

**Interview with Frank Baldwin Conducted by Angela Baker, July 8, 1993**  
**Transcription by Jeff Lipton, February 24, 2000**

- AB: Background Information. Could you state your name, your full name?  
FB: Yeah, it's Frank Baldwin. Francis, Francis, my name is Francis but I go by Frank.
- AB: And your date and place of birth?  
FB: Halifax, December the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920.
- AB: Could you describe your association with Saint Mary's? When did you first come to Saint Mary's?  
FB: I guess it would be around 1950. I had been coaching at [inaudible] high school in the basketball. Father Donald approached me and asked would I coach at Saint Mary's. I said sure, it was just more or less a hobby with me at the time. They mentioned, Father Brown asked me would I be interested in doing some other, some other work at the university so I ended up doing 8000 different jobs.
- AB: What different things did you do?  
FB: Well, I was the purchasing agent [of the schools], I ran the bookstore, I ran the canteen. They needed an altar boy in the middle of the morning and I would go up, or if they needed somebody to sing for a funeral mass, I'd be on call. So, I did everything that you could imagine.
- AB: So, what sports were offered at that time?  
FB: Well, football and basketball and hockey. I mean, football, when I went there, there was no basketball. Of course, when I first went there, there was no building. It wasn't finished. It was just being finished. When I went there, all the scaffolding was up, and they were just completing it. The rooms weren't finished so we ended up doing all the, I mean lugging beds and fixing up the rooms which was in the north wing. The north wing was for the students, the south wing was for the, was for the Jesuits. That main building was only one main building. There was, nothing was really finished.
- AB: Where were the, where did the sports take place?  
FB: Well, see the sports, they had built a, on the back over, I guess is where all the computers are now, that was a, the gymnasium was there. It wasn't finished then. There was a church upstairs, the Canadian Martyr's Church, was all a part of the whole complex. That wasn't finished either, so there was no roof on that. The field was, was out there where it is now a days except they didn't have any stands like they have there now. But this was in 19, 1950-51. So there, you knew everybody, you knew every student. Enrolment wasn't that big.
- AB: How many students were there?  
FB: I guess I really couldn't tell you [inaudible]. They also had the small high school attached to the university there. I coached the basketball team there too.

AB: I see. So it was totally separate, the high school?

FB: No, it was a part of the building. It was, just in different areas because enrolment wasn't that big. The library wasn't finished and all that type of thing. They took, they had the high school. They had, from the other building, from the, from the other building, up on Windsor Street, where Saint Pat's high school is now, they had students from South America and everything. A few of those came along from Guatemala, and all those places.

AB: So, how many years were you at Saint Mary's?

FB: I suppose, about thirteen years.

AB: So, you must have seen the school grow a lot while you were there?

FB: That's right yeah, oh, that's right yeah. It was still, it was still only one building when, when I was there.

AB: When you left, and that was in '63?

FB: Sixty-three, yeah, that's right.

AB: So, this was a school run by the Jesuits.

FB: That's right, yeah.

AB: What was that like?

FB: Well, they, it was a good school 'cause Jesuits are known for their, for their education. But they weren't, a lot of times they weren't business people. A lot of people, people went and if you couldn't pay your bill, they'd say oh, you know and the result, sometimes you get in trouble financially because it's pretty tough to be too compassionate. I think it's really nice, but not good for business. They had, they were, earlier in the early years, especially in the fifties, students wore certain ties when they went to class. So, they had to be presentable.

AB: Did they do that in the sixties too, or?

FB: It might have been in the early sixties. All the sudden the roof fell in. They had, they had quite a few boarders, or what they call them, boarders. They had to attend mass, two or three days during the week. It was that type of a situation.

AB: So, what other types of social activities went on at the university?

FB: There were, they had, of course they had, they were closely aligned with this, I sort of ran a dating agency. I had a lot of friends in Halifax, and some of the guys who I didn't have girlfriends, they'd call up, call up the mothers' and say we need to, how's your daughter or something. I guess I'd like to ask you, so the convent was, the convent and the Mount at that time were available for the students. By available, I mean that you could get them dates.

AB: I see. So would you have dances and things and the girls would come?

FB: No, once in a while they'd have them somewhere, but if they had them too, I mean they, they would have the graduation dances and stuff. They put on, of course the high school and that put on plays and there was always something going on at the university. They had to share dances and they had to pick these, with the mock trials they had. They would try somebody or, they would, they were, really fun. It was a, it was a good, it was a good feeling. Everybody knew each other and it was ...

AB: So, did almost everyone compete in sports of some kind?

FB: Yeah, they had to, what they called intramurals and they, everybody, nearly everybody that I know was, the high school team. When I was at the high school we, everybody at the high school played basketball. Because [inaudible] we would finally get the, I don't know what year it was, we got the gym fixed. The gym all done. You said, we just had the softwood floor there. But everybody in the high school played basketball. Football was a big, was a good sport because the field was out there.

AB: So is the, was the field where it is now?

FB: It is now, that's right.

AB: Let me see, what were the academic programs like back then?

FB: Well the academic programs were, they weren't as varied as they are now. Of course they had the science program, engineering program. First three years, then they went to, it was called Nova Scotia tech at the time. Then they went there, and was arts and commerce. That was basically all that was offered. Then they were the first ones to have the adult education. I think father Blair was there, started the adult education and people coming in after four o'clock in the afternoons. See, when I was there, there was no summer school or anything. There was no summer school. It was just closed then in the summer time. That's only a relative newcomer type of thing, the summer schools. They started the classes at four o'clock in the afternoon for people that wanted to get a degree and were working or something. There were a couple of courses but particularly it was a science degree. Science degree and arts and commerce.

AB: What were the faculty like then?

FB: Well, mostly were, mostly, mostly Jesuits.

AB: Mostly Jesuits?

FB: Mostly Jesuits and, but of course they played a big, religion was a big part of there, and philosophy was a big, was a big thing then. Everybody had to take philosophy. But the faculty was mostly, say, mostly Jesuits. Of course, it wasn't co-ed for a long while. It wasn't co-ed.

AB: It wasn't co-ed the whole time you were there.

FB: No it was, it wasn't, it was just after, that's right, just after I left. I remember Eileen O'Leary was one of the first ones there. No, it wasn't Eileen; the girls

name was O'Neil I think. Her, her and Eileen O'Leary were one of the first ones ever.

AB: So, did they come during the evening classes?

FB: No, the girls, the women, no they didn't no. There was nothing then see, for evening classes then. It was only later on that they, that they started. So, it was

AB: Very different then today.

FB: Well, that's right yes.

AB: So, let's see. The student population, about what ages were the boys that were going there?

FB: Varied, I guess, about, it would, it would be the same as it is, as it is today. Very, very, and the rules were much, you know, you just had to be, you just couldn't go roaming around all the time. You had to be in your room at a certain hours and stuff like that. So it was certainly, certainly more structures than it is now.

AB: There were curfews?

FB: Curfews, oh yeah. I mean, the, Lord forbid if there was any, any thought of drinking or women in the rooms and stuff like that. That would be terrible, a terrible thing. But I'm sure, I'm sure that there was a little bit of both. The lower floors, you could open those windows pretty easy and get in there and go from one place to another.

AB: So, what were the family backgrounds of the student?

FB: Of course again, we had to have a lot of people that you, not a lot of people, but people from South America, and there, that came up which would be, which would be of affluent backgrounds. The people, the people that were from Halifax would be ordinary because, they, I guess, what can I say? It would be a middle-aged type of, I mean middle, not middle-aged, but a middle-income area. See, the thing too, most of them were Catholics with a few, with a few non-Catholics dispersed. The non-Catholics, the non-Catholics went to Dalhousie or Queens if they were in the city. So it was a, it was that...

AB: So why were there some non-Catholics there?

FB: Well, I guess they had some friends there or they wanted, you know, it's like a lot of things. They was a bit of discipline there too with the Jesuits and that. That had such a great, had a great influence. When we, when we tried, the north wing, we needed some students so we went on a little tour down to New England to see if we could get some students. When you mention that it's a Jesuit school, it was a big plus for it because a lot of them in the US went to private schools and went to Jesuit high schools. That made a big impression, so it was very important to people that they had, that they got a ... it still is today when you think of Georgetown and Boston College, and these places. That is that they, a lot of people go so it's ...

AB: And it's well known and respected.

FB: That's right. But it was, in the more, in the. I say you get to know everybody. In the morning, they'd come in and you'd hear all the stories and it was a, just, just Fun. Never made any money, always, the Jesuits took a vow of poverty and expected me to take it too. It was a good atmosphere. It was a good, it was a good, it was a good time because I get to know a lot of people and got to know a lot of, sometimes you feel you might have had a little influence on somebody, somewhere along the line which makes it a little better. As long as it was for, as long as it was a good influence.

AB: So how did the sporting activities change when you were there?

FB: It's like sporting activities changed everywhere. It's unfortunately, so often today that the coaches aren't paid to coach, they are paid to win. It was more of a fun attitude, it was. A little less professional and a little more of a fun to it and not everybody wanted to win. If you didn't win, it wasn't the end of the world. So it was that type of an atmosphere. In those days, everybody wanted to beat St. FX, and St. FX, they were winning everything. But it was a different type of atmosphere as it is today. They, you were lucky if you got a uniform, a nice uniform. Money wasn't available, that much available.

AB: I think we've covered everything I wanted to talk about. What was your relationship with the students?

FB: Oh, great, it was just, it was, you sit down, and of course we spent a lot of time. I knew everybody. The people, some of the people that I still see.

AB: I suppose, you were running everything, so you had to...

FB: That's right. So you had to be, even deliver the mail sometimes. I had a, it was a great time for me and I had, it was just some of, it was just, you put in a lot of hours. You would drive to, you play at St. FX or something, basketball game and then come back. Play there at, come back at four in the morning on those roads from Antigonish, those old roads. Back to work, back to work and never thought of missing any work or anything. You just went to, but as I say, it was great for me.

AB: So, have you kept up touch with Saint Mary's?

FB: Yes, I do. Not as much as I'd like to. Since I moved out here, I used to live down in the south end, and we used to drop down there very so often. I don't get down there that way that much. It's just more. More or less, [inaudible]. I was very, very, very happy that I got an honorary degree, an honorary doctorate.

AB: When did you get that?

FB: Two years ago.

AB: Two years ago?

FB: Yeah, which was kind of nice. It's nice to be remembered when you're alive rather than when you're dead.

AB: It doesn't mean too much then.

FB: That's right.

AB: Okay, well that's about all I wanted to talk about.

**Tape ends here**