

Misericordia University Faculty Oral History Project
Interview with Donald O. Fries – History Department and
Edward Latarewicz – Philosophy Department
Excerpts – 02/06/2006

David Wright: Let's start with introductions.

Ed Latarewicz: Ed Latarewicz, I teach philosophy, I've been at Misericordia since 1969.

Don Fries: Don Fries, I teach history, I've also been here since 1969.

Harrison Wick: Harrison Wick, college Archivist.

Suzanne Pierce: Suzanne Pierce, history major.

Joe Ciattei: Joe Ciattei, senior history major.

David Wright: David Wright, history teacher.

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David Wright: Where were you born, where did you grow up and go to school?

Ed Latarewicz: Jersey City, New Jersey. I lived there until I was 22. I went to a tough inner city public high school. I worked for several years as a director of a high school then I went to seminary for three years in Calico, New York, and then I went to St. Bonaventure and finished my degree. I had scholarships and I had teaching fellowships for graduate studies. I taught six hours of philosophy while I was doing graduate work, after that I went to New Hampshire to work there from 1963-69 at St. Esslum's College. After that I came here and this is where I've been since.

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Don Fries: I was born in the Wilford Hospital in Fort Dodge, Iowa. The first 7 years of my life we lived in a trailer and we moved 28 times. I lived in Iowa until I was 14 and then we moved again. I lived in Michigan from the time I was 14 until I was 30. I went to North Muskegon High School where I had the least money of anybody there. I started working in the factory and realized that factory work wasn't for me, so I decided to go to a junior college. It was there that I realized that education was a good fit for me and so I went to the University of Michigan. I had a tuition scholarship for both the junior college and the University of Michigan. I went to the University of Michigan and liked it so much that I decided to go for my Masters. By the time I finished my Masters there I thought 'well I don't know if I want to get all my degrees here', but I had to stay in the state, because of tuition, so I went down to Michigan State to finish my PhD, which I did in August of 1969.

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I came here and it was my first teaching job, I came for a year in 1969 and I'm still here.

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David Wright: Were there aspects of working at the college or living in the area that were difficult to adjust to?

Ed Latarewicz: I'm an Easterner, so I fit right in. The area is not the exciting city life I had when I was in New York, but the school I came from was a Catholic School, St. Agnes, so I just fit right in

Don Fries: I had culture shock; the first time I realized how different things were here was when someone gave me a recipe that had mangos in it. I went all over town looking for mangos. I'm also an outdoorsman. Ricketts Glen and the hiking were appealing to me. As far as the school is concerned, I had never talked to a nun before interviewing for a job here. I knew a lot about the Catholic Church because my PhD is in Reformation History, which means I knew a lot about the 16th century Catholic Church. I tried to keep quiet for the first six months I was here. It was a big adjustment because prior to coming here I was at Michigan State's campus, which in 1969 was being closed down every three weeks for Anti-War and Civil Rights demonstrations. When I got out here it was so different, I didn't know where I was. It was a big adjustment for me, but I love the small classes and getting to know my students because as a student I never knew my professors.

Joe Ciattei: Where do you live now and would you tell us about your family?

Ed Latarewicz: I live in Clark Summit. I have been there since 1974; the flood tore me out of Kingston. I have no children. I married a nurse and I have a happy life. That's about it.

Don Fries: I've lived in Wilkes-Barre since 1985. I left there because of the flood. I also married an adult student. I had two kids in my first marriage who are doing quite well and two kids from my second marriage, one of whom is doing quite well. I have 8 grandchildren. In 1990 we took our grandson out of a foster home and raised him. We just put him on a bus to Philadelphia to live with my step-daughter.

Joe Ciattei: How did the Back Mountain change in your time here?

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Don Fries: When I first came here there were no sewers. The sewers came in 1970. The scene of downtown Dallas has not changed a lot since 1969. The stoplight still looks the same, the clock is new. I agree with Ed. I don't think Dallas has changed that much.

Joe Ciattei: What did you do for entertainment when you first got here and what do you do now?

Don Fries: When I first came here the faculty was much smaller and we were very close.

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We were a close faculty; we would go to people's houses like Dave Payne and Ken Fisher. My first friends here were college people and we couldn't really afford to go out, but we would get together once a month and talk and have a few beers.

Ed Latarewicz: Since I lived a distance from the college, my entertainment was with family, New York trips, Broadway shows, Theatre Leagues in Scranton, dining out, but not really campus involvement.

Joe Ciattei: Did you work during the summers and what did you do?

Ed Latarewicz: I taught courses during the summer to pay for entertainment. I'm a golfer, I like sports, and I used to play tennis when I was a little more mobile.

Don Fries: I taught summer school the first 2 summers I was here. After the flood I was on a paint crew run by Dave Payne, and I spent my summers painting houses and hanging wallpaper, and I did that for 14 years. I still taught summer classes, but we didn't get paid very much money. When I came here I received the same incoming salary as my friend who taught at Springhill College, and we both had PhDs. We only made \$9,000 so we had to do something to gain supplemental income. Working with the paint crew got me through some really bad times. I always camped, always went to the Ontario Shakespeare festival, and I always took a vacation. I started painting at Dave's house because it got totally destroyed by the flood. He lived on Sheldon Street off of River Road in Wilkes-Barre. He had 3 feet of water on the second floor. He hired people to help him. I had never pounded a nail, but Dave had done this before and he had all of the equipment. We always did the biggest houses nobody else wanted to do.

Harrison Wick: What can you tell me about Dave Payne?

Don Fries: Dave and I were close right from the beginning.

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He taught in the English Department before he became Admissions Director. I believe he saved the college because of what happened financially. The whole admissions staff had walked out. Dave and I were fixing Tom O'Neill's house and Dave received a call one night that asked if he wanted to be Admissions Director. I said 'Dave, I wouldn't touch that with a 10 foot pole', but he did it. He was very close with the Dean. If he was alive now, he would have great stories to tell. He was always a very popular teacher, everybody liked him, and he also had a keen sense of humor and a great wit. He was always great with his children.

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Suzanne Pierce: What are some memorable moments or anecdotes you have of Misericordia?

Don Fries: The story of my first faculty meeting is pretty memorable. We had the faculty meetings in the science building in the lecture hall. We had them on Monday night, which the male faculty later voted out and moved to another night when they started having Monday night football. I didn't know what to expect, the meeting lasted from 7-9 pm and afterwards everyone went down to the local Hearthstone Pub which was called the Brothers Four then. There was really good camaraderie and it was really fun. I had just come off Michigan State's campus where it was totally radical and they had all kind of demonstrations there and I get here and Sister Collette got up and said 'I want to talk about something and even Sister President doesn't know what I'm going to talk about... I was visiting another campus this summer and their faculty was there and they get paid more than our lay faculty does, they really do. But you know what; they don't get free donuts and coffee.' Then she just sat down. The head librarian, his name was Bob Carlson, got up and started saying that we should close this school down because of Vietnam War, and that we have to protest and send students out to protest.

Ed Latarewicz: I don't really have any anecdotes, but one thing that struck me when I first came- the administration thought I was a radical when I'm really quite the opposite. I wrote the first Statement on Academic Freedom for the college because we had no Statement of Academic Freedom and I guess it was not received well by the President or the board would not approve it and we got into quite a contest later on.

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Suzanne Pierce: What was the college like when you started?

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Ed Latarewicz: We had no student union so it was a more modest campus. Were we saying prayers when we started classes here?

Don Fries: I wasn't, but a lot of people were.

Ed Latarewicz: Yes, we started class with an 'Our Father' and I think that was the first year here.

Don Fries: I just didn't do it.

Ed Latarewicz: The atmosphere here changed a lot from a parochial college to a real full fledged academically free college.

David Wright: Did you feel pressured to pray before class? When you came here did they say you had to do that? Was it a rule?

Ed Latarewicz: I did it at the other schools and it just kind of naturally gravitated; it was done here, I remember a few people and I did it for a while.

Don Fries: I honestly felt no pressure to do anything like that at all. I never heard of doing it, I was never told to do it, and I wouldn't know how to do it if they had asked me to. But I know a lot of people did do it. And it wasn't across the board, but there was a dress code that some teachers had; Joan Krause insisted that her students wear skirts. Remember it was all women then.

David Wright: So there was a dress code for the students?

Don Fries: Yes, but by the time we got here there wasn't a dress code; it was only done by certain professors. Joan Krause ended up teaching Education, but she taught Home Economics and she felt that young ladies should come dressed up to class and they did. But it wasn't anything that was required and neither was prayer although as I said a lot of people did pray in class.

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David Wright: When I came here didn't you have Sister Anne McLaughlin teaching philosophy?

Don Fries: Sister Anne was Religious Studies not Philosophy.

Ed Latarewicz: Yes, she was teaching Philosophy, but she was not a philosopher.

David Wright: You were the only philosopher in the department?

Ed Latarewicz: Yes, I was the only one in the department so I used to boast that I was the Chair, but it was really only because I was the only one.

Don Fries: When I came here I took the place of a guy who was extremely popular, his name was Ed Handlin. He unfortunately died of a heart attack a few years ago at a relatively young age; he was extremely popular and I had some big shoes to fill. Also, Lee Williames and Louis were here and Rosemary Savelli had always been a fantastic teacher, so that was my competition. I either had to do it well or I wouldn't get any students.

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David Wright: Ed, what courses did you teach?

Ed Latarewicz: When I came here, I claimed to have some sort of expertise in interdisciplinary studies. I went to St. Johns College in Annapolis, studied the seminar technique and I developed that technique at the other college and it's still in effect after 30 years. I taught an interdisciplinary with David Payne and Richard Wegner. It was a two semester course with three teachers, and it was fabulously successful. Since we didn't have any majors until recently, I had to do the service courses. Introduction to Philosophy, we kept changing the name, Self Images, it doesn't matter, Ethics courses mostly until we had a major and then I did some advanced courses.

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Dr. Fries: I took my PhD in Medieval History and I've never taught a Medieval History class.

Harrison Wick: What courses did you teach?

Don Fries: We had a big English Department, and they didn't have anybody to teach English History so they decided to hire me to replace Ed Handlin, who was a modern Europeanist who taught English History. When I came here I was required to teach Western Civ, to teach 2 semesters of English History and British History, and then I did 19th and 20th century Europe. Those were the courses I taught when I first came. I started teaching Nazi Germany in 1977-78. I didn't do Russian History until 1981.

Harrison Wick: Were you involved in campus activities outside the classroom?

Ed Latarewicz: I cannot remember the year we had mini-courses.

Don Fries: They were a combination of Tom O'Neill and my ideas.

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Ed Latarewicz: I taught Ball-Room Dancing. I taught Jack Hoover and his wife. I was going to do one in wine-tasting. There was a lot of flexibility.

Don Fries: I taught one on folk music, gardening, and I believe Ed taught one in chess.

Ed Latarewicz: I remember teaching Pat Lewis' daughters chess.

Don Fries: The craziest course we had was with a guy who taught religious studies. He was interested in Outer Mongolia. He wanted to build a Mongolian Yurt, which is a tent. O'Neill and I were all for it, but the President was against it. These classes only lasted from 1972-74. No more than 2 years, they put a stop to that quick, as they should have.

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David Wright: What about other activities or clubs?

Don Fries: There weren't clubs in the beginning. There were dances we chaperoned. We did a panel on the Revolution. In those days I spent a lot of time on campus, nothing too formal.

Ed Latarewicz: Outside of the classroom, I was a cultural events chair. When the students had pool tables and table-tennis tables I would play with them, but they don't have those facilities anymore. I never lost; I was pretty good in pool.

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Joey Ciattei: You mentioned Jack Hoover and Arnie Garinger, I would like to know some stories I don't know as I only knew them for 2 years through our golf team.

Ed Latarewicz: I didn't know Arnie as well as Don did, but Jack was a very pleasant person, a lot of fun. He always had a smile on his face; I played golf with him a few times.

Don Fries: Jack doesn't look any different now than he did 20 years ago. I knew Arnie pretty well. I'll start with Jack. I painted his house a couple times. I got to know him and his wife pretty well, they're very pleasant and have a great sense of humor; I also got to know his kids well. Arnie was a special type person. Arnie was hired the same time Ed and I were, so we were in the same kind of class. Arnie was close with a guy who taught German here, his name was Steve Fulter, his wife was Czech and the faculty secretary. My ex-wife and I were close with Arnie too. He was wonderful; he had a great sense of humor and was very lively, with an amazing personality. He had gigantic parties, he used to own a camp up on the lake and he had these parties where nobody ever went home sober. He used to have some parties at his house, he invited everybody and everybody came and it was always fun.

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Harrison Wick: Do you remember any special events that happened on campus?

Don Fries: Such as the flood?

Ed Latarewicz: The day before the flood I went to New York and I didn't hear the weather forecast so I just left my wife here and we got flooded out. I couldn't get back for a week or so.

Don Fries: You lived in Kingston then.

Ed Latarewicz: Yes, Kingston, on the border of Forty Fort. My wife came up here like everyone else did for refuge, and I guess since she was a nurse she was helping. Don was involved too.

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Don Fries: I was living in Dallas at the time of the flood, and as most people did I took in refugees. I couldn't stand it so I came up here to get food for them, because there was no food in the grocery stores. I went home that night and I found out that Lee Williames was running security and needed some help so Lee Williames and I were running security for a week and a half. Instead of having 400 security guards, we only had 4, two full-

time and two part-time, and it seemed just as safe. We just took over security because Nesbitt Hospital in Kingston was moved out here and took over Alumnae Hall. There were babies born in Alumnae Hall that summer. The security was in the basement and we would split the day up. I would come in at noon and work until 4 o'clock in the morning and he would come in at midnight and work until about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. But we had a guard at every gate with walkie-talkies. I had long hair and a long beard and all the state cops were talking to me so I thought that was pretty funny. In the area where we are sitting there used to be a helicopter pad; they would bring in people with helicopters. They took over Mercy Center and all the dorms, McHale hadn't opened yet, but all three floors of Alumnae was a hospital.

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David Wright: When school started, things were back to normal?

Don Fries: Yes, just about every night around 10 o'clock, I would brief the President, Sister Miriam Theresa O'Donnell about what was going on and she lived in McGann so I'd walk her home every night. I went to her one night and said, 'Look, Sister Miriam Theresa, I have some classes starting on Monday and I know I can't keep this up with security plus Lee Williams hasn't seen his wife in a month because she is up at the Lake in Niagara, New York' where she lived. So she said let me see what I can do. She called Dan Flood and two days later 20 members of the National Guard came and took over security. They thought they had died and went to heaven because they had been shoveling mud and corpses for 3 weeks, and they just thought this was wonderful.

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Don Fries: The basic humanities core and English have been changing since you've been here. The basic core of that core Ed Latarewicz did in 1970. I'll brag for him. He came up with the idea that Philosophy, Religious Studies, History, and English would be the center of the core. And he got it through.

David Wright: What would that take, was there a senate at that time?

Ed Latarewicz: No, we didn't have a senate.

David Wright: Administrative body or just go through the Dean?

Don Fries: No, we created the senate. I was the first senator.

Ed Latarewicz: John Filer had a committee.

Don Fries: A faculty welfare type of committee.

Ed Latarewicz: A few people got together from the faculty fighting for faculty issues and it wasn't really a formal structure.

Don Fries: But from that came the first senate.

David Wright: Which was when?

Don Fries: 1971 maybe.

David Wright: And how was that set up?

Don Fries: Louis Maganzin and Rusty Anderson wrote the bylaws and Dave, Louis, and maybe Lee went to the President and got her to okay it so that we could have a faculty senate. She didn't like it, but she approved it. Then we had elections, but Dave Payne had a lot to do with that at first.

David Wright: Do you remember who the first Chair was?

Don Fries: Maybe Dave Payne, you can probably look that up in the Archives.

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David Wright: Who was the Dean at the time?

Don Fries: The first Dean was Sister Regina Kelly and then Marvin LaHood.

David Wright: What was he like? Was he the first lay Dean?

Ed Latarewicz: He was the one who did the pushups. You'd go in his office and you'd have to show your physical strength by doing 50 pushups.

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Don Fries: One day I walked into his office and he says 'Don, I can do 50 pushups.' And I said 'one hand or two?' and he says 'two' so I said 'well I only do them one handed' and I walked out. A month later I walk in his office and he jumps on the floor and starts doing one handed pushups. He didn't last very long, he was here during the flood and then after that he wasn't.

David Wright: He came after Sister Regina?

Don Fries: Yes, Regina was first, she had the sense enough to hire me, and then LaHood came and he lasted a year or so and then after that we had Downey maybe?

Ed Latarewicz: Leo Downey.

Don Fries: Yes, he was a philosopher, but he was a Dean also.

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Don Fries: He got into a fight with the President or the Dean over something and he got fired in the middle of the year and I think this had to have been in 1976 because that's when the admission staff got so upset about him being fired, they walked out. Dave Payne took over Admissions, and then Sister Carolyn Burgholzer took over as Dean.

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David Wright: Do you remember what department was she in?

Don Fries: Yes, English. Then Sister Marie Dolores Moore came in from the Music Department and she was a great lady.

David Wright: Was she a nun?

Don Fries: Yes, she was a great lady and she lasted a couple years then James Pallante came in.

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David Wright: Did faculty have any say on Deans being hired?

Don Fries: No.

Harrison Wick: What was the difference between being Dean and Vice President, how did that change?

Don Fries: That didn't change until Mary Glennon came along. I don't know if that was an Administrative decision, I'm not sure what it was. Fink had an Administrative Vice President, first it was Arthur Kirk, then another guy, when they left I think Mary Glennon was first Academic Dean, and her office later became Vice President.

Harrison Wick: Tell us about Joe Fink.

Don Fries: Joe Fink came here in 1979. He had been President of a Junior College, and he basically turned College Misericordia around, and he was responsible for starting up the Occupational and Physical Therapy programs. Dave Payne had a hand in all of this. Fink was a very charming individual, not particularly outgoing, but very charming.

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Ed Latarewicz: He increased our salary a bit?

Don Fries: Gradually, it still wasn't great, but yes he did.

Ed Latarewicz: That countered the union movement.

Don Fries: He came in 1979. The 1970s before he came were the hardest because we were having double digit inflation and we weren't even getting raises. I was on the Welfare Committee and Sister Ann Miriam Gallagher was President. We met at night time and we walked into her office with all these salary demands and she walked in, having already met with the Board of Trustees, put a bottle of Jim Beam on her desk in front of us and said "gentlemen I suggest you have a drink before I talk to you about this". That's the year we got a whopping \$400 raise whether we wanted it or not. You have to remember we were going through double digit inflation. Ed's wife and both my current and my ex-wife were making more money than me.

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David Wright: Do you recall any speakers or special events where people came from off campus to hear anything?

Don Fries: We had the Harrisburg Seminary up here one time. There were two of them, and they came with two nuns. I don't remember the story, what was the name of the priest?

Ed Latarewicz: Berrigan.

Don Fries: The Berrigan Brothers; they were both priests and they had broken into the state office of Harrisburg and poured blood on draft cards and things of that sort. Two of the nuns, one of which married one of the Berger brothers, came and the place was packed.

David Wright: Was that 1969 or 1970?

Don Fries: 1970. It was in the cafeteria and lots of people there weren't students.

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David Wright: Did you ever have presidential debates or did any well-known politicians come here? Did Dan Flood come to campus?

Don Fries: Dan Flood was here all the time, but he never did anything like debate. He came to every graduation. The last time he came to graduation he walked in front of me and I had to help him because he was so weak he had to take my arm.

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Harrison Wick: What about going co-ed, how did that change things?

Ed Latarewicz: It was dominantly female; there were always a handful of male students on campus. I think going co-educational was an improvement.

Don Fries: In 1970, King's went co-educational. They were panicked because they thought all the students going to Misericordia would go to King's. The first men were very few; there were always a few men. When I was first here, the men were all off campus.

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Don Fries: ... a few guys came in 1973, but the college didn't really go co-educational until they got a dorm which was in 1976. There were men after 1973 though, such as Brian Benedetti.

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Ed Latarewicz: I don't think there was an identity crisis where people were threatened by it. The numbers increased incrementally, nobody minded it or raised any issues over it.

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Harrison Wick: When you were here were there still Sisters living here?

Don Fries: Yes, in where room 330 is now. It was divided into 2 little cubicles, and the nuns were in there.

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Don Fries: The nun's laundry was on the other side of their office.

David Wright: Where did the nuns live?

Don Fries: They lived in 330, in the two little cubicles. They had maybe a bed and a desk. When the nuns left, their rooms became faculty offices.

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Don Fries: ... They lived there and their laundry was next to us. They did their laundry on Saturday and I would be working and I would see the nuns running around in their housecoats and the older ones would be embarrassed and I would be embarrassed and so I would close the door.

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David Wright: When did men live on campus and what was it like?

Don Fries: I think 1976.

David Wright: Was there controversy over hours?

Don Fries: There were no hours for men just like everywhere else and when Fink came along he brought in more students that were liberal like he was.

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David Wright: When you first arrived here, did you notice or were you concerned about financial difficulty, or was that something that happened a little bit later and when did that occur to you that it was something people started to get nervous about?

Ed Latarewicz: That hit us quickly. During the 1970's, the survival of College Misericordia was really questionable and for a number of years we didn't think we would survive.

David Wright: Was that during your first few years here?

Ed Latarewicz: Not my first few years, this was before Fink, that's why they hired him. He was financially into what he was doing and they knew they were in trouble before he came. I don't know what years that was, probably the late 1970s.

Don Fries: We went through some boom and bust years and Ed and I were hired at the end of a boom year. I remember this very well. When we were hired, 20 people were hired that year in big groups at a time and then all of a sudden in 1972 the bottom dropped out, and it dropped out real fast and that's why they let a lot of people go in 1973. They didn't close departments, but they let a lot of people go. From that time on until the middle 1980s, they didn't hire anyone. I mean they hired some only because of a big turnover and they created the radiography program and hired people for that, but they didn't hire anyone else. That's why I said that between 1973 and 1988, I was the low man on the totem pole. I was next to go if they were cutting more people.

David Wright: Who else of the 20 people stayed more than just a couple years?

Don Fries: Well, most of them didn't.

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Harrison Wick: What other interaction did you have with the Sisters?

Don Fries: The Sisters were broken up into two camps. They were all Sisters, but the younger nuns, like Sister Barbara, came in about the time of Vatican II. They were much more open to talking, planning and working with the lay faculty. The older nuns that had come in the 1920's or 1930's were in parochial schools that were very strict.

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Don Fries: Teaching at that time and then she became Dean of Students later. I think there was a real split in the Sisters. The younger ones were more in tune with the lay faculty than the older ones were and so I can remember they were placed in houses called the Merton House and we used to go over there. And they even gave me Communion

once, that's how liberal they were. We'd get together and talk, and we'd have discussions like that. We were pretty close.

David Wright: Where was this?

Don Fries: Remember the nuns were cloistered, but after Vatican II they lived off campus, some of them, and so the really wild ones decided that they were going to get a house together. The nice houses right across the street from the college.

Harrison Wick: On Lake St?

Don Fries: Yes, right across the street. And you had to go down this long driveway and they called it Merton House after Thomas Merton, who was a hero of theirs, and so they lived there and we'd get together there sometimes. It was kind of this liberal Catholic view point. Payne, Fisher, Lee Williams, and me, we'd all go there. We'd call them liberal catholic. We had some good times.