Good morning. My name is Father Tom Kennealy, I'm the Archivist at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. Today is Tuesday, October 10, 2017, and I am presently in the McDonald Memorial Library on the Xavier campus.

With me is Father Albert J. Bischoff of the Society of Jesus, who has graciously consented to be interviewed this morning for Xavier's Archives Collection of Oral Histories.

First of all, let me give you some background on Father Bischoff. Father B, as he is affectionately known to countless Xavier students and alums, graduated from Xavier University with a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1949, and a master of education degree in 1958.

He was ordained a diocesan priest in 1956, and served the Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati and a variety of priestly roles for 23 years. In 1979, Father Al entered the Society of Jesus, and after completing his Jesuit training, pronounced his final vows as a Jesuit in December 1991.

Father Al has been associated with Xavier University for many years, both as a diocesan priest, and as a Jesuit. Very few people know the University and its students, past and present, as well as he does.
Thomas Kennealy: 01:35 So first of all Father Al, welcome and thank you for your willingness to share with us your memories of Xavier University. Let me begin, if I may, by asking about your life prior to Xavier. First of all, where were you born and raised?

Albert Bischoff: 01:50 Well, Tom, I was born at St. Mary's Hospital in downtown Cincinnati on January 19, 1927. And I was raised on that holy hill we call Price Hill. And I lived on Joanna Place with my mother and father, Al and Margaret, and I had a sister who was three years older than me named Ruth.

Albert Bischoff: 02:15 I went to Carson Grade School, and then I went to St. Theresa Grade School. And then to the dismay of some of my classmates, I went to St. Xavier High School instead of Elder High School. I graduated there in 1945. And after that, I entered the Society of Jesus for a couple of months.

Albert Bischoff: 02:45 When I look back upon all that, I don't think I was ready for the discipline of the Society of Jesus. I think I had to mature a little bit. But I have good memories, and I came then to Xavier University in-

Thomas Kennealy: 02:58 Let me ask you first of all, going back to your days in Price Hill.

Albert Bischoff: 03:03 Yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 03:04 Being a Price Hillian myself, I can't let that pass. What was life like in Price Hill, and is it really true that Price Hillians and West Siders are not truly appreciated by Cincinnatians in general?

Albert Bischoff: 03:17 Well, we certainly appreciated ourselves. I think we were mostly a middle-class community. On the street I lived, there were 22 houses. We never had a doctor living there, or a lawyer living there. We had people who worked in insurance and had their own...a lot of people had their own businesses. And it was very Catholic.

Albert Bischoff: 03:44 My mother always told me this story, of the family that lived on the corner of Joanna and Armistice Lane, that
the lady told them they were moving to Westwood because Price Hill was just too Catholic for them.

Albert Bischoff: 03:59 There was a Jewish family that lived there, Sal Marmer, who I played with as a kid and truly loved. And as I said, it was built around a lot of family values. Houses in those days had a lot of porches, and in the summertime, everybody sat on their porch. Everybody listened to Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, and those stations.

Thomas Kennealy: 04:27 The radio stations, yes.

Albert Bischoff: 04:30 You could really be out in the yard playing, and listen to the radio, because everybody had it on. I'm very grateful. I had a lot of fathers and a lot of mothers I would have never had, and at the time I didn't enjoy some of them, because they told of my mistakes.

Albert Bischoff: 04:47 But I look back upon it, and it was a wonderful, wonderful life.

Thomas Kennealy: 04:52 Well, being a Price Hillian, how did you wind up at Xavier High School? That's downtown a long way from Price Hill.

Albert Bischoff: 04:58 Well, my dad had his business at Lumway Tire Shop, and it was a small business, but he had about 12 men working for him. And they repaired cars, and they sold gas. And his business was on the corner of Iliff and Glenway Avenue. And right down the street, no more than about even a quarter of a mile is Elder High School.

Albert Bischoff: 05:24 And he used to, a lot of the priests came there, and my dad felt that I should go someplace where I wasn't known and he wasn't known. And my mother agreed with that. My mother was very active in the Catholic Women's Club, and of course there were women from all over the city.

Albert Bischoff: 05:43 My dad only had a sixth grade education, he was a very wise man, though. And my mother graduated from Hughes High School, and she read a lot, and she encouraged me to read. So my sister ended up
going to the Academy of St. Joe, instead of Seton High School, and I went to St. X.

Albert Bischoff: 06:09 My sister was going with a graduate of St. X then, and he was a very fine fellow, and he just kept telling my mother and dad I should really go to St. X. So maybe I went so my sister wouldn't lose him, [both laugh]...and she ended up marrying him.

Thomas Kennealy: 06:26 But as it turned out, those were four wonderful years at Xavier High School.

Albert Bischoff: 06:29 Oh, just great years, yes. I am so thankful for my education, yes.

Thomas Kennealy: 06:37 And of course, those were years downtown, when the high school was still at Seventh and Sycamore, not where it is now at Finneytown.

Albert Bischoff: 06:46 Yes. I remember when ... every now and then we could sneak out and go to the Wheel Café, which was a wonderful place.

Thomas Kennealy: 06:53 Oh, that was a very popular restaurant downtown, the Wheel Café, yes.

Albert Bischoff: 06:58 I loved it there. Yes, had great memories and made great friends with students all over the city.

Thomas Kennealy: 07:07 That's one of the big advantages. You did meet people not only from all over Cincinnati, but Northern Kentucky as well.

Albert Bischoff: 07:13 That's right.

Thomas Kennealy: 07:14 Well, after high school, then you spent several months at Milford.

Albert Bischoff: 07:17 Yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 07:18 And left there, and then entered Xavier University in 1945.

Albert Bischoff: 07:23 Yeah, in August, September.
Thomas Kennealy: 07:26 What was Xavier University like in 1945, right after the war?

Albert Bischoff: 07:29 Yes. Well, that was the big thing. First of all, most of the students were what we call day hops. They didn't resort on campus. The one residence that was for campus was Elet Hall, was a residence. And there was some barracks that were put up after the war.

Albert Bischoff: 07:53 It was very Catholic. And I don't mean that in a bad sense. In a very wonderful sense. One thing I really loved about Xavier High and Xavier University is, I felt we were really loved in the best sense of that word. We were challenged to do our best, we were encouraged to do different things, and it was a wonderful place. I remember graduation, when I was walking out of the field house, I had tears in my eyes.

Thomas Kennealy: 08:23 Oh.

Albert Bischoff: 08:23 I didn't want to leave this wonderful place.

Thomas Kennealy: 08:24 What were some of the teachers you especially remember?

Albert Bischoff: 08:39 Well, there was a layman that had a great influence upon me, Mr. Rocco Paone. He was from New York City, I think he went to Florida. But that was after the war and they started the United Nations, and he got me interested in that. He got me interested in an organization called UNESCO, which was United Nations Educational ... I forget the exact, all the words now.

Albert Bischoff: 09:07 But I used to go out to different schools and give talks on this. I remember going to Mother of Mercy and St. Bernard, and I found that really opened my eyes. I read a lot of things I would have never read, and got interested in government. I used to love ... well, we all did. Saturday was the day we would go to a football game when they had one.

Albert Bischoff: 09:41 In those days, people, they didn't give all these big scholarships out, so they were just ordinary students-

Albert Bischoff: 09:49 Playing football, and there wasn't anything wonderful or unique about them, they were just good people, friends.

Albert Bischoff: 09:56 I got involved in student government. Oh, just a moment, let me recall myself for a second.

Thomas Kennealy: 10:08 Sure. You also got involved in theater.

Albert Bischoff: 10:14 Theater, yes.


Albert Bischoff: 10:16 Yes. I remember playing, there was a short show that we gave, a number of short plays, and I was in one called If Men Play Cards As Women Do. Today, we would be terribly criticized, but it was how you thought the women played, and you emphasized those things.

Thomas Kennealy: 10:40 Yes, yes.

Albert Bischoff: 10:40 Arsenic and Old Lace.

Thomas Kennealy: 10:40 Arsenic and Old Lace, oh yes. The old comedy, yeah.

Albert Bischoff: 10:44 And I got also ... the oratorical contest was big, and I'd never won it, but I was always in it. I think I came in second one year, and that was like a win.

Thomas Kennealy: 10:56 Now, where did these events take place?

Albert Bischoff: 10:57 It took place in a barracks called South Hall, which is if you enter the Musketeer Drive, it would have been on your left, where the Shrine of the Blessed Mother is.

Thomas Kennealy: 11:09 Okay.

Albert Bischoff: 11:09 And that was like the hangout, because it was ... it wasn't the cafeteria, the cafeteria was around the other side.

Thomas Kennealy: 11:19 The old Union building, yes. That's right.

Albert Bischoff: 11:21 But it was like-
Thomas Kennealy: 11:22 A snack bar?

Albert Bischoff: 11:23 Snack bar, that's right. Thank you. And then the other side of it is where the plays were held-

Thomas Kennealy: 11:28 And the oratorical contests, I guess.

Albert Bischoff: 11:31 Yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 11:33 And what was your major as an undergrad?

Albert Bischoff: 11:35 My major was history. In those days, I think I have this correctly. You used to get 36 credit hours for a major, and I think 18 for a minor. And I had a major in history, and I think we all had minors in philosophy-

Thomas Kennealy: 11:52 I think that's right, yes. Everybody did.

Albert Bischoff: 11:54 Also, I had education. So I had 18 credit hours in English, I got a minor in English.

Thomas Kennealy: 12:02 Well, if you were a history major, you would have known Father Gene Shields.

Albert Bischoff: 12:05 Oh my heavens. Tremendously important man. I just admired him. Yeah, in fact, I used to come periodically back up here for graduation, just to see him. Yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 12:22 And Father Paul Sweeney, do you remember him?

Albert Bischoff: 12:23 I certainly do.

Thomas Kennealy: 12:24 What did he teach?

Albert Bischoff: 12:25 He taught English.

Thomas Kennealy: 12:26 English, yes.

Albert Bischoff: 12:28 I remember taking Chaucer from him.

Thomas Kennealy: 12:31 Did you have Jim Glenn?

Albert Bischoff: 12:34 Yes, very much so. And he, I had him in high school, too. He taught the high school.
Thomas Kennealy: 12:41 Yes, I think he came to the University from the high school after.

Albert Bischoff: 12:45 That's right. In fact, our senior year in high school was spent at the University.

Thomas Kennealy: 12:50 Oh, is that right?

Albert Bischoff: 12:51 Yeah. For two years, I think I saw him two years in a row. The senior class at St. X went to XU. And the reason for that was, the war was going on, and we just didn't have the students in college.

Thomas Kennealy: 13:04 There were no students at the University, but at the high school, there were.

Albert Bischoff: 13:08 Well, and the high school was getting more students. So the thing I understood, and is this accurate, I don't know, is that the University really needed the money, and the high school was doing fine.


Albert Bischoff: 13:23 So that's what we did, yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 13:26 After you graduated in 1949, what did you do then, Al?

Albert Bischoff: 13:32 What I did was, Dr. Ray McCoy was the head of the Education department, and he knew I wanted to teach. And I always wanted to teach in the public school system, and quite frankly, he told me, "Al, if you're going to get in the public school system, you're going to have to hide your Catholic education. I would say, why don't you go to University of Cincinnati?"

Albert Bischoff: 13:58 So I did, that summer, and picked up 12 hours, and over the summer I got a job at Fayetteville, Ohio, which is a community on the east side of Cincinnati, about 50 miles from Cincinnati.

Thomas Kennealy: 14:12 About 50 miles from Franks Hill.

Albert Bischoff: 14:13 Oh, every bit. Maybe 55. Going up the hill took time. And I taught, that was a 6-6 system, so I taught 8th grade and I taught three years of high school. I taught
geography and, called arithmetic then, and English, to the 8th grade. And I taught sophomore world history, junior American history, and senior social studies.

Albert Bischoff: 14:42 And there were times...the students were ahead of me in the book, and there were times I was catching up.

Thomas Kennealy: 14:49 Do you remember your salary from that year?

Albert Bischoff: 14:51 Oh yes. I was supposed to get $2100. But then when I went up to sign my contract, they told me the Board of Education couldn't afford that, they were just giving me $2000. So I took it, and I lived in a boardinghouse up there, Mrs. Archer's boardinghouse with two other students, Paul Rausch and Paul Alexander. Good men, but a lot of fun. Had to produce the school play and put out the newspaper, all for $2000.

Thomas Kennealy: 15:20 Other than that, you didn't need much to do.

Albert Bischoff: 15:22 That's right.

Thomas Kennealy: 15:23 Were you there one year?

Albert Bischoff: 15:26 I was there one year. I used to go to Mass every day, at the St. Patrick's church up there. It was a very Catholic community. In fact, I got the job because they had hired two nuns in the public school, Sisters of Charity. And they had this, there was this organization, I'm afraid I can't think of the name. But in Ohio, where the Catholics were predominant in the county, they would hire Catholic people. And this organization got after that.

Thomas Kennealy: 16:05 Separation of church and state, I guess.

Albert Bischoff: 16:07 And that all had to be changed, and I took the place of some dear Sister.

Thomas Kennealy: 16:12 Ooh.

Albert Bischoff: 16:12 I think the students were wishing she were back.

Thomas Kennealy: 16:16 After that year, what did you do then?
After that year, I went to the seminary. It was during the year, and I went to Mount St. Mary's. I had a wonderful priest, a pastor, Father VonderBrink, who was just a wonderful, wonderful man. I admired him and we talked, and he said, "Maybe Al, you're ready now to go back. You've had some successes and some failures, you've matured. I don't know if you wanted to try the diocesan priesthood, I think you'd do well."

Which I did do. And I went to Mount St. Mary's in Norwood, Ohio.

And tell us about, the seminary was not on Beechmont Avenue at that time.

No. It was divided into two sections.

Okay.

And Mount Washington, it would've been St. Gregory's seminary, and that was at that time four years of high school and two years of college. And then you went to Mount St. Mary's, which was two years of finished college, they called it two years of philosophy, and then four years of theology.

That's where Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center now is, on Montgomery Road.

That's right, yeah.

So you were there six years, at Norwood. What was seminary life like at that time, what were some of the teachers you had?

Well, when I heard some of the Jesuits talk, I felt very much it was very like being in the Jesuits, except you never had that spiritual component and charisms and all that. But it was taking philosophy, and life was lived, you weren't allowed to go off the grounds. So it was made of study, time off playing games. You had much like college, we used to produce plays, and we would have talks. Made some very fine friendships, wonderful people.
Albert Bischoff: 18:16 I hear people complain about the seminary of that day, but I don't know, it was just the culture. I never thought of complaining. Some days you had bad days, we all have bad days.

Thomas Kennealy: 18:34 Do you remember Father Gene Maly? Another Price Hillian, incidentally.

Albert Bischoff: 18:41 You know, he was a great, great Scripture scholar. Looking back upon it, we didn't realize how wonderful he was.

Thomas Kennealy: 18:51 He was one of the foremost Scripture theologians in the world.

Albert Bischoff: 18:54 Yeah. And he didn't have it easy there, because the other priests there were very much into sacramentology, the sacraments and the history of that. And he was the first person who began to say, "There's another way of looking at things."

Thomas Kennealy: 19:12 Especially Scripture. Yes, interpreting it differently.

Albert Bischoff: 19:15 And even on the Sacraments, he would say, "It's not that they're wrong, but there's another way of looking at that." He had a wonderful influence upon me. In those days you weren't allowed to go to the library without permission. And you had to get permission, and I used to try on my afternoons on Tuesdays and on Thursdays, and on Saturday, to get permission to go to the library, because he really pointed things out to me to look at.

Albert Bischoff: 19:47 And that's where I first read American Magazine.


Albert Bischoff: 19:55 I read that faithfully. Yes, every week I would read it from cover to cover.

Thomas Kennealy: 20:00 When were you ordained then, Al?


Thomas Kennealy: 20:06 1956, okay, and who ordained you?
Albert Bischoff: 20:10 It was Archbishop Alter, at St. Monica's Cathedral at that time.

Thomas Kennealy: 20:15 Why St. Monica's?

Albert Bischoff: 20:18 The original cathedral really needed a lot of repair, and it was not cared for.

Thomas Kennealy: 20:26 That was the one downtown, St. Peter in Chains.

Albert Bischoff: 20:29 Yeah. So we went to St. Monica's. And then it was later, maybe it was 1960, when they had a fund drive, we needed to expand the high school. Catholic people had a lot of children, and that's when they started Moeller High School and LaSalle. And St. X was in on that fund drive, too.

Thomas Kennealy: 20:50 Yeah. They were moving at the time.

Albert Bischoff: 20:52 Yeah. Have I answered your question?

Thomas Kennealy: 20:57 Yes. In other words, the cathedral was originally downtown, moved out to Monica and Clifton for a number of years, and then after the renovation-

Albert Bischoff: 21:08 It went back.

Thomas Kennealy: 21:08 Archbishop Alter moved it downtown. But in the meantime, you were ordained at the cathedral at St. Monica's, yeah. And your priestly assignments, your early priestly assignments?

Albert Bischoff: 21:17 Well, I was assigned to Elder High School. As I had said to you once before, it was not a place I wanted to go. It was right up the street from my dad, and everybody would know every mistake I made and not forget it.

Thomas Kennealy: 21:31 And your dad would.

Albert Bischoff: 21:33 But it turned out to be a deep blessing.

Thomas Kennealy: 21:37 How long were you there?

Albert Bischoff: 21:39 I was there for 12 years. Of course, you know, I go back to St. X so much because I just so loved St. X.
just loved my students, I loved the teachers, and I came in there thinking that this was going to be inferior.

Thomas Kennealy: 22:01 You mean Elder was going to be inferior to St. Xavier High School.

Albert Bischoff: 22:04 Yeah. There was a bit of arrogance in me, that I had to realize, this is not what you think. And it was great, I taught English there. And that would have been three years before I left. I taught religion, and that was the time of the second Vatican Council. We couldn't use the books, you almost had to make up the course as you go along.

Thomas Kennealy: 22:38 Oh, because the books weren't up to date with the Council.


Thomas Kennealy: 22:45 Was this the period of time when you, I think were at Resurrection at Price Hill, and introduced that Sunday evening mass for-


Thomas Kennealy: 22:54 How'd that come about?

Albert Bischoff: 22:56 Well, it came about because of Xavier University. In the summertime, I would always come up here and take a course. And a lot of us did.

Thomas Kennealy: 23:07 I guess you were getting your M.Ed. at that time.

Albert Bischoff: 23:09 But even then, I got my M.Ed. in 1958. We just continued to come up here, and there were so many, Ed Hussey, and Ed Rudinel, and Laurie Strickman or Bob Buney. And it was a double-edged sword. It was wanting to take a course, but it was also wanting to get out of the parish house and get with your friends. So we built a lot of relationships and friendships that way.

Thomas Kennealy: 23:39 I know the mass was very popular. People came from all over the city that night.
Albert Bischoff: 23:43 Yeah. I remember one night, the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief came, and they came back and we were ready to start the mass, and said we were gonna have to move all the cars, because they were blocking driveways and if there was a fire ... and I remember Rino Angelini and Pete Holley were leading the music, and I said, "I can't stop the mass." I just waved my hand, well, the music started playing and we walked in.

Albert Bischoff: 24:12 And then after communion, I told them what the situation was, and they better not do that, otherwise there would be no mass.

Thomas Kennealy: 24:25 Now, you were assigned to the seminary staff for 1968.

Albert Bischoff: 24:32 Yeah. Between 1968 and 1969. And that came about-

Albert Bischoff: 24:36 Well, what came about there was, Archbishop Alter was, well, he was the Archbishop. And there were a lot of men leaving, as they were throughout the country, leaving the seminary. He knew that this mass was very popular.

Albert Bischoff: 24:59 I found out later, Father Joe Buening, who was on the staff at Elder at that time, very fine man, he had told the Archbishop that he thinks I would be good in the seminary and maybe some of this loss would not happen. Well, you know it wasn't. Nobody was going to save it, it had ... something new was being created. And that had to be, I would say, that's why I went.

Thomas Kennealy: 25:28 Well, to talk about that period then, from about '68 on. The late 60s, the early 70s was a time of considerable turmoil, not in the seminary or the Church, but really in society in general.

Albert Bischoff: 25:40 Oh, it was everywhere.

Thomas Kennealy: 25:41 Yeah. Tell us about that, and your experience of it.

Albert Bischoff: 25:45 Well, they were very exciting times. You lived with a lot of questioning, a lot of doubt, wonder. There was a Civil Rights movement going on in the country, there was the Vietnam War going on, there was the Second
Vatican Council and changes, people started seeing changes in the Church.

Albert Bischoff: 26:07 Here at Xavier, there was ... women started coming into the school. Usually if they came in the past they had to register through the night school. And that happened. You had ROTC here, and there was a lot of protest on campus, a lot of ROTC used to be demanded for two years. Everybody had to take it.

Thomas Kennealy: 26:32 Had to take it, yeah.

Albert Bischoff: 26:33 Well, that stopped.

Thomas Kennealy: 26:34 As a result of the protest.

Albert Bischoff: 26:36 Yeah, by the protests. There was also, you used to have to make retreats, you used to have to go to the Holy Spirit mass. And you would get a card that you had to turn in, and that was checked on you and put on your record. That all changed. So I remember the Holy Spirit mass we had, but you didn't have to attend.

Thomas Kennealy: 26:59 Well, of course, the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and the riots here in the city.

Albert Bischoff: 27:08 Yeah, the riots in the city.

Thomas Kennealy: 27:08 Just a few blocks away.

Albert Bischoff: 27:09 Yeah. And those were, I remember Norwood, when you went to Norwood, the police were all standing so they wouldn't come into Norwood, the African American community was rioting to keep them out.

Albert Bischoff: 27:24 And then there was the Kent State shooting. I remember an Ohio State student ... and that brought about a movement to close all the colleges down throughout the United States. There were students that came down from Ohio State, going through the halls and putting up signs. And I remember we had a mass on the academic mall. And they asked me to preside at that mass, and we talked about...I got great help from Leo.
Albert Bischoff: 27:57 But anyway, the Archbishop later told me that it was that mass that saved the University from closing, we didn't close, we finished the year. And I remember, that was a lot of things we did in campus ministry. We started...well, I didn't start it, Leo started it and I was a part of it.

Thomas Kennealy: 28:21 That's Leo Klein, you were implying, yep.

Albert Bischoff: 28:23 Before campus ministry, the Jesuits were here and they all took care of you, and it was very much that this was a Catholic school, so you were expected to go to mass, you were expected to receive the sacraments, you were expected to go to confession. All these traditional things, which was emphasized on a certain personal holiness.

Albert Bischoff: 28:44 And as I reflected upon that more and more, what changed is that whole thing you know, of God is in everything. And with the breaking out of the civil rights, the breaking out of the war in Vietnam, monks were being burnt alive. All of that set people to question and to be free.

Thomas Kennealy: 29:09 And authority was being challenged everywhere, in every form.

Albert Bischoff: 29:15 And if you didn't challenge it, you weren't real. You would find God in challenging, in all that. And I remember having a mass over in the Armory, and I didn't know this was gonna happen, but during the mass at the Armory, two guys came up and burnt their draft cards.

Thomas Kennealy: 29:38 Oh, right at mass.

Albert Bischoff: 29:41 Right at mass, yeah. And what do you do? I continued with the mass. And you had asked me the question, so much of what campus ministry was, was getting engaged with the students and just listening. And you were trying to understand what they were getting out, and seeing if they had spiritual values, and trying to find a way in which to dialog with them.

Albert Bischoff: 30:13 And the Archdiocese started a campus ministry association, and we used to meet with Mount St. Joe,
Xavier, UC, Wright State, Dayton. And so much of that was saying, "What's happening on your campus, and how do you see this?" That's so much of what it was about. And then also, establishing new ways of retreats, new ways of expressing, well, let's look at what the church teaches.

Albert Bischoff: 30:49 There was much more theological discussion on campus in those days than there is today.

Thomas Kennealy: 30:57 Yeah. Because the issues were real to people at those times.

Albert Bischoff: 31:00 Oh, they were very real.

Thomas Kennealy: 31:01 And there was a great deal of difference of opinion.

Albert Bischoff: 31:02 and they had friends who would be killed in Vietnam. Yeah, and then of course the whole Black movement came on. And the University wanted to have African American students, but when they came, we expected them to be white, and it was so much discovery.

Albert Bischoff: 31:25 And that kind of created a chaotic thing, and you wonder if teaching was really being done. There was just so much, and some of the professors that were very influential were Ernie Fontana, Roger Fortin, and Stan Hedeen. I think Ernie Fontana taught English, Roger Fortin history, and Stan Hedeen biology.

Albert Bischoff: 31:52 I always grew to love Stan Hedeen, because later on, I went to Augustana College, a Lutheran college, and he was a great graduate of that school, they were very proud. And they all knew Xavier, because he was there.

Thomas Kennealy: 32:05 You came to Xavier then as a diocesan priest, what, around-


Thomas Kennealy: 32:09 1969, and then J. Leo Klein came the following year, and really established campus ministry.

Albert Bischoff: 32:16 Yeah. And he periodically came in from New York.
Thomas Kennealy: 32:19 Uh-huh, just finishing his doctorate at that time, yes. So where did you reside as a diocesan priest?

Albert Bischoff: 32:27 I resided in Kuhlman Hall.

Thomas Kennealy: 32:29 So you're with the students there.

Albert Bischoff: 32:31 And I lived on the fourth floor, in a student suite.

Thomas Kennealy: 32:34 Okay. Yes. Among other things, you got to know the football players fairly well. How did that come about? Just up to meet them?

Albert Bischoff: 32:43 Well, how did that come about?

Thomas Kennealy: 32:45 I think you once told a story all about the time that a group of football players were in the lobby or the lounge talking, and you came down the corridor, and they made some uncomplimentary comment about the priest?

Albert Bischoff: 33:02 Oh, that was on the fourth floor. I'll give you the letters, but I won't say the words. And I was going down, and I overheard this talking. And I overheard, "We got this g-d f- bald head priest, and we're gonna have to do something." "What's he up to?"

Albert Bischoff: 33:23 Well, you know, I thought, I guess that must be me. So I went back and knocked on the door, and I said, "What?" And finally they said, "Who in the f- is it?"

Albert Bischoff: 33:41 And I said, "Why don't you open the door?" And they opened the door, well, they almost dropped. I just imitated them. I said, "Well, gentlemen, I want you to know these walls are very thin, so I would be careful what you say. But I want you to know, I am the g-d f-bald-headed priest, and who are you?"

Albert Bischoff: 34:07 Well, I ended up presiding, there were four guys and I ended up presiding at three of their weddings.

Thomas Kennealy: 34:12 Yeah, you became good friends in the meantime.

Albert Bischoff: 34:17 And of course, stories like that got around. You know, well all of a sudden people wanted to look at me. And they got a football coach who had at one time been a
coach at Elder, and he knew me, so that's how I got involved. And as I said to you at one time, Tom, if the theme of everything that happened was trying to build trust, there was such a sense of alienation.

Thomas Kennealy: 34:54 Yes, yeah.
Albert Bischoff: 34:54 So trying to build trust.
Thomas Kennealy: 34:56 In a period of alienation.
Albert Bischoff: 34:58 Yeah. And you know, were mistakes made? Oh my heavens, yes. But you know, there's nothing ... well, you know, there's that wonderful prayer in the Scriptures, which I love, which says about, these aren't the exact words, but we shouldn't be afraid of sin to claim us, because God's forgiveness, and in God's forgiveness, we grow in holiness.

Albert Bischoff: 35:28 And I think in fact, Saturday and Sunday, just out of the blue I got a call from a young man and he told me he was Skippy Wright, and he wanted to come see me, he was on the football team. And Sunday, I heard from McCullen, an African American student out at Denver, that said he was thinking of me and wanted to talk to me. And Al Banks, another African American student, he's in California.

Albert Bischoff: 35:55 So you know, I went back and I thought, God was really working in all of that. Ignatius is right. If you look honestly enough, and openly enough, and truthfully enough, you find God.

Thomas Kennealy: 36:11 Yeah. Of course, that was a time when football was dropped, and I'm sure that was traumatic, for the players anyway.
Albert Bischoff: 36:19 Oh it was a hard time. There's no doubt about it, the way football changed so much, more money was given to players, everything, they were building new stadiums. We couldn't afford any of that. We might get 2000, 3000 people at a game. It just strained it, the University budget.

Albert Bischoff: 36:45 I don't think anybody...and there was a strong movement upon certain students on campus that
wanted, they thought that was getting into funds that should be used for their education. Now, a wonderful man who was very popular at that time was Tom Savage.

Thomas Kennealy: 37:05 Tom Savage, we used to apartment together.

Albert Bischoff: 37:08 Tom was a marvelous teacher and a real educator. And he gave great ... I remember, there was a song that the kids would sing when they were at their parties that was called "Up Against the Wall, Mother F-er."

Albert Bischoff: 37:31 That was the song they sang. Tom Savage took that and wrote a homily called, "Up Against the Wall, Mother Church." And I remember that being posted. That 11:00 mass was packed with students to hear what he had to say.

Thomas Kennealy: 37:48 Now, was this 11:00 a.m.?

Albert Bischoff: 37:52 It was 11:00 a.m.

Thomas Kennealy: 37:52 On a Sunday, and he preached regularly at that mass.

Albert Bischoff: 37:54 Word got out, that...well, you couldn't get in the church.

Thomas Kennealy: 38:00 Eventually those homilies were published.

Albert Bischoff: 38:04 Yeah, they were published. And Now a Word from Your Creator.

Thomas Kennealy: 38:06 Yes. Richard Garashe edited that, yeah.

Albert Bischoff: 38:10 Once he referred to, he said he was watching a Michigan-Ohio State football game, and he talked about the cheerleaders. He said, "Their rhythm was hardly an iambic pentameter."

Thomas Kennealy: 38:25 Well, at some point then while still a diocesan priest, you left Xavier.

Albert Bischoff: 38:29 Yes.
Thomas Kennealy: 38:30 Do you recall, maybe about 1974 or so?

Albert Bischoff: 38:33 I left in 1974. And the reason I left is I started making retreats out of Milford directed retreats. I was over here and strongly influenced by their Jesuits. I really felt this call to return to the Society. But I thought ... the beautiful thing about growing up in Price Hill, you might not have had a lot of formal education there, but you had so much wonderful earthly wisdom.

Albert Bischoff: 39:12 And I mean that with the greatest pride, that I didn't find other places. And one of those things is, "The grass is always greener in the other yard."

Thomas Kennealy: 39:23 On the other side, yeah.

Albert Bischoff: 39:23 And I thought, Albert, you really don't know, you better not just jump. Why don't you never head parish, why don't you take a parish and find out, because you've always been involved and worked with work the Jesuits had been involved in.

Albert Bischoff: 39:36 So I did and it was with Wally Houser, another great man, and we were appointed pastors, and there were a number of us, Bob Beuning with Tom Axe, other at St. Claire's, we were co-pastors.

Albert Bischoff: 39:54 Well, you know, people in the parish weren't prepared for that, they'd always had pastors.

Thomas Kennealy: 39:58 It just didn't work.

Albert Bischoff: 39:59 It didn't work. And we stayed, we called it co-pastoring. Wally we looked upon as the pastor, and his work was in the marriage department. And he was away all the time, so I really did the pastoral work of St. Margaret Mary's.

Thomas Kennealy: 40:19 And then when did you enter the Society of Jesus, then? Around 1979?

Albert Bischoff: 40:24 '79, 1979, yeah. As I said, i started making retreats and more and more, it came back to me.

Thomas Kennealy: 40:34 How was the Archbishop, how did he react to that decision?
Albert Bischoff: 40:38 Well, it was Bernardin.


Albert Bischoff: 40:40 And he was very good. He said, "You've got to look at that. You've discerned with the Jesuits, and if it's not, we want you back. And then we're gonna have to talk to see what is the work you should be doing in the diocese so that you're a happy man."

Thomas Kennealy: 41:00 It took a big man to do that.

Albert Bischoff: 41:03 Oh.

Thomas Kennealy: 41:05 And he was that, no doubt about it. Tell us about your Jesuit years of training, then.

Albert Bischoff: 41:09 Well, my first two years was a novitiate.

Thomas Kennealy: 41:13 A two-year novitiate.

Albert Bischoff: 41:14 Yeah. And I mean this with the greatest charity, I don't think they knew what to do with me.

Thomas Kennealy: 41:24 Well, your situation was certainly unique.

Albert Bischoff: 41:28 There was this 52-year-old man. And more I was there, the more they began to ... so for instance, what did I do? Well, the first year, I spent at the University of Detroit, that's where the novitiate was. I made my long retreat, and I studied the history of the Society. And over the summer, I did some ministry in the African American community in Detroit. And the following year, they asked me what I would like to do. And they asked me in the spring, "Al, what would you think?"

Albert Bischoff: 42:06 And I said, "I would like to go back, I think I would like to study some theology and catch up." So I went to Chicago and went to the Jesuit School of-

Thomas Kennealy: 42:19 Of Theology, there in Chicago.

Albert Bischoff: 42:23 And I stayed there from September until maybe April. And then I came back and finished up the novitiate, and I took my first vows.
Thomas Kennealy: 42:37 In 1981 then, 17 years later.

Albert Bischoff: 42:44 Then I was sent to...my first year after the novitiate, I was at St. Ignatius Church in Chicago.

Thomas Kennealy: 42:52 Okay.

Albert Bischoff: 42:52 And I spent a year there, and then I went to oh, Milford for four months. And then Leo Klein was telling me to look at different things. He finally told me, "We want to open up a ministry in the Quad Cities," that's Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport in Iowa.

Thomas Kennealy: 43:24 And Leo Klein was provincial superior at this time. So he's setting up this community in the Quad Cities.

Albert Bischoff: 43:30 That's right. And I went out and Bill Creene (?), he took me out to Augustana College, this Lutheran college. And at that time, what was so interesting is all the things that were happening at Xavier at the time I was at Xavier, were now happening at Augustana College.

Thomas Kennealy: 43:53 Augustana is a Lutheran institution.

Albert Bischoff: 43:55 Yeah. And there were people there, they were afraid they were losing their Lutheran identity, they were getting these Catholic kids. They had a football team that was Division III, they were getting so many Catholic kids from the suburbs and from Chicago.

Albert Bischoff: 44:17 I could just recognize-

Thomas Kennealy: 44:19 All the same issues.

Albert Bischoff: 44:20 And their worries were the same. So I went there. And I met with these kids, and these kids were just so wanting to have a priest. So I went there, and they were way too good to me. I mean this in the best sense of the word, if it comes across as prejudiced, I hope I'm not.

Albert Bischoff: 44:48 But I felt like I was the only Black on campus and they didn't want to lose me.
Thomas Kennealy: 44:52 The token, yes. Augustana was Lutheran, this would've been an undergraduate college?

Albert Bischoff: 45:00 Yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 45:00 And you were there, what, as a Catholic chaplain?

Albert Bischoff: 45:03 I was there as ... well, I was there with the Lutheran pastor as a chaplain. And I did very much a lot of these same things that I did, it was building trust again. And I lived for a year ... well, then the other thing is, the diocese had a lot of Hispanics, and they did not have any priest to care for them.

Albert Bischoff: 45:37 So Chuck Niehaus and...Anyway. Jerry Grosche and I went out there together.

Thomas Kennealy: 45:52 To the Quad Cities.

Albert Bischoff: 45:53 And we lived in a house. And they did the Hispanic ministry, and I also then helped out a number of Catholic parishes in the area.

Thomas Kennealy: 46:05 So what it came down to-

Albert Bischoff: 46:07 I also started a house of prayer. I was half-time at that time, for the first two years, I was half-time at the campus, half-time at the house of prayer. And then it became so big that Bill Creed came out and took over the house of prayer, and I went full-time at campus ministry.

Thomas Kennealy: 46:27 So essentially, this was a Jesuit community of four or five people residing in the Quad Cities, and your particular job was at Augustana College.

Albert Bischoff: 46:36 Yeah.

Thomas Kennealy: 46:37 So when did you come back to Xavier, would it have been about four or five years later?

Albert Bischoff: 46:40 I came back to Xavier in 1988, and I stayed here until 1992. And I worked in campus ministry, I also taught a theology course called Faith: Can We Still Believe?
And I was chaplain on the football team, I did retreat work and did counseling. And then the provincial, Brad Schaeffer asked me to go to Brebeuf in Indianapolis, and I became the rector there for six years.

You were rector there.

Yeah. For six years, and then in 1998 I came back to Xavier, and I've been here ever since.

Let me ask you about your Xavier years of experience. Over the years, since you were an undergraduate in 1945 down to the present, have students changed?

I don't think so. Have they changed? Of course they've changed in the sense that if you walk across campus, they'll be watching something. But when you engage them ... I think one thing, I think the quality of the students has gone up. By that I mean their intellectual-

The academic qualification.

I think they come here knowing that they really have to study. Go back to the 1960s, this was happening all over the country. Studies for so many were secondary. It was being here, listening to the world, and did stupid things to try to save the world.

But the atmosphere is like, I hate to say this, but I have never been awakened out of bed at night, nobody rings the fire alarm or anything. There's many more students that aren't of our Catholic faith. As I always say, "Well, we have wonderful students here. The religious denominations are Catholic, Roman Catholic, roaming Catholics." We have Anglicans, we have traditional Protestants, Methodists, Presbyterians. We have evangelicals, we have students who have no church but believe in God. We have Jewish students, we have Muslim students, and any other variety you want, you'll find one here.

And part of my ... again, with part or some of the students is building trust again, to be able to say, they
don't have to think that I'm trying to convert them. I just want to know them and have them, I want to learn from them as well as I can give them some experience.

Albert Bischoff: 49:47 I had a beautiful experience just a week ago, when a young man was going over for the 5:00 mass around 4:30, and a young man came up behind me and he said, "Father B, can I talk with you?"

Albert Bischoff: 49:59 And I said, "Sure."

Albert Bischoff: 50:00 And he said, "I just want you to know, I believe in God, but I'm not a very hopeful person. I don't see much good in the world. And I'm a freshman, and since I've been here I've been observing you. You always hold doors for us, you call us saints. You smile, you ask us what our name is. You let us live our lives. And I just want you to know, I'm beginning to think maybe I can live that way."

Albert Bischoff: 50:38 Now is that building faith? Oh, I think that is.

Thomas Kennealy: 50:40 I think it is, yes. Very much so.

Albert Bischoff: 50:42 It's much like Ignatius had told the early Jesuits, when he sent them to a foreign country. Well, in some sense we're living in a foreign country, we're not living in that Catholic culture we had.

Thomas Kennealy: 50:56 And we're much more diverse.

Albert Bischoff: 50:58 Yes. And I remember a wonderful man at Augustana, Lutheran pastor told me, he said, "Al, you might want to think, what holds the Catholic Church together, it is somewhat of a culture."

Albert Bischoff: 51:16 And boy, is that true. We had our own Boy Scouts, we had our own, we had all those things. We might not have seen it, but it was a lot of culture. And that culture is gone.

Albert Bischoff: 51:37 And that's why people think the church is falling apart. I don't believe that at all. I think the church, it's like what the Pope said recently. He said, "We want a
church of adults. We had a church of children, we had to ask the priest if we could do this, we could do that."

Albert Bischoff: 51:59 And the other thing is that the Catholic Church was very much inward, now it's outward. And a lot of people feel insecure in that. And I'm not blaming them, but they do. We got these children on campus, I'm not putting that down. But they want something to hold onto. And there's nothing wrong with that. They're in a certain stage of development.

Thomas Kennealy: 52:31 Looking back over all of your years, are there certain individuals that you would point out as very influential in your life, and in the attitudes you've developed? You admitted to Father VonderBrink?

Albert Bischoff: 52:44 I'm glad you asked that question, because I've thought about it so much since we first met. And I would say the person is a Jesuit, and it's Daniel Berrigan.


Albert Bischoff: 53:00 He was the priest that was so involved in Vietnam and I think he went to prison for a while.

Thomas Kennealy: 53:09 I believe he did.

Albert Bischoff: 53:09 But he really influenced me. Because I used to feel at times, I was betraying my faith. I used to feel at times, what am i doing? And I could feel walking around with a lot of guilt. But he gave me courage. Not that I did the things he did, I could never do that.

Albert Bischoff: 53:35 But gave me courage. I prayed more. That's the thing I would say too, that happened. In those years, I really learned to pray.


Albert Bischoff: 53:47 And I pray so much more today because of that. And develop trust, and not be afraid to ... you don't have to defend your position. Not be afraid to be with people who differed from you, and not to judge them. I used to pray, I still do, I pray to God to help me see his
goodness in this, and to help me see that maybe I'm wrong and feel free to question myself.

Albert Bischoff: 54:21 I would say he is the one ... Leo Klein had a tremendous influence upon me, because he hid all this knowledge of the mass that I never got. We were taught to say mass, but we never got any of the history of any of that.

Thomas Kennealy: 54:40 He was a trained liturgist. His doctorate was in liturgy.

Albert Bischoff: 54:43 Yeah. I miss Leo.

Thomas Kennealy: 54:49 He died just this year, about seven months ago, yes.


Thomas Kennealy: 54:56 Your fondest memories of Xavier? Maybe you've already given those to us.

Albert Bischoff: 55:01 Well, this might sound corny, but every day I just thank God I'm here.

Thomas Kennealy: 55:09 That pretty well says it, I think.

Albert Bischoff: 55:11 I just thank God.

Thomas Kennealy: 55:12 That's the highest compliment I think you could pay.

Albert Bischoff: 55:16 I don't worry about the place. God has given me so much life here, and I just love going to the chapel and just sitting there a little bit every day, thanking God.


Thomas Kennealy: 55:34 Yes, yes. And finally, is there anything else you'd like to add, anything I should have asked and did not?

Albert Bischoff: 55:40 Oh, I think Tom, you're so thorough. This is, I just hope I fulfilled your desires.

Thomas Kennealy: 55:50 Oh absolutely.
Albert Bischoff: 55:50 This is wonderful. I love the community. I'm still learning how to be a Jesuit. I'm a little retarded, I started late.

Thomas Kennealy: 56:03 Well, I think you made pretty good progress. That would be my opinion.

Thomas Kennealy: 56:06 But anyway, this concludes our interview, Al. And thank you very much for joining us this morning for this very, very interesting and I think very enlightening conversation. And I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

Albert Bischoff: 56:18 Oh, it was wonderful.

Thomas Kennealy: 56:19 And God bless you and all your work.

Albert Bischoff: 56:23 Well, thank you. Thank both of you. Well, thank you.

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