

Oral History Interview with Father Edward Granville:
Conducted by Kathleen Lingley, July 12, 2002
Transcription by Sarah Jones, March 1, 2004

KL: This is Kathleen Lingley interviewing Mr. Edward Granville.
What is your full name?

EG: Let's see. Edward Wallace Granville.

KL: Okay. And when and where were you born?

EG: I was born in Halifax, grew up in Bedford.

KL: Okay. Did your parents work outside the home?

EG: Only my father. My father was a doctor up in Bedford, then he moved back into the city.

KL: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

EG: I have one sister who's older than I and five...four younger brothers.

KL: Oh wow. Quite a few of you.

EG: Very close in age. Yeah.

KL: Did any of your brothers attend Saint Mary's as well or...?

EG: Let's see now. They all did, but mostly just high school. One of them graduated from here.

KL: And when did you attend Saint Mary's?

EG: I attended the old high school on Windsor Street, 1936 to 1939.

KL: Okay. And then did you attend the college, or just the high school?

EG: Pardon me?

KL: Did you attend the college or just the high school?

EG: No, just the high school.

KL: Oh okay. What made you choose Saint Mary's?

EG: Well, first of all, it was a...it was a Catholic school in those days. And I was a Catholic, and there was no high school out in Bedford and my father had gone here, and his brothers and I think that's the main reason. But another reason is that I would have had to pay the... to go to high school in Halifax I would have had to pay the Halifax Board anyhow, so I... It used to be sixty dollars a year.

KL: Oh. That's quite a change, eh?

EG: Yeah, yeah.

KL: When did your father attend Saint Mary's?

EG: I might be able to calculate backwards. It would be in the...let's see, he graduated from Dalhousie in 1922, I think, and that's four years. And he did a year of Freshman at Saint Mary's and then three years of high school, so that's eight years in all, so it would be from... 1922 minus eight is 1914 to...

KL: Oh okay.

EG: 1914 to...four years, to 1918.

KL: Okay. Wow. Do you remember who your professors were? Like could you tell me something about the different professors you had?

EG: Well, it was conducted then by the Irish Christian Brothers, and I can remember every one of them I think. Yeah, there's Brother Lyons. There was high school teachers, Brother Lyons, Brother Kehoe, Brother King, Brother Regan. And then the lay teachers were Mr. Jack Lynch, and let's see, and a Mr. Burlington, I think his name was Burlington. They taught mostly science and math.

KL: Okay.

EG: Now that's as far as I can remember.

KL: What makes them stand out in your mind? Do you remember any stories about them in the classroom or anything?

EG: Well, they were very good teachers I must say. They...they used to play soccer out on the field with us and...but I didn't take much part in any of the extra-curriculars because I had to commute to go in and out, and I had to go in the bus, so I was in Bedford all the time. I can't remember anything except the general business about...they were strict, and their...they had a lot of corny humor and I can't remember. I taught myself, so I did...I taught for about thirty years myself, so I know what you're apt to do, but...

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

EG: Not then.

KL: No?

EG: There was later on. There was a dress code when I taught here. Not from '36-'39. The Jesuits came in '40 and I left...it'd be...I don't know how many years they were here. There were some Jesuits that...well the...there's a Catholic chaplain here is a Jesuit, right now, but...and they were...they also taught the university section, taught until they reached retirement age and some of them taught single courses for years after that, just until they filled the gap.

KL: Do you remember any other high school rules?

EG: No, I...No, I...You know, I don't think...I don't think there's anything notable. The Brothers used to hit us a lot, before the province had any...they hit us when...Oh I remember, one thing I remember about Brother King. He taught us Latin and every time you missed something in Latin, he'd...the thing he called, "wang-wack-a-chu", and it was a bamboo rod. It didn't hurt at all, it stung a bit, but it didn't hurt. Every time you missed an oral question he'd give you a whack over the hands and it was a big joke, you know. I remember once he said to... somebody missed on...I don't imagine you ever took Latin, did you?

KL: No I didn't.

EG: No. Well there's some...some Latin nouns that looked as if they were feminine, like *nagta*, which means it was a sailor and it looked as if it was feminine, but it was masculine. And it had to have with...modified by an adjective, which would have a termination, not an 'a' but a 'us'. So we used to, and then he'd ask us to decline this, you know, run it through the various cases. And he once told us, he says, "Oh" he says, "I could do that...I could do that...write it on the board with left hand and the right hand, and singing at the same time." So we said, "Go ahead, do it Brother." He says, well he said he'd do it, "I'll do it over the week-end." Well he practiced over the weekend, so on Monday he did it on the board like this.

KL: Oh my gosh.

EG: And he's a good singer. Yeah. He was a Newfoundlander. What did you ask me?

KL: Oh, I just asked you if there was any college...or high school rules you remembered.

EG: No, I don't think. Except we were supposed to be on the job doing our work and...Like when I came over here, you said "Ten o'clock", so I made sure I got here about five to, because [unclear]. But I mean those are the same anywhere.

KL: And what major historical events occurred while you were at Saint Mary's High School?

EG: If there were any, I didn't know about them because I and Archbishop James Hayes, we were the two youngest. We were...he was younger than I. He was twenty days younger than I, but we started...started grade nine at about twelve years old.

KL: Oh my goodness.

EG: And finished at fifteen. Now, he graduated from university here. He was later the chancellor. What was that question again?

KL: What major historical events...

EG: Oh, I can't remember anything. It...There was a historical event...I'm trying to think if anything had happened athletically. Those are the ones that we would notice when we were kids. It was an all boys school, of course, then. And the Brothers were interested in sport and they were good. They were...still kept good at sports. No, I think that's it. I don't think I can help you on that one.

KL: Okay. Now, were you responsible for paying your tuition at Saint Mary's High School?

EG: No, my parents did.

KL: Your parents did? Okay. Did you have any part-time jobs while at school or in the summer?

EG: Not at that age. I did later when I was going to university.

KL: Yeah, you would have been quite young.

EG: Yeah, yeah.

KL: Okay.

EG: And this was during the Depression, remember.

KL: Mm hmm.

EG: And work that young fellows might be doing, older men were doing. You know, things like selling newspapers that was done by older men. But those days, they used to deliver from grocery stores and they would do it on bicycle, and it would be an older man that would do it. So, no those were...No, I don't know of anybody my age or even a bit older who worked then. It's only when the war started, that the Depression really started vanishing. Now, I don't know what it was like in the city. Maybe they could get jobs in the city.

KL: Okay. Now, were there a lot of the young boys that would come in from Bedford and other places like that?

EG: We had a little...There were sort of cliques, came from Bedford on the way in. And you'd have some come from Dartmouth, and we'd eat our lunch, either in with the rest of the students or we would eat them in the...have our own lunch and we'd go to the sort of kinds of restaurants that they had in those days. They didn't mind us coming in.

KL: Okay.

EG: I'd say there were probably about...there would have been ten or fifteen of us.

KL: Okay. What would have been a local hangout for you boys? You mentioned restaurants that you'd go to.

EG: Yeah. Well, there was the one that used to be Russell's, where the...on the corner of...more or less on the corner of Windsor Street and Quinpool Road. It no longer exists. It was the...I suppose it was the biggest high rise there was then. At the bottom was a restaurant, and it's been leveled. It had about five or six stories, which was...Halifax was a city of ordinary homes, when I grew up.

KL: What do you remember about this Russell's place? Would everyone go over there after a hockey game or...?

EG: I don't know what they did after school.

KL: Oh, because you'd be on the bus, right?

EG: I'd be on the bus, yeah.

KL: What recreation facilities were there on campus?

EG: Well, we had a...we had a football field. I don't know whether it was re... We had handball courts. Handball was very... And we had tennis courts, and we had a rink, which was undersized. We used to call it the Rorum. And it was natural ice. And there were pool tables and stuff like that.

KL: Oh, in the school?

EG: Yeah.

KL: Okay.

EG: There was one pool table.

KL: What can you tell me about the non-Catholic students at the high school? Were there a number of them?

EG: Yes there were. There weren't many. There might be, in a classroom, we might have two non-Catholic students. The ones that came in from Bedford were mostly non-Catholic. They were friends of mine and I...One just died the other day.

KL: Oh.

EG: [Unclear] before me. A mayor and I didn't remember that he had...Gordon Low, that had had been a mayor of Kentville, a long way back. He was older than I, but he was behind me in school.

KL: How often would you boys attend services at the chapel? The chapel on campus.

EG: Yes. I don't know...I don't know what the arrangement was there. I know that I used to visit the chapel everyday, I, personally, but there was nothing like that for the day students.

KL: Just for the boarders?

EG: Yeah, yeah.

KL: Okay. What impact do you think the Catholic administration had on your high school experiences at Saint Mary's?

EG: Well, I probably would not be a priest if it hadn't been for them. At first I had thought about being a Brother, and they told me that...That's the main effect. I mean, I admired them and loved them and I thought it was humorous, they were rough, that's the way they were back in Ireland. They were...I can remember one fellow like this, Brother Kehoe. He took the tallest...there was a little bit of a ruckus in grade eleven, and he got the tallest one in the class, and he...up like this, to swing like this...[laughter]. You don't get much punching when you just fling like that. [Unclear] than the ones that just do damage. But it impressed us. But, I'll tell you they made us appreciate getting on and education. I didn't need that, my parents were all for it. And they...But I wanted to be a Brother in grade ten and they kind of turned me down. I'd had TB when I was...and my aunt died of it. Both my parents had it, incipient TB. So they said I wouldn't be able to stand the life, so I ended up doing the same sort of thing as a Jesuit. I was going through that, but I was refused at the Jesuits the first time and then my father sent me to six other doctors, so they said I might have had that, but I had compensating qualities.

KL: Well, I'd say. I've read about annual retreats. What can you tell me about them?

EG: Well, we had no experience in these as day students. And I don't know whether they had them in the Brothers times at all. And I can't remember, when I taught at Saint Mary's. I was on...I taught at Saint Mary's the first time they moved in the McNally Building, the first year.

KL: Oh wow. In the high school?

EG: Yeah. The high school, the whole thing, you know, high school and university, art division. They all came down there. And that was fun that year. It was...we were teaching classes when it wasn't finished.

KL: Oh my goodness.

EG: You know, and doors would...doors wouldn't be on classes, no windows would be in place, scaffolding would be outside, and a fellow would be polishing off [terazza] tiling with a polisher, when you were...you had to scream louder than it. So, but the retreats, annual retreats. I don't know. We were so busy and working on different building conditions. I know they had some kind of retreat under the Jesuits.

KL: Okay.

EG: But, I didn't...When I was coming through as a student, I'm not aware of any.

KL: What was the transition like to be a student at Windsor Street and then a teacher here on Robie Street campus?

EG: Well, it was...it was quite a difference of course. And Halifax has changed so much, see I came back, I entered the Jesuits in 1943 and I came back here in 1951. So eight years, Halifax has changed, you know, you start getting some high rise structures, and I was just so concerned about what I had to do. And I wasn't aware of anything except having to work and we actually had to live in the old building on Windsor Street before we moved on. And I went for a summer up there. I don't remember too much about that.

KL: Now, when the...everyone moved over from Windsor Street, did they keep some of the labs open on Windsor Street?

EG: Yes they did, for half a year. Father Jim Murphy did. I only know that from...I didn't realize that he was doing that. And, but that's the fact, that the labs weren't finished down here, they had them, eventually they built them down in the basement of the McNally building, I guess others have told you that.

KL: Yeah. How does Saint Mary's being a small campus affect the atmosphere at the school? Were you a close-knit group of young men on Windsor Street?

EG: I think that we're particularly...Yeah, I think that we're the ones who came from Halifax. The rest of us were less, were a little bit on the outside, the ones that were commuting. And commuting, 1935, '36, was not...wasn't as easy as it was nowadays.

KL: Certainly, no.

EG: So, they gave the impression...and a lot of them had gone to school together before they even came here. They mostly came from...what were then, for all practical

purposes, separate schools, you know, from Saint Thomas [unclear] College Street, Oxford Street School, stuff like that. They were pretty close-knit.

KL: Okay. Did the Brothers promote student involvement in athletics and societies and that?

EG: Well, I don't know how many societies... I was telling you over the phone, I don't know how many societies there were. We had one thing, I have since thought, but it was just a question of trying to support the missions, the Mission Crusade. The students had a Mission Crusades or something like this, but it amounted to having a closet for chocolates, chocolate bars and things like that. So, they were a wonderful person, but we used to do that when Father John Mills, he wasn't a priest then, he was a... just before he went in the seminary. But, what was that question that... did they promote... athletics? Oh yes, they promoted athletics, and they were interested in them themselves. And the way the Brothers in their formation they used to (()) before they had... well, I think all the Fathers and Brothers had university degrees, but they would start teaching after about two years (()). And they might not have a university degree at all. So, they would start playing with the kids right all the way along. So, that's the way they... Every time they... every now and then you'd have one of the Brothers would challenge you to a pool game or they were particularly very good at handball. And, do you know handball, have you ever...?

KL: I've never played it, no.

EG: It's... there is a Olympic sport called handball, but that's not what this was. This was more like, what do you call it? What's that thing, it's like a tennis racket, but...

KL: Squash?

EG: Squash. It's more like a squash court, but the back was not in. The back was open. It had three courts and it was... The Brothers were very good at that, even the Brothers that were older, you know. The ones that taught in the university section were all older and they... they could still play, but mostly they just watched us. And the high school teachers, several of them would come out and play soccer with us. But, we used to play... They used to play English football then, not the Canadian football. And they never played that, but they watched it and they seemed to have... Their spirit was young enough that they had their local heroes and all. So it was by their own interest that they interested us. They didn't... I'm not aware that... I wasn't small, I was tall, but I was very extremely skinny, so I had no way for me to play any contact sports. I went into... when I entered the Jesuits I was six foot three and I weighed a hundred and thirty-five pounds. Well, they wouldn't take me for the first while. I had to... They wouldn't take me until I hit a hundred and fifty.

KL: You had to bulk up.

EG: I had to bulk up, yeah, so I didn't work my last summer. I went down to Saint FX for university. I thought I was going to be a doctor, and it was the only place in Atlantic Canada where they had a pre-med course in a Catholic institution, so that's why I went

down there. And then it was there that I changed my mind, and I did two years science and then switched over to arts.

KL: What made you change your mind?

EG: Well, I got called to...I got called to it. I had two brothers do the same thing. So, all of us went to Saint Mary's. All the boys went to Saint Mary's and all the boys went to Saint FX. And only...only three of the five brothers got degrees from Saint FX. One brother came back here and he got a degree from Saint Mary's, and another brother entered the Jesuits, the same as I did, without a degree.

KL: Okay. Neat. What do you remember about the Ladies Auxiliary? Was that established when you were at the college?

EG: Yes it was. The ones who... I'm sorry.

KL: Oh that's okay.

EG: The ones that would know more about that are the...the ones on staff of course. But it was still functioning when I came here as a student...as a teacher. We used to call them the "Ladies Artillery." [Laughter.] They did a lot of things like, if there was a tea or something, I think they were...They made themselves responsible for that, but a lot of it meant that they looked after mending our clothing. And I don't...I didn't know at all about it when I was a student here on Windsor Street. That's about all I can say on it. I didn't...I was only vaguely aware of some of the oldest names. Like this Russell's that I mentioned there, it had sort of a restaurant in that high rise structure, Mrs. Russell used to be on the Ladies Auxiliary. I remember that, and then a Mrs. Klein, and that's all I know about the...I never thought I'd get asked that. [Laughter.]

KL: It's surprised you, eh? Now, could you walk me through the college building and try to give me an idea of what it was like?

EG: The Windsor Street place?

KL: Yeah.

EG: Well, it was very unpretentious. It was...There were parts that were kept for the high school and there were parts for the college. They had an engineering program here too, and they had Brother Croke, I didn't know him really, but he looked after the engineering mainly. But it was one...let's see. There was a basement floor, there was a second...the ground floor, and there was a floor above, and a floor above that. And it was, everything was all very economically organized. You didn't have much space around the corridors. Oh, I know one rule. There was one staircase we weren't supposed to use. Why was that? Well, I think it was just a question of just traffic organization. I think maybe the college students were allowed to use them, but not the high school.

KL: Oh, Ok.

EG: And it was...inside it was pretty dingy. There were wooden floors, the colours were sort of kind of a green and perhaps a fawn coloured, no effort at beauty. We had an assembly hall which they cut in half when they started...turned half of it into a library and it was pretty small too, but it seemed huge to us. There was only one building of course, and you could sort of get a judgement of what it looked like. More of like a, really like the Tower Road...it was notably bigger than the Tower Road Schoolhouse which is now a...what do you call it? The Halifax Grammar School.

KL: Do you remember hearing anything about Sterling Castle?

EG: Sterling Castle.

KL: Yeah. I think it might have been torn down by the time you were there. It would have been a residence.

EG: Was it supposed to be on the...

KL: Yeah. On the campus.

EG: On the campus. No, it wasn't on there when I went there.

KL: Okay. Were girls ever on campus?

EG: They came to watch football games. That's about all.

KL: Okay. No other purpose.

EG: Yeah, but they weren't...not students at all.

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

EG: Well, as I say, it's the first thing that made me oriented to being a priest and towards being a teacher and they were very Catholic and it helped me in that way too. It helped me in my own teaching. But I don't know much else other than that. You know you're not very philosophical about things when you're twelve to fifteen.

KL: That's true. What do you see as your connection to Saint Mary's now?

EG: Well, particularly since I taught here as well as attended here. Then there was a period when our college...there was a period in Toronto that we were affiliated with Saint Mary's and we got our degrees from here. And I notice now, any stuff they have for me, they want to tell me where I...they just talked about my being a high school student. There's nothing about my having taught here, and there's nothing about our getting a degree from here, but there is some notation indicating that there's something there, but

there's no sign of the degree at all. Because I think, I think that would be the thought. We didn't have any residency...[First side of tape cuts off.]

KL: There we are.

EG: Since then we'd have our own charter and we're one of the founding members of the Toronto School of Theology in the University of Toronto's infrastructure. So now they get their...simultaneously they get an ecclesiastical degree and a University of Toronto degree. So for the same work you might carry two degrees from...Now, I'm too early for all that. So, I have a strong affection for Saint Mary's. They ask me for money and I just... See, we have a vow of poverty and we turn all our money in, and since I have been a... I've had one real stoke and a whole other series of small ones, since I'm just living on alms on the community that I live in. I haven't felt like I could ask them for money for that, so I don't contribute any money, but I get asked. And they are always very understanding. They're not pushy, the ones that... When I taught here I got no salary.

KL: Oh really.

EG: Yeah. I taught for nothing. We also...Now, later on, there were, I don't know, perhaps thirty years ago, they came in, the Jesuits came in I think in 1940 or 1941. I forgot which exact date. And from then until about twenty years, they all taught free of charge. Now, we all got our room and board and then the people were very good to us. But I don't feel that I, at the present time... There was a time they never asked us for it at all. Now they're asking at a grandmother practically, their very grandmothers for money. So, I can't say this anywhere, but I have quite an affection for Saint FX, but not as much as four Saint Mary's. I spent four years at Saint FX, and I was three years here, but then I thought here two years, and then I've been living with people who have been working at Saint Mary's, so I have a... That's all I can say on that.

KL: Okay. I've asked all my questions, but did you have anything to add that I didn't ask you about?

EG: Well, I suppose first of all, I think I would, I would not be too interested that any of this be used as...against my name.

KL: Oh certainly not.

EG: You know, I at the present moment I'm not participating in...I haven't said an external mass since October 1st. That's the last time I had the stroke and had to be taken off to the hospital, but... So, that I haven't been taking part in anything, and I don't feel that I want to be inserted into any public kind of thing, since I'm not asserting myself ordinarily. At the priest meetings they have, I don't attend them anymore. I attend the ones that we have inside our own house, but not externally.

KL: Well, mostly the interviews are just going to be used just to give a flavour for Saint Mary's. No one wants to say that this certain person said this, they just want to more say,

“Oh, we interviewed ten people, and ten people said that the Irish Christian Brothers were really good teachers.” Is that sort of more an idea?

EG: Yeah. They were good teachers in one sense, and not good in another. They prepared you exams. They were good instructors, they were great for exams, but I’m not sure that they helped us that much to think.

KL: They drilled you, did they?

EG: Yeah. Yes, they drilled me. And they were very good for...I didn’t know the difference then, but I wouldn’t have taught the way that they taught. I taught in Newfoundland for a year and they wanted me to do what the Brothers were doing across town. And then...for example, when I taught English, they would want you to set out your interpretation of every single poem, every single short-story, etceteras, etceteras, etceteras. Well, I wouldn’t do any of that stuff, but the Brothers did do that.

KL: Oh.

EG: Yeah. And one of the classes that I taught over there, it was the hardest one I had ever had, although I taught a year I had one that was pretty hard too. I had fifty-four in my classroom and I had to be as tough as anything, but I didn’t sock them, except one of my cousins. I hit my cousin across the face. He had [unclear] skin and my finger marks were there. You could see them right in his face for hours afterwards. He sauced me one time, and then he sauced me again and I hit him on the other side of the face. He was a... When I heard his whole story I was sorry I had ever done it because he was a resident student, a boarder. As I said over the phone, I just have a general memory. I don’t have any details. Now, that’s not...I can’t blame my stroke for that. My stroke makes it difficult for me in present memory more than the memory way back then.

KL: Well, you’ve told me some things that I haven’t heard before, so that was interesting. Especially about the building not being finished here and teaching with all the construction going on. That’s neat.

EG: Well, I can remember a long time back, a fellow from Halifax, a Jesuit from Halifax, he says this chemistry book says that...throw it out the window. The windows weren’t in there, weren’t there, so he took it and he threw it out the window. [Laughter.]

KL: Oh my goodness.

EG: It’s funnier still if I could tell you what his name was, but I won’t. [Laughter.]

KL: We just need the story, we don’t need the name. Okay, well I’ll turn this off then.

[End of Interview]