

**Oral History Interview with Dr. Fred Dockrill**  
**Conducted by Angela Baker, 1993.**  
Transcription by Sarah Brennan, March, 2000.

AB: Ok well, let's start off by stating your full name.

FD: Ahh, Frederick Joesph Peter Dockrill

AB: (chuckle) And your date and place of birth.

FD: That'd be Halifax, May 25th, 1934

AB: Ok. so let's talk about the time your were a student at Saint Mary's, you say you came in 1951.

FD: Umm-hmmm

AB: What were, Ok, it was the Jesuits at that time?

FD: That's right, yes, Father ... I believe it was Father Lynch was President at that time.

AB: How did you find the Jesuits as educators?

FD: Ahhh, they were, I mean, I came from, I had been educated my whole school up to that time from Grade One through to Grade Eleven I had been taught by the Sisters of Charity in Dartmouth and Saint Peters School, so, I was...as a young person I was kept very close to my family, so it was a really big deal to go to Halifax, to go to school. And, of course we traveled on the ferry, then, there were no bridges and so I was, I was very impressed by the Jesuits in many ways. First of all was their intellectual capacity and so on, and was very.... and sort of, their worldliness... Priests, priests that I'd been associated with before that, parish priests, were sorta on a different category. These men had a real sense, in my perception of them at that time, had a real sense of the world, so it was actually very exciting. These people were traveled and so on, so it was for a young person who had been kept rather close to his family and school and had not seen much up to that time, it was quite impressive to be involved with these men,, yeah.

AB: So, when you entered into the school, was it the high-school you were going to?

FD: No, I started as a Freshman, I... they, Saint Mary's still does take people from Grade Eleven at that point and there was no Grade Twelve at Saint Mary's so I won a Holyman (?) scholarship from Saint Peters parish and that helped me to go.

AB: I see, so what was the academic program you were enrolled in?

FD: Well, I uhh, I started out in Arts, ahhh, I guess I didn't find that part particularly challenging after a year and I decided to do Engineering. I took classes for, in Engineering for two or three weeks and there was a professor there - uhhh his name was Allan Sabean and he was teaching both Chemistry and Mathematics and umm, Chemistry Program. Although, I found it quite easy when I was in high-school, I took one look at it after being to a few classes and figured if I didn't want to do , or I'd be, end up doing Chemistry all term, all year and it looked like it was going to take up more time than I wanted to put to it so, I quit the Engineering Program, so I could stop doing Chemistry, and started doing a Program in Honors Mathematics and that was really quite a jump, for Saint Mary's to begin an Honors Program because they, a Jesuit there, - his name was uhh, Burke Gaffney and he was quite a famous Astronomer and he was sorta behind starting this Honors, Math Program, so that I moved onto that second year. Third year, I actually failed the only curved course I ever took in university which was Integral Calculus... because the year before that the program was so compact that there was a conflict between one of the courses I had to take and they tell me I didn't have to go to class. I could just write the exam - so actually I ended up passing that course I didn't understand - didn't get any of the background for any of the subsequent courses, so by the end of that year, I had actually failed a course but ahh... I forget what they had taught me (laughs) about Calculus, then

I, I left Saint Mary's I joined, decided to be a Jesuit and uhh, went to Guelph [?] following year, I was actually there 14 months. Came back after I left the Seminary and came back and worked in the bank for the remaining part of that year and then came back and finished my degree in Arts and that's, I mentioned I graduated in 1957. Yeah, that why I was 6 years getting through, uhh,

AB: You had a taste of all the faculties pretty much!

FD: Yeah right, right, right, actually this, my study of Mathematics at that time stood me in good stead later on in my studies.

AB: So how did you find the workload? and the expectations?

FD: Now, aside from the story I told you about Chemistry and deciding I just didn't want to do that much work, I didn't find the demands terribly difficult. None of the years I would have Grade Eleven - the year that I'd spent before getting in, And the Jesuits were very considerate, I remember that first year I was sick and there was a man by the name of Father ... Roarke and he taught English, and I had missed a number of classes at the end of the year because of my illness - he phoned me up, and told me I didn't need to write the exam because my work was fine, so you know, I didn't find it particularly difficult. I couldn't say what my marks were, if I went back and looked at them, how great they were.

AB: Ok, let's move to the recreational activities outside the classroom. What was available to the students?

FD: Well, I was in - I got involved in a lot of inter-faculty sports. There was uhh, the Inter-faculty sports and that, they were all around faculty. So, you know, I played for uhh, Arts, or Science, or whatever it was in and I played hockey and football at that level, I also did ummm, some track and I can't remember the name but there was a man who was fairly well known in Track and Field at that time. He used to coach us and I was sorta training for the 100 yard dash - not much ever came of that. I never became a varsity Track and Field, and so on, But there was lots of ... you know, availability of facilities at that time.  
Ummm, we didn't have a rink at that time so we used to play in what used to be the Shirley Street Arena, sometimes at the Forum, sometimes we used to, as far as hockey was concerned and the football field was, was there - it wasn't what it is now.

AB: No.

FD: Right? And then of course there was always that spirit of ,you know, Saint Mary's was pretty well known in hockey and football at that time too.

AB: Yeah, so did sports play an important role on campus?

FD: Oh yes. Absolutely. Yeah, it was .. I mean, you know the Jesuits were very big on sports and it was, as I say the Saint Mary's hockey and football teams were always quite... well known.

AB: Ok, So, aside from sports, what other extra-curricular?

FD: Well, Personally... I was involved with World university, WUSK - World University ... whatever. They had campaigns for raising money for different, things and I was involved with that. Socially, there were .. the big occasions at Saint Mary's when I was an undergraduate were the faculty balls. We used to attend all the balls and they were really big do's. I mean Don Warner's Band, Big Band used to play at all the dances and most of them would be at the Lord Nelson Hotel.. they had a big ballroom and so on.They were... they were big events and that was part of... a big part of the social life. They used to have dances in... ahhh where the old gym was, which is now where the computer center is now and so on is now downstairs and we, you would go to dances there on the week-end and there was a fairly active social life among the students - we used to go to, sort of, public dances at the Jubilee Boat Club and the Olympic Gardens and so on... the fact that you lived in Dartmouth didn't seem to deter that...

AB: So, was there any type of student government ... at that time?

FD: Oh yes, yeah, there was a student union and uh.. I can't remember who was, I was never much involved with that outside the WUSK [mumble] but there was [mumble].

AB: Ok, let's talk a little bit about your fellow students. Now, were there boarders at the school at the time you were there?

FD: Oh yes, yes.

AB: So what geographical areas do you think were represented by the students?

FD: Well, they came from all - there was only - when I started in '51, including the high-school, there were only about 200 students. I mean it wasn't... it was a monstrous place and this new building was quite an edifice you know, I mean there was, that was paid for by the parishioners of Nova Scotia - through their weekly contributions to the churches, that's how that building was built. The students, I remember particular, uh, students from around Nova Scotia - I remember a man by the name of Carl DuJay who came from Joggins in particular. There was a group of us from Dartmouth. Bulk of 'em were from Halifax. There were students from the West Indies, uhh, who I remember quite clearly, again, I don't remember any of their names. There was, there was students from New England, yeah, That would be the main sort of groups.

AB: Ok, you mentioned the building. At the time you moved in, the building wasn't finished was it?

FD: Not quite. It was... the interior was finished, the church which again is the big theater in the back. I don't think was finished. Ahh, but the main building and the wings finished, because the resident students lived in the north wings and [mumble]. The exterior stone wasn't finished at that time and there were big piles of stone all around the campus as well, and that uh,... but it was pretty impressive.

AB: Ok, see.... what role did religion play when you were at the school?

FD: Oh, big.

AB: Big?

FD: Very big, because I can remember visiting for instance, going into residence and visiting people there and if you came at certain times everybody was out, saying the rosary so.. They would kneel in the corridors there where the faculty offices are now? Yeah, the Jesuits, like Father O'Donnell used to have a suite right in the students residence wings, and there were curfews and so on, and the residents also had to get up and go to mass every morning, as well I think, and so it was very much a religious institution.. Oh yes.

AB: Were there student who were not Catholic?

FD: I would imagine, although I didn't really, I couldn't specifically say, yeah, who they were but, uh, I would imagine there might be a few.

AB: What was the discipline like at the school?

FD: Well, the Jesuits. They used to like to, well, they ran things with a pretty iron fist. It was probably very much out of the high-school atmosphere. I never went to the high-school, but my brother did. And, I can remember there was a lot of, you know, physical discipline. I mean, it wouldn't take some of the Jesuits, you know, too long before they would belt someone, you know, or punch them, or whatever they felt that they were getting out of line, I mean that wasn't uncommon at all and at the university there wouldn't be too much of that but I remember a man by the name of Father Murphy who used to walk around with a great big ruler in his hand, and you know, wouldn't hesitate to whack you with this - this was in, this was in university, in Math class and that sorta was his tradition, you know. But, he was that kind of a teacher - used to call people "bonehead" (laughs) but there - I mean, so there was very much that kind of relationship between teachers and the students. The students kind of expected it, it wasn't much of a big deal.

AB: So, let's move on, you say, Ok, You received your BA in 1957.

FD: Mmm-hmm.

AB: And then you went on and did your Education degree there?

FD: Well, not right then. I went to Winnipeg and worked with the Hudson's Bay Company for three years as a retail management trainee and I often tell people that's where I got my education... I learned a lot in those three years... I decided I didn't want to stay in the retail business for the rest of my life. I didn't particularly like any position that was in the company. I found out while I was there that none of the executives in the retail division ever lived to retirement.. at that point - they had never, none had ever retired. So, after a year I decided that I would like to go back to school. I went and talked to the Jesuits in Winnipeg at Saint Paul's college and uh, because, of the type of degree I had, which was a general Arts degree, the program at Saint Mary's wasn't very broad and you'd end up with something like four years of Theology, four years of English, four years of French, four years of History, or whatever and I had a few other mixed in because I did some Science and Math, so, uh, they pretty well told me that I would have to get some subject area together before I could go to graduate school. In the meantime I wrote back to Father Fogarty who was then the Dean of Education. Education was then just sorta starting up at Saint Mary's and after some correspondence with him decided uh, if I could get my money together - I had a couple of kids by the time I came back in 1960, I guess it was. He would accept me and that's when I did my B.Ed. I did part-time. It was full-time but the courses were all in the evening and late afternoon, so I worked full time and did my B.Ed. at the same time. I think I graduated [mumble] So, I worked with the

Provincial Government, I worked as a clerk at the Nova Scotia hospital and the work wasn't too demanding so I had lots of time to study and do assignments as well as work.

AB: That's good, and then you did your MA?

FD: Well, I got a job teaching at Saint Stephen' School here in Halifax and I started by M.A. part-time and at the end of that year Father Fogarty was looking for faculty and he asked me to come and teach in the Faculty of Education, so, I was actually teaching there before I completed my M.A. I was quite happy because that was sort of my goal was to become an academic and teach at university and the reason why I went back and took education was so that I could have the summers off to study and get myself qualified to go to graduate school and so on, so , when he asked me to come and teach I thought that was just marvelous. I had just bought a house in Dartmouth and, my family was growing. I ended up having five children and he was looking for people who would commit themselves to Saint Mary's and stay there, so he said that if you come and teach with us for a couple of years while you finish your M.A. then we'll consider helping you to go on to do, for studies if you're interested in staying with us.

AB: Oh.

FD: So, I taught for those two years while I was doing my M.A.

AB: And have you been at Saint Mary's ever since then?

FD: Yeah.

AB: Yeah?

FD: Yeah, I took three years off to do my Ph.D. at Dalhousie and in the Psychology department and that was after two years there and uhh, yeah, and then I came back to the Faculty of Education.

AB: All Right, well, let's talk about the changes that you've seen in the Faculty of Education over the time you've been associated with it. It's obviously grown a great deal.

FD: Well, yes, it's not nearly as big as it used to be. When I started teaching there, there were probably less than 20 in the B.Ed program. I'm not sure how many there would be in the M.A., so, part-time and then I went to Dal for 3 years and came back, it had started to grow then and it, actually, there was one year it had, I think, about 180 B.Ed students and we wouldn't have had as many faculty as we do now. Yeah, ummm we had a lot of part-time people uhhh... and ahhh, at that time I think we limited the people studying M.A.'s to Masters in Education to full time students

so that population really fell down. Then, decided that there was such a demand for the B.Ed program but the - that's when the job market really started to change? We thought that when it was a good time to raise our standards for admitting people to the B.Ed. So they, um, whereas before all you needed was a degree to get in. Then we required a certain grade point average, something or marks above, raised it very slightly. That cut our enrollment down by half- it went from about 150 each year to 75. That would have been in, the year we had 75 would have been about 1979 - it would have been about 1979 - call it '78. 'Cause I had been on sabbatical the previous year and came back and the B.Ed population had been cut in half - it really was great because it gave you a chance to breathe. Before it was really difficult, I was, I mean you were supervising students in the schools and you would have so many that you would barely get to see them once and they would be all over the province - so just to get people placements was..

So that cut it down and then gradually we kept raising our standards and to the point where it is today where it's on a competitive basis, and we more or less decide how many people we're admitting, we've got it down as low as 40 which allowed us to make changes in the program to improve the quality of education we were giving to our students. And then the demand kept going up so we had at one time 700 applications but we were merely admitting, registering 40 people. Also our Master's program grew by leaps and bounds because we went back to part-time people and it expanded to the point now where we have programs in Prince Edward Island and all, Truro, Bridgewater, you know, it's quite wide-spread. We have, all, having part-time enrollment in the Master's program, so it's sort of, the Masters program, it went up and it went down, the B.Ed program went up and it went down and now I think we have 58 students this upcoming year which may create some problems for us because some of the things that we could do when we had 40 students we can't do when we have 60 because the problem is the pressure on the schools to be able to handle- it's not what we can do, it is what we can do in co-operation with the schools. I don't know if that answers your question.

AB: Yeah, it does, how about course offerings? How have the individual courses changed?

FD: Well, they haven't really changed that much. In the B.Ed program and the Masters program had expanded considerably, the most notable was the recent edition of the Teaching English as a Second Language component at the graduate level. But the B.Ed program.. it's changed but the actual course? Things haven't changed, I mean probably have on paper, one of the most traditional B.Ed programs, actually we do. We still require people to do both a History and Philosophy of Education as well as the Psychology, uhh, I remember probably the biggest changes was back in the '70's when we went to Special Education, not Special Education, but Special Methods courses where students had an option. Before we just had a Methods course which was sorta General Methods which applied to anything, which we still have but then we added uhh, but it's in specialized areas like teaching of English and so on. We've always just been involved in secondary education for the most

part, not elementary. We had tried to move into elementary education at one time, we made a presentation to the Senate, the administration and with the cost of it they just decided they couldn't afford to do that, so, we stayed mainly secondary education. So, one of the big changes, as I say in the '70's was having Special Methods courses. The courses added to the program. The government required us to have a course in Special Education - students who were specially challenged - students, teaching those, uhhh, we're this year I understand, I've been on sabbatical so I haven't been involved in the discussions, so but changing the options so that the students don't have to take both Philosophy and History of Education, so students will have the option of taking Global Education and some current issues on Sexism and Racism and that type of thing, and we've all for a long time had a Sociology course offered by the Sociology Department and our students could take that instead of taking, probably there was fitting into a rather tight class schedule. And often people who would end up taking the Sociology course would be people who would be coming from teachers college - who were getting a B.Ed subsequent to doing teacher training in Truro.

AB: I see. Ok, so what differences have you noticed in the student body?

FD: Ummm, lots.

AB: Like?

FD: Lots over the years.. Huh, well, it was very small and it was very much sort of a Rah-Rah institution. There was lots of school spirit when I was an undergraduate and then you know, the place grew like Topsy in the '60's and probably grew too fast and became.. to what it is now. I think that Saint Mary's has lost a lot of its character. It has become very much just a public institution, and although there's sort of a tradition that it has attempted to maintain, my description of what's gone on at Saint Mary's is that it has largely been attempting to emulate Dalhousie. It's become, you know, like Dal instead of seeking its own niche. People will of course say that Saint Mary's has always had a niche in community service and that type of thing, more than Dal, and that's certainly true but I think Saint Mary's along the way lost lots of opportunities to be really distinct as an institution and I think that feeling is shared by many of the faculty. However, student-wise and their differences, it was a very small group with lots of school spirit when I was there, when I came back in the '60's it was still growing, it became a co-educational institution. There was still a lot - the '60's were great in terms of student involvement - it was the time of the hippies, the sit-ins, the love-ins, and we had lots of fun in education. There was lots of controversy, the students were very much involved in running of the faculty. We had a Faculty Council where there were just as many students on the council as there were faculty. It was a very democratic time, very exciting, lots going on, lots of controversy, students involved with everything and larger issues. I can remember students demonstrating about food at the cafeteria, you know, things like that.



They had a wonderful man who looked after the food services then. His name was Heinz Morestad. He just found it so much pressure from the students that he just quit and opened his own restaurant in Halifax, but I always thought that the food was fantastic with him. It was not like institutional food and he used to put on these big parties for the faculty and so on and the food was always fantastic but anyway, the students didn't like it. Maybe it was too fancy for them. I don't know, and so there was that kind of thing. Students were involved. There were students involved with sit-ins at the President's office and sitting-in at Senate meetings and so on, and the, you know, students just reflect the general trends in society. In the '70's that kind of thing died and then, you know, people are more concerned now. I find students today are really, issues are not a big thing. They're mainly interested in, getting their degree, seeing if they can get a job. It's very sort of, individual centered and I suppose again that's a reflection of the '80's and so on. Umm so, I've seen lots of changes in the, you know.

AB: What changes have you noticed in terms of ethnic origin of the students...have you noticed any?

FD: Umm, well, as I said, back when I was an undergraduate there were lots of people from the West Indies who used to come and they were both White and Black students. Uhh, there's certainly now far more Asian students and far more uhhm, African students and so on and I think its great. That's one of the things I think that, you know, Saint Mary's has done is encouraged foreign students to come here. I think its unfortunate that the government- that we charge them double, things like that, but, I'm not involved with making economic decisions but uh, yeah, I think the more we can educate people, the better off we'll be. Although if you look around the world today, you wonder if that's true (laughs) or not, what's going on but anyway..

AB: How about the age of the students? Have you noticed any change in?

FD: Yeah ... to some extent. I think there was a period where there, uhh, there were more mature students. Certainly in education we get more mature students and that's simply a function, I think, of the number of applicants we have for the B.ed program, uhh because of our Masters program and obviously involved experienced teachers, so there's a lot of maturity there but, the more applicants you have, I mean one of our criteria for admitting people is that they have some kind of experience. People are applying with the same academic qualifications, we are more likely to take a person who has had some kind of life experience because I think that contributes to their ability to be a good teacher the more experience you have. That's probably a bias I have because having worked in business I've always felt that that helped me be a better teacher.

AB: Ok, umm, what effect do you think the co-educational change had on Saint Mary's, as an institution?

FD: Oh, I think it has a good effect, uh I think that it was, when I was there it was a boy's school, or men's school. That was very insular. It was very, you know, very locker-roomish type of... and then back when I was talking about the physical discipline of the Jesuits and all that, sort of, was again, a tradition. I think bringing women onto the campus made the place much more human, realistic. Yeah, gave it a much broader perspective, then, I think it was a great thing.

AB: Mm-hm. Ok so you were at the school when the Jesuits gave over control. What effect did that have?

FD: Well, again, from a faculty point of view that was very interesting time, that was when we formed our union and so on. We had the second union at a university in Canada. The university that was first was Notre Dame University, BC, which no longer exists, may not exist practically because they did form a union, I don't know, but it was a very controversial time because Owen Carrigan, who is in the History department, became president and there was a great deal of conflict between Owen and the faculty. And the faculty really gelled again, this was back in the 60's I guess.

AB: 70's.

FD: 70's was it? Yeah, and I can remember faculty meetings where they would, virtually every faculty member would be there and there was a great deal of upset because 14 faculty were given their notice of termination and on the recommendation of some administrators of the university to Carrigan - I understand. I could be wrong on some of these things because... but so the faculty became very joined against this one man and all of these people were eventually reinstated. The union was formed because my understanding of - I was very much involved in the formation of the union - uhh CUPE was here trying to organize us and I was involved with that side of the organization - trying to get an external someone that was independent of academics and then there was the Canadian Association of University Teachers which we, er, eventually remained affiliated with but formed an independent union. So CUPE was trying to organize us, the ...

I forget, I lost my train of thought what I was starting to say. But, oh yes, The Act under which the university was formed gave all power to the Board of Governors. So that, in a matter of fact, I remember being at a meeting, a Board of Governors meeting, I guess and I was probably there as a representation of the faculty because I am not even sure that we had representation on the Board at that time.. and somebody saying that they could actually tell us how to dress and if you read the Act - he was right - in other words, the complete control of the university and all its aspects was with the Board of Governors and they could tell you to do, whatever they wanted. Ahh, so we had to have something that counteracted that so we went to the Labor Relations Act as a counterbalance to that, and it was, as I say, a really interesting time, there was lots of , lots of interest in the faculty and the development of the university and I think the union had a big effect on the

university from an academic point of view. I think it's made it a much stronger academic institution.

AB: Mmmhmm.

FD: ...through the things they've negotiated with the administration over the years.

AB: Yeah, so do you feel that the nature of the institution was changed over the years by the unionization?

FD: Oh yeah, absolutely. From a paternalistic institution that was run by the Jesuits in a very religious sense to a very public institution with much changed academic standards and what was expected by the faculty. I mean you got promoted. I mean I got promoted to Associate Professor by the Dean just sending me a letter. I didn't apply for anything or whatever, he just said now you're an Associate Prof. You know, the same with when I got tenure. And that was because they liked you, I guess, you know, at that point, because there, lots of people over the years they didn't like and you know, they lost lots of good academics because of controversies you know over religious issues. You know, this is back some time now, and other controversial issues, and so on and they sort of drummed people out and with the coming of the union of course, there were standards set and they, it was more difficult to do that although in some instances it was tried to .. yeah, we've had some interesting differences and battles with the union and university administration over the years.

AB: Ok, those are about all the areas I wanted to cover, unless you can think of anything else that stands out in your mind about Saint Mary's.

FD: No, I would say that we've covered most of the things and I've mentioned this earlier but sort of, my disappointment over the years with Saint Mary's is that I don't think it ever lived up to its potential . I think it had, you know, as a small institution, a lot of potential to be rather unique and I think it was watered down to uh, into what it is today and uh, yeah, that's probably it.

AB: Ok, Great.

**Tape Ends**