

**Oral History Interview with Father Edward Granville.  
Conducted by Angela Baker, 1993.  
Transcription by Sarah Brennan, 2000.**

AB: (Beginning of tape cuts off) Please?

FEG: Edward Wallace Granville

AB: And ah, where were you born, what was your date and place of birth?

FEG: I was born in Halifax in 1924.

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

FEG: I attended Saint Mary's in high-school, from 1936 to 1939.

AB: So, what were the academics like at the school in those years?

FEG: I don't know whether I would, the Irish Christian Brothers were the people that were teaching at that time. And they were strict, but we loved them. I think, it was thought to have a good standard in high schools in the college I suppose, it would be, it would not have been as uh, it wouldn't have been considered as high a level then. Saint Mary's has developed a great deal since then .. But I think they had competent people, but a small staff and small student body. So, we were in high-school, but the whole place, this was up on Windsor Street, more or less where Saint Pat's is now and the guesthouse. I suppose all told, we were not much more than 350 students - high school and college. Even back then they had pre-Engineering, and had Science and had Arts , but, it was all in one small building, you know, uh... We were all fitted in with a shoehorn and they had boarding students there too.

AB: Oh, really.

FEG: Yeah, yeah,

AB: So where did these students come from?

FEG: Well, I'd say a good number came from , uh, scattered around the Maritime provinces, but, ah, a good number from Newfoundland, and a sprinkling from Maine, and the same kinds of people uh, Maritime institutions draw now - wouldn't be that many from outside the Atlantic region, whether it's uh, the American Atlantic, or Canadian Atlantic.. I lived up in Bedford at that time, so I used to uh, have my middle meal with the boarders there.

AB: Oh.

FEG: And o I knew them fairly well.

AB: How did you commute in?

FEG: Bus. Yeah.

AB: Yeah?

FEG: Or hitchhike. Yeah...

AB: So, what size were your classes?

FEG: We would have that.. in the high-school we would have about uh, we'd have about , we'd have two Grade 9 and there were about 30 in each, two Grade 10's about the same, and then it shrunk a bit in Grade 11, I suppose we were about one class of about 40. And then there was no Grade 12 - went right into Freshman -it was four years Arts and Science and Engineering and Commerce then too and...

AB: What were the lengths of your days when you were in class?

FEG: Well, 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock I think, and I think we had an hour off for noon meal , maybe and hour and a half - I don't remember.

AB: Ok, so what were the recreational activities that went on?

FEG: Well, I suppose, we, uh, they had - it was just boys then of course.

AB: Yeah.

FEG: And we , uh, we had uh, soccer, rugger - we didn't play Canadian football then. A lot of handball but not handball in the Olympic sense but playing against these, ah, sort of courts, with big alleys we had. The Irish Christian Brothers played a lot of handball themselves, so we had two handball courts , We had a rink that we call the Roarum. It was a small, dark natural ice, and in those days of course, there was only the Halifax Forum and the old arena, on top of Pepperell Street, and it was natural ice and the Halifax Forum had artificial ice and that was all that we had in Halifax. So... we were quite advanced even though it was a small rink - it was smaller than regulation, it was tennis courts, three tennis courts. There ... there was no basketball played at all. I think you know, uh... events like, there was a certain amount of Track and Field but, the main thing was Rugger, English rugby, Hockey, those would be the main things that people would be interested in, and the other things were just fringe things, you know, like ping-pong and pool, shooting pool....

AB: What other clubs and activities were there?

FEG: Oh, I don't know. I don't remember in the... I know that we had class officers, and I think we had Students Union, of some sorts and Athletic Association, and I don't know that we had much more than that. Yeah, it was a different era altogether. We were right in the heart of the Depression and we didn't go over the Depression in Nova Scotia until the war started, really. I knew that because there used to be a bill collector and we used to try to get... my father was a doctor out in Bedford, and we used to try to get one dollar of medicine, the accounts were six years old, to try to get one dollar from each person and

there was no chance of getting even a dollar from a family until the war started and husbands went into the service then and the money could start coming back in. So people were just surviving, uh, but I don't think people felt themselves terribly deprived, but there was absolutely no luxury.

AB: So what were the family backgrounds of the students that were at the school?

FEG: Um, we had to pay, so that in addition to paying taxes we had to pay, so it might have meant that there were middle-class. If you're poor you probably couldn't come but there were always some poor students there, somehow subsidized by somebody - we never knew who they were, and they were usually kids who had done very well in the elementary system and they just came to the attention of somebody and they got somebody to sponsor them. I don't think there was anybody who was rich there because the facilities were really just awful.

AB: Really?

FEG: Oh yeah. They, I don't know how old the building was nothing was properly painted or anything. they uh, I would uh, the reason I know how awful they were is that when I came back here to teach, we had not yet moved to Saint Mary's. They had not yet moved from Windsor Street to Gorsebrook campus, as we called it, and we had to stay up there one summer while the building was being prepared down here and so you realized just what you were leaving and what you were getting into. So, I was in the first group to teach when they moved down presently in the McNally building and that's all we had then.

AB: Oh yes?

FEG: Yeah, yeah.. But it was a tremendous thrill to go down there even though we started teaching there with... There was no windows.. we had the space for windows of course, and you'd be teaching and there'd be no doors in the room. We went down about 10 days late to start with, we had postponed the starting of classes. And then there'd be somebody grinding terazzo outside on the stairwell while you're trying to teach uh, right off the stairwell practically... But it was an exciting time because there was a lot of hope and yeah, we couldn't have done anything really with what we had then, uh, you wouldn't have tried to maintain things. You knew it wasn't going to last there, no.

AB: So what were you teaching when you came?

FEG: I taught, uh, the subject I taught most was English, but at the same time I taught Latin, French, English, and some history I guess it was..

AB: Ok, what was the size of the university then?

FEG: It was about uh, I just sort of situate the...I'll tell you about the prep school we had: Two Grade 9, pardon me there's no Grade 9 at all, we had two Grade 10's and two Grade 11's and I think that's all we had, and then the rest was university. I suppose the whole thing

would be about 550, maybe this is '51 to '53 - it grew each year and it showed signs that it was going to grow.

AB: So, in what ways had the school changed from the time you had been a student? It was the Jesuits at that point?

FEG: Yes, you see, I am a Jesuit myself. So, the Jesuits instead of the Irish Christian Brothers I suppose that made a difference. I don't know how much the ordinary person would notice that.... I suppose that we Jesuits had more obligatory education than the Irish Christian Brothers would have had, they would have all had for high-school work at least, a Bachelors degree, and some teacher training. Whereas we would have perhaps 2 or 3 degrees plus teacher training. They were uh, there were more, uh, we, the Jesuits were not just teachers, we were a lot of other things, so that might, whereas the Irish Christian Brothers at that time were primarily just teachers, and very good teachers and I think they've kept that way. So I don't know whether we started..., I did an awful sinful thing: I graduated from Saint FX before I entered (laughs). My father's a doctor, and I thought that I was going to be a doctor and I finished high-school when I was 15, so I was able to go to Dalhousie and my uncle was a priest and a war victim and wrote from the hospital in England and said to my father, don't send a 15 year old boy to Dalhousie, but my father never thought of it. And at that time the only Catholic school that offered pre-medical training was Saint FX so I went down there, and my two brothers did the same thing. All four of my brothers did, but two of my brothers went down there for pre-medical studies and all of them changed their mind eh, three of us changed our minds down there and we all became priests.

AB: Ah..

FEG: One of the brothers has since left the priesthood after being a missionary in Africa. He left in Africa and he left about 20 years ago. It was less usual then and uh, well it was around the time when it was starting. It wasn't a very usual thing for a priest .... technically they are still priests, but they are dispensed from their obligations and suspended from their privileges, so, and he eventually did marry. So, what was your question back there again?

AB: Ah, I was just talking about some of the differences you noticed.

FEG: Differences... I think that, ah yes, we had more obligatory. I, I graduated before I entered and before I started teaching I had seven years of study before I started. Whereas the Irish Christian Brothers would not have had that at all. They wouldn't have nearly as much as that. So.

One of the disadvantages of that is that I don't think we were as close to the students. They were... when we played soccer, they played soccer with us and they played with the same kind of enthusiasms as a kid would, whereas when we played games with them I think we were more like their fathers than their brothers. Yeah, so I think that was one difference. They were much more... their history had been one of dealing with Irish kids in Ireland, of limited financial means, so they tended to be kinda rough. There was nothing, we, I can remember, when I took Latin my first year in Grade 9, we had a

brother who strapped us every time we missed. But it was fun, it was just a bamboo rod and we called it “Wang whack-a-choo”, so, whereas we Jesuits, we didn’t hit anybody at all. So, the discipline was, we were much more on moral kind of discipline, and to be honest with you, I think some of the kinds of things that the Brothers did, you know, they, hit us a lot, they threw chalk at us, they threw brushes at us and, but you know, since about 1969, that has not been possible anywhere in Canada. Corporal Punishment can happen, but there has to be an adult present, when it is administered and the adult has to be a non-student, because you’ve got a lot of students up in Ontario particularly who are 19 and still in high-school. So it couldn’t be a student at all.

Yeah, so um, I’d say the, they were more easily and spontaneously friendly with students than we were. We had, we always has what we called...I wasn’t a priest yet, we were called ‘scholastics’. We were Jesuits, but we weren’t priest Jesuits. So the Scholastics were quite close, to the students. The priests were perhaps not. I wasn’t ordained until 13 years after I entered the Jesuits, for example and I wasn’t finished my Jesuit course until 15 years afterwards, so that makes a difference in age. Whereas some of the Brothers would be teaching, not in Nova Scotia, - well they only taught high-school in Nova Scotia - but some of them would be teaching in elementary school, perhaps when they were 19 years old, you know they would have a high-school, perhaps, I’m sorry, a normal school. I don’t think they do that now, I quite sure they would have to have a Bachelor degree anywhere in Canada before they would be able to teach. But it was possible then and it was quite common. So that by the time that we go them in high-school they would be older than that, but they would be teaching right from the time they were teenagers themselves so it made a difference. They were friendlier. Even we Scholastics who were younger - we wouldn’t be as young as they were starting off. And I think that was a principle difference.

I think the Brother were much more for teaching for exams. They were superb teachers, I must say.. Whereas we were less concerned about that. I don’t know whether, there might be individuals among us who would do it that way. We’d be hardly any lay staff at all that time. They’d be lay staff in, ah, perhaps teaching science. In high-school we’d have just one lay person. He was the science teacher, and at the university section, they would have, you know, people in Science, Commerce and so forth. But they would be very few in number, you know, perhaps on the whole, at that time in the early ‘50’s, teaching commerce for example, there might be only three professors. And then in science only two or three. Except in Commerce, we usually had a Jesuit in everything. Philosophy there’s two or three and things like that. The numbers were way down and the students were... we didn’t have that many students and we didn’t have that many professors either. And I knew all of them, when I was down there, I knew all the professors, high-school and college, even though we had nothing to do with the university, section really..

AB: Really?

FEG: Oh, we were completely, we were using the same building, but one corner of the same building there was no...It was totally separate administration. There was no... We were a

feeder school. That's what we were for and most of our students would go on to the universities.

AB: What difference in academics and recreational things did you see, from the time that you had been a student, and the time that you had taught?

FEG: Well, I suppose one of the biggest changes was when I started teaching and moved down here, we had facilities here that people knew they were not completed - we had no gym of our own - It wasn't completed, where the present, well, not where the present gym is set up, but, the old gym - you know- they've got computers and so forth all on the east wing, I guess they call it. Well, that was all just a shell, so we had to borrow our facilities and we did borrow them because in our, I guess you could call it, out publicity stuff, it had all been promised. So, Canadian football, the same is played now, that was the big difference - it was still an all-boys school, uh . I don't know when it became girls ah...

AB: '68.

FEG: '68, yeah. So, in recreation would be much more.... Recreation was provided, even though we had to transport.. We used to use the Halifax Forum for hockey, for example, and I used to drive the bus there. We rented the Forum for the whole afternoon every, the whole of the year. And, I used to take all the equipment backwards and forwards for that. We had promised tennis courts and there were no tennis courts... The thing is that they ran into financial difficulties, and then it was for years that they didn't have anything in the McNally building - all the stuff was just bare concrete in the sides and back and it was only in the front part that they got in (spruce) stone they bought in Quebec. It was eh, - that was a whole complicated story - maybe I could tell you something, but others could tell it more accurately I think.

Um , academics, well, I think I told you a bit about that already. We would have much more - I can only tell you about the high school, for sure but, we can have, more or less the same thing - I think it was more. It was not just a question of what was happening at Saint Mary's. It was what was everywhere in the city schools - there would be much more student involvement - student responsibility and therefore you had students' union and stuff like this, and forming associations but they would be much more in charge of it there then were when I was in high-school. I don't know even when I was down in Saint FX and got into some forms of student government, the moderator was much more important that the moderator is now. I don't know if they still use the term moderator... faculty advisor or something? I don't remember what aspect of things.

We now had high school boarders. We used to have the old north wing, which was the boarding gallery which was all filled with residents. As a matter of fact, the Jesuits had to live in the north wing because our South wing where we lived eventually - we only moved out of there about 15 years ago. We're still living there even after we'd given up the administration of the place. Now they live over on Wellington St. that's near here. And there are a lot fewer - we're dropping for a while there and I don't know how many people are dead and... So I would say the kind of development I speak of in the high-

school in the student activities would be simply what was going on in the world, it was not anything peculiar to Saint Mary's.

I don't even know, accurate my statements are because you know its 40 years ago and I was extremely busy. Not only did I have my teaching job when I was in high-school but I had a bunch of Joe jobs that had nothing to do with the school, as such- you know, little things. Like, we used to have, we Jesuits had reading at table, I'd read at table. I served the priest at the same time. I had my second year at teaching, '52 to '53 - we had , the preceding year we had 4 Scholastics - I inherited every one of their Joe jobs except one that didn't have any responsibility for the keys, I just, I didn't have a chance to think! I used to get them up in the morning. I used to have to get up half an hour early. We had chapels all over the ends, over the ends of the corridors. I used to walk, I don't know how far it was. I used to look after the altar water and wine, I used to put that out and Saturday morning - we were trying to cut expenses in every way - I used to spend all Saturday morning straining wine that we'd get in big barrels, you know, I used to strain it to get all of the sediment out of it. And so there were all kinds of things, so I didn't have much chance to notice what was going on around me except what I was doing myself. I was young enough, to have the energy then - I couldn't do it now! (chuckle).

AB: Ok, let's see if we've covered everything... Did you find that the backgrounds of students had changed any when you were here teaching?

FEG: Eh? I don't think so. It might have a bit, because by this time St. Pat's and QE, before that you had the Old Saint Pat's on Brunswick Street, and the old Halifax County Academy on Sackville, and Bloomfield. Those weren't terribly attractive places. I could have gone to some of those from Bedford , but I would have had to pay because it was a different Board - we didn't have any high school in Bedford then at all. Bedford only had around 1400 people then. So it was not that hard for me to pay 60 dollars a year to go to Saint Mary's - but that was a lot of money for '36 to '39. When I went to St. FX, I went there for boarding ... everything not including books or incidental expenses, for a hundred and sixty dollars, I think it was. Now that was considered a lot of money.

Well, I can remember when I worked in construction work in 1942, we were getting, as a laborer, we were getting 45 cents an hour and that was considered very very good. I can remember in the '30's people getting 30 cents an hour. So in a few years' time my youngest brothers were getting 95 cents an hour but even that sounds like nothing, does it.... So it gives you an idea of how the prices were. But the big thing is that people didn't have to come to Saint Mary's now if they wanted something a little better, they had two big places right in the center of the city, so maybe the people that came, maybe those people, they were a little more affluent. I have no way of testing that out. I know we had lots of kids from, you know, from all sections of the city. A few years later, about 5 years later they started giving out scholarships out and for one year, I think they filled, half of them were in scholarship kids. There were trying to make the standard immediately much better. That would be perhaps be Jack Power [mumble] it would be around 19... around 1958. But I didn't experience that at all.

Some of our boarding students would be kids who had some difficulty elsewhere. Not [wealthy] mostly, but we had some very rich boarders, but most of the them, it was just that they needed a stronger hand. Apparently, we did a lot for them. We don't see it ourselves, we just see the problems we had with them, but the parents found we did a lot with them. We had far more boarding students that went down to Gorsebrook than we ever had at Windsor Street. I don't know that there's any more than 60 - that's high-school and college. There's one period when they had some part of the old Halifax Ladies College on Barrington Street and I don't even know where that place was now as I walk down there. It was close to Barrington and Inglis, but I don't know, I don't know what place it was at all. It used to be the Halifax Conservatory of Music that used to be there too, before they combined with the Maritime Academy, or the Maritime Conservatory of Music but...Halifax Ladies College, that's the forerunner of Ambrae, is it?

AB: Ambrae

FEG: Yeah [mumble], on the Dalhousie campus. Yeah

AB: Think that's pretty much everything I had to ask you about.

FEG: Hope can have somebody too, are you?

AB: Oh sure, I can gets lots of people. That's good.

**Tape Ends**