

Oral History Interview with Raymond Beck (alumnus):
Conducted by Kathleen Lingley, August 8, 2002
Transcription by Sarah Jones, January, 2004

- KL: It is August 8, 2002 and I am Kathleen Lingley and I will be interviewing Mr. Raymond Beck.
- KL: What is your full name?
- RB: My full name is Raymond Vincent Beck.
- KL: Okay. And when and where were you born?
- RB: I was born in Halifax, November 8, 1920, a long time ago.
- KL: Down on Bedford Road, right?
- RB: Yeah.
- KL: Did your parents work outside the home?
- RB: My father did. He was in the fire department. He was in the fire station down at Bedford Road, and he drove the aerial ladder.
- KL: Oh neat. Did you have any brothers and sisters?
- RB: Yes. I had a brother and sister.
- KL: Did your brother go to Saint Mary's as well?
- RB: No. He went in the fire department about 1941.
- KL: Oh okay.
- RB: And I had two other sisters who died in the younger years. One was days old and the final was eleven months.
- KL: Now, when did you attend Saint Mary's? You said you started at the high school, right?
- RB: I started in September 1937, in the high school, which was Christian Brothers.
- KL: And then you stayed until when?
- RB: 1944.

KL: Okay.

RB: Yeah.

KL: Now, what made you choose to go to Saint Mary's?

RB: I don't know. It's just my mother decided that I would go there. Yeah.

KL: Sounds good. And what faculty were you in when you were in the college.

RB: Engineering.

KL: Engineering. Okay. Now, do you remember anything about your professors, either at the high school or the college?

RB: Well, in the high school it was the Irish Christian Brothers. And in grade nine it was Brother Kealey, G. A. Kealey.

KL: How would you spell his last name?

RB: K-E-A-L-E-Y. [Edward Kiely?]

KL: Oh, okay.

RB: And then in grade ten it was split. There were two grade tens, A and B. And we had Brother Flannery in grade ten. And grade eleven it was Brother Kehoe.

KL: Do you remember anything about them?

RB: Well, they were dedicated men. They...you know.

KL: Good teachers, eh?

RB: I beg your pardon?

KL: They were good teachers?

RB: Oh yes, yeah.

KL: Now did you notice a difference in the teachers when the Jesuits came to the college? Did it seem like a different place?

RB: Oh yes. It was different, but they were still dedicated, you know. They were committed to education.

KL: Do you remember who taught you when you were in the engineering faculty?

RB: Oh, Brother...not Brother. Father Burke-Gaffney.

KL: Oh, okay.

RB: Yeah. And then there was Barney Thomas.

KL: What did he teach?

RB: He was... Not working? [Referring to the tape recorder].

KL: Oh. I'm just making sure it's on. Yeah. It's perfect. I wouldn't want to mess it up.

RB: C...I think it was C.E. Thomas. He was a civilian. He wasn't...he wasn't a priest. And then there was others. Some of them like Father Phelan, he taught us economics the first year. And, he had... That would be...I just want to look in there and see. [Sound of pages shuffling]. Oh yeah. That was 1940. That's...the yearbook would have been the Christian Brothers then. Yeah. Brother Lannon, he was the President of the college. There he is there.

KL: Oh neat.

RB: Brother Lannon.

KL: Now, was there a dress code when you were at Saint Mary's?

RB: Hmm?

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

RB: Well, we had to wear a shirt and tie?

KL: You had to look professional, eh?

RB: Yeah.

KL: Do you remember any other rules for the college or anything?

RB: No, I can't think of any. No, I guess not. Of course when I got into college, the war was on and the COTC was, you know, it was very, very prevalent. See, you were... during at least two afternoons during the week, you might go on to six o'clock. And then you had, you know, training on Saturdays. And then, of course, you had the summer camp. You'd go camp in Aldershot for two weeks.

KL: What would you do when you were at camp?

RB: All army work.

KL: Oh my.

RB: Oh yeah. Range work, you know, marching, and...yeah, fueling craft. Yeah.

KL: As an engineer, did you ever go on anything like a survey camp or...?

RB: Yeah.

KL: What was that like?

RB: We went to survey camp. I don't know when it would have been. I think I went there twice.

KL: And what...

RB: I'm not sure what year we went. Third year, I guess.

KL: Okay. And where would you go?

RB: We used to go up around Truro to the...it was in the agricultural college, I guess. They had a bit of a camp there.

KL: Neat. Now, when you were in college did you pay for your own tuition?

RB: Oh yes.

KL: How would you make the money? What sort of jobs did you have?

RB: I worked one summer, down in the MacDonald's Cigar Store on Spring Garden Road. I was there... I was there a couple of summers, and then I went to work for Acadian Construction. They were building the A-23, that side of the Eastern Passage. And I worked there and then next summer I worked for Wartime Housing. And next summer, for the City of Halifax, and then, ah, when I got down to Tech, I went in the army for a summer to Petawawa.

KL: Wow. What can you tell me about the cost of education at Saint Mary's?

RB: Oh gee. It was really peanuts. It was something like seventy-five bucks or something like that.

KL: Oh my goodness.

RB: You can't realize. Well...there was no pay for the Brothers and the Jesuits when they were there. No pay for them. Yeah. It was about seventy-five bucks.

KL: Now, you lived at home. You weren't a boarder, right?

RB: No, I lived...yeah.

KL: So you were a day student, right? Do you have an idea of how many boarders there would have been?

RB: Oh gee. I'm not sure. I'm seeing if we could, ah, if there's anything about boarders in here. [Transcriber assumes RB is referring to yearbook]. There's my grade eleven class. There I am there. Now, that guy, that was Jeff Fischer. He went in the airforce and he was killed in 1942.

KL: Oh my goodness.

RB: Art Milne, another guy, went into the army. He survived. There should be a picture here of the boarders. Let's see about the army...navy. When Junior McMann was... Poet's Society... There's COTC

KL: Quite a large group of you.

RB: They...I wasn't in it then. That was 1940. Ah. There's Barney Thomas there. And that is Spencer Brawl. And that's Major Propner [?]. This guy, by the name of Jenkin [?]. I don't know. There should be a picture of the ah...

KL: Now do you remember the boarding students, some of the places they'd be from?

RB: Occurs to me that most of them were Newfoundlanders. Yeah.

KL: Neat.

RB: There should be a picture here somewhere of the ah...[Long Pause]. There they are there. In Petawawa.

KL: Oh neat.

RB: I don't know.

KL: Now, when you were at Saint Mary's what recreation facilities did they have? Do you remember?

RB: They had handball courts. And when...in high school, they used to have inner-faculty sports. Soccer, hockey.

KL: Hockey?

RB: Yeah. They had the old Rorum.

KL: Oh. That was a natural ice rink wasn't it?

RB: Yeah it was.

KL: And would you go to see a lot of games there?

RB: Well, the inner-faculty sports, you know.

KL: Do you remember when the Brothers would play a game of handball with you or anything like that?

RB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. They'd tie up their...what do you call it...sultan [?] Yeah. Yeah, they played. They were good at it.

KL: And they enjoyed it.

RB: Yeah. Yeah.

KL: Oh neat. Were there a lot of non-Catholic students at the college and the high school?

RB: There were a few. Oh yeah. Yeah. We had a few.

KL: Okay. Now, did you attend services at the chapel as students a lot or no?

RB: Oh yeah. No, no. There was always time for chapel. Yeah. Oh yeah. And they'd have retreats, you know.

KL: Every year, or?

RB: Yeah. Just about, yeah.

KL: Oh. What would you do during your retreat?

RB: Mostly be quiet. [Laughter.]

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

RB: Well, certainly they were Catholic, you know, with the Brothers and the Jesuits, and the Archbishop was there by times, you know. And we had the sedulity and you know. Yeah.

KL: Now, were you a member of any societies during your time at Saint Mary's?

RB: Oh, I remember the sedulity, the engineering society.

KL: What sort of things would sedulity do?

RB: [Laughter.] Well, I'm not sure. They'd ah...no that's a blank.

KL: Do you remember anything about the engineering society?

RB: Oh we usually had a banquet once a year.

KL: Would you have a lot of smokers and things like that, or? Someone told me that you used to go over to where the Gorsebrook is now. Where the Gorse...(()) over there.

RB: Oh yeah. That's ah...I don't remember smokers down there, but we had dances down there.

KL: Oh neat.

RB: The old house was down there. The Inosculum [?] Yeah.

KL: Oh cool. How does Saint Mary's being a small campus effect the atmosphere of the school? Were you all really close-knit?

RB: Oh yeah, pretty close. There was...there weren't that many there.

KL: So you knew everyone.

RB: Yeah. Oh yeah.

KL: Okay. And what sports did you play when you were at Saint Mary's?

RB: Oh, the...We played soccer. Played a bit of hockey. That's about it.

KL: Do you remember anything about the Ladies Auxiliary?

RB: Oh yes. There's a picture here somewhere. I don't know whether you're interested or not.

KL: Yeah. I'd love to see the picture. What sort of things did the Ladies Auxiliary do?

RB: They helped decorate the chapel with flowers and ... [Referring to the yearbook] And there's Father McCarthy. He was, ah, T.C. McCarthy. And there's grade ten. Jack Lynch. He was a teacher in the high school.

KL: Did you ever have him?

RB: Yeah. I had him, yeah. Jimmy Ryan, Brother Burke-Gaffney, Al Sabeau.

KL: What other things would be... Oh there they are. The Ladies Auxiliary. Oh, having a Faculty tea.

RB: Yeah.

KL: Oh neat. What other sorts of things would they have done?

RB: They're just, they're right up there.

KL: Oh neat.

RB: Fall bridge and Faculty tea.

KL: And a sewing group. It looks like they were really busy.

RB: Made several gifts to the college chapel, new carpet to the Sacristy, two lamps ... The whole list is there. I suppose you have all these yearbooks.

KL: Oh, we have some. I'm not sure what ones we have, exactly. My boss would know that. She knows the collection really well. Well, I was going to ask you what your impressions of the college building were. What it was like and...

RB: Well, it was small. There it is there.

KL: Oh okay. It looks big in pictures.

RB: There's COTC

KL: Hmm. And there was a library at the college wasn't there?

RB: Yeah.

KL: Was it large or...? What was it like?

RB: No, it was a small one. Yeah, a small one.

KL: Who was your, ah, librarian?

RB: Oh the... There was no permanent librarian... It was, you know, catch as catch can.

KL: Oh, okay.

RB: Now there's "Arsenic and Old Lace". The play they put on in 1944.

KL: Were you in this, or?

RB: No, I was the program director, I think it was. Or program... There it is here.

KL: I've never seen these programs before. Oh. And there's a picture from the paper. Oh! You had it at the Oxford.

RB: Yeah.

KL: Oh wow.

RB: Yeah. First class, all the way.

KL: That's neat. Oh. There you are. "Program. R. V. Beck." Oh wow.

RB: There's Kenny Mackey. Eddie Boyd, he's still around.

KL: Edmund Boyd?

RB: Yeah.

KL: Oh yeah.

RB: Jimmy Pineole, Axel Allen. That's Father George.

KL: Wow. That's a neat picture. Neat! Now, did girls ever come onto campus for any reason?

RB: Not as students.

KL: No, but like, as visitors or maybe for a dance or something?

RB: Oh yeah, once in a while. Yeah. My daughter, she's an engineer, the oldest one, Jen-Ann. And my youngest one's an engineer, and Rosemary's...C.A. They all went to Saint Mary's. And Jen-Ann, she was the first woman in engineering at Saint Mary's. And she was...she had to be around the first females who went to the college. Yeah.

KL: That's really neat. Oh, one other question. Was there a lot of interaction between like, other students, the Saint Mary's students and the Dal students or the Mount students, at all?

RB: No.

KL: No? Okay. What effect do you think the education at Saint Mary's had on your life?

RB: Oh well, it was...Starting with Brother Kiely, he certainly had an influence. You know, at that age...

KL: Sort of set you on the path, eh?

RB: Oh yeah. Right.

KL: And, so you've stayed connected to Saint Mary's. You said your children all went there and...

RB: Yeah, right.

KL: Okay. Do you ever go to alumni events or...?

RB: No, I don't get out. No.

KL: Do you look fondly on your days at Saint Mary's?

RB: Oh yeah.

KL: I've asked all my questions. Did you have anything to add?

RB: No that's fine.

KL: Great. [Phone rings.] Perfect timing. I'll just turn this tape of then.