats. Tom Hamel had an idea: "What would you think if four or five of us went up to Gloucester, made it a community of Jesuits, and gave directed retreats?" As I

thought about it, I realized, 'That is a really good idea.' Bill Connolly thought it was awful.

RR: So his proposal interested you.

RL: I said, "Well, how many directors do you think we have?" He replied, "Well, why don't we choose?" I said, "Jack Begley would be my choice." He liked Paul Carty and Brian Duffy. We did start the retreat house for directed retreats. It had been a retreat house for high school students. When school administrators could no longer convince them to do retreats, the house was going to be sold.

RR: Right.

RL: I remember Jack Begley and I stomped in to see Bill Guindon, who was the provincial—best provincial, I think, we have ever had. We said, "We heard that Gloucester was going to be sold. We can't sell Gloucester." He asked, "Well, why not?" In a very practical sense, he said, "We have Round Hills." Round Hills in South Dartmouth had about as much personality as a clam. It just had nothing going for it. It was a big barracks, cold, empty, dull. Whew. So he said, "Why can't we use that?" I said, "Bill, there are rocks at Gloucester." Bill said, "There are rocks at Round Hills." And I said, "No, Bill. There aren't rocks at Round Hill." He said, "Of course there are." I said, "You're dealing as a scientist, Bill. Go out and stand on the rocks at Gloucester." And he said, "All right. We'll give you a year. We won't give you any money. You do it."

RR: Sounds just like him.

RL: "OK," he said, "We'll not sell it this year. Go and do it." We traipsed up there, and it was a mess. It was filthy. All of us found helpers, mostly sisters that we had been directing for years. We had a whole crowd come up and clean the place for two days. It was just thrilling.

RR: Ha-ha.

RL: They all came up in their work clothes. Some of the men we had been directing came up, too, and they washed toilets and cleaned it up.

RR: Ha-ha.

RL: The best part of it was that we got everything set up, particularly the new bathrooms, because they were terrible. A sister came in to me and said, "Father, you have got to do something about the ladies' room. It is set up for men." I said, "Yes, I know that, sister." She replied, "You've got to put shower curtains up, because women are not comfortable walking around naked." So we put up shower curtains. Bill Guindon said, "I will not give you any money." That first year cost us \$100,000 to run the place, and we made a \$100,500.

RR: Oh. So you broke even?

RL: Yes. Now, the group did not hang together well. Some of us had various agendas. But it began a great career at Gloucester, which is still going. It has a different format now, and I know they are changing it, but this is back in 1973—a long time ago. That is why I say that Center for Religious Development, and what it did for the spiritual life of the Province, what it did for the notion of spiritual direction, is really thrilling.

RR: A major event.

RL: You had to be there then. My experience made me think spiritual direction was just a word, something that most people did not experience. I thought that the Center for Religious Development really changed the spiritual climate of the Province.

RR: Right. It brought practical, down-to-earth, psychologically well-balanced discussions about spirituality as a normal reality which everyone could share in and profit from.

RL: Exactly. It was not some esoteric thing of perfection,

a pie-in-the-sky thing, where we all became saints. It was God in your life and God in your prayer.

RR: Right.

RL: Especially this disagreement with Bill Connolly. He did not think it was a good idea to encourage people to go off to Gloucester to pray on the rocks by the ocean. He said Ignatius wanted people to be right where they were, and find God there.

RR: Right. Now, do you see such benevolent approaches to the spiritual growth today in what is happening, for example, here at Campion and in other retreat houses?

RL: That is very interesting. Most people of my generation and your generation—you were a theologian when I was a philosopher.

RR: Right.

RL: Most of them have not made a directed retreat, at least most of them here in the Health Center. They are men who really desire to pray and do pray. There is much talk about how to change liturgy and the rest of that going on here right now. I think tapping into what is already there, again, is more important than bringing stuff in from the outside that may work someplace else.

RR: What do you think might work?

RL: At Campion Center? Well, helpful approaches may be something like tapping into what is already there, or the work that Kathleen (Sr. Kathleen Foley, SND) and David (Fr. David Boulton, SJ, Health Center chaplains) do, going around and just being present to the men on the first and second floors. Your question brings up the whole topic of aging and how we age as Jesuits. In the past four or five years, Kate Morency (Province Health Care Coordinator) and others of us have been trying to look at that, and make suggestions, since moving into this stage of life is tremen-

dously important. Most men, especially Jesuits, are not prepared for it, because when they no longer do what they do, they feel they have no further usefulness.

RR: Right. Did you have any contact with the house retreat given this month?

RL: Not really. I knew that Bob Levens did it very well, and I know he was well received here.

RR: How would you describe that, in the terms of what you have been talking about?

RL: Certainly it was well thought through. I got a copy of his notes. It was a development, and it consisted of ideas and scripture being offered to you, that you might think about and pray over. You progressed day by day with the themes of the exercises. The difference with a directed retreat is that, as the director, you try to hear where the retreat is going for the retreatant. You do not presume anything, either that they are praying or not, that they believe in God or not, that they are comfortable with being religious or not. You start by trying to hear where they are. You do not try to have the retreatant do the whole exercises; if necessary, you encourage the retreatant to stay where he or she is finding help from God. The beauty of this approach is that the retreatant comes in and tells you, "This day sucked. I got nothing out of it. I was very distracted." Or, "It got much easier as the day went on, and I was able to be present to Our Lady, and really have a sense of what the Incarnation meant to her." So with the directed retreat there is a sense that all the things that Ignatius said the role of the director should be are in fact present. Certainly, Bob's approach to a guided retreat is fine, and I know he is a holy man. I know that the work he put into that recent house retreat here at Campion was very well received, because he did not talk down to the older

men, and they could consult if they wished.

RR: Right.

RL: The one danger is not being able to get the retreatants to talk to a director about what is going on, so they can be asked, “Why don’t you stay there and savor that sense of gratitude you have been experiencing, and just be grateful?” Or, “Do you feel unfree in one area of another?” But God has to take care of that. I think it is a little late in the day to try to change many people.

RR: Right.

RL: The younger men—you hear it with the tertians and you hear it with the novices. It is so exciting. Their approach—some of them feel there is a little too much of it—is that they start off by getting to know one another well. They begin by sharing their faith journey. They start off with how God worked in their life, or not worked. They come more together as a unit, and know one another’s experience. I think the Society has got to go that way. Otherwise, we are foot soldiers off there in the battle all by ourselves and we do not know whether we are the only ones on the horizon. You and I did not have to bother with that, because in a house like this of three hundred people, you could find at least two people you could talk to.

RR: Right.

RL: But now, unless you know how other people are experiencing the Society, God, or the Church, you can feel terribly isolated. So I think that is the way it goes now, and it is going to go, but your question is interesting. How does this particular approach relate to Campion Center? Except through preaching, probably not. Probably not.

RR: I see. OK. To try and tie some themes together, could you speak a bit about how Phil Donnelly’s course

on grace, how the gardening and the music, and all those occasions where you felt yourself alive in God, helped you deal with and relate to the darkness that you encountered in your life?

RL: Yes.

RR: And how that experience helped you guide others as a spiritual director?

RL: Well, it is all of a piece. It is coming into the light. As I really experienced God's free gift of love for me, I in turn could accept, even grow to love, myself as I truly was without having to prove to others how bright and talented I was. When I first began to play the piano as a little boy, I played classical music. I did not do very well with it, because you have to work at it. Along with studies, I never had the discipline to do that. But when I found the music of Cole Porter and Jerome Kern—what they call standards now—and Rogers and Hart, and started to play it on the piano, I knew I had arrived. What I realized was that the music was playing me, that the piano was a bigger and more beautiful thing than I was. All the way through the course, I think most people would say, "Bob was a pianist." It was a way of getting out of myself. I have since grown to believe that prayer, basically is allowing God to distract me from myself.

RR: Right.

RL: So music, especially the piano, or listening to the piano, or playing the piano, give me a sense of coming alive, because the music summons me. More than that is the gardening. It was that new life, that gratuitous gift, that coming to life, that finding one's self, all that Phil Donnelly was talking about—all this gardening did to me. Not because you were planting or anything like that, but it was a sense that the ground was calling you and responding. That is why you could get such a kick out of gardening—because it just did

its thing. You get out of the way, and it does its thing, and you do not fuss over it. Does that make sense?

RR: Yes. Now we are going through a rather difficult time in the Church, and younger people sometimes experience this feeling of darkness, and are looking for ways to cope with it. How do you move from being completely enveloped in the darkness to finding a way out, a way of hope?

RL: First of all, you have to experience being loved. That is why friends like Frank Miller have been so important to me. Somebody else, whether it is God, your mother, your father, your friend, or whoever has to be able to touch you in such a way that you can begin to come into the light, and show you that you are not the flawed, really retarded person that you feel you are. Phil Donnelly, again, helped. The initiative is with the Lord, who makes the first move. It is important that you have people that you can really talk to.

RR: Right.

RL: My question would be, how do I grow emotionally? If I were seeing a candidate, what I would be interested in is, whether this young man or woman seems to me to have the capability of expressing themselves, or do they need help doing that? Can they grow emotionally in self-acceptance? That was the big thing with me.

RR: To go back a bit again, could you speak a bit more about your experience at Holy Cross? You spoke of “mishandling” Holy Cross?

RL: After my doctoral studies, my first assignment as a Jesuit was chaplain at Holy Cross. Holy Cross had a cachet about it, that our other colleges seemed to lack. It had the aura of being warm, a school that cared. When I thought about being chaplain at Holy Cross, I was thrilled and scared to death. Talk to John Michalowski, because he was there the four years I

was there.

RR: John Michalowski, who just finished being director of
Campion Renewal Center.

RL: Yes. The very first job that I had to do as chaplain
started when my boss said, "The freshmen are coming
in, 660 of them. In preparation for the Mass of the
Holy Spirit, I want you to teach them the music."
There was no piano, there was no orchestra, there was
no nothing. There was Bob Lindsay's voice, that has
always sounded like a barroom squeak. I thought they
would laugh at me. I was very much afraid.

RR: Your first job.

RL: But I got up there, and I did it, and they did exactly
what I told them to do. Freshmen do that. I taught
them to sing "God is Love" from the Black spiritual
Mass by Clarence Rivers. I later realized many of them
were not terribly interested in going to church, be-
cause they did not have to go anymore. I said I thought
it was wrong to force people to go to Mass, especially
every day. So I started saying Mass at 7:30 PM Sun-
day evening, because people said, "Well, in the morn-
ing it is too bad, and you want to go away." So I
called it the "7:30 Show," and I said it was for people
who do not like being Catholics.

RR: Ha-ha.

RL: Well, it was a smash. I have a facility of being very
light, of being clever, of being user-friendly, when I
talk. There also is a quality of being able to talk right
from my heart, and that is what I did. I tried to re-
member how I felt as a freshman at Boston College. I
remember the very first thing I said to them, "You
know, a lot of us are like St. Paul. We've got all kinds
of strength, but what has to happen to us is that we
are knocked off our horse." That clicked somehow.

RR: Then what happened?

RL: The four years I was there, that is what I did, along

with some counseling. But they went to Jesuits living on the corridor for that. Then there were some of the other Jesuits, like Al Desautels, George Nolan, Paul Kiley, and a few others, who would begin to get into saying Mass on their corridors. Ray Swords was marvelous. He said to me one time, “Do anything you want to, but remember you’re dealing with the liturgy,” because there were guitars.

RR: That was in the mid-sixties?

RL: Yes. It was difficult because of the two generations ahead of me. A lot would not say Mass for the students. There was a time in the mid-sixties, when everything was up for grabs. I could not get many of the older men involved. Their approach was...

RR: They differed.

RL: Yes. It was kind of an isolation thing that I allowed to happen. I concentrated totally on the students, and did not sufficiently engage the community, and I could have. Then I just got very tired, and just felt that I could not do this anymore. And I asked to leave.

RR: Do you have something else we missed?

RL: No. I think the main question—I have already said this. The main question in one person’s life, and what I always look for, either in a conversation, or in spiritual direction, is the sense: Have I had the experience that I really have been loved? I remember saying that to Paul Lucey, who was my spiritual director when I first came here. He was marvelous. We were talking about the Principle and Foundation in the Spiritual Exercises. I remarked that in former times we never talked about God’s love in the Foundation. We were told what we were supposed to do as creatures.

RR: Right.

RL: I said, “Unless a person has been loved, there is no way that they can truly have a spiritual life. And if a person has been loved, that is where I would start.” He

replied, "Suppose a person has not been loved. What would you do?" I said, "I would tell him to beg for that grace to recall someone somewhere, whether it was a teacher, or a friend, or somebody—a faculty member, because teachers are tremendously important—or somebody that you run into, from your youth, or middle age, or old age, as far as that is concerned. I notice that the tertians who come to Campion can do that with some of the older men. The tertians bring them alive.

RR: Right.

RL: So, I would say the most important thing is to start with the experience of being loved, or the missing of that experience. That was why I mentioned the alcoholic family. Alcoholic people never do what they promise they will do. One of the worst things one can experience in life, or what one can do to another, is to promise what you cannot or do not deliver. Do not promise it if you cannot, or will not, or do not deliver it. And if you cannot deliver it, do not make the promise. But it is that experience of being loved. Is that what you are asking me?

RR: Fine. One last question: Given your love of music, which song captures your sense of "the unbearable lightness of being?"

RL: Oh, boy. "You're the Top" from Cole Porter. It blows you away with the exuberance of it. He is very sophisticated, but he has a sense of joy. We did it for Peg Farrell's retirement party as Activities Director here, where we changed the words. But it had that exuberance, and she was just thrilled. And it was the best performance of Ron Amiot, when he got up and introduced the Cement Shoes Quartet and who would sing this for Peg Farrell. And we sang, "You're the Top."

RR: Ha-ha.

RL: I play it beautifully. I miss all the notes, but the feeling is there.
RR: On that note, thank you.
RL: You are very welcome.

Rev. Robert E. Lindsay, S.J.

Born: April 26, 1929, Washington, District of Columbia
Entered: July 30, 1948, St. Isaac Jogues Novitiate, Wernersville, Pennsylvania
Ordained: June 18, 1960, Weston College, Weston, Massachusetts
Final Vows: August 15, 1965, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts

1939 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Latin School - Student
1945 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College - Student
1948 Wernersville, Pennsylvania: St. Isaac Jogues Novitiate - Novice
1950 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/Shadowbrook - Junior
1951 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied philosophy
1954 Portland, Maine: Cheverus High School - Taught French and freshmen
1957 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied theology
1961 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertianship
1962 Washington, District of Columbia: Catholic University - Studied ascetical theology
1964 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy Cross - Taught Old Testament, campus minister
1968 Boston, Massachusetts: St. Andrew Bobola House - Assistant Director of Xavier Student Center
1971 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston School of Theology - Studied retreats and spiritual direction at Center for Religious Development

- 1973 Gloucester, Massachusetts: Eastern Point Retreat House - Minister for Jesuit community; retreat ministry
- 1974 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School - Retreat ministry
- 1977 Wernersville, Pennsylvania: Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth - Studied and directed retreats
- 1978 Nairobi, Kenya: Loyola House - Founded retreat ministry
- 1980 Westfield, Massachusetts: Genesis Spiritual Life Center - Pastoral Ministry; leave of absence
- 1983 Boston, Massachusetts: Campbell House (418 Beacon St.) - Sabbatical
- 1984 Dorchester, Massachusetts: 77 Alban Street (sub-community of Boston College High School) - Studied and worked at Paulist Leadership and Renewal Project
- 1985 Boston, Massachusetts: Loyola House - Studied and worked at Paulist Leadership and Renewal Project
- 1986 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 15 Hawthorn Street (sabbatical residence) - Director of residence; spiritual direction ministry and at Campion Renewal Center
- 1993 St. Ann, Jamaica, West Indies: Villa Loyola at Mammee Bay - Director; retreat ministry at Jamaican Centre for Religious Development
- 1997 Boston, Massachusetts: Jesuit Urban Center - Pastoral ministry
- 1997 Apache Junction, Arizona: St. George Church - Assistant pastor
- 1998 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center - Praying for the Church and the Society; assistant chaplain to Campion Health Center; spiritual director; retreat ministry

Degrees

- 1952 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-
Boston College
- 1953 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-
Boston College
- 1961 Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Weston College
- 1964 Doctorate in Sacred Theology, Ascetical Theology,
Catholic University, Washington, DC