

Transcription of Oral History Interview with Mr. Edmund Boyd (alumnus)
Conducted by Kathleen Lingley, July 11, 2002
Transcription by Sarah Jones, January, 2004

- KL: This is Kathleen Lingley from the Saint Mary's University Archives. It is Thursday July 11, and I am interviewing Mr. Edmund Boyd.
- EB: If you ask me questions it is must easier than to spout off, you know.
- KL: Sure. Well, I've been doing with interviews with some other people but I haven't met anyone that was at the College when the Irish Christian Brothers were there.
- EB: Oh yes, yeah. I entered in '37 and I was there, a residence student for two years and they left in 1940. And that marked the arrival of the Jesuits and I went into college, I did my college years under the Jesuits.
- KL: Okay.
- EB: Yeah.
- KL: Oh I forgot to ask you, just for tape purposes, what is your full name?
- EB: Well I, uh, just Edmund Boyd. I have a middle name but I never use it. Patrick Boyd as they say. Just Edmund Boyd, I prefer, you know, just to go under Edmund Boyd.
- KL: Sounds good.
- EB: If there is a question of ambiguity to confuse them I put my middle name, which is Patrick, but as I say I never, never use it.
- KL: Were you born in River Bougeois?
- EB: That's right.
- KL: In what year?
- EB: 1924.
- KL: Okay. And, I guess I would like to hear about your experiences with the Irish Christian Brothers. What day to day life was like, discipline...
- EB: Well they were um... the discipline was by today's standards, it would be quite demanding. I wouldn't call it harsh. No one suffered from it. But uh, we used to get up at 6:30 and go to Mass at 7:00 and then there would be, after breakfast at

7:30 or so, there would be a half-hour there would be a study period before classes would begin, and classes began at 9:00. And as a high school boarder, there was always a Brother in charge. They'd rotate every week some Brother would replace the other, and if you went off the grounds you would have to demand permission. If you were to go to the barber's or whatever errand. And um, but as a regime it was quite moderate in the sense that no one chafed under the regime, that's for sure. And in the boarding school for the High School there were about fourteen of us because they didn't have... There was one large dormitory, which divides into cubicles and the college students of whom there were forty. Well actually I think there were sixty because there was a room reserved for college seniors. And the college boarders, they faced the street, that looked out on Windsor Street, whereas the high school boarders, we had the wall behind, you know. We faced the wall, in that room.

KL: Do you remember how much it was for the boarding fees?

EB: About three hundred dollars...three hundred and fifty, three hundred... Ah tuition was sixty. And then the thing that I remember was that laundry for the whole year was ten dollars. And the sisters of the Good Shepherd were the ones who did the laundry and [unclear] and came back and so on. And I think...but you could get a more accurate, if you were to pick up a... um, college brochure. You know. What do they call that, the university when they publish that?

KL: The calendar?

EB: Calendar. That's the word. You could get a calendar for those years and get a little more accurate. But I think it was about, you know, three hundred...it was certainly under four hundred dollars for the whole boarding and tuition and so on.

KL: What were you allowed to have in your...your cubicle?

EB: Well, it was a very, obviously space was very limited. There was room for a bed and there was a table, there was a chair, and there was a kind of a clothes...with curtains, and so you could hang your clothes in this quasi cupboard.

KL: And the Brothers, they boarded in the same area?

EB: They were on the second floor. Yes. We were all up on the third floor and they were on the second floor. They used to go into...We used to see them emerging, going in and out and so on. We always...There was always a certain mystery about their quarters. [Unclear] to preserve the community.

KL: So what was leisure time and weekends and that, you know, for a boarder?

EB: Well, the thing was in...There was always inter-mural sports and various...In the wintertime there was hockey, there was football, there was people playing soccer.

One of the big sports, of course it was understandable because the Brothers being Irish, handball was a big thing in Ireland, so there was a big handball court. And a lot of the students used to get involved in handball. And in the wintertime, every Friday night there was this intense competition among the schools of the city. There were four high schools then, there was Saint Mary's, Saint Pat's, Bloomfield, and the Academy. And every Friday night there'd be a two-header game. One Friday it could be between the Academy, Halifax County Academy and Saint Mary's and the next game could be Saint Pat's and Bloomfield. But they were always very closely followed rivalry... was very keen among them.

KL: Now, where would you eat at the college?

EB: Well, there was a refectory down in the bowels, in the bottom near the furnace room where the kitchen, scullery, was and so on, where all the pantries were. And there used to be...there was also what we used to call the Bedford Brigade. There was a group of students who would come in on the bus and would go to school during the day and they would have their lunch, their noontime meal in the refectory. There was a table set up for them, and then there was a table, which was reserved for some Profs. For some of the Prof...like Dean Beazley, who lived in Dartmouth and Jim Lovett, who lived in Dartmouth...and they used to, they would have their noon meal in the refectory at the same time we did.

KL: Okay. Who would cook for you?

EB: Well, they used to have a housekeeping staff. When I first came there was a Miss Brophy; Jane Brophy from Mulgrave, and Brother Doyle held a more cultural image of the Brothers community, always referred to as Lady Jane. And she had, you know, three or four people under her who did the cooking and that. But, at one point, I can remember, there were only three. It was during the war when women were getting jobs in industry and the dockyard and factories and so on, and there were only three and they were responsible for getting meals for the Jesuit community and the boarders and keep the place going and it was no mean chore.

KL: Oh, certainly not. Why did you choose Saint Mary's High School and then the college?

EB: Well, I had a scholarship, a two years resident scholarship through the school. And then when I was in commerce I had a four year scholarship to the...residence and tuition. But my final year I boarded out. My senior year, I used walk to...I lived on Cornwallis Street just very near the school so...

KL: And were you the first in your family to come to Saint Mary's High School?

EB: Yes.

KL: Did any other brothers...

EB: Yes. I have two younger brothers who came subsequently.

KL: Okay. And, what faculty were you in the college?

EB: Arts. I graduated in Arts in '44.

KL: Okay. Do you remember who your professors either at the high school or the college were? Like ones that stick out in your mind?

EB: Well, in grade nine we had Brother Kiley, who was an Irishman and he came to Saint Mary's via Newfoundland. He had spent, I don't know, six, seven years in Newfoundland before he came here. And he was our class-master. And grade ten, Brother Flandry was our class...was our homeroom teacher. But then we had another Brother for French. So, and we had a layman, Mr. Lynch, who taught us English. And those were our three, you know, our three teachers. And in matriculation, we had Brother Knight for French, we had Brother Kiley for Bible History, we had Brother Lynam for Chemistry, we had Brother Kelly as a class teacher, and I think that's the whole... We had Brother Birmingham briefly for French, but then he only, you know, lasted a short time. He was of a venerable age, so I think that was a problem...a factor in deciding that...because it was a large class, there were about forty-eight of us in the matriculation class, so...

KL: What was the transition like, from the Irish Christian Brothers to the Jesuits?

EB: Well, the fact, there was a necessity... it was transition from high school to college anyway, so that it was obviously more liberal, the regime was not as strict in the sense that we had more freedom to come and go. And for instance, in college we didn't have to have permission to go off the grounds. And well, I'm trying to think. That was basically the main distinction between...And um, I'm trying to think as far as the study regime. The students could... the college students could study in the library, I mean they weren't in the study halls because study halls were supervised if you were in there, there would be a Brother. I think the Jesuits too, they continued too. But you see I wasn't in high school when the Jesuits were there, I think maybe they thought [unclear] classroom and the students would be supervised, studying for an hour and a half or two hours or something like that.

KL: Okay. How did being at the high school and the college during the Depression and the war, how did that change your experiences there, or affected your experiences?

EB: Well, there were of course, naturally we didn't have...It wasn't as, what shall I say, the infinite access to milk, sugar, butter, and meat and so on, so it was more restricted to that part of it. But we didn't suffer. There was no question of being

deprived in a way. But I don't think we saw a banana, for instance, but that doesn't say it was [unclear].

KL: Were you a part of the R.O.T.P. at...?

EB: C.O.T.C.

KL: C.O.T.C., not the R.O.T.P.

EB: Yes, yeah.

KL: And what was that like?

EB: No one who is...it was an endurance test, I mean we used to have to, a couple of days a week, on Saturday mornings we used to come and parade. And another day of the week, every Wednesday, we used to have to wear these huge C.O.T.C. uniforms with the gray coats and so on, which were ill-fitting, most of them. Then we went to... in the summertime we went to Aldershot. It was just after the school closing and we would come home in June, I remember June 6th, was when we went to the end of May after convocation, and then came home on June 6th.

KL: Now did you have jobs during the school year to help with money?

EB: Oh yeah. For instance, through [unclear], it doesn't work that way now, but you see everyone should improve it. We used to... in the wintertime some of them worked in the harbourfront as checkers. And several Christmas holidays with fleets of our fellow students we used to work in the post office, because then, it was completely different. Nobody mailed early, so there would be these mounds of mail that would all descend on the post office causing quite a gridlock. So they used to recruit mostly college students.

KL: Okay. And...

EB: Now what is this...Is this for an article or...?

KL: Well, it's all part of the two hundredth anniversary. Basically I'm interviewing a broad spectrum of people, just to have information in the archives for future researchers, or maybe if someone was writing a speech, they could look at a different event and they could say, "Oh, people had fond memories of this organization." Or...So, not specifically saying, you know, "Edmund Boyd said this.", but more so, the idea of some of the things for the interview.

EB: Yeah. It was... Certainly the facilities were very limited and I think it was amazing how they were able to accomplish what they did because the labs and... It was only the last year of the Brothers, in 1939 and '40, that the President then, Brother Michael Lannon, undertook to establish some kind of library. What they did, there was an assembly at the assembly hall, and they shortened, or made the

library from the rear. They cut a portion of the assembly hall to accommodate the library, which is back, sort of back to back with the assembly hall.

KL: Do you remember who the librarian was?

EB: Pardon?

KL: Do you remember the librarian at all?

EB: Oh yes. Well, we had Father Chabot, who had...who became Dean in 1942, and he took over the library. And there was also a Florence Foley who was here for years, for a long time, and she moved on with the...Oh no, and she had been also, she was librarian and then they made her Registrar and then when they moved down here, she... They were looking for more professional and she had some certificates in library science, but she wasn't a full-fledged librarian with a Bachelor or a degree. So she was seconded from the registrar's office into the library, and functioned as, I suppose you would call her a clerk, a librarian clerk. Then after her, there was Father...well, I think he was here during her time, Father Hallum, a Jesuit, who died prematurely. Then, who else was there? There was Patricia O'Neill who is still around. There was something Rockingham, a girl here, a girl who functioned as a librarian. I'm trying to think. Was there anyone else? No. Of hand, I can't think.

KL: Now, you're from Cape Breton. Were there a lot of other Cape Breton students at the college?

EB: No, because most...No. There'd be the odd one, but most of them of course, because of their proximity to Saint FX would go to...But when I was in high school the first year, let's see, there was...three, I guess, Cape Bretoners. Then there was somebody from the Magdalene islands there was somebody from Bermuda, there was someone from Amherst. Let's see if there was anyone from New Brunswick, I can't think off hand. PEI, no one from Prince Edward Island. So, I mean, that would probably be...Oh, and then there was someone from Bear River or Parsboro, I never figured out which one, but he was um, sort of semi-American, I could never understand, but he was in the school. And there was also generally some from Saint Pierre de Michelon. A French boy who came here and spent the year to learn English and...Yes, there'd always be...in the three years that I was in high school, there would always be a Cape Breton element among the students.

KL: The students from Bermuda, why would they come to Saint Mary's? Would they have family that went here?

EB: Well, no. It depends. You see, because Halifax was in the...was the archdiocese. Bermuda used to be in the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Halifax. For instance,

- there was a charity function there at the school. I suppose it would be natural for them to gravitate to Saint Mary's because of that.
- KL: Okay. Now, in some yearbooks I read about when the Irish Christian Brothers were at the Windsor Street campus, they used to have on Saturday nights, you know, like movies and they'd play the piano, and things like that. Do you remember anything like that?
- EB: No. They used to have what they called [unclear] which were fundraising. And they would have a kind of variety show and they would recruit different people to provide entertainment, but no, it wasn't a regular thing. I never remember...I remember, I can recall when CPR would They...who spoke to...They had, like, travel logs under the auspices of CPR which would feature Van Springs Hotel and these type of things. It was a P.R...you know, publicity ploy. But no, I can't say that at the time there was a, really a Saturday Night Live.
- KL: [Laughter.] What do you want to tell me about non-Catholic students at Saint Mary's? Was there a number of them?
- EB: I don't...In the boarding school, no. They were always...you had to be Catholic, and that was understood. That was [unclear]. So, I don't know...Yes that's true. That was a pattern, that if you boarded you... because they insisted on daily mass and this type of thing.
- KL: The Christian Brothers or the Jesuits?
- EB: No, the Jesuits too.
- KL: Okay. And were you a member of any societies at the high school or the college? You were a part of the play [unclear] weren't you?
- EB: Yeah. Yes, but in high school, the Brothers used to be strong in elocution contests. They used to have those. There would be an annual elocution night. And then college...but I didn't take part in any. Well, yes. There was an entertainment, if you will, at the... I remember in grade ten, Brother Kehoe, who was into that type of thing, he staged an evening's performance of different types of entertainment.
- KL: And ah...
- EB: In college though, there were...yeah, there were three productions during my college years.
- KL: What were those?

- EB: Well there was “Riding White Horses,” which was to celebrate the centennial, but that’s another thing too. It’s rather bizarre because anybody who was an undergraduate in 1941 remembers when the college celebrated its hundredth anniversary, and then sixty years later they celebrate their two hundredth.
- KL: [Laughter.] Well that doesn’t make much sense, does it? What sort of things did they have at the centennial celebration?
- EB: Well, the usual. I have to feel sorry for the Jesuits because they came here and there was certain resentment and hostility about their supplant from the Brothers, but they were [unclear] follow the directives of the order they came. And...but they had to stage the usual things. There would be this play which was put on with the convent of the Sacred Heart. There was a, what else? There was an unveiling of a plaque on the university...well it then the college campus. And there were banquets, the usual things that you’d identify with the anniversary of the [unclear] kind.
- KL: Now, how does Saint Mary’s being a small campus effect the atmosphere of the school? Were you a close knit group of people?
- EB: Oh well yes, because knew everyone else. Even in college although we were a separate entity, you knew these people in college who played hockey, or who played football, and so on, so there became a certain familiarity and intimacy to the place, which of course doesn’t exist now.
- KL: Was there a sense of rivalry with other schools, like Dalhousie?
- EB: Well, we were always referred as to the kids from Windsor Street. That’s how, well even the press used to refer to us. They were rather condescending about Saint Mary’s because their being professional schools and so on, they felt somewhat secure.
- KL: Now, was there a lot of interaction between, like, Dalhousie students, Saint Mary’s students, Mount students?
- EB: Well, yes. Because in those days things formed out of a religious basis and things were rather ghettoized. There wasn’t that much interaction or exchange between Protestants and Catholics. So, Mount Saint Vincent was...they were generally...the girls from Mount Saint Vincent.
- KL: So, what sort of things would you do? Like, would you have dances?
- EB: Well we used to have...yes. There would be different society dances. The Arts Society, the Commerce Society, arranges these dances, and of course, in the year we would always have people from, well, the Mount, and, well, the Convent or

- later on the vocational school, but that would have been from the early fifties, from the vocational school.
- KL: Okay. Now, some other people told me that, like, the engineering faculty would have smokers over here on the Robie street campus, in the college. Did the arts faculty have anything like that?
- EB: Yeah. They used to have... They had the Tau Gamma Sigma, what you'd call an arts society. And they would have various functions. Maybe we would have a dance, but the college... Now, for instance, now when I was in... Now, I think there were a hundred and fourteen students when I graduated there were... well, there were eight of us in arts, who graduated. Eight in commerce...
- KL: Quite a drop.
- EB: Yeah.
- KL: Now, why would enrollment drop so much? Was it because of the war?
- EB: Yes, well that certainly was a factor we had many who normally would have gone to college, stand up for service in the army or navy, of course.
- KL: Okay. And did the Brothers and then later the Jesuits, encourage student involvement in things like debating, hockey, and that sort of thing?
- EB: Oh yes. There was always an element of... um I don't know what you would call it. It was a way of generating some décor among the students and they would encourage students to participate.
- KL: Did they participate themselves? I heard stories about Father Kehoe playing football with the boys and...
- EB: Oh. Let's see. Yes, but that was exceptional. It wasn't... Well, some of the scholastics would, the younger Jesuits for instance, would get involved.
- KL: Okay. And did you notice a level of... a different level of involvement between the day students and the boarders?
- EB: Let me think. Give me that question again.
- KL: Did you notice a difference in the level of involvement from the day students and the boarders?
- EB: No, not really. There was no... For instance, there was a boarders hockey league in... it was the days when there was what they called a rorum, which was behind

the...adjacent to the tennis courts, and there would be some...They used to have to play hockey there. But no, there was no, everything was...

KL: I'm just seeing how much tape is left before I have to flip over. And which teams were you affiliated with?

EB: Well, no. I was never... I was never involved with... I played a bit tennis in high school, but... Hockey, not very strenuously, bit of handball. But I wasn't into...

[Tape cuts out.]

KL: Okay. You can continue now.

EB: Okay. Well, I guess I didn't...I wasn't involved to any way extent in sports.

KL: What recreation facilities did they have on campus. You mentioned the rorum and tennis courts.

EB: Handball court. And there was a campus where you could play football or baseball or soccer, and so on. And there was a recreation...what they would call a recreation lounge, a recreational area, and there was a radio and of course it was pre-television so that was a factor. And there was a high school...well it was very spartan. Certainly the facilities were very limited for...you know, we'd scrounge around and pick up some old chairs or something and furnish it that way.

KL: Do you remember the Ladies Auxiliary at all?

EB: Oh yes.

KL: Could you tell me about that then?

EB: Well, it was just a group of...well, you know how it works. It was a group of women who, the idea was, they staged teas, so they would raise funds for something, perhaps faculty or... They would outfit the faculty with suits or whatever and they were always...I think they donated the odd prize at convocation. And I don't know how often they convened, but they were certainly factors in the social life of the university.

KL: Could you tell me about your first impressions of the college building and kind of describe it to me, the different areas? Like the floors and that sort of thing?

EB: Well, it's hard to...Now, I think I was twelve when I entered high school. And the building, after being in a private home, was gargantuan proportions, was very impressive. But I don't know. I suppose my reaction was comparable to anyone going into a new environment.

- KL: Now, Mr. Alan Abraham told me that the high school students, they weren't allowed to go in through the front door. They had to go in through the back?
- EB: Well, somebody...No one ever went, we never, never went in the front door. And if you had a visitor, as a boarder, you were called to parlor, the visitors would come up the front. And we never went up the...there was a stairs which was reserved, exclusively reserved for the community when there would be going from the main floor at sea-level, to go to their quarters. But we never...Some daring, adventurous spirits would venture down and so on, but no, it wasn't the norm. There was always, at the rear of the building, there was this door...they said they were going to build a storm porch on it. And there was this pulley that was very, very heavy and it required you to pull. You'd have to expend considerable energy to get through the door and the, to the left, the right, there were stairs leading to the basement and then upstairs, you would keep on going upstairs to the classroom areas.
- KL: Okay.
- EB: But I can't imagine Al Abraham...What did he say that there were?
- KL: Well he said that you used to go in...I guess there was a back door or side door and that the high school students had to go in that way and they weren't allowed where the college students were. Like in their classrooms. They had their own classrooms upstairs.
- EB: Oh well, yes. Yes. There were...simply because the high school was in one sector, the classrooms were separated, that's why there was no... But as far as an entrance, there was no such thing, as a, you know, a distinct entrance for college and for high school.
- KL: Okay. Was there much interaction between the high school and the college students?
- EB: Well it was just a small community in that there was a certain...you saw them constantly, but there was no, no...Now for instance in some of these senior high hockey teams, there would be people from college playing senior high, they would be freshmen. But, no I wouldn't say there was that much interaction between the high school and the college as far as... But we all knew that the starting hockey players on the college team and the gridiron heroes on the football field, in that way, but we wouldn't necessarily socialize. Well it was natural, I mean you get the situation in life too, where a nineteen year-old, a twenty year-old, isn't interested too much in associating with a fifteen year-old, or sixteens.
- KL: Where was the chapel in the building?

EB: When you went in, that was another thing, when you went in on the left there was this plaque in memory of Patrick Power, the generous benefactor whose name is immortalized in the library.

KL: He was your great-great-grandfather, wasn't he?

EB: Yes. And then you would go in; go in and to the right there was a parlor. And then you kept, you just went a few steps beyond the parlor and went a narrow court...a narrow passage, and there was the chapel. It was, you know, very miniscule. There was a small altar. So the Brothers, we used to have the chapel come over from Holy Hearts Seminary, a priest every morning for mass.

KL: How many classrooms were there? Do you remember at all?

EB: Oh Lord. Let's see. One, two, three, four...five, six, seven, eight, nine...I would say about nine classrooms. That's college and high school.

KL: Okay. Now, do you remember ever hearing anything about Stirling Castle?

EB: Yeah.

KL: Could you tell me what...

EB: Well I heard about it, but it didn't exist in my time. It used to be on the corner of Windsor and that was a resident...student residence, and it was called after Brother Stirling, who was very much a part of the Brothers community.

KL: Now, when that was there, would the students have slept in the college as well? Or just in that one place?

EB: I think so. See, this is before...I could find out for you, because I have a friend who comes from that area...era, he's in his nineties, and I could ask him. I'm not sure whether they...the resident students were housed exclusively in Stirling Castle or whether some of them were...

KL: Now, I read in some of the yearbooks, now this is more before your time, sort of when Stirling Castle was around, that different... there was almost sort of different groups in one sense. The students would have almost like a club and they would call them by different names. So was there anything like that when you were there?

EB: No. There would be... no. I wouldn't say. Well, like, for instance, boarders would ice a hockey team and they would play against say commerce, or one of the other faculties, but, no, as far as...I'm not aware of any.

- KL: Okay. What effect do you think the education offered at Saint Mary's had on your life?
- EB: Well, I would like to think that it developed my mind and provided me with a certain background in literature and the various disciplines, but I don't know. I can't...I couldn't put a figure on the percentage or the extent to which it did. I suppose any formation would have an impact.
- KL: Now, what was it like to come back to the Robie Street campus as a member of the faculty?
- EB: Well, there was a certain continuity because many of the people that I had known in Windsor Street when I was a student, an undergraduate, and came down here, there was a sprinkling of them that I had known. So, it wasn't as if I were into a completely new milieu, so that it could have been much more marked and dramatic if that hadn't been the case.
- KL: Certainly the facilities were different though.
- EB: Oh yes. There's no comparison between the residence facilities and the whole...because it was amazing how the faculty and those directing the institution on Windsor Street, how they were able to, despite the handicap of facilities, how they were able to function and operate with any kind of...
- KL: Now, um, did certain parts of the Windsor Street campus remain open even after they moved over here? Like the labs? There were labs. Or everything moved over at once?
- EB: Yes, because then the building was used by Saint Pat's because Saint Pat's had relocated and before it was completed, before the building was completed, they lived in the old Saint Mary's. And I remember substituting up there in high school. It was strange because there I was in...teaching in a classroom which had been the dormitory where I had stayed, you know, some years before.
- KL: That must have been different. What do you see as your connection to Saint Mary's now? You seem to have stayed active with different groups.
- EB: Well, I'm an alumna and I attend alumni activities, and of course our ranks are getting thinner and thinner and now it's been, what, fifty-seven...what am I saying? Fifty-eight years since I graduated. So there were eight graduates and there are four of us out of the eight, four of us. Half the class is gone. So I suppose after fifty-eight years, that isn't a bad record.
- KL: Now, I've asked all my questions, did you have anything that you wanted to add that I didn't ask you about?

EB: No, I can't think of anything that I'd like to, you know that might be of interest and such.

KL: Well, I'm just going to turn this off then.

EB: Okay.

[Tape recorder is turned off.]