

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. James B. Malley, S.J.
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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.

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

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. James B. Malley, S.J.
by Fr. Richard W, Rousseau, S.J.
May 10, 2006

EARLY YEARS

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome.

MALLEY: Thank you.

RR: I'd like to ask you about various phases of your life, starting with your birth.

JM: I was born in 1921.

RR: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

JM: Yes, we were four children. I was the oldest. My next younger sister, Joan, is deceased. I have a brother, Jack, and another younger sister, Janice, both of whom are now living up in Portland, Maine.

FIRST THEME: SAVING ONE'S SOUL

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

JM: Actually, there were three parental figures in the family. My father was the child of Irish immigrants. He worked as a boy in the local factories and went on to become a shoe manufacturer. He was born and brought up in Randolph, Massachusetts. My mother came from Paso Robles, California, where my ma-

ternal grandmother was also born. She had been educated in the East and lived for long periods in Boston after her father lost everything in the San Francisco Fire. Mother and Dad met through mutual friends when she was on a visit to Boston. My maternal grandmother lived with us as a de facto member of our immediate family until I was thirty. She was a very important member of our family.

RR: And where did your family live?

GROWING UP IN NEWTON

JM: Actually, I grew up in Newton. I was born in Beverly, but I grew up in Newton until I was 18. And then we moved up to New Hampshire, because that's where my father's shoe factory was. He was just exhausted with the commuting involved. We moved to Somersworth, New Hampshire. And then, except for two periods in the Navy during World War II and Korea, three years at Harvard Law from '46 to '49, and a year with a Boston law firm, I was very largely a New Hampshire resident until I entered the Society.

EARLY PARISHES AND RELIGIOUS IMPACT

RR: And during those years, what was your local parish church?

JM: In Waban, part of Newton, we lived in St. Philip Neri parish. In Somersworth, New Hampshire, it was the old Holy Trinity parish, the so-called "Irish church," which meant that English was spoken rather than French.

RR: Well, now we have a background of very nicely laid out "themes" The first theme is about your Christian vision of life starting at an early age.

JM: Yes. What I basically wanted to show in these "themes," Dick, were a few things that seem to run

through the varied events in my life and help to explain them. I was born and brought up with Christian beliefs. They were the foundational bases of my life. They were essentially what I would later know as the “Principle and Foundation” of St. Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises, which I first learned in the *Baltimore Catechism*. For example, to love, honor, and serve God in this life and thereby save one’s soul. Our life here on earth is a preparation for our fuller life with God. That vision of life was and still is absolutely fundamental. And I got that from my parents and my grandmother. That’s how I was brought up, and it’s the foundation in my life.

IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

JM: When I was practicing law in Manchester in 1955 or so, I remember how, as, I was coming home, I saw a number of people coming out of church on the afternoon of All Saints Day. I had gone to Mass in the morning and, as I had been doing, I had just ducked in and out. And I thought to myself, “You think that your eternity with God is the most important thing in your life. And you’re giving it about forty minutes a week.” I think that was the moment that I really began to think about the need for a new direction in my life. In saying that, I don’t mean that my faith and my religious vision had been on the back burner. But it wasn’t something explicit either. So I began trying to make it more explicit. My first thought was to join a religious order and become a priest, praising, reverencing, and serving God. I saw it as a way of living out my basic beliefs and saving my soul.

EARLY ECUMENISM FROM GRANDMOTHER

RR: And I understood from what you said before that

your grandmother had a lot to do with this.

JM: Yes, my grandmother did influence me strongly. In a way, she was a unique kind of person. Her father was Protestant; her mother was Catholic. She was brought up in Paso Robles, California, conscious of being Catholic. She and her mother used to drive in the wagon to the old San Miguel Mission every Sunday. But when she came home, they'd have breakfast and then hitch up the horses and she would drive down to Atascadero to go to the Baptist Church with her father. She also used to sing in their choir. So she had a very profound ecumenical experience as a child. She was way ahead of her time. She was very important in my life.

She once said to me when I was being teased about being a Catholic, "Jimmy, Jesus said that when two or three gather in my name, I'm with them." And she added, "Jesus didn't say anything about Protestants and Catholics. We all just try to serve the Lord." That was very important to me.

Also very important to me throughout my whole life was her compassion for losers. I remember one time we were walking down the street in Boston around 1930 in the bottom of the Depression. We saw a drunk lying on the sidewalk. She looked at him and gave him some money. Then she said: "Just imagine how that poor fellow feels." I've never forgotten it. It made such an impression on me that it influenced my whole life. It gave me a vision of Christianity has led me to try and reach out to losers and the marginalized. I figure that if I do that for them, the Lord may be moved to take care of me.

RR: Yes, I can see that. You've done a number of concrete things in that same spirit of ecumenical understanding.

A MINORITY EXPERIENCE

JM: Well, in many ways I knew all about religious bigotry and hatred, because I grew up in a very Protestant section of Boston. The “Revised Klan” was everywhere in those days. We Catholics were a small minority. I don’t mean that we were hated by most people, but we were certainly suspect. I always felt myself to be some kind of “outsider.” That’s why I’ve always tried to gravitate toward people who feel like they’re outsiders. Whether they’re slum dwellers in Brazil or prisoners in jail, my tendency is to try to help them as best I can. My heart goes out to them. I figure the winners can take care of themselves. [Chuckles]

INFLUENCED BY SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND BY WIDE RELIGIOUS CONTACTS

RR: And I gather too that you felt a certain affinity to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius because it expressed a kind of kindred spirit.

JM: Yes, in a way. St. Ignatius introduced me to Jesus. I was a practicing Catholic, but I certainly didn’t know much about Jesus. My piety was influenced by the fact Protestants were the ones who were talking to me about Jesus. I practiced Catholic devotions and bowed my head when Jesus’ name was mentioned. During the long years of Jesuit formation I began a process of deepening my experience of Jesus as my friend and Lord. And this has developed into a Christ-centered piety.

SECOND THEME: COLLABORATION

RR: Let’s go on to your second theme: the personal insights you got from a spirit of collaboration.

JM: Well, basically, I don’t like confrontation and conflict. I suppose it all boils down to that. My personal

instinct is to seek collaboration and reach understanding with others. The other way sees life as sort of a race. I always thought that competition was basically silly. At times I have had to go through this sort of thing, but I never particularly liked it. My instinct is always to seek to collaborate with people, not compete with them. Of course, points of difference do come up in religious matters. But we need to try and understand each other. We need to search out our agreements. Once again, we're talking about inter-religious dialogue. I deeply believe in it.

GROWING WITH CHANGES IN THE CHURCH

RR: There has been a number of changes in the Catholic Church due to Vatican II. In 1963-1964 ecumenical instincts and ideas came to the forefront. You already were thinking along these lines, but did this strengthen your own viewpoint?

JM: My position was clear, but the Council put a seal of approval on what I already believed. I remember my mother saying, "If a person is sincere in their belief, God loves them." My family operated in this way—quite independently of church statements. Our friendship circle included many Protestant friends of my parents. As I said, my Dad was in the shoe business, and he had loads of Jewish friends. Good friends. Our friendship circle embraced everybody. And I've often felt a bit "strange" as a priest, because I've never felt much of an urge to convert anybody. I try to understand people and talk to them. When I go to a Jewish family for Friday evening services, which includes dinner and candle lighting, I know God is with us. The changes in the Church and the growth of dialog are, for me, a great liberation. I just used to do it quietly on my own, but now, [chuckles], I seem to have a seal of approval.

DISCOVERING REAL LEGAL INTERESTS

RR: That could be called a real “insight.”

JM: Yes. But that whole thing could play out in another way. too. I remember when I came back from a trial where I was assisting my old senior partner. He asked me, “Jim, how did you like it?” I said, “Okay.” He said, “Take my word for it, Jim. If you don’t get out of the trial business, you’ll be dead before you’re 40.” I said, “What’s the matter? Did I do something wrong?” He answered, “No, you were great, but you don’t have the internal disposition for this kind of thing. Trial work is confrontation and conflict. You get nervous, anxious, and upset by it. Your talents lie in a different direction.” He was right. They did lie elsewhere. I was great as an office lawyer and planner, but I just never liked the conflict in trials. I especially don’t like disputations about religion. I’d much rather talk things through.

A PERSONALISTIC FOCUS

RR: That comes through loud and clear.

JM: Yes, it’s a kind of personality trait. I can say, “That’s the way I am.”

RR: It was very insightful for your senior partner to see that himself.

JM: He could talk to me that way, because he was an old friend of my father’s. He said, “I can go home at night and close the door and forget about the case. You go home at night and you worry about it all night.” And he was right! In a way, I’m an anxious guy. [Chuckles]

RR: So, when you became more fully aware of this personal trait, what did you decide to do from then on?

MAIN ACTIVITY AS A PARTNER

JM: In the law firm itself, I concentrated on business work, tax planning, and bank representation. And I got pretty good at it. It was a time when there were lots of business startups and our firm needed people like me. There were enough trial people around. In the first days, another lawyer and I were the ones best suited for business. It was something I liked, so I went on with it. It turned out to be a very creative opportunity. When someone came in interested in starting a business, we were able to help him to decide how much he would want in bonds and various kinds of stock. Then we were able to help him get it set up and functioning the way he wanted it. I felt that all this was a kind of “art form” that made use of my knowledge.

RR: Impressive

FEELINGS WHEN LEAVING THE PRACTICE OF LAW

JM: That’s why I loved it. And when I left the practice of law, I could do so feeling that I had done something positive and was successful. And that was it.

RR: So what led you to give up law? And what was your next step in that context?

JM: A couple of things. First, I’d been made a partner in the law firm, and we had a good practice. I loved my partners. They were colleagues, friends, and wonderful partners. So I could look back and say, “I’m not running away from anything. I’m a success.” But the law to me was nothing but a way to earn a living. It was not in any sense a vocation. I practiced law, because I hadn’t inherited a large amount of money. I had to earn a living.

DECISION TIME FOR PRIESTHOOD

JM: So that's what I did. As I said earlier, one day I came back from doing some work in Rockingham County and I saw the people coming out of a nearby church. And I thought to myself, "It's All Saints Day." I was reminded of having gone to Mass in the morning. So when I saw them coming out of church, I said to myself, "You're spending about forty minutes a week at something you think is the most important thing in your life. You'd better look into this." So it became clearer to me that I was basically a religious person. And I thought, "Well, all right. Maybe I ought to think about having a vocation." And, as a matter of fact, I did start thinking about it then and there. I thought about it for a couple of years. And a diocesan priest, Arthur Sullivan, in our parish was very helpful to me. In fact, he steered me to the Jesuits.

TURNING TO THE JESUITS

RR: Providential connection!

JM: I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do as a priest. And Arthur said, "Jim, if you go to the Jesuits, they do all sorts of things." And I said, "Well, look. I'm getting up in my thirties now. I don't want to spend another thirteen years getting educated." [Laughter] And he said, "Well, they can probably trim it a little bit. At least go and talk to them."

Growing up around Newton, I had good memories of the Jesuits. When we were little kids, we'd casually bump into the Jesuit priests at B.C. And my impression at the time was that they were nice guys. And I knew if I was going to be a priest, I wanted to be a member of a community. And I knew from my contacts with the Jesuits that they were educated, and, especially, that they were nice guys.

They were the kind of people I liked and wanted to live with. And, in my mind, “being a nice guy,” as they were, is a kind of ministry in itself. That’s what turned me around. I’d always had this vision. But the Jesuits seemed to represent what I was looking for.

Also, I loved adventure. I loved the intellectual life. I was interested in service of the poor. These were all things the Society did. And as I was telling you earlier, I spent the first thirty five years of my life trying to sort all these things out for myself. I needed to clarify my priorities and how it would all work out. So, finally, six days before my 36th birthday, I entered the Jesuit novitiate at Wernersville, Pennsylvania. As Jung said, at thirty-five, everything comes together.

RR: Could you make this a bit more concrete for us?

FOLLOWING HIS MYSTIC SIDE

JM: Yes. It’s all well and good to say, “I want to serve God.” But what do you do next? When I went to Wernersville, my novice master was a great help in introducing me to prayer. But I realized that I wasn’t really a mystic. I saw myself as more focused on the active life. And then, in the philosophy courses here at Weston and later, in the theology courses at Woodstock, it became quite clear to me that I didn’t have much affinity or talent for abstract thinking. Also, I wasn’t planning to become a teacher. I was much more attracted to the practical service of people. So when I finished my time at Weston, I was sent to B.C. for six months for my regency. And I spent my time there “practicing law” — reviewing various endowments, looking at pending estate files, and even looking over the history of B.C.’s land holdings in Boston. I tried to systematize them and explain how

to handle this sort of material. When I was “practicing law” in this way, it became clear to me that I could serve God in a very concrete way through financial management. And I thought, “That’s at least part of what I have to do.” At the same time, it didn’t appeal to me all that much or seem very religious, because it didn’t involve much outreach to people.

CENTRALITY OF WORKING WITH PEOPLE

RR: Working with people seemed to you to be more important to you than working with things?

JM: That’s right. And I had to confront the fact that if I worked with “things,” I was going to end up in some sort of office for the rest of my life. So I was drawn much more to practical service. And that’s what drew me to the Jesuit mission in Brazil, Latin America, where we were called to serve the poor.

RR: A great vision!

JM: So I was drawn to that and to working with prisoners—all of which brings me to my work with law students. Then, and as strange as it may seem, my talent working with law students was much more like living with people. They are under terrible stress. Even someone in a slum experiences no more stress than law students do.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS

RR: Why is that?

JM: There are all sorts of reasons. Competition is intense and the career stakes are high. Their call to problem-solving is demanding, even intense. There’s competition for jobs. Then there is the problem of their finances. They have to work very hard on these because, how shall I put it, they have to manage huge amounts of debt. As you can see, law school is a very stressful kind of place. So I could say to myself, “Look,

I'm working with people who are in acute stress, away from home and need help." All this was certainly true at Georgetown and B.C. law schools where I worked. I was also very much drawn to working with non-Catholic students, because they were in an alien atmosphere. I knew the world of the "outsider." Besides I'd lived with Protestant and Jewish guys all my life, could talk their language, and share their culture.

RR: Yes.

JM: And so, I was truly reaching out to people. I could always go along with young people. But the ones I really tried to reach out to were those who were in difficulty.

NAVY SERVICE DURING WWII AND KOREA

RR: Going back just a bit could you tell us something about the impact on you of your service in the Navy? Also, if I remember correctly, you mentioned something about being at Dartmouth. Could you also tell us something about that?

JM: Yes. That's one of the themes I mentioned at the beginning. One theme is about intellectual challenge and the other is my love of adventure. From the time I was a small boy, I was fascinated by the Navy. My mother had friends in the Navy. I wanted to go to the Naval Academy. After three years at Boston Latin, I transferred to Admiral Farragut Academy to prepare for the Naval Academy. I was gung-ho for the Navy. After my secondary school education, however, it became quite clear to me that I didn't have much natural talent in science and math, both of which had to be grasped quickly to get through the Naval Academy. So I moved on. I went to Dartmouth. We can get back to that later.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, I joined the Navy in January of '42. I then graduated from college in December of '42 and was called up to active duty. I was commissioned in May of '43 and was what they called a "90-Day Wonder." I was always the frustrated adventurer type. I dreamed of being on an aircraft carrier. In real life, I ended up on a little landing ship doing what was the necessary and humdrum work that war is all about. To be honest with you, I was broken-hearted. I would love to have been on a carrier or cruiser as a big-time career officer. But I have to add, as I look back, that I was given command of my own small ship. Being in command of a ship in a war zone had a very maturing influence on me. It was something I could not have gotten any other way.

KOREAN WAR

RR: What was your rank during these times?

JM: I was a lieutenant junior grade when I got command of the LSM #1, a new class of landing ship. Later, I was promoted to lieutenant. I got out of the Navy in '46 and went to law school from '46 to '49. I practiced law for a year after graduating from law school and got called back into the Navy during the Korean War. Since, by this time, I had law school behind me, they made me an intelligence officer on the Commander in Chief's staff in Pearl Harbor. That was a wonderful job—one of the most interesting tours of duty you could ever imagine. I was doing strategic intelligence analysis. I loved it, because it involved a quite different side of the Navy. The training, thinking, and reasoning I got at Harvard Law put me at least on a par with the Academy grads. On the other hand, they knew more about the technicalities of ships.

NO COMMISSION FOR RESERVISTS

RR: An interesting reversal, right?

JM: Yes, and to be honest, I did a good job on that staff. They wanted me to stay on when my two years were up, but, because they couldn't offer me a regular Navy commission, I got out of the Navy.

RR: How could they expect you to stay if they didn't offer you a commission?

JM: While I was on active duty, the Navy had not yet come up with its program to integrate reserve officers into the regular Navy. That meant that I could be let go at any time. If I had been offered a regular commission as an intelligence specialist, I would have at least considered it seriously.

DARTMOUTH EXPERIENCES

JM: You asked earlier about Dartmouth. Well, after I concluded that I probably wasn't good enough in math and engineering to survive in the Naval Academy, I was drawn to Dartmouth, because my father was a Dartmouth grad. I hadn't had stellar grades in prep school, but I did get in. I'm grateful to my father for many, many things, including especially the fact that his presence and personal intervention probably got me into Dartmouth. I am, in a way, also very grateful to Dartmouth itself for accepting a green, insecure kid.

I had loved history since I was a little boy and I loved it at Dartmouth. They recognized my love of history, and encouraged me to pursue history courses. It was a great little teaching college. Dartmouth was a truly wonderful experience for me. I got top grades in history. And I came out of there confident that I had a real grasp of the field. In many ways I would have loved to go on in history. But the fact was that, though Dartmouth was a great teaching college, it

never really gave me the thirst for graduate-level scholarship, because my destiny when I left Dartmouth in 1942 was the Navy. Once I got into the Society, however, I was exposed to the possibility of graduate school.

But then I said to myself, “Here I am, thirty-eight years old. I can’t ask the Society to put me through a doctoral program. So I’ve got to make the education I have and my experience the basis of my future contribution.” And that’s what I did. It might have been different if I entered when I was twenty-one. But, of course, that was not the case. It was just too late.

YEARS IN BRAZIL MISSION

RR: You did say something briefly earlier about going to Brazil.

JM: Yes. First of all, I was interested mainly in pastoral work, in helping people. When I got out of my theology course in 1965, the Pope had just asked all the religious orders to send people to work in Latin America. So I volunteered to go to Mexico, because my family, with California roots, had a background down there. But when the Provincial asked me, “Would you be willing to go to Brazil?”, I said, “Sure.” So, to make a long story short, soon after I was ordained at Woodstock in 1965, I was sent to Brazil. At the time, there was already a group of several New England Jesuits working in a Brazilian mission.

DECISION ON WHERE TO SERVE IN BRAZIL

JM: So I went first to up-country Brazil in São Paulo State with only six weeks of Portuguese. I spent my first year there mainly learning Portuguese and getting exposed to the culture. Fr. Denny Brown was serving down there with me, and it boiled down to the

two of us investigating concrete possibilities for work for our New England group. So, one day, we got into a car and started traveling around various places in Northeast Brazil. We thought the Northeast might be the best area to set up a New England presence. We went from Campinas, where we were living with the New Orleans Province Jesuits. We set off to investigate around the State of Bahia, and specifically in its capital, São Salvador. Then we went up to Recife and Juazeiro in the interior of the State of Bahia.

Our conclusion was that, since we were focusing mainly on a pastoral presence, São Salvador and the State of Bahia were good places on which to focus our attention. Just about that time, the New England Province Provincial, Fr. J.V. O'Connor, came visiting. So Denny, J.V., and I tried to look at possibilities. We then talked to Fr. Bresciani, Provincial of the Italian Vice-Province of Bahia. We told him of our plan to work pastorally for and with the poor. He agreed with our decision and hope to begin a New England presence in the rather notorious slum we already had in mind. Its houses and walkways were built on stilts over the water of a tidal swamp. The residents were filling in the area with whatever they could find, mainly the garbage of the city.

MINISTRY IN THE SLUMS OF BRAZIL

JM: So we moved there, and started living and working there with the poor. It was a mission targeted on being a living presence in that slum area with the very poor. At night, we would say Mass in their little houses and shacks. There was no church building. And we went around trying to help the residents in any way we could. For instance, there was a real nice lady with three children who had never had the money to get married in the Church. So I said to

her, “Well, I can marry you.” And so, with her children present, we celebrated her marriage in her own house. We got the paperwork done for her. Of course we didn’t charge anything. We did a lot of marriages.

RUNNING WATER

JM: So we were able to be helpful in a number of small ways. I also remember asking a very bright resident, “What can we do for you?” And he said, “Look, Padre, you guys can go to the governor about us. We can’t get to him. What we need down here is running water. Our women are spending six hours a day lugging water to our houses. The best thing you could do for us is to get running water down to our houses or near them.” I said, “You guys should do that yourselves.” And he said, “We can’t speak to the government people, because we don’t speak good Portuguese well enough and they look down on us because of the way we talk.” And I said, “Well, you can speak Portuguese a lot better than I do.” But he pointed out that we had “status” and our foreign accents didn’t matter. In fact, the rich whites used to laugh, because Denny and I spoke with a local accent Bahian—“Black Portuguese.” So we went up were to the city and spoke to the proper government commission. And, to make a long story short, we were listened to, and before long the slums had running water.

RR: That was a great achievement,

LIMITED SANITATION SUCCESS

JM: Frankly, it was. If I look back and ask myself what we did for that little slum, the answer would be, “We got them something very important, running water.” Another problem we tried to deal with was the way that the streets were filled with garbage, a ter-

rible health problem and a terrible stench. They had a saying about this, namely, “Garbage is progress.” There were contests to get more garbage, probably because it was available and the government was happy to dump it nearby. What we were finally able to do, and it wasn’t much, was to get them to stop dropping infected hospital garbage in the streets. So, as you can see, our “service” to them was rather limited. At the same time, of course, we were saying Masses for the people, baptizing the kids, and trying to encourage their own efforts.

BRAZILIAN MISSION: BROADER QUESTIONS

RR: What was the idea of sending New England Jesuits to Brazil in the first place?

JM: It was in response, I believe, to the Pope’s request that all religious orders send people to Latin America to help the desperate shortage of clergy and to serve the poor. This was the New England Jesuits’ response to that request. At the time, we had a mission in Jamaica and another in Baghdad, Iraq. Brazil was also the last of the old “Province Missions.” I think now that we probably should have integrated our little group immediately into the Bahia Vice-Province that had been there for a longer time. But the model at the time was for the different provinces to have their own missions, autonomous of one another, but collaborative in ministry. And, as Fr. Bresciani said, “We’re all Italians here. We’re foreigners, just as you are.”

The idea, in part, was the possibility of attracting foundational money from the States as well as vocations from home. But I think that we would have been better off working on a partnership immediately with the Italian Vice-Province. We wasted an awful lot of time trying to determine our “distinct

mission identity.” Lest there be any misunderstanding, the Italian Jesuits were great guys to work with. They were holy, hard-working, imaginative, and wonderful Jesuit companions. We had some different customs, of course, but I enjoyed being and working with them.

RR: Your analysis of all this is very perceptive.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BRAZILIAN MISSION

JM: Well, after I came back to the U.S. from Brazil, I went to tertianship and it gave me the opportunity to think about my work in the Society. I was searching for what I should do next. I was haunted by something a Brazilian priest had once said to me, “Now, look, Jayme, you guys are sort of ‘ecclesiastical imperialists’— coming down here to make over our church.” There was truth in his observation. We came as “reformers.” It was “in the air.” We believed we were following the lead of the Alliance for Progress of the United States as well as the new decrees of Vatican II. We felt that we were going to help reform both the Brazilian church and Brazil itself. And actually, as I look back, our vision was rather ingenuous but innocently arrogant.”

RR: Any second thoughts?

JM: It just wasn’t realistic. Brazil had been Catholic for 400 years and we weren’t going to change the Brazilian Church. I also talked about this with a good friend of mine, and he said to me, “It’s been problematic for foreigners from Germany, Italy, the United States, and other parts of the world to come down here and tell us what our church should be like.” And as I reflected on this, I said to myself, “The Brazilians have wonderful ideas for developing their own church.” So I came to really doubt the wisdom of

sending foreign priests like myself down to Brazil. Not many people agreed with me and many do not agree with me now. I respect their disagreement, but I respect my own doubts too.

RR: Isn't our Brazil undertaking at least much diminished?

JM: The Provincial still has a twinning agreement with the Brazilian Province, and we help them financially, I believe. And, shortly after I left, we stopped the autonomous Brazilian New England mission. The remaining Americans were applied or transferred to the Bahian Vice-Province in a way that respected our differing cultural identities.

JESUIT CONFERENCE

JM: And that's the way the Society with its Assistancies and Provinces operated when I was down in Washington [1984-1988] with the Jesuit Conference. We were trying to promote twinning agreements between, say, American or Canadian provinces and provinces in Africa, South America, and other countries.

LAW SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY

RR: Now, when you did come back to the States and settled down, your main apostolate for some years was as a campus minister to law school students, first at Georgetown and then at Boston College. Could you tell us more about that?

JM: Yes, it started at Georgetown. A good friend of mine, Larry Madden, a classmate from Woodstock days, was the Georgetown campus minister. He offered me a job to go the Georgetown Law School as a campus minister with Brian McGrath. At the time, Georgetown Law had over 2,000 students. It was a huge law school, and Brian was alone. During my

first couple of years, I worked with Brian McGrath — a wonderful guy from whom I learned a lot, especially about Georgetown.

RR: I see.

JM: And it soon became clear that my style of ministry was to go around talking with people. I used to call it “prowling around.” I’d cruise the common areas, and I tried to talk especially with people who seemed lonely or out of place. I just talked to everybody I’d meet; that was how I made friends.

RR: That’s how you did it.

JM: Yes. So it wasn’t a surprise when my main ministry turned out to be counseling. I learned a lot from a wonderful woman, Sr. Mary Himens, who was persuaded to join the staff. She had forgotten more about counseling than I ever knew. On the other hand, I knew more than she did about law schools. So we made a good team and are good friends. As well as from Sr. Mary, I learned much as well as from Rabbi Harold White and Rev. Walter Scarvie, a Lutheran pastor. We were all campus ministers, working as a team.

RR: So there was a strong ecumenical and interfaith aspect to your work.

JM: Basically, we set up an ecumenical campus ministry, reflecting the inter-faith realities of the Law Center. And what we did together was talk to the students and listen to whatever their problems might be. Harold White, the rabbi, could end up talking to a Catholic, and I might be talking to a Jewish student at the same time. We were trying to be helpful to them in any way we could. And I really should say this: the Georgetown and B.C. Law schools as institutions and their faculties, staffs, and students were wonderfully welcoming. They couldn’t have been any more welcoming than they were.

RR: As counselors and ministers?

JM: Yes, in every way. I would say Mass every day and we would all do all sorts of things that seemed to be needed and within our chance to help. But they just really welcomed all our efforts of every sort.

SOME TEACHING AT GEORGETOWN AND B.C.

JM: I also taught at B.C. and at Georgetown in certain team seminars. At Georgetown, I was involved in a seminar on medical-legal ethics. At B.C. Law, a fellow by the name of Prof. John Flackett had developed a wonderful course he called “Law and Literature.” He invited me to contribute to that. We would have the students read works of literature like *Billy Budd*. We would then use them in our discussion. These works of literature were designed to raise the legal or moral issues they would be facing—situations where the character, a court or even the legal system were challenged morally. In good literature, they could identify with the problems they would have to deal with in their practice.

RR: Very effective teaching.

JM: John developed it. We had this wonderful seminar every year based on about ten or twelve such books. He and I were good friends and we made a good team.

RR: It made the issues more concrete. You were showing them how to deal with real people.

JM: Absolutely. It was much more real to identify with a character out of a good piece of fiction.

FOUR MAIN PROBLEMS OF LAW STUDENTS

RR: Without going into anything confidential, what would you say were the students key issues or problems? And how were you able to help them with these?

JM: We dealt with just about everything you could think

of. I would say that a very frequent student problem that we tried to help with each year was their loneliness. A law school is a lonely place. There were a number of factors involved.

First, in order to get into a law school like Georgetown or B.C., they have to have been top performers in high school and college.

Second, when they did get into a first class law school—you guessed it—they're no longer stand-out hotshots. They were just one of the gang, as it were. They bump into people there who sometimes are better prepared than they are.

Third, finding a way to deal with being just "one of the gang" can be difficult. Many of them have been brought up in families where success is the prime goal and expectations are high. And success can easily become for them a measure of their own personal worth. Getting into law school only reinforces this attitude.

Fourth, they are devastated if say, they get a B grade. They can ask themselves, "Am I a nice person and can I be a good lawyer, even if I am in the middle of the class?" Disassociating grades from personal worth and even from future success as a lawyer, is a challenge they all wrestle with. They would sometimes come to us, because they couldn't find anybody else to talk to. They quickly realized that none of us was going to try to convert them. All we'd try to do was listen to them and help them sort things out. And that's what we did: exploring possibilities together.

THE WEIGHT OF LAW SCHOOL DEBT

JM: Students didn't come to us with legal problems. That's what the faculty solved. They came to us with personal problems. Another big problem that they

were faced with was financial, which worried them no end. Also, some marriages blew apart when one spouse carried the burden of financial support and the other was just studying. The law students were spending all their time on the books, and the marriages were under great tension.

RR: Was medical school also like this?

JM: I don't know, but I wonder if medical school culture is a bit more collaborative and supportive. Law school is unique in the sense that a law student feels very much alone, competing against the whole world. This loneliness is much more true now than when I went through law school in the golden age right after the war. The faculty was supportive, and there were plenty of jobs available. And as veterans, we bonded with one another. But by the time I got back to the law school scene, it was a whole new ball game. Also, when I first went to Georgetown, women students were pioneers in grad school. Women then faced the first generation of gender problems. Now, there is more parity between men and women in law schools.

POSSIBLE SUICIDES

JM: One of the very first students that came to me for counseling at Georgetown sat there and said, "I want to commit suicide."

RR: Oh, my!

JM: To make matters worse, at that time, I knew practically nothing about counseling. So I just prayed, "Please don't let me do anything wrong!" I tried to listen to and understand him. And fortunately, he didn't commit suicide.

RR: Oh, good.

JM: Fortunately we counselors were backed up by good medical support that we could turn to for help in such situations.

SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

PAUL KENNEY: I have a few follow-up questions. When you entered, you had gifts from your family and your upbringing that you brought to the Society of Jesus over the years. Can you point to how those gifts you came in with have been enhanced or deepened over the years? And do you feel that you have received new gifts?

JM: Gifts, in what sense?

PK: Gifts such as a relationship with the Lord, spiritual insight, or ability to minister to people .

JM: My basic gift is being comfortable with a short course in Christianity, such as the Apostles' Creed. Also important to me is a flexibility to adapt to the various challenges that I met in life. I'm not sure how much I've advanced. But I think I have the gift of a good mind that I've been challenged to use. I didn't have an overwhelming love for law as an academic discipline, however. I saw the law as a challenging way to earn a living, and I did quite well at it. And I did well at Harvard Law, where I got a superb training—a trained and disciplined mind. It's something I was able to use in the Society as well.

My most basic gift, I suppose, is compassion for people in order to help them. I reach out to losers. I know where that came from. It came from my parents and my grandmother. I absorbed this from them, and it's been with me all my life. I also have some weaknesses that I had to learn to live with. My parents were always very honest with us. If we did something wrong, we were told, but I never felt that they didn't love me. On the other hand, we were corrected from time to time. One other gift I had is the gift of good health. I have gone through life with remarkably few health problems. My life has been blessed.

TERTIANSHIP IN MEXICO

PK: My last question is about your tertianship in Mexico. How did that go?

JM: OK, I guess. It came after my years in Brazil. I had a two-semester tertianship. I started with a thirty-day retreat in Rhode Island, and then I went down to Mexico. One of the decisions I made there in Mexico was to become fairly good in Spanish, which I did. But it was now clear to me that my destiny probably should be up in the States, rather than in some Spanish-speaking country

YEAR IN ROME AND CANON LAW

RR: And my last question is about your year in Rome studying. What happened there?

JM: I had been at Georgetown for eight years, and it was time for a break. But they had no sabbatical program there. I had been working with people who were trying to get annulments for their marriages. So I thought to myself, "All right. I'll go over to Rome and acquire some more canon law." Unfortunately, to do that, I had to resign from Georgetown. So I said, "I've always wanted to see Rome. If I'm going to study canon law, I'll go over there and do it." So I did go. I had never taken a canon law course. The whole thing was taught in Latin, and I decided in a matter of months that was not the avenue I wanted to pursue. But it was an interesting trip abroad. And I learned Italian, which was one of the great things in my life. I also tied in with AA over in Rome, and received the great gift of sobriety, which I've been working at a day at a time for some 27 years now.

GRATITUDE FOR MANY BLESSINGS

RR: As we close, is there anything significant that we haven't touched on?

- JM: I feel we haven't yet said much about my gratitude for what so many people have given to me. If I've been able to do anything, I've been standing on the shoulders of an awful lot of wonderful people. In his book, *Big Russ and Me*, Russert talks about standing on his father's shoulders. Well, I certainly stand on my family's shoulders.
- JM: My father worked like the devil through the Depression and the war years. He held a little shoe business together, all the while trying to support his family. He always gave us an immense amount of his time and attention. He commuted regularly back and forth between New Hampshire and Boston. It was killing.
- JM: My mother, in her own way, was doing the same thing. My parents were always right there for me. My grandmother, too. At no time were we unable to get a hearing at home. Sometimes when I talk to people in jail, they say to me, "I have no good memories. I have a terrible time with my home life. It has been a mess." So I am especially grateful to be able to say that I'm indebted to God and my family. What good things I have had from them" [Chuckles]
- RR: Right.
- JM: And I must add that everywhere I went I met a lot of wonderful people. At Dartmouth, for example, two or three professors took an interest in me, brought me along, and encouraged me in many ways. I'll always be grateful to them. In the same way, a couple of professors at Harvard Law, who tended to be old-timers staying on to see the veterans on their return. I could go and talk to someone like Eddie Morgan or Austin Scott or Ralph Baker, and they'd give me their time.
- RR: Very dedicated.
- JM: I learned a lot from my colleagues in the Society. I can never mention them all. I'm so indebted to all of

them: Tom Gavigan, my Master of Novices at Wernersville, as well as Tom Clark and Gus Weigel at Woodstock, and Tom Fleming at B.C., for whom I worked for many years. I just feel that I've been carried along by wonderful people. It is one of the treasures of belonging to the Society and having been associated with this group of wonderful people throughout my life.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

RR: It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that there's been some sort of providential guidance in your life, where sometimes things seem to happen and you don't know exactly why. Yet they turned out to be the best thing that could happen to you or your friends. It all helps you to go on from there.

JM: Very much so. I just pray to God for guidance. I even prayed to God for some guidance in our conversation. I prayed to sort things out in what can be a bewildering blizzard of events. I sometimes just suddenly feel we are being guided. I don't think I'm naive. I'm sure the Lord inspires us this way.

LATER DISCERNMENT

RR: Anything you want to add or you think we went over too quickly?

JM: Yes. When I was finishing up my staff job at the Jesuit Conference in Washington, the provincial asked me, "What would you like to do?" And I said, "I've always thought that if I'd been born at a different time, I might liked to have been a nurse." And I think, in many ways, my vocation has been in that direction, whether in a law school, a jail, or even in Campion Center, where I am now. It's a question of trying to be compassionate and helping people in their feelings. I don't have to have "answers."

RR: But you listen and try to help others as best you can, right?

JM: Yes. I think that listening is the more important thing one can do. My biggest fault is that I talk too damn much. That's basically it.

RR: Anything else?

JM: Actually, I want to repeat how grateful I am to God and to a whole lot of people I've been able to help in my life. I haven't written any books or founded any universities or anything else. But "I've tried to be helpful." And I know I've done some of that.

RR: On that note, we will end. I want to thank you for your openness about yourself and your work. We are grateful and want to thank you sincerely. God bless you.

JM: Thank you!

Rev. James B. Malley, S.J.

- Born:** September 14, 1921, Beverly, Massachusetts
- Entered** September 7, 1957, Wernersville,
Pennsylvania
- Ordained:** June 18, 1964, Fordham University, Bronx,
New York
- Last Vows:** October 2, 1976, Georgetown University,
Washington, DC
-
- 1938 Pine Beach, New Jersey: Admiral Farragut
Academy - Student
- 1939 Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College -
Student
- 1943 U.S. Navy: Line Officer - Sea duty
- 1946 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Law School -
Student
- 1949 Boston, Massachusetts: Associate Attorney in Law
Firm
- 1950 U.S. Navy: Staff Officer CinCPacFleet - Intelli-
gence Duties
- 1953 Manchester, New Hampshire: Private Law Practice
- 1957 Wernersville, Pennsylvania: Novitiate

- 1958 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied philosophy
- 1961 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College - Assistant to Financial Vice-President
- 1961 Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College - Studied theology
- 1965 Brazil: Bahia Mission of New England Province
- 1971 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston School of Theology - Sabbatical
- 1972 Mexico: Tertianship
- 1973 Washington, DC: Georgetown University Law Center - Campus ministry
- 1980 Rome, Italy: Collegio Bellarmino - Sabbatical
- 1981 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College Law School - Campus ministry and Assistant Dean for Students
- 1984 Washington, DC: Jesuit Conference - Secretary for International Ministries
- 1988 Cambridge, Massachusetts: LaFarge House - Sabbatical
- 1989 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College Law School - General Assistant to Dean of Law School
- 1998 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College Law School - Adjunct Faculty

- 2000 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Jesuit Community at Boston College - Private Study and Domestic Duties
- 2005 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center - Assisted Living

Degrees

- 1943 Bachelor of Arts, History, Dartmouth College, cum laude
- 1949 Doctor of Law, Law, Harvard University
- 1965 Bachelor of Sacred Theology, Theology, Woodstock College

Awards

- 1980 Georgetown University Law Center Medal
- 1994 Boston College Law School Alumni Association Special Service Award
- 2000 Georgetown University Law Center Dean's Medal
- 2000 Boston College Law School Founder's Medal

At Boston College Law School, the James B. Malley, S.J., Award is given to the alumnus best exemplifying the Jesuit tradition