Voices of SJC: Oral History

Spring 2017

St. Joseph’s College

Transcribed by McEntegart Hall Library/Archives
Preface

*Voices of SJC* is an oral history project curated by McEntegart Hall Library/Archives in collaboration with St. Joseph’s College Brooklyn Campus Honors Program. The project was inaugurated in the Spring 2017 semester as a part of the College’s centennial celebration. Led by the Library faculty moderators, students engage with the College Archives to develop a strong understanding of the history of the College and conduct an oral history interview. Interviewees include but are not limited to the Sisters of St. Joseph, current and former faculty/staff members, and alumni. The students develop interview questions, discuss the theoretical implications of capturing histories orally, in addition to gaining interviewing skills.

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Interviewee’s name: Sister Patricia Dittmer  
Date of interview: April 10, 2017  
Location of interview: Founders Hall, St. Joseph’s College, 232 Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn, New York

List of acronyms: PD = Sister Patricia Dittmer, JA = Juanita Arias, PC = Pamela Castillo, DD = Dara Desrosiers, DT = Denise Trerotola, LK = Lauren Kehoe (moderator), MM = Mayumi Miyaoka (moderator),

Recording Link: [https://youtu.be/QQdu2I29KDg](https://youtu.be/QQdu2I29KDg)

Keywords
Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph  
S. Patricia Dittmer

Higher education institutions  
Pratt Institute  
Pratt family

St. Joseph’s College  
Dillon Center  
Founders Hall
PD: We have prayers here every day. Every Sunday, we have Father Tom Ahern. I don’t know if you know him. He graduated from the College.

Student: Wow!

JA: No?!

PD: Yes, he graduated from the College. He is the pastor of Saint Augustine’s. So he comes in. We are fortunate enough for him, he comes in he says mass for us. We are very happy. We don’t know if it’s originally-- there are all kinds of things-- I have heard it was the library from the Pratt’s. Somebody else heard that it was a dining, I don’t-- a living room even. I’m not sure what it was but I will check [sister laughing]. And then this room over here. [Walking] This is called the North Parlor. The lighting is terrible in here, but anyway. This is a terrible thing to say this is our wake room when a sister dies we have her wake here. And the reason why this has been moved over because I’m waiting for one of the men to move this over here, so I can bring the table and the chairs for the holy week. I know this looks a little odd but that's the reason that that’s been moved over.

And I’ll let you go through this way [walking] I should do that oooooo. [Sister making ghost sounds] [student laughing] This is another parlor. This used to be the priest parlor. So years ago when we had priest faculty, they would say mass every day for us and they didn’t-- this is how it was years ago. The priest wasn’t allow to have breakfast with you. They had to have their own. We had to serve them. So that was here, but originally this room-- you’re gonna love this-- the lady of the house would meet all of her servants and she could give them the direction for the day, what you should do, blah blah blah. And then they’ll do-- you are going to see the buttons are gone. This little rounded things-- and if someone from the house wanted they would just press the button. If you have ever want Downton Abbey?

Students: No.

PD: Okay. [Student laughing] You don’t like that. It’s the same thing she would do that in Downton Abbey. She would press the button, and then something would ring. I don’t know where in this house, and the server would come. I keep pressing these things and nothing happens. [Student laughing] When they pressed it, they would want me to come. Because I am one of the babies of the house. So that's that.

[Walking]

And then, you just go right through here again. [Walking] [Inaudible] This goes outside, going out to Dillon. -- Just don’t lock us out, leave the door open. [Student laughing] All these plants were inside various places. And so I bring them out here, because they can't wait to be in the sunshine. They’ve been inside for so long. I’ll bring the children over here and we’ll have lunch over here or whatever, it was great. But this is the side door, and you can even [inaudible].
JA: This is so beautiful.

PD: And originally two families lived here. They were Pratt’s. Two families, one lived in the front and one back, one on the first floor and third floor. And they had it split up like that. But now we’re one big family of sisters.