

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. John's Episcopal Church

Personal Experience

O.H. 1355

RONALD L. GOULD

Interviewed

by

Jane R. Butterworth

on

November 28, 1990

## RONALD GOULD

Ronald Lee Gould was born in Joliet, Illinois on Christmas Day, 1932. He graduated from Lemont Township High School in Lemont, Illinois, and went on to receive a bachelor's degree in music from North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, in 1954. He earned a Master's degree in Sacred Music from Union Theological Seminary in New York, in 1956. Although he was accepted for doctoral work at Harvard, the U.S. Army requested his presence as well, and he spent two years in New Jersey as a chaplain's assistant at Fort Dix. While he was in the Army, he worked at a small private school, and continued his employment there until 1960.

The position at Youngstown was intriguing because it involved being split between St. John's and teaching duties at Youngstown College. In addition, both places were seriously contemplating new organs, and the possibility of being part of the choices for these new instruments was especially appealing. Gould accepted the position and has been in Youngstown ever since, with one exception. In 1966, he was awarded a Danforth Teaching Grant. He headed back to New York City to complete his Sacred Music Doctorate at Union Theology Seminary. Among his recollections at this time are those of being surrounded by the anti-war protests at Columbia, and living in rather luxurious family quarters. Because he was not allowed to work while pursuing this degree, this hiatus was also time well spent with his

young children. He had married Marcia Margaret Carlsten in 1960, and by this time, Erik and Lars had been born. Dirk was born after they arrived back in Youngstown, in 1970.

Dr. Gould has an excellent memory of his 30 years at this post, and a keen perspective of the changes which have occurred in these years. Among the most notable of these is the transition of St. John's from its traditional men and boys choir to a full mixed choir of adults. He also sheds light on the musical evolution of the annual Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival, and the process of choosing a new organ for St. John's.

On a less inspiring note, he also mentions his worries for the future of music at St. John's after his retirement, and his wishes for greater congregational participation in the services. There is no doubt that St. John's had been blessed with 30 years of an organist with marvelous talent and an extremely high caliber of professionalism.

--Jane Butterworth

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INTERVIEWEE: RONALD L. GOULD

INTERVIEWER: Jane R. Butterworth

SUBJECT: St. John's Episcopal Church, the Boar's Head Festival, music at St. John's in past years as compared to today, Dr. Gould's involvement with the selecting of new organs at both St. John's Church and the Dana School of Music.

DATE: November 28, 1990

B: This is an interview with Dr. Ronald Gould for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on St. John's Episcopal Church, by Jane Butterworth, at St. John's Episcopal Church, on November 28, 1990, at 10:00 a.m.

B: Dr. Gould, I just wanted to ask you a little bit about your background. Where did you grow up?

G: I grew as a child in Lemont, Illinois, which is about 25 miles southwest of Chicago. I went to the local public schools, and then went off to college at North Central in Naperville, Illinois, where I completed a bachelor of music degree in 1954. From North Central, I went to Union Theological Seminary in New York City and worked on a master's degree from 1954 through 1956. While I was there--as part of our program, we had, of course, a field assignment--my field work assignment was at St. James on Madison Avenue. I was the assistant organist and choir master to Donald Coats from 1954 to 1956, the two years I was a master's student. Following that, I took a job up in Providence, Rhode Island. Actually, the church was in Cranston, Rhode

Island, in a little section called Edgewood. It was the Church of the Transfiguration. I only lasted a few months, from the end of August until the middle of November. I got my draft notice, but was able to put them [the Army] off until after Christmas. But then, [I] went into the Army in January of 1956. I served as a chaplain's assistant at Fort Dix, New Jersey for those two years. Actually, it was not quite two years. I got an early release so that I could come back because I had a school job at the time, teaching at a private school and preparing the choirs for the holiday season. The Army let me out a few months early, in October rather than January. I was there [in Providence, Rhode Island] from 1958 through 1960.

I came to Youngstown in 1960. I didn't really know anything about Youngstown State University which was, of course, Youngstown College at that time. I certainly didn't know anything about St. John's Church. Alec Wyton, with whom I had worked very closely at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City on Amsterdam Avenue when I was a student, insisted I come out for this interview. He said, "It would be a good thing for you to do for a couple of years. They're going to get some organs at the school, and the church is talking very seriously about getting a new instrument." I figured--we were to be married that next September, and my wife was in her final year of nurses training--it might possibly be something to look at. In the meantime, I had just gotten accepted for some doctoral work in the doctoral program at Harvard, and Providence is very close to Cambridge, Massachusetts, so it was easy for me to plan that. It looked like a very promising year. I was also in the middle of rehearsals for a performance of "Amahl and the Night Visitors", which we were doing at the Church of the Transfiguration. There I had a boy choir just as St. John's did when I came here. I told them that I couldn't possibly come out for an interview until after that was over in the second weekend in December. So, we polished off those multiple performances--I think we were doing two or three performances that weekend--and then I flew out to Youngstown on Monday and stayed here for about three days. It was a very intensive interview. It was one the most enjoyable experiences I think that I've ever had. From the very beginning, the post intrigued me because it was a combination of teaching and church position. I was interviewed at the University and promised a job there. The church was very willing to let me do both things. I arrived on March 1, to begin the Lenten season here at the church, although I was not, obviously, scheduled to teach in the academic year until September. I was interviewed by John Kruger, who was the conductor of the Youngstown Symphony at that time, and Kenneth Kitchen, who was the

dean of the Dana School of Music. We were not even a college of fine and performing arts at that juncture. In addition, St. John's Church also had a very, I think, good music committee that had been working here for a period of about two years to try to find somebody. All of the things kind of meshed together. I also, at that same time, had a job opportunity at Christ Church in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. And that, too, was a teaching job, but it was a prep school. It was the church, as you probably know, where Will Brewster served at as assistant before he came here. They [Bloomfield] weren't really ready to make a decision, and I wasn't really interested in prep school. I had done that in Providence, and I really wanted to get into an academic college/university area. So, it looked like a good move. Indeed, I came here in 1960 and, unfortunately, I have been here for 30 years since! [Laughter]

In the meantime, I did get a Danforth Teaching Grant in 1966. I went back to New York to complete my residence requirements for the doctoral degree. I had been in residence as a part-time student at Case Western Reserve up in Cleveland, although it was just known as Western Reserve at that time. Another colleague and I went up every semester for a couple of courses, so I did get a lot of the course work in the two years preceding that. I went back in summers and finished my language requirements at the seminary and entered as a resident doctoral student in September of 1966. We were there from 1966--fortunately, Danforth renewed my grant for 1967 and 1968. We pretty much finished the whole program in two years, although I did come back because I hadn't quite completed my last chapter in the dissertation--the famous "ABD." (All But Dissertation) That was completed during the next year, and then, I got the degree in January of 1970 from Union Seminary, The School of Sacred Music, which of course, is now up at Yale University as part of the program. It's now known as the Institute of Sacred Music.

That's my academic background. I've sort of sandwiched in a few other little items as well.

B: What happened to the Harvard doctoral?

G: That I really was interested in doing. The nature of my job here was such that I went back as an alumni officer in the Union Cabinet. There was a change of administration at Union Seminary and, quite frankly, I was very fascinated by a Harvard professor who had come to work there. He was in charge of doctoral studies, and I really was so taken with him that I decided I would do the degree at the Seminary instead and, as a result, never did matriculate at Harvard.

B: What happened at St. John's when you were working on your doctorate?

G: Fortunately, we had several young colleagues of mine that were between jobs, so we had a choice of a lot of people that would be able to fill in for me. Originally it was only to be a year, although I, from the very beginning, was pretty sure I'd have to stay the two years. A Union graduate who had finished a master's degree that same year by the name of Gerald McGee, and who had gone to college over in New Wilmington as a pupil of Ray Ocock, was interested in the job. Actually, he would not have been my first choice for the position, but the rector then, Hunsdon Cary, was interested in having him come. He seemed like a very gregarious individual, and he really worked out quite well with the choir. I think the boys, at that time, responded very well to him. The choir went on very, very nicely for those two years.

While I was gone, Dr. Cary, who was the rector then, switched jobs also. He went on to Bethesda by the Sea in Palm Beach, Florida. So, I came back to a wholly new situation--with a job search going on. Then, John Wigle was finally selected as the rector. He was the second rector I worked with here.

B: What were your first impressions when you came and looked at St. John's?

G: Well, I had sort of mixed feelings about it. I was following a person--Frank Fuller--who had been here for 33 years, so I knew that the program was very firmly fixed. It had a very solid boy choir tradition, and the choir was very effectively kept together by Ray Ocock, who was serving as kind of an interim organist-choirmaster until the new person was hired.

Actually, I should say that I did not directly follow Frank, because another colleague of mine, who strangely enough, followed me at Church of the Transfiguration in Rhode Island when I went off to the Army, was free at that time. So, he filled in for me those two years that I was serving in the military. Clarence Smelser, then, when I went back to Providence, assumed the post here at St. John's, in Youngstown. He lasted here for a period of two years. Things were not very happy. It was just not a very good marriage in terms of personality and the then current constituency of the choir. He was not the easiest person, I think, to get along with. He worked out, certainly, reasonably well, but it was

very obvious, from a point of view of the personnel, the relationship with the rector wasn't as good as it should be. So, it was sort of a mutual agreement that he would leave.

I followed him here, then, on this job. It was like a wonderful circle. I came to St. John's only because it was the kind of place that would give me the freedom to work in both environments.

Clarence did not teach at the university and really was not interested in doing that kind of thing. He was basically a singer. He didn't like teaching and he never really wanted to go into that area. So, what initially intrigued me then, of course, became--upon my interviews here and my assessment of the job--increased enthusiasm about the possibilities. As Alec Wyton said to me, "There's only one thing that can happen in Youngstown. It can only get better; it can't get any worse." Because there had been a lot of personnel problems in terms of the relationship of Mr. Smelser here, and it just wasn't a very good scene.

I inherited a pretty balanced group of men and boys and a second choir that sang for the 9 o'clock service--the girls' choir. Both of those organizations, fortunately . . . you know, the decade of the 1960s was a decade of extreme optimism and growth lasting until the Vietnam War. I was in New York at the very time that all of that initial protest and the SVS movement broke out on the Columbia campus. So, I know how the mood of the country changed so radically after the death of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. I suffered through all of those things as a full time student. My family and I have very, very vivid recollections of those two years because, for us, living in the womb of the seminary in New York City and being a part of that whole scene at a very, very crucial time in our political and world history was really an eye opening experience for me. I was in the middle of copying some of my microfilm transcriptions from 16th century part books--and I would have to go over to the Columbia library every day. Columbia University and Union are, you know, in a real reciprocal arrangement with Union and Columbia and Julliard all interchanging faculty and library facilities and everything. So, I would go over every morning. At that particular point in my study, I was in the transcription stage and also my oldest son, Erik, was then a first grade student at the Cathedral School, which is right across on Amsterdam Avenue. So, we would walk through the Columbia yard every morning, because I'd take him over to school. We saw this gradual build-up of student protest, and then finally, the taking over of the buildings. There were many days at that time in April I



could not even get in the library. I was barred, because the students had taken over the buildings. So, it was a very, very, I think, disruptive time in a decade that had been so productive and so optimistic and so forward moving. It was, I think, the first real block that any of us had to progress, and it was kind of hard to take. I remember very, very vividly, because it made such a profound impact.

I think our family life at that time, those were the two best years that we ever spent. In the first place, because I could not work. I was paid to go to school, which is kind of a luxury. [Laughter] My children saw more of me--we only had two at that time, Dirk was not born. It was such a remarkable experience, in the first place, living in a very elegant student, two bedroom apartment, fully furnished for \$110 a month, on Riverside Drive, and having all of these wonderful facilities. The children were in nursery school and kindergarten at Riverside Church, and then, Erik went over to the Cathedral School, so he really had the best of beginning education, and Lars, of course, in the nursery school and kindergarten, also. They remember those experiences a great deal and still talk about them today.

I used to run every day in Riverside Park and take them to the, you know, all the wonderful things that New York offers for children. We were right on Riverside, next to Grant's Tomb and the International House. So, we were in the heart of everything. It was just truly a remarkable activity.

But getting back to your original question about St. John's, then, of course, when I came back--that was 1968, in the fall--we found a much changed situation. The choir was in very good shape. Indeed, in the next two or three years, it probably grew to its most potent force. We had a wonderful group of probationary boys that were always coming in. And then, the chemistry really changed because the public school systems went on split schedules, and that locked us into a real time frame that was virtually impossible [to deal with].

Before, we had a rehearsal on Wednesday at 4 o'clock after school, a Thursday night rehearsal, of course, with the men, a full Saturday morning program that included the Boys' Church School and their two rehearsals, a sports period, and lunch. So, it really was a full schedule. They came in at 9 o'clock and they went home at 1:00. It was a very active program that involved the two clergy--sometimes we even had three at that point--and the Director of Christian Education was also a full time person. And then, we had a lot of the

older boys in the choir who would come in and help out with the various sports programs and the supervisory roles. So, it was an extremely active program. Not just music, but a total kind of program.

It [the program] was going very well until that time frame was broken up, first of all, by the schools. We could no longer get everybody together at that Wednesday shot, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Then in the mid-1970s, we had the first of the real gas crunches. Our Mideastern problems really began to hit us in that area. The parents just simply could not, at that point, drive as much. Well, our public transportation system was not such that the people from Poland and Canfield and all the outlying communities--and most of our kids did come from the suburbs--would be able to bring them in. It [practice] was Thursday; it was Wednesday; it was Saturday; and it was Sunday. That's four trips a week, and that began to take its toll.

First of all, we dropped Wednesday after school. And then, I was trying to go with boys on Thursday night and Saturday and Sunday. That worked with problems, but at least it was realistic. Then, we began getting more and more problems with Saturday because the schedule of the kids kept increasing and they went to do all their after school activities on Saturdays. So finally we had to do away with the Saturday program. Again, it was not the children so much, it was the parents who refused to drive. Finally, we simply gave up and we went to a Thursday rehearsal.

At that point, we had already been using a few women professional singers just simply to reinforce the ranks on Sunday. Gradually, although we did have boys well through the 1970s in the choir, when there isn't really a strong program, a program that appeals particularly to them, and they are focused, then we just simply gradually lost all of our young people. At that same point, our church school declined. We were probably at our strongest during the period when we were without a rector. Nancy Morris was the head of the church school [and] we had wonderful lay participation. Really, I think the program here was better then than it ever has been before and probably ever since. At that point, everyone really pitched in and, you know, worked so effectively as far as the contribution and the responsibility that each one of them made and felt. I really think, from my experience in these 30 years, that two year period that we went through then was our greatest period in terms of active parishioner involvement and support, and all the programs thrived.

B: Just to clarify, this is between Hunsdon Cary and John Wigle?

- G: No, [this was] after John Wigle left. That would have been what? I can't even remember now, late 1970s, I guess.
- B: That's really interesting. At the beginning of the interview, when you came for this first interview, they were talking about getting a new instrument.
- G: Yes. One of the things that intrigued me, of course, was the fact that the church was really actively pursuing the investigation of the organ problem and was pretty well committed to a new instrument. Although, there were many people who felt the old one could be rebuilt.

I arrived on a Wednesday, and I had my first organ committee meeting that Saturday. That was like the first week in March of 1960. We then began a sort of two year commitment to try to find the best solution to the problem. We had an old E.M. Skinner organ that dated from the early 1920s, and it was really in absolute wretched shape. It had been abysmally cared for and was literally held together by scotch tape and paper clips in some cases. I just knew that the organ was not really worthy of repair. The amount of money that it was going to cost us was just exorbitant. Then when it would have been finished, it still wasn't going to be what I would have liked to have seen in place here. The committee felt exactly the same way, and we were committed to a new instrument.

That caused some degree of problems, because any time you make a radical change like that in an old tradition and here's this young . . . I was 26 years old when I came here so I didn't have much credibility vis-a-vis the predecessors like Bob Forcier and Frank Fuller who had been here for so many years and who had begun the tradition. But we gradually, I think through some very, very active lay support--we had wonderful lay people who led the committees at that time, Dr. Bennet, Dr. Bunn, Nevin Lewis, and Dr. George Pugh--and they were really committed to this new idea. Indeed, we eventually contracted for the Schlicker organ. I believe it was done in about 1962 or 1963.

It may have been 1963, because there was a setback at one point. We had an awful lot of people at that time in the community that were vociferously against the project. There was one time even, I remember--I just happened to talk to one of our organ repairmen in town the other night--going out into the parking lot at St. John's on a Sunday after a service at which time a congregational vote was going to be taken about what to do about the organ. This rather unscrupulous

individual, who still is here, had gone to a great deal of trouble to print up a flyer and malign the work of Herman Schlicker, who was the designated builder. He made accusations that Mr. Schlicker had bought all of his materials in Germany and transshipped his pipes through Communist countries. He slammed all of this through this basically steel community parish. You know, we used to have all of the executives of U.S. Steel and Youngstown Sheet & Tube and Republic Steel, all of the big, high echelon, administrative people. This was really a setback for us, because how do you disprove something like this? We had a lot of questions, and it didn't go through as we had originally planned. We were about a year late in signing it because there had been so much opposition to the project.

But, finally it was contracted in 1963. I know it took three years to build--at that point almost every organ company was about three years behind schedule. And so, the organ was installed in the summer of 1966. It was just at that point, of course, that I had gotten my Danforth, and I was here through the entire installation and then left right after Labor Day to move to New York. But, I did fly back to dedicate the instrument at the end of September. That was kind of an ironic thing, to work that hard and then to turn it over immediately to somebody else for two years was very, very strange for me.

That was the first instrument and it was successful, and I think certainly it has changed the complexion of the organ in churches here in the Youngstown area. We have since added to it, but it [is] still not completed, as you very well know. I hope someday to be able to say, "Well, we'll keep adding to it and it might assume a definitive completion at some target date." That hasn't happened as yet, though.

Then, at the University, when we became a state university in 1967-1968--fortunately all of that hassle happened while I was on leave, so I never had to deal with the problems of converting from semesters to quarters. When I came back, there were already plans which began to assume some kind of concrete form in 1970. The College of Fine and Performing Arts was probably a seven year project. We brought that new building into shape and there indeed was a whole organ wing there. I added, at that point, five instruments over there, all of which are mechanical action. Mr. Schlicker built two of those, a five-stop Positive, and then another tracker organ for the small recital hall. But the brunt of those instruments--the other three instruments--were by Dirk Flentrop in Zandam, Holland. I have a 15-stop Flentrop in my studio. We have a

9-stop practice instrument and another 3-stop practice instrument. So, it was really a marvelous opportunity for a young person such as myself, at that time in his 20s and early 30s, to have been part of the design for the instruments both at St. John's and in the complex at the University.

B: It does sound like a pretty special opportunity. When did the Boar's Head start?

G: Oh dear. The Boar's Head began right away. I arrived here in March of 1960. In September, we hired a new assistant by the name of James Kirkhoffer. Jim had grown up in Indianapolis--his father was bishop of Indianapolis--and he had been a part of the scene in Christ Church Cincinnati, where the Boar's Head, as we know it really had its origins. Jim had seen it down there and was very excited about it. He sort of talked about it for a year [starting in] December of 1960. We just projected doing something like it the following year. He set into motion the activities of all the women in the parish that could sew, and they had an expenditure of I don't know how many thousands of dollars. They made all their costumes, hand-sewed all of that material. So, a lot of the things that are still a part of the Boar's Head are the original costumes that were designed by the women. It was Jim's brainchild.

We began on a small scale, but I think we just had the beef-eaters and the kings and things. That would have been 1961, the first performance. Then in 1962, it was a full blown performance. We immediately found that because there was so much music in it--and the choir people were actively assuming the singing roles--that it became necessary to involve the college choirs, which I had been affiliated with at that time. My baritone soloist here at that juncture was James Elson. He directed the Concert Choir so we sort of worked as a joint project on the Boar's Head from the very beginning. That has now grown larger and more complicated with every successive year.[Laughter] We are afflicted with it each January. I look upon in probably as the most distasteful day of the year, in terms of just the amount of hassle that it costs us. But the community seems to respond and I suppose it's what has made St. John's very famous. We certainly have sent it out all over the country, in terms of influence that has now sprung up in virtually every state that I know, because somebody has seen it here at one time. We really can't claim any originality because we took it over basically from the design that Jim Kirkhoffer had provided for us from Christ Church Cincinnati; although, as you know, there are certain musical choices every year that remain the same. Those, to a large extent, were sort

of the basic materials that came out of the Christ Church Cincinnati performance. We also change the music each year so at least it's not so repetitive and so boring for our musicians to do exactly the same thing each year.

B: Didn't you compose one of the fanfares that's used?

G: Well, yeah. It's a little fanfare that begins . . . my compositional ability is very limited. I despise composition. I always say that I'd rather be flagellated than be compelled to write anything. I only do it under the most emergency-like situations. But I did write the opening fanfare for that [the Boar's Head Festival].

B: One of the nice things about the Boar's Head is seeing the church full.

G: Yes. Believe it or not, in the days when I first came here, an 11 o'clock service on Sunday morning was always like that. You had the transepts that were really filled, and to have 450 in church at an 11 o'clock service plus a 9 [o'clock service] and plus an 8 [o'clock service]. Those were the real halcyon years of this parish! Unfortunately, they have not lasted.

B: What was a typical Christmas Eve service like? Has that changed at all?

G: It has changed a bit, I guess, because we always did a half-hour of music before [the service]. I think a lot of the choices of material were sort of restricted. They did basically the old, traditional carols, which I still like to use to a certain extent, but I have changed a lot of the choices, in terms of a much more eclectic series of pieces that we do.

But the structure of the service remains, ostensibly at least, the same today as it was when I came. They always have those beautiful votive candles all over the church. They always have a candle light recessional. We always sing "Silent Night" as the kneeling carol. Those things have not changed at all.

Really, interestingly enough, the Boar's Head brought into being the great affection in the parish for the Christina Rossetti hymn "In the Bleak Midwinter" that has become part of the hymnal. But that carol, for instance, was not sung very often until we began the Boar's Head festival. Then, it became the highlight of that, in a sense. That was Jim's own contribution--Jim Kirkhoffer--[because] that was not done at Christ Church Cincinnati. Since that point, it's sort of become a traditional part. We usually sing a fourth

stanza, "What can I Give Him," as the presentation hymn as the Christmas offertory. Fortunately, we don't do many of those presentation things in the new prayer book anymore, but that one still remains.

- B: Can you tell me what the new changes were in the new hymnal when it came out, and maybe a little bit about how the choir and congregation reacted?
- G: The new hymnal, that is The Hymnal 1982, was probably one of the most significant publications, even more significant, in my estimation, than the changes that the prayer book revision revealed. It made it possible for the prayer book to be a vital element in worship. I think the Episcopal Church, in the past, had always done things piecemeal. They had issued a prayer book, and it went through a trial period, and then, finally, became a finalized form. It was used, but none of the liturgical materials were ready for that utilization. The new services, and particularly the language of Rite II in both Morning Prayer and in the Eucharist, then had to be filled in from many, many sources. The new liturgical calendar that had evolved greatly expanded certain traditional areas.

For instance, the season of Advent was very minimally represented in the old hymnal, that is, Hymnal 1940. The new Hymnal 1982 has a wealth of materials for the great feast days and for some of the Saints' Days celebrations that were not included before. The thing, of course, that I like about it is that we, as church musicians, have very ample time and really a lot of input. We were solicited by Ray Glover, who was a personal friend of mine and who was a colleague at Union Seminary. He, of course, was the general editor of the hymnal. All of us, through our association with the Association of Anglican Musicians Conferences every year, would be brought up-to-date on the proposals, and we would sing through a lot of the materials. We really were actively involved in the selection process. Some of us were solicited to compose things. I've already told you, that for me [composing] is like taking a horrible medicine. I am not interested in composing, but a lot of my colleagues did submit things. And I think the ultimate choices, while they certainly have not pleased everyone in terms of the character, are very, very eclectic and very catholic--with a small "C"--choice of materials that have just provided a wealth of treasures for the musician and the parish that is really interested in coming to grips with the integration of music and text in the liturgy. It really is an absolute compendium of materials.

The thing about it that disturbs me, about St. John's Youngstown, is that I don't think people today really get a kick out of singing. I cannot find here, nor really have I ever found it from the very beginning, the great enthusiasm for congregational participation. I think people are only willing to complain about what they don't like about it rather than the good that is to be found there. They're very reticent about trying new things. Now, I think you can overdo new materials, and I suppose that in our great desire to set forth all of these marvelous musical treasures, we may overfeed our parish because they do rebel once in awhile. If there's a new hymn, particularly on a recession, that they don't like, they just close the books and don't sing at all and the choir is to be heard, and that's it.

What surprises me is that the hymn singing is not very good. I have felt that from the very beginning. In other parishes that I have served, particularly Lutheran congregations when I was a student . . . I guess growing up as a Lutheran I always had a great love and a great sense of participation in terms of the hymnody of a service. I never have found that at St. John's--nor have I found it generally in the Episcopal Church, except for our AAM (Association of Anglican Musicians) Conferences, when we, as musicians, really raise the roof. I think the materials in there are inherently so good, but musical tastes are very different in 1990 than they were in 1940. Also, musical abilities are different. I have noticed in the last few years at St. John's, particularly as I look out in the congregation and as I look into the mirror at myself and see every morning more gray hairs, I realize that the older congregation isn't able to sing as effectively and they don't, perhaps, try as hard. The young people that we used to have are no longer that much in evidence. As a result, you don't find real commitment to active congregational participation.

It's not only the singing, it's in terms of the responses in the prayer book. Sometimes you just wonder if the people who are sitting out there are alive at all, because they don't react like the clergy and like the musicians would like them to. I think in all of this--which is said with some disappointment, but also with a sense of the reality of the changing tastes--peoples sense of the liturgy and the heritage of the church, particularly its music, is not nearly so strongly felt now as it was when I came here 30 years ago. The average person today who sits in St. John's Church has only been here fairly recently, and as a result, they don't have the backlog of experience with the church that we have had. They don't feel things as strongly as we do. I don't mean to put them down in



any way, it's just that their lives are different. It's the same thing in the public schools. I know it, and you know it very well, because we deal with college kids today. The preparation in terms of basic skills in English and writing is absolutely abysmal. It is surprising how minimally prepared so many people are. When I teach a class, let's say as I do occasionally, to non-musicians that just sort of deals with music history as a reality in non-technical terms, you find that most of these kids have never even heard any of this music before, let alone have participated in it. The musical art and the liturgical art and the heritage was so much a part of my experience growing up and going to school and participating in it. Today, I would set my alarm to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to sing a 16th century motet or a Latin Mass or a madrigal or a Victorian anthem or whatever you could name. But most people don't feel that way about the repertory we create. It's just a changing context. It's very frustrating to deal with that from a point of view of an educator or somebody who, like myself, has spent a lifetime dealing with--and then, you don't seem to get the response from people that you feel yourself or that you would like to have happen. As a result, the more you try and the fewer people that come Sunday after Sunday, in terms of a congregation, it's a no-win situation because you can't ever generate the kind of enthusiastic support that you should have.

- B: Do you think from your AAM Conferences that you were talking about, is this just St. John's or is it a nationwide thing?
- G: It is pretty much nationwide, although it does exist in certain pockets. For instance, there are wonderful things that happen all over the country. It usually is in a context where all the right chemistries are there, where you have enthusiasm in terms of clergy leadership, enthusiasm in terms of musical leadership, the response of a lot of people who have been carefully nurtured and who are really part of a community. Then, things do occur. Certainly we, as professional musicians, see that in the activities that we ourselves take part in and do ourselves, and we try to engender the same kinds of things in the parishes we are involved with. It's not the same kind of thing at all. You would like to be able, when you see a situation that really works, you would just like to have your own congregation sit amongst that group of people for just one positive experience like that. It's so catching; it's so contagious; it's so exciting for people to be a part of it. But it's very difficult to create that kind of excitement when you're dealing with a group that basically doesn't feel that.

- B: Are you seeing a big transition. . . ? When you first came to St. John's, what percentage of the choir was paid? I know the congregation was much larger, so there were probably more parishioners that. . . .
- G: At that point, actually, when I came, all of them were paid. All of the boys were paid. All of the men were paid. And, the girls and women sang for nothing. But, they always were given some sort of reward. We did a lot of trips with them at that time. For instance, we went to the Washington Cathedral. We would take a train trip in the spring. We did all sorts of activities, often up in the conference center at Cedar Hills. We would just take the whole weekend off and go up and be a part of that scene there. We had our projects that--there were funds expended then. It's just that it had not been a tradition to pay them. When I say "paid", in 1960--I'm talking about the boys-- maybe they would make all of \$2 or \$3 a month for their services. It was not very much money. The men's pay was very minimal, too.

At that point, as far as I remember, there may have been one or two volunteers in the men, but what we had as a choir was basically all professional people. Fortunately, there was an endowment, as we are open today because of our endowments, as you very well know. There was a specific kind of endowment for that very thing, and that still is in evidence. It's obviously now a part of a larger support system, but it's still there. We still have an endowment that is exclusively designated for the pay of the choir. Now they're adult men and women, but it is in the original bequest.

- B: So, actually today, there would be more volunteers then there were then?
- G: Oh, yes. Today we have, let's say, of a choir of about 30, well over half of those are volunteer people. We do pay the students. We have to in order to get any kind of balance within sections. Even that is becoming increasingly more difficult because students today are not willing to commit themselves to the kind of schedule. You know yourself because you are a part of it. It's very difficult to say, "I'll be there every Thursday and every Sunday from September through June or the end of May." This is true all over the country. You do not find that kind of commitment that we once had because people's schedules are just over-committed right now. I feel very badly about it because it certainly precludes us from doing our best job.
- B: Certainly, I think it would exempt most of the graduate students right away because many graduate courses are at night.

- G: Yes, that's true. We do have a lot of talented students, but then, you lose them over the major feast days. For instance, this year, Easter falls exactly the day before the classes for the spring quarter open. I know, because it's happened before, we'll lose a lot of people. We lose very good singers at Christmas time who leave for family reasons, and I can't argue with that. They have three weeks off.
- B: You could be like Richard's choral director and say, "No!"
- G: That's right. Richard has a wonderful colleague of mine in Baltimore. Henry Loen; again, in a large metropolitan area like that, he can get people because he can pay them more. Even if I had a lot of money to pay, I think I would find--just simply because the Youngstown area is smaller--that you don't have nearly the wide choice of available talent. You sort of have to make due with what you've got.
- B: I can imagine--just from what I've learned through the other interviews and reading the histories--that you must have been a real shot in the arm to the musical library for the choir. Has it always been very, old traditional music?
- G: Yes. It was very limited. When I arrived, again, it had been abysmally cared for. There were literally boxes in cartons that were sort of under water in the recreation room. Much of that music was full of mold.

You can't imagine the choir room at that point because it was like a page out of the past. The old pews that had once been a part of the church were down there in this abysmally dark and dank room. It was the most depressing possible atmosphere for rehearsal that you could ever imagine. Plus the fact that our materials were severely limited. Even those that were usable were pretty much from the Victorian era only. So, I look upon my major contribution, I guess, as just simply making that a real catholic library. Now, we really have an extraordinarily fine collection of music.

But what disturbs me is the fact that the way music in the church is going. . . . I'm 58 now, I have a few more years before I retire, but I really don't think that this parish will continue the kind of thing that we have had in the past after I leave. As a matter of fact, the vestry has even stated that. It's already a sort of a fait accompli. There again, it's a living heritage that sort of goes down the tubes when that happens. You don't like to think that you're presiding

over a wake, you know. You like to think that you're going to pass on something that some other generations of people in this church might grow to love and to appreciate because it's a part of their regular diet. I'm not very optimistic about that at this point.

I get very discouraged even in terms of our own choir now. They are able to do what they are able to do. But certainly, I have had to cut back in terms of my demands and my dreams for what we would like to be as a viable musical entity. Even all of the support from the school and the valuable resources that you have in terms of players and singers, there still is a limit to what you [can do]. If you don't have adequate rehearsal time and if you don't have adequate budgeted amounts of money and you don't have the enthusiastic participation of people and, more importantly, the attendance of an audience and a congregation that sits out there on Sunday, you just sort of lose all of your sense of enthusiasm for what you do. I have not felt that. I can truthfully say, as I do every year, I look forward to September so much because after a summer of respite and not constant demands, in terms of cranking out anthems and an intensive service schedule, I always look forward to coming back and starting all over again. There's so much more that we should be doing and can be doing. But it does get harder and harder every year to get things off the ground.

B: I've seen that even in the four years I've been here. [There has been] a tremendous change in that respect. I'm part of the change.

G: Well, that's just it. I get so furious at times because I would like to slam somebody up against the wall, but there's really very little that one can do about it. You have to accept what busy schedules your people have and deal with it as best you can under the circumstances. You certainly don't necessarily like it, but on the other hand I think back, for instance, to the spring performance of that Crashaw poetry and the Finzi anthem. That was one of the very best things that we've ever done. You can work and make things go under a lot of adverse circumstances, but you do fewer and fewer of those things, and you also get less and less support for it when you do it. It's just one of those realities we have to deal with.

B: This seems like a good lead in for Musica Sacra then, since we've been talking about the dwindling at St. John's.

G: Youngstown Musica Sacra was an organization that came into being in 1980 as a result of an affiliation I had built with the Cathedral [St. Columba]. As a matter of

fact, when I first came here, St. Columba Cathedral was celebrating a mass with some newly ordained clergy. I went down and sang in Orly Vitello's choir because he invited me to come. I've always had a close association with the Cathedral and with Bishop Malone. The two full time organist/choirmasters that have served down there previous to Mr. Alexander both have been former students of mine. They did both their bachelor's degrees and their master's degrees at YSU. I'm very proud to have been responsible for their professional lives at that time. It was something that was quite natural. We used to join the choir for various services down there. When Tony and I decided to do more things together, we fortunately had budgets at that time that allowed us to have several thousand dollars a year for instruments. We used our joint budgets to do services and concerts together.

But really, what brought Musica Sacra in to being was an Ohio Arts Council grant that we received to do a separate concert. Now that organization is devoted principally to the performance of the great choral, orchestral masterpieces--the masses and motet literature, some of the oratorio pieces. We started out by doing, let's say, a Haydn or a Mozart mass in the context of the Eucharist here at St. John's. We would move from 10:30 service here down to the 12 o'clock noon at the Cathedral and repeat it down there with the same personnel. We have just had a lot of enthusiastic support for that kind of thing. As you very well know, we did the Italian tour in 1989 and that was certainly a wonderful experience. We try to keep feeding that as much as we can, but personnel changes--and now Joe Alexander has taken the position after Dan Laginya left to do his doctoral work with Michael Farris at the University of Illinois. We're trying to crank all of that up again and keep it going, but we find that increasingly the costs go up, and our budgets go down. So, I'm not, again, overly optimistic as to how long that's going to be able to keep going. Unless we get a major influx of funding, we'll soon run pretty dry in terms of our support system for that. But it is a glorious opportunity to do what we can do best, I think. Everybody seems to profit from it. But again, it's an extra; it takes time, commitment, and money. And you don't always have those things in abundance.

B: Do you miss the boy's choir at all?

G: Yes, I miss it greatly. That was something that was a very important part of my life. I sang as a boy soprano, myself. I participated not so much in a boy's choir, but did an awful lot of singing in a junior choir situation. Then, [I] went on to school and really sort of forgot about boy's choirs until I got to

New York and became affiliated first of all with St. James, Madison Avenue, as Donald Coats's assistant, and then, most particularly, with Alec Wyton and the St. Thomas Choir down on Fifth Avenue, which we heard all of the time. [I] really was fascinated by this and had the great opportunity particularly to work with Alec in this area. When I left the Seminary and took the job in Providence--actually it was in Cranston--at the Church of the Transfiguration, we did have a very active boy choir program there. I certainly enjoyed it very much. Here, I think we did some stunning things in terms of the repertory and the quality.

But you have to be flexible, again. There's no sense in whipping a dead horse, as they say. When the church school began to decline and when all of these other things that I have referred to interfered with our work, it soon became a very, very clear path as far as I was concerned. If you can't do it well--and even reasonably well--if it just declines in quality, then it's foolish; it's just not worth it. But I do miss it, yes, very much.

B: What changes do you see for the future? You've been talking about this dwindling, but in the immediate future before you leave, what other changes would you like to accomplish?

G: I certainly would like to revitalize our program, which I think means that we simply have to have more people and more programs and more intensive rehearsals and make music, once again, a real vital part of the parish. I don't, myself, feel that it is at this juncture. I think we're sort of in a holding pattern. We keep doing the same kind of things, and I'm not so sure, in my own tenure, I will ever accomplish that. I'm at the point in my life when I'm not so willing to put forth the effort anymore. If my job becomes less desirable for me than it is now, I don't really think I will continue to do it. I hope that that's not the case. I hope that we'll be able to recoup a lot of our losses and continue to contribute an effective program. I really, myself, don't feel that the last two or three years have evidenced that. I'd like to think that we could muster the enthusiasm and support--particularly among the vestry and our leadership, which I feel has been significantly lacking--and get everyone on an even keel again so that we're at least working together to provide something that all of us believe is important. You end up feeling like you're sort of a voice in the wilderness crying, like John, to a bunch of unbelievers. If that's the case, if that's what the church has come to, so to speak, in terms of my own. . . . My own perception of it is not that at all. As a result, I would probably remove myself from the circumstances,

because I don't need to work much longer. I'm not so sure I would want to work in a declining kind of environment. I already feel a radical change in terms of the atmosphere, particularly, I would say, of the last two or three years. If it gets much worse, I don't think I will choose to remain in it.

B: I think it's not just the music. As I look into the church, it's the whole [thing].

G: Very definitely. I don't mean to single out music alone, but it's a very unwholesome atmosphere. To me, I love the church too much and I love my professional involvement in it. I have a high enough opinion of myself in my own self worth to not let my work go on when I don't feel like it's doing what it should do. It's hard for me to say because I don't mean to be overly pessimistic. Things are not going to fall apart. I mean, St. John's will always have its doors open, I suppose, because it has a large enough endowment to just keep things going. But that's not healthy. It's just an absolute shell. I've already seen that take place, in terms of people's reaction to it. And, their feeling about the church has changed so radically. I think people have been just sort of forgotten for a long time. When you're not made to feel like you're an active part of things, then you tend to think, "I don't have to go on Sunday. Nobody knows that I'm missing anyway." That's the general attitude.

B: I think the financial contributions, too. . . . I mean, if there's an endowment then why do we all have to contribute?

G: That's true. They don't feel what they give is really that necessary. I think we have an enormously difficult job just communicating the realities of what things cost. Nobody can deny that. Look what you're putting in your gas tank every week now, as opposed to what it was before the Mideast crisis. To think of a gallon of gas in terms of 80 or 90 cents, those days are long gone. I guess we just have to face these changes. It's very difficult. I'm not old enough yet to always live in the past, but I can sympathize with people who do that because I think it is always so easy for us to say, "My gosh, it never used to be this hard before." It was never so complicated just to get a simple task off the ground. For a person who works in the church today, you really have a difficult task.

I feel that very much so, because my life at the university is on such a different level. I think as an academic, it's really wonderful for me, because the lack of support you feel in terms of the church, I

don't feel that ever in terms of my teaching, even though we see the student population decline. Certainly we're not--at least at the music school--dealing with the numbers or the talents that we used to have. You at least see your own material, so to speak, being accepted and used by people. I guess the greatest thing for me in terms of my own work is the fact that I can sort of leave one office and go to another. If the problems in one place are too great, it sort of balances out in the other. But I basically love teaching so much, and I have such a wonderful affection for our atmosphere at YSU and the colleagues and the people that I deal with, that that sort of gives me enough enthusiasm and incentive to really keep on top of things. Again, it's very difficult to compare an academic world with a liturgical one in a church situation, but there is a conspicuous difference. The two institutions are very, very different. Each one of them is having its own kind of growing pains at this juncture. I suppose both of them will last an awful long time, but both of them, I think, are going to have to change a great deal. An academic institution is just as difficult to change as anything else, but it seems to muster the support, and the response is a little bit more evident.

A church and a parish situation, that's a little more difficult to accomplish because you're not dealing with a community of likes, so to speak. You have a tremendous, not only age span to encompass, but also the nature of people. One of the things that drew me to St. John's was its catholicity. It has everything from the blue collar steel worker all the way up to the executive, professional kind of person. I like that constituency. It's not that way anymore. We've lost a lot of our blue collar parishioners. Fifty thousand jobs have disappeared since the mills closed. It's more problematic to change an institution like St. John's than it is to change an institution like YSU. But like any problem, I think these things have got to be faced and tackled from a point of view of collective leadership. That's where changes are made. It's not getting a new clergy or getting a new organist or getting a new secretary or whatever. One person is really very insignificant in a fabric. It takes a lot of people that work together to analyze problems and to begin to creatively solve problems. That's one of the things that I have made clear to a lot of the committees that I've served on, both here and at YSU. Everyone expects Johnny to do it or somebody else to do it. When things happen it's because you get a group of like-minded individuals who are willing to tackle things creatively and who are not afraid of saying,



"This is the way it was 35 years ago, but that's no longer the case. We have to do something creative with what we've got." That's where the rub comes. You don't always find that as a possibility.

B: I'm wondering if the upcoming Foyer groups will help get a lot of that spark back.

G: It seems to be. . . .

B: I think that it's exciting they have enough for five groups. I never would have guessed that.

G: I'm very excited about that, too. I know somebody approached my wife the other day and said, "We're so disappointed that you're not doing this." She said, "We're disappointed, too." I feel that I would like to be a part of it, but at this point in my life, it's just not possible for me to commit to anything more. [Laughter]

B: The nice thing about it is that you can drop out or start up every six months. I think that kind of thing, where it's not a static group that people don't want to enter or something like that. . . .

G: I think it's a very, very healthy growth opportunity. I wish it a great deal of success.

B: I really thank you for your time. This has been a wonderful interview.

G: Sure. You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW