

**Interview with Richard Beis Conducted by Angela Baker, June 19, 1993**  
**Transcribed by Curtis Dray, February 27, 2000**

AB: Ok, well, lets start with a little background information on you. Could you state your full name?

RB: Yeah, Richard...you mean, oh, Richard H Beis...you mean or something like that.

AB: That's good enough. And your date and place of birth?

RB: Yeah, I was born, January 18, 1928 in Sanduski, Ohio; that's near Cleveland. It's about 60 miles west of Cleveland.

AB: OK. Could you describe your educational background?

RB: Yeah, well after high school I spent about six years or six and a half years in a Roman Catholic Seminaries. And during that period, I...because of one of the seminaries that I was in London, Ontario, they had worked out an arrangement with the University of Western Ontario. So certain of us, including myself, were able to get degrees from the University of Western Ontario. That's where my undergraduate degree is from and then I went to Notre Dame after that and got a masters and a doctorate in the University of Notre Dame. Do you want to know the dates or does that matter?

AB: Oh, sure yeah. For research interest too.

RB: Yeah...Ok, well I would have gotten my undergraduate from the University of Western Ontario in 1951 and then...well I spent two years in the US army from '54-'56 so I was out and then back and...Notre Dame would have been...lets see '57 for the masters and '63 for the doctorate, but I left in '60 and started teaching and so ah I was teaching...in those days you had four courses, which was terrible plus you had a dissertation. So I worked 7 days a week for years.

AB: At St Mary's...or?

RB: Oh no, that was in the states I taught. My teaching career began in 1960 at St. Norbert's College; it's outside Green Bay, Wisconsin. Distinguished by the fact that then as now, the Green Bay Packers stay on campus before the season, and as matter of fact when I started my teaching career, kind of interesting after having left Notre Dame. I got to St. Norbert and I was waiting for the famous Vince Lombardi to get out of his room so I could get into it. He's one of the famous ones. And so I taught there from '60-'63. And then in '63 I took a temporary job. Was supposed to be for a year, it ended up being 2 years at Mary Noel's Seminary in Glen Allan, Illinois. And in those days that was the beginning of when lay people were starting to teach in Catholic Seminaries cause prior to that priests taught there all the time. But that was the beginning of course, that's all changed now. And at the same time in the second year I made contact with [Vasin]

Papers of Northern Illinois so they asked me to teach there. So I ended up teaching at Northern Illinois as well as the Seminary.

And then in 1965, I came to St. Mary's and I taught from '65, 1965 to 1990 at St Mary's...25 years. And I saw Saint Mary's change immensely ...immensely... When I got to Saint Mary's...1965, there were 800 students, all male. The place was run by Jesuits. When I left 25 years later, in 1990, there were 8000, it had been co-educational probably 20 years since the early '70s. Jesuits are long gone. There's a good couple of Jesuits left, but that's pretty well it. So you know, I've seen a lot of changes and...lest one become nostalgic, as many are apt to, we had plenty of problems in the past and we have plenty of problems today. One of the things that I am unhappy with is the way people will treat the past, they mythologize...well, you know, being in history, they make it up. A kind of wonderful thing and you look at them and you say well, do you know anything about it? Well, no, we just kind of create it. You know.

AB: The good old days.

RB: Yeah, the good old days, well...no. The point is it's like virtually all human situations; it was a mixed bag. I mean, we had plenty of problems in those days. So, they were not the good old days. On the other hand, we had some very nice things in those days. And the same was true throughout my career, right up to today. You know, when I left St. Mary's, they had solved certain problems but there were other problems, and there's always problems where you got people, you know.

AB: Yeah

RB: [The way] profs eliminate people I suppose, you know. I think...I was there right through the coming of the union. And of course the administration opposed it, but the fact of the matter is that I think the union solved many problems. I think the union itself has some problems, but what human institution doesn't? See one of the things that's important about a faculty union and perhaps other unions too is that it isn't a one way street. It doesn't mean, here because you got a faculty union, faculty is going to get this, this and this and not have to give anything in return. No. What a union does through negotiation is layout rules for both sides. And therefore the whole process, for example for hiring, you now have an appointments committee. Back then, it was between the president and maybe the head of the department and that was it; a far more informal thing. Appointments committee, you've got renewal committees, you've got promotion committee, you know and so on. I think there was a little bit on promotion committees in the past maybe but the whole thing has been formalized and what that does is, that if it cuts down the problems because I lived when you didn't have it. You see what happens is when you don't have rules and injustices occur, to what can you appeal.

I was head of the faculty association late '60s while that became the union see, so I kinda have some hard experience in that regard. One of the things I learned some years

ago is somebody may do something, which all of us would agree is pretty bad, but in the legal sphere, if there's no law against it, than they haven't broken any law and therefore you can't nail them legally. You see what I mean? So, similarly if you don't have rules in regard to what must faculty do, what are faculty responsibilities and so on... You see, well, there are now many rules that faculty has to do x, y and z. So, it's a two-way street and that makes it good for the administration and for the faculty cause then they...no, I mean sure we can improve the contract, you can always do that, but I remember a case some years back about sexual harassment, long before it became a popular kind of issue and speaking with a lawyer about it and you say, "Well Dick, what's St. Mary's policy on sexual harassment?" And I was dumb-founded. You may have said "Well, hell, they're against it!" But again he said "have they put forth any policy?" and I said "well not in any formal sense, you see" and that's when I learned the hard way and I could give you other hard examples that even though most of us think sexual harassment is bad...like war is bad, you know and so on...

AB: Yeah.

RB: You shouldn't have to be taught that. But the fact of the matter was that St. Mary's had not put forth the formal policy on sexual harassment. Therefore, how can any law be broken? See, if there isn't a policy or a law or a rule, you see. So contrary to what...let's face it, you know unions have abused things in the past, so it isn't just a blind pro-union thing. But if you get balanced people, that's the key. I don't give a damn whether you got union or non-union or this or that. You get balanced people on both sides and work out a reasonable agreement, you know, then all sides benefit. And I've lived through that and that's why I feel fairly strongly about it because I've seen what it's like without it and what it's like with it. So anyway, those were my...

AB: Let's talk about the early years. The academic programs that were available at the time, how did they change?

RB: OK, that's a good point. That's a very good point. When I came to St. Mary's, it was typical of Catholic schools, college and university in North America and that is every student had to take a number of philosophy courses. Fact is that would have been one of the reasons why I was hired. In turn, 'course, that means many students, all the students want to do some philosophy and you need people to teach them, okay. Now why had that come about well, it had come about in my view for the wrong reason. What it was, the real motivation behind it was a kind of religious motivation that a...it really, to be blunt, was kinda teach 'em how to defend the faith. You know, use their brains to defend the faith and so on. That's how theologies get created naturally along with scripture and so on. So that sort of thing in North America, like I say... St. Mary's was very typical. They were throughout North America that way. And I remember a friend of mine went to Marquette...this was years ago. I remember talking with him. He said, somehow they had to take eight courses in Philosophy...everybody. Now these

courses were semester courses so it would be you know like getting four-year courses but different but in eight different areas. I guess everybody took that. And so in terms of that curriculum, there were, I think, three courses in those days. I taught ethics for many years, right up to the end actually. But now there were two other courses which...I don't know...I'd have to get the old calendars...I think I could get...they're still around the office in the school, but I suspect maybe an introduction of philosophy that goes pretty far back and ethics and maybe one other, maybe in the history of philosophy, or maybe metaphysics. I really can't remember the third but that was through business people, science people, arts people. They all had to take that.

Well then what happened was this...I think as the sixties developed, late sixties and into the early seventies...what happened was you got more and more students going into commerce. Commerce has always been large right but it had even got larger, I guess and the commerce gradually become more sophisticated as indeed perhaps all of us did in various fields. But anyway, they wanted to do more and more, which meant that if they did it, what about these courses that people were taking in philosophy. If they had to take three courses in philosophy, that cuts down the time they got to take commerce courses. And so they, I think...now I would have to check it...I think they were about the first to drop them, the require...maybe reduce it from three to one and eventually the one went you see and then to have it an elective and then science then proceeded to through the years to do the same thing from three to one and then arts reduced it down from three to one and the idea was to develop kinds of thinking and that's why you got well... Here's a group, of course, say social science courses, humanities courses, skills courses, like logic and so on. That's where that came from to say well, you have to take one in here, one in here and one in here. About the only exception was the basic English course, which I think, I guess that's still so. Two hundred, that was OK that was the only specific course.

So, that's how the curriculum kind of evolved. I mean, there would be a lot more to be said but that's what occurs to my mind, in terms of philosophy, you know at St. Mary's. And I suspect if you looked at many, many other Catholic colleges or universities or formal Catholic colleges or universities, you'd find very similar kinds of evolution. So, of course, Saint Mary's now I call a Catholic college because it isn't really in terms of its legal status. It became about 1972 maybe... '71, '72 it became no longer a Catholic college. It got out from under the archdiocese.

I don't know if you know about that battle with the Mount and so on. Yeah, you know about that. My reading of that was that poor old bishop there he's kinda minding his business, governing his diocese and I happen to know the president very well. His office used to be, he used to be in our department, Father LaBelle who's now dead...his office was right across the hall from mine so I know him quite well. He got to be the president. He decided that...going to make St. Mary's co-ed. But when they did that, the nuns out the Mount, they hit the ceiling for obvious, very practical, pragmatic reasons...worried

about going out of business. But of course they wouldn't say it that way and you know. And so, my understanding, and I knew a priest was a good friend of mine down in the bishop's house or area and I guess what happened was the nuns converged on, sitting we always served you faithfully for hundred years or whatever and you know, now you're gonna do this to us and basically all. And then the Jesuits hit 'em from the other side. You see the story I've gotten now. This is something like Art Monahan would be good on this. Art would very good and Father Stuart, you know... I mean, they're sharper on some of these aspects cause they were here before I was. But my understanding is that the Christian Brothers originally ran St. Mary's when it was down about where the IGA is now. See when I came in '65, that was all those red big buildings in those days. That's all changed of course, but my understanding was that the Christian Brothers were there. They had a blow-up with Bishop and so they tromped out and let the Bishop. Now this is all that I've been told you see and so that's why I want you to double-check it. But that the Bishop had some connections in Rome and he wanted the Jesuits in there and the story I've been told is the Jesuits didn't really want to come here and through leverage in Rome, they came, while then I guess then, that was like quite a few years before.

Then, when this co-ed thing came up around, I don't know 1970, more or less, you know. Then, of course, then the nuns complained, kind of complained you know, "We've served you well for a hundred years and this is the way you treat us." The Jesuits came back and said "listen, we didn't want to be here in the first place and when we were told, we came here, we could run it the way we wanted to" and here's the bishop caught in the middle. Well, I mean that's a pretty tough position and guess what, the last one being ecumenical, was...you get these things leak out all over the place, you know, what's the latest and so on...Being ecumenical, and that meant being open and so on. And so hear are these two at it and I guess it was a pretty vicious fight from some of the detail I got by Bishop dissolved all of it. And St. Mary's officially became no longer a Catholic institution. And that's when Owen Carrigan took over around 1972...well you know him from history, I guess...as its president and Owen who I know pretty well, and here have worked with. []

As you get older you see things repeat themselves; those who least want unions, are the very ones who bring them about. They don't want unions because they're getting away with murder. Well guess what? If you're getting tromped on and getting' murdered you ain't happy, surprise, surprise. And after a while even the deadest wood begins to...I don't mean dead in their field. They might be alive in their field but dead politically begins to become aroused and to unite and guess what happens you see. So ironically, there's no question about it, the union came about because of Owen Carrigan, at least to start it. And then he was gone and then Ken Ozmon became the president. Ken Ozmon, I can honestly say has been the best president I've ever worked under in the 30 years, yeah. He'd be surprised if he knew I thought that of him. Now Ken has done I

think a good job. He's a...let's face it, anybody in that job has a tough job. Very tough job. You know, what it amounts to is you got a multiplicity of competing interests see. So you know the old thing, you can't please everybody, but trying to please anybody is the problem. So, Ken Ozmon came on the scene and then he was on the scene till now. And I think he's done a very good job. I imagine you could pick out this or that or the other thing, but I'm sure if God ran the university, they could find out well God missed on this and that and the other thing. But he did a fine job here or she did a great there or whatever... Or it did wonderfully! But, Ken Ozmon...I served under him, served on the Senate, I served on the board of governors, you know and so on.

I remember St. Mary's was caught in the Basketball cheating thing of...there was a guy from Alabama that the coach had gotten in, breaking some of the rules. I forget the detail of the thing, but that became a big thing when St. Mary's was under severe fire and I was on the board at that time. And I was at a real hot meeting where...what Ken had in mind to do and he did it and I credit him for it, is suspended basketball for a year. And we had members of the board...it's great to hear people talk like this, members of the board while we were in a fund drive at that time and threats were made that you know the alumni would hurt the fund drive and that... These were threats, not descriptions. And I think, "boy isn't it great that don't you feel wonderful to produce an alumni that unless you bump, bounce basketballs and entertain them, they ain't interested in the university. Better seriously question what you've been doing in the educational field. You know, which is what I thought universities would have something to do with. Well, everybody spoke and I had some things to say and they were a variety of things, so when I was finished, Ken Ozmon spoke. And he gave the finest talk I've ever heard a university president say. You don't hear many faculty members praising university presidents, I can tell you. But gave the finest talk and the substance of his talk was look: St. Mary's was here long before basketball was here and our mission is, he said, " is an educational mission" and in so far as other things fit in within this mission, they can stay and they don't they can go. But he went through that and I remember Rob Downey, was I think chairman of the board at that time and I was talking with Rob and he thought very highly of what was said. And I said that was the finest that I ever heard. And he went ahead with it and they suspended basketball for a year. So anyway I don't want to embarrass Ken, but he probably doesn't know I think that, but I do. So through the years, I thought he's done a good job.

So...any other thoughts? Or...you wanna know about my field. I taught ethics for many years. I've taught both...I created the one course in advanced ethics. I taught the normative ethics course for well throughout my career...normative ethics is the kind of ethics that...where you'd look at...see, what it suggests, not that its try to identify and defend basic normative principals, principals which would be guides to upon which you could base your ethics really. And that's the kind of ethics that from Aristotle and Plato onwards, present day, the big ones, the Augustin, Aquinas, Hume, Kant, Mill, Hobbes,

and so on...into the present day, fine. But then the advanced ethics course is...we call it what...analytic ethics or meta-ethics...I forget the title to it. It's called advanced ethical theory, that what it was. That was the thing that, while others have dealt with it in the past, it was kind of treated formally and became a discipline in this century. And what you do in meta-ethics, you ask...and it has very fundamental implications...“what is the meaning of the word good?”, “what is the meaning of the word bad?” So you're right down at the roots of things. I mean, if you say abortion is bad and I say abortion is good and you say euthanasia is good and I say euthanasia is bad. X is good, Y is bad. What does good mean? What does that mean? Another thing you study in meta-ethics is the logic of ethics. You say for example you've proved things in mathematics, ok. You've proved things in empirical science, like physics. You prove things in social science...prove in Columbo on the television, who done it? You proved it was the butler and so on. In ethics you try to prove things, in other words...back-up positions. Well, the point is that, do you prove things in ethics, as you do in mathematics; or do you prove things in ethics, they way you do in physics. Or do you prove things, the way you try to do it in history. Or do you prove things the way you do it in “Columbo, who done it.” You see, it's either prove, establish, or support. You can interchange these. In other words, how does the logic work? How does by they logic what do you base it on. What do you connect it to as a foundational? And so, in the advanced ethical theory, you look at those questions, which I always found very fundamental and exciting and had very important implications and tremendous implications...God, just shot through with implications and I watched the news and I watched all these things and I think boy oh boy, I can see what's going on and its so important if they understood how language works and how meetings work. I don't mean it would solve all the problems but it would take us to a higher plane. I think in dealing with them and so I taught that, normative ethics and meta-ethics, advanced ethical theory...those are my main things along with the introduction.

Publications in ethics, well I published, my first article was on anthropology and ethics. I've published actually, I suppose the focus has been sexual ethics, I published in 1964, I think ... an article on contraception in which I showed that the...that was in 1965 I guess, in which I showed the traditional theory on which the Catholic church bases its opposition to contraception, actually turns out that the proof won't work even in terms of its own theory, natural law theory, that ... actually that theory given certain circumstances may even require contraception which is kind of interesting. But I've published on math; I've published stuff on homosexuality and more recently, toward the end of my career, on pornography. So I, in that sense, it wasn't by any design, I didn't start out twenty, twenty-five years ago saying well I'm just going to publish on psycho-ethics, but it would be things that would come up from time to time that I that um, the contraception things was strong back in the sixties. I guess the Pope's the only one left believing in that now. But the homosexual thing came up then in the seventies and so ... well, see what had happened, I should mention I did my doctoral dissertation on Saint

Thomas Aquinas. You've heard of Aquinas' natural laws theory and that was back in Notre Dame, back in the fifties. And I came across this argument against homosexuality and one thing about Aquinas is that he's a genius, you know, but more than that he's, he's clear on many, many things and that's what both makes him powerful when he's right and you can get at him when he's wrong. See if I'm woolly headed and talking to you about something you don't know whether I right or wrong. So I'm invulnerable you see and some who would like to pretend to be gurus or some phony thing like that, you know. They love to be woolly minded and pretend to be profound, see, but the whole thrust of twentieth century analytic philosophy is just the opposite, it's very hard nose, very tough minded and not this motion of being woolly minded and therefore I think, I think just to either mentally mixed up or phony, which is even worse.

And so Aquinas writes in simple Latin and [secrets from my seminary days, I sure with Latin I never heard the English] But in very simple Latin and he's clear and I saw that gee, his article is quite weak against homosexuality. So that was way back in the fifties, well I didn't really get around to it until the late seventies when it came up and I pursued that and so I wrote on it. But I mean for example, well let's take it, we're talking about homosexuals in their services. Clinton got hung up on that, the chief of staff in the US. And we're talking about people who are highly intelligent people, regardless, you I mean, I mean I think of lets say Brian Mulrooney, Joe Clark, Jean Chretien, the head of the NDP...MacLachlan. Yeah, Audrey, I knew it wasn't Alice, its Audrey MacLachlan. When you're dealing at that level, I don't care what you think about their policies, you can just say "oh they're stupid", most of them are not stupid, most of them work about 16-18 hours a day, they work damn hard on all sides and most of them are pretty bright people. You have to allow for that. I don't mean...occasionally you do get a clunker and think, "how in the hell did they get there, usually through all sorts of back doors, but other than that. But...when I think people that level and then I think well...see now the position would be homosexuality is wrong.

Remember when I said meanings of terms "x" is right, "y" is wrong, "a" is good "b" is bad. What do you mean by those fundamental terms and the meaning and the implication and the meaning are terribly important, you see, and homosexuality is wrong, why? You made the argument against it. You see and the usual argument I found against it has been something under my kids, my kids just now 29, Jill 26. But I remember the kids used to use the term yucky. You know, yuck or yucky and think a lot of times what it is, is most of us are not homosexuals and therefore we kind of almost imagine ourselves in homosexual relations, for example me with a man or something like that, now how does that effect me as a heterosexual, yucky. Cause like you said, I think oh God, I wouldn't want to do that, you know and I think we have confused, maybe our tastes with morality and the two can have some relationship, but they have important differences you see, and so that a...Oh this is my wife Francis and I had mention to Angela about talking to Father Stuart and she said, oh I spent a day because



he's the one who would know an awful lot of the [inaudible] So, but that in regard to the homosexual issue, for example, I don't like raw oysters. You know some people like to eat those raw slimy things. God, I don't want that. Now in terms of being rational it seems to be what follows from that, well then I have a good reason for me not you shouldn't eat raw oysters. But is that a good reason to say you, you shouldn't eat raw oysters. It seems to me, I don't see that, that is. But anyway I've never really found a good argument against homosexuality. See, in all this woolly headed talk of family values and its just...see that's what I mean about being vague you see and you kinda get away with murder and of course I think some of the politicians are purposely vague on things. You know, family values, what is a family value? You see, cause this is what Dan Quayle and George Bush were trying...and this was even talked about in Canada some say and so on. Of course they've won and the union had real fun with this because you've got males who've been together and females who've been living together and so on and they wouldn't have a family. And I said, "ok what about selling it to the Catholic clergy, where are gonna put them?" But of course you've got them on the political hotspot once you take that line. Or what about people who are just plain single who chose to live a single life and they can't. They must be forced to get married in order to promote what you're calling family values. You must be off your rocker.

So anyway, in the last work I did, last number of years I did a study of pornography and published it in the late eighties on that. And was roundly attacked by feminists or certain feminists, oh year really climbed all over. I took the middle position on it and told them my position was that so far I hadn't found a good argument against pornography and so I didn't know. I treated it from a moral point of view. See you treat it from the legal point of view like censorship and that and so on... But I was central; many had treated it from that point of view, so I just argued from the moral point of view. What I did is I examined as well as I could the arguments brought against pornography and found out that they didn't hold up. So, I don't care to watch gobs of pornography. I'm actually kind of interested in the US Open that's coming up. But...anyway that was my last work. On the other hand, I've always kind of had an interest in epistemology too, that like theory of knowledge actually I'm reading on that right now, which interests me. So that kind of gives a general background.

AB: OK Lets go to the student populations, what changes have you seen besides the switch from male and female, what other changes like...?

RB: OK Good question. Yeah, when I came in '65, one of the rules was that it was all male and you had to wear at least a sport jacket to class. The notion of somebody coming with their hat turned on backward and like that wasn't there. Now that was the rule then and of course that all changed. But see with me, this is someways in which I've not changed, you know when I began teaching in 1960. I wanted things out of my way, so I could deal with thought, which I love, and minds. Therefore I didn't care if somebody was male/female, black/white, or pink/green tall/short, you know, wore a tuxedo/or as

they say a jock strap and a bow tie. I didn't care what they wear any of that stuff, that's fine, that's OK I'm not gonna waste my time on that no, no. I just wanted to think. I love minds. I've always loved minds and thought and exchange with students. That's one thing, I taught thirty years and I was tired, but I loved teaching right up until the last day. From day one, until the last day, I always enjoyed teaching. Grading papers, that's another thing, that can kill ya. Going to meetings, that can kill ya, being on committees, that can kill ya, running departments that can kill ya. But I always enjoyed you know, so anyway those were the rules in those days and that gradually changed and that would be one change.

AB: Did you notice any difference in the gender, I mean in the ethnic origins of the students that you taught over the years?

RB: Now here's an interesting thing. That's a good question. I taught at Saint Norbert College '60 – '63 that's outside of Green Bay, Wisconsin right in good old heart of America OK. Now, there if you'd have like one of our good friends was Chinese, he was in the History department by the way. Well in that school, just to have like one, you'd kind of look for and that's cause it was very different. Halifax has always been, in that sense a kind of cosmopolitan city. In other words, from day one that I walked into Saint Mary's, it was very small, but a very heterogeneous faculty. And I've talked to people even then about it, but I haven't in recent years but it was suggested to me that Halifax had been a seaport town. You get people coming in from all over, where as Green Bay, Wisconsin is, that's the center of the country, it would be like Saskatchewan or something like that. So I really haven't seen a lot of that. I would say, I'll tell you one change that took place, I'm pretty unsympathetic towards it. It's what I would say, called quantified laziness. Back then, I suppose maybe students were required to come to class. See again, this may almost sound contradictory, I hope its not, but I thought this, the students to me are adults. A good friend of mine had died quite a few years ago, Bill O'Callahan, I used to teach with a Saint Norbert. He said to me something I've never forgotten in my early years of teaching, he said; "well Dick"...we were out of the depression years, you think [kind of live in the] 30s in the depression years...he said "look, what about the kids that don't have the opportunity and the privilege of going to college. What's their life, seventeen-eighteen year olds?" They're out on the job market, they're trying to make a buck and live. OK, if I'm the boss and I'm running a business and you decided to goof off and not come in or not to do this or that, well, guess what's going to happen?" Well, his point was "look, these kids are paying us a lot of money and they're putting in a lot of their time with what expectation?" With the expectation of when they leave university, they're further ahead...well in the States it's all four years...but say four years there, four years here...they expect to be ahead in some way. So his point was, so that if we treat them as lesser beings, treat them like they're high school kids and so on...Have we fulfilled what we should? And I agree, I don't think so. And so, my notion has always been I treat...I suspect...I'm sorry I used the

term kid, but you know younger people, like adults that I did from day one in 1960, that's one thing I always...that's what I was going to say, you know man to man, face to face whatever, just straight out. Generally, a good reaction from students. Now the rule then was that you had to come to class. Well if you would not come to class and I'm sure not going to be like some nun reading a role or something like that. Gradually, that rule went out and I think that's OK 'cause I never believed in it. I don't believe in forcing students to do stuff. You see, I figure, if I'm your boss, I'm not going to force you to come in, in the sense of, where were you and write down that's a mark against you, no. It's gonna happen; you're going to get fired. It's that simple. Well, with me...probably if you produce...OK the way you choose to produce that's your business, you see. But to me, the fact of the matter is that philosophy is hard work. Emmanuel Kant said so and he was right. It's hard and intellectual work and my answer is, show me the easiest way to do push-ups. Some parts of the world are hard; that's the way it is, and until we find an easy way, we have to deal with it that way, so therefore what would happen is not coming to class and they flunk the course. Not because I'd say I'm gonna flunk ya because you didn't come to class. I had, put it this way, a very, very, very few students who could miss a lot of classes and pass the course cause the subject was hard and that's all.

What I found incredible was the quantified laziness that gradually through the years got bigger and bigger; just got bigger and bigger and large droves for the last, I don't know...ten to fifteen years is a rough guess. Here would be the pattern. First day, about everybody's there. You get a few come in a day or so late. And they'd come in; you'd just see this pattern, ten days to two weeks they'd come. And then Mary Schow or Johnny Joe, they'd disappear. Another thing I didn't like was...I tell ya another change that's taken place that I never liked the big final exam where you based the whole year, and you'd flunk somebody if they had a bad day. I was one of the ones who fought that and we won in fact. That's another story academically, I could tell you. But what happened was, I would give these four tests plus there would be some papers. But the test would be of the quarterly, quarterly, Christmas, quarterly in the final. And I saw these kids come in and they'd flunk it and I mean a lot of the time, just a zero, with an "F." Now where the difference was from my day, because every generation, including mine, has had its goof offs, you know. But what would of happened in my time would be, for the most part, there would be a few exceptions, but they'd say boy oh boy that guy means business you know, or I really got to learn this subject or I'm going to flunk. But I would find incredibly high percentages that would...you'd give em back a failing paper, nothing would change, you wouldn't see them until the Christmas test. You'd give them the Christmas test and they'd flunk the damn thing. And my tests were always three question tests and I tell them, I did everything I could to take the pressure off the students. I wasn't anxious to flunk anybody, I'd prefer to pass everybody. The [big do] it right. But, so I'd give three questions and I'd say look, "I don't care about big answers, I mean you know obviously if your style leaves you to write more well ok, but using a

paragraph you could nail it.” You see, so on and so forth...But with all that, then they take and you give it back and they’re flunking it and then they get their Christmas mark and they’re flunking the course. They just go off, and do the second term and do the same and then the final and so that I reached a point and said look why don’t you people do something that will benefit us all, why don’t you people do something that will benefit us all, why don’t you just flat out donate the money you’ve paid for this course to the University. I said that way you’ll get your name on a plaque you know, you’ve donated money to St. Mary’s, you won’t waste the registrars time with filling out a bunch of forms. You won’t waste my time. And of course the other thing that’s bad is when you get droves of students like that, it somehow, despite your best efforts, does pull the course down some, when you’re getting dead weight like that. And that hurts the other students, who are genuine students that care.

And thank God there were students who cared. Student power in the sixties, late sixties, early seventies, they used to talk about that. Students had a power they didn’t know and I sure wasn’t going to tell them. It’s just the power of caring; that’s the thing. And so I’d always have them sign up and say, “where in the hell’s my paper. You see, and you don’t have it and maybe that student never came and so always...you learn a lot of things the hard way. And I used to then spend my time memorizing students names, so I would know I’d remembered a class of twenty-five, I could name every student in that class, not right off, but in time.

AB: Did you find a big change in the size of your classes over time?

RB: The classes. St. Mary’s has been weird that way. You would think, and it didn’t work out that way, that going from 800-8000, then you’d think the classes got bigger; they would get proportionately bigger that way. I would describe it, more like this, the relatively small, for example my ethics class, back when everybody had to take ethics and there were eight hundred students, I think, I might have 55 in an ethics class and that’s big. But never the less I would, I have to think back, but it would look something like this, it wouldn’t go from 800 – 8000, it wouldn’t go like that in a uniform manner. It would go something like this. A bit back this way, cause I can remember when Art Monahan, for example...let’s say mid-way through my career so that would be...let’s say, I’d have to be very hypothetical on this, but say mid 70s something like that. Art would have 250 in his introduction. I remember Bill Dalton, who passed away many years ago, used to be in political science 250. So, but this is when St. Mary’s was somewhere between the 800 and 8000, you know about there and so they got real big and they, they...I can remember Jerry Gordon, who’s practice used to run the psychology department and run psychology thing downtown for many, many years. Jerry was talking in psychology about lecturing in theatre A and B and being in one and using you know, a photographic system to... And that was years ago, so it’s weird that way. On the other hand, in philosophy, we are the worst student: faculty ratio right now, certainly in arts and perhaps the whole school; the philosophy department is now. The people in logic have

been especially over loaded. I'm talkin' 70, 80, 90 people in the logic class and its just hopeless. They come along in the English class and they say your teaching like a skill and thirty is max or something like that and here are our people with 80 and 90... So in that sense it was bigger.

But I wanted to mention about the exam thing, that's another thing you'd be interested. When I got here, everybody had to take these final exams. First of all, you took kind of a big exam at Christmas, which was kind of a quasi final, only it was through halfway through the year...'cause the courses were one-year courses at Duke. But that was one of the things that I liked about teaching in Canada, it was supposed to the States, I always like a one year course because you had more time to develop it. That was good, but these exam things see and very close friends of mine, like Art Monahan, would be one and I can remember Guy Chauvin, the reason I mention him was because Guy was from Quebec, Art from Ontario and I was from Ohio, you know the mid-west, different backgrounds. But they would be shocked to find out that it would be possible, and it did happen, and from time to time people would fail my final exam and pass my course. And the reason would be, they would have done well say, in the other three tests and maybe if there was a paper, you know or something like that. So their overall...and I also gave some percentage for class performance. I never lectured in 30 years; I just simply dialogued with students. But with a lot of hard work in advance, I don't mean going to wow the students, you know, you can wow and be mister nice guy and so on...You're not being mister nice guy, not when they get out in life. But I like an ordered dialogue, like I throw out questions to students and develop around the particular thing, free will discussions, for example, well, what about that and so on... I always tried to make it live in the classroom and therefore I could just never stand up and lecture. Closest I ever came to that would be from time to time, there would be a thought so delicate and refined that I would kind of read off a paragraph, cause if you missed it, then you might...but that was only the very occasional. But anyway, we used to have some big arguments over that, and I was equally shocked and I'd say look Art and Guy and the other guys around the faculty, you seriously tell me that you think this is fair and just and honest. I'd really lay it on 'em and say that a student could go through the whole year, they're in class a good bit and particularly if in a fairly small class, you know the student, they handle themselves well, they take your other tests and I'd turn the heat up. Suppose the 100% on their other tests, that would happen, but it can and they could do very well and then do very well on your papers and they happen to come in and fail the final exam. That one 3-hour endurance contest in May and the flunk a whole year's course? Well, I think that's unjust and so more and more came in and thought the way I did and we got the final exams made optional. I mean, I didn't wish to impose on other people, like you can't have a final exam and different disciplines worked differently too.

But now, what's happen is that since I left, but of course faculty are just like anybody else, faculty are just people, they'll abuse things, just like anybody else. So what

happened was, I didn't give final exams but I would give a final test, which would just be the final quarter, so four quarters each one. But some of the abuses were these; some faculty members would give apparently, would give in the final test, which was a fifty minute period, would like a final exam then well I am see the students point of view there, that's not fair, they would that. Our faculty needs a kick in the ass sometimes. I can tell you this, I have, I know they're wrong, they're wrong and you know I'm not one who's pro-faculty blindly, or pro-student blindly, each issue had to be decided that was one. Another thing would be is that they'd do slip shot stuff, like give a final test before the final day. Well, if you give it two weeks in advance and there's nothing else coming, then guess what's gonna happen. And that's so they could get out early, you see not because they cared about students. So of course, I understand they've got it back to where they're kind of forced to give a final test. I don't agree with that either, but that's an evolution on final exams.

AB: What changes did you see in the faculty that you worked with?

RB: O.K. Good question. When I came to St. Mary's in 1965, one of the biggest changes you see today is the demand to produce papers and to publish. In our faculty, hardly anybody was doing that. Now at the university level, there should be some of that. Again, I've seen that over done, but there should be some responsibility to produce some papers and to make an effort towards publication and so on... It varies from field to field. My field is one of the worst fields in which to publish simply because there are not the journals. There are rejectionary rates can be 90 to 95%. Whereas in another field may have 40 to 45% rejection rates see, so there are contingencies there that have to be looked at. But on the other hand, in 1965, there were a few people doing a little bit of publishing and that was it and very few and so what that meant it was like a large high school in that respect. When they handed in their finals, it was off to the races until this thing started. Well, that to me is immoral. You know you're a professional educator, you've got to develop. What happened, very simply...it wasn't planned that it happened...there became more and more people that were highly qualified and the competition became greater and greater to get the jobs, the people became better, better trained and so on. So you know if you got a job opening, you got twenty-five to thirty-five, forty people that meet higher standards. So that it became more and more accent on publication.

My own view is we need more balance. I would take the position that teaching should still be number one. On the other hand, there should be some reasonable requirement for producing papers and publishing. I distinguish the two because you may produce papers and that's not going to learned societies. That's one thing. And on the other, is that you may publish papers and sometimes the ones you present to learned societies will become what you publish and so on. It varies and but at least you should be doing

more than just repeating what you've done every year at another graduate level in your teaching, that to me is unacceptable for a university professor. You should be advancing. So the problem of course one of the reasons it goes toward publication is very simple: it's stuff printed on paper and you can copy it and count the publications. It's harder to measure good teaching, but I think it can be done. Incidentally, what I found through the years was this: in a smaller school, you hear, you get to know bit about who'd doin what and who isn't, who can and can't or will and won't. Invariably, what I found was this; that those who don't want student of those courses, invariably with ones who I knew were doing a lousy job at teaching. Of course, the reason will be, "well, who are students to evaluate us, you know just like you're not able to because you don't know enough to do, you see. All kinds of fractionalization there and so on...The tests have shown to be invalid and I've listened to the whole litany and I just think excuses. You're not doing a good job and you know it and you don't want to look bad.

AB: How about extra curricular activities. How have they changed at St. Mary's over the years?

RB: Extra curricular activities...well, probably I'm going to have to say I don't know in one sense but obviously with the building in the tower and with all the very fine athletic things they got there as opposed to lesser opportunities. I suppose must have changed. But I didn't if we're thinking of extra curricular activities, I was thinking in terms of sports and athletics, but in terms of school societies, I don't know that I could say. In other words, there's always been, far as I know, school societies, but I never kept up. Our philosophy society, kinda goes out of existence for a few years and then it kind of comes back in and then things subside and go up and I understand its up now, so it's just... I have to plead some ignorance to the extra curricular activities, cause I guess I found teaching and research like doing jobs and exhaustion but other than that I'm probably not too help, there.

AB: That's all that I pretty much wanted to cover, unless you can think of any other changes?

RB: Gee, I can't...well, let's see, you'll probably leave and I'll think of three things but I don't really...Here's a little tidbit of information you'll be interested in. Of course when I came to St. Mary's our philosophy department was all male. There were clerics and there were priests. Lets see there was Father Stuart, Father Moche, Father...I know a guy that was there just one year and something like an Irish name, like O'Brien or something like that...he was there one year and retired. There are Art, Roley, Buzz, professor Monahan, professor Marshall, myself. Well, it's very interesting. This year as of 1993, the philosophy department at St. Mary's will have more female than male. Now, the way it lines up is this; see professor Monahan and Marshall they retired this year, I retired three years earlier, which is good for the department, cause otherwise all three of us just by chance would have gone this year and boy, you know it's hard to hire

people on tenure track because it's very serious and as awful lot of work. SO what the philosophy department will have, will be four full time men, which would be Sheldon Wine is the chairperson, and Wayne Grennon and Bob Anstel and Peter March...ok, that's four. But then Sheila Crooks has been there quite a while and that gal June Blair, who replaced me and they've hired two women, one of them is Susan Wake and other is...I heard her name and I can't remember right now. Ok that's 4 and 4 but the part timers are all women. We've had Sheila Kinnerd about 20 years has done part time and teaches logic and makes a wonderful contribution and she does two logic sections. Now how big would your section have been?

AB: It was a very large class, probably 160.

RB: Yeah, that's too much. You can't really do it. So now the philosophy department is really in that sense; more females than males and that's a big change. But see we were never...that's one thing about my department I can say we've had some very, very strong differences but I've never from day one seen anything like anti-female and that. I find that incomprehensible really. Because everybody is liked here. The women that are in there have been wonderful. Sheila Crooks, well Sheila Kennard was the first back in the early '70s and then Sheila Crooks has been in for quite a number of years now and because they've always made a wonderful contribution to the department. I don't think that we in the department think of them as both female and male, they're colleagues and they always have been and I'm sure that the ones who come in...I never understood that...maybe it's because I often wonder why and I think your upbringing has a lot to do with that. I went to public schools in Sandusky, Ohio, where you had males and females in the same class. The reason I say that is because the Catholic schools split them and what it was that I grew up around very smart girls, the ones who would be the class leaders would not be male. We'd have some males and I was always up at the very top but there would be the females too, right on from grade school through high school. So I often wonder did that rub off or that just when you're around people that are bright females, how can you think otherwise? Our department in that respect, I must say, has changed. I can't really think of any off hand. I've been over the academic, the curriculum. No I think that's it.

AB: That's great.