

**Transcription of Oral History Interview with Mr. Martin Barry (alumnus)  
Conducted by Kathleen Lingley, July 16, 2002.**

KL: What is your full name?

MB: Martin James Joseph Arthur Barry Jr.

KL: Quite a mouthful. How did you ever get so many names?

MB: I don't know, we're Irish decent so I guess, second name is after my grandfather, I don't know where the other two came from.

KL: When and where were you born?

MB: Montreal, Quebec.

KL: How did you come to Nova Scotia?

MB: Well my father played hockey, professional hockey, and then he came down here to coach Saint Mary's Juniors. Now that's not connected to Saint Mary's College.

KL: Mm hmm.

MB: It was more or less people from Saint Mary's Basilica who went there and they formed an athletic club called Saint Mary's Winter Gardens. In the fact the team he coached is going into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame this October.

KL: Oh neat. That's really cool.

MB: So he came down here for two years first and then he coached a team two years and then we came down the third year in the summer time. Subletted a house and then went back to Montreal for a month and then he found a house and we moved back down and we've been here ever since.

KL: How large was your family?

MB: I have an older sister and a younger brother. One year older, one year younger.

KL: Did your brother go to Saint Mary's as well?

MB: Yes, his picture was in one of the latest magazines there...

KL: The alumni magazine?

MB: Yeah. I forget which grade it was now. It was the High School. Probably eleven.

KL: Now when did you attend Saint Mary's High School?

MB: In 1948. My first year in grade ten, and then the next year grade eleven.

KL: And then you went through the College?

MB: College, yeah.

KL: OK. How many years?

MB: Well it was three years in the old building and then one year here in this building. The McNally Building.

KL: And uh what made you choose Saint Mary's?

MB: Well, my father was connected with the hockey team and was all involved in sports so I guess it was, that time it was a private school so, I don't know he just enrolled me.

KL: Um, do you remember who your professors were when you were at the High School and the College?

MB: Oh yeah.

KL: Could you tell me something about them?

MB: Well one of the most famous ones was Father Murphy. I forget his first name but he was a big, big tall man and he was a real character. He used to oh one of the fellows in the picture here, Scott was at the board one day and he couldn't get a question and he would say, "You should be on that radio program that we have here, How Wrong Can You Be? You had to get the wrong answer," he said "you'd be right every time." And he also used to call everyone "bonehead" when he got mad. And he used to keep a yardstick and he would normally, one student Bobby R, he used to clown around a bit and he was sitting right in front of him and he waved the yardstick about an eighth of an inch away from his nose up and down he would sit there and wouldn't move his head. One day he did something, he said right me a three page cowboy story. I was late and he said to me, he said, "What's your excuse?" I said "I didn't hear the alarm" "Why not" I said, "I was in my mother's room" he said you can get an extension for that then. But he was a real character. But he was a good teacher. He used to have a little pencil, just the lead, just silver piece and the eraser, and he used to put his nose down and be writing and at Christmas time we got him one of those huge pencils that you buy, about a foot long, he got a great charge out of that.

And then we had a Father MacKinnon, his people were from Candace Flowers in Montreal, big florist company, he used to get strict with us and one day he came and he started giving it to us and he told us he'd hold to the straight and started banging his hand on the desk like this and the next day he came into school with a splint on his finger and we said, "What's the matter with your finger Father?" So they were good, good teachers. Especially grade eleven class we had one new

Jesuit came in, Father Sutherland. We had close to forty people in that class. I think that's the worst they got then. Later I counted them I think there were forty-two. Evidently we drove him to a nervous break down.

KL: You guys were tough on him?

MB: Well, we used to call him Sudsy.

KL: Why?

MB: Because there was a detergent called Super Suds, and when he came in the class the guys would sing way in the back of the class, Super Suds, Super Suds, that was their motto when they sang the thing for the advertisement for Super Suds. So we called him Sudsy, short for Sutherland. But most of the teachers were good. I believe in High School we had strictly Jesuits and then when you got into the College is when you got into the lay teachers.

KL: Ok. And you were in Engineering?

MB: Yes.

KL: And you said you had Father Burke-Gaffney.

MB: Yes. Father Burke-Gaffney, he was, he was a smart man but if you said he was sort, he had a cute little smile, a snicker like, but he was brilliant.

KL: Now was there a dress code at Saint Mary's?

MB: Not really, but most kids dressed up casual, suits, but they didn't wear suit and tie, I wore dress shirt, you didn't wear jeans back then, you all wore dress pants and shirts or tee shirts.

KL: Do you remember any other High School or College rules?

MB: I don't think we had any rules back then. It was very small eh, there weren't many boarders eh and we had our own sports field. We had uh, high school hockey, we had interclass football. And then we had a high school football team. I never played tackle football before, I wasn't too keen on playing, I went out for the High School team and then didn't show up the day they picked the team. But the hockey we played baseball, it was mostly interclass football and we had a handball court that was all that was left there, no one played that very much.

KL: Now, were you responsible for paying your tuition or did your parents pay?

MB: No my parents paid. It wasn't that much I don't think. I think in College it was only 200 bucks, 300 bucks.

KL: Did you have any summer jobs or jobs during the school year to help you earn extra money?

MB: Well I worked as a take-out boy at the Dominion Store on Spring Garden Road. That was when I was going to College. I think in my last year I might have had a paper route.

KL: And you weren't a boarder were you?

MB: No.

KL: Do you remember uh, how many boarders there would have been or anything like that?

MB: Well I would I don't know if there was even fifty boarders in the whole school. I also know there was from Cape Breton a couple of kids, and Quebec.

KL: Mmhmm. Just flipping through my notes here. And you played hockey?

MB: Yeah, mostly hockey.

KL: Did you play for the College as well?

MB: Yes. But then we only had a small league it was only DAL (Dalhousie) and Nova Scotia Tech, we didn't play Acadia or St.F.X. I can't even remember playing them in exhibition games. And even we didn't have College football.

KL: Do you remember any games that stuck out in your mind?

MB: Yeah, Sydney Academy beat us in the High School finals. They walloped us, we played in the old hockey rink on Shirley Street, there used to be a rink on Shirley Street. Shirley Street Arena they called it, [inaudible] and he played for Sydney Academy and he scored and they beat us by about six goals I think and he scored three of them. He eventually went on to play for the NHL, he was a real good hockey player.

KL: What can you tell me about non-Catholic students at the High School or the College?

MB: I can't remember many non-students there, or non-Catholic, I think most of them were Catholic. I remember Father Rourke in College somebody brought in tickets and asked him if they could sell them. He asked what they were for and they said the Y and he said you won't be selling any of those tickets here in this school. They didn't even want you to go to another Church half the time there.

KL: What impact do you think a Catholic administration had on your experiences at the College?

MB: Quite a bit. There were mostly like I said the Jesuits and that and they all got involved in a lot of the sports, most of them. But they were good teachers.

KL: Did the Jesuits join in an intramural game of football or anything like that?

MB: No, they were mostly older men so they weren't younger, like we had younger ones so they didn't, they would clown around with us or something, sometimes they would be coaching you in some of the sports, not that they were, they didn't participate in any of the, they had one American Jesuit came in and we were missing our hockey coach so he came in but he knew basketball I guess and he thought he was coaching hockey like basketball. He said, "I want five men on that puck all the time, if they can't get the puck they can't score." And we just looked at him and thought, "what's this guy doing?"

KL: What does he think?

KL: Were you a member of any societies at the High School or College, like debating or anything like that?

MB: No. I was very quiet, I didn't. We didn't have much. They had some debating, but most of the time we went to school and we went home. The school was very small at that time, even in first year down here (referring to McNally) I remember we put a few skits on about different things and uh the fellows participated but these fellows were really outgoing. I remember we had a debate about they were charging this, I don't know if it was Danny Madden, he must have been about five foot two and he was charged, there was a McCarthy fellow and uh, I forgot his name, and the two were from Dartmouth and they were the lawyers for these two fellows, and uh Frank, anyway this Danny was only five foot two and Brian O'Hearn was six foot two and uh Danny was accused of throwing a basketball game and they were trying to prove it. But that was a riot. Because a guy five foot two wasn't going to score in basketball against a guy who was six foot two. It was quite comical, but that's the only thing I can remember. We had no girls at neither the High School or the College back then. So we...

KL: Well I've read about annual retreats did you ever go on any of those?

MB: Not that I can remember.

KL: Ok. Now you mentioned that Saint Mary's was a really small school. How, did that affect the atmosphere of the school, were you all really close knit?

MB: We were fairly well close knit. But I had just moved down the first year and didn't get involved in much because I was really shy, and I didn't. There was one fellow that lived down in that area but I didn't, I mixed with other people. Involved with them I guess, from the minor hockey end of it, from outside the High School.

KL: (Yawns) Just flip through my notes here. Now uh, was there a sense of rivalry with other schools like Dalhousie?

MB: No. Well mostly, Q.E.H. and St. Pat's in hockey, and even in football I mean, football was Q.E.H. and Saint Mary's because they were across the street from each other, where St. Pat's High School is now. There was quite a strong rivalry in sports and mostly hockey and football. And mostly the guys that played minor hockey at Saint Mary's played with the same fellows on one team and then in minor hockey played with guys from the different high schools but then they were all on the same team. So it's kind different.

KL: Did you play for Saint Mary's minor hockey too?

MB: They didn't, it was the Saint Mary's Junior Organization, Saint Mary's Winter Gardens, and then they had bantam, midget, juvenile, and junior teams. So most of the guys played on those teams.

KL: Oh, ok, I understand. Now when you went to the College was there a lot of interaction with students from The Mount or and students at Dalhousie with you Saint Mary's College boys?

MB: Not really. I think one time they had a few dances with the Mount or something but I didn't go to any dances there.

KL: You weren't a dancing kind of guy huh?

MB: No.

KL: Uh. Could you give me an idea of what the building on Windsor Street was like?

MB: Well it was real old, a brick building, and uh and then it was just attached in the back the boarders, and then the back end was were the classrooms were. I think it was four stories high, it was a really small building. The classrooms were, I didn't realize but they had a grade nine and ten and eleven boys. But the nine I don't know how big the classes were. So the College then only had Commerce, BA, and Engineering, so the College wasn't that big either. You just had your small, very small classes.

KL: Um,

MB: I don't know if you can picture it. I got a picture somewhere of the old building. (shuffling papers)

KL: Is that it there?

MB: That was the front part of the building and then there was a wing on the back and then a piece that wasn't as big as that in the back.

KL: Oh.

MB: I'll give this to you I don't know how much is in it.

KL: Well it's certainly useful. Now was the natural ice rink still on campus when you were there?

MB: I don't know if the building was still there or if it was all fallen down but we never played in it. But there was a building off to the, the building was basically where you go into St. Vincent's Guest Home Parking Lot and maybe a little, that building was over to the right of the property.

KL: Where would you play hockey then?

MB: The Shirley Street Arena.

KL: Oh, that's right. You told me that.

MB: And we used to play, Dal had their rink, and we used to play down at Dal when we played university, there was the Forum also. But I think we played a lot in the Shirley Street Arena.

KL: Now what was it like to go from the Windsor Street campus to the campus here (on Robie Street)? You were saying how it wasn't finished when you arrived...

MB: Now it, just the, the main, they had the whole McNally building, the two wings and the side and the centre piece and that and then the church was not built on the back end yet. The church eh where the gym is (MB is referring to McNally East) used to be the church when they first had the church, it's not, but only the front face of the building had the stone done on it. They were still working on it and had the staging up and all that.

KL: Must have been pretty distracting.

MB: Yeah. And then the back was being finished and they, I don't even, I forget, we had the football field but that was like a swamp. They had to put drains in and everything it was so wet. Just had a playing field for football.

KL: Ok.

MB: Basically running opposite the way this field runs this way now and we were, the field ran that way.

KL: Ok.

MB: Opposite to it. The just sod it, grass, but the equipment there was so outdated, the football equipment and especially was, I can't remember what we had here, but the old building some of the old helmets were old leather helmets, that looked

liked somebody from the 30's pictures. But the equipment was really old, pants and the cleats. I don't know if we, if they supplied the cleats or not, but we just the just the pants and the helmets, they didn't have very much equipment. They didn't even have a College football team at that time.

KL: They just had the High School?

MB: They had interclass in the College. They had interclass football. We only had the three, Commerce, BA, and Engineering so we only had three teams.

KL: Ok. Now was everyone really excited to move over to this building?

MB: OH yeah, yeah.

KL: I was just going to ask you if there were celebrations or...

MB: They didn't have any celebrations at the closing of the old building at all, we just moved out. I can't remember when they actually tore it down. But they just left everything and came down here, and the wings were for the boarders and the priests, the Jesuits were on the South side and the North side was the boarders.

KL: Ok.

MB: And they started to get a few more boarders and they enlarged, I don't know how many.

KL: Oh neat. What effect do you think the education at Saint Mary's had on your life?

MB: Very good I think. But at that time life was different than it is now. I don't know what to tell you. (Pause) But I really enjoyed school here, the summer time we all would go down to the Saint Mary's Boat Club and the same people hang out at Saint Mary's Boat Club down on the Arm. But it was really, like I was saying I only had the two years in Engineering and then I went in to take a trade at the Shipyard so I kind of lost contact with the school and all the fellows that went there.

KL: What do you think your connection to Saint Mary's is now? Do you still attend Alumni events or...

MB: The only event was a High School reunion, it is because my wife is handicapped now, she had a major aneurysm back in 1989, which sort of finished me going anywhere and in 1998 she had another stroke that has affected her bowels so, the last six, 1998 I've been strictly her caregiver she can't do anything, clip her nails and everything but before that I was trying to work and she could pick me up, but we had to move out of our house and everything. She cook meals and that was basically it. I could leave her there but after 98 I couldn't leave her alone, now I can leave her off and on. It took almost two or three years before she could be left alone.



KL: Oh my.

MB: But that really finished me, a sickness like that. It really hurt me financially too, that's the worst part of it.

KL: That would be hard.

MB: Yeah.

KL: Now, I've asked all my questions, did you have anything to add that you didn't get to talk about?

MB: Not that I know of. I went back to Montreal in the 60's, I used to work at the Shipyards and I got laid off and I went and got a job in the dockyard and decided to go back to Montreal and I got a job up there at Northern Electric for nine and a half years and they were talking about leaving Quebec and the FLQ crisis and all that and I said "I'm not staying here". So we moved back here and beside getting a job back in 1972 that's when everything started to fall apart in our country I think so a friend of mine was driving taxi's part time and he said "why don't you drive a taxi?" So I said that I would drive a taxi and I stayed there, I didn't do too bad till my wife took sick and then being self employed and having, you used to have to put ten to twelve hours in to make a living, I couldn't even work eight hours so that was really hard so I went down and [inaudible] it affected me even emotionally too, I've gained so much weight the last year, it's unbelievable, and I think it's due to stress.

KL: Do you have any children or...

MB: I have two children, one, two adopted children, we adopted them in Montreal. My son lives over in P.E.I. he owns a security company, in fact he came back to Saint Mary's and took Criminology. I couldn't believe he got his high school diploma and went into vocational school and took up carpentry and then he got a steady job with CBC and then the PC's got in and canned all the jobs, so they finished that. And he started to take carpentry and he got out carpentry and didn't know what to do so he worked with a friend of mine doing renovations for a few years but he wasn't, he couldn't climb up on roofs and this guy did a lot of roofs, so he didn't like that. So he got into, he got to be manager of the company, small rental company, Rent Town, and then they, they changed all this other stuff and Toronto came up one weekend and he fired him for I don't know why, I think he thought my son was a threat to his job actually, yeah, I think because my son started telling us, and we said never tell a guy over you how to do a job. Anyway, he got into security, he went and worked for Crime Stoppers and he got into the security business and he took over the company now he owns the company, so he did well. My daughter lives out in Shubenacadie. Shubenacadie she works for him, she is in charge of his office up here in Burnside. She was working, had a lot of problems with her when she was younger. We straightened her out and she got a job at the IT store, she quit in grade 10 and didn't get her high school, she was manager of a

store in Mic Mac Mall, so she was smart as anything, but she straightened herself out, took the job as manager and got married was expecting her first child and then she went back, the store was sold and closed up so they wouldn't take her back, so she went worked for the pet store, she managed a pet store in Mic Mac Mall. And then they sold that business, so then she went back and took that, went to the Community College there in Dartmouth and took up business, computer business or something. So when my son took over the company she was able to do all his, the computerized the whole company so she is in charge of that also. She is his right hand person doing all the payrolls and accounting work and all that. The two of them are doing all right.

KL: That's good.

MB: She's got two boys and my son doesn't have any boys, any children. He's only married two years.

KL: Ok. (Coughs) Well I'll just turn this off then.

~ End of Interview ~