

Oral History Interview with Terrance Ahern (alumnus):
Conducted by Kathleen Lingley, July 17, 2002
Transcription by Sarah Jones, January, 2004

KL: It is Wednesday, July 17th, 2002, and this is Kathleen Lingley and I'll be interviewing Mr. Terrance Ahern.

Note: First part of interview cut off. Mr. Ahern is talking when taping of interview begins.

TA: ...They had grade seven and eight school courses and I went through grade seven and eight. As I finished grade eight, they abolished grade seven and eight. It seems they were just waiting for me to get through. So anyhow, the building... I supposed you'd like the layout of the building. It was a big building facing on Windsor Street and on the upper side of it beyond street side was the tennis court and behind that was a wooden hockey rink...a rough wooden hockey rink. Yeah. Where they would play in the winter, of course, they would play hockey. And other times they would play basketball. The used to play basketball, they had a dirt floor.

KL: Oh cool.

TA: And, but the thing that...Behind the main building, was a thing which was unique to Halifax and has been ever since. It was a handball...a double handball court. Open air. Now any handball I've ever seen, shown, it's usually been on TV or something like that, some kind of thing like that, where it would be portrayed on the screen. There was always four walls inside a building with all four walls where the balls went around. Now this was a large wooden...huge wooden wall, wooden sides coming down, tapering down to a concrete floor. And that wooden wall that was one side of it, and the other side of it was the same thing. So there were actually two outdoor handball courts.

KL: Oh okay.

TA: With a concrete floor. So we could play doubles or singles on both sides. This is just one side, I don't know...I don't suppose it's still there, but I don't think I've seen anything like that. Now the Irish Christian Brothers, they were strong on handball. It was something they liked, so I guess that's why they had that there. And they used to import the balls from Ireland. The little handballs. I don't know where you get them and I don't think... you know the sport wasn't going in Halifax at all. So, and along with that of course, they also imported these, ah, the magazines, Boy's Own, and they had an Irish one from Ireland as well as the English one. They were about the size of a comic book, but there weren't any illustrations. They were all stories. Stories about the [clears throat], about drug dens and gambling, places like that. And the boys would get involved and they'd

have... There'd be big gangs of crooks and all that, and they'd be out [inaudible] and that sort of thing. So they'd import those and they'd come out every week, and they were five or ten cents.

That main building...uh, you think of it afterwards. I guess it's fairly large, but that main building included the entrance for the parlours and then leading through to an assembly hall and stage at the back end. And besides that, they had all the, all the classrooms were in the building, plus the boarders quarters, because they had boarding students at the time, right in the building. And of course the Brothers' quarters. Those were all there in that one building. I don't know how they did it, but...I can't now, when I come to think of it. But... and they had other rooms too, like there were... we used to play pool after class. We had to play billiards with a pool table and there were pianos, at least two pianos, at different parts of the place where they would have, we could sing pop songs or practice for a concert or something.

But it was all contained there, and of course the campus was beside, going down to Windsor Street, and there was a racetrack around the outside of it. They played rugby there in the fall, and in the spring, they'd play a short season of baseball. They had a baseball diamond. And, that was the thing about that [laughter], about that campus there. English rugby was the sport here in Halifax, and there was no such thing as Canadian football. It was not anywhere near Nova Scotia, I don't think, in those days. And I'm talking now about 1935, I think.

There were quite a number of American students at Dalhousie and there were a fairly good number of American students at Saint Mary's. And one thing that we did know a little bit about was American football, because we'd get it on the radio, the Rose Bowl game, and all that, and then you'd see movies where they did things about American College football, you know. So and so would star, they'd have some star that would be a great player, a collegiate player and the games would be the main thing where he'd score the winning goal, the last minute or so. So we knew a bit about that. The students did, and some of the population of Halifax, but, anyhow, with these students at Dal and Saint Mary's, somehow they got together, and decided to try to introduce American football. And they started practicing, I guess each one of them on their own, and then they got around to it, and finally have a game. I think the idea was to start it with an exhibition sort of thing, and then start the next season, next year and start to get serious about it.

So I believe the day had this game was November 11th because...and think it was around 11 o'clock in the morning because it seems they had one minute of silence before the game. Now there was no P.A.'s or things like that in those days. People just came in. They sold tickets. I think they were 25 or 35 cents or something, a ticket. So, quite a... and they advertised it in the paper and a lot of people came. But, they were used to English rugby. Now, in English rugby, the rules then, I don't know what they are now, but the rules then in English rugby, the players never left the field. It was like one half and a second half, and they

changed. But at half time they just all lay down and rested on the field, and they weren't supposed to leave the field. So, they were used to that, you see, and then change at the second half. So, American football is four quarters, of course, and they change ends each quarter. So, they had played the first quarter, and they changed ends, and they played the second quarter, and then, as in American football, all the players went off and went off into the dressing room when that happened. Now, some of the people thought that the game was over, they thought that they'd seen two halves.

KL: [Laughter]

TA: Seeing the players all leave the field. They'd never seen that before in rugby, you see. [Laughter] But, maybe [inaudible] but a lot of the people went home. Anyhow, well that was the thing about the campus.

KL: Now, do you remember anything about the Stirling Castle?

TA: Well, there's Bubba Stirling. We used to play awful tricks on him.

KL: What do you mean?

TA: Well, before my time, somebody said they strung a rope or something and he tripped over it or something, in the dark. Things like that. But I don't know what Stirling Castle would be. That must have been his quarters, was it?

KL: Ah, some people said that maybe there was another building on campus, where there was...where people stayed, like in residence.

TA: Well, it might have been, but in my time, I'm quite sure there wasn't any other building.

KL: Okay.

TA: That I can remember...unless my memory is bad. [Pause] I wonder where it would have been.

KL: I'm not exactly sure.

TA: Yeah, but I remember I heard the reference. Yeah. But I wasn't sure, because... Yeah, it was Bubba Stirling. They called him Big. He was big, quite a big man, you know, and very easy-going. Yeah. But there were other characters too. There was Brother...Brother Connors. He was an American. We had an American Brother, and they said he had been a baseball... a professional baseball player. He was left-handed. But he used to be at the board and if he happened to be...look over his shoulder and see somebody who wasn't paying attention. He'd let the chalk fly and ping them. Yeah.

KL: [laughter]

TA: So, he was apparently, he must have been a pitcher or something there to be that accurate. Yep.

KL: How do other Brothers stand out in your mind?

TA: Well, of course, uh, Brother Lannon was, he was, he became... I think Brother Stirling was principal [inaudible]. Brother Lannon became the principal, the later years when I was there. And I think he went and got some sort of Nobel Prize at one time. Yeah. I think it was chemistry or something like that. But anyhow, he was...he was pretty smooth. I remember when we had come into our senior year, that was the fourth year I had...the two years of grade school there, three years: grade nine, ten, eleven and high school, and then the four years of university courses. So there was the tradition there, that there was one room, it wasn't very big.

We were in arts now. This is why there was only so many of us, because it was divided through arts and chemistry and engineering and so on. But in this room, the seniors, when you got to be seniors, you got to go into that room and smoke, you see. Now the [pause]. Whatever happened when we really got to be seniors, we were looking forward to that, but they abolished that when we got there, so we felt that we were really being short-changed and done in, so we used to go in there and smoke there anyhow. I know Brother Stirling, or one of those brothers used to write up on the wall, "[inaudible] de fume" and we'd come in and erase it out.

But, now, they used to have...Do you know the old fashion desks...did you ever see the old fashion desks... those combination chair and a desk and a place to put books in under, and a place for an ink well, because there were... People used pen and pen inks, you know, pen and ink wells in those days so there was a hole there where the ink well went in, but they didn't use them anymore. I think most people had fountain pens or something like that. So, anyhow, one day were in there smoking and Brother Lannon appeared in the doorway. [Laughter] He came in suddenly, and I had a cigarette in my hand. I put it down under, you know. To get it out right under the top of the desk. Of course it didn't completely go out and smoke started to come up through the hole. Brother Lannon looked over at me and said, "Look" he said, "Your desk is on fire. Put it out please." [Laughter] ...and then walked out.

Another thing I remember about the assembly hall, this big assembly hall there. We used to be allowed to play cards and things after classes, you know. Go down to the assembly hall and use it for recreation. But it was used for all the concerts and things like that, too. And, one day there was some big educational [mucky muck?] from England, happened to be over in the city and apparently...suddenly asked to come to St. Mary's [inaudible]. He was the Chief of Education for English schools or something like that. So, everything was done in a rush, you

know, to get things ready for this guy coming in the morning, some time in the morning. Everybody was summoned down to the assembly hall, all of a sudden, like that, and they were running around, setting things up. So, Brother Lannon brought the guy in, this man in. Ushered him in through the double doors at the back of the hall. He was starting to walk up towards the stage, you know, where...to sit up on the stage, I guess, and the curtain was on, and somebody opened the curtain and as they opened the curtain, there was Mr. Chute the Janitor cleaning up the stage. [Laughter] He was just like the opening scene of a play. [Laughter] Brother Lannon's face got pretty red.

So...so, those were the main ones. There was Brother Roth who was very excitable, I think. Because I remember the day of my last exam, I came in and I think it was philosophy or something, and I was pretty sure I got, you know, I had gone through a lot of work on it, and I came in late for the exam. And he said something about, "You're late...you're late." And I said, "Oh, it won't happen again", because that was my final exam. [Laughter] And he got kind of red-faced.

But, I remember Mr. Chute, the janitor, was there for years. He seemed to know all the boys quite well. He always was arguing with them and giving them his opinions about life and all that, you know. But, I think it was ah, something I thought, where you learned the idea from being in grade three with a former mayor of Halifax, who I won't name, decided...well he said, he said, "Let's all start dropping our rulers", you know, at a certain time. Or he said, "Let's all start coughing." Anyhow, this time, I don't know why...I don't know why we particularly wanted to bug this teacher, but in the afternoon I brought a huge bag of peanuts in a shell. They were very, very cheap in those days. And I passed them around before the class started, to everybody. And of course, when the Brother started the class, all you could hear was cracking and cracking. But, the only one who got mad about it was Mr. Chute, the janitor, because he used to go around with this push broom and sweep up all the floors everyday after class, all the old wooden floors...and all these peanut shells. And I remember arguing with him. I said, "Look, you got to...you have to sweep up anyhow. They don't weight enough to make it hard for you to sweep." So, we had that argument. But that was [inaudible].

Now, other Brothers. Brother Lynham was, he was a very, very good teacher. He was, Lynham, he was...

KL: How would you spell his name...

TA: He was in chemistry. Pardon me?

KL: Oh, I was just going to ask you how you'd spell his name.

TA: I think it's L-Y-N-H-A-M. I'm almost certain of it. It's that. Yeah. There was...I think there was a Brother Murphy. I'm sure there was somebody that we called Spud. That had to be him, I guess.

KL: Why would you call him "Spud"?

TA: I don't know. Spud Murphy. Somehow it's a very...A lot of people with the name Murphy were given the nickname Spud. I don't know why.

And, yeah, there were other Brothers there, but those are the ones I remember especially. And, ah, the football team, of course they got into football, the next year. Dalhousie and Saint Mary's, and they'd play games back and forth, American football and that. There was a league started and the high school started with an American big football team. And that went on for a couple years and then I think it died away, and then I guess the Canadian football came in. But, ah, what was I going to say about the sports? Oh yeah, the hockey. They have very good hockey players, and they used to win fairly often. You know, they had both high school, ah they'd be in the local high school league playing, and also, ah, playing the universities. Other universities like Acadia, St. FX, and so on. They were very good at that. But, there was a time later on when, this is getting around the end of it, I think the year I graduate, there was quite a divide. There was sort of a division between the Roman Catholics and non-Catholics in Halifax at that time, it wasn't really sharp, but it was there. It's not as bad as it had been. And there was a...

Part of that rivalry was Saint Mary's playing someone else like Dalhousie or Acadia or something like that. We were the underdogs you know. Small, you know. I think it was in my last year, they were getting primed to win. I think to clean up and win the provincial title again in hockey. And, at that time there was a battle between the local hierarchy and the Irish Christian Brothers. Apparently the way things went, the archbishop and the clergy, they had no authority at all over Saint Mary's college, you see. The brothers were autonomous and they were actually trying to push the brothers out of the thing, and there was a clash and it didn't work quite then, but there was this antagonism. So, along with that, they had to remain at it. Everybody was getting primed up for this great hockey team we had, and were in against, I guess against, Acadia or somebody like that, or Saint FX. And this thing came up on the bulletin board that said, "All Catholics, for lent, must refrain from any public engagements." So, in other words, we weren't allowed...supposed to go to the movies, and the hockey team wasn't allowed to play in the play-offs. So, that was it because they couldn't do it. They couldn't do anything to the Brothers as a congregation of Brothers, but they could get at the students, being members of the Catholic Church and subject to the archbishop, you know. So, they couldn't. I guess people went individually. I don't think everybody stopped going to movies, to the theatres, but they couldn't as a team go out and play. So that was one thing.

And then came graduation day. Traditionally the archbishop had always been there and presented degrees. And actually, some of the things that were being held by Dalhousie, at least one, the archbishop, the Catholic archbishop attended one of the Dalhousie functions. But, when it came to graduation day, I got my degree from old Father Cole, the parish priest, who came here and that was it. That was the only representative that the clergy sent to give out the degrees.

Okay. You're wondering more about other Brothers, eh?

KL: If you don't remember any, that's fine.

TA: Yeah.

KL: Because you certainly named quite a few.

TA: Yeah. And things that went on there. Yeah.

KL: Maybe I'll just ask you some background questions.

TA: Yeah. Go ahead. Go ahead. Yeah. Because you might want to hear about something else that I'm not talking about here.

KL: Okay. Well, I'll just start with some background questions. What is your full name?

TA: Terrance Joseph Ahern

KL: And ah, when and where were you born.

TA: I was born in Halifax. And we lived, around that time, well I was born in Halifax in hospital, we lived around at Edmund's Grounds, you know. The other side of the North West Arm.

KL: Oh. Okay. And, ah, did your parents work outside the home?

TA: Well, my father did.

KL: What did he do?

TA: He was in the um, what to they call it? The Marine Fisheries Department. The name of it, it's a start. But actually it was mostly in pilotage and it became something else later, where as ships come in and out, they have to have a pilot, and that was his department, running the pilotage department of the city. And he had to make sure that pilots were available to meet the incoming ships when they got in. And then have them ready to take on ships as they were going out. It was quite a growing concern. It was very busy. Halifax has always been a very busy

port. And then make sure that the pilots go off again when they got out. And sometimes they got trapped on the ships because when they got clear of the harbour it would be really rut to rut. They couldn't get them onto a pilot boat, so they would have to stay on and go on to New York or something like that. Then he made arrangements of getting them back. Yeah. That was his job up until the time he died.

KL: And how large was your family?

TA: Well, there were...It was just my brother and myself. He was about four or five years younger than I am.

KL: Okay. Did he go to S...

TA: There was a young daughter but she died when she was about a year old.

KL: Oh. Did your brother go to Saint Mary's as well?

TA: Yeah. He went there. Yeah. Yeah. He was in engineering. He taught engineering at Nova Scotia Tech for many years, until his retirement. I think it was the first retirement. They had that thing about age 65 and there was a lot of [inaudible] and court cases about it or something. Yeah. Yeah. So, he is still available, I think.

KL: And, ah, what made you choose Saint Mary's.

TA: I don't know. I didn't choose it, my parents just sent me there. [Laughter] Grade seven.

KL: Yeah. You're right.

TA: Well, I went from grade five. I was in grade five at Oxford School. Grade seven.

KL: Now, when you were at the college, like in University, were you responsible for paying your own tuition then?

TA: No, my parents paid it.

KL: You're parents paid it?

TA: Oh yeah. I'll tell you something else about the early days. I remember that when I went there, I think it was sixty dollars a year was the tuition pay. 1929, that is. I'm not sure it was the same for the high school and the university, whether they charged more for one or the other. And I think it was about three hundred dollars for borders. And that seemed to be the same amount ...number, as the amount or number of students. There were about three hundred, and I thought there were

about sixty borders. I'm not sure if there were that many, but it seems to me, these figures seem to coincide somehow or other.

KL: Okay.

TA: I don't know if that's of interest to you.

KL: Oh certainly.

TA: Yeah. But, I remember the sixty dollars. Of course that was getting into the Depression, you know, then. That was...any money wasn't easy to come by. So, no, I didn't have anything to do with paying the tuition, though.

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

TA: In those days? I don't...I don't remember. I don't remember anything coming up about it. They had a few other things they didn't like us to do. [Laughter] We would get into trouble. [unclear.] There was a rugby game in Kentville one time and we weren't supposed to go and I went up to somebody in a car or something and I got in trouble for that later...

KL: [Laughter]

TA: ...because I was seen up there. Well, we got involved with some of the girls in Kentville before we came home.

KL: Uh oh!

TA: I don't know who was there to squeal on us, but... but yeah, we were just having a good time.

KL: Now you mentioned...

TA: Yeah, I'm trying to think now, again about dress code. Well, I suppose we wore a necktie and a jacket, you know.

KL: Okay. You mentioned earlier that there was a number of American students at the school. Do you remember where other students would come from?

TA: Well, one from New England. That was Ferrel, Tommy Ferrel, I think he was from New England. And then there was a Marty...or somebody. He used to...I think he was a little further south, but I couldn't, I couldn't remember too much about him. Yeah. He was a good kicker, punter. He used to practice kicking. Kicking the football into buckets for accuracy to try to get the ball in. It was out in the corner. And no, I couldn't say where they came from. No.

KL: Okay. And uh... What can you tell me about the non-Catholic students at the college? Were there a number of them?

TA: There were just a couple. Only one or two that we knew of. Ah. I think there was a [inaudible] by the name of Fuller, and one by the name of ... he used to run a bus company in Halifax. I forget. I can't remember the name. And actually, some of the other students were saying that they thought that these guys were the best of us. Best of the rest of us. They said, "They're a better example for the Catholics." These particular guys were, were considered having, you know, by the students. Both in sports and both in academics, yeah. There were two...now that was in the arts. You see. I was in arts. Now I don't know about how many there were in commerce or engineering. Probably you'd know that better if you could get a commerce or engineering graduate.

KL: Okay.

TA: Uh. Yeah. There were two or three in arts, but there weren't...I would say there weren't many. There weren't an awful lot.

KL: What sports did you play when you were at the college?

TA: Well, I played handball. And I played a little bit of basketball. That's just inside the college, you know. I wasn't on any team representing, anyway. And some of the American football a little bit.

KL: Okay.

TA: And I, I was supposed to play baseball, but I was too busy. I was too far behind in my studies, just before graduation. There were books I had to read, you know, and write reports on novels and that, and I remember trying to grind them in, and they were out playing baseball there, but I couldn't go. But it was my own fault because I left them all to the last minute.

KL: Okay. [inaudible]

TA: Yeah.

KL: How often did you attend services at the chapel?

TA: Oh yeah, yeah. I forgot to tell you. Included in my building was a chapel. A chapel with an altar, there. In fact, I went back later and we were...[laughter] Long after I graduated there, we came back and play the organ and ah. We had a choir for forty hours. They had a forty hours...they used to have, I don't know if they have it any more. Where... forty hours devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, you know, there was a ... it went on and on and ah. How often did I attend chapel?

KL: Yeah.

TA: Well, the day students everyday had to come down to chapel at about quarter after twelve. I think 12:30 was when they got their lunch break, and they had prayers in the chapel for ten minutes.

[First side of tape ends. Part of speech is interrupted.]

...I think it was grade seven and eight anyhow. They used to have classes on Saturday mornings.

KL: Really?

TA: Yeah. Yeah. Saturday morning. I think it was the old English United Kingdom, that idea of the schools, you know England and Scotland and Ireland.

KL: Okay.

TA: But it seems to me that we had Wednesday afternoons off. I'm pretty sure. I'm not so sure of the Wednesday, but I know the Saturday morning.

KL: Okay.

TA: And, I know, ah, they did... The seminary was just over on Quinpool road there. And on St. Patrick's Day we'd all have to come to school in the morning and we'd go over to the seminary for a special mass. They'd have a special mass at the seminary for us on St. Patrick's Day. And then they had the rest of the day off, so... Irish traditions were being carried on there. Yeah. That's another thing I remember.

But, uh, I'm trying to think about dress code. I don't remember any problems, or any rules being spoken of about dress code. It was more, if anything came up, it was more about the activities, [laughter] or what we were doing, than what we were wearing. Yeah.

KL: Now, what impact do you think Catholic administration had on your experiences at Saint Mary's?

TA: Catholic administration?

KL: Yeah. Like the Irish Christian brothers.

TA: Oh.

KL: How do you think they impacted...your experiences.

TA: Oh. Well, I thought it was quite good. Although later on, now, I find that it was apparently restricted. You know. It wasn't as [noise on tape] as it should have been. As far as, you know... philosophy courses and things like that, it was all pretty cut and dry, it adhered right to the line, and I think, ah, I guess they were good for young kids. I think a good number of the boarders, the boarders were there because they were problem kids in their own communities, I think they were sent there to keep them in line. So, I'd say on the whole, well I enjoyed it. Yeah, I...because I used to hang around after school and play cards, or play a game of handball, or pool. Sometimes the Brothers would join in, especially in handball. You know. They were usually around and I remember we did, we listened to the World Series games. In those days they were always in the afternoon. The World Series was on and there was a big radio down in the ...some big room. We'd gather around and we'd hear the last part of the game. Class was out at, you know, about three o'clock or three-thirty. So, I thought they were ah, I thought they were a pretty good influence for what we were at that age, you know. But then, maybe in the university part of it, there should have been a little more broader outlook, perhaps. But, I only realized that in retrospect. Yeah. Not then, then they made quite an impression. Yeah.

KL: I have heard about annual retreats. Did you ever go on any of those? [Pause] Or participate in them?

TA: Well, I can't remember now, about that. Well, I went on retreats at other times, but not when I was...not when I was at the college. I'm sorry. I can't remember.

KL: They might not have done them...when you were there.

TA: I don't think they did them when I was there. I can't remember, anyhow.

KL: Okay.

TA: But I attended retreats in other... I was over at the seminary another time, but I had gone because of some other connection, you know...with the parish or something. I went with the parish.

KL: Now, were you a part of any societies at the high school or the college?

TA: Yeah. Well, there was some sort of society that begins with a Greek name, but we never did very much. It was kind of a...I don't know. It was more of a formality, getting a...getting inducted into it. They made a fuss about that. But, so that one the Brothers were there. I don't think...There were societies, but I don't remember much activity in it. It just seemed you did it at the beginning of the year and then forgot about it. But I do remember that each year, at a certain time in the winter, each class in the... freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, had to put on a skit or something, a play of some sort. They did them all in one night at

the...up in the assembly hall. And apparently, our junior year, we didn't get one together. We didn't get anything done. So there was a lot of pressure on us in the senior year to do it. And I remember there was a lot of snow down right at that time. And I also remember, I used to visit a girl at a house, at her home, and some friend of her brothers came in and had a whole lot of salt cod or something, strung up or something, and left it there. They didn't want it. So, we were getting this play together. It was supposed to take place in some place like McNabb's island or something like that. Real old, like 1900's... or 19th century melodrama about a villain owner of the property, and he's trying to get this girl and he's threatening the father and all that sort of stuff. So, we decided to put on a play, to wake them up, and I got hold of these salt cod and ...that was strung right up on the stage, you know, with the smell coming from it. And it was supposed to be a fishing shop or something over in this island. Also, my brother had ...was building a boat, he was the one that became the engineer, he was really good. He built a rowboat, and so we commandeered the rowboat and got that on stage too. And, and then the hero finally came in. He was supposed to swim over from Halifax, from the harbour, you know, to rescue the...and ah. I don't know, I remember him having that old fashioned bathing suit on. And they got, actually buckets of water from the harbour. It had seaweed in it. And boy, he was pretty good to go through that. We threw it on him, and then he made his entrance onto the stage, dripping with the seaweed and the water. [Laughter] So I think we won that time. Yeah. But we were really on high, that time. We think we won the prize. But I remember getting the boat back to my house, you know. We put it on a rope on the back of a car and had somebody drive it up Windsor Street. Right along the street, and I was sitting in it.

KL: Oh my gosh.

TA: Yeah. Yeah. Well there was a lot of snow that hadn't been cleared, you see, but the guy was able to drive it. But there was enough snow that the boat went out. It was eleven...probably eleven o'clock in the night. There wasn't any traffic thank God. At least there were no cops around. [Laughter.]

KL: They would have been surprised if they found you.

TA: Yes. I remember that. Well, they probably figured we were drunk, but we weren't drinking. We were just worked up after the play. Now, I can't remember those things about retreats or about the society.

KL: Oh well that's fine.

TA: Yeah. It didn't amount to much.

KL: I wanted to ask you. How do you think Saint Mary's being a small campus affected the students? Were you a really close-knit group of young men?

TA: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. We were fairly close to the...to the Brothers, too. You know... Yeah. And there was probably that thing of us against them. You know, with the bigger universities around, like Saint Mary's and King's, of course King's probably wasn't much bigger. And then there was the religious divide. Yeah. I guess we were the only Catholic University before...until you got to Saint FX.

KL: Did you keep in touch with any of your professors after leaving Saint Mary's?

TA: Yes. A little bit, yeah. But not for long, because I don't know how long after I left...that they...I guess it was several years before they were gone, the Brothers were gone, and the Jesuits took over. I used to keep...a little bit, but not to a great degree. Not as much as [inaudible].

KL: Now, people, different people have told me about some of the Brothers, if you were playing handball, how they'd jump in and have a game with you.

TA: Oh yes. Oh yeah. They would show you how to ... good ways to hit the ball, you know. Spin it. You see that ... people would cheer. It would be like tennis, something like tennis. A person up there would serve it up against the big wooden front wall and it would come back and then you had to get it in. Get it in before it hit the floor, and then there was a volley back and forth. One would hit it against the wall and it would come back and the other one would ... The idea was to get it as low down on the wall as you could. They had a thing called the perfect shot. If you got served to or the ball came at you, it would be that when it would hit that front line and roll out, come rolling out, it wouldn't even bounce. Other people couldn't get at it at all. Your opponent couldn't get it at all. So the Brothers were good at that, yeah. Just a few of them. Not all of them. Some of them didn't play at all. There was a Brother Kiley, but I don't remember much about him. He was soft-spoken. I think he might have been into Chemistry or something. Kiley. K-I-L-E-Y.

KL: Do you remember anything about the Ladies auxiliary?

TA: No. The only women that I saw there was the one that ... a caretaker, I think, who looked after boarders, looked after the... And down in the basement they had ... They had a dining room down in the basement, and I'd see her down there and I thought she was sort of a ... I thought she was sort of our housekeeper. But I don't know. I guess there was a ladies auxiliary, because sometimes I used to stay and eat lunch. You'd stay and pay a certain amount. I think it was twenty-five or thirty-five cents and you could have lunch with the boarders. The lunch wasn't very...they'd read from prayer books, somebody had to read from prayer books during the ...when you were eating, you know?

KL: Oh my.

TA: Yeah. Well that was common, I suppose. Like in the Brothers order, you know. The order of congregation, they would do that themselves apparently. I think that was quite common, that somebody would read something during lunch. So they were doing it there.

KL: Now you mentioned sort of a rivalry between larger campuses. Did you have a lot of interaction with students from Dalhousie or the girls from the Mount or other colleges?

TA: No, there wasn't interaction. No, I guess it was only during the...when the games and teams played each other. You mean were there riots or anything like that, or...?

KL: No, even just visiting back and forth. Dances.

TA: No, I don't think there was much. No, they didn't seem to go in for much of that.

KL: Okay.

TA: At that time, not Saint Mary's. I think they were too religiously oriented. Yeah, it strikes me that there should have been. Especially in the first few years. We did a little of our own. I helped a couple of the boarders. I think I took them over to my aunt's place. Her in-laws were two girls or nieces of somebody, were staying there, so I used to take these guys over for visits. But, I don't think ... I don't remember any interaction with females, not sponsored by the Brothers anyhow. They were too ... That's another one of the things I said that was a drawback. They were too centered on ... narrowly centered.

KL: Oh okay.

TA: Maybe they figured they wouldn't be allowed to do it, or promote it. What have you heard about this ladies auxiliary?

KL: Mostly just that they had different teas for, you know, the ladies, and bingos and things, to raise money for the chapel, like for the altar linens.

TA: Yeah.

KL: And that sort of thing. But, I mean, as a student you might not know anything about that.

TA: No, I guess we didn't know.

KL: Unless your mum was in it or something. That would be how you would find out about it.

TA: No. I don't know anything about that.

KL: Okay. And you graduated in 1937, is that right?

TA: Yeah, '37.

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

TA: Well, it was a fairly general one. But, you know, I didn't go any further than that, but probably what I had wasn't enough. [inaudible] But it was a good general education, I think. There was a lot more learning that was needed I think.

KL: What career did you enter after leaving Saint Mary's?

TA: Oh, I was doing a lot of different things. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I didn't know what I wanted to do. For a couple years I was working in the printing business with my uncle who had a very small printing place. And I did a few things like that. In the war I was at the shipyards, working on the shipyards during the war. So that took care of that. Then afterwards, I went into business for myself. I had a problem, a financial problem. I guess I was kind of desperate, because my firstborn child had a brain tumor and he was between three and four years old. It was quite a while here, and then we had to take him up to the Montreal Neurological Institute. It was Dr. Cohen, and who was the other guy? Dr. Penfield. Dr. Penfield, he was the guy who did all the brain work in Canada at that time, I guess. And he was there for three months, and he finally died there, you see. So, I didn't have any kind of money to take care of stuff like that and there was no Medicare in those days, you know. So I was trying to pay off things. So I went into, my brother went into it as well, a business, a hobby business. I've been in it ever since. Of course I also had a choir up at a church. I was there for quite a few years at St. Jehovah's church up there.

KL: Okay.

TA: In fact I still go sometimes to this hobby business. A few hours a week, I do things for them.

KL: Oh wow! Keeps you busy.

TA: Yeah. And we started out down on Barrington Street. No, we started on Agricola Street and went down to Barrington Street, then we went to Scotia Square, and now we are in the old Saint Mary's girl's school.

KL: Oh, neat. Is that a...

TA: It's Grafton Street, opposite of the Public Library, there.

KL: Yeah, yeah. Oh, what's the name of it?

TA: Maritime Hobbies and Crafts.

KL: Okay. Maritime Hobbies and Crafts.

TA: Yeah. Well that's the one we started with my brother back in nineteen... what was it? 1946. I think we started then.

KL: Well that's great. I've asked all my questions. Did you have anything to add that I didn't get to ask you about?

TA: No. I think I told you about the dark part of the thing... of the religious thing, eh?

KL: [Laughter]

TA: Do you want this to understand what that was like? [Transcriber infers TA is referring to picture or diagram of handball court.]

KL: Yeah. Would you mind if I kept that [inaudible] or...?

TA: No. This is a front view of it, eh.

KL: Mm hmm.

TA: And there was a ... Behind this there would be the exact same thing going on the other side. This is one side of the wall. The other side of the wall would have the same.

KL: Okay. I understand.

TA: And there was a wall down this side, of course, the same as this side.

KL: Neat.

TA: I don't know if there's any place like that around Halifax, now.

KL: Well, I haven't played handball, but ... I mean that's not to say others don't.

TA: I don't know where there's a handball ... and I don't know whether there was ever an outdoor one, except this one.

KL: [Laughter]. That one there?

TA: Yeah.

KL: Neat. Oh. I did have one question that I didn't...that I forgot to ask you. What do you think your connection to Saint Mary's is now? Do you still participate in...

TA: I found out...I found when the Jesuits came that it was entirely different. I didn't find I had any connection with it at all. Although there have been connections because my wife, her cousin is a Jesuit, Father Peter Ryers (?). So he comes over here fairly often. Over here or at his lectures a couple of times. Although he's up in Ontario, he comes back all the time. And, so I got to know a few of the Jesuits. Peter, Father Peter Ryers. And a little bit to do with the literacy of the church, from being, you know, I was responsible for hymns and creating English out of Latin, you know. When it changed over I had to put some of it into English words, the hymns, to make them fit, and so on.

KL: Oh, okay.

TA: And there was a priest here I think. There was a Jesuit who was interested in that too. So we had a few connections like that. But I never really felt it was part of [inaudible], although my son went there. Brian, he went to Saint Mary's for a few years, but he didn't go the whole way because he got so into music so much, he was busy producing Anne Murray's records and things like that, you see. He's a recording producer, yeah.

KL: Oh neat.

TA: And he went to Saint Mary's. And my son Patrick, he went...my youngest son, he went to... he graduated in chemistry. Right now he's...he was down in the States but he lost his job there, back in the nineties when they had a bit of a recession there. In California they were cutting things. So now he's up at Mount Allison now, I think on a short term teaching course there. No, not teaching it's...they're trying to develop something with research. But anyway, he went through there. That's how I got to know the college a bit, I had that connection, but I never felt it is what I had been a part of.

KL: Right. Yeah. Well the university has certainly has changed.

TA: Yeah. They were so different. The Brothers were so different from the Jesuits. The Jesuits I think are much more broadminded. But the Brothers, because I was at that time of my life, you know, it was very...I appreciated very much being [inaudible] with them. And being around the games and things after classes. So, I think it was useful in that way. Different stages of your life, different things impress you.

KL: Well, I'll turn this off then.

[Tape recorder is turned off.]

