

Oral History Interview with Mr. Peter Weal
Conducted by Angela Baker June 3 1993

Transcription By: Armin Shujaatullah February 21 2000

AB Okay, lets just start with a few questions about you personally. Could you state your first name, your full name?

PW Peter John Weal

AB Okay, and what's your date and place of birth?

PW 27th of January 1930, London England.

AB Okay, so how many years have you been associated with Saint Mary's?

PW 26 years.

AB 26 years. So what capacity has this association changed over time?

PW How has it changed?

AB yeah.

PW Over the years?

AB What was your role when you first came?

PW Exactly what it is now? Manager of the printing duplicating services. It, at the beginning it was sort of more or less setting up the place, you know. There was some equipment here but not, not adequate for what what the university required at the particular time, and of course over a period of years, this has undergone a lot of changes.

AB So how has your department itself grown over the years that you've been here?

PW Well, it's not—It's shrunk! As a matter of fact, in personnel. When I first came on this scene there were one two three people and myself made four, we then inherited the responsibility for supplying stationary for everybody , so we had to increase staff then. Then we required somebody to do composition, so that increased the staff again. Then with all this added responsibilities and the fact that we were located in another building, which was in the student center, we needed somebody to do deliveries, so we then got somebody for that. And then over the years, the stationary was then given to somebody else. Another department was formed and so on, so we got rid of the stationary—oh, we also used to look after the typewriters before we got computerized you know. And that was almost a full time job in itself,

because they needed repairing, and bringing in and sending out for repairs and so on so forth. Then anyway, then we got rid of that and then we moved just about six seven years ago from the student center over to this building, and where we were now located within the main area as it were, and the mail room which is right next to us. Our, delivery cum general, odd- job kind of a character, clerical person you know. That job was absorbed in to the mailroom and then took over all our bulk deliveries. So we ended up by having now less people, more equipment, but were doing more, a lot more. A lot of our equipment is automated you know. Instead of people operating perhaps one machine at a time, they could possibly be operating two or even three. Depending on what the requirements.

AB So what are your responsibilities exactly now, for the university?

PW As I see it or—I vet everything that comes in to make sure first of all that it's a it's a legal job, it's a job for the university, and there's not a private job, and if it is of course. Not not the people who tried to shove it through as a private job as an individual department job [being] a private job. But I check it all out and very importantly make sure it's not in copyright violation. I then assign it to a machine to be done on. If it's something that requires artwork and composition well I do that internally here. Again, put it out to where it should be done. I do all the, the budgets for the department. Ordering materials, stock as needed. I keep meticulous, I might add, records every month of what we do at any given time during the month. I can pretty well know where we are financially and as far as stock over here is concerned you know. And well you name it we do it-ha! Its, it's anything and everything within the printing requirement, to the best of our ability and with the equipment we got, course there's a lot of work that we can't do. I mean we we cant do reprocessed color. Color work too, and that of course is shipped outside the universities [do].

AB The size of the university must have grown a great deal since

PW Oh, tremendously yes. Well when I first came here the, the Burke building which is now the education building, that was the library and that was brand new, just been opened. The Ignatius building wasn't here. The low-rise residence had just been opened. They hadn't put this big mound down here; you know for the where the bleachers are on this side. That was just an open ground out there. What else... They hadn't put the top on the chemistry building.

AB The numbers of people here must have been...

PW And and oh well, yes surely. The business office when I first came here consisted of the business manager; he was called in those days. And a lady name of Mrs. Leahy who turned out to be a distant relative of my wife's—and two, two typists. That was the business office, you know. Now I think they must have at least twenty people in there. But when you're talking about increasing in staff, certainly an increase in the administrative staff, the support staff, but the faculty has grown and

of course as faculty grow to keep pace with the enrollment figures, this in turn increases our demand for services for us in here because the more faculty-the more classes-the more turn over in material that they need for class room use and so on and so forth.

AB So how has the experience of being a staff member changed over all those years?

PW Not a great deal I suppose, really. It's sad to see people go. People that you've worked with a number of years, especially if they're closely—you've worked closely with them. They either die or retire or go on to bigger and better things perhaps you know—If there is some thing better than Saint Mary's and I'm sure there possibly is. That that's about it. You know, I do miss some of my older colleagues who've died you know most of them have.

AB Okay. Let's see—so you were here around the end of the '60's when the school was becoming secular and women were being introduced.

PW That's right it was all male when I first came [here] kind of brightened up the campus a bit

AB yeah

PW Seeing you know, now it's just old hat you know. You just don't think of it any more. But I suppose it was something that had to come. And of course when that did happen—not because of the being open to-to, to females—but the Jesuits were gradually sort of stepping aside you know. I mean we only had what three or four of them that were still here acting up on campus. There were some real characters amongst those, fine gentlemen too, most of 'em.

AB Okay, so unionization took place with the support staff in the seventies. What effect did that have on your job?

PW Not on me because I'm not I'm not part of it. I think it's a good thing. I think it finally gave it a cushion, you must too, there weren't that many support staff as such back then. Secretaries yes, Although of course those've-they've increased a tremendous amount because of the need for more and more support, you know within an office. But where it went a-you know and I'm looking at, cause there always were unions here in the engineering I mean the you know the physical plant aspect of engineering, and I think some of the other trades you know in the physical plat there were unions there. But there wasn't a union for the general administrative people, the secretaries, the lab techs and so on so forth. I think it was a good thing. Gave them a voice. At least they had a place to go for their gripes, you know. They still do. It hasn't affected our operation any. For better or for worse, you know. We still are going on with our work.

AB So there's no union here, for you people in this office, or?

PW Not for me personally. No, no. My staff are part of the staff union.

AB Oh I see

PW But the supervisory people were not, not allowed to join. And we don't have any voice. The faculty has their union, the support staff have theirs, and the trades have theirs, but not supervisory personnel. You know we're sort of one on one with the administration. And of course none of the administration have unions.

AB So you haven't noticed any negative or positive effects other than you mentioned?

PW Oh there's always negative and positive anything in any, whatever it may be. And usually that's because things have gone off the rails they haven't gone where they should be. If any, you mean any any union as against administrative head to head within our organization? No. No. We're too small for that you know. Perhaps if we had thirty or forty people, well then you're gonna get all these different... you know meshing in, you're bound to get some dissention. No, we hadn't had anything like that. Not that I can recall and if it was it was only something that be very very minor, you know.

AB Okay, I see. Are there any other changes that you can remember over time that, since—twenty-six years? Or significant events that stand out in your mind?

PW No... Not really. I suppose one, in one sense was that the... perhaps its not the right thing to be saying but a pub on campus seems to be, don't get me wrong I like my beer same as anybody else, I enjoy drinking beer, but it seems that the, the students' council with their yen to make money—hey that's not like yen, Japanese money

AB haha

PW ...but their eagerness to make money, and with this, a lot of money that has been spent of course they make a lot of money, and we have the refurbished Gorsebrook now. And, hearing so many of the students saying that they haven't got enough money for their tuition, they haven't got enough money for their bed and board whatever. That Gorsebrook lounge certainly gets crowded. And I know people are entitled, and that they should have a chance to let their hair down. But it just seems to be a little lopsided, to me somehow, you know. And of course there's been, there's been a change outside off campus, as far as liquor is concerned. With all these nightclubs and lounges. I mean when I first came to Halifax, which was forty years ago yeah, you know there was no place to go except a tavern, if you wanted a drink. There were no lounges, no women certainly weren't allowed in these places. I think there were two or three of the hotels. If you wanted to get a drink, take a lady in, you had to go in and buy a sandwich or something other. There was always the joke about serving up the same sandwich over and over again to all the patrons. But you know, I guess societies changed tremendously. Staid old Halifax has

become one of the nightspots you know for, for the country. And I suppose that had to come on the campus as well. My opinion - I don't think it was necessary. But anyway that's, my opinion.

AB Okay, what other changes have you noticed in the student population over the time you've been here? Whether, whether in terms of age or just what they [are] you know..

PW Oh well there's been a, there's been a, a lot more mature students. Of our extension services of continuing education, have really gone out in to the, you know, off campus and brought a lot of mature students in which I think is good. I've often thought about going back to school myself. I never really found time you know—I mean you always get too busy. Too busy to enjoy myself you know during the day. That, and students as a whole they're much more, than they were, perhaps vocal? They seem to be into much more, many more activities whether it be charitable or just their own societies you know. The students council seem to be, seem to have a grip on the students. I don't I don't mean a sinister grip, but I mean that they are very much involved. Student body is very very much involved. Which is a good thing. There a lot of charitable organizations that owe, get a lot of their support from some of our student bodies. And the staff union as well the university community as a whole. Very generous to, to charitable organizations. I don't know whether I'm answering [correctly, which way you want]

AB Oh, no you're doing fine.

PW You know I'm start I'm starting to ramble a bit now

AB No, not at all. So what ways have you and your staff or the other members of the administration interacted, like socially or professionally over the years?

PW Well, when we were much larger and of course you know as you get older, your-your commitments outside the university become more involved. When I first came here of course my children were very young. They're all grown up now and you know, that took an awful lot of my time. To be home with them. But when our staff was a, larger... We used to have these occasional, we haven't had any for years, at my place, you know my home or at somebody else's, we have a little gathering. But they didn't really catch on you know, and they sort of fizzled out [but when] there's only just two of us plus a part time, you know. We see enough, enough of each other during the day. But come the, any special event going on, like we just did this walk—the fitness thing last Friday, we all participated. We usually all participate in the, you know any activity as far as somebody's birthday you know [recognizing]. But not a social get together outside the university.

AB Is there anything you can think of that you'd like to add?

PW No, I don't really know, you know how you know how this is going to go, or where its going to go I just don't I cant put my—probably think of a thousand things after you've gone...

AB I can always come back!

PW Yeah, well could always give you a call I suppose. No I can't think of anything other than that.

END OF TAPE