

This recording contains an oral history interview with Father Ronan Herlihy conducted at his home in Raheny on 20 January 2003 on behalf of the Department of Modern History at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. It forms part of the Mission History oral Archive and was conducted by Dr. Charles Flynn. The oral archive is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences by way of a post-doctoral fellowship which was awarded to Dr. Flynn.

Tape 1: Side I

If I could just ask you for the record to give me your name and tell me where you were born and when you were born?

My name is William Herlihy, Liam Herlihy, which changed to Ronan Herlihy when I joined the Capuchin order. I was born in Castleisland in Kerry because my mother was from Castleisland so she went back to her home to have me. So that's why I was born in Kerry and I lived across the border in North Cork in a place called Knocknagree which is about half-a-mile from the border in the parish of Rathmore which is in Kerry and it's also in the Kerry diocese. So I'm from Cork in the Kerry diocese born in Kerry and lived in Cork.

That would be awkward when it comes to sport I would imagine?

It does yes.

2

Would you remember any incidents that your parents may have told you about so that we can get this back as far as we can go? Any - perhaps about the political things or various things that happened?

Well yea in the time of the Black-and-Tans there was an ambush in a place called Tourengarrif which was in Kerry between Castleisland and Ballydesmond and the Black-and-Tans were ambushed there. And the following - it was a success from the point of view of the IRA or the Republicans and the following morning they (the Tans) came down to our village and there were several children playing hurling and they fired on them and they killed one chap of eighteen years of age and they wounded another two. (One of them was a first cousin). The two of them were my first cousins and one of them was wounded in the stomach and the Auxiliaries wanted to throw him into the back of a truck or a lorry to take him to hospital in Tralee but my father refused and he called them some names and he was very lucky to escape because they put the gun up to his head to try and get him to agree to send his nephew to the hospital. But eventually they took him into our house and he was nursed there by my mother. His brother became - his brother was shot in the thigh. They both became priests and there was another brother who was younger, he wasn't there, and he became a priest also. He was a Capuchin and he was one of the early missionaries out in Zambia or on Northern Rhodesia at the time and I think that's what kind of influenced me to join the Capuchins and to go to the missions. Now the man that was shot in the stomach was a priest in the diocese of Kerry and he went to Rome to study. He was teaching in All Hallows and he eventually ended up as Bishop of Ferns Donald Herlihy. He was also president of the Irish College in Rome. And the second priest was in the diocese of Kerry and he died about six year ago. He was Michael Herlihy. The third one Agathangelus (Brendan) [he was one of the early missionaries out in Zambia]. He left Zambia, or Northern Rhodesia at the time, and went to South Africa and then he went to found the order in New Zealand and he died in New Zealand of cancer. So that's a bit of my past.

3

And they were three brothers in the one family.  
Three brothers from the one family.

Now just for me to get that straight in my head, the fellow that was wounded in the thigh he became?  
He became - he was a diocesan priest in Kerry. And his name was? Michael, Michael Herlihy.

And the guy who was wounded in the stomach was?  
Was Donald Herlihy.

And the other guy was a brother of theirs and his name was?  
He was younger.

He was younger than them?  
Brendan, but he became Agathangelus.

And he's the missionary?  
Yes.

And the others - oh I forget his name the one who was wounded in the stomach - he became Bishop of Ferns?  
Bishop of Ferns yes. He became president of the Irish College in Rome and then Bishop of Ferns.

Now what did your father do for a living?  
A Public house.  
4  
In the village?  
In the village.

And was he from there originally?  
Yes he was.

And was the publican, the pub, a family business, was that handed down to him?  
A family business yes.

Do you know how far back it went just as a matter of interest?  
I don't.

You don't?  
No but in that village there were forty-eight houses and fifteen public houses, because there was very big fairs there and they used to come down. The area I'm from is called Slaibh Luachra and they used - it was very poor land - and that's why in the parish if Rathmore, where I was, there wasn't a single Protestant. It was all Catholics because the land was too poor I suppose. And the buyers, the cattle buyers, used to come down from the midlands and buy the cattle and when they'd go into the good grass up there they'd fatten up very quickly.

And what about your mum, where was your mum from?  
She was from Kerry, from Castleisland.

And what brought her to your village? Your father obviously?  
Well my father was also - he was a creamery manager at one stage in Kerry. So that's where they would have met.

5

They met in Kerry?  
Yes.

Did your mum ever tell you anything about her family or do you remember?  
Not very much mind you. There was a very big family of them there and her name was Brosnan, So I used to spend most of my holidays back there actually so I would. They were butchers and that went back a long way in the family all right the butchers.

And what part of Kerry were they in?  
Castleisland.

You did say that — excuse me my head's not working right here! Were there many in your own family?

My father was married twice so I had two step-brothers. They emigrated to America so I didn't know them until I met them in America and when they came home. In my own family - the second family then - there were four. I was the youngest and the boy next to me died when I was about four years of age I just barely remember him. My sister is still alive and my brother, the eldest, he died two years ago.

Did we get your date of birth I don't think we did, did we?  
1926, 15 February 1926.

6

Now what was life like for you in the village as a young boy?  
As a young boy it was I would say a very pleasant life. Great neighbourliness there and in those days everybody was in and out of everybody else's house. Everybody came to the help of anybody in need and when you'd kill a pig for instance — everybody would have their own pigs - a lot of people would have their own pigs you know for curing you know - you'd go round to all your neighbours with a pork steak and black pudding and there was a great spirit of friendship there.

And what about your friends. Would you have many friends at that stage?  
Ah yes my school friends yes.

How early can you remember back? What's your earliest memory?  
The earliest memory would be I'd say when I was about three I'd say.

Is that right?  
Yes, that would be when my brother died. I remember being kind of sent away as they did in those days you know when there was a death. We were sent to Castleisland you see out of the way and I remember that.

And what about schooling now what?

Schooling, we had a big school in the village. It was a six-teacher school, a boy's school and a girl's school; three teachers in the boys school and three teachers in the girls school. It was a very old school actually. It was built in - written on it - 1884. There's a new school there now of course. Very good teachers but though they didn't spare the - well some of them you know. We had one particularly good teacher and I discovered afterwards he was an Ex-Christian Brother. But he was the best teacher on Christian Doctrine, or Theology or whatever you wish to call it, that I met in my life you know.

7

That's saying a lot is it?

Yes, he had a great influence on us, you know.

Now you have forty-eight houses in the village and yet you have a six teacher school that seems to be

Well there was quite a large hinterland you know.

Oh right.

They would all have to walk to school in those days. That would have been the 30s you know, the very early 30s.

Things were though then?

Yes.

And about how many pupils in the school, a rough idea?

I should think about 140 or 50.

In the boys?

No, in both schools,

So the class sizes would be fairly small then would they?

I suppose, let me see now, there would be possibly maybe around twenty in the class. How would that work out?

That would be about 120 wouldn't it; so there would be somewhere between twenty and thirty in the class?

Yes

8

And what was a typical school day like for you or you know; give me a general idea of what it was like for you to go to school in say. Do you remember your first day in school?

I don't really. We went to school in those days - we went to school very early. We went to school at the age of four. We used to have low-infants and high-infants and then standard one and up to standard six. That was six and eight years in school.

And what kind of subjects are we talking about there?

The usual subjects I suppose: Irish, English, History, Geography, Religion, and Mathematics of course.

Were the teachers all lay teachers or were they?

All lay teachers yes. We had no priest in our village. At that time in the Kerry diocese the priests lived in the parish house all together so that was in Rathmore which was about three of four miles away.

So you didn't have a priest connected with the actual village itself?  
No, except he used to come once a week for confessions.

Did you have a church?  
Oh we had a church yes.

So you'd have Sunday Mass in the village?  
Sunday Mass and First- Friday.

And how many Masses would you have? One?  
Just one mass.

Just one Mass?  
And Holy-Hour once a month.

9  
Now what about a policeman, did you have a policeman in the village or?  
Yes we had a sergeant, usually a sergeant and three policemen.

They would have been Garda Siochana at that time?  
Yes.

What were relationships like with - how did you view the priests when they came?  
Well I was an altar-boy myself so there was one priest who was very good to me you know, a Father O'Connor. So he influenced me quite a bit you know and it was he [who] usually came. He usually used to come to us every Sunday you know. The other priests I wouldn't remember very much you know.

So what about with the guards, how were they viewed by the population?  
Oh the guards were usually viewed as one of ourselves.

Would there be any crime in a village of that size?  
Very little. I think the guards would have to kind of — what would you say — produce some summons you know. They might ask a friend could they summons them you know.

As blatant as that?  
Yes.

10  
That life really does seem idyllic in this day and age?  
Yes, and I remember - our public house was just opposite the guards you know so there was really nothing there for the guards there it was a quiet place you know especially for young guards so it was a tough assignment for especially young guards you know. The only thing that was there was bicycles you know and they very often our pub was their drinking place you know and I spent a lot of my life doing BO. Now BO is Barrack Orderly. While they'd be having their pints I'd be minding the phone.

In the Garda Station?

In the guards yes because the only thing they were afraid of then would be the phone. Because there were no cars you see so there was no danger of anybody popping in to them unannounced.

Were there any cars in the village at all?

The first car came when I was there; it was a taxi.

Roughly when? Do you remember that?

It's about 1936-36.

That late?

No it was probably before that '33 or '34 I'd say.

Early thirties? And when you got orders in a various things was there any kind of - what kind of transport was used for carrying farm goods of beer or

Well the beer would come in trucks and the porter all that would come in trucks from - they were the Nash's from Newcastle West I remember and there was a crowd from Killarney. But they had trucks all right and then the bread would come around from Castleisland actually.

That would be a truck as well would it?

Yes.

11

I have an impression in my head about horse-drawn vehicles in that environment; were there many horse drawn vehicles there?

Ah it was all horse-drawn. Horse-drawn well donkey and cart, pony and traps, sidecars, bicycles on foot that was the [lot].

Did you work in the pub at all in your youth?

Ah I did. I spent a lot of time working in the pub.

And what would that involve? Would you be serving customers or?

Yes.

Washing bottles? Washing bottles and filling bottles and topping them, putting caps on them, corks on them.

Was it ever a chore for you?

No I took it for granted you know. You see my father died when I was quite young.

Oh.

My father died of cancer when I was just around ten years of age and my mother wasn't that well off you know.

Right. Now you mentioned that your mother was your father's second wife

Yes.

Have you any idea what the first wife died of?

I haven't actually because strangely enough they never spoke very much about that you know.

12

Was that the custom or?

I wouldn't really know.

So what kind of devilment, for want of a better word, would you get up to as a school boy? What kind of games would you play or what kind things would you do in the village?

We'd play in the schoolyard; football of course when somebody would give us a small ball. We used to spend our summer - we were just about a half-a-mile less than half-a-mile from the Blackwater a big river there between Cork and Kerry. We used to spend a lot of our time there in one of the big pools swimming, doing a bit of fishing, football. We used to play quite a bit of football. Sometimes we used play a team from a nearby village but that wouldn't be very often because you'd have to walk you know.

Now you mentioned that there were very few Protestants, were there any at all?

None at all.

You never met a Protestant as a young man?

No. The only - I remember the first time I met, I was told that a person was a Protestant was we were on holidays in Ballybunnion, the seaside place, and I was told that person was a Protestant and the impression I got then of course was God he's going to go to hell.

And was there any implication that you shouldn't be associated with him or anything like that?

No. Well that was just some person that was pointed out to me you know.

Not the same as yourself

Yes

13

Now you mentioned holidays, were they regular or would you have a holiday on a regular basis or was that a big treat?

Well, I had a lot of uncles and aunts especially uncles so I used to go back there a lot and we spent a lot of our holidays there.

In Castleisland we're talking about now?

Yes.

But Ballybunnion was an exception, was it?

Ballybunnion, we'd go to Ballybunnion then because later on then in Castleisland one of my uncles had a car and they use go to Ballybunnion and we went a few times to Ballybunnion also on holidays you know just for a week.

And your mum looked after the pub then I take it after your father died?

Yes.

And there were four of you in the family at that time or were there six?

Oh no the stepbrothers had gone to America.

They'd gone to America?

Yes I never remembered them. So there was one - well one had died so there were three of us.

Three of you and how did you get on together did you get on well together or was there any frictions of anything with your brothers and sisters?

No it was no great problem.

14

So it was a friendly atmosphere?

Yes

So you've gone through primary school I take it and was secondary an option for you?

It was. I went to secondary school because there were no schools around actually so anybody who wanted to go further had to go to a boarding school. So the nearest boarding school would have been Killarney, it was generally Killarney, but I went to Rochestown, our own Capuchin college because of my connections with my first cousin, Agathangelus, who at this stage had been ordained and was already in Africa, Northern Rhodesia

Now this was a secondary school; Rochestown was a secondary school?

A Capuchin school.

A Capuchin school. Father Hayes went to that school he was telling me to.

That's right yes.

Were you inclined towards the Capuchins at that stage or was it in your head that you might join the order or were you just going to secondary school?

I was always inclined toward the Capuchins. I remember they had what we used to call the Questor, a brother Questor. He used to come around and he made a very big impression on me.

Could you just explain that to me I haven't come across that before when you say that Questor would come around? What exactly would he do?

He went around visiting the houses and collecting money.

Right.

He would give you - he wasn't a priest. Usually well I suppose in some places he was yes but the man that used to come around our area he wasn't ordained. He was a friar, an un-ordained friar.

And was that an annual thing or?

It used to be an annual thing. That lasted up to quite recently,

And you met him first in your own house really did you?

No I saw him - ah yes I suppose there's another story to it - I saw him when he was walking round the village when we were going to school and coming from school you know one or the other. And then they say that one time had lost my voice and he was supposed to have cured me, so I was told, but I don't remember that.



But your inclination was towards the religious life from a young age was it?  
Yes towards the religious life and towards the missions.

In particular?

In particular because of the first cousin Father Agathangelus. You'll meet his name quite a bit because he was one of the early friars, one of the pioneers in Zambia, in Northern Rhodesia.

16

Was it just the fact that he'd gone on the missions or did you meet him? Did he talk to you about it?

I would have remembered him when he was ordained but I don't remember him speaking to me specifically about it you know. And then my father was very impressed with him you know because he wasn't too impressed with the local priests. He didn't get on very well with the local priests because he also had a dancehall.

Ah right.

So dancehalls wouldn't what would you say they weren't very favourable towards dance halls, the priests at the time.

Indeed they were not.

So he wouldn't have much time for the diocesan priests. And then he wrote home letters you know about his missionary exploits and that and he would have been very impressed about it and talked about it you know.

Would you have seen these letters or would you?

Yes, I would have seen them and heard them talking about them.

And you would have heard your father talking about them?

Yes.

So this would be filtering in to you from talk in the family and from letters and stuff like that?

Yes.

17

Could we just stick with the dancehall for a little while if you don't mind? Was the dancehall connected with the pub or was it a separate entity?

Oh it was a separate building but by the time I remember it was closed. I think he made a few efforts to revive it but it didn't work you know. That would have been before I'd have been about seven or eight at the time.

And would you have known what days the dances were on or what nights on?

No, I wouldn't remember no.

You don't really remember really much about the dancehall?

No, not that dancehall but other dancehalls yes.

Well tell me about some of the other dancehalls. Would you have been going to dances?

No, we had one priest, the man who I respected very much, he was very, very hard on dancehalls you know and he used raid then very often and kind of close them and clear them all out. That's what I remember.

So what was life like for you when you go to boarding school?  
I enjoyed it yes. It wasn't very easy going away from home and all that.

Do you remember the actually separation for the first time from your family?  
Ah yes I do yes.

Could you describe that for me or do you want to?  
Just my mother took me there you know. That's all I remember really.

18

Tape 1: Side 2

And how did you mix with the other guys then. You know I get an impression - what age were you then about twelve?

That would have been 1938 yes, 26, twelve yes.

It's a young age to be facing the world on your own really isn't it. How did you mix with the rest of the lads that were there?

I mixed very well actually because I kind of happened to be a good footballer. And I remember my first year there, probably my first term, I was put on an under sixteen team and scored a goal for them and won the match so I was upon a pedestal.

You are a hero then?  
Yes.

I take it now we're talking about Gaelic? Oh Gaelic and Hurling but mostly Gaelic.

Would you ever have come across Soccer at all?  
No

Or Rugby?

No, although Castleisland was a great Rugby place but I wouldn't have been in contact with them.

And in secondary school it would be all Gaelic? All Gaelic games?  
All Gaelic yes.

19

No tennis?

Tennis? No handball.

So we're basically talking about Gaelic games as such?  
Yes.

And what kind of subjects are we talking about now when we are at secondary school?

English, Irish, Mathematics, Latin, Greek; we had to do the classics in those days, Geography, History and Drawing. I think that was about the sum of it.

Any particular subjects that you did well in or that you particularly liked?  
English I'd say and Maths, Irish no. I'd trouble with Irish always because I got sick - I got an appendicitis when I was in national school and I had to be taken - I was in Cork in hospital and I got of an infection or something afterwards and I was out of school for quite a while and when I came back I never kind of caught up on the Irish. So I was always weak in Irish afterwards.

You mentioned a priest in national school; sorry you mentioned a teacher in national school who was very influential on you, a Christian Brother, in what respect was he influential on you?

Because he was a very good teacher and he wasn't aggressive, because I'd also another teacher who was a demon you know; and on the Catechism, as we called it at the time, he made it most interesting.

Now I'm interested in the terminology you used there that one of the teachers was aggressive and you weren't too fond of him. Would you think, even looking back on it, which would have been the more conducive to learning?  
Oh the one I respected of course.

The one you respected?

Yes, he made it most interesting you know.

And was it just Religious Instruction he did or did he do any other subjects as well?  
Ah no, you would have the same teacher for all subjects.

Right, so would he have a different approach say to history than the other teacher would have?

No, they both would have had much the same approach to history in the sense of the time it was after the independence and the struggle and all that. They were both very anti-British of course which they instilled into us you know.

And what about towards Irish would either of them have been more favourable towards Irish; the Irish language?

Not particularly, no.

Was Irish - was it a fluent language in the village?

No, it wasn't.

So we're talking about school Irish.

Yes.

21

Is there any particular thing that stands out in your mind about school? Any particular day any particular incident or?

I'd say the diocesan catechism man who used to come around and I remember him coming to the school and giving the parable of the Sower and the Seed. His treatment of it was excellent it always stayed in my mind you know.

So from talking to you now you seem to have this - as a young, a very young man you seem to be drawn towards religious life?

I suppose so all right.

Would that be a fair assessment?

I think so all right because I was a devil you know. I got into trouble for being a devil you know.

In what respect?

I was very troublesome you know. Too lively you know for teachers and that.

Are we talking about inquisitiveness or?

Yes, but at the same time in my village actually there was an Ordination every year almost and I used always serve any masses that were there. I loved serving mass you know. But at the same time I was by no means a saint; constantly in trouble even in the secondary school you know.

Well we're talking about boyish pranks are we? What kind of things are we talking about?

Well I suppose playing tricks on teachers and things like that you know.

22

You'll go to hell for that? So what about in the boarding school, is there anything that sticks out in your mind about that.

Yes, the priests that were there they were always very friendly to the students that were there and they mixed very much with the students. Because it was afterwards I found out you know listening to other people who had been to other colleges and when we'd be comparing notes you know that nothing like that ever happened in our place you know. There was division between the priests and the boys. And I think that was something that does stick out in my mind, you know, the friendliness.

And what kind of a regime would you have? What would your daily routine be?

We'd be up in the morning very early I suppose about six-o'clock, half-six, seven; I don't remember now at this time. It would be real early anyway. And Mass every morning and then breakfast and then start class and then dinner and then recreation and back to class then again maybe in the evening. Up for study. No we wouldn't have class in the evening. Two periods of study evening and night study. Night study came after supper. Before supper we'd have and prayers with the rosary in the chapel. Bed about nine-o'clock I think.

Lights out?

Lights out in all the dormitories.

At nine?

Yes.

And what about weekends?

There was no such thing as getting out. You went for the whole term and you stayed for the whole term.

And you went home?

You went home just for holidays.

23

At what time - Christmas time maybe?

Well Christmas, Easter and summer time.

And then back in again. How many years are we talking about now at boarding school?

Five years.

That's eight years national school and five years. And where to - where do we go from then. You obviously must have been firming up in your mind when you were in secondary school that you were going to?

Yes join the order.

Was that a gradual thing or did anything happen that made you decide definitely that I'm going to do this?

No it was a gradual thing you know.

And how did it actually come about that you made the approach, that somebody made the approach to you?

Well I let it be known I suppose that I was joining and then I was advised to write to the Rector to say that I wished to join the order and that was it.

And you got a reply. Did you have an interview or did you have?

No, they would have known us pretty well.

So you went from secondary school? Straight to Novitiate.

And you would have been home for your summer holidays in between would you?

Yes.

24

Now when you were home on your summer holidays say for the last time you obviously, well I shouldn't be saying that, would you have been in contact with your school friends still?

Yes.

How did they take the idea that you were going to join the order?

Well I can tell you one little story about it you know. There was a Jim Creed in my class and after ordination we got a week home and I happened to be walking down the street in Cork and I ran into Jim and Jim looked at me and he said, "Herlihy" he said, "I never thought you'd stick it." So that was his attitude.

Did any of them try and persuade you not to join?

No not at that time.

What about your family anybody?

No, my mother was very quiet.

In favour?

Oh very much so yes.

And what was life like for you in the Novitiate what was the situation there school wise?

Well again we had a very good Novice Master because he had been teaching us in the college and he was also he became our Novice Master for that year and I met him again four years before ordination in our place up in Donegal. He was the Director of Students and Teachers so he had quite a big influence on me you know.

25

So we're in the novitiate now what kind of subjects and what kind of studying are we talking about there?

What had we? At that time it wasn't too good because we were doing a book called Rodriguez; I don't know if you ever heard of it?

No.

And we hadn't - [Edit] we didn't have very much Franciscanism I suppose it must have been the standard procedure at that time and we'd no [unknown] to any other subject you know just.

And what was this Rodriguez what was it?

Ah it was I think it must have been translated from the Portuguese or something you know and it was - we used make a skit of it you know.

I don't follow you fully there. Is it that you didn't believe in it or you didn't?

It was you know.

So amongst the novices you would make fun of it?

Yes.

And how did that go down? Was it ever found out?

No this was the done thing it went on from year to year you know. [insert: our director of novices used to tell us not to take it too seriously]

And was this theology?

No it was supposed to be a spiritual life you know.

Spiritual life right?

Ah it was all old stories from the past and things like that you know. It didn't make a very big impression on us.

So were you doing theology there?

No.

26

What subjects were you doing there?

Were weren't doing any subjects just the religious life.

Just living the religious life?

Well we would have been doing the Rule also of Saint Francis and the constitutions the Capuchin constitutions.

And was there much study in that?

No not very much; nothing very serious. No exams or anything. So it was a quiet year.

How long?

It was twelve months.

And then, where are we, for Donegal is it?

During my novitiate then my mother got a heart attack, a stroke, and she died just before my profession and that was a very, what will I say, traumatic experience. And at that time of course we were just allowed home for the funeral and back again the same day.

Right so you're a young man at that stage?

I'd have been eighteen.

Eighteen?

Yes.

It must have been a big blow?

Oh it was a big blow and it affected me you know. And I suffered from depression you know for quite a while actually. But that was just before moving to the university in Cork; before starting the Philosophy.

Right.

And even when I went through the university in Cork I found it very hard to study or settle down. Now they would have been all professors and all that; psychologists and all that they didn't recognise what was wrong you know because back then I don't think bereavement was understood very well.

27

Not at that time.

No.

There was very little talk about it I think?

No.

So you move to Cork?

Yes.

Were you living on your own or were you living in?

We had a place outside of Cork. Bonaventure, Brother Albert would probably have told you about it. Then we used to go to the university. At that time we had to do the course in the university and it was the Capuchins were responsible for the faculty, the Philosophy Faculty, so we did philosophy and some other subjects to make up the number of subjects for the BA.

How did you find that?

I thought it was pretty rough and tough you know. That was during the war, after the war, and food was very scarce. The weather was cold, very, very bad a very, very cold winter you know. We used to have to had to walk to the university and back again

And how far was that?

It would have been I suppose a mile. And that was a very full schedule I should think because we had to have the study and then quite a lot of our prayers and offices you know. You had the ordinary Divine Office and then we had the Little Office where we

said the Office of Our Lady. We used to have to say that and then we have to say (Dead Masses), Dead Offices for anybody that died and it was a bit heavy going you know.

28

And what about the study itself, did you have any difficulty with the subject matter? Well I just scraped my way through.

Well we're all like that?

Nothing brilliant.

Was there any particular thing that you particularly liked?

Yes, we had - I was doing English for the BA and there was a famous man, a writer called Danny Corkery, and he had been just a national school teacher and he was also out in the Civil War and he worked his way up because of his writings to become Professor of English in Cork University and he was most interesting you know.

So you have this love of English which seems to be running through from the national school?

Yes.

Anything you didn't like?

Latin, I had to do Latin also. Well the professor was just going through Virgil and all this; very, very boring you know.

Of course the mass was said in Latin at that time still wasn't it?

Oh the mass was in Latin and we had to do Latin you know. It would be nearly essential for you to have Latin? Yes it was.

29

Would it?

Oh yes to have Latin yes.

Would you consider yourself to be fluent in Latin?

No, although later - I'll tell you a story about that later.

Right okay. Now is there anything that sticks out in your mind about university that I mightn't have covered?

No, there would have been a group of - in my group there were ten, which was quite a big group you know, in my novitiate year. So they would have been about three years students there, so there would have been maybe about thirty of us. Maybe thirty plus you know. We used to play GAA hurling and football all right; we had our own pitch and we used to play. And we'd always go for long walks on Sunday and Thursdays. It was a fairly restricted regime you know.

Of course in that situation it would have been mixed? There would have been male and female there as well?

In the university? Yes.

Did that have any?

No because we more or less kept to ourselves because we marched together to a class and we marched back together from class you know.



Right okay. Now after university were are we going then?

Going up to Donegal to our house of theology and that was a very big change from the atmosphere of Cork you know. A much more friendly atmosphere up there, more relaxed. And eh, I don't know how much you know about our place up there?

30

I don't know much about it, no.

It was owned by a landlord and the Land Commission took it over in 1929 I think and we got it in 1931. So it was used first as a novitiate for one year I think and then as a house of theology. A beautiful situation right down to just the sea; plenty of forests; lovely swimming. I has, what do you call it, a sunny beach there. My pastime there was fishing for sea trout and generally we had quite a bit of work on the farm you know. If we wanted to get out from class or study we'd tip off the brother who was in charge of the farm and say we wanted to go out working you know. So he'd ask to us to get us out digging potatoes or planting potatoes. Then we'd rush the job and go for a game of football or hurling afterwards. A lot more relaxed there than in Cork. Never got home of course in our whole time; once we joined the novitiate we never got home until after ordination.

So we're talking about four years away now?

Four years yes.

And never a trip home?

No.

What about a visit from the family?

Visits all right, no problem with visits, but I was at the top of Donegal and the family would be down in Cork Kerry you know.

Did they visit you at all or was it just?

Well at that time of course my mother was dead so my sister would visit me yes. And actually she got married while I was there and herself and the husband came up and had their honeymoon there and they were received with open arms you know; a place was got for them to stay and all that, a local house you know.

31

So you talk about working on the farm there, what would the rest of the day consist of study-wise?

Well three classes in the morning I think, usually three classes.

Three hour long classes?

Yes.

And then you'd have to - and what about study periods?

Study period - we'd be free until - then dinner at halftwelve I think was it. Then we'd have a recreation period and back in to study prayers and study in what's called the Little Office again and study again in the evening. But we studied in our rooms you know. Each had our own room you know.

Once again I'll ask you was there anything that you liked study-wise down there?

Ah I liked the study of theology yes.

Anything you didn't like?

A lot would depend on the teacher of course you know.

We're back to the teachers again. And what were they like? Was there a difference in them?

On the whole they were pretty good.

So when we finish that where do we go from there? You're about 21 - 22 now?

No I'd be more. I'd be ordained.

You'd be ordained; was that a big day?

The end of the four years.

32

Yes, was that a big day for you?

It was yes. Well it was and it wasn't actually because I couldn't have as many relatives as we wanted because there were nine of us being ordained and we were being ordained in a fairly small chapel so we were reduced to ten guests each you know. In fact there were many more that wanted to come that couldn't come you know. We were ordained by a Bishop McNeilly. That was 1952. And then we were ordained on the Corpus Christi and after our breakfast we had to make our way to North Cork and to our various homes for what was called the first mass. And there was in our car we had my sister, my brother, brother-in-law, and an aunt, who was a nun from England, and myself were in that car. And it was only a small car in those days 1952; the roads wouldn't have been too good. So on the way down, being Corpus Christi on a Thursday, we met a lot of Eucharistic processions so that held us up in several towns on the way down. So it was quite late when we arrived in Knocknagree that night. The following day then we had our first mass and all the community of course would turn out for the first mass. That was always a big thing there you know. And we got a week holidays then back again.

Back to where then?

Back to Donegal.

Back to Donegal. And what was in Donegal then for you when you went back?

Well we stayed there then. We would have had exams by the provincial and his definitors and anything like that - the faculties and all that and then we got our assignments.

So where were you assigned to after Donegal?

I was assigned to Rome for two years unfortunately.

33

Unfortunately, why do you say that?

Well I didn't like the idea I wanted to go to the missions you see. But I was glad afterwards actually because that was a very exciting time in the continent but not in Ireland. Because, it was before the Vatican Council and there was a lot of new ideas and movement and all that on the continent which really hadn't reached Ireland.

Tape 2: Side I

This recording contains an oral history interview with Father Ronan Herlihy conducted at his home in Raheny on 20 January 2003 on behalf of the Department of Modern History at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. It forms part of the Mission History oral Archive and was conducted by Dr. Charles Flynn. The oral archive is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences by way of a post-doctoral fellowship which was awarded to Dr. Flynn.

So when I went to Rome I got in contact with all that. I'm always thankful for that you know.

How did that affect you as an individual, the exposure to these new ideas?

Very much I think. I mean the whole idea of scripture study, the new approaches to the liturgy and all that. The preparation really for the Vatican Council had started in Europe fifteen years before the Vatican Council so the. When I was in Rome of course we were just doing study as I had done in Ards you see just getting a licentiate in theology you see. But I was very selective. What I had done before I wouldn't go to it because it was just a repetition so I was looking around and see what things I'd like to do in say liturgy and scripture and things like that and I could make my own way and attend my own - I attend classes I wasn't supposed to be attending you know.

Right and did you have exams -was this college you were attending in Rome?  
Yes it was the Gregorian in Rome.

And did you have exams too?  
All subjects were in Latin.

So were getting to the Latin. So the subjects that you would have done already?  
Yes it was just only a repeat for those actually.

Would you have done those in Latin?  
No in English.

So how did you fare out then?  
It took quite a while to settle down to it you know and especially the ones I found easy were the American professors because they spoke slowly and not with the continental accent you know; especially the Spanish. I found it very, very difficult to understand them.

The Spanish people speaking Latin?  
The Spanish professors yes.

And it must have been very exciting going from Donegal to Rome?  
Donegal was such a nicer place.

35

Yes but you're going from a rural setting in Donegal and you're slap into the middle of a very bustling city are you not?

You are yes, but we were kind of restricted in ways you know. Because we had a big international college there so we had - that would be from all countries you know. So again well, we would be able to get out round Rome on Sunday evening and visit different places and also on a Thursday because otherwise it was to the university -

you'd walk to the university and back again; because we were in the Gregorian - the Jesuit University you see.

And you say you would have had people from all over the world; you would have been mixing then in the university?

Yes we had our own Capuchins and also in the university.

But you would have been mixing with people from different universities, Capuchins from different countries?

Yes.

And that would have been a change from your

It would yes, and a very difficult time also because I was one of the few English speakers there when I went you know and I would have been a lonesome time until you get to know the people and a little bit of the language you know.

Did you form any life long friendships there?

Yes a few. One of them died since actually

Were they from Ireland or from?

Well my best friend was from America.

36

America right.

One from Spain also.

So the idea, this is what I'm trying to come to really, is the idea of bringing the Capuchins together from all over the world to the one college would seem to have worked in your case? That you formed friendships with other nationalities?

Ah yes.

Would that be fair to say?

Yes fairly fair to say yes.

Fairly fair to say; right well I won't assume anything into it?

Because I just spent two years there.

And you come to do the exams then you have to sit the exams there?

Yes.

And you have to obviously write in Latin as well?

No it was oral.

No so bad.

And that's where I found the difficulty because I met one Spanish and I couldn't understand him it was all hard [vocal sounds] you know. But I survived it.

You survived it. Is there anything that sticks out in your mind about Rome?

I suppose I did see Rome. We used to go out every Thursday and Sunday visiting the various basilicas and all that you know. It was really an experience you know because

if you were going into the church of Saint Peters you know every time you went in there it got bigger you know.

37

I've never been in Saint Peters it's an ambition that I have to fulfil yet. Please God I will. So after Rome then where do you go?

After Rome I came back to Donegal again and I was teaching for three years.

In the college?

In the college in Donegal.

And what were you teaching?

I was teaching theology what was called Fundamental Theology and a bit of Liturgy.

And you brought home your ideas from; Pre-Vatican ideas to Ireland?

I suppose yes.

Were they discussed?

Yes and no; you know because they were a bit progressive for some.

That's what I asked.

But it would have affected me in my own thinking and in my own preaching you know and my teaching also with the pupils I was dealing with you know.

Were there any objections to the fact that you were bringing liberal approach to the thing?

No, except I remember one incident all right. One of the students who was asked to give a discussion on Our Lady he came to me for some help you know. So anyway the professor of that particular subject wasn't very pleased with his exposition.

38

Because of your influence?

Yes but I don't think he knew it you know.

So you have two years back in Donegal?

Three.

Three, anything that sticks out in your mind about that is there?

Lovely place.

What about the pupils you were dealing with did you have any difficulty with them?

No.

How did you find the transition from being a pupil to being a teacher?

I mixed pretty well with them. We went out playing football with them and walked with them you know because I would have been closer to them than the professor that had been teaching me before I left you know.

Yes, so where are you off to then?

After then to Africa actually.

We're talking about what year?

'57.

I was going to say '58 but '57?

Well it would be the end of '57. And what happened there was, there was a new regulation came out that the newly ordained had to do a year's pastoral study and not go straight into ministry. So they decide that those going to Africa, to Zambia or to Northern Rhodesia then

39

- those going to Northern Rhodesia would go out and spend a year in Africa and so a bit of study out there, pastoral work out there. So I had been down giving a retreat down in Cork and I came to our head house in Dublin on the way back to Ards, that's Donegal, and the provincial had come home - was coming home from Africa after a visitation. So I said I'll take a chance and I walked into him. I said, "I'd like to go to Africa." So he said, "go back to Donegal and we'll see." So I didn't know about this regulation you see and they had a meeting that week and they decided I'd go out to Africa to start this year's pastoral study in Zambia. So that's how I got to Africa.

Now that would be a journey, how did you travel?

Well he thought that it was very important that I get out quickly and I missed the boat, so I was the first to fly out. [insert: I would have gone from Southampton to Cape Town; spent a week in Cape Town, and then go up by train to Zambia. Albert would probably have given you that experience.

Well he did but that's Albert's experience and I'd like to hear yours?

But I wouldn't have had that experience you see.

On the boat? On the boat trip, but he did talk about the train journey. So you were in Cape Town for a week?

No, I flew. I was the first to fly rather than go by boat.

So you flew to where - Zambia?

I flew, I don't even remember the place I flew to now, I flew to Nairobi. From Nairobi down to Bulawayo. No, from Nairobi to Salisbury, which is now Harare and from Harare to Bulawayo and from Bulawayo to Livingstone. It would have been a night in Rome, or a night in London; a night in Salisbury, which is now Harare. So it would have been two days travelling. So there were no direct flights then.

40

So you were in Livingstone; you were there with Albert were you?

I was there with Albert yes.

Were you in the parish?

I was in another parish. That was in the African township. He'd have been in the eh Livingstone itself

And was there a name on the African township?

Maramba.

And what were your responsibilities and your duties there?

Well there was a few - two newly ordained students had come out so my responsibilities was to do pastoral work with them even though I was just out in the

country myself you know. But then I had to make an attempt to learn the language. Of course still at that time the mass was still in Latin you see so I'd be able to start at saying Mass immediately.

Now what about the cultural change from coming again from nice rural peaceful Donegal to the middle of Maramba?

I suppose I took it in my stride you know.

Was there anything that impressed you or affected you in any way?

Not particularly.

41

You were living in the African township?

Living in the African township and we had a community of four or five of Irish.

All Irish?

All Irish yes.

Were there any foreigners there at all?

There was a secondary school there and a primary school; a big primary school. There were sisters, German, at the beginning and then later Irish sisters and I can't remember now - the teachers started coming at that time - no I don't think so; the Irish teachers hadn't started coming at that time.

Were you responsible for education there or?

Not at that stage.

You were just more or less training at this stage?

Well I was only there for a year.

For a year. What about the living conditions of the native population what were they, the living conditions, like?

Where we were it was a big township. Living conditions were small houses but there would have been asbestos roofs and concrete blocks you know. You would have shanty towns then all right you know where they just put up a bit of a shelter. Grass I suppose. Some of them would be grass houses in that area. Attached to that parish then we would have had outschools and out - at that stage it would be mostly outschools where we used to say mass you know. It was at a later stage we started building small churches you know.

42

So what - I'm trying to get an idea of how you would work; how you would spend a day working in Maramba there. What was involved there?

I had several classes with the two chaps that were there.

Were they Irish?

They were Irish they were just ordained and I'd have been teaching them actually you know. And then we used to have to help out with the masses and visitation of the people you know. You'd have to visit the different areas in what we used to call the compounds.

This was the native people?

Yes.

And how would they react to you coming round?

Ah very friendly no problems. One of the big problems there was language because in all the towns in Northern Rhodesia you'd have - you see there's something like seventy two different tribes in the country.

[Interview interrupted]

Now where were we? We were talking about your visitations to the native people.

Well you see I only spent a year there and then I was sent out on my first assignment which was. I had gone out to a mission for Christmas to help out at Christmas to one of the nearer missions, which was a place called, Sichili.

Again I'll need you to spell that out for me?

S i c h i l i. Albert probably have told you something about that. When you get the history of the missions, especially inside in Church Street, you know the whole set up of the whole country. At the time you know and if you were to go out there you had to get on a lumber

43

train that's about eleven-o'clock at night. And that left about two-o'clock in the morning at ten miles an hour so you got out to a place Machili the end of the line. 110 miles doing ten miles an hour; got out about twelve-o'clock the following day. And then I'd have been met by one of the priests from the mission which would be about thirty miles away and driven to the mission and that's where I spent my first Christmas. At that stage I wouldn't have known the language so I'd have helped out at mass.

Now he did mention Sichili but Albert's experience would seem to be more within his own area than out in the bush or whatever you call it.

That's right yes.

Is that what you called it out in the bush?

Yes the bush yes.

So Sichili would have been out in the bush than?

Sichili would be - that's all bush you know.

So what was life like out there? I know you only spent Christmas there but what was it like you know living conditions?

Well I'd have been back again there in later years you know.

Oh you were back there again?

Yes I'd be coming and going. But whilst things would have improved a lot by the time I arrived there because they had already built pretty good houses you know. We would have had water. We wouldn't have had electricity. Electricity came later after I going there. The water would consist of a drum, a forty-four gallon

44

drum, and you'd get one of the Africans to fill the drum so you'd draw the water from there you see. Living conditions of the people themselves you'd just all grass huts you know. The sisters - there'd have been a hospital there, and a school there: a boy's school and a girl's school. It would have been about a hundred boy boarders there and



about almost two-hundred girl boarders there. And they would be fed from about fifteen or twenty other schools. They'd come in from the lower classes they'd - I don't know if I should go into this or not because it's a whole education system.

Please do.

When I went to that area first there were no schools. So then - and they'd no teachers. All this would be in the whole history before my time you know. So there are people who would know much more about it than I would you know.

Speak away.

They had a lot of trouble of course when they went out there first because there was such a thing as spheres of influence. I don't know I you ever heard of the phrase 'spheres of influence'?

I have.

So we weren't allowed open any schools in that area because there had been a Paris Mission School, a Protestant school a Paris Mission they were called, in that area at one time. So the first people that went out there in 1931-32 they weren't allowed go to set up any station there and they had to go out to a place where there was no population and they stayed there for two year. This is a whole history but you'll get it better in other sections. Now I don't know if I should go into it you know.

45

Just briefly go on. You're doing rightly.

Now there were three of the early priests there, one of them was Bishop O'Shea [insert: at that time Father O'Shea, he became a bishop later] and another one who was Monsignor Flynn [insert: at that time Father Flynn. Father Killian Flynn became the first Apostolic Delegate [editor: Prefect Apostolic] of the mission - Monsignor Flynn was succeeded by Bishop O'Shea]. Both of them went on and did great things there later but they were sent out in an area where there was no people. And after about, I think about two years or so, some District Commissioner, I don't know if you know the word District Commissioner, he came upon these three people with you know degrees and they doing nothing so eventually he got them shifted and he got them moved into this place Sichili. So then they had to go and - they had no teachers - and they had to go and set up basic primary education and then get a few teachers with after four years primary basic education get teachers, form a few teachers and that's how education , the whole education system started there you know.

The District Commissioner you talked about, was he attached to the British administration?

Yes.

He was a white man I take it?

Yes, in Northern Rhodesia at that time and there wouldn't have been any blacks in that administration you know.

Now what about your time in Sichili, where did you go from there?

From there.

46

Is there anything that sticks out about Sichili at that first visit?

Well it would have been my first experience out into the bush you know and lots of things stick out you know.

Well mention some of them to me?

I suppose my first train journey out. I went out with Bishop O'Shea he was a bishop at that time. He'd have been made a bishop in 1950, this was 1957. So he came down to - oh he was going out to Sichili too for Christmas so he came into the train later and we had trek beds and he came about two-o'clock and put down his head and slept and snored the whole way and I couldn't get a wink of sleep.

You mentioned a lumber train now I take it that's timber?

Yes, and there wasn't any carriages or anything it would have been a coach for carrying goods but otherwise the rest would be just open carriages with the timber on.

So you talking about no benches, nothing to sit on?

No.

Just a goods wagon as you would see in a station here?

Yes, and anyway early in the morning he - he'd get up early in the morning and I was trying to get a bit of sleep and oh he said, "oh look at the lion outside". So I jumped out of bed to see the lion and it was two women hoeing the garden you know. He was just pulling my leg. I remember Christmas day going to mass to a village. It would be in a hut. Mass would have been in a grass hut. So he was driving an old four-by-four truck and he was going around just picking up the people who were jumping on the truck as he was going along. And then he stopped and we had to push the truck, he had to

47

start it again, and we had great difficulty. And then once he got going he was afraid to stop so we all had to try and jump on as best we could. I remember offering the mass there, in Latin of course, but then the prayers were in Silozi and I tried to say the prayers at the end of the mass in Sitozi and they started laughing at me so the bishop had to take over.

And how long did you spend there in Sichili?

I only spent about six or seven weeks there.

You would have been mixing more with the - oh what's the word I'm looking for? The word I'm looking for is something to do with the real African living in.

Oh yes. there would be no - I suppose about fifteen or twenty miles down the road there was a forestry station - there would have been a few Europeans there because that was in a teak [forest] area and then policy was to regulate the cutting of the timber. So that's why the train was bringing the timber from there you see into Livingstone. And they would regulate the cutting of trees so that it would be self regenerating. So they would be the few Europeans near us otherwise there would be no Europeans.

And how did you find the natives took to the Catholic religion?

Well at that stage now, the stage I went out there, they'd have been more - at the stage I went there now we would have had quite a lot of our own teachers trained.

48

Tape 2: Side 2

Would these have been African teachers or?

All African teachers. [insert: At this stage a few sisters were still teaching. At the beginning there were no sisters. There were no African teachers so all teaching was done by the priests who in turn trained the first African teachers.]

All African teachers?

Yes and they were very, very good then and they would have been - got their primary training from a lot of them. By the time - when I got there a lot of them would have got their primary training from priests or sisters so they were well trained also. And then they would have got teacher training from teachers from our own people you know. So they were very, very good and they would teach the catechism then in the schools. And the schools, at that stage we hadn't - at a later stage we'd have come on to small Christian communities but they would have been teaching all the religion you know and we would have been managing the schools. So we would have to visit the schools, on foot mostly, at that time; although Sichili wasn't too bad. And they would teach the pupils for baptism you know and then we'd do a little bit of examination for that as we could and they'd have to teach themselves the [unknown] you know examine them and that's how really the Christian faith started there you know through teachers and catechists, you know.

Now when you say you would have been managing the schools, were you in Sichili on your own or were there more Capuchins?

Oh at that time I wasn't managing any schools at all.

49

You weren't managing any schools?

I came back to Livingstone after three or four weeks and then I was sent to another station Sioma. There were three of us there. There was another priest and a brother and myself and I was there for - the other priest he was the manager of schools - so we'd be doing the ordinary work then of the religious and also visiting schools which would be his job to visit schools. Because it was a government appointment the manager of schools. After a year he left because his mother was ill so I had to go and take over as manager of schools with no, very little, experience. At that time we used to have to walk to all the schools so you'd be out maybe for about two weeks walking to the various schools and then maybe after that section you'd be out for another two weeks. You'd have carriers with you to carry your goods you know. Also there were no roads or anything there. That was on the Zambezi River and at that the whole place was teeming with game you know. You'd wake up in the morning and there'd be elephants and all sorts of game going on to the river because we were right on the bank of the river and they are all gone now of course; all shot out.

And how far a distance would it be from school to school like you're talking about being away for maybe two weeks?

Sometimes it would be a day's walk. Now you'd start off maybe about seven or eight-o'clock in the morning depending on the cold weather and you'd do three miles-an-hour. So if you were doing a long journey you'd stay the night and then arrive at the school the following morning. Or else if it was fairly near you you'd keep travelling to the school which the African didn't like very much. They didn't like to travel too quickly or too late in the evening you know.

50

They didn't like travelling at night?  
Oh no there was no travelling at night.

And was there something about that?  
No, they'd be afraid of animals you know. There'd be a lot of lion and?

What about superstitions?  
No as far as I know I don't know any superstition now of

Travelling at night?  
Yes.

Would you ever have to stay really out in the open on these travels?  
I nearly always stayed out in the open.

And what are we talking about now a tent or?  
No, just under a tree because in those days I used to have what was called a manager's house you see and I had - it would be a grass shelter you know. And for some reason I didn't like these because I was afraid of bugs and things being there you know because all sorts of people were using the place you know and I used generally have a trek bed and your mosquito net and I'd sleep under a tree. Now the Africans, or carriers as we called them, they would have had built a fire and they would sleep around the fire. I'd be away at a distance under a tree but they never liked what I was doing that because they were afraid of an animal coming in and taking me you see because there were hyenas also which were very dangerous. But I never had any problem with them.

51

It sounds very exciting?  
It was.

Were you aware of that sense of excitement or?  
Yes I enjoyed it. I remember the brother I was with Brother Andrew he's a famous man; he had been married actually before he became a Capuchin, he was telling me when I was doing my first trek you see, he was telling me, "ah you'll wake up the following day and you won't be able to move a foot, you won't be able to move a muscle and you'll be all tight up," you know after the walking. I was pleasantly surprised I was able to take it when I woke up the following morning you know. But it was a very healthy life you know.

This could be to do with the football that year?  
It might have been.

So where did you move then after - where are we now Sioma?  
Sioma, I moved from Sioma to Livingstone again. Back to Livingstone to Maramba the first place because the manager of schools there - now there was a very big number of schools there in Livingstone. We had two education secretaries. One was for Livingstone, which was a part of the Southern Province, and the other one was in Mongu, which was part of the Western Province where most of our missions were. So the man there was going on holidays and I was asked to go down and take over the

schools for him. So I spent a year there because for some other reason he didn't come back for a year to that place so I had to look after the schools there. At that time we had just opened a big secondary school for girls which was the first Catholic girl's boarding school - secondary boarding school, in Northern Rhodesia. So it was for all the nine dioceses.

52

So they sent their girls there. At that stage we had started to get teachers, expatriate teachers from outside so it would help with the teaching that would have been the biggest thing there. Then we had a big primary school in the mission also. There would have been anything up to a thousand pupils in it and that would have been managed by a sister. She'd have been the headmistress but then we had African teachers also you see. And then attached to that we would have Livingstone itself we would have had - fifty-per-cent of the schools would have been opened by us. They would have been Catholic schools, primary now. Some of those were quite big and then we'd have schools also in the outlying areas. So that was one of my main duties in managing those which would mean supplying all equipment to them and pencils, papers, jotters everything you know. Also getting buildings, new schools, buildings and that you know.

Now at that stage, this was before Independence, and in those days if you wanted to open a school people would come to you and say, "would you open a school in such and such a place." And then we'd have to go over and take a census of the children from one to six or something and then that would be brought before the District Council of Education to prove that there was enough children coming up to warrant a school. If there were enough children you'd either get a one teacher or school two a two teacher school depending on the number, you see. Then you had to go back to them, we'll call them chiefs the different names or the head man, and say, "yes you can open a school - we'll open a school here but you must do the buildings. So the people then - they were highly organised. The Silozi system of government was very highly organised which was destroyed later. But they would have to build, with the local materials, two classrooms and two teachers'

53

houses before they would get the school. And then the school would open and that was that done. All the work would be organised by themselves and every village - there might be ten villages say - that wanted to send their children to that school. Each village would get its own assignment. Bring grass or bring poles and this and that and that's how the school would start.

And did you ever have, in that situation, interference from chiefs or from British? Not from chiefs. The chiefs were always very favourable to us you know; from the British yes you know.

And what form would that take?

That form: because there were also other agencies you see and they would have been most Paris Mission you know which would be Protestant. There were some other ones also and strange enough with the British they would never stay with them in their missions. When they'd be going around on tour - they'd have to go around on tour and they'd have to go around walking that was part of their work they had to walk on tour they couldn't take vehicles so they had to walk from village to village under the British system - but they would never stay in a Protestant mission. But they'd stay with us always.

This is the British people, civil servants?

Yes, because they could have a drink, a drop of whiskey or a beer. They wouldn't even be allowed to smoke in the Protestant mission. So they liked staying with us but when it came to the crunch they wouldn't back us up very often you know.

54

Well I have to ask this question now; would that have helped to influence decisions? Sometimes yes but there'd be very big rows. There'd have been very, very big rows at the meetings oh yes you know. I mean somebody was writing on it that the Catholics and Protestants - what way was it put now? They fought one another for the love of God you know at that stage you know.

Do you remember any of those particular rows?

The Africans themselves they were always very - later now; this would be later now when independence you know, I remember one particular one. He would have been an African District Governor you see and he'd have been the chairman and all his children had gone to our school, boarding school, and they would all have become Catholics you see. The New Apostolic Church I think, one of these anyway, they objected. The people came to us, this was in another area altogether, the people came to us and asked us to open a school there so we went out and did the survey and all that but they thought we were moving too close to their territory. And the day of the meeting they sent a big delegation, they organised a big delegation to come outside to object you see. So the comment he made was, "I'm neutral" he says - oh yes I'm trying to think what group it was - "I'm neutral" he says, "I'm a Protestant." - which was another group again - "but for me anyway" he says, "the Catholics are the best."

This is the chief?

The District Governor you know who would have been an African. They were always very, very favourable towards us you know.

55

Now when you were saying the day of this meeting where was this meeting taking place

Well I'm at an area - I'm at a time now really I'm jumping.

Right was it in the village or was it?

No, when I was Education Secretary of the whole diocese except for Livingstone.

Right we'll come back to that. Now were there any difficulties in getting the goods that you were talking about the pens and papers and various things like that you were responsible for?

Again I was involved in education for years and years and at different stages you know. I mean after Independence.

We'll talk about Independence now. How did that come about for you or how do you feel about that?

Well I went out there in 1957 and if anybody said it that there would be independence in 1964, which was seven years later - they'd think you were mad. Nobody foresaw it. But then the movement came down from the north. You had the Ghana - it started at Ghana and then you had the Mau Mau and then you had the Congo and the movement came down and the famous statement of McMillan in the South African Parliament

when he said, "the winds of-", he spoke about "the winds of change." You might have heard that famous phrase he made in South African Parliament and told them that they'd have to change. So the winds blew into a storm and it was either bloodshed or handing over. So within seven years Zambia or Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, they were protectorate under Welenski. Now the winds of change Northern Rhodesia saw the writing on the wall either bloodshed or hand over; Nyasaland the same; Southern Rhodesia no they

56

wouldn't, "not in a thousand years" Smith said; so independence came in '64 to Zambia. And we were Zambia was one of the richest countries in Africa now it's the poorest. That's the change that came about due to various causes you know.

When did you first become aware of the movement towards independence?

Almost - ah it had started immediately I was there you know UNIP (United National Independence Movement [Editor: Party]) you know.

And was there any apart from - was it political agitation or what was the movement - what did the movement consist of towards independence?

What do you mean?

Was there violence attached to?

There was some violence.

Is there any of it that you remember, that you experienced?

We were pretty lucky in our area you know we didn't have that much violence as the north of the country. Now one of our men, he died here actually a great friend of mine, he was in Livingstone: he was Vicar General of Livingstone at that time. And Livingstone was the place where all the executions took place. He used to attend all the executions. Now there was one very bad violent escapade, or what do you call it, up in the north of the country in what's called the Copper Belt. UNIP, they were the party that was agitating for independence under Kaunda you'd have heard. And the UNIP were supposed to have a very big meeting there and at the last moment the authorities banned it so they rioted.

57

And there was one woman driving a car Mrs. Burton, with her child and they burned her car and they and then both of them died. Now there was one chap was picked up for that and he was sent to Livingstone; condemned to death; and father Salvator, my friend, he was attending to him. But he was convinced himself, this doesn't go on the record possibly.

[Interview edited]

So that violence took place in the area that you were in was it?

No the north, mostly the north of the country. There was - we would have had troubles with the - when we were under the Lozi they were very pro-UNIP and pro-Independence which they changed after independence started for reasons. We would have had some trouble with schools but not very much you know and the strange thing about the violence was the schools that had been built by the government with 100% grant - they were burned down. But the schools that I was telling you now that the people had to build themselves - they never touched them.

So the schools that were built by the British Government?

Yes, with full money. With full grant; they burned them down. Not in our area but up north. The schools that the people themselves built they were their schools not government schools, so there was an awful lot of lessons learned there you know.

Did they make a distinction between Irishness and Englishness?

Oh very much so yes.

58

Did they make a distinction?

Yes.

In what way?

Some of them - before independence some of them were sent to Ireland to training for local government you know around the country. And they went back they came back as rebels you know. I remember one fellow who was Hillary, he caused them awful trouble you know and he used come to us and tell us about the fight for Irish freedom and all that you know.

Is that right?

Oh yes. Oh they never associated us with the British at all.

At all, at all?

No.

So that would seem to indicate perhaps a reason why you were safe?

Oh it would yes.

Would it?

It would yes.

Was that ever said to you?

Well you'd feel it, you know, you'd feel it but I don't remember it being said to me. Well it would be by this fellow in our village. These fellows that came back they would say it all right because I knew one of them pretty well you know and he used visit us you know.

And he'd say what you needn't worry about, everything's okay or?

Ah no, I don't think - they never held anything like that towards us you know. We never had any trouble.

59

No I don't mean any trouble. Like I talked to one lady who was a Protestant living in my own town Dundalk during the troubles and they had been visited by the IRA and told not to worry they were okay.

Oh yes.

Would that have happened to you?

No.

Do you know what I mean in that situation?



Yes.

But you felt safe anyway that's the main thing?

Yes.

And the affects of independence on what you were doing. Now you mentioned the economic affects briefly we can maybe touch that again?

Well at that stage I was Education Secretary for the whole of the Western Province. And that would consist of five or six secondary schools, teacher training and about 120 or 130 primary schools various sizes. At independence the money flowed in from all over: too much of it you know.

From?

America, England, Russia, China.

Are we talking business now or are we talking government grants?

Government grants yes mostly government grants and a lot of it did more harm than good you know.

60

I mean I'll just give you one example now. Every province area got a tractor and ploughs so that the people would be able to get their agriculture going you see in a bigger way. But what they didn't know was that deep ploughing wasn't good for the land. Number two, they had been ploughing with their oxen and with a hoe but mostly the oxen and they had fertilizer from the oxen. They had to supply them with fertilizer. There was a survey made by Dumont. I don't know if you ever heard of *False Start in Africa*. He was a Frenchman and he was sent around a couple of years later to assess how the affects of the money and he didn't find one single tractor working. They were all gone because they were never trained with machinery you see. Fertilizer was just left there rotting you know. That was just one example of the help they got you know. That was just one of many you know. He did also a survey in Tanzania but he wasn't allowed publish it.

In England or in Ireland?

In Tanzania they wouldn't accept it. And that's a book also *Africa Strangled*.

How did it affect the social structures both in the white areas and in the black areas?

I wouldn't know a whole lot about the social structures in the white area. Well I would know quite a bit but I was more in the African areas you know.

61

Tape 3: Side I

This recording contains an oral history interview with Father Ronan Herlihy conducted at his home in Raheny on 20 January 2003 on behalf of the Department of Modern History at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. It forms part of the Mission History oral Archive and was conducted by Dr. Charles Flynn. The oral archive is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences by way of a post-doctoral fellowship which was awarded to Dr. Flynn.

What happened there was - I mentioned there the Lozi, the people we were dealing with - it was a protectorate which meant that there were no Europeans allowed in there except government officials and missionaries and few shop traders very few. But

there was nobody allowed to have land – to own land or anything and there was no Indians allowed in. But what am I on to yes - at independence; the chiefs didn't want independence in our area because they were very well paid by the British government. So the chiefs never went along with independence and the independence movement so they [UNIP] which was the independence movement, they had to act against the chiefs also as well as against the British. So when they got independence they set out to break the power of the chiefs. As a result the whole there was upstarts of politicians put in, in place of the chiefs. The chiefs lost their power. As a result these people were not respected by the people and where you had the system going back into the ages say of cleanliness in the village you see; if you didn't have your what we used to call a latrine, your toilet you were fined. If you were a thief you were thrown out of the village. A whole lot of this discipline fell apart and never really recovered. So that was one of the social things. Also you remember I mentioned to you there

62

about the chiefs organising the building of schools which were self-help you see. Now before independence they [UNIP] went around and told the people that they were not to have any of this self-help that the government must pay for everything. Then when it became policy of self-help for the new government after a few years: for instance they would get - for schools they would get steel stanchions and the roof - a galvanized roof. But then they were told to fill in with bricks in between to make the classrooms, the people that had told the people that they were not to have self-help they now had to go back and tell the people self-help, and the people wouldn't do it. So the whole - this whole cultural native system broke down really and it hasn't recovered.

And are you saying to me that that was because of the natives themselves and not because of British rule?

It was because the chiefs didn't go along with independence and they didn't want independence so the people who were looking for independence had to fight the chiefs as well as the British. So you see the point.

I do see the point but most people I think would have interpreted that as - most people would attribute blame as they did in Ireland you know to the British interference: British interference in this and British interference in that. Like a big paintbrush and paint everything it's all the Brits fault?

I don't eh.

The break up of the native social order.

Oh I see.

63

Most people would consider that to be 'it's all Britain's fault.' But really what you are saying to me is a slightly different slant on that... that it was because certain native - certain elements if the native population didn't agree with another element that - that was influential in breaking up?

Well you see the area I'm talking about was different from the rest of the country because that - it was under a Paramount Chief. It was the Paramount chief of the Lozi that had given the rest of the country to the British you see. There was as you possibly the chiefs had to get protection from other chiefs so they had to call in outside help. So it was purely accidental that our area of Zambia which was at this side of the border that it didn't come under the Portuguese in Angola. And the reason it didn't

come under the Portuguese because there was a hunter there, Westbeech, I think, and he persuaded the Paramount chief to go for the British and not to get the Portuguese and the reason was because he was a Protestant he didn't want the Catholics in. Now, so because it was protectorate they didn't interfere with any of the government. They left them govern themselves.

Right I'm with you now.

So the rest of Zambia wouldn't have been under the same. But it also happened in the rest of Zambia you know I think of Northern Rhodesia Zambia.

So have you anything more to add to the independence thing than we discussed? Did it affect the way you ran your schools?

No actually it was the opposite.

64

In what respect?

The money started piling in you see. Now where we were there was very poor transport, no roads hardly and big distances and the money poured in especially for schools. Well I don't know - I was dealing with schools so I'd know more about schools and hospitals also. The schools would have been away miles, miles away out there you know. Now in some of our missions we had set up trade schools you know and we also, our brothers especially, they had trained builders to put up our buildings. To put up things like schools and things like that you see. So we had in each of our missions we had a building unit. The money started pouring in to that area. There were government schools which were about fifty-per-cent of the schools possibly. [insert: very few government managed schools] Our schools would have been oh thirty or forty-pre-cent of the schools and then you had the Protestant schools. Now the government [insert: and Protestant schools] weren't able - they hadn't the facilities and the know how or the organisation to use the money so they use to allocate money to us; we'd get our jobs done and then they'd come begging to us will you take more money because they had to put up a good show and show that they were spending the money you know. So in that way there was no limit to it really because there was several different schemes started. I was talking about the self-help business that was one of them you know. And we had to organise the people for the self-help also you see. Does that explain it?

Yes it does but were you successful in the self-help thing the second time around?

Well we could say we were more successful than they were but it did have an effect all right you know.

65

And did the quality of the education improve then?

No, because when you expand you know you haven't I mean up to this you have the more intellectual or the better pupils going on you see because it was very restricted you know. Maybe five or six of a class might go on to secondary school if you were lucky. Then when they started expanding the secondary schools the standard - it would naturally go down you know.

The standard?

Yes the standard.

Now was the main thrust of that money spent in secondary education?

Secondary and primary and university of course.

So it was an overall really.

Yes, and our standard of education was so high compared to the other schools - even compared to government schools - that when they opened the university in Zambia there was over 50% of the pupils Catholic in the university. That would be for the whole of Zambia.

That's big?

Yes.

And you mentioned trade schools there these I take it are carpentry, woodwork, metal work?

No not metalwork. There would be no electricity at that time you know.

You talked about them coming and they would ask you to take this money is there any meetings that you remember where these kind of things happened – where you were flabbergasted or maybe surprised by an approach by a?

Well I was also involved at one stage in development. When I gave up education I was in development. The stage came when even the overseas aid people giving the aid didn't want to give it to government they wanted to give it to us. I can give you one example up in the Northern Province. The Americans they wanted to build fishponds and also build the houses for the people to look after them you see. Who would be responsible for the fishponds and it came to a couple-of-million dollars. They wanted us to do

[one page edited out]

Now in the aftermath of independence what - you were still in Zambia then were you?

Yes.

And you were in education for how many years?

I was in education until '74.

Ten years from '64?

And then I was a VG. A Vicar General to the bishop the new bishop and then I also had to take over development after a while because somebody who was on development left and I had to kind of fill a gap.

Is there anything that I may have missed about the independence thing? Is there anything that I mightn't have asked you that might be relevant?

We had a big influx of expatriates you know teachers and nurses but especially teachers. Because at independence there was only a small number of Africans had university degrees.

67

[insert: and also teachers trained for secondary schools] They were very, very short of teachers. We couldn't - then they had a big programme to educate teachers especially for secondary schools and primary schools as well but secondary schools we're dealing with now. As a result we - they wouldn't give us any of the trained African teachers because they wanted to keep them for their own schools and we had to bring in expatriates. So we'd have - this man now the other man Father Crispin, he would have been dealing with the schools for the whole of Zambia at that time and I think he would have had something like 300 teachers you know expatriates, an awful lot of

them from Ireland. Quite a number from India also a number from England also the English what was it now? I'm trying to think of the name now of the English volunteer that come through the English government you know.

Did this put a strain in your administration there?

No it wouldn't no, because that was mostly secondary you see and at that time now, the sisters came since of course, the sisters would be principal of the secondary school. And the Christian Brothers came out to help us and the Brothers took over our secondary schools also; the Irish Christian Brothers, so that was a big relief you see.

Anything else I might have missed?

Independence, no I don't think so.

So your next move then you were talking about you were VG what did that involve or what?

It was our first African bishop after our own man had been there for. He was made bishop in 1950. We were most fortunate in the man we got a very genuine man, a very good bishop you know so it was a pleasure working with him you know.

68

And what responsibilities would you have now with him?

Well I had quite a few; a lot of responsibilities actually because I also had to look after - I was secretary, not secretary, for the previous VG became secretary for Father Salvator and he was a great help to me so he stayed on there. So what was I doing? I was as VG I had to take over the finance for the diocese and the development of the diocese and development funding and training and also the lay apostolate so I really had too much.

So what - now when you say the finance are you talking about the finance for all the schools all the hospitals is that what we're talking about?

Yes and no. The finance for the hospitals - I mean schools would have been getting their own funding through the government. You see the government would have been paying the salaries. The system there we had was - the system we had in Northern Rhodesia which continued was the government would give 75% of the money for buildings and we would but in 25% for hospitals and schools. Teachers and nurses they would be 100% paid by government you know.

So what finances were you responsible for when you say you were responsible for finance?

I'd have been responsible for the finances of all the missions the daily running of the missions you know. So every mission would have been on an allowance you see from the diocese. A lot of that would come from our own, from Ireland from Rome etcetera.

69

Oh through the collections and various things and you'd administer that?

Through the Vatican also through Rome you see.

From external sources?

Yes.

So from whatever external sources the finance came in you looked after it?

Yes, and also I was responsible for getting the funding for development projects you see. And supposing we had - in development we gradually came to the need people would not get any project for anything unless they themselves did what they were able to do, subsidiarity. So if they wanted say a well, and clean water was very important because of disease, they had to do, they had to dig the well, they had to do this they had to do that and we would supply the what they couldn't supply. So it safer than any other project and that was what I would be dealing with. Like I would be dealing with outside organisations like Misereor or Cafod and all of these you know.

So you're back to the self-support again?

Yes, oh yes very much so.

Now how did that go down? How did that fair with the people that you were dealing with?

It means training first. We trained leaders to go out.

How were they chosen?

The mission themselves would know their people you know. [insert: but the leaders would have to be chosen by each community]

70

Something like your education in Ireland?

Yes. [insert; emergent leaders]

Something on the same lines?

Something on the same lines [insert: not exactly. Africa was years ahead in the training of leaders] and then we had a team going around training them at the different missions you know.

And then what did the training consist of?

Self-sufficiency.

Common sense?

Oh yes. The main idea was you know no help. You see the early missionaries, as you possibly know, we went out and did things for them you see and they did not regard - the same as going back to the burning of the schools - when you went out and built something for them, or built a well or built water, or gave them water, that was yours. It wasn't theirs you see so if anything went wrong you must come and fix a tap put on the galvanized iron you see. But with this programme they had been trained to be responsible for themselves in the sense that you don't give them anything unless they have given what they can give and then it was up to them to look after it and they would respect it then. For instance I would know say a hall that would have been built. This would have been called Sister Josephine's Hall because she got the money from overseas you know and she built it you know. Now if you want a hall now you'd have to make the blocks you'd have to do this, you'd have to do that and we'll supply you with say the roof.

That was complete change of emphasis wasn't it?

A complete change yes.

71

What influenced the change in emphasis?

I suppose the stories we'd have heard. I mean gradually we copped-on [editor: realised] that it was the wrong process. I think it also came in with the Small Christian Communities which was basic Christian communities in Southern America you know that they were responsible for their own church. The big change I found - when I went out in 1957 it was the Church that was brought from Ireland you know. It was our Church you know. When I left ten years ago it was their Church you know because they were more fully involved in it.

So they are going towards self-sufficiency, you have or have you, native people coming into the Church?

Oh yes. Well of course we had quite a number of priests ordained now you know and also sisters you know but also the people themselves taking responsibility for their own Church in the sense that they'll do their own funerals you know. They teach their own catechism. They will look after their own sick. We wouldn't be a Vincent de Paul they you know they would be responsible for looking after their own poor you see and various ways like that you see. And some of these can only be villages because of distances they can only be visited maybe once, twice, three times a year only you know so they are able to carry on with their own church services and all that. So that's the big difference that has come about.

Was the fall of in vocations in Ireland influential in that?

Well from my mind anyway it wouldn't because this is part of the work of the laity by their baptism and confirmation they're supposed to do this you know.

And was there a movement towards that from the lay people from the lay native people? Is it something that they wanted to embrace?

72

Oh very anxious. There's no problem say getting people to work for the church and within the church. They really loved it you know. And we had one man especially who was really started the Small Christian Communities for us and I mean a long time even before it was mentioned in other places. But he started a small little group you know and stayed with them you know. And then when people saw how they were getting on people from other places go, "why can't we do this; would you not come and help us to do the same."

Who was he?

Father Michael.

Was he an Irishman?

Yes a Capuchin an Irishman. He's now in New Zealand.

So did that blossom? How quickly did that blossom from his beginnings?

Oh it would be very slow; very, very slow. If it happened too quickly it won't last you know.

Probably true yes.

Tape 3: Side 2

So now you're in a situation over there - you came back ten years ago is that right?

Yes just around ten year ago.

You mentioned that you moved on to development what was involved there? You already mentioned the fish

73

farm but how but how responsible a job was this development job?

Well there would be in each parish they'd have to decide what they wanted and decide with the people. And then they would come and approach a development committee, our diocesan development committee which I was in charge of you see. And we'd examine it and see how valid it was and then try and get funding for it you see.

And was this run through the government or was it just run through the missionary movement?

The missionary movement: it would have been the overseas agencies especially the Germans were very good you know they really were.

Are we talking now about charitable institutions things like Trocaire and things like that that are coming to my mind is that it?

Yes but some of them would only give money - not for religious projects you know. Some of them would only give it for development projects say building a fish pond say you know which wouldn't be directly religious you know.

And that was the Americans. What about the Germans what would they be?

Oh the American government we [insert: very little] to do with them. The Germans would be - that's Misereor and Caritas. You see that would be the same as Caritas in England and Trocaire here and in America also; Switzerland; all over. So you would have a list of them and you'd know the people who'd be prepared to fund a certain project. You'd contact them and if you had a good project they'd give you the money you know.

74

And how successful were you in that now? I don't mean that from - how do you judge success - but if you went for say 100 projects would you get 95 or 94 or 90% of them funded?

I nearly always got 100% you know.

Was that down to yourself that you knew where to go for the funding?

I think it was down to they trusted us. You know once you established good relationships with them and they know that the money is being used for what they are giving it and usually these people would come around and they would also look around themselves and see what's happening you know. So it was down to relationships you know.

Would you have had any dealings with the Irish Government in that line?

A little.

How did you find them?

What is it now? That project now where they used to finance volunteers I'm trying to think of the name [insert: APSO] I think they're after interfering with it recently - they are after stopping it recently.



I know the one. I can't think of it myself but I know the one you're talking about. And how did that work out? Ah they were very good. We had one man, he was from West Cork, and he came out and he dammed a river and got hydro-electric equipment from Germany and set up a hydro-electric scheme and also a pumping scheme for the whole mission. It was quite a success.

75

Are we talking about big [unknown [project]] here?

Yes, it was enough power and water for a whole mission which would be a secondary school, a hospital and all the staff you know.

And pumped water as well?

Pumped water and electricity.

He would be supplying the expertise; you would have to find the finance for that would you?

Yes.

And were you involved in that particular project.

I was yes.

So where did you go looking for the finance for that?

Germany, Misereor, because I found them very easy to deal with.

Have we missed anything out on that? Yes we have. What about your Protestant neighbours at that stage of the game would you have had any of them around or? For the most part they'd disappeared.

After independence?

Yes, they wouldn't have had the organisation I was telling you about that we had built up around our missions you know. They wouldn't have been able to accept the money because they wouldn't be able to carry it out you know so they really didn't expand you know.

They wouldn't have been able to [do] so to an extent what the government asked you to do?

Yes.

76

Because of manpower?

Manpower and already before independence they'd already kind of stopped progressing you know.

So we're talking a combination of manpower and expertise are we or am I making it too simple?

Expertise, and I think also the confidence of the people you know. They had confidence in us you know.

The native population?

Yes, and it didn't matter whether they were Protestant or Catholic because we never did distinguish anyway with regard to hospitals or schools or anything. There was never any distinction of religion everybody was taken you know.

So if you had Protestant pupils in the school it was just?  
Ah yes.

And how would religious instruction work out in that case or were you involved in that?

Well that would be a matter for the schools you know.

And you came home ten years ago was there any particular reason why you came home?

Well as you possibly can see I was very involved and I was doing too much and I thought it was time to pull out. I didn't want to stay because I had been too involved. That would be number one. Number two - I would have to make up my mind whether to come back here and do maybe be a bit useful here for a few years or stay out there for the rest of my life you know.

77

Another one also was - the bishop I was working with he was an extremely easy man to work with you know. Very sound and you could depend on him - [insert: This was a new bishop after the other bishop was transferred to Lusaka Archdiocese] he was one of - an old man you know and you could depend on him. I'd go to him and discuss something with him and maybe I wouldn't agree with what he'd say but I always found that he was right you know because he was really a man of wisdom you know. On the other hand he'd never really - anything I wanted to do he'd always go along with me and say do it you know. So, I had a very good relationship with him you know. I'll say no more.

This is a native bishop what was his name?

Adrian Mungandu. After that he was changed to Lusaka; he became Archbishop of Lusaka.

And was it after he became archbishop that you came home of beforehand or?

No I was working the new bishop for about three years; three or four years.

And he wasn't as cooperative as this?

Well I'll say no more.

Fair enough we'll leave it at that. So you came back then to Ireland. By the way how often did you get home when you were over there?

Well when we started it was every six years; then it was every five years I think and then very three years. In the end we came home every three years.

And how many trips home overall would you have had since you went there? You went there in '57?

78

'57, I was back in '64; 1 was back in '68; 1 was back in '71; '85 1 suppose I remember going out. Every three years after '85.

From '85 every three years?

Yes.

Is there anything you remember in particular about coming home after all these trips how you saw Ireland developing, which is something I never even thought of until now. Like the Ireland you left in '57 I would imagine was completely different than the one you saw in '85?

Well of course we would have, coming home so often, we'd have been in tune with it.

Would you?

Well I mean we'd have known what was going on I suppose. The other way I often think maybe that the culture shock coming back was greater than the culture shock going out.

Was it?

Yes.

I can imagine periods of maybe six years you'd see a big change in six years?

Yes.

And what kind of thing are you talking about now that would hit you from a culture shock point of view coming back?

I suppose the whole way the country has changed you know all this crime and drugs and all that you know.

79

That was something that wouldn't have been around when I was going out first you know.

And is there anything that hit you now the biggest period of change?

I don't know, I don't worry too much about change.

No I'm just wondering - I have this picture in my mind that between '57 and six years after that when you came back '63 - '64, Ireland would have been a different place than the one you left more so than?

Oh yes. It would yes. Oh yes well you had the TV and the Gay Byrne and all that it started then you know.

So you're back home ten years ago and what were you doing then?

Well I kind of took a year off and did a bit of fishing also.

In Donegal?

In Donegal and down on the Blackwater. And then I went for a year to Blanchardstown as chaplain of the hospital there and I've been down here since. We have a Hospice of Saint Francis I'm chaplain there.

And what does your work involve here?

Chaplaincy, in the hospice.

That's visitation and meeting people is it?

Yes dealing with the patients and the relatives you know and the staff of course.

I take it your life is a bit more relaxed than it was in?

Yes I suppose so. You meet a lot of death you know.

80

Do you find that difficult to deal with?

Well I often think you know if it doesn't affect you, you should get out

Yes it's not a fair question I'll remove it. Have we covered everything?

I hope so.

I think so. Listen thanks very much I thoroughly enjoyed that.

The end