

**University of Houston**  
**Oral History of Houston Project**  
*Oral History Project*

Interviewee: Reverend Lowell Case  
Interview Date: May 6, 2008  
Place: Houston, Texas  
Interviewer: Ernesto Vald  z  
Transcriber: Michelle Kokes

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**Abstract:**

Reverend Lowell Case is one of thirteen siblings born in a historically agricultural area of southern Maryland. Lowell discusses his youth and the education he received in the Catholic schools he attended and how competitive scholarship placement tests became after integration. Lowell lists the big-time employers like Bethlehem Steel and his own experiences working thirty-three hours a week with the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company while a student at Coppin State Teacher's College. In 1980 after a year of spiritual formation and studies at Xavier University, Reverend Case was ordained priesthood and worked with parishes in Texas around the Houston area. All the churches are dedicated to the Blessed Mother, and Reverend Case goes into detail about the network of the community's parishes and how they resulted in stability in the Fifth Ward.

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON**  
**ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT**  
**Reverend Lowell Case**

Interviewed by: Ernesto Valdés  
Date: May 6, 2008  
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes  
Location: Houston, Texas

EV: Okay, let me start with the formalities first.

LC: Alright, okay.

EV: These oral histories that we are conducting for the University of Houston are, here is my card by the way...

LC: Alright.

EV: Will be going into the archives, these oral histories that we take will be going into the archives at the special collections, at the Library of Houston.

LC: Yes.

EV: And we keep them for... we preserve them there for the study, future research of historians, students and families frankly. We will have a typed transcript made of this interview.

LC: Yes.

EV: That will go on file and it will also be on a cassette and also on a CD so we won't... so anything that you give us in the way of this history that you are going through right now, any kind of photographs, stuff like that we will put them in the file for those researchers, future researchers will get.

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LC: Okay.

EV: Now we have, you and I will both have an interest, a copyright interest in this so I need to get both of us to sign a release which I have right here.

LC: Right.

EV: If you have a pen here.

LC: Go over there in that pile and I can reach one. I'm the interviewee?

EV: You are the interviewee. Let's see, there are, I want you to understand please that I'm not going to ask any questions of, I don't mean to ask any questions that would be offensive or anything like this. If you find that you don't want to answer it just don't answer it, let me know that.

LC: I'll \_\_\_\_\_ out.

EV: All I'm trying to do is get the history of the church, the folks who came here and that's it. Nothing controversial or anything like that.

LC: Right.

EV: I will from time to time have to look at the tape of course to make sure so I'm not being rude or anything. What I do generally is begin with your background, your education, how you came to this church here and then whatever you are aware of that's fine. At the end of which something you might be thinking about, if you think there is anyone else that I should talk to about this I'd like those names. We talked about that before.

LC: Right.

EV: To get some of those that would be wonderful. At this point do you have any kind of questions or anything?

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LC: No.

EV: Alright, then will you give us your full name please?

LC: Lowell David Case.

EV: L-O-W-E-L-L?

LC: Yes.

EV: Alright. And did you say Lowell W?

LC: David.

EV: David, okay.

LC: Case C-A-S-E.

EV: Alright and would you mind to tell us when you were born?

LC: December 3, 1941.

EV: You must have had a great first year birthday.

LC: Yeah, Pearl Harbor.

EV: Yeah. Were you born... where?

LC: In Baltimore, Maryland.

EV: And what did your folks do there?

LC: My father was a chauffeur for the Vice President of the local Westinghouse Electric Corporation and my mother was a housewife.

EV: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

LC: I had six brothers and six sisters.

EV: Oh my goodness!

LC: Thirteen.

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EV: You were where?

LC: Third from the top?

EV: Third from the top? Anyone else go into the clergy besides you?

LC: No. A mixed bunch. A doctor, a nurse, one school teacher, two guys who work for banks, we have two school teacher, executive with Westinghouse, my brother's a doctor, a medical doctor, runs a medical center in Wilmington. Angela was the director of student teaching at the University of Delaware until this year when she retired. My older brother worked and my older brother and my younger sister before me and after me, they both worked Social Security Administration, as did my mother in her later years. Alice works for the Drug Enforcement Agency... a week ago visiting her in Washington and my sister Joanne is deceased, she worked for Westinghouse. Rosemary is a Registered Nurse at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Brothers who are twins and they both worked... they are fifty four, they both work banks there in Baltimore. The youngest girl, Gene, works as an aid in a parochial school there, St. William of York, in Baltimore County and she is a housewife. She has three daughters. My youngest brother teaches math at Woodlawn, I don't think I've left anybody out, I think that's all. Most of them're out in the Maryland area except for my old, younger brother Charles who is a doctor in Delaware.

EV: What about your grandparents were they all from the east?

LC: Southern Maryland, tobacco, farming, pretty dominantly. They left "the country" as it was called. My father's people, the Cases... Charles County as did his mother and father. My father's parents both came from Charles County, Maryland which was at that time all agricultural \_\_\_\_\_ county. Mother's family came from Hughesville. That's the only

thing that they did was grow tobacco there, sharecroppers of tobacco. I visited there \_\_\_\_\_ somehow they knew that their older brother \_\_\_\_\_ sharecropping house-shack, which was very interesting to see. Grandmother and them all came to the city...some went to Washington, most of her sisters came to Baltimore, all did domestic work. Francis got a job as a maintenance woman at the telephone company, she was the most highly employed. Aunt Helen, my grandmother's sister, cleaners. They all went to East Baltimore. Day domestic.

EV: How far back have you been able to track your family?

LC: My sister Alice has done volumes on this.

EV: Oh really?

LC: And I don't... I haven't done it. She used the Mormon Church's and the state of Maryland. She is an ex... she is really, very, very.... College of Notre Dame of Maryland, African-American's going there. Gone to Western High School for Girls, College of Notre Dame of Maryland, won a fellowship for a \_\_\_\_\_ to the University of North Carolina. Eleven of us were graduated from college, my youngest sister and my oldest brother are the only two that didn't go.

EV: \_\_\_\_\_?

LC: My mother had an extremely good educational background and she was an honor roll student at Douglass School, become a school teacher, she dropped out to get married. She is a very literate woman. Her father was an Irishman born... account for our complexion, part of our heritage that we have just come to... She didn't tell us that until her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. I forget his name. My youngest sister remembers, but, very literate woman.

She is 92, she'll be 93 on September 6<sup>th</sup>. Very up and about. Studied a little bit of Latin and well-read and we attribute it out of, ability with the language and speaking. Father was a drop out but we were blessed in a way and my mother's family the Toyes, T-O..., Many occasions after I, had a car and my grandmother and her sister Francis wanted to go to see... fried chicken. I saw my grandmother's sister-in-law kill it and fry it. And they're really...Baltimore and settled. Always Catholic, even from southern Maryland. If you lived on one of those tobacco estates, or plantations, or if you were anybody down there, there is a large history of volumes about the African American Catholics in southern Maryland. Louisville, Kentucky, southern... long history they were not converts they were Catholic from the very time that their ancestors came. Maryland was a slave holding, whatever the master was and many of the people were Catholic and had huge African American Catholics.

EV: Maryland was originally to be settled as a Catholic state wasn't it?

LC: Yes.

EV: Protestants, the puritans... gave them that edge.

LC: Lord Baltimore I don't think... Carroll's from southern, huge, three to five African Americans. Catholic churches, all exclusive, large parishes in east and west Baltimore. It all changed after integration. K-8 grade school, the Oblate Sisters of Providence was the first African American community of religious, founded in the United States. The Sisters of the Family in New Orleans also is the oldest because their foundress was American born. The foundress of the Oblate Providence in Baltimore, Mother Mary Elizabeth Lang was a

refugee from Hispanola and she founded the community before the Civil, and they conducted the Catholic grammar schools, African American children, children of color.

EV: So what... did you go to school in Catholic schools in Baltimore?

LC: I went to Catholic school from K to 8 and then high for one year, ninth grade. I was graduated from Fredrick Douglass Senior, integration time but it was nearby. There were thirteen, I went where I could walk. Tremendous time, we often talk about it, I was in Washington for fifteen years until I came... and I met once a month with some of my high school, and college. Because our high school was on one corner and the college was just down the street, teacher's college. All reminisce about that, daughters and sons of the de-- highly skilled and dedicated. Despite the fact that we were an African American, classic education, art, music, literature, history, and how to sit at the table. Rose Tyson Kenney, I'll always remember her. Define and discuss remote and immediate causes of World War.

Nobody had ever asked us to do, that I could remember because I was coming of age at that time, the eleventh grade. As was the lady we had after that, that always fascinated me.

Naomi Young Hardy took, the American Revolution to maybe the New Deal in one year.

Leslie Johnson, oh Cecil Wheeler, who is deceased, myself and John Lawrence we took a test for an AFLCIO scholarship and we didn't win but I think three of us, Leslie... Leslie, Cecil and I both placed. Only once you know because some of the black folks had gone on to integrated schools and there was a lot of competition for that scholarship. Bethlehem Steel in Sparrows Point, largest employers, most of the men. The best jobs, the better jobs were at Sparrows Point, definitely. When worked you made good money. Men had big cars and nice houses, families ate and dressed well. Steel workers and some classmates told me

that their parents, some of us had parents that are still living. One girl, Brenda, known her since I was fourteen. She has lost her sight now. Told me Irvin had lost his, because drifting in and out of Alzheimer's and he lost his... Devastated many families when they went belly-up and the retirement fund was not properly... Very safe parochial school. We had African American nuns we had no lay teachers in those days. Eight to fifty, maybe it was forty seven, high school was quite different. Very urban jungle was our junior high but the high school was very settled, wonderful environment. Many prominent people were graduated, had a lot of teachers in my class, at the top of the heap in terms of grades went to the State Teacher's College because you have to have a B+ average to get in.

EV: That was what it was called, Maryland State Teacher's...

LC: Coppin was ours. Coppin was, P-P-I-N, Coppin State Teacher's College was named after Fanny Jackson Coppin was one of the first... I don't remember that I usually remember everything... one of the first

EV: Did you participate in any extracurricular activities, choir any kind of sport?

LC: In college I did because I worked from my freshman year, I got my, I had my first part time job I worked every night, six nights a week until 11PM, and I worked on Sundays until I got a job at the A & P. My older brother was working at the A & P.

EV: What was your \_\_\_\_?

LC: Bern's Drug Store and I worked in the store, cleaned up and I delivered liquor! Because people could call in and I would carry them beer, twelve-pack of Bud. You know people who lived around there, a lot of steelworkers they used to send out for it. That's

where I got my first injury, skating down Parkwood Avenue, I was nineteen, just alive and  
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happy about being in college, I busted my right knee. I took the bandage off the morning, still wear it because I was going to go to the gym, probably will go later but I didn't do much in high school. I was, government and we had a club, the "High Y" associated with the YWCA, a couple of them got involved in junior... Oh I forget what the name of that bunch was, to teach us business. Oh shucks, it has some business leaders come in, Cecil and them were much more involved in it and I liked the "High Y" and I was very involved in our parish church. College, junior and senior year I worked less. I worked for the A & P, the great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company. I went from making like a dollar and a quarter an hour at the drug store, I think the max I made in those days was \$3.33. We had a union and retail clerks and I worked for Charles, a Dutchman. They all swore that Charlie had quit the tea company during the war and he went to work for the Nazis, that was a big joke but Mr. Heinsenberger was very fond of me. I worked for that guy and I worked every Thursday, Friday and Saturday. I got hours that way I worked thirty-three hours a week, no less. Even during the summer I worked seven less than full-time. He trusted me and I was always I only think I missed two days of work.

EV: Then you went to graduate school I take it?

LC: No I went to... I finished Coppin State, it was accredited at that time. We had four buildings by that time. I was third from the top. I got the Circular Scholarum award, Circle of... I don't remember why but I got it. State Teacher's was predominately female and we had almost all the fellows worked. We had married men who worked at the post office at... Walker Brown he is now dead, seniors and we remained friends forever. He had just given me, he had smoke from a fire next door. He lived in Columbia, Maryland built by the Rice University of Houston

Company. He and his wife Barbara, Barbara Coleman. High school and in college and, big set of drapes, the insurance covered it and I gave it to my mother, a really expensive set of drapes. I think that was the last time I saw him. He became and he never answered my phone calls. I was down in the south somewhere, and when he died I went up to do his funeral. We did not do much socializing because we all worked. We had a few big parties, we didn't party like kids do today. We didn't have cars and I worked, hours a week and went to school. I maintained a B average, College Honor Society. I was in the choir, all male students had to join the choir it was a tremendous choir. Henry Neil Freeman one of the few... I always use him as a paradigm to measure other groups because we were excellent so that was a big thing. We sang in many places and it wasn't all, you know, Negro spirituals. Then I taught school for three years, I hated it! I wanted to be and do something more. I had three years, you had to work two to get tenure and also two, we guaranteed the state two years who paid the preponderance of our tuition. Bought clothes and I had so many younger brothers and sisters I had to clothe them for school and other things like prom dresses. I used to say that. I was always a hustler. Sometimes I had two jobs. Second year of school but I was strong. It was good. Everybody in Baltimore to be A-list you had to be a school teacher. Integration was coming and people were getting government jobs and I took the federal service entrance exam. Always easily passed the verbal, language skills and comprehension, always had trouble with math. Math that was the bane of my existence! Solid geometry, Cyrus Marshall, he was an uncle of Chief Thurgood Marshall, he gave me a passing grade but I think I flunked. Plain geometry, I had Delaphine Warrington, I think I had breezed past that. Oh trigonometry... I got out of that one too, I passed. I excelled in the University of Houston

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language, French and History. My homilies, you know historical, in perspective. One day I'm going to phone up, another professor from Texas Southern here says, "He's full of stuff." She was head of the chem, Spanish American War...

EV: Well the Texas, the war with Mexico which followed a few years later was for the land grant that's what they were doing. But yeah it was because you hear these Texans talk about how they were fighting for freedom, they were fighting for the freedom to own slaves.

LC: That's right and Mexico was against it.

EV: But they had outlawed it by that time.

LC: Yeah.

EV: Maybe a a hundred years...

LC: Which it's surprising it didn't sit well with some of our African Americans here because the Mexicans were early, early abolitionists who didn't believe in the concept. Interesting because, surrounded by Spanish. Went out to recruit for the school, said "Why are we doing that?" "Because they live here, you left the Fifth Ward years ago." Interesting but I don't mean to get off on that. But then a bunch of us, another guy that I taught with, Gene Fewget, he had a son, national football teams. Gee I can't remember but Fewget and I were, "We got to get out of teaching." We weren't making much money the first year we made, 1963.

EV: Yeah because I got teaching first year 196-

LC: Baltimore had just given a \$400 increase and that was more money than I thought we'd ever seen but I made more than half that much money working at the A & P, I kept my University of Houston

A & P job for another three years while I taught because I was greedy and hungry, liked nice clothes. But eventually Fewget and I and a bunch took the Federal Services Entrance Examination. I took it twice or so. The first time I didn't do well but I was able to pull up my math scores and I passed. Before I got my notification of rating. Lyndon Banes Johnson, the Great Society, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and they could tell so I found out. I went to work for the United States Civil Service Commission as a personnel background investigator in a field office. I was a greed, I made \$6,100 the equivalent of the two jobs that I had held and it was a lot of money and I learned from... The Civil Service Commission of course gave the tests and one of the guys that had done my full field background investigation said that, "We knew immediately when your name appeared on the list... One of my youngest sisters was born there because my older brother and I were born on Calhoun Street at home. My oldest brother was born in the hospital, my mother never went back. I did that for a while, maybe two years. I was knocking on doors, doing background, or mainly nuclear clearances at that time, Martin Marietta Company in Baltimore. I didn't like that, you know, knocking on doors, spying on people. I remember I got two superior evaluations on cases that I did. The Blue Baby Cure at Johns Hopkins Hospital and that was... A member of a World Health Congress and she needed a full field background investigation. Very swanky neighborhood in Baltimore County and I handled it discretely and with dis... It was given to us by our \_\_\_\_\_ transcription center that the head boss there said he deserves a superior. I got a couple of superiors another one I did on a Pentecostal guy, radical religious beliefs, kind of weird and he is not crazy. Then I moved on and got a job at the Labor Department Personnel and I went back to the Civil Service

Commission because they needed, regional office I had worked for them at first. Back there just to move to Philadelphia. Then I came back to Baltimore and I wanted to, draft me but I had high blood pressure, I've always had that and they rejected me. And I went to work for the first U.S. headquarters, and I was a son-of-a-gun, I learned a lot of discipline there. Management job classification was a skill which I picked up and I was good at it and they called me back to the Civil Services Commission to do classification appeals because they had no African Americans and a lot of African Americans were saying there was prejudice, "They won't upgrade, I'm doing...." They brought me up there even though I don't think I ever had an African American. God, I was doing defense contract agency, the navy yard in Norfolk, sea ship building command. I can't remember, said "Jeez I've got to be an expert on FAA jobs, discreet address beacon systems." I didn't know a damn thing about radar then, jobs because they were all over-graded. FAA for a while, summer, I went to work while I was in the seminary, I had gotten very involved with the church after Vatican, too. It was a bunch of us, one was a priest he's not a priest anymore. Beverly Carroll, we lived in the same neighborhood. We were very involved in church work and but the new church and going out into the community we were on a board with the Jesuits, the Saint Ambrose Housing Project we were just all kinds of crap. Some of it took place better than others. Jesuits students were tremendous, brilliant, brilliant. Benny Quail I remember they all left the Jesuits eventually but fair housing and area council, the Urban Commission, Gossman was the first urban Vicar, unless he's retired he's still the Bishop in... Francis Murphy he's dead. He was an auxiliary Bishop and the one who ordained me. Oh God I can't think of the man's name, last urban Vicar. Rome now, isn't, can't think of his name. He ordained me in University of Houston

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the priesthood. I was so involved with them and I met Carl Anthony Fisher, everywhere in this house. He came as a seminarian to my parish in Baltimore. I was working for the government, in Philadelphia, I worked in Norfolk I traveled around the region. I was so sick of Navy jobs and Marine Corps supply depot jobs. Church work consumed a lot of my time, President of Parish Council the first one. Single. So Carl suggested to me, 1973.

EV: Is it M-i-n-e-m-i-o-r?

LC: Minor Seminary. Josephite House of Studies in New Orleans and I took I don't know how many courses in philosophy from people who were trained by Spanish Jesuits at Xavier University, Faraldo and Martha Josefina Pelayes they taught at the black Catholic University. Xavier, the only one in the world founded by Saint Katharine Drexel, founders of the Philadelphia to uplift the Native American and the African. \$20 million of her dollars, refugees, who were trained by Spanish. Good philosophical, I took readings. Martha Josefina was brilliant, so was Faraldo, he had been a Jesuit at one time but left and got married. I owe them a lot and I took courses at Loyola, a young, little, major seminary and I was there, I went to \_\_\_\_\_ in Newberg, New York, a year of spiritual formation.

Ordained deacon, May something of 1979 and I was ordained priesthood on May 3, 1980.

EV: I'm confused about the name of the seminary you attended. You said minor and then you said major are those levels of the seminary?

LC: Yeah minor seminary was for college students.

EV: You were explaining to me the name of the ...

LC: [29:12] When I went to New Orleans I had to get philosophy before I could go to the major seminary and we had a college formation house since we no longer had enough

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professors to run our own it used to be in Newburgh. They wanted us prepared in the south it was at our Josephite House of Studies in New Orleans at Corpus Christi Parish it was the former Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Convent. Corpus Christi at one time was the largest African American Catholic Parish in the world, before integration. Passe blanc they called them. At one time I think some of the girls told me who were still around, the Blessed Sacrament sisters who were all white told me... lived very primitively, no desks, all that crap on. So one of them Kathleen Cager she was in Lake Charles. Let me take you upstairs! We were visiting in New Orleans, she was stationed in New Orleans, this where we used to hang out at night for them to dry and you put all that on. And Maria... Worcester, Massachusetts, the furthest south she had been was Philadelphia and then she got off the train in Port Arthur and fainted, it was that... Turned out to be a happy time. For many of our, would come over and join the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, women who worked in parishes in Beaumont, Texas, they went out there in fifteen... Mother Katharine built places for them. The Bridget Kate \_\_\_\_\_.

EV: Oh.

LC: I found in that parish in Blessed Sacrament, twelve Bridget Kates, women who had named their daughters after her. One of the gals was a sister superintendent of schools. It was the kind of parish that we ran and that attracted and made stable communities like the Fifth Ward. When this place was built in 1928, the original church was here, that's the new church. 1963 they were breaking ground for this and they always had, they only had four sisters of the Holy Family, a candidate for sainthood at the present time. The one who was already a saint was Katharine Drexel of Philadelphia, who founded the Blessed Sacrament University of Houston

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Sisters and Xavier University, a whole network of parishes. She knew they were going to do that before they built it, but you get to all of her places off I-10. Out of New Orleans she didn't have \_\_\_\_\_ Lawtell, Church Point, Rayne all the way up to here, Beaumont. They never went to Beaumont. They went all the way to the Beaumont border, the Sacraments because they stopped in Lake Charles. But a whole network of schools and parishes. Mother Katharine had the money and the connections to help our priests. She would come and build a school. She would send a number of, she would send two graduates from Xavier University. A brilliant business woman. Buildings, we knocked down one in Beaumont. I was with ... from the Bronx, Hugh Henover. We had many white priests, in fact most of our priests would come before and after WWII to become... They would leave like New York. They were accepted they would come to the Josephites because we had a, Newberg, New York just up the road from New York City. Cardinal Hays was pals with our guys. Cardinal Hays was a Cardinal in New York. He was one of the powerful men in the world and he used contacts to help us. He built our major seminary in Washington. Take diamond balls to knock that sucker down.

EV: The Josephite's... was that, that's white and black order right?

LC: Yes.

EV: Was that the only order that blacks went into?

LC: Society of the Divine Word, later some entered the Holy Ghost Fathers. The Holy Ghost took them. The Holy Ghost Fathers and Sisters worked in predominantly African American parishes, they were, we've got one here. She must be ninety. She runs our religious education, an Irish woman. Irish community formed in Americas and maybe they

worked among Spanish. They worked in a number of places in Louisiana, Holy Ghost Sisters.

EV: Yeah because for a long time Mexican American and Native American could not become priests. I didn't know if they put the same thing on African Americans?

LC: The first three were left at the mother house, they could not be assigned. Long time before you could ordain them but any diocese would... One of our other guys can give you the history of that. I joined... oh when I went, I was in New Orleans for a year. I did philosophy at Xavier and Loyola and Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. I took courses.

EV: Okay.

LC: Then I went to Washington to Saint Joseph Seminary. We no longer had our own staff but we went to a Washington Theological Union. \_\_\_\_\_ hated that place because it was so wonderful. Carmelites, New York Franciscans from 31<sup>st</sup> Street I think they are, not far from Madison Square Garden. Still have friends, guys is retired as a \_\_\_\_\_. He was in the chaplain core I think because he took the job as President of the Union but he quit. Great, big, Italian guy, great big thick mustache. Typical stereotype but he was gentle as a lamb. He found parish work difficult and Steve \_\_\_\_\_, Frank Sinatra's home we have always been friends. I don't know... Oh he did he wrote to me two months ago but we don't keep up like we ... because he's been all over the place and so Carmelites Ron Oakum who was at Mount Carmel here, dirty rat left town when I got here. Ron, God he looked so old! They were Chicago Carmelites and many guys and I know some Sacred Hearts. Here some of them got big time they've been promoted Monsignor. One in Egg Harbor near Atlantic City, Joe \_\_\_\_\_ Polish boy and we were good friends. They, I was the only student in my University of Houston

class. There were no Josephites at the major seminary they had all gone and I had to have them all Eastern European they served my final profession mass and my deaconate because. "Who are all these strangers?" I said, "They are my classmates." They helped me set up the chapel. They had a huge property there and I lived at a seminary and we went out to school. Franciscans, and Augustinians taught theology, Spanky we called him, Michael J. Skanron he looked just like Spanky, Spanky in "our gang" and Dobbin, Bill Dobbin, forget Dobbin, Dobbin's first name. Dobbin is the president of Villanova and we learned about religion, he left and got married. We were all broken hearted after he taught us Christology. Bobby Dowd but he was good, Grill Meyer was the text and I had a wonderful time there. I was in the student government I made a lot of lifelong friends that I haven't seen. I used to know a lot of Augustinians. They're all up in Philadelphia somewhere.

EV: How did you wind up down here then at this community?

LC: Our community has, began in Baltimore and Washington.

EV: Our community being?

LC: The Josephites.

EV: Okay.

LC: Founded after the conclusion of the Civil War. Bishop Martin Spalding, the Arch Bishop of Baltimore, the plenary see, the mother see of the church wanted some missionaries to go and the Mill Hill Franciscans under Cardinal Vaughn came and did that work from England and after they stayed for a while, some wanted to return to England.

Mill Hill, they're our mother community and those who wanted to stay formed the Society

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of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart. We are a religious society, not a community, a common apostolate.. Father Maurice Slattery, his daddy built the New York public library was our true American founder, brilliant man. Slattery... Slattery Construction Company you see it everywhere in New York but he fell into a heresy at that time called Modernism... I think he left and got married but they still recognize the genius of his plan. That we were to come down from the North. We didn't originally go to California. We had people who followed us, always blamed us that they left the church in California and went to the Church of Christ because we weren't there. Came from New Orleans, further, further west. We had visionaries. Father Augusto Claire Laplante was a Canadian. He built three parishes in Texas. He was a Canadian newly ordained, he joined the community, spoke French. Then there were two Canadian brothers. O'Claire I think their name was and they built the rest of them. One after the other built churches on I-10, what was to become I-10, you can get there off of I-10. Church Point, Lawtell, \_\_\_\_\_, Eunice, that's where all these people come from, all of them come from.

EV: You go to highway 10 say from Louisiana to here right?

LC: Yeah. But somehow he built them, you can get to some of them on 90 because if I need, I had to go into a funeral in Lawtell for... sisters, biological sisters I knew in Baton Rouge, I was in Baton Rouge before I came here and they knew me. Felicion Bella he spoke no English and they knew me. One of their daughter's husband died during Katrina, refused to leave the house he ran out of insulin and we became friends in Baton Rouge and I went up and I sat through and they prayed the rosary. Some of our guys, black guys and

white guys can do, Chuck and Roger they are the only two I know who are still with us that

can do, they grew up with that. And they are younger than me, both of them are younger than me. Oh and Joe Rodney, he's never been to Houston, he's a big black guy from New Roads, he is the historian of the black church in Louisiana. These... But I lived with him for a year he taught me so much. Somebody comes in here and wants a baptism, "Father, but I was born here," he says, "You ain't old enough to have been \_\_\_\_\_" Call Joe Rodney and I said \_\_\_\_\_ and Joe, Baton Rouge. Even the Holy Family Sisters, we had one, Chretian there was a guy he had a wedding on Saturday a very white looking guy, Chretian. He says "How did you know that?" Oh, Dedeaux, D-e-d-e-a-u-x. I know that because there's a girl from, she's dead now, who was the principal of Saint Francis Academy in Baltimore for, the reader for the Mass on Saturday. I said, "What's your name darlin'?" She said, "Corey Dedeaux" was her married name. Great, great aunt who was a literate and brilliant woman, she ran a girl's high school before integration, black girls."

EV: How do you spell that "Pass Christian"?

LC: Pass Christian, two words.

EV: French I take it right?

LC: Yes Pass Christian.

EV: The transcriber's got to figure this all out, she's a Baptist.

LC: Pass Christian, Biloxi, they have parishes in all those places. I forgot the other, some may have closed, especially since the storm. Were on the gulf coast, all down and through there out to here, and we went to Fort Worth, but we went before the people or when the people went they would always have a church to worship in. Augusto Claire Leplant, three

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in Beaumont because they had left there before... they came with the discovery of oil at Spindle Top.

EV: These, when they built the church, you are talking obviously they didn't built it out of their own pocket. So they grabbed people and said, "We need a church here."

LC: They got \$40 and a mule we are told and went out to meet some Catholics. There are stories about they would find a house or there would be somebody, and the men. The first church here was built with lumber from the railroad yard. Bernice William who was a Dorian, the name Dorian you will have here, President of the Finance Council, Tyrone he doesn't know but his mother knows she lives right down the street. Can tell you when they came, they came back here and she still has a house in.... He stopped her from driving, her son. Poor guy. Her only son but, she is in a nursing home and she is still lucid. She's in 12777 Beechnut Manor. Bernice William. Probably have to go with you and then get you out of there because boy when she gets started and just really and really, The old girl was at Star of the Sea, my other church. "What is it?" I said, "It's not coriander or cumin." You will never know but she runs the kitchen, Virgie Mae Mayer at Saint Francis Xavier when I first went over there, graduates of Prairie View that taught Home Economics and they being there do like she says, Virgie Mae went over at Star of...

EV: Star of the Sea?

LC: My other church. I have two churches.

EV: Star S-T-A-R?

LC: Star, Our Lady Star of the Sea.

EV: Oh Our Lady Star of the Sea.

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LC: All of our churches are dedicated to the Blessed Mother, our Community. Very few Saint Joseph's, we have a few, right over in the ship channel. Those are all Creole. Sunday I went to the Chapman's house, doorman was dead but he came to life. Walking around I went down there, because I met her in Park Plaza three times. She was always his second wife. She made me figs. I sent them to Chuck who used to be the Pastor he is from Lebeau. I sent him five jars of figs, and she has made some other stuff for me. They grow berries on the big piece of property over there, just a nice home. Old man built it when he was in his prime. Over here, Chapman, but a Frenchman, I talked to him and I thought "Huh?" They invited me over Sunday because he was rejoicing that he got up again. Sausage, pork, ham.

EV: You're making me cry.

LC: Baked beans, a different potato salad, yellow potato salad but very different. Ol' \_\_\_\_\_ will not put any onion, no onion. I've become a connoisseur but I love to eat over there. She's probably fixed something today. She sent me chicken, she's a house keeper over there. How do you people do that? They have, a priest came from Beaumont, a young guy from New Orleans, big ol' country boy, black boy. He is on our council, our governing council. I said, "What do you want?" Seminarian for me. He said, "I-10 accidents all weekend." So he had to come in here, stayed the night. \_\_\_\_\_ said she had some food. I just knew he wasn't coming. I said, "Henry I'm over in Star of the Sea." He had relatives that stayed over there during the storm and he stayed over there because the Parish he had went under and that's how he got to Beaumont because his place went under, completely under. And he ate it. I said, "Well I can always get more," but that was how they did things over here. The finest of Creole cuisine, same way in Beaumont \_\_\_\_\_. The more I stay

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away from rock and roll, Lake Charles, for Blanchard. But here, this is a monument to the African American Catholics who came eighty years ago. They built the first church, ran the school. Many Sisters of the Family. I was at Saint Francis Xavier in Baton Rouge said "Where are the black women at?" Baton Rouge was that kind of a place.

EV: Well I know that when I had mentioned to you that when I came to Houston somebody said, one of them in fact one of our ex, he had quit just maybe three or four months before I got here but he was still buddies with the other parole officers and we used to office... how long have you been in Houston?

LC: It will be two years in August.

EV: Oh well the Downtown U of H used to be a place and that is where the parole office used to be. The guy ahead of me a fellow his name was Prigien and I had the parolee coming out and I had him come visit French town and he said, "You are going to be very surprised when you get to French town." And he said, "As a matter of fact many of them resented having black, dark African Americans here to come see them. Hispanics or very light colored blacks here." Does that ring true?

LC: Yeah and I'm not a part of it.

EV: Are you not Creole?

LC: No my best friend in high school, Leslie Johnson, playing football he got hurt very bad never finished. He was smarter than any of us, he lived up the street from me. He was a nice guy, here that's a part of the culture. Done annulments here, later after divorce.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Well Father, quite frankly, my mama said he was too black." \_\_\_\_\_ Rafferty in Woodlands.\_\_\_\_\_ I met him at Incarnate Word, Tom Rafferty, lovely, lovely guy. Wherever University of Houston

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he was he married a very dark woman, he had a Deacon \_\_\_\_\_ but the one who stayed, that marriage broke up.

EV: By the way the way you said Our Lady of the Lake did that completely burn down last night?

LC: I don't know Sister Theresa Healey told me about that. Healey, she is the Irish nun around here she does religion education. She said that they had set a trashcan on fire near the college and it had been threatened.

EV: Maybe they made a bomb threat or something like that. You came here just two years ago but you kind of got your feet wet I guess with Cajun parishes in Port Arthur?

LC: I was in Beaumont...

EV: Beaumont, sorry.

LC: I was in Welsh, Louisiana, Calcasieu Parish and Jefferson Davis Parish I had two churches in Southwest Louisiana, not the New Orleans, just southwest just like here. I was in Baton Rouge, I went to Washington for 15 years. A Monsignor was asked to leave for reasons, almost a sexual abuse case but they never proved anything. At a large archdiocesan parish that was predominantly African American. I don't know if you can say that. It was the oldest black church in Washington. I'm going for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary next weekend. President of the Parish Council who was very fond of me, he was very fond of me. He is paving my way. So I was in two Josephite Parishes, I was in Incarnation. I paid off a big debt for construction of a new building just, Joyce Grimes... Bingo and we made a bungle on bingo. We paid off \$150,000 on that, we paid off \$200,000 in just six years. So I was a wonder and so I was sent to Our Lady of Perpetual hell... not hell that's what I said

when I first went there. Bowels of Southeast Anacostia, the one-time murder capital of the world. White pastors, two of whom they revered and I went out there, and a classmate, a white guy, my classmate from Oregon, who was my classmate at first and then I ended up behind him. He only lasted three years and I knew he asked out, Tom Frank, big German boy from Oregon. "Nothing. Nothing." I said, "You..." I had to go there and I said, "Oh this is going to be tough." And it was but we fixed up, we fixed up, we fixed up. I cleared the hill, we had a big piece of property. It was an ash dump. I mean the east coast is where they dump the ashes from coal, no substance. The national airport, the Pentagon. All overgrown from a fierce summer of rain and heat. Proctors, just like here. He happens to be a botanist, a fireman. And this guy came and left some vegetation. Drainage problems. And I, same place where he come from, southern Maryland. Pastor had me me put a new roof on, at retirement age but he was only coming in there to keep it warm for somebody new, \_\_\_\_\_ a white boy from Newark, fancy that. We became friends and he \_\_\_\_\_. Some five years later, stooge, Monsignor Godfrey Mosley, very fair-skinned, token placement, and Godfrey said, "Can you come have dinner over at Brother Mark's where we had last weekend..." Right next to what is now the national, high rise buildings everywhere in abandoned oasis. I said, "Alright I'll meet you over there." Brother Marks is a brother, not a priest a professed, I went to school with his uncle. We are friends. We are both from Baltimore, big black guy. "Go get them." I could not afford to piss them off. Marks would go out and yell at them. He was my associate. So brother invited, so I said, "Brother what do they want?" He said, "You're lying Brother." You know we were together in Louisiana I was in Welsh, he was in Breaux Bridge. So I went over to his house and Mosley said. Not a plum but it would

be a good experience. Highly integrated even when I was there. I was there last Sunday, the Sunday before last when I went for Brother's 25th jubilee he has cancer. And I went over to have dinner with him and Mosley and McCarrick wanted me to take, they thought the southeast was a very tough assignment because the neighborhood was so bad. They never came on our property, they all left when I got there. School sisters, everybody knew that. We had a big hall, the panorama room that they rented out every Thursday, Friday and Saturday in the seventies to have dances. That's how we got money to build a new church or whatever. Everybody knew the hill. I had a ball there. I locked horns with some women government workers \_\_\_\_\_. From my background working with the government I knew what they were like. Transparent finances, I knew it was an incentive to get me to take this job, Robert J. Kerns from south Boston, Irish. There was a big race war, forced bus integration, that was then, the Irish Catholics and Rocky told me... Boy it was a zoo, the celebration. We usually start at midnight and go to 5AM I said... But I gave in and we had, I was there two years. John Payne. A high school we used to have a high school. Bill Laurie who was in school when I was in school, who would never be bishop...it wasn't in the parish. You know he said, "Do you know that guy?" He is a bishop. Park, Springfield somewhere up in there in Connecticut, God help them. Gays, no gays \_\_\_\_ but so I thought I would take it. I had a number of sizable P.R.'s in the \_\_\_\_ before I left the \_\_\_\_ I did an anthrax video. I was on the evening news and even though we weren't supposed to do that they caught me. I was down in the basement trying to switch. Brother Marks was out of town. Switch from air conditioning at Halloween which was Halloween day and I was coming up and one of the reporters came over. "Do you know where the

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pastor is? We heard he was in the basement." I said, "No, but I will go and get him." So I ran in the house I just washed the top part of my body because I was filthy. I got a video I never, I never watched it. I was on with that Brian Gumbel, he didn't talk to me. I had a profile and I did a couple of \_\_\_\_\_, Alexis Herman an influential mayor, "Come here pastor." "How are you Mr. Jordan" Vernan Jordan. "Oh yeah..." The lady I was marrying he, didn't approve of her. I met her in the street. I met her... he had come to the church a couple of times and \_\_\_\_\_ come southeast, a red light hook up with the Indian reservation and we had two \$50,000 winners. After that it all went up.

EV: Which Indian reservation?

LC: I didn't set it up white boy... He had the same director for the Kansas. He took me to the back way, "What are you doing in here?" We were trying to get BINGO legalized in the district.

EV: I see.

LC: Computerized BINGO legalized to support Catholic schools. It never worked out. Larry.... Larry it will come to me but with that so \_\_\_\_\_ got to know me because I was here and the Bishop came to live with me. That was a non Josephite it's like a punishment I was sent to Baton Rouge... my successes gave him twenty wipe out even though they threatened to bomb the White House in 9/11 headstones, two story houses and I had two of them left to me, part ownership of a church and I could tell that even though it's part of you coming back \_\_\_\_\_ CPA's on the finance council. The black Mormon, any five members...

EV: My goodness...

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LC: \$150,000 he didn't get anything. But so it was sad to leave \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't have my work experience.

EV: So is this, are you considering this a pearl on your... ?

LC: No.

EV: So let me ask you a couple of questions about this. What percentage of number one, of this congregation do you have or attendance of?

LC: Probably about 80% descendants of.

EV: What about this neighborhood? Have they pretty much melded into Fifth Ward?

LC: Except for a very few elderly people all of the young ones.

EV: So then 80% come from outside of Fifth Ward here?

LC: And they came before I got here for the two black priests who were here who were very revivalist-ic. \_\_\_\_ they trailed off attendance. You've got to have something to combat Joel Osteen. And we usually do it with choirs and their preaching is different from mine, I'm more subdued and I don't, \_\_\_\_ someone who don't rock. I'll always poo poo that because some of it is very dark and so is his \_\_\_\_\_. I am very very light and her second husband was very, very light skinned. It's nothing to do with that. I know some excellent preachers in both.

EV: Most of the people that 80% that come here like have a sentimental attachment to this community?

LC: Yes.

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EV: And the sociologists have told me French Town is virtually no more there. They aren't BS-ing right? That's pretty much true? And do you know any servants or \_\_\_\_ that talk here in Creole or French or all English?

LC: I can't, all English?

EV: Okay. Are there any, what about where you have the Sea of the S...

LC: Star of the Sea.

EV: Star of the Sea, is that all conducted in English?

LC: Yes.

EV: See what I have...

LC: Let me see if my afternoon person is here.

EV: Go ahead and I'll get.

LC: I'm sorry.

EV: That's fine...

LC: I'll get you some people, Jackie Bars, she's a Landry and she is fluent with the history she is involved, the same is her sister Denise Labries.

EV: Is there something more I want to bother with you with can I get their numbers?

LC: Alrighty let me see. Let me try, excuse me.

EV: Just let me...we are concluding you are telling me you've got to split right? Is that right?

LC: In a little bit because he's not here yet.

EV: That's alright I have very few questions and we can probably get them. I just have to ask you a few other...

LC: Okay alright go ahead.

EV: I just want to know about the, we talked about the \_\_\_\_\_... I just want to know about the cultural thing... the melding of the cultures but from what you are telling me it's probably not a very prominent other than in the church itself?

LC: Yeah and the zydeco dance.

EV: Right.

LC: We belong to a zydeco union they haven't been well attended here but they used to be and we always had huge zydeco bands for the I left them in the church the flyers for, I talked to Nooney and the zydeco when I was using somebody's house and his mother said, "Oh Nooney he's a nice guy, he's from Star of the Sea. He will be playing here, he will be playing over there. Zydeco band or whoever zydeco showmen, zydeco this and zydeco that they are the big drawer for the bazaars. You have to have not rides but big bands. Some boy I got his card. You know my memory..."

EV: Let me cut this off because I know you are busy.

End of interview