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Father McCormick's Stories of Teaching Through the Years

Rose Schaner

University of Dallas, rschaner@udallas.edu

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Recommended Citation

Schaner, Rose, "Father McCormick's Stories of Teaching Through the Years" (2017). *Oral History Interview Projects*. 29.

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1 Rose Schaner: So Fr. Paul if it is alright I am going to be recording you for an interview
2 for my History of American, um, Education class and this will be put into the University
3 of Dallas oral history depository. Are you okay with this?

4 Fr. Paul McCormick, O. Cist. Headmaster: Yes, mam.

5 RS: All right so, um, my questions are kind of, um, over the category of change over
6 time, so I am wondering how come you chose teaching as your profession.

7 PM: Well it's like a crawfish, you kind of back into it. You know? And so I was going to
8 be a priest and came to the University of Dallas as a compromise with my parents, who
9 weren't too excited about my being a priest. And so I would go to a Catholic school that
10 I would major in economic or business. They didn't have business at that time and, um,
11 and so that is what happened. And the economic department, I'm sure it's still that way
12 today, it's right down the hall from the education.

13 RS: Yeah it is. Yes it is.

14 PM: So I would pass them everyday, but never. You know? And, um, never crossed my
15 mind and then, um, a few years later, um, I discovered a vocation to be a priest here. And,
16 um, I like the idea that priest could live in the community, I always thought a priest living
17 in a parish by himself, feeling lonely. I had a pastor, who was kind of intellectually
18 frustrated, I thought. You know?

19 RS: Yeah.

20 PM: And so that made me hesitate on the whole priesthood idea. And when I discovered
21 these guys, uh, they were priest, but they lived in a community. And they teach, so they
22 challenge each other, uh the boys are challenging them. So I thought it was kind of

23 appealing. And so I wanted to join this group and I'll do what y'all do. If y'all make fruit
24 cake, I'll make fruit cake. You know?

25 RS: Yeah.

26 PM: But if y'all teach, I have always been a good student. So I had a lot of teachers. And
27 so I wasn't intimidated by the idea and, um, and so I jumped in and, um. At that time,
28 unlike your brother, who is very involved in the school already.

29 RS: Yeah.

30 PM: At that time, the wisdom of that age, was you keep the young monks out of the
31 schools, so they are focused on their spiritual development, discernment. And you didn't
32 want to get caught up in the craziness of the school. And, um, and so I joined in '92 and I
33 really didn't do anything in terms of teaching until after my ordination in '97. And I came
34 back from Rome, uh, I think it was...July, late July early August. I was ordained on a
35 Saturday, my first mass on a Sunday, and I was thrown in the classrooms on Monday.

36 RS: Well yeah.

37 PM: No pedagogy, nothing, nothing.

38 RS: Yeah.

39 PM: And at that time, that was the Cistercian way. You swim or you... You sink or you
40 swim.

41 RS: Yeah.

42 PM: And um, and I think I had two, a couple things going for me. I think, um, one is, at
43 that time, there were no vocations, not many vocations. Fr. Mark a couple years before
44 was this...

45 RS: Yeah.

46 PM: And so I think the kids, and the parents, and everybody understood we got to make
47 this work.

48 RS: Yeah.

49 PM: You know? And so I think that everybody was kind of working with me, to kind of,
50 you know? So they don't drive away the last vocation. And um, and so the teaching was
51 fine. I thought, and I mean, it was... you you learn. And the kids were very patient. Uh, it
52 is fun, ironic. That some of the first, the first kids I taught sophomore theology. Uh,

53 [Kassey Lastimosa and Ben Hokey. \(3:45\)](#)

54 RS: Oh yeah?

55 PM: And they saw me at the rawest of moments. You know?

56 RS: Yeah.

57 PM: And so if you compare my class then to my class now, change over time.

58 RS: Yeah

59 PM: You see, uh, different at that time. I think a lot of us do this. We come right out of
60 college. And we step in and we just start sharing all of that stuff that we acuminated and
61 these kids are like, you know? Right? Um, and but I enjoyed it! I did enjoy it and um I
62 did the sophomores, which is usually kind of an armpit year.

63 RS: Yeah?

64 PM: And the eight grade, which is kind of an armpit year. But I enjoyed it and the kids
65 were good. And um, the trick was, I was also a Form Master that year, the fist year.

66 RS: Okay.

67 PM: We got thrown in with these forty-two, ten year old boys from all different schools,
68 getting to know each other. And uh, some of them had come to my ordination. So they

69 have seen me, change over time as a priest. And I was at the wedding of one of them on
70 Saturday, which is kind of cool.

71 RS: Oh wow.

72 PM: Yeah, it is kind of like a reunion.

73 RS: Yeah.

74 PM: Um, and so I taught on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and then the
75 Form Master period. Did you hear about that?

76 RS: No.

77 PM: You heard, you know the Form Master system, though?

78 RS: Yes, yes!

79 PM: So once a week, the Form Master gets all the boys together. You teach my sections,
80 which is reasonable, twenty in a slide. But once a week you get them all together for
81 mass.

82 RS: Okay.

83 PM: Once a week you get them all together for Master period. And there's no guideline,
84 what you do Form?... Well whatever the Form Master wants to do. You know? So moral
85 theology, you have a curriculum and um religion or Latin or whatever, history, you have
86 a curriculum. Form Master period is whatever you want to do. And so that makes it even
87 harder for a teacher.

88 RS: Yeah.

89 PM: And so that very first week, so that very first Friday, my very first week. Um, I had
90 all forty-two of them together in a classroom that was down in the basement. No
91 windows, no natural light.

92 RS: Yeah.

93 PM: All closed in. And it was wild. It was really quite a wild and I know. And, and
94 whereas for the older boys we kind of, we got to help them stay, we got to make this
95 work. You aren't gonna....(trail off.)

96 RS: Yeah.

97 PM: And so I remember it. I I tell the story a lot, is um. That was the last, I don't know
98 who planned the schedule wise. The last period on a Friday is not prime time, anyway,
99 particularly not a boy's school. And so the Form Master dismisses them. And so we did
100 our little pledge or whatever we do, a prayer. And I dismiss them: "Have a great
101 weekend." And I walked out of the classroom, walked over to the monastery, hopped in
102 one of those little Toyotas. I drove over to the University of Dallas.

103 RS: Yeah.

104 PM: I walked right past the economics department into the education department.

105 RS: Oh yeah?

106 PM: And Miss Clodfelter was there. And again, I didn't know her.

107 RS: Yeah.

108 PM: Um because I heard such superb things about her. She was the, you know? And so I
109 walk in, I introduced myself. I said, "You don't know me. I am a young monk. And uh, I
110 got forty-two little kids and I am looking for a book. Do you recommend a book on
111 classroom management?"

112 RS: Oh yeah.

113 PM: And it was like a eh, I don't want to exaggerate, but this is how I remember it. It
114 was like a Yoda moment.

115 RS: Yeah.

116 PM: You know?

117 RS: Yeah.

118 PM: Did you know who Clodfelter is?

119 RS: I I meet her once. Yeah.

120 PM: “What you seek is not found in a book. It must come from within.” Now, that is very
121 profound.

122 RS: Yes.

123 PM: And I said, “Well thank you very much. But just in case, can you recommend a book
124 anyway?”

125 RS: Yeah.

126 PM: And she didn’t. I don’t think she did. (trail off)

127 RS: Yeah.

128 PM: And um. Wow. Okay. And um, but you know by the second week I kind of put a
129 little curriculum together. You know, then we kind of... I tell you what my, my
130 inspiration was. Is I taught history that year.

131 RS: Okay.

132 PM: American History. And I said, “Well there is forty-two of us, well it is almost like,
133 you know, fifty senators.”

134 RS: Yeah.

135 PM: And so I turned them into, I gave, I gave them each a state. You are going to be a
136 senator of this state. Do a fifteen-page history, do a fifteen page, uh, project, again no
137 pedagogy.

138 RS: Yeah

139 PM: Fifteen pages, coming out of grad school that is not much.

140 RS: Yeah.

141 PM: And that was really kind if intimidating for them.

142 RS: Yeah.

143 PM: Can you image? I didn't. but not in fairness I had I all arrange. The first page is only
144 an introduction; summarize what you are about to tell me. And it doesn't have to fill the
145 page, it can be a little, you know?

146 RS: Yeah.

147 PM: Second pages I only want the geography. The third page I only want the economic.
148 Fourth page... So it was broken up that way.

149 RS: Yeah.

150 PM: And some of those kids wow! They wrote to the state governors and they brought
151 dirt from Arizona. And, and, so some of, theses kids are really.

152 RS: Yeah

153 PM: And uh, so that, so I tied my Form Master into my social studies. And I said, "Okay
154 now, we are going to do kind of a practicum in Form Masters. And so you are going to
155 elect a president of the senate." [Josh Hughes \(9:12\)](#) was elected. And uh, sorry. And um.

156 RS: Oh wow.

157 PM: Is, isn't that something?

158 RS: Oh, that is awesome.

159 PM: And you gonna have to... In a sentors rules of decorum, you know? You don't talk
160 disrespectfully for, you know? And um so.

161 RS: Yeah, no go ahead.

162 PM: And so uh, and so Josh was the brainica of the bunch. And um, he pounded the heck
163 out of that.

164 RS: Yeah.

165 PM: And, but it was, it was fascinating. It was fun. And uh, it was fun. And so uh, so I so
166 survived.

167 RS: Yeah.

168 PM: Uh they gave me gray hair, and...

169 RS: Yeah.

170 PM: And uh, but there is a special bonding so you... Your first class, our first, you know?
171 So they are educating you, but you are educating them.

172 RS: Yeah.

173 PM: And again, this weekend we had eight or nine of us together, and half of them are
174 married, baptized the second kid of one. And uh, they look back on that and discipline
175 was kinda always an issue. And so I came up with the idea, of.. Cuz in P.E. they are
176 running. And so I came up with the idea, "okay we are gonna, you are going to run laps."
177 You know? In P.E.

178 RS: Yeah.

179 PM: And one of the dads calls me a few weeks later. He says "You know I hate to tell
180 you this, Fr. Paul." Cuz I always hated running.

181 RS: Yeah, me too.

182 PM: It was punishment for me. "I hate to tell you this, Fr. Paul, but my kid loves to
183 run."

184 RS: Yeah.

185 PM: It's not gonna end up working that much. And so, then I came up with, uh, I think
186 they had to write, uh, Psalms.

187 RS: Oh okay.

188 PM: Write, write Psalms. Which one? I don't care which one you pick. Well they figured
189 out pretty quickly that 117, is like two lines.

190 RS: Is the shortest one?

191 PM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so it was trial and error.

192 RS: Yes, yes.

193 PM: It was trial and error. And and you got good kids and good families and good fellow
194 faculty members you can learn from. And you're humble. You're humble and so I think
195 parents will give you the benefit of the doubt if you're... and they know you're trying,
196 you want the best, you care. Uh they can be very patient and understanding.

197 RS: Yeah.

198 PM: And they work.

199 RS: Yeah.

200 PM: So I guess a long...

201 RS: Yeah.

202 PM: So I guess I didn't choose teaching, it kinda choose me.

203 RS: Yes. Alright.

204 PM: It kinda choose me.

205 RS: And then what about, so have made any major changes or even little changes from
206 that first year to teaching in the future?

207 PM: Yeah I guess. Um, yeah, yeah, technology has changed.

208 RS: Yes, yes.

209 PM: Technology changed. One of my handicaps as a teacher, one of my huge handicaps
210 is my writing is illegible.

211 RS: Oh okay.

212 PM: And those poor kids. Those poor kids are so patient. And uh, and sometimes the
213 harder I tried, the worse it is. And so, gosh! Ten years ago... I guess I've been at this for
214 twenty years now, but about half way through we had these computer carts, for the
215 projects on the carts.

216 RS: Oh yes, I remember.

217 PM: We would wheel it down the hallway. And you could do a PowerPoint. So I learned
218 how to do PowerPoint and and, badly!

219 RS: Yeah.

220 PM: And uh, and so that's a dramatic difference. And I still kinda use that as too much of
221 a clutch, I think. (trail off)

222 RS: Yeah.

223 PM: PowerPoint, but. But now you can do a PowerPoint with video and now you can do
224 a PowerPoint with...

225 RS: Yeah, so many things.

226 PM: And the kids, yeah you know? I don't think the comraderie kids really appreciate
227 that PowerPoint as much as those kids who did, who saw the...(tail off) take notes.

228 RS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah so would you say, um, technology effected your teaching in a
229 negative, or positive way or both?

230 PM: Both.

231 RS: Both?

232 PM: I think positive is uh. There are so many resources now, online.

233 RS: Um, yes.

234 PM: And so I think one of the challenges in Theology, it can be a challenge. Uh, not so
235 much if you only teach one or two courses, over the course of eight years. A kid... But
236 eight years, six weeks a semesters of it for an adolescent.

237 RS: Yeah.

238 PM: You know, for a sophomore or junior it's like, Church History what, what really do
239 I care about the Western Schism? You know? I'll memorize it to get into college and if it
240 will to get me the grade, I'll get the grade.

241 RS: Yeah.

242 PM: Uh, but when I can go online and, and you know? And um, the Patriarch of Moscow
243 was on his way to, uh, Mexico. Francis meet him in Cuba for the first time at the, you
244 know? They never meet.

245 RS: Yes.

246 PM: Why is it such an important thing. So relevance. So, so I can show them relevance.

247 RS: Yeah.

248 PM: And um, and also music. You know? Or Martin Luther King. I use to, uh, go to the
249 library and use those eight track, not the eight track tapes, the little cassette tapes.

250 RS: Oh okay, yeah.

251 PM: You know? And have the kids listen to it. And the sound quality wasn't very good.
252 And now. You know? I can, you show them the video.

253 RS: Yes. Yeah

254 PM: Along with the sound.

255 RS: Yes.

256 PM: And Martin Luther King comes alive. Gosh! So technology that is the positive. The
257 negative, the negative I guess is... Is that it is true that when you are lecturing. When I
258 was lecturing it seemed like going to the board and writing this down and come back and
259 around. That there was more dynamism. The lights were all the way out and more. You
260 know?

261 RS: Yeah.

262 PM: Where as, there is the danger when you turn off half the lights and then the
263 PowerPoint.

264 RS: Yeah.

265 PM: Uh, and you know? It use to be if you were just talking and writing the kids have to
266 really... Keep up. Whereas the PowerPoint the faster kids. And so um. They kinda zone
267 out or get bored or so.

268 RS: Yeah.

269 PM: Yeah, so. And so it, at the same time, now that I am a Headmaster too. I don't can't,
270 I don't do as much as I would like to do in terms of prep.

271 RS: Yes.

272 PM: Um, I think I could do, um. And so I can... This is my third year teaching this
273 particular course and so um.

274 RS: Yeah, so would you say that the amount of technology used in a classroom today is
275 good amount, less, more?

276 PM: I guess I would like to use the PowerPoint, rely on the PowerPoint less.

277 RS: Yes.

278 PM: I do try to always bring in supplemental, original sources to read and have the kids
279 read or I'll read or. But I do think, uh, it slows down class... (trail off)

280 RS: Yeah. Um, well back to the first year teachers would you have any tips, um, to give,
281 uh, first year teacher.

282 PM: Yeah I think, um, mentor. Find a great mentor. Whatever school you are at. Every
283 school has those individuals who get it.

284 RS: Yes.

285 PM: And not just in the obstruction, but with the kind of kids in that particular school.
286 And there is a reason why they have been there so long, the reason why they are so
287 successful. Well it's that...

288 RS: Yeah.

289 PM: Trying to figure out that what that is and try and get that from them, um. And that
290 perseverance is tough. The first year if tough. (trail off)

291 RS: Yeah.

292 PM: Every quiz is new, every lecture is new, every test is new, every assignment is new.

293 RS: Yeah.

294 PM: Maybe not, well the kinks can be anticipated, so just stick through the first couple of
295 years. It's no fun.

296 RS: Yeah.

297 PM: It's not.

298 RS: Yes.

299 PM: Um, but um, but I can't think. I have said it so many times, what career could you do
300 that could be more rewarding. You know?

301 RS: Yeah.

302 PM: And so like when I was at that wedding the other night, I might be over stated,
303 obviously, but they insist that hanging around me, that changed the trajectory of their...
304 You know? They see the world differently.

305 RS: Yeah.

306 PM: And, uh, now if you could so that for one or two kids, I mean that's.

307 RS: Yeah.

308 PM: Uh, what could be more rewarding... (trail off) You know? Engineering, if that is
309 your vocation, I am with you, but you know?

310 RS: Yeah, it is very beautiful. Yeah, um so how did make that transition from classroom
311 teacher to Headmaster? Were you just like, Fr. Abbot was like you are Headmaster now
312 or do you.

313 PM: Yeah there just wasn't very many options. So there was just a of dearth vocations.
314 And uh, so uh, uh it was kind of evident that some point Fr. Denis would have to retire,
315 cannon law. Some point Fr. Peter would have to be abbot and so who was next? I mean
316 there's not that many options.

317 RS: Yes.

318 PM: And so um, I think Denis and Peter seeing the future. You know? Gave me jobs
319 along the way to kinda prepare me for that.

320 RS: Okay.

321 PM: So I did everything you could think of doing. I did community service. I did student
322 counsel sponsorship. I did admissions. I was middle school head.

323 RS: Okay.

324 PM: Assistant head. And so um, so it was gradual it wasn't... And um, and Fr. Peter, I
325 think brilliantly, the last couple years of his Headmastership would have a meeting with
326 me every week. And whatever issues can up. We would talk about them, make sure them
327 and um, and so um, it was very smooth in that regard.

328 RS: So when you were making this slow transition were you also like slowing like losing
329 teaching like subjects or...

330 PM: Not really.

331 RS: So you are just adding more onto your plate.

332 PM: Now again at that time we didn't have luxury of, you know, fourteen monks in the
333 schools.

334 RS: Yeah.

335 PM: You know? And uh, and you will find that out too, whatever school you teach at.
336 That um, budgets are always tight. And so people wear many hats, everybody wears
337 many hats. And uh, and so you are... You teach and! Uh and so I guess that really only
338 changes when I did become Headmaster. So now I am down to, I'm not Form Master any
339 more.

340 RS: Okay.

341 PM: And I miss that.

342 RS: Yeah.

343 PM: So I am down to one full time class.

344 RS: Okay.

345 PM: And uh.

346 RS: Is that theology?

347 PM: Theology.

348 RS: Okay

349 PM: For juniors

350 RS: For, okay.

351 PM: And um, and so that downside of course is I use to always teach in middle school

352 and upper school. And so I knew everybody.

353 RS: Yeah.

354 PM: Not just know their name their faces, but I knew them and they knew me. Um now

355 that I am only teaching juniors, this is the last group of kids I had in junior high.

356 RS: Oh okay.

357 PM: And so I've had them for a semester for four in a half years. And so um, or four and

358 three quarter years and so uh, from now on. So all the other, I work in admissions still, so

359 I know them, but it's more removed.

360 RS: Yes, yeah.

361 PM: Removed.

362 RS: Yeah um, so what exactly are your duties as Headmaster? And yeah.

363 PM: Yeah, so it is um, it is kinda like a little executive. Uh, in the sense that the board

364 kinda sets the values and the, you know? Made the trajectory and you are the one who

365 runs the day-to-day operations.

366 RS: Okay.

367 PM: And um, and so it's many different aspects. So um, from facilities to personal, HR to
368 uh development, you know? Um, obviously to hiring and firing, which we don't do often,
369 thank the Lord.

370 RS: Yeah.

371 PM: (trail off) I guess. And then there is the cause admissions part of it. There is, there's
372 lots of different aspects of it.

373 RS: Yes.

374 PM: Which, um, if I had to do it all it would be impossible. Back in the Fr. Denis-days,
375 he use to do it all.

376 RS: Yeah.

377 PM: Fr. Bernard kind of inherited that and began to diversify, Fr. Peter and so. So now, I
378 mean, we just incredibly blessed. Financially we can do this. So we have a development
379 director, who I just oversee.

380 RS: Okay.

381 PM: And she does the leg work.

382 RS: Yeah.

383 PM: And we are at a capital campaign, which I hope we rap it up this year. Uh, and
384 facilities, I got a wonderful facilities manager.(trail off) In terms of um, the academic,
385 wonderful dean of studies. In terms of upper school, got a great upper school **reading**
386 head. And so I got a great registrar here.

387 RS: Yes.

388 PM: And so um, because you know I am just surrounded by very very talented,
389 dedicated, loyal individuals. My jobs is kinda to just keep in touch with them and make

390 sure that we are all pulling in the same direction. And the board kind of holds me
391 accountable to that.

392 RS: Okay, so would you ever like go into a classroom and observe other monks or
393 teachers? For fun or...

394 PM: I should and I need to. So so I really, subsidiarity, right? I, uh, even though I don't
395 do all the stuff, just overseeing all the stuff takes a lot of time.

396 RS: Yeah.

397 PM: So I am meeting constantly. Uh with division heads or Form Masters or facilities
398 directors or the science building construction, the architectural team.

399 RS: Yeah.

400 PM: I'm constitutently meeting. Uh, yesterday was a circus of meetings, you know?

401 RS: Yeah.

402 PM: And uh, and so I... Consciously, not just cuz of time, but to empower the
403 department heads to be department heads, is uh, that they are required to visit every class
404 once a semester.

405 RS: Okay.

406 PM: Ah, if you are a new teacher, under two or three years and then that's more frequent.
407 Plus you have your mentor visit your class, plus you have your, uh, Form Master
408 sometimes visit the class.

409 RS: Yeah.

410 PM: So classes are being visited so I'm. And they report back to me in writing. And so,
411 um, I guess as a cause of that, I have not been in the classrooms as much as I would like
412 to be.

413 RS: Yeah.

414 PM: But I can remember saying to myself in December that next semester I'll gonna
415 really make an effort to visit classes.

416 RS: Yeah.

417 PM: And now we are starting the fourth quarter and I really want to visit classes.

418 RS: Yes.

419 PM: Uh, and, but I guess I'll put it on the calendar.

420 RS: Yeah, so if students come to different, um like, head... Well not Headmaster because
421 you are like the one. But if teach... If students go to staff members to talk about, I don't
422 know, if they are having trouble or anything. Do you like hear about that or would they
423 come to you?

424 PM: That is wonderful. We are blessed. We are so lucky. So we have the Form Master
425 system.

426 RS: Okay.

427 PM: Which means for every forty boys there is one person whose primary job is
428 watching out for those boys. Emotionally. Socially. Academically.

429 RS: Okay.

430 PM: Uh athletically, right? And so they see things and yeah they'll bring it to my
431 attention. And I try to give them my counsel based upon my twenty years or whatever.

432 And um, and um so listening from others when necessary.

433 RS: Yeah.

434 PM: So that's an incredible blessing here. That, um, sophomores going through the
435 beyond the norm angst and depression that, um, that Form Master has a six year

436 relationship. Uh with the family. So he not acting the same, are you seeing it? I'm only
437 seeing what we see here.

438 RS: Yeah.

439 PM: The trust is there. And so. And valuable. And so, again in one step removed from it,
440 but that is a high priority that they keep me informed. You know? So we were not always
441 over reacting.

442 RS: Okay.

443 PM: Uh, then we are blessed that we just had a coach, who is had a nature gift with kids.
444 And **Walsh**, (27:00) I don't know if you know **Walsh**.

445 RS: I don't.

446 PM: Incredible. And so, my predecessor, Fr. Peter, had the wisdom to say well why don't
447 you go get a degree in counseling.

448 RS: Yeah.

449 PM: We'll pay for it.

450 RS: Yeah.

451 PM: And so he just finished his degree at SMU with flying colors. Was one of the top.

452 RS: Okay.

453 PM: Students.

454 RS: Wow. Yeah.

455 PM: And uh, and so he reports to me every week.

456 RS: Okay.

457 PM: We got through a list of, uh, form Form One to Form Eight, uh, concerns.

458 RS: Okay.

459 PM: And uh, respected confidentiality, but, you know, also trying to keep me in the loop.
460 Cuz that's, you know, pretty much in this day and age. That's, that's top responsibility.
461 Make sure the kids are safe. You know? Physically, emotionally.
462 RS: Um are the Form Masters usually monks? Or can they also be teachers?
463 PM: They're also lay. And so um.
464 RS: Okay.
465 PM: We are no monks(trail off) organize. It was um, at one point we had four, four lay
466 Form Masters, half and half. Uh with all these young monks, now, we have one lay Form
467 Master.
468 RS: Okay
469 PM: And uh, the last lay Form Master graduated his class last year.
470 RS: Okay.
471 PM: And so it was an option to make them all monks. Um, but decided to do it
472 differently, uh, so we recycled one of the lay Form Master before the one this year.
473 RS: Okay.
474 PM: And the logic there was, one we don't want to create the impression that it's only
475 monks. So that should we ever have to go back to the lay. Well you know. Step down.
476 Well it is not a step down. Uh, second, um, we as Form Masters have to meet bi-weekly
477 and uh. I just think it is wonderful to have a layman's perspective. Uh at those meetings,
478 so Form Masters, as a group, we're dealing with something. Well you know as a dad, as a
479 husband and as well as a teacher.
480 RS: Yeah.
481 PM: You know, I think you might want to consider this.

482 RS: Yeah.

483 PM: So it is invaluable having a lay perspective in that group.

484 RS: So if, um, a Form has a lay professor or um, Master, then you know when you are
485 saying that y'all have mass together. Is there like um, kinda like co, cuz I think Br.
486 Raphael is kinda like a side.

487 PM: So each Form Master has an assisant.

488 RS: Okay.

489 PM: And and Cistercian is a unique place, uh. It's one school. But particularly in the
490 middle school, From One does everything by them...only with Form One.

491 RS: Yeah.

492 PM: Athletics, sciences, curriculum, uh activities, outings. All, all one. Very low contact,
493 if any, but with Form Two, Three, Four. That is all the way through middle school.

494 RS: Okay.

495 PM: Some, Third, Fourth Form, little bit of, they might do speech team together.

496 RS: Okay.

497 PM: Very rare. And the Form Master is really like the principle of that little group.

498 RS: Okay.

499 PM: And so like I said that Form Master period, he do what he wants to do. (trail off)

500 Activities on weekends and, you know? And...and so he really is like... So you can have
501 a Form Master who has this skill set or this comfort level. So you do these kinds of
502 theses, you know? And then other Form Masters. (trail off) Father, what do they call
503 him? Fr. Easy-Go-Lucky or uh, I don't know. I forget his name.

504 RS: Yeah.

505 PM: They kinda...

506 RS: Yeah

507 PM: And, uh, so your experience as a Cistercian student can be very different.

508 RS: Yes, yes.

509 PM: They all have the same teachers and same schedule, but your experience at

510 Cistercian can be very different for that individual. And so that is why it is kind of a neat

511 thing; when the alumni come together, at other schools... You know? What year were

512 you... What year were you?

513 RS: Yeah.

514 PM: At Cistercian, when alumni come together they say, "Well who's your Form

515 Master?"

516 RS: Yeah.

517 PM: And so if Fr. Roch was the Form Master of the class of '73 and the class of the, uh

518 '00, and the class of whatever. So they could be a decade apart, but have so much in

519 common.

520 RS: Yeah. Yes.

521 PM: You know? It's, it's fascinating.

522 RS: Yeah.

523 PM: The other thing that is fascinating and the lay people remark on this true. And it is so

524 true. And I don't know how to explain it. uh, but by senior year, particularly. The Forms

525 all them have different kids and you know? And the same teacher and everything and

526 every Form resembles the personality of that Form Master.

527 RS: Yeah, that is what Br. Raphael was saying. It's fun...

528 PM: Shocking!

529 RS: Yeah.

530 PM: It is absolutely shocking!

531 RS: Yeah.

532 PM: And uh, it's absolutely shocking. Uh, and that is a heavy responsibility, you know?

533 Cuz I think, that um, you get that from the moms that for good or for evil. That in

534 phsycology of a young man, I mean they perceive you as truly a spiritual father. Whether

535 you are a laymen or what. So uh, and so your words and your expectations and your

536 perceived love of them or lack of love of them is a huge impact on their growth.

537 RS: Yeah

538 PM: (Trail off)

539 RS: Um, so do you like miss teaching more than one class or do you like...

540 PM: You know I think, I think one of the hardest things I do every day is, is teaching.

541 RS: Yeah.

542 PM: You know, so I seat at meeting like this and talk about...

543 RS: Yeah.

544 PM: Manage the budget and... It's not a real challenge, you know?

545 RS: Yeah.

546 PM: But to stand in front of a group of very intelligent students. And not just, you know?

547 Know the material, but know how to communicate in a way that's... I hate to say it this

548 way, but it is true... Entertaining.

549 RS: Yes.

550 PM: You know?

551 RS: Yeah.

552 PM: Um... Engaging, uh, that's... A challenge and um... I... That is more challenging
553 than going to a board meeting.

554 RS: Yeah?

555 PM: It really is. You know? Um, and it's fun. I have a teacher now on staff, teaching part
556 time. Uh, he's a surgeon.

557 RS: Oh wow.

558 PM: Highly...(trail off) He's, uh, immunologist, I guess.

559 RS: Okay.

560 PM: One of the most highly respected ones in the city. And, uh, he offer to teach an
561 elective, in the upper schools. He's got sophomores and juniors. And, but he has done
562 surgery before. And um... and he said, "Fr. Paul," he said. I just... last week, two weeks
563 ago. "Fr. Paul, I..." Kay he is just coming out of classes and he says "I don't know how
564 y'all do it. I just don't know y'all do it. All I have is a little bitty elective, twice a week.
565 And I'm so emotionally distressed and drained and, and." You know?

566 RS: Yeah.

567 PM: "This is worse than surgery. This is worse than, you know, being with dead, dead...
568 dying people all the time."

569 RS: Yeah.

570 PM: And uh, so, so this is... you know? And uh, and I laughed, of course. And uh, but
571 it's true. There is a reason why, you know the students get out for the summer, but
572 teachers get out for the summer too.

573 RS: Yeah.

574 PM: Cuz it's just emotionally... It's, it's, um.... And I do think that our program... here,
575 the expectations are so high. And that has happened before, when we hired people from
576 other places. Uh, when it hasn't gone quite as smoothly as we would like it to have gone.
577 Part of the problem is that they don't know how much... to challenge the kids. And if
578 there are more of them and you are new, or you don't know your stuff. And you, you
579 give them busy work and you are new. Uh they can be tough, almost, almost want to use
580 the word mean.

581 RS: Yeah.

582 PM: Um because they kind of become custom to a certain way of caliber. And um, and
583 they are forgiving if you're sincere and you are passionate and you are perceived as doing
584 your best. They can be very forgiving. But if you're perceived as being unjust and
585 uncaring and not preparing as you should...

586 RS: Yeah.

587 PM: Yeah.

588 RS: Yeah, um well is there anything else you would like to add about teaching or
589 anything?

590 PM: Oh, I...I... It is just a great profession.

591 RS: Yeah.

592 PM: And just... incredibly impactful. And uh, I think you see it really with those who are
593 retiring, right? So Miss Greenfield is about to retire this year after twenty-four years.

594 RS: Oh yeah.

595 PM: Bod Haaser, he's been here forty eight, as far as I think that's right.

596 RS: Yeah.

597 PM: Um, and they, they just have the same passion as they had, I'm sure, the first... you
598 know? And so I think that being around the kids keeps you young, it keeps you young.

599 RS: Okay.

600 PM: Alright.

601 RS: Well thank you for your time.

602 PM: Thank you! Thank you! And so when do you start teaching?!

603 RS: Um, I don't know yet. Um, Sara, she is....

604

605

606