Salve Regina Oral History Project

Date of Interview: 7/18/2018

Interviewee: Fran LaSalle, Alumna (Class of 1962)

Interviewer: Kathleen Christ, Class of 2020

Kathleen Christ: Okay, so this is Kathleen Christ. Today is July 18, 2018. As a part of the Salve Regina University Oral History Project, I will be interviewing Fran LaSalle, a Salve Regina alumna of the class of 1962. That is correct, right?

Fran LaSalle: That is correct.

Kathleen Christ: Okay, [*laughter*] my first question is where did you grow up?

Fran LaSalle: I grew up my first eighteen years in Fall River, Massachusetts, and then my family moved to Somerset… with a brief time in New Hampshire, I have lived in Somerset the rest of my days.

Kathleen Christ: Wow, so you weren’t that far from Salve to begin with?

Fran LaSalle: No, no.

Kathleen Christ: How did you come across Salve?

Fran LaSalle: Oh… I was at Mount Saint Mary Academy in Fall River, run by the Mercy nuns. I was heading for college, one of the state colleges in Massachusetts, and a Mercy nun that I absolutely worshipped, and who was a friend of my parents, called my mother and said, “You don’t want her to go there! You want her to go to Salve!” And so, here I am.

Kathleen Christ: Wow!

Fran LaSalle: And it was probably July, and I said, “Well that sounds good, you know, but it’s too late to get in.” You know, you have to take all these exams and all this fine stuff that sometimes now they don’t require, and Sister Verona says, “Worry about nothing.”

Kathleen Christ: Sister Verona is the woman that you knew?

Fran LaSalle: Yes.

Kathleen Christ: Oh! Was she a teacher here?

Fran LaSalle: No, she was a Provincial. After she left Mount Saint Mary Academy she was Provincial of the Sisters of Mercy in Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Kathleen Christ: Ah… okay. So pretty much what made you choose this college was–

Fran LaSalle: My mother and the Sister decided, [*laughter*] and the first day I saw this place was the first day of school.

Kathleen Christ: Really?

Fran LaSalle: Yup.

Kathleen Christ: You were okay with your Mom saying–

Fran LaSalle: I am from a different generation than you are. When parents spoke you said, “Yes.” You went into your room and grumbled, but your parents ruled. So, when I came here, my father says, “You will stay at home. You will live at home, because you’re only– (at the time I was)– 17.” He said, “ No living away from home,” so I commuted.

Kathleen Christ: Ah… you were a commuter?

Fran LaSalle: Yep.

Kathleen Christ: All four years?

Fran LaSalle: All four years.

Kathleen Christ: Oh… so overall how did you feel about your school experience here?

Fran LaSalle: Oh, I loved it, absolutely loved it! I went to an all-girl academy for high school and so this was like more of the same. It was small and comfortable. Our classes were small. You kind of knew everybody, everybody knew you. So, I loved it. I loved everything about it, except when we’d have to play field hockey. I would purposely slide in the mud so that I would be disgusting and I was told to go and clean up. [*laughter*] That was the only thing I didn’t like.

Kathleen Christ: Were you forced to do physical education?

Fran LaSalle: We had to take– I don’t know whether it was a year or two years– of physical education. We took six courses a semester, and there was no ands, ifs, or buts about it. You took six courses.

Kathleen Christ: Wow. So, kind of going back, but the school that you went to­– that academy, Mount Saint Mary– was that a Sisters of Mercy institution?

Fran LaSalle: Yes, it was…

Kathleen Christ: Ah… and so, your freshman year, what was that like? Transitioning into–

Fran LaSalle: Oh, it was a life of beanies– we had to wear those silly little beanies that signified that we were neophytes in this place– and it was like, drag all your things around, because being a day student, you kind of were like a turtle. You wore everything on your back, carried it in your arms, [and] had to make sure you were everywhere. So it was confusing, but it was also very good. I learned how to play bridge… we had the infamous smoker here where you played bridge and smoked cigarettes and were decadent. [*laughter*] …School always was easy for me, so that was not a problem. But, you know, it was getting used to longer days, because we would leave Fall River– oh, around seven– and by the time you get home at the end of the day [it was late], because the first couple weeks of school we came home on the bus, and that was not acceptable, so my father bought me a car… Another girl that went to Mount with me and I split the driving so one week she drove, one week I drove, and several people joined us. So, we had to be here in time for the first class and stay as late as one of our passengers had last class. It was a long day, so we spent a lot of time between the smoker and the library.

Kathleen Christ: Can you tell me a little bit more about the field that you studied?

Fran LaSalle: Sociology… Initially, my goal was to be a clinical psychologist, so I thought sociology was a nice way of approaching it, but being a realist, I minored in education because I thought if that fell through, I could teach. I found sociology very interesting. Eventually, I did both of those things. I taught; I spent forty years in public education, but I also was a school psychologist in part of my career, so I sort of accomplished both ends of that.

Kathleen Christ: Wow! Was there a particular class that you enjoyed, or–

Fran LaSalle: Oh, absolutely! One of my shining stars here was Sister Mary Norbert, who was in the Sociology Department, and she was just a cool lady. She knew her stuff, but she was also personable. One of my friends had a convertible, and Sr. Norbert­– this was when the nuns wore the habits with the stiff hoods and all­– she would get in this red Pontiac convertible and barrel down Bellevue Avenue. [*laughter*] She was just– she related well to students, but when you got in the classroom, you knew she was all business. Forget all the social stuff out there, she was to do the work, and we remained friends up until the time she passed away. While I was working on graduate work, if I had a problem, I would make an appointment, come down, and see her here. She left the Sisters of Mercy and became a professor here under her own name. She was Dr. Pat Murray, and she would critique what I was doing and often tell me, “You know better than that,” kind of thing. She was just a fantastic lady.

Kathleen Christ: Wow… was there anything that you disliked about your... academics here?

Fran LaSalle: No, I mean it was…a charted course. There was very little flexibility to do anything different or out of the track, so, you know, you signed up for what you were told to sign up for. [*laughter*] And again, different generation, you did what you were told. You know, my father says, “I’m sending you to school to learn, to keep your mouth shut, your eyes open, and your ears focused on what’s being said to you.” So, that’s what I did.

Kathleen Christ: Cool… so can you tell me a little bit more about the faculty at the time?

Fran LaSalle: There were primarily Mercy nuns, a couple of Dominican priests. Fr. Georges[[1]](#footnote-1) was a particularly interesting guy, he… looked sort of like a fireplug. He was short and stout, and had a shock of gray hair and little round glasses, and they wore the Dominican outfits. There were two Dominican priests, and he was just… funny. At the time, Queen Elizabeth [II] was expecting one of her children, and he would come in. He’d say, “I had a premonition last night that it was a boy,” [*laughter*] and then he’d come in the next day, “I had a premonition it was a girl.” [*laughter*] You know? He was just… funny, knew his stuff… You know, to be a good teacher, in my opinion, and I stressed that with the faculty that worked for me, you have to have a sense of humor. You have to be able to segue based on what’s going on in the community, in the world, whatever, and then you have to be able to refocus, so that people know that what you’re there for is business, and he was able to do that, but he had these premonitions. He’d walk across, “I have a premonition…” [*laughter*] We had… some strict teachers. They were all business, but overall it was, you know, I knew why I was here: to study, to learn, to get a degree and to move on, kind of no nonsense.

Kathleen Christ: [*laughter*] Can you tell me a little bit more about Sister Miley­– Sister Hilda Miley?

Fran LaSalle: Oh! We saw her infrequently, but I have a funny story. We were freshmen­– goofy freshmen with those little white beanies on­– and as I told you, Sister Verona became a Provincial with the Sisters of Mercy, and she was like my buddy from high school. So, we were told that the Provincial was coming to visit Sister Hilda, and we were told to stand in the driveway-circle area of Ochre Court when the Provincial arrived. So, if you know the front door, we were sort of standing closer to the front door all the way around. They came up the front drive and in, and the hierarchy of Salve is standing there, and Sister Verona steps out of the car and says, “Oh Frannie!” and comes running over. Well, they couldn’t believe that this big deal is coming over to hug a lowly freshman, so I got my hugs, I got my, “How are you?” but then she went back to the protocol of why she was here. [*laughter*] But Sister Hilda, we rarely saw her… she just was sort of separated.

Kathleen Christ: Mmm… she was busy.

Fran LaSalle: She was busy, and… she was of a generation many before mine, and there was this distance between who’s in charge and who’s at the bottom of the totem pole.

Kathleen Christ: I see. So how were you involved on campus at all?

Fran LaSalle: Well, my daughter and I­– who is also an alum– have established a scholarship in my parents’ name here. [I am] very much involved in reunion kinds of things here, and our class, 1962, is infamous for being a rowdy bunch and we get together, three or four times a year. We got together yesterday for lunch… Kate Brezina[[2]](#footnote-2) came to the lunch in fact. We get together, whoever is available because there are snowbirds who head south for the winter, and we kind of share our good fortune, that we still can take care of ourselves, take nourishment, know who we are and appreciate where we came from, and you know… When I was doing my graduate work, I used to come here to use the library here… and doing work, reading or whatever at home, there was always something that would come up. So, every Saturday I would take my kids, and their homework, and we would come here so that I could do work and the kids could study or read or do whatever they had to do in the library. This was a regular Saturday afternoon thing, and so when my daughter was ready for college, I did the typical mother thing: “Let’s go visit colleges all over the place!” And trucking around, you know, “Where do you want to see?” and oh, she’d name bunches of places; we did all that. And after all was said and done, I said, “Now, what do you want to do?” This place we didn’t visit because I figured she knew about this place. After all was said and done, I said, “Where do you want to go to school?” She said, “Salve.” I said, “Well why didn’t you tell me?” She said, “You didn’t ask.” So, she came here as well.

Kathleen Christ: Wow! What year did she graduate?

Fran LaSalle: 1988.

Kathleen Christ: Oh… also, you said you did graduate work. Where did you go to school?

Fran LaSalle: Everywhere: Bridgewater State University, Rhode Island College, U.R.I., Clark University, [and] Pacific Western. I also did some graduate work at West Virginia. I just went to school forever.

Kathleen Christ: Really? What degrees do you have then?

Fran LaSalle: A Masters… two CAGS and a Doctorate.

Kathleen Christ: Oh, wow. In what?

Fran LaSalle: In what… Guidance and counseling, Psychology, educational management, and then Education in general, education leadership.

Kathleen Christ: Oh, wow. So you just love school.

Fran LaSalle: Well, you know, my goal in working in the school department was to do as many different things so you don’t become stale, and after a few years, it was like, “Okay, I’ve done this… what else is there?” And the only way to do that easily, or more easily, is to observe what’s going on, but then also to have education to back up your observation, so I went to school, and my daughter is doing the same thing. She is kind of a dynamic lady.

Kathleen Christ: Switching gears a little bit… since you commuted to school, did that ever make you feel as if there was a separation?

Fran LaSalle: Oh, absolutely!

Kathleen Christ: Oh, really?

Fran LaSalle: Absolutely! You could tell first class of the day who lived here and who didn’t. We had to come fully dressed, prepared for whether it was going to snow later on, or rain later on, or whatever, and usually the gals who lived here came to first period class with nightgowns and trench coats over them. Barely combed hair, they would come and sit like this, and take notes, and go back to the dorms to clean up and get ready for the rest of the day. Plus also, as a day student, a lot of the activities that went on after school, in the evenings, on weekends, we couldn’t take part in because we were… you know, some distance off. So, you know, there was a big difference, almost… like we lived in a different culture. They would go back to their dorm rooms between classes. We would go to the smoker. We would go to Newport Creamery for lunch, until they established a little lunchroom or something. It was right where the chapel now is. It was right in that area, and you could buy sandwiches and stuff there, but we brought our lunch from home, or went to Newport Creamery… whereas the resident students went to wherever they ate their meals, and back to the dorm rooms… And when we had no classes, if you didn’t play bridge or didn’t smoke, you went to the library to study because there was no other place to go. So, there was a big difference, and like some of these people, who we now get together with for lunch, were people who lived here, and it’s like rediscovering, and that sort of happened, oh, three other gals and I started going out for lunch when we retired, and then they said, “Well let’s invite– let’s see who else wants to come…” and so it grew and it grew and it grew and so now it’s a regular occurrence, but there was a difference.

Kathleen Christ: … I see. So, did you have a favorite part of campus, even though you weren’t always here?

Fran LaSalle: Well, I loved the library. I would go in and read books on stuff­ that– you know, you could walk through the shelves­­– I don’t know if you can still do that or if there are even books in the library anymore, but… there were stacks… It was over at… McAuley,[[3]](#footnote-3) and you could go into the stacks, and they used to have study carrels along the windows in the stacks, and that was…kind of my favorite place to go… in the study carrels in the stacks area along the windows so if you wanted to daydream and look at the ocean you could do that, or pull out a book on something you had no idea what it was about, but sit there and try to make sense out of it.

Kathleen Christ: So, how did you and your fellow classmates socialize out of the confines of the school? I mean, you mentioned, Newport Creamery, but was there anywhere else you would go?

Fran LaSalle: Well, because Somerset wasn’t that far, friends and I, some of whom went to Salve, some of whom did not go to Salve, we’d come to Newport– see the sailors. [*laughter*] And we could go to the places that were off-limits to resident students because we weren’t resident students. So, The Tavern was one of those places that we could go to because we didn’t live here. The Mooring was another place we could go to because we didn’t live here, because it was off limits to resident students.

Kathleen Christ: Were those two of your favorite places to go?

Fran LaSalle: Yes, [*laughter*] yes.

Kathleen Christ: So, what did you do with your free time then? Did you have a lot?

Fran LaSalle: Not much, as I said, we started out early in the morning, got home late at night. We took six courses, so there was a lot of work to do. We would get the syllabus for each course and know what was due when and so on, so it was a lot of work, so there was not a lot of free time.

Kathleen Christ: How do you feel that your education at Salve impacted your outlook on life?

Fran LaSalle: Well, I’m Catholic, and it supported Catholic teachings… You know, we had the teas when you had to wear the hat and the gloves and all that nice stuff when you brought your mothers to tea, so there was a degree of sophistication and propriety. And, it was a caring place. I mean, the nuns had time to talk to you. It wasn’t like they ran out of class and they were heading to someplace else. I can give you an example with my daughter. She was a chemistry major here, and took a lot of math courses, and… a sister who just passed away a couple of years ago, Sister Leona Misto,[[4]](#footnote-4) was in the Math Department and she said to my daughter, “You know, you have all these math courses. If you took a couple more courses, you could have a double major.” I mean, she bothered to look at my daughter’s education courses she took, and then she suggested what courses she should take. She got a double major.

Kathleen Christ: Wow!

Fran LaSalle: You know, so it was a caring place then, and with my daughter. My daughter loved it here. She lived here, because I told my kids because of my experience, both my son and daughter lived at college. I said, you know, “You miss so much of what college is all about when you’re sitting in a car driving for an hour plus each direction, it’s just not the same.” So, I said, “Even if you go to school around the corner, you’re going to live there.”

Kathleen Christ: Do you regret not living here?

Fran LaSalle: No, it worked for me. It worked for me, and, you know, I came from a time where parents ruled the roost. There was no, “Let’s negotiate this.” That was a word in the dictionary only. It didn’t prevail in most households. And all of my friends who came from Mount Saint Mary Academy and who came here, we were all what they called, “day-hops,” and we all rode together. There was Gerry, and Marilyn, and Sue, and me, and sometimes we picked up Helen… and the trunk of the car had boxes with names on them so the trunk was always unlocked in between classes. If you were hauling too much stuff, you opened the trunk, threw your books in your box, and you know, that’s how we survived.

Kathleen Christ: Can you just tell me the last names also of… the friends that you commuted with?

Fran LaSalle: Geraldine Porada, Marilyn Kane, Sue Jean, Helen Furtado.

Kathleen Christ: Ah… okay, well thank you! Also, you mentioned the teas that you guys were invited to?

Fran LaSalle: Yeah… every so often we had a Silver Tea, and it was in Ochre [Court], and you could bring– oh, another friend that used to come with us was Ann Petrillo, but that was in subsequent years because she wasn’t a Mounty. She came from another school, but she lived in Tiverton so we would pick her up. But we would bring our parents, get all decked out, and go into the dining area, which is the one farthest over, when you came in for Silver Tea…. I don’t even remember what time of the year it was, but you know, I mean the ladies wore hats and things, different from now. We had… an opportunity to come for one of the reunions– maybe it was like the twentieth­– and of course we wore skirts, and knee socks and penny loafers and trench coats, I mean, that was the dress of the day, and Oxford shirts and sweaters over it. That was the way most girls dressed, and when you went to the Silver Tea you wore high heel shoes and all the regalia to make yourself look lovely. But when we came to the reunion, we’re walking across campus and there are kids walking around with *shorts* on, it was like [*horrified gasp*]! [*laughter*] “Do they do that now? They actually have legs, and tank tops and stuff!” But we’ve been coming every year, every five years. Every year we come to the reunion thing, and now that we’re old and we’re part of the “Fifty Year Club” we come every year for the “Fifty Year Club” to see who is standing and who has fallen, [*laughter*] but it was a wonderful experience.

Kathleen Christ: How do you feel Salve prepared you for your career and life after college?

Fran LaSalle: It gave a lot of self-confidence, good education, trained mind and spirit… made you think on your feet. I mean, one of the things, you know, in the public school education when you’re out in the public schools when you’re dealing with limited budgets, the mantra is always, “Think outside the box; think about another way of getting things done. You don’t solve problems by always throwing money at [them], ” and here we were forced to think. How were you going to accomplish all these courses, driving back and forth, getting good grades… being responsible, doing your oral reports? … I can remember, I had a professor in Education, and I was kind of shy– you can’t tell that now, but I was­– and he had us speaking in class, and he told me I did an absolutely atrocious job and [to] see him in his office. His office was on the second floor of Ochre [Court]. If you were looking toward the ocean, it was on the right-hand side, the very end office so it looked out over the ocean, and in his office he had this humungous mirror… It was part of the building, you know, it was not his, and he sat at his desk eating the cookies that Mrs. McKim made for him, and drinking his afternoon milk, and he had me in there talking to myself in the mirror. He said, “Now look at yourself. You think anybody is interested in what you have to say? Have some pizzazz!”

Kathleen Christ: Oh my!

Fran LaSalle: I had to stand there and talk to myself in the mirror. I had to deliver reports. “The report you gave to the class was awful; now give it yourself in the mirror. See what… they’re looking at.”

Kathleen Christ: What was his name?

Fran LaSalle: George L. McKim.[[5]](#footnote-5) He came to Salve after he retired from Boston College, and he was a character. In order to pass his class– I don’t know, we had him for a couple of education classes– you had to fill one blue book for every question in the finals. Now, I taught at Bridgewater State University as adjunct faculty, and unlike George McKim, I would tell my class, “This class has four points I’m looking for. You can take four lines to answer it or four blue books, that’s up to you, but once I see the four points, I’m not going to read anything else. Everything else is window dressing.” But he wanted the whole blue book for every question. So, you have a final with ten questions, you know how much writing that is? After a while, you left and your hands were like this. [*gestures floppy hand bent, stuck in writing position*], but that was just his style, and you know, to succeed in any professor’s class you have to know what his/her style is and you have to hear what they say to you and then do that. But I just wasn’t a fan of any extraneous writing, and I said, “You know, when you get it back, I’m going to check all four points that I’m looking for and if you get all four points you get full credit.” But he was a character… He wore rimless glasses, [a] double-breasted suit, his hair was perfectly combed, he was just a vision, but he was an interesting character. Sr. Martina[[6]](#footnote-6) was another interesting character. She taught religion and philosophy, and she would hook her hand in her belt– you know, the old Mercy wide belt­– and walk around the classroom and talk philosophy. It was like write everything down because we might miss something. We had a… sister by the name of Sister Donalda, who was probably too brilliant to teach. She taught biology, and we had to go to… the class and the lab to go with it, and she was like an absent-minded professor. She was just in her own world and she would just talk at us and we would not get sometimes what she was intending, but she had this box full of cancerous mice that were in the refrigerator at a suitable temperature to keep them in kind of “Nirvana World.” And she brought it out, and put it on a lab table, and forgot that once they warm up, they’re going to start moving. We had … cancerous mice running all around the table, had to sort of scurry them together, get them back in the box and back in the refrige[rator].

Kathleen Christ: Oh my gosh!

Fran LaSalle: You know, it was a very… interesting experience because the Sisters were very different than professors now, who have their separate life. I mean this was their life… They were devoted to this, and devoted to their students. Not that the professors now aren’t, but their lives extended beyond the campus, and the nuns were here, and their lives were here… but interesting folks.

Kathleen Christ: Are there any lessons you feel that you learned from your time here?

Fran LaSalle: Anything’s possible. That is absolutely­– anything is possible… There was a course I took in my doctoral program called “Ethnographic Research,” and pretty much it said that you look at the obvious– you sitting here– but you also look at everything else because it’s contributing to the whole picture, and I think that’s what we learned here. Anything is possible. Look around, search. Be prepared to work hard, because we worked hard; but you know, if you set realistic goals in increments– I mean you can’t be President of the world overnight, you’ve got to sort of take your time and get there through bits and pieces– you can do almost anything. So, you know, I was divorced early on and raised two kids, and built a house– a vacation house– in New Hampshire, and did all kinds of things with them. They became independent people. Anything is possible. You set your mind to it, you decide how you’re going to get about it, you think, you turn to people around you that can provide support or help, and you move forward, but this was a great learning environment. And I know it was a great learning environment doubly because it was a great place for my daughter as well. She flourished here. So, you know, I mean I’m not only speaking from my perspective, but from my daughter’s as well.

Kathleen Christ: Do you have a favorite memory, or particular story that you would like to share?

Fran LaSalle: Hmm… There was a situation that occurred when we were taking philosophy in Sister Martina’s class. Her class was on the second floor of Ochre [Court], as you face the ocean, left-hand side, all the way at the end, so it was in the corner, and it must have been a military helicopter that, I don’t know, it lost its way? I have no idea. It landed on the lawn of Ochre Court, near the ocean. And she is walking through the class with her hand in the belt talking and talking, and everybody is gaping out the window, and then we dared to stand up and go and look out the window and, “Girls! Sit down! It is only a helicopter!” “Okay!” We had to sit down and stretch our necks [*laughter*] … to see what was going on. I have no idea why it landed here. Another cute story: they filmed a piece of a movie about the Hungarian Revolution… here, and it was when the Russians invaded Hungary, around 1956? I don’t know, you’re the history person, not me. And they sprayed phony snow over the lawn in front of Ochre [Court]. They took down our blessed US flag and put up a Russian flag, and we were all told that if we wanted to be in the movie, we have to stand like poor peasants with babooshkas on. So we got babooshkas and stood there and this open car with Russian– people in Russian uniforms– arrived in the circle. We don’t know what was going on; we were just told to stand there and keep your mouth closed and wear the babooshkas. So, we did.

Kathleen Christ: Wow! So you were in a movie!

Fran LaSalle: Oh, yes! No credits however [*laughter*]. That was kind of an interesting thing that happened. A not so nice thing– well, it was nice, it’s humorous now. I wasn’t quite sure what I was going to do with my life. I thought I was going to go off to Ohio State and work on a PhD in Clinical Psychology, and it was time– you couldn’t major in education at the time, I don’t know if you can now, but you couldn’t then, it had to be a minor, and since I had a minor in education we had the option of going out to do student teaching. So, they came around to all the education classes to say, “If you want to sign up for student teaching, you know, here’s the paperwork and so on.” And I didn’t… I went home and I was talking to my parents and my father said, “Well what’s wrong with you? You want to take advantage of every option that’s there. You don’t know if you are going to get in to graduate school… you don’t know if you’re going to like it. If you’ve got student teaching…” [I said,] “Okay,” so I made an appointment with Sister Rosalia,[[7]](#footnote-7) who was the Dean of Students at the time, and her office was up on the second floor of Ochre [Court] as well. And I had been playing bridge down in the smoker and smoking my cigarettes and all and I went in and her office was huge, and she had two chairs in front of her… desk. So, I went in and I told her who I was, and I told her why I was there, and I shook her hand, and she said, “Miss Mis, you reek of smoke. Sit there by the door.” I had to sit by the door because I smelled too badly, and so I sat by the door, and I had to pretty much [yell] across the room, and I had to do my mea culpas to say I am one day late, but I sought counsel from my parents who said that I would be foolish not to avail myself of this opportunity, and she said, “Well, we’ll see what we can do, anything else?” “No, thank you Sister,” and out the door I went. I got student teaching, [*laughter*] but it was like, “OOH!”

Kathleen Christ: She was scary.

Fran LaSalle: She was scary. Oh yes, she was absolutely scary, you know, she was tall, she was imposing, and you know, I thought I was– I didn’t really smell the cigarette because… even if you didn’t smoke, if you went into the smoker to play cards, you smelled because everybody smoked there. And then she just, “Sit there.” “Yes, sister.” So, you know, just a couple little funny things that went on, [*laughter*] but it was a great place overall. I mean, you worked, you worked, you did your thing, you drove back and forth, you graduated. It was good.

Kathleen Christ: I’m glad. Is there else that we didn’t talk about that you would like to add?

Fran LaSalle: … No, I think we covered it all. I take pride in the fact that I graduated from [here]. I’ll tell you, I was working at the funeral home, and I wear my ring all the time, and you know, you have to take names of people who come to the funeral or whatever it’s this paperwork to do, and this woman is giving me her name, and she said, “Oh! You went to Salve!” I said, “Yes I did!” She said, “So did I.” And so it was like what class, what year, and whatever, because it’s a unique ring. I don’t know what the rings look like now. My daughter’s is significantly smaller and she has a cloudy sapphire as opposed to this star sapphire. I don’t know if they [even have] rings or if that’s a big to do, but we had a Ring Dance our junior year. We were given a ring by the President of the college, and then a formal, I mean, tuxedos, long gowns, wonderful stuff… But that was kind of interesting. People recognized it- [that] you went there. So, I don’t know if you have any other questions. You know, in preparation I tried to dust off all of the old memories and all [*laughter*] …you know? One of the gals in the car would always bring cookies for everybody in the morning so we could have our sugar rush before we got to work. You know, our lunches, even when it was warm on a day in springtime or in fall, we’d leave our lunch in our box in the trunk. There [was] something growing with bacteria I’m sure, but we ate those lunches until we discovered Newport Creamery as an alternative, but it was just a wonderful experience. There’s something nice about a smaller school. My son went to Providence College… he was a freshman the year after they made the Final Four in basketball. There were a gazillion kids– no one gave a damn about anybody. You missed class. If you missed class here, you had to have a damn good excuse why you weren’t here. My freshman year, Sister Martina’s class, I went to her­– my grandfather passed away– and so I told her I wouldn’t be in on the day of the funeral. “Well, I guess you’ll have to get the notes from somebody else. You belong in class.” My son is not a morning person, and PC has a bunch of philosophy classes that freshmen and sophomores must take, and it’s in the first couple of hour blocks of the freshman or sophomore year. Not a morning person, he never went to one of them, they didn’t give a damn. “Get it in the library.” He’d be in the library at ten o’clock at night listening to the morning tape. It was a big school; you just sort of functioned. If you didn’t show up, well that’s okay. Here, if you didn’t show up, “Why not?” So, you know… it created a responsibility. Especially going into public education afterwards, you know, you can get a substitute teacher to come in for a teacher that’s ill, but there’s nothing like the real thing. When I left… the public schools I had over two years of sick leave– you get fifteen days a year– because I would drag myself in no matter because I had a contract between those kids and me, and later on in my administrative [career] between the school committee and me, and between me and my teachers, that I…have to be there. I have to be there to answer questions. This school taught that kind of stuff. You have to be, you have to show up, you have to have a real good reason why you don’t show up, you know, unlike where my son went to school… When my daughter went here I was hoping he’d come. “Oh, I don’t want to go to a girl’s school,” and he went elsewhere, and he’s lived to regret it. He’s told me, “I shouldn’t have gone there; it was too big.” So, [*laughter*] enough said.

Kathleen Christ: Yes, are we done then?

Fran LaSalle: …Unless you have anything else… my recollections are done.

Kathleen Christ: … Well, thank you.

Fran LaSalle: Oh, it was fun.

1. Father Irving A. Georges was a chaplain and professor of theology and philosophy until 1960. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kate Brezina currently works on the Salve Regina Development staff as the Director of Major Gifts and Campaign Associate Director. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. McAuley Hall, a part of this campus since 1955 after the college received the Vinland estate, used to house the library and resident students. However, currently, it is used solely as an academic building for classes and offices. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sister Leona Misto, (d. 2016), graduated from Salve in 1962, but also worked at the institution for thirty-six years as a professor, department chair, Dean of Campus Ministry, Director of Graduate Extension Studies and lastly Vice President for Mission Integration and Planning. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Mr. George McKim was an Education professor at Salve Regina College from 1960-1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sister Mary Martina Conley, an original sister at Salve Regina College, was the first registrar of the college, Dean of Admissions, and a history and religion and philosophy professor during her time here. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sister Mary Rosalia Flaherty was the Dean of Studies from 1957-1967 and played an active role in the Sisters of Mercy and on the school’s Board of Trustees for decades. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)