

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Martin P. MacDonnell, S.J.
Volume 23**

© Society of Jesus of New England
2007 All Rights Reserved

Editor: Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
Associate Editors: Paul C. Kenney, S.J.
Thomas J. Sheehan, S.J.
Assistant Editors:
William J. Cullen, S.J.
Joseph V. Owens, S.J.
Joseph A. Paquet, S.J.
Ernest F. Passero, S.J.

ISBN 1-60067-020-2

Distribution:

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

Interview with Fr. Martin P. MacDonnell, S.J.
by Fr. Thomas J. Sheehan, S.J.
January 20, 2006

EARLY YEARS

THOMAS SHEEHAN: The first area we usually cover is the family background. Could you say a little bit about your parents, brothers, and sisters?

MARTIN MacDONNELL: Well, my entire family is gone now. They all passed away in about eight years. It all happened so fast that no one had a chance to really pause and think about it until it was all over. So now I find myself alone in the world after having grown up with a big family of seven children—two girls and five boys. Three of us—Jack, Joe, Mart—were Jesuits, and Vin was one for a while, too. There were so many of us that even my mother on occasion would get confused when she called after we had joined the Jesuits. She would say, “Hello, Jack, Joe, Mart, Vin.” She would also sometimes call us all by the same name. That was an example of some of the happy confusion you would find around our house. When we were growing up, it was a very active house, and we were very happy there.

TS: You grew up in Springfield?

MM: In Springfield, Massachusetts. We all went to Cathedral High and then to college. I went to Boston College; Jack, Joe, and Brendan also went to Jesuit schools. Vin went to St. Anselm's, and the two girls went to Our Lady of the Elms College in Chicopee.

TS: Are there any memories from your school days that stand out? Any subjects or teachers that you liked, or were there any difficult experiences there?

MM: Many times I talked with my brothers about the fact that the teachers that we had were very good. In fact, they were surprisingly good, compared to what other people had. I have very few complaints. They did a very competent job. They always treated us well; they always gave us a good education. I think we also got a good deal from the diocesan priests. We had about five priests assigned to Holy Name Parish, the largest in the city, and the priests were all very good. I had very few complaints about any of them. I thought they each made a unique contribution, and I would vote for all of them for our parish team. They helped us all, each in his own way with his own gifts. There was never any hint of abuse, as there is nowadays. It has always been rather amazing to us that our family had contact with all sorts of priests, and we never had any kind of a scandal in our close associations. All those were positive. The priests were very good, and they helped us enormously.

DISCERNING HIS VOCATION

TS: Did that contact with your parish priests start to develop your own idea of a vocation, your sense of being called to religious life or priesthood?

MM: I suppose so. I am not exactly sure when that sense developed. Maybe it was the influence of the sisters

at school. There was always a sense of somebody saying, "What about your call to be a priest?" I was never sure whether I had communicated this to them, or whether they had come up with it among themselves, wondering if I, too, had a vocation, because so many in my family seemed to have one. So I let them say what they wanted, and it seemed to catch up with me eventually anyway, no matter what. For my part, I felt that I was getting pulled towards a vocation. From the time that I went to B.C., it was rather clear to me that there was some nagging question out there that I had to answer. It was not going to do, to just go and do a two-week seminar. I had to give it a full answer. So, after I graduated from B.C. in 1953 and spent time in the Navy, I entered in 1957.

TS: At B.C. were there any people who influenced you?

MM: Yes, there were a lot of people. Some of my close friends have been faithful to me and have written to me and shared their faith as long as I have known them. These contacts, if anything, have gotten stronger.

TS: You have had very strong ties from your B.C. days and you still do?

MM: I have had a few anyway, yes. Most of my closest friends were people I stayed in contact with, and they were good contacts.

STUDYING AT BOSTON COLLEGE

TS: What was your major at B.C.?

MM: I studied economics and sociology. I do not exactly recall why I chose them then. I suppose I could have studied mathematics the way Joe did, but I had no desire to study it.

TS: Did you have assigned chapel seating at B.C. and requirements like that there, as they did at Holy Cross? Did you have to be at the chapel for Mass

- every day at a particular time?
- MM: We probably did, but it was not a big deal for me. But, when I was at Holy Cross during regency and had to prefect the students, it was a big deal then for us as scholastics. We thought it was murder our having to get up every morning to prefect those guys who did not want even to be at Mass.
- TS: Yes.
- MM: They would not be paying attention. We thought that was kind of sacrilegious to do that. But we scholastics did not get anywhere with the rector, who said, "You do it!" And so we did it, but it was not any more meaningful to us than it was to the students, to have to attend Mass in that way.

SERVING IN THE NAVY

- TS: So from B.C. you went to the Navy?
- MM: Yes, I was drafted, so I put in for OCS, Officer Candidate School. That was an interesting experience. In one sense it was not any more than what you would expect: you fulfilled your obligation for the military that way. There was a war going on in Korea.
- TS: Yes.
- MM: So it was the least we could do; that is the way we felt. I did not have any great moral question about the war at that time. Later on I had all sorts of moral questions about the war. But then, when I was actually in the war, I really did not see how it touched me morally.
- TS: Do you remember particular times in the Navy?
- MM: I remember getting my commission. I remember that cold graduation day when my parents came to the ceremony at Newport, Rhode Island. They seemed so out of place that I felt sorry for them. It was February, I think, and it was freezing cold, in the twenties. There were about five hundred of us

graduates. First we had the graduation; you got a certificate and a dollar bill. The dollar bill was to give somebody who was standing by strategically placed to get the first salute—our first salute out of OCS. My parents were there for that, but the formality did not mean that much to them, nor to me, either, except that it was part of the ritual that got me through.

FACING THE CHALLENGE

MM: Yet, on another level, it did mean something to me, because the OCS gave me a goal to shoot for. There was a certain degree of excellence required; you had to get good marks. If you did not, you were out—that was all. No sentiment about it. So we did not shed any tears over that. We graduated one day, and the next day I got my commission. They really gave us a shakedown down there, really a workout. I found myself really working hard to pass all those tests about mechanics and navigation, and all the other courses required by the Navy. You had to pass them in a practical way; you had to know exactly what you were doing if you were going to go out and stand on operations watch. You had to master each one of your responsibilities. You would be using what you learned in just six months or less; you could be court-martialed depending on how you did it. So you found out pretty fast what they were expecting from you, and what it meant when they told you that you have the ship watch when you are out at sea. So you had to learn a whole different style of life. It was all very interesting; it was all challenging. It was not too difficult, but it was something you really had to apply your mind to. I was really surprised that I even graduated, with all that mechanical and technical matter to master. That was not my strong suit.

TS: Yes.
MM: Overall, I kind of enjoyed that challenge; it was good.
TS: Were you assigned to Korea?
MM: Everyone was assigned to the Korean War effort. I personally was stationed in the U.S. most of the time in support work. I did one period in Alaska, and taught cold weather survival. Everybody was involved in the war effort in one way or another.
TS: Everybody?
MM: Yes. There was no skipping that. You might by chance be attached to some task force in the South Pacific or something like that, but most likely not.
TS: So you must have seen a lot of action?
MM: Well, no, nothing extraordinary. I saw just as much as the next person. I did not have a lot of experiences to talk about. I did an ordinary three years' term, and I did not see much action at all other than when once in a while planes from our group were shot down.

JOINING THE JESUITS

TS: You came back and went to the novitiate?
MM: Yes, that is right. I got out of the Navy in New York on April 1. I decided to enter the Jesuits and get that over with, get that off my back. I finally said to myself, "This is it. I have had this thing on my back now for years since high school. I finally want to do this thing, and do it right. I am not leaving in two weeks' time just because it is hard to get up in the morning. I am going to stay there as long as I have to, and get it out of my system." I was hoping that things like not smoking would just murder me, and so I would just say. "No, you just cannot do this. This kind of life is not for you."
TS: You were a smoker?
MM: I was a big smoker.

TS: Wow.

MM: Oh, yes, I was a huge smoker in the Navy. I was also going up and down on the weight scale; I put on all sorts of weight. I was up about fifty pounds in a short time after I quit smoking.

TS: Was the novitiate similar to the military?

MM: Oh, it was similar in some way. There was a set course of training, so you could line it up, since you knew what to expect.

TS: Yes.

MM: See, you become a Jesuit. You have eight years training here, and then four years there, and two more years somewhere else. It is easier to line it up that way. OK, so we are going to spend fourteen years over here, and then after that is over, you have a short period of time when you can relax a little bit. But it is one of those things you can line up.

TS: Yes.

MM: That is what the Jesuit course looks like and how it almost always works out.

TS: Yes, and obedience in the Society certainly was similar to what you found in the military?

MM: Yes, obedience; I know obedience.

TS: OK, so you went to the New York Province novitiate, St. Andrew-on-Hudson in 1957, and then you spent three months at Gloucester, also in the novitiate, and then you went to Shadowbrook.

MM: Right.

TS: Three different places for novitiate?

MM: That is right. All because the New England novitiate at Shadowbrook had burned down in March 1956. I found having three places for novitiate very interesting, too. I was somewhat familiar with Gloucester, because I had been there before.

TS: Is there anything about your time in the novitiate that stands out, any memories?

MM: At Shadowbrook I had Fr. John Post as the master of novices. He was more old-fashioned than I had expected, but he understood me much better than the previous one.

TS: Really?

MM: I found that the approach of Marty Neylon, the New York Province master of novices, did not really grab me. He was a nice guy, and pleased most of the novices around me. They were all very young and kind of sitting at his feet; but I was older. He was a ballplayer, and could tell entertaining stories. He thought he was giving them a good sense of leadership. I have no qualms with that. But his approach did not really grab me. I had some difficulty with that, but it was not really anything to complain about. I was able to get along with him all right. He just made it seem difficult for me to do things on my own; I had just come in from the Navy, where I had major responsibilities. So I had a little difficulty with authority in his regard.

TS: He did not like you doing things on your own?

MM: Oh, no. He did not care for that. But, on the other hand, when I did come to Shadowbrook under John Post, I just adjusted to things as they were under him there.

TS: So it was easier to relate to him?

MM: Well, I had no trouble anyway.

STUDYING PHILOSOPHY AT WESTON

TS: OK. And then from there you came here to Weston for philosophy?

MM: Right, I came here.

TS: Any memories from then, especially now that you live here in the building? Are there any recollections of that time?

MM: I remember the whole family getting together shortly

after we came down here, when I took my first vows here. I did all right. I didn't have any trouble, except Greek!

DOING REGENCY AT HOLY CROSS

TS: OK. And after that you went to Holy Cross College, where you were teaching philosophy? Any particular memories about that period?

MM: Oh, yes, I remember when they told me I was going to teach philosophy. I said to them, "By what right are you sending me out to expose me to those poor students out there. I don't think I know any philosophy, but if you want me to go out there and teach it, then I will go out and teach it." I asked them for some tips about how I should prepare to teach philosophy. In the end, I never could find anything really useful by way of preparing me to teach it. Philosophy was not my favorite subject anyway. Yet, in the end, the students and administration were all thoroughly happy with what I did.

TS: Oh, good.

MM: Yet I still kept on looking for ways to teach philosophy. I taught the usual topics—the history of philosophy, and so on.

TS: Great. So you had that in your skill set, you were able to do it?

MM: Right, yes.

DISCOVERING HIS CALL TO THE MISSIONS

TS: That is great. And then from there, you returned to Weston College for theology studies and then later ordination.

MM: Yes. I liked theology, and I did OK.

TS: Any recollections from that time?

MM: Yes, there was a lot going on at that time—Vatican II and all the changes in the Church. Not all the

teachers supported Vatican II. Some were outstanding, like George McRae in Scripture. And there was my great attraction for the missions, too.

TS: Right after theology you went on the missions.

MM: Since I was a novice, I wanted to go on the missions. I had written a letter saying I wanted to go on the missions. I was hoping to go to Latin America or to Japan. I had a sense that the missions would be a big part of my future. So during theology my whole idea on the missions was developing. My desire was to give myself to it completely, as much as possible, to do the work, whatever it was. I was interested in giving myself whole hog to the mission of the Church. First in Latin America, and then wherever else I might be sent. Much later, I found I was still interested in a need I heard the Church had for Portuguese-speaking people in the Far East.

TS: How did you learn about that need?

MM: Some Jesuits came through B.C. who were very important in the history of that mission. Some of their province were even killed, others cruelly persecuted: it was a tough mission. I was in the Society for eight years when I volunteered again for mission work. During the course I just went along as an ordinary Jesuit, and, depending on what the needs were, I would sign up to help address them. In each case there was usually an opportunity for increased involvement and to grow in my initial commitment. Somewhat like the Detroit Tigers and their levels of recruits, who gradually get greater responsibility.

Things start small and then develop. Funny how you remember bits of the past. I remember my first night in Brazil. We were staying in a 400-year-old Franciscan monastery. The mattresses were full of holes, but we had been given some powder against

the bed bugs. No sheets. I got up at night, and as I headed down the corridor, I took my flashlight. Then I noticed my feet were encountering some resistance. I tilted the flashlight down, and saw the whole floor was covered with cockroaches. They all scurried away from the light, and I could go on OK.

On the way back, I wanted a breath of fresh air. I had heard some music like trumpets, so I opened an old door onto what seemed the outside. Instead, I found I was about two stories up, out on a little balcony or tribune decorated with angel wings on the walls. I was overlooking a music group preparing for an early Mass! There I was in my pajamas staring down at them from the tribune with angel wings all around me! Boy, did I shut that door fast!

TS: [Laughter]

MM: I was eager to start my work in Brazil. So I got to go down to Brazil the summer immediately after ordination, and before my fourth year of theology. At one point, I recall I was asked to go to a parish on an island to celebrate two weddings, hear confessions, and say Mass. When I got off the boat and onto land, all the people were lined up on either side of me as for a triumphal procession. Meanwhile, I could hear the lively trumpet music of a famous U.S. jazz trumpeter broadcast from the church belfry. What a welcome! It was great. Then I heard many confessions, did two weddings, and celebrated the liturgy.

TS: What a happy memory of your introduction to Brazil!

WORKING IN BRAZIL

TS: What drew you to the mission in Brazil in the first place?

MM: It was the challenge and opportunity I had to go over-

seas on a mission.

TS: Yes.

MM: I knew little more than that I would be working in the Church down in Brazil.

TS: OK, so you only knew that you were going there after theology?

MM: Yes. So during theology studies I just got used to the idea of working in Brazil. I was able to plan my studies during my fourth year of theology with that in mind. I was ordained in 1966 and a year later I went down to Brazil for seven years. I was ready to receive whatever they would give me; I was totally available to address any need. All they had to do was send me down there.

TS: Yes.

MM: Which is what they did. There was, of course, nothing to prepare me for that immersion. They just sent me to live in Brazil with several other New England Jesuits as though we were members of the Vice-province of Bahia. As a necessary first step, I started to learn the language for a year or so. On my own I continued to work away at it by taking other courses in just about every little city that I came to. In Bahia, where I was going to work, I zeroed in on the way they actually spoke. I realized that, if you get to know the language by ear from the people who are actually speaking it, then you can get to know the folklore of that area, the stories, the tales, and everything else that tells you about the people in that area. You grow to depend on such people almost as associate members of your own pastoral team.

VALUING OBEDIENCE

TS: You said another reason it was important to you personally was—you told me this a couple of weeks ago—the fact that you were assigned to Brazil. That was

why you went there. Of course, you had to be open and available to where the superior wanted to assign you. So it was not just something that you were coming up with on your own, but you were going there because that is where the superior was sending you.

MM: Right. Being assigned by the superior meant a lot to me, although I had already volunteered to go. It was a kind of confirmation.

TS: Yes. When we were planning this interview a few weeks ago, I recall you were saying, as regards the missions and as your guide to accepting assignments, that this principle was very important to you in your training and in your understanding of the Society, that we go where the superior tells us to go. That is an important thing.

MM: Oh, yes, that is true, yes. We had a pretty good sense of commitment among our own group of New England Jesuits there on mission to Brazil. But it was not just plain blind obedience, as in the old books. For us, to be obedient meant something very active. You had to be willing to make sacrifices in order to live up to whatever it was you were called to. That usually meant a specific sacrifice in every case; it was not just a generic theme. We grew to understand much more clearly that we should expect that there would be certain sacrifices we would be called to make in our own particular circumstances, and not to be surprised by that.

TS: So it sounds like you probably encountered both in Brazil, some sacrifices that you had to make, but also some gains, something that enlivened it.

MM: Oh, I am sure, yes. Although it was a real and formative part of my life, it was something that it was easier to put into words in years past.

BEING WITH THE VERY POOR

TS: OK. Your superiors gave you some different assignments when you were in Brazil. You were minister twice and vice-superior once. You were in the social apostolate. So you were there for a good chunk of time, from 1967 to 1974.

MM: OK. There is so much to recall about those years. They were so full of activity, because that was when we were developing our work in Brazil. We worked with the poor in the city of Salvador da Bahia, in a favela of about forty thousand in the Alagados. There at that time the houses were built on stilts right out over the water. The streets were made of piled-up garbage. It was such a desperately poor place that we used it as a reference point to show visitors what kind of work we had in mind. We did not do much formal education, as Jesuits traditionally have done. Instead we offered classes in basic literacy—the alphabet, and so on. People came many miles to our simple classroom. We also gave some retreats and did some preaching in our favela.

We were willing to work for nothing and to take care of all of the sacraments for nothing. We wanted to bring that same kind of commitment to all our apostolic work. If the people in our favela lacked something, then we would try to get it for them. We tried to blend in with their living conditions. We were committed to working with the poor in those poor favela communities—as one with them, but at the same time we were committed to giving them good religious teaching and religious ministry. It was quite a challenge. For me, it was a very good experience—working with them, getting to know them, and eating their meals.

TS: And some community organizing probably, too?

Helping the communities to organize and to help themselves, so they could learn to fend for themselves?

MM: And helping the communities organize, too, yes.

TS: Forty thousand people, that's a lot of people in your favela.

MM: Oh yes. The numbers down there are really incredible—people, distances, even industries. It is a big country and things are on a big scale. For example, there are huge paper plants, you know. That is one thing that the Brazilians have plenty of—paper plants. And they are pretty good at it. I noticed that, because my grandfather had owned one of the big paper plants in Holyoke, Mass. Because everything is so immense in Brazil, just trying to understand it can be mind-boggling, too.

TS: Any memories of your work with other Jesuits?

MM: Yes, I vividly remember Dick Eisenman. He was very creative in shaping his own apostolate among the people. He was looked on as a saint—he was a superb guy. He came to help me with my work, and I let him gradually take it over. But, when he was suddenly killed in a car crash, all that responsibility came back to me. To me it was an awful blow. I also had grown to really depend on him for his spirituality. So it was a double loss.

RETURNING TO THE STATES

TS: I realize that, and have a sense about how hard it can be to put such a formative experience into a few words. But it is clear to me that it was a significant time in your life. Let's move on. From that point, in 1974 you went to Cheverus High School, where you did some educational counseling.

MM: You know, I really found that transition very abrupt, my returning to the States all of a sudden, and then

going back to high school. My heart was in Brazil. I had recovered from a very bad bout of hepatitis. I had been working more or less on the high school level in Brazil, so I guess there was some continuity in working at a high school.

TS: Yes, I can see that. Yet after seven years in Brazil you were suddenly working in an institution in a very different part of the world. What a cultural jolt that must have been!

MM: The result is that it seems that every time I have talked about the past at length, it seems that I always end up focusing on some aspect of my time in Brazil. So it is a little bit difficult for me to focus on something other than Brazil, because Brazil had become second nature to me, like talking about your own country. It can take up your whole vision, and mark everything after it.

TS: Oh, yes. It reminds me of how hard it was for some who had worked in Iraq to adjust to their sudden expulsion in the late '60s.

MM: To me, everything about Brazil is fascinating. It offers you employment, it offers you vision, it offers you places to exercise your experience in education.

TS: Living there in Brazil was for you a total experience, a total immersion, is what you are saying, immersion in every aspect of life there—educational, political, spiritual, religious. You were so immersed in it that it became a permanent part of who you are. It shaped your experiences from that point on, I'm sure, and you bring all those experiences with you for the rest of your life.

MM: Right. Another part of it was that I had also enjoyed a very memorable degree of closeness among the Jesuits working in Brazil, so I was always keeping that wonderful experience in mind in every other community. The warmth of community life has al-

ways been important to me. When I have not experienced that, whatever the factor, it hurt a lot.

TS: So when you went back to Cheverus, although you were in a different place, your experience in Brazil was still very much present to you. Nonetheless you managed to adjust, for there you were doing a number of various things—counseling, teaching religion, and assisting the minister. And then from there you went to tertianship in 1976. Where was it?

DOING TERTIANSHIP

MM: The tertianship was based in Cambridge.

TS: All right.

MM: And it was a very interesting tertianship, because Bill Barry was assigned to be my director. I was asked, “Who do you want to be your director?” I said, “Well, I just assume I have Bill. I don’t know who else you have there, but I think Bill is all right.” As it turned out, Bill proved to be a terrific director for me at that time. He was just the perfect guy for me. He was coming at me from an angle that I could recognize, and he gave me the particular encouragement that I needed to take off from where I was then.

Dealing with alcohol in my life was a big chapter. It took a lot of serious work and effort, and a lot of time. But by God’s grace I came through it OK, and I was able to make myself a stronger soldier in St. Ignatius’ army. It was before tertianship that I went to Guest House. That experience gave me a rigorous leatherneck course, brutally frank like the training the Marines get, to deal with the issues behind my alcoholism. I thank God every day for that experience.

CHAPLAIN AT BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL

TS: All right. Then you had about three years at Boston City Hospital as a chaplain, with final vows in 1978. Then in 1980 you started your stint in the provincial offices, which lasted about sixteen years.

ON THE PROVINCIAL STAFF

MM: Starting with Ed O’Flaherty as provincial, that’s right, yes. That was an interesting period. Ed was an interesting leader; he had his own style. I learned a lot from him. The thing about Ed was, he would really stay with you, and be as honest as he could. He was not trying to pretend to be someone other than who he was. Yet at the same time he did appreciate having the ordinary supports of government, you know, provided for a provincial—consultants, his *socius*, and so forth. Ed was also not what you would call a haranguer. He would not just get up and say, “This is what we are going to do from now on, and we want you to all jump in line.” It was interesting to see that usually it would be a more systematic plan, which would be tied in with other aspects of Province life. Such planning involved a lot of time elaborating it.

TS: How was it for you to adjust to working to another provincial’s style, when Bob Manning was provincial?

MM: It was a time of personal growth. During my work with Bob Manning we were all taking those tests for compatibility in working with one another. The tests would tell us a lot about how compatible we were with one another in our style of working on a problem. And the tests would also tell us about opportunities that we might have missed, areas where we could have worked together much more effectively. As a result, I later learned that there were a lot of

times when, if I just took the time to wait until I felt I clearly understood what the provincial had in mind, and then stepped forward and promoted my ideas on his proposal as far as I could, then I could usually make more sense, than if I just jumped in every once in a while

TS: So you gradually learned from those tests how to work more compatibly?

MM: Yes. They were helpful. So whenever I would remember to wait until a project proposal gradually got clarified, I found we would be in a much better position to develop it successfully. I remember saying the chances were that we would be asked to do something down in Brazil, and that a school would be one possibility. Sure enough, almost like clock work, we had a request come in for us to open one there.

TS: Rio de Janeiro?

MM: In Goiânia, southwest of Brasilia.

TS: What did the request involve?

MM: It was for us to develop a school for the people who were working in Goiânia at the two public universities, one federal, the other state. The Jesuits there were developing an educational approach as an example for our use, if we were to go into Brazil. I found such planning very interesting, and there were a million things like that going on.

TS: So you were still involved with Brazil through your position here in the Province?

MM: Right.

TS: Now from Bob Manning's time as provincial, you served under Bill Barry, too, as provincial, didn't you?

MM: Bill, yes. I always liked having a lot of responsibility, and he gave me a lot to do.

TS: During Bill's time you again became *socius*, his assistant and right-hand man?

MM: Yes.

TS: And then from there you spent a year at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Storrs, at the University of Connecticut. You were associate pastor there.

MM: Oh, yes, that seems like it was just last week. But that kind of parish work in a college setting was not my strong suit. It was OK, but not so challenging as I have found planning and similar work.

TS: Right, and then you were at B.C.

MM: Yes.

REFLECTING ON HIS LIFE IN THE SOCIETY

TS: As you look back over your life, are there any things about your life in the Society that you would find important to say for somebody who is interested in a vocation to the Society? Anything about the Society that it would be important for them to know?

MM: Well, I think vocation promoters should have a good general knowledge of the conditions of education nowadays, to know what the kids are like, what university students are like, even what other seminarians are like, what the conditions of the typical seminary are like nowadays, and what the expectations of the seminary are. I think all of those things are very important.

TS: Because those apply to us, as well as to diocesan seminarians.

MM: Yes, right.

TS: Yes, I think that is a good point.

MM: Yes.

TS: In asking this question of you, I am struck how ironic it is, because today in this interview the roles between you and me have been reversed. When you were in office under Ed O'Flaherty in the early '80s, I was a candidate to the Society, and it was you who were asking me the questions.

MM: Oh, yes. Is that so?

TS: Yes. I am grateful for my vocation to the Society. So I just want to thank you for what you shared with us. You have shared a lot. I appreciate what you shared. It is very insightful into life in the Society, and you were also very personal about your own life in the Society.

MM: When I have talked about my life before, I have been conscious it is a rather complicated journey. I have found that the deeper you go into your past memories, the more you could get absorbed in the details.

TS: Right, right.

MM: But when I have talked about my life, I prefer to speak from an actual context. I usually had something concrete in mind, so I could immediately develop the topic with plenty of fresh examples from my recent experiences. I could talk about where I had been and where I would be planning to be in the future, and how I could plan for that.

TS: I see that planning was a key part of your life and ministry in the Society. So it must be frustrating to not be able to do that now with the same ease?

MM: Yes, yes.

TS: It is becoming more difficult to do that?

MM: Well, to tell you the truth, I am somewhat out of practice. I have not spent enough time trying to do it in recent years. I have been more focused on the present. Yet I have a lot of time to reflect on my life as I lie flat on my back. I am struck by how big a role illness has played. And as I reflect, I think of all those who were so generous to me, especially my nephew, Brendan, who gave me one of his kidneys when I really needed it.

TS: Wow. All right. Thank you.

MM: You're welcome.

Rev. Martin P. MacDonnell, S.J.

Born: October 18, 1931, Springfield,
Massachusetts
Entered: August 14, 1957, Poughkeepsie, New York,
Novitiate of St. Andrew-on-Hudson
Ordained: June 11, 1966, Weston, Massachusetts,
Weston College
Final Vows: April 22, 1978, College of the Holy Cross,
Worcester, Massachusetts [with his brothers,
also Jesuits, John and Joseph]

- 1945 Springfield, Massachusetts: Cathedral High School
- Student
- 1949 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College -
Student
- 1953 U.S. Navy: Service during Korean War
- 1957 Poughkeepsie, New York: Novitiate of St. An-
drew-on-Hudson - Novice (8/1957-58)
- 1958 Gloucester, Massachusetts: Gonzaga Retreat
House - Novice (8/58-11/58)
Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/
Shadowbrook - Novice (11/58-5/59)
- 1959 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
philosophy
- 1961 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy
Cross - Taught philosophy
- 1963 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied
theology
- 1967 Salvador da Bahia, Brazil: Monte Serrate (and
various other Jesuit residences) - Studied Portu-
guese (1967-68), minister (1967-69), pastoral minis-
try
- 1969 Barrio of Federaçaõ, Salvador da Bahia, Brazil:
Jesuit Residence - Minister, pastoral ministry,
studied Portuguese

- 1970 Barrios of Ondina and Federaçaõ, Brazil: Jesuit Residence - Vice-superior, pastoral ministry
- 1971 Barrios of Ondina and Federaçaõ: Centro Pastoral - Vice-superior, pastoral ministry, collaborating in socio-pastoral apostolate; parish priest; minister (1973-4)
- 1974 Portland, Maine: Cheverus High School - Assistant director of educational counseling; sub-minister; taught religion (1975-76)
- 1976 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for Religious Development/42 Kirkland St. - Tertianship
- 1977 Boston, Massachusetts: Immaculate Conception Rectory - Assistant chaplain at Boston City Hospital; studied theology at Weston School of Theology; tertianship
- 1978 Charlestown, Massachusetts: St. Joseph Center - Assistant chaplain at Boston City Hospital; minister (1979-80)
- 1980 Boston, Massachusetts: Province Offices - Director of International Ministries (1980-81); Director of Pastoral Apostolate (1980-81); Assistant for Pastoral Apostolate (1981-84); Socius to Provincial (1981-90); Coordinator/Director of Refugee Services (1984-86); Director of Jesuit Missions (1984-86); Executive Assistant to Provincial (1984-88); Director of Vocations (1986-87); Superior of Province Curia Community (1988-90); Director of Refugee Services (1988-90)
- 1990 Santa Barbara, California: Old Mission - Sabbatical (Fall 1990); directed move to new provincial offices and residence (Spring 1991)
- 1991 Boston, Massachusetts: Province Offices - Assistant for International Apostolate (1991-96); Assistant for Province Refugee Services (1991-96); Assistant for Province Planning (1991-94); Superior of Curia Residence (1991-1996); Acting Director of

- Formation (1991-92); Socius to Provincial (1992-1995); Assistant for Pastoral Ministries (1994-96)
- 1996 Storrs, Connecticut: St. Thomas Aquinas Parish - Associate pastor; Provincial Assistant for International Ministry
- 1997 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Jesuit Community at Boston College - Assistant to administrator/ treasurer for Jesuit community (1997-2004); assisted with graduate students (2004-05)
- 2005 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center - Praying for the Church and the Society

Degrees

- 1953 Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Arts, Boston College
- 1961 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1961 Licentiate in Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1967 Master of Divinity, Weston College-Boston College