

**Oral History Interview with George Haliburton
conducted by Kathleen Lingley on July 7, 2003.**

Transcription by Danielle Dungey, January 5-February 10, 2005

KL- And could you tell me your full name?

GH- [An old ball of wax here]...George Macdonald Haliburton.

KL- And when were you at Saint Mary's?

GH- September '34 until May of '41.

KL- And how old were you when you came to Saint Mary's?

GH- 12/13.

KL- Okay.

GH- What was I? In '34 when I...in '34 I would have been 13 going into grade nine.
No, I would have been...I was born in '21, so I was...I wouldn't have been 12 until
October.

KL- Okay.

GH- So I was just under 12 going into grade nine.

KL- Okay.

KL- And did you have any family members at Saint Mary's as well?

GH- Well, my older brothers had gone to Saint Mary's in high school.

KL- Okay.

GH- And my younger brother followed later on. Those were the big days when the fees
were twenty dollars per semester: for each of three semesters.

KL- Oh wow.

GH- So twenty bucks...

KL- Twenty bucks goes a long way.

GH- Compared to today.

KL- Yeah.

GH- Yeah but twenty bucks would buy an awful lot of the family groceries for a week. I mean a loaf of bread was ten cents, a pound of hamburger fifteen, three pounds for a quarter on the weekend- two pounds for a quarter on the weekend.

KL- Oh wow.

GH- So that's...

KL- Times have changed.

GH- The daily paper was eighteen cents a week.

KL- That's neat.

KL- Do you remember any of your teachers when you were in the high school?

GH- Oh sure. Well, who'd we have? Well, in high school...it's hard to sort them out. They were the Christian Brothers and they were there for a long while. So if we can explore the different names there was...grade nine, we had Brother Ross; grade ten... grade eleven there was Kehoe, Shea[?]...Lannon didn't teach, no Lannon didn't teach high school...I can see some of the faces but I can't pull the names. Lyons was one and of course Brother Ross. Ross looked after the book room so everybody knew him. You had to. And then of course the Jesuits came in '40. That was a change.

KL- How was it different from the Christian Brothers?

GH- I don't know how you say, read it. This was when we're still tight. But I think the [Jessies] had to make a bit of an adjustment on their own too. You know, here you come with a new order into an old order. You hopefully make a good transition without upsetting everybody. So Father [B.G.]...Father Burke Gaffney was the...I had him for a lot of classes. But...were you ever here when he was here?

KL- No I wasn't, no.

GH- He had a temper like you couldn't imagine. I mean that's why he went in the [Jessies].

KL- Really?

GH- His temper...it was to try to get a handle on his temper because [in industry] his temper was...he had a brother who was also a [northern] engineer. But he was both an engineer and an astronomer- astronomer and math go together. But I can remember one...in my last year and there were only four of us in the class and I guess there was three there. It was Math 5. And one of the fellows asked a particular question. Father [B.G.] blew a fuse like you've ever saw sparks before.

KL- Oh no.

BH- He just blew a fuse and then whacked out, “wang” and slammed the door and that was it. I mean that’s why I say that’s why he joined the Jesuits was to try to control his horrible temper because...I mean he was only a short little fella- even the grade niners were bigger than he was. And of course today, grade niners are huge compared to what they were a hundred years ago or whatever.

KL- Do you remember any other stories about the teachers that you had?

BH- Oh well, the Brothers were particularly good with chalk. Not just writing on the blackboard but if you were dozing, you’d get hit in the head with a piece of chalk so fast. Oh yeah, he’d be busy on [?] and then “whoosh”, you’d wake up.

KL- I bet.

GH- Oh yeah, they were deadly, the teachers were. They all played handball. I don’t know whether you know anything about handball.

KL- I know a little bit.

GH- Well handball is a black rubber ball about yay high and it’s very hard (it’s almost as hard as...harder than a baseball) but it bounces beautifully. Brother Lynon was a particularly good one. They used to have their own house contests- the Brothers on their own. And also you see that the handball alley down the street there at Holy Hearts Seminary, so you when you learned handball when you were going to Saint Mary’s, then when you went down to the seminary, you were competing with the fellas that were already there who had handball experiences at Saint Mary’s. But I can remember seeing Brother Lynam who taught a bunch of the engineering stuff but most Chemistry, but I seen the back of his hand, the blood coming out. That’s how serious they played. The whole back of his hand would be not bleeding but the red practically coming through the skin. Oh, they were terrific. They’d fire a bottom board and there was absolutely no chance of you hitting anything. The bottom board, it just goes right into the junction and that [?] goes right out flat on the bottom. And of course, that was the ultimate. That’s the real ace in tennis. And then of course there was the old Roarum with the natural ice. The swamp made part of it so part of the ice went up and down about two-thirds of the way toward the north end and you’d be going up over the bog and down again. There were tennis courts there.

KL- And were you students really active in playing in the Roarum and on the tennis courts and that sort of thing?

GH- Well there was always a problem to get time on the handball alley, but I remember one fella, [Thomas Gerry], Tommy’s parents had an Austin 8 or that vintage, an Austin 8 was an eight horsepower rating on these little old English cars, a few of them were over here. The boys played a trick on him more than once, but they’d push it into the handball court, which was a concrete floor, put it right in the corner and then lift it diagonally so that you couldn’t move it ahead and you couldn’t move it behind. So if you got onboard, fired it up, you couldn’t get it out: you had

to get somebody else to lift with you and lift the front end or the back end so that you could now move it out. But, you know, when they're finished classes at 4:30 or something, they'd come out looking for the car and then somebody'd say, "well, it's in the handball alley". And, you know, time was passing, this was late in the year and you're trying to get home and you were one of the last students in the place. So you've read and saw pictures of similar cars up on the roofs and whatever of university. It happened more than once that this Thomas guy was stuck in the corner of the handball alley.

KL- That's pretty funny.

GH- Well I remember too one time, this is Brother Lynam, I had just come past the handball alley and get in the north end door and he looks at me and he said, "that pile of lumber back the other side of the handball alley," "yup", "how much lumber was that"? So I looked. He said, "well, you're taking engineering aren't you"? "Yes". "Well, you should have been able to take a look and estimate quickly how much lumber was down there or what the dimensions were of the pile of lumber". And ever since then, I've been checking piles of lumber all over. When you see the transport trucks loaded with lumber and you count how many pieces, how many in this bundle and how many bundles in this layer and how many layers. Well if you're driving along behind them, why not?

KL- Exactly.

EG- It sure put the need on [him] to be observant. That's what engineers are supposed to do to start with- at least they're supposed to be observant.

KL- So was there an Engineering Society, like a group of students when you were in...?

GH- eah but it was more nominal than actual.

KL- What do you mean?

GH- In name only.

KL- In name only? Oh okay, that's what [nominal] means. So would you have events together?

GH- Well when the whole place only had 75 students so it was pretty difficult. If you took the, what was the Arts one was Tau Gamma Sigma...I forget what the engineering one was but I don't know if we ever had a meeting. The Arts might have had their own sessions a couple of times because they were the biggest crowd. The rest of us were also [Engs.]. Well of course Babe Beazley, he had a pile in Commerce. He liked to play handball too [sometime] really. Well, he was here for years too, eh?

KL- Oh yeah.

GH- But the big fella to remember at Saint Mary's is Shooty.

KL- Who was that?

GH- Mr. Shoot.

KL- Mr. Shoot?

GH- Shooty. He was the general factotum, janitor, building superintendent, whatever and he was the one that ran the power plant and did all the chores and whatever but also, you see, there were in the high school (more so in the high school than in the college section), there were boarders and of course the boarders have some different rules than the day students.

KL- Were you a boarder or a day student?

GH- No, I was a day student.

KL- You were a day student, okay.

GH- You know there was a certain twilight time everyday that you've got to be back in. If you were late, there was also a way back in via Shooty's: in through the coal vent and up the back stairs. But Shooty wasn't a big fella, he was a small fella. But he'd been there for donkey's years. But I remember one fellow that I hadn't...he was a boarder, he was about not much more than five foot, maybe five foot two. He was as strong as an ox: he used to be able to go over and lift the end of the billiard table and bounce it, eh.

KL- Oh my goodness.

GH- I don't know how many years later...the very late forties or early fifties, I met him again up Inverness way and he said, "George, you don't remember me, do you"? And I said, "No". What he said, "Do you remember a little fella, Morocco McLean"? "Oh yeah, absolutely". He said, "That's me". And I'm looking up at him, he's about six foot three, maybe six four. It was Dr. Jim McLean. He was in Inverness or Marguerite, whichever it was, Inverness I guess it was. I said, "That's impossible". "No," he said, "I stopped growing when I was like fifteen and I was short and then when I was about twenty-five, I started to grow". It's a disease of some kind or other. I forget what it's called. But Tiny Titus, he was another engineer and when he was going to Dal he was six foot plus broad, he had to give up football because all his bones were brittle. He'd get tackled and he'd be broken, as simple as that. So I expected that Jim was much the same. When he sprouted up, all due to bone growth, unless you've got calcium replacement, you'll have problems.

KL- Definitely.

GH- There were all kinds of Newfoundland stories, all kinds of jokes about every young whatever. But in those days, there were, I'd say, an unusual mix of some fellas who were relatively large for the class they're in and relatively old for the class they're in but somebody in their family insisted "you're going to finish high school whether you die trying". Well also, the first American football used to be played between Saint Mary's and Dalhousie.

KL- Really?

GH- Somewhere in some of the old Collegians or Santamarians you'll find pictures of them. Jack Lynch who used to teach at Saint Pat's, Jack was one of the players, along with Chris Grant and then there was Tommy what's his name? He was from the States. It seems to me there was [one or two] from Dartmouth. But when you looked at them and then you looked at today's, all the pads that they wore today, well those days, you see, the skinny helmet literally was a helmet more like the old navigator's helmet but with a little heavier padding but shaped like the great big helmets that they wear today. No face mask or anything like that. The football was a different size than the rugby football.

KL- So would a lot of people go to those games?

GH- Well it's basically the university crowd that goes- parents likely don't get too much involved. But those were the days too when there were good hockey games and you had people like George West and whatever. Those were hockey games: they weren't just grand melee, they were hockey. They were there to score goals, not to break the other people into little pieces. I won't watch hockey at all because the hockey [how] it used to be played: when it was the name of the game to get that little black thing into the net. The way the game seems to be now, it's see how many people you can put in the hospital.

KL- That doesn't seem right.

GH- What?

KL- I said, that doesn't seem like the right way to play.

GH- Well to me the best, one of the best hockey games I've ever seen was the first Russia/Canada one. The Russians would go fast and the Canadians couldn't catch them. They couldn't catch them. They couldn't hit them because the Russians were skating faster. You know, it's a different hockey game when it's all based on speed and scoring. But we had all kinds of...a mixture of everything.

KL- So did you play on any sports teams when you were at Saint Mary's?

GH- Oh on a few of the intramural stuff. In those days, you're looking at pretty lean times. If you wanted any spending money, you had to get out and find it. So I had

paper customers, not the daily papers, but the *Toronto Star*, the *Montreal Standard*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Macleans*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Chatelaine*, *Liberty Magazine*, *Boston Advertiser*, *New York Sunday News*, and all of these different ones that became marshals in American news, we're always dropping a bunch more out. And of course, as soon as you got them, you got to take them out and deliver them. You had routes, you had customer lists for everyone of them. I had customers, we lived at the foot of Jubilee Road, most of the time I had customers all of the place, even down in [Wood Brothers] on Granville Street: one of the hairdressers wanted *Good Housekeeping* and when *Good Housekeeping* came out, she got it delivered to the store. I don't know...you couldn't really commit to playing certain days of the week because you never knew what days these [damn] papers or magazines were coming out.

KL- Yeah exactly.

GH- But father said that if you wanted some pocket money, you...

KL- You better work for it.

GH- You better get out and keep those customers otherwise you're in trouble. I played some tennis and some hockey whatever, but I was never out on the team.

KL- Okay.

KL- Do you remember who was the President of Saint Mary's when you were there?

GH- Stirling was one. Cornelius, Father Cornelius he was one. He was there for quite a number of years. Stirling was before Cornelius and then when Connie left down to Atlanta, it [?]. . .there were nicknames for different, of the Brothers. Father Birmingham was Burge, don't ask me where it came from, but he was transferred from Newfoundland to here to Saint Mary's. He was much older than the rest of the Brothers. Most of the Brothers were fairly young, you'd put them in their forties/fifties, but Burge must have been right in his sixties.

KL- Was there a dress code when you were at Saint Mary's?

GH- You were lucky to have clothes.

KL- I was wondering, do you remember any other school rules that stick out in your mind?

GH- Well you certainly wouldn't be dropping cigarette packs all over the corridors or anything like that. If somebody caught you dropping, you know, wastepaper and there's a wastepaper basket around and you aren't making any effort, you learned about it. You learned more than where the wastebasket was, you learned that it was your job to use it.

KL- Also, what effect do you think that the war had on your experiences at Saint Mary's? Did it make things different there?

GH- Put it this way, once you got into university, you had to be in COTC [Canadian Officers' Training Corps]. There was the opportunity to study and write exams and qualify as a Second Lieutenant, which most of us did: the Second Lieutenant in the Coast Artillery and you would do all your firing calculations and whatever. And then later, I don't remember when the big COTC move went on but it was after '41 cause the fellow who turned out to be my father-in-law was the CO of the COTC, Major Mike McManus. He was a World War One trainee pilot, at least, in the Royal Flying Corps. But you'll see in any of those pictures you see of the COTC, the guy out front in the middle. Most of the Profs were also involved as officers of the COTC unit. But that was after I...well, that would have been after spring of '41 because in spring of '41, I was ready to go down to Tech. I was...I also had to go o, as was all the grads who were going to Tech, all those who were in Engineering, who had a diploma in Engineering, we had to go to army camp at the, what was it...[?]. That was a camp that was right in Tuft's Cove, up above Tuft's Cove.

KL- What was the name of it?

GH- Anti-Aircraft Battery.

KL- Oh okay.

GH- This was, you know, a regular army battery and we and the COTC all had to go and spend a two week camp there doing military drills and doing gun drills and whatever and these were 3-inch heavy anti-aircraft guns. They had dummy ones, what they call dummy rounds, which would be wooden [?] and they're about this big, the cartridge was about that long and then the round [wood]. One time they or every so often they would do practice with live ammunition rather than with a dummy. With the live ammunition you went through the same routine except you didn't pull the lanyard to fire. One time somebody pulled the lanyard and it fired and here this round went up over the city and down into somebody's backyard in Spryfield. Nobody was hurt, but it was a bit of an exercise. So after that they made sure that whenever they were doing any of the practice gun drills, they were aiming out the harbour somewhere because they didn't want it to go into anybody's backyard again. And then it was down to Tech after that. That was in the spring and then in the fall, you were in the Tech contingent.

KL- Were there weekend and evening activities for Saint Mary's students?

GH- Well there were lots of activities. I mean there were plays and stage performances and whatever that were done by the students. You see, there was only one decent sized room in the whole building that you could have any kind of a congregation of people. There was a stage up front and I don't know where they'd round up all the chairs (they were all folders). There was a, I don't know how you'd describe it, but there were regular programmes within the student faculty operation, within the

walls. Yes, there'd be at once time or another there'd be a band organised and they'd keep it going for a while. Then there was a debating crowd that did their thing and whatever. But unless you were able to have certain times, which was a little difficult with me with the papers coming all the time, so you didn't end up being in all those things.

KL- Were there every any dances for you boys?

GH- I don't remember any dances because remember it was strictly a male university, as well as a male high school. I mean if you were a girl going to high school and you were Catholic, you went to Saint Pat.'s Girls High. If you were a boy and you didn't go to Saint Mary's, you went to Saint Pat.'s Boys High. That was it, otherwise you went to the Halifax County Academy, which was on the corner of Sackville and Brunswick.

KL- I also wanted to know, were there religious solidarities, different groups?

GH- Try this again.

KL- Religious solidarities or societies of students?

GH- Well, Society of the Blessed Virgin, everybody belonged into that one. But sodality, yes.

KL- What would the Society [of the Blessed Virgin do]?

GH- I don't know, I hardly ever went to...sodality was it. This chapel was right under grade nine so you were always cautioned not to be too damn noisy- not that you'd wake the Lord up.

KL- How do you think that Saint Mary's being a small campus affected the atmosphere of the school?

GH- More fight.

KL- Really?

GH- I don't say fights, I said more fight because Saint Mary's always had good sports teams. And I can remember going up to St. FX to a hockey game and Saint Mary's was beaten and there were beaten by the fact that X was on average something like ten pounds heavier per man than was Saint Mary's. And it was basically the good little team being beaten by a good big team. I mean I can still remember seeing the whole team crying in the dressing room. I mean they were beaten. They were absolutely physically hardly able to move after the game. I mean they were exhausted. It was, as I say, a good little team being beaten by a good big team because you had fellas like [Tark] Walsh and [Tark] was about six two and about 280.

KL- Wow.

GH- Or maybe he was only two and a quarter, I don't know, but he was a big...and he was on defence. So if you got down there and you got in his way, you knew it. But it was always, there was always fight, not fighting, fight see. Well, it was part of the old yells.

Tape stops- end of side one.

KL- There you go.

GH- But at Dal always was the Mr. Big, [Saint Mary's] was a little small fry. No, Dal didn't have much honour for Saint Mary's and they didn't have much honour for Tech either.

KL- Really?

GH- They wanted, Dal always, their Profs...in Engineering, three years, it used to be, three years Pre-Engineering and then two years of Tech...at Dal always, their Profs were saying, "Don't go to Tech. Stay here and take Engineering Physics". Well Engineering Physics didn't qualify for registration as a P.Eng, but they wanted to see the end of Tech. They wanted Tech to be non-existent. Actually, they tried...we got it stopped twice. I was a [?] at...along with [Alan Thomas] and the bunch. And we used to meet down in Alan's living room and we'd write the letters and Alan would see that they got in the press. When he said, we were trying to defeat the takeovers, and in his will he put as such that should there be a takeover between the time that he died and, the whatever, before the settlement of his estate, but if any of his estate was to be given to Dal, it was all to Mount A. So Mount A got about two million bucks. And Dal sued to break the will and the court threw it out. Oh no, like I said, Alan Thomas was adamant that there wasn't going to be a penny of his money ever going anywhere near Dalhousie because they didn't want Tech to be in business and he was a real Tech and he was a wealthy, kind of wealthy boy. Al was in Engineering sales: he and Maury Taylor. Maury Taylor was also big in Montreal Engineering and whatever, and when you've got deep pockets like that you can do a lot of mailing out. The third time, it was...I didn't have any steam left and Alan was dead at this point and so Maury...you need a lot of ready green if you're going to fight that kind of stuff.

KL- Yeah, definitely.

KL- Just going back to your comments about Saint Mary's having a lot of spirit, do you remember any cheers or songs?

GH- **[Sings a loud, fast, cheer]** Saint Mary's, Saint Mary's, rah, rah, rah! You never forget those.

KL- They're engrained in you, eh?

GH- Well it's part of your inoculation.

KL- That's neat.

KL- I was going to ask you, could you sort of describe the college building to me saying where you come in for your classes and what the classrooms were and that sort of thing?

GH- Well, the high school was separated from, essentially from the university in whatever way they could knowing it's only one building. On the ground floor there was what we called the common room. And then if you came in the front door, to the left there was the anteroom for the President's office and then on the right hand, it was the chapel. And there was stairs that went downstairs and stairs that went upstairs and upstairs, over the chapel, you have grade nine and I remember there was a class...the book room was just to the east of the stairway on the second floor and then there were classrooms [for] grade nine, then there was a classroom here, which in the senior year we took certain classes in that one. And then on the third floor was essentially the living accommodations. The basement of course was the kitchen and all the [?], vegetables and whatever, plus Shooty's domain. So if you knew the place, you knew the boarders from the day students because the boarders were a tight knit bunch. The boarders will tend to be, they're quiet at the right time and silent at the right time and vociferous at the right time.

KL- o were there any areas in the college that you weren't allowed in?

GH- Well the day students weren't really supposed to go into the boarding accommodations. The boarding area was private for the boarders: that was their home and you don't go barging into other people's homes. This is one of the disciplines. There was always an invisible barrier: that's the boarder's area and unless there's a special occasion or inviting or your whatever, you wouldn't simply go and trespass.

KL- I was going to ask you, what impact do you think the education you received at Saint Mary's had on your life?

GH- It was fundamental: fundamental stability. It gave you an intrinsic feeling of responsibility and of course that [solves] everything.

KL- That's great.

KL- Well I've asked all my questions, I was wondering if there was any other memories or anything that you want to share that I didn't ask you about?

GH- I don't know, you start rambling on and certain things pop up.

KL- It's hard to remember things.

GH- Well there's one fellow that was, well he's 92 gone and he used to play hockey and football and whatever, Pat Flemming, C.P. Flemming, he also graduated with his Diploma in Engineering and then went down to Tech. But at 92+ he knows from which rack, where which check, bump or whatever was when- they all hurt later on. At 92, he's still able to move around but not very fast. We take him to church on Sundays.

Also, one of the things that perhaps is relative, I don't know, the mix of students was from all over the city. I mean it wasn't, shall we say, restricted to south-enders or west-enders or north-enders, you had everybody from each area. Those were also the days when many of the families were big families: 12, 14, 16 kids. And I remember one family, the Garrigans, there were lots of them. Wests, there were lots of them. Flemmings, there were Flemmings galore: you know, lots of cousins and whatever. Once you knew say one in the middle of five or six, you knew a whole lot of kids because you knew their friends too. So when you were a kid going to school in a small community, depending on how many brothers and/or sisters you had, you knew their friends, you knew an awful slew of people. And you knew them and they knew you. It wasn't the case of, "Oh I think that's Charlie Brown": you knew damn well that was Charlie Brown. It was the same with kids that went to a College Street school. Those kids were all south-enders. And some of them had pretty well-to-do parents and some of them didn't. But you still had the same Scouts and Cubs and whatever. So those kids that went to College Street School, they can tell you all kinds of stories: disciplinary stories about the nuns that ran the place.

The Brothers were damn good with the chalk. There was not question about that. They weren't the strapping type, but they "whoosh"...most of the Brothers and the Jesuits - they were both real people. I mean they weren't haughty or they weren't...I mean they were teachers that were as far as I was concerned, they were relatively close to the students all of the time. They weren't going down with their heads up in the air. They went down the corridor and some of the boys were down the corridor, there was nothing to stop them to stop and talk to them unless they were heading for another class or something, then they'd get into the next class so they wouldn't lose anybody. That's about it.

KL- Well that's great. I'll just turn that off then.