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Oral Memoirs
of
Fr. Daniel Walsh, C.S.Sp.

A Series of Interviews

Conducted by

Megan DeFries

April 6-May 2, 2016

Collection: Oral History Initiative

Project: Spiritan

Duquesne University Oral History Initiative

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Legal Status

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Interview History

The recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) were processed in the offices of the Oral History Initiative (OHI) and University Archives, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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Project Detail

The purpose of the Spiritan Oral History Project is to document the lives of Spiritan priests, brothers, and Lay Spiritan Associates in their own words in order to preserve the history of the Spiritan congregation.

Fr. Daniel Walsh, C.S.Sp. [b. 1958] was ordained in 1991. He attended Duquesne University, the University of St. Thomas, and Catholic Theological Union, where he earned a Master of Divinity in 1991. From 1992-96, he was a missionary in Carauari, Amazonas, Brazil, going on to serve in many different roles at universities and dioceses across the United States, including as the University Chaplain and Director for Campus Ministry at Duquesne University from 2013-18. Fr. Walsh is a Parochial Vicar for St. Paul Cathedral Parish in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Megan DeFries was the oral historian for the OHI.

Fr. Daniel Walsh, C.S.Sp.
Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 2

Interviewed by Megan DeFries
April 13, 2016
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Collection: Oral History Initiative
Project: Spiritan

DeFries: This is Megan DeFries interviewing Father Daniel Walsh. This is our second interview for the Spiritan Oral History Project. It is Wednesday, April—

Walsh: Thirteenth.

DeFries: Thirteenth, thank you, 2016 at the Laval House at Duquesne University. Hello Father, how are you?

Walsh: I'm good. Welcome back.

DeFries: Thank you. So, last time we left off it was about 1984. You were—around there—you were living in Phoenix [Arizona]. You had been working previously in Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania], at Disc Writer. You had moved to Phoenix to become a loan officer, correct?

Walsh: Correct.

DeFries: At a bank and then you felt that you had a vocation for the priesthood. And I think where we left off, it was around—you had contacted Father Crowley, but I had wanted to just kind of go into a little more of—you had mentioned through the years you had had the feeling like, maybe, I might want to enter the priesthood and then the idea, you had decided, went away. So, what was it about this time—this time in your life, that made you really think this was something you wanted to pursue?

[00:01:05]

Walsh: It was—it was a thought that had come and gone and as I reflect back, it was—I just didn't want to sit with the idea. I didn't want to entertain the idea. And out in Arizona the idea came back, but I didn't have all of my buddies or all of the diversions, you know, to take my mind off of it. And I didn't think that I had the vocation to be a priest and my experience of the Spiritan community was that they were educators. No real concept of them being missionaries. The priests who I'd met, they were really, really good guys, but the idea of foreign missions never really entered into it.

The other priests in high school—well, in our parish in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], they were Augustinians, and there was kind of a relationship with Villanova [University], but the—Father Sherman was a really good guy, but the contact was pretty superficial. The most contact I had was with the [Congregation of] Christian Brothers through high school and the Spiritans through my work at—or studying here at Duquesne. Do you want to move the—[refers to audio recorder]

DeFries: I'm okay.

Walsh: So, you know, it wasn't—I wasn't looking really, really deeply. It was more people I knew and that would, I think, describe me. I don't have to know everything. You just kind of—the people, they were not only trustworthy, they were good men. That was enough. I wasn't going to do a doctoral dissertation on discernment. Kind of let's start there, with kind of the idea that I probably don't have what it takes, but let's give it a try rather than—and then I can kind of check it off and not worry about it. So—

DeFries: Okay, and so you decided to contact Father Crowley because he had been your advisor for your fraternity?

Walsh: For the fraternity. Right.

DeFries: And so you had a relationship with him after that?

Walsh: You know, not that often. I would talk to my buddies who were still around and they would run into Father Crowley, but I was on the other side of the country and—but I mean, Father Crowley was just good to all of my buddies in the fraternity and any Duquesne student. These guys were just good men. So, when I called, he remembered exactly who I was, and “That's a really good thing. Let's see what we can do,” and so he started the contact with the vocation director from the West. In spite of going to daily Mass, I didn't really know the priest in the—and I would—if I even would have thought of the diocese, it probably would have been Pittsburgh, but the priests who I knew the best were the Spiritans and then from there the next would have been the Christian Brothers and then probably to a diocese.

DeFries: Um-hm—I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

Walsh: No, and that's kind of—I wasn't a whole—I'm not a deep thinker. (both laugh)

DeFries: So after you contacted Father Crowley, he had sent you to—well, you got put in touch with the—

Walsh: The vocation director.

DeFries: Vocation director for the West, for Spiritans?

Walsh: Right, out West.

DeFries: Out West, and that was in Houston [Texas]?

Walsh: Yeah. They came from Houston to talk to me. And at that time, I don't know that we had—we had Gerard High School that we had already given that up, and I think the only one of the Spiritans may have been Matt Evanstock, but it didn't—but kind of from the initial contact to the working on all the paper work and getting all the—of the—the application finished, it was only a period of a couple months. And because I knew so many of the guys back here at Duquesne, there wasn't a whole lot of—I wasn't unknown. So, kind of the application went—went quickly.

DeFries: So, when you entered novitiate that was in Houston?

[00:06:01]

Walsh: No, I entered the pre-novitiate.

DeFries: Pre-novitiate, okay, excuse me.

Walsh: And that was in Houston. And the pre-novitiate—this house here, Laval House, would function as the pre-novitiate—and there you need to live in community for a year, minimal. You have to complete all of your philosophy prerequisites. I already had my undergraduate degree, so I was very, very far along. I think I only needed three or four philosophy classes.

DeFries: So basic philosophy?

Walsh: Yeah.

DeFries: Plato, Aristotle, those types of things? (phone sound)

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) And after years, they've gone back and revisited the program for priestly formation and have now increased, by way too many, the prerequisites for philosophy, but that's another—another story. Back in the eighties, the number of classes that you needed weren't as many as they are now.

So I lived in that pre-novitiate community for an academic year, eighty-four, eighty-five, and I was the only Caucasian. There were six or seven African American[s], all from (clears throat) Louisiana, all pretty much from the Opelousas Holy Ghost Church in Opelousas with Father McKnight. A couple of the guys were—had already been there for a couple years. David Lazare and Joshua Sam—well, Joshua was from Lake Charles. David was from Leonville, which was a tiny, tiny little mission church off of, I believe, Opelousas. And the other guys—oh my goodness, Patrick Hill, [name redacted], really good Cajun names—yeah, I think they would be Cajun, but they—but, oh—Harold Washington, Patrick, Andre, Joshua, Dave. A couple of them were serious about it. Dave Lazare, he went on to the novitiate and left after the novitiate. Joshua Sam never applied to the novitiate and most of the other guys were not really cut out academically.

Coming from Louisiana and going to the University of Saint Thomas [Houston, Texas], the undergrad or the—like the high school, these guys were not really well prepared. The challenge of—getting in to the University of Saint Thomas was a challenge and so some of them had to go to the community college to kind of get better prepared and kind of—socially and in every other way. Some of these guys

weren't—but it was—the Spiritans, they wanted to get these guys out of the—kind of the context and show them that there's a world beyond your situation in Opelousas, certainly Leonville or Lake Charles. One of the guys, [name redacted] was almost catatonic. I mean, his mental illness was—he barely communicated. Wonderful kid and the Spiritan community wanted to help him to—if you could get him into a college, there could be some counselling, but I think he was institutionalized several years after. But the other guys, they were discerning and so was the community and the—Dave discerned his way out. Joshua never discerned his way in and the community discerned that you don't really have a vocation now or ever.

DeFries: Can you talk a little bit about discerning and what that means when you're being—or trying to discern your vocation?

[00:10:47]

Walsh: Yeah. Well, you have to opt-in. In religious life, in priesthood, you've got the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and if—and if you're going to be a priest, you also have to do your academic work. If you flunk out, there's not much you're going to do if you can't get into the theology school, end of the story.

I can remember one night, sitting at the dinner table—and the level of high school education in Louisiana, particularly for the poor and the blacks, it wasn't good, and if you can't write a paper, I think we're going to come to a pretty quick conclusion that you're not going to advance. And I can remember Dave Seiter was—and Joe Gags and Mike White were at the table and the one guy says, "I got my English paper back and it be all red." (laughs) One of the guys said, "I think right within that, there's a lesson. It's, you've got to really work well. If you're going to write a paper, whether it be in the community college," where this guy was, "You can't be—not every conjugation of the verb 'to be' is 'be'—I be, you be, he be. You're going to have to really work at this." That was Harold who said that. Now, Harold has gone on and he's a high school teacher in Louisiana, but it was kind of the a-ha moment. For an English class, you're going to have to write in a way that's acceptable for a college and kind of the way that you speak at home is not going to be what's going to give you a passing grade in college.

DeFries: Is one of the ultimate—well, one of the end goals for the priesthood also is to get your masters of divinity, correct? So, they [novices] have to enter into graduate work and be able to do that level of graduate work?

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) You have to get through your undergraduate (DeFries clears throat) papers, whatever your degree would be, and to do that, (chapel bells ringing) you've got to write in a way that shows that you can do college-level work. So it was—I can remember that dinner and everybody was kind of like, "Well, you know, you've got to really work at this." Harold didn't last a year. I think that year that I was there was his first and only, as well as Patrick Hill. [Name redacted] was not able to even get into community college, I think. The—we were, the community—I was a seminarian at the time, but I came to find out that they really worked to get him some counseling. The poor guy was pretty far into his mental illness.

[00:14:10]

But it was an interesting and it was a good year. Dave Lazare and I went on to the novitiate, which was in Farnham, Quebec about thirty or forty miles outside of Montreal. Fr. Frank Hanley was our novice master and Fr. Jean Labreche from the French—from the Canadian province, which would be French-speaking, was the assistant novice master.

And that was a tough year. I was accustomed to work and being engaged in the novitiate year is a year of prayer and study of the constitutions and history, with no real outside ministry—Father Hanley—no outside ministry. We couldn't even go to Mass in the town. Everything was in the novitiate. (clears throat)

DeFries: So you were always together with the same people?

Walsh: The same people. I would just go out and shovel snow and it snowed plenty. We had a garden and I would go out into the garden at every chance just to get something to do. It was a very cold and snowy year. They didn't plow the streets. After the snow got high enough, they would send a grader, which is a big piece of construction equipment. It's Canada, it snows.

DeFries: Can you tell me a little bit about the daily ritual or daily—like a typical day?

[00:15:48]

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) It would be a continuation of what you had in the pre-novitiate. Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer. We would cook on the weekends, which we did at the pre-novitiate and we had a lady who was the cook Monday through Friday, and she would make dinner and maybe lunch, but you would have classes, and Father Labreche, big guy—he worked here at Duquesne for a little while in campus ministry—with a big operatic voice and he loved to sing. So every other week, we would pray in French. So, the first month was an intensive in French and it was basically so you could pray. We didn't do any real ministry and I didn't do that well. I could read a couple words. I could—as you would pray, there'd be two sides, and we would always bring Terrence Killoran, who was from Montreal, “You can sit on our side, guy. You be the lead dog in this and we'll kind of stay with you,” and Bob Colburn spoke decent French, conversational French. He was from Saskatchewan, but worked in West Africa so he had more facility with French.

It was an odd year, like—unlike anything that you will ever experience and you're to kind of shut out all of the other noise so that you could see if you were ready and were willing to make vows. (clears throat) I felt comfortable with the community. I was still very concerned, being a guy from Pittsburgh, would I ever be able to work in the missions, learn another language, adapt to another culture. I had my doubts, but not getting any sign that the heavens opened and said, “You do have a vocation or you don't,” I still felt attracted to the life. Since they told me no other years was going to be like that, that was okay.

[00:18:06]

It was cool because I was one the guys who I enjoyed working. So, maybe four times we had classes with another religious community and they would come over to our

house and they were the Divine Word—SVD [Societas Verbi Divini], Society of the Divine Word, and they were in Granby [Quebec], which wasn't that far away and it was a high school with a farm. And they had German brothers and that was cool. And the brothers, when they were bringing in the hay, needed help. It was a passport out of Farnham to a farm and you could work and bale hay and just be outside. And then they needed help in the spring to make maple syrup. Score.

DeFries: (laughs) You were their guy.

Walsh: Yeah. You got to walk behind a tractor and take the buckets off of the maple trees and dump them in and then go back and help the brothers to make maple syrup and they had beer and they'd feed you. And they were big—and they'd say, "Brothers need to be fat because the cows when they are birthing, you need to be out all night! You've got to be fat. Have another beer!" Yeah, right. I'm good with that.

And then we got visitors, the one thing would be to go to what they call a sugar bush, where you would go around to different places and they would be making their maple syrup and you got to have a big meal. And everything had maple syrup on it. Bacon and eggs with syrup, pancakes or crepes with syrup, they would boil hardboiled eggs in syrup. (DeFries laughs) At the end of the thing, they would go out in the snow and take a ladle of syrup and put it on the snow; it's maple syrup taffy.

DeFries: Wow.

Walsh: It was cool. And you got out.

DeFries: Surprised they didn't steal you away. (laughs)

[00:20:03]

Walsh: Yeah, I mean, I enjoyed that. But we would get one day off a month, and we would leave after Morning Prayer and we would come back late at night, but you only had thirty dollars Canadian. That's not much money and I smoked at the time, so you got to save money to—Axel and I would make our own cigarettes. You'd go by a can of tobacco and a can of the filter papers.

DeFries: And they allowed that in the novitiate?

Walsh: Oh, yeah, you could. If you wanted to smoke, that was your money, but you could buy one can because they taxed everything and Canadian money isn't—it takes a lot of Canadian money to buy a little bit of stuff. So, Axel and I would make our own cigarettes and we couldn't smoke in the house. We'd have to go outside, onto the porch or outside.

But it was interesting, kind of the—you're in a very enclosed environment with the same people every day. It was interesting, Dave Lazare from Louisiana had never really seen snow, and to buy clothes in Louisiana in the eighties for Canadian winters was tough. Dave—Dave didn't like going out in the cold very much, but Terrence, his name was Killoran, a very Irish name, but he was French-Canadian. His mother was French-Canadian and he lived in Montreal and his first language was French. So, he was kind of the go-to guy for the rest of us. His English was very good, but he had

these long Johns and it was a one piece with a trapdoor, (both laugh) so—we had—we had a dryer, but we would hang stuff outside. So Terrence Killoran took his uniform or, whatever, the single-unit long Johns, and he took it out and he hung it after he washed it and he—by the sleeves, so it was like this. Well, it got below freezing and it froze like a stiff board. (both laugh) So, he brings it in to leave it in the house to dry out a little bit. Dave Lazare nearly killed himself laughing. He had never seen, first of all, long Johns in a single piece with a trapdoor, and it was frozen. (DeFries laughs) So, he killed himself laughing at the silliness of what the cold meant and what it did. Dave just wouldn't go outside.

DeFries: Montreal or—Quebec is very cold.

[00:23:01]

Walsh: He would go out on our days off, but it was—it was a struggle and with next to nothing. If you—maybe it would take ten dollars or more even in the eighties with Canadian money to get a hamburger, French fries, and Coke. But one of the days off, it was the day after opening day and I got to see the Montreal Expos play in Olympic Stadium. I froze. I froze and I had to walk over there because you couldn't take a bus because you had no money, but that was—that was cool. And I think there were only twenty other people in the stadium.

DeFries: How long of a walk was that?

Walsh: It was a long walk. I would have to look it up because we would stay down—we would park—I can't remember what the area was, but it was cheap parking and you could walk to Notre Dame Cathedral. You could walk through kind of the touristy area.

DeFries: (speaking at the same time) You drove into the city?

Walsh: We drove into the city.

DeFries: Oh, okay, that's what I was thinking at first that you walked all the way. (laughs)

Walsh: All of us in this broken down old van and we would come back together. Everybody would go their separate ways and meet back at the given hour. So I mean, I had to walk and walk and walk to get over to Montreal—or to the Olympic Stadium, but that was my day off and—baseball—and a friend—well, my uncle Bob Bitner, his brother lived in Toronto [Ontario] and knew that I was there and whenever he would come over, he'd take me out for a meal, but he also came in for the Grey Cup, which would be the Canadian Football League Super Bowl and they played that year in Montreal, so I got to watch a Grey Cup game—

DeFries: (speaking at the same time) That's neat.

Walsh: —which was cool. But the novitiate was just an interesting year. One I don't want to—now that you're older, it might make more sense, but as kind of a young person—

DeFries: Did you have the rule of not being allowed to speak unless spoken to? I know other people had that experience and—

[00:25:24]

Walsh: At night. There was Grand Silence at night. So, after Night Prayer, you were not supposed to talk until, like, breakfast, which would be after Morning Prayer. And we would—we didn't have a month-long silent retreat. We had four one-week retreats that got progressively quieter. The first time it might be you couldn't talk until lunch and then after Night Prayer, to the point where I think the last one was all silence except for lunch, (clears throat) but I don't remember a whole lot. I just remember it was nice to get professed and get out of there. It's kind of counting the days.

DeFries: And then when you were professed, where did you – you went to the Catholic Theological Union [CTU]?

[00:26:20]

Walsh: Then I went to CTU in Chicago [Illinois] and Fr. Tony Gittins was in our community and the first year we were nineteen men in the house and Fr. Joe Harris, who's now archbishop of Port of Spain, Trinidad, was our director. Tom Byrne was the assistant. Tom Byrne's (unintelligible), but Joe Harris was Afro-Caribbean, wonderful guy, and a missionary in South America who really took working with the poor as one of the best articulations of being a Spiritan that I've seen. There are a lot of other guys—you can have institutional people and here, institutions form people, you know? You live here, this is how you live. The poor and their needs never really enter in. Joe Harris was the exact opposite, "You live with the poor. They will be your best teachers." I am indebted to Joe Harris for shaking me up and not that it was easy to hear that. You would listen, but what did you hear? And Joe very gently, but firmly, would bring you back to the poor are the reason why we have a congregation and it comes from kind of liberation theology. He worked in Paraguay and he was—is an African guy from the Caribbean, black guy. People would come in and assume that the white guy was the director. Absolutely not! (chapel bells ringing) So, he would constantly remind us that you have to measure your life based on what the poor live—not what is allowed, not that which is expected, but you have to kind of order your own religious life and the poor have to be the measure. We live here at Duquesne with many advantages. It doesn't help being a religious. When you can have dinner with anybody, you could easily forget about the poor. This place could be poison to religious life, in the sense—

DeFries: (speaking at the same time) Because it removes you from – I'm sorry.

Walsh: Yeah, because it does remove you and because you have the opportunity to acquire things. It doesn't mean that you should. I could ask to have a Coke here and have somebody to clean my house. It would be a poison that I would drink. It doesn't help.

DeFries: So, that's where you got the idea to go to—not to jump ahead, but to go to Sao Paulo [Brazil]?

[00:29:44]

Walsh: Well, yeah, actually—not Father Joe Harris—but I wanted to go to Mexico to spend the summer learning a language, learning Spanish, (clears throat) but—and that was agreed upon with the other—one of the guys who was my in-house director and then all of a sudden, “No, you’ve got to go do hospital work,” which is one of the other things, and I was kind of, “But we had agreed on this? Why is it changing?” Well, because—big deal. So, I was a little bit—got my nose out of joint, but that’s what you got to do.

DeFries: Was this at Ben Taub Hospital?

[00:30:33]

Walsh: Ben Taub, yeah. So, I worked down there with Sister Agnes Joy, who’s this itty-bitty four foot eleven [inch] Maryknoll missionary who had worked in Paraguay and she would give—oh, she would be frustrated. You just want to get through the summer. Get this over with. You have to deal a lot with your feelings and guys, “I feel hungry. I feel sleepy. I’m pissed off,” all the other ones, you just—we’re guys, you don’t have to deal with that stuff. Well, Sister Agnes was like a bulldog and she and Joe Harris, they would kind of bring you back to what was the important stuff that I didn’t want to deal with, but they were—and Frank Hanley also. They didn’t let you get away with it and I’m so appreciative of them being who they are. They didn’t conform to, “Oh, I’ve got to be your friend.” They had friends, you know? They didn’t need a knucklehead seminarian to be their friend or to curry favor. This is the program, do the program.

DeFries: They didn’t tell you what you wanted to hear to make it easy.

Walsh: Yeah. So, Sister Agnes Joy—it was—made you become someone who listens. You acquired that skill of listening and attended to the needs of others, not what it is that you have to sell or you have to teach or you have to offer. You kind of focus on what their needs are. And also become aware that you have an emotional life, not that you know what it is as a guy, but you are awakened to the fact that there is another level to yourself that we are not socialized really to be that attentive to. And not that I’m good at it, but at least I know that there’s something. Joe Harris to the—we will insert ourselves into the lives of the poor and that they have a lot to offer. It was a remarkable opening of the door.

Over—and then I went to Brazil for my—did two years of theology in Chicago, a house with nineteen guys the first year. No cook, no housekeeper. We were going to live among the poor and it was really rough, rough neighborhood. After the first year, a few of the guys graduated, a couple guys went off to overseas. So the next year we were a much smaller community—Father Bill and Mike Cunningham.

DeFries: And this was at CTU?

Walsh: At CTU. (clears throat)

DeFries: Okay.

[00:33:53]

Walsh: They went off to their novitiate. (coughs) Yeah, a couple guys graduated—Joséf Phillipe, George Bender left the—graduated and he eventually left the community. There were a couple of returned missionaries who went off. So, we were a much smaller group the next year. Joe Harris kind of set, I think, a very, very important tone for the house and some of these things, it takes you a while to unpack. At first you kind of chafe. It was certainly more liberating than the confined program of the novitiate, but in exposure to something that was challenging in its own right, being inserted among the poor. And really to be challenged by the call of the Gospel, to live a life for the poor in a very Spiritan way. So, to process that, to be engaged in the challenges of a multicultural community; we were from seven different cultures. And there was to be no, “This is the norm. You’re in the United States, so you live like Americans.” Well, no. In the house, everybody can be themselves. So, the Haitian guys—if you’re cooking, make Haitian food. The Nigerians, the Hispanics, the African Americans—there is no pattern. There’s going to be no privileged group within this community context.

DeFries: So, learning to understand each other as you are?

Walsh: Yeah, as you are, but you to be free to express yourself as you are, but everybody else has that opportunity also. Challenging in that you’re—how are you going to do it? And there’s no playbook. Everybody has to come with a healthy measure of understanding and listening, but also to be yourself. So there was going to be some friction, which was understandable.

[00:36:36]

And then in the second semester, one of the—Sister Ana Maria Pineda came, and she was going to be on the faculty. She needed a place to stay. She liked the Spiritans, so “Could I come?” Well, with nineteen guys in the house, she was going to be the princess, the queen mother. And I can remember at one community meeting, one guy—he was not a good-looking guy. He’d walk around in his long johns and he says, “Does that mean that I have to put on pants?” We’re there, “Yeah, you’re ugly and you look like a fool. Get dressed. You’re obnoxious. We don’t want to look at you, George.” (both laugh)

DeFries: So, it was your excuse to ask him to put some clothes on.

Walsh: That was. In a very healthy way, we got to vent, “George, you’re disgusting.”

DeFries: Oh no.

Walsh: But it was funny. This conversation came up and it was all about, “That’s going to cramp my style,” “Well, we don’t care because you’re a goofball.” (both laugh) So—but yeah a lot of—it was a healthy, challenging community. Kind of gets you ready. You’re doing your classes, part of them are for—to get ready for cross-cultural ministry.

[00:38:04]

Now, Fr. Tony Gittins was on the faculty, lived in community with us, and really just another—just so smart. He’s ten years ahead of where everybody’s going to be and

that's—it's hard for him to put up with kind of the daft and knucklehead guys like me, who are going to be not at the level or depth of where he is, but he was always very generous, hardworking, very much—he would live with the—every week at a homeless shelter for women. He was very, very committed working among the underprivileged in a very authentic way. (clears throat) So we—community life had its own challenges, its own ups and downs, but a good healthy place.

[00:39:05]

After the second year, I had originally wanted to go to Mexico. I wanted to go for one summer, learn Spanish or begin, then go back, do a one-year overseas training, come back and finish. Now, since I had to do the overseas or hospital training called CPE, Clinical Pastoral Education, now it was back, “We want you to do two years.” Well, I wasn't really that enthusiastic about that idea, but we talked about it and Brazil offered the opportunity that I could do my overseas training and also maybe a class or two in theology. And—I went off—it was a challenge. We did language school and there were seven Spiritan seminarians. Myself, two guys from Ireland, and four guys from Puerto Rico. And we all were Spiritan seminarians, all in the same language school. Now, the Irish guys and myself, we didn't speak any Portuguese. Spanish and Portuguese are pretty close. The Puerto Rican guys were able to converse. So it took—we were there for three months, and after about two months we were able to talk to each other in Portuguese. One of the guys, Juan – was it Juan? José? Juan? Eddie? José Orlando – he was—he spoke English very well and so he would kind of translate.

[00:40:51]

Now, being Irish, I never had rice until I was in high school and probably a sophomore or junior. I was probably sixteen; never saw it in any form in our house. It was potatoes every day. I was well fed. I was a happy guy. I didn't need rice. So, we went up to—my dad worked for Mine Safety Appliances and we went up to the Poconos [Mountains], and one of the guys who used to repair the miner's lamps and the charging racks, his wife had – they had us up, the Walshes. And so she makes beef stroganoff with rice and I'm sitting at the table, “Mom, look at how she did her rice.” She says, “You idiot, that's rice.” What the hell do I do with rice? (laughs) I'd never had it. I'm not going to like it. Well, put a little bit of rice in the stroganoff, and it was pretty good. So, long ride back to Philly [Philadelphia] from the Poconos and “Hey that was pretty good. What'd you think?” “Well, it wasn't bad.” If I got the recipe and I made it, would you guys eat it?” “Yeah, why not.” Well, the only time we would ever have rice was when mom made stroganoff. You don't have rice with anything else. We were satisfied with potatoes.

[00:42:11]

Now I go off to—well, and then living in community, now, you're eating all kinds of funny stuff. Go off to Brazil and the staple is rice and beans. Oh, God, I'm going to starve. They don't get a lot of meat because they're poor. You get a piece of meat like that and then the rest is you fill up on rice and beans. I'm going to starve. I'm not going to do this. This is going to be crazy. Well, after a while, you kind of get used to it. Now, I could eat rice and beans every day, but kind of for what it is that you eat, how it is that you live—

DeFries: I just wanted to ask you. Is this something that Father Harris had prepared you for in terms of—I know he’s talking about the spiritual education of living with the poor and among the poor, but had he prepared you for the practical—what that means, what it looks like?

[00:43:11]

Walsh: Yeah, yeah.

DeFries: Okay.

Walsh: I mean, in the house, we had to eat fufu. We had to eat all this kind of crazy (chapel bells ringing) African stuff and you couldn’t complain. You could complain, but nobody would listen. Then you’d be challenged, “Why are you complaining?”

DeFries: Right.

Walsh: “That’s a really stupid thing to say.” So, it was kind of—but you could always find something else to eat. It was kind of growing step by step. In Brazil, I mean, you were thrust into that and there was no turning back. Now, you’re living among the poor on their terms.

DeFries: Were you living at a local parish or—

[00:43:53]

Walsh: I was living—for the language school I was living in Brasilia [Brazil] at a—kind of a place run by the Catholic bishop’s conference [National Conference of Bishops in Brazil] and at that time it was right after the military dictatorship. They were still—it was interesting because the government if—they would ask you where you were finally going to work and if you said you were going to work in an area where the church was very challenging to the government, you weren’t going to get a visa. So you had to kind of work your way into an area where they would allow you. And as a seminarian, I mean, we were insignificant. You could go anywhere, but it was more for the ordained and the other people coming in that there was a bit of pushback. You had to be careful how you got in, and then after you were there for a while, you might be able to transfer to one of the areas that was a bit more on the cutting edge of the liberation theology and the challenge to government. (clears throat)

DeFries: And the poorer areas were seen as a challenge to government?

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) To government, yeah.

DeFries: Okay. Why is that?

[00:45:12]

Walsh: Well, there are a lot of poor people and the church made the preferential option for the poor. So, there were—in the area of liberation theology, there was—you could criticize the government. Well, the government didn’t really like it and they were

moving away. While I was there, it was the first—he was—José Sarney was appointed president after the dictatorship and he oversaw the first direct election. Now, there was a plebiscite and they could vote for whether they wanted a presidency or a parliament, whether within that, they wanted a prime minister, a president, or a monarchy and, I mean, to be able to vote if you wanted a monarchy? Well then, who the hell's going to be king? King Carlos was overthrown many years ago, but they would have to go back into his genealogy and find who would be the best kind of—having blood—royal blood in their system to be the—

DeFries: The heir to the—

Walsh: The heir to the throne, but, I mean, that was on the ballot, so to go through that was very, very interesting. People who really had no history of voting. And the church was very much involved in—the Spiritans, the preferential option for the poor, the basic Christian communities. The Spiritans in Brazil had done an absolutely wonderful job or defining who they were with.

[00:47:04]

Now, in Brasilia, Spiritans were beloved. It was built by [Juscelino] Kubitschek and the development of Brazil was all along the coast. Well, they have this vast interior with no real development in the interior. So, they decided they were going to build the capital in Brasilia, which was in the middle of the country, but with no real infrastructure—roads, railroad, anything like that. So, they decide they were going to preplan the city and they were going to build it from scratch. So, they had to bring all these workers in. Well, as they were completing all of the construction, there were no sidewalks. Poor people weren't supposed to live there. So, they came with the military and trucks and told the people who had just finished building this city, "You have until six o'clock to get all of your belongings. You are going to move."

DeFries: Oh my goodness.

Walsh: And with rifles, they made them get on. Well, the Spiritans joined them. The Spiritans got their bags; they got on the truck, and moved to this area with nothing. They said now you can build your houses here. Well, the Spiritans were beloved and it began what they called Ceilândia.

DeFries: Ceilândia?

Walsh: C-E-I-L-A-N-D-I-A.

DeFries: Okay, and what does that mean?

Walsh: It's an acronym for something [ed. note: *Campanha de Erradicacao de Invasoes*, or Invasions Eradication Campaign].

DeFries: Okay.

[00:48:43]

Walsh: So, this is kind of the backdrop of what Spiritans were doing and what I was introduced to. So, I lived in the formation community. I did two classes, one in Christology and the other in ecclesiology, and my Portuguese was really bad then and they were very merciful and I still don't understand any of that stuff, but I have to fake it. And I worked in a wonderful little community called Maria Imaculada and these poor people were the best teachers. My mentor was Father Bruno Trackler and there was another guy, Klaus Velsing, living in the community and Seamus Mahar was the director and we kind of butted heads because he didn't like Americans. Americans were the oppressors. We're the rich; we're the pain in the butt.

DeFries: Even though you were also a fellow Spiritan?

Walsh: Yeah. (DeFries laughs) He was always throwing elbows under the—"Oh, the American." Well, I learned bad words in Gaelic too, so—(both laugh) but I didn't use them. Bruno was just—he had left—he had come off of the general council and wanted to work in Brazil and just an absolutely—his way of working with the poor, at their level, asking the questions. It was just one of the best experiences. And so you learn a bunch of theology, but so—we're over-educated. We're so over-educated that we're useless. We really are.

DeFries: You're talking about as—as priests? Okay.

[00:50:32]

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) As—as priests. And you study all this goofy philosophy junk that has nothing to do with people's lives, but we feel smart, but we're useless. How do you translate that to people who have to struggle to put food on the table, clothing? Where's the Gospel in all of this? Have we replaced the Jesus of scripture with Plato? Do people have philosophical questions that they wake up with and we're going to be really helpful with that, or do they have a life and challenges? So, kind of the Brazil brings that back. You're supposed to talk to people in a very profound way. Well, how do you engage people? There's a big difference from institutional—and this is the challenge that I see living here. We're institutional animals. We can be very much out of touch with the lives of people. Over-educated to the point where we can only talk to the top 1 percent or 5 percent of people.

DeFries: Not really understanding people's lives and how they live and what that means for them?

Walsh: Yeah. It's the real challenge. And if we kind of insulate ourselves from all that goes on, we're even more incapable. And just the way that we order our lives. We can be very incompetent as men, "I don't know how to cook. I don't know how to clean the house. Don't know how to do this. Well, mom's going to take care of it." Or then you get married or then you—whatever. Instead of saying, "We're really incompetent, let's address this. Let's learn how to cook. Learn how to take care of ourselves." Like when a guy comes into this house, I tell him, "Better know how to cook two things. I don't care if its oatmeal, scrambled eggs. Learn two things. Eventually you're going to learn more, but here we're not going to have a cook. Nobody's going to clean up. You're going to do your own laundry. You're going to be responsible and you're going to acquire some skills." I can remember Father Bruno, we were sitting in the community of Maria Imaculada and the women—Brazilian guys are even more

incompetent than regular American guys. At least we can do a couple things, (DeFries clears throat) but the women were lamenting the fact that their husbands would never think to help clean the house, do the laundry, cook the meal. If they had to go somewhere, they would have to prepare their luggage. If they're going to go visit family in the interior, they couldn't even pack their own toothbrush and they said, "And our sons are just like them." Father Bruno says "Oh. Who trains them to be that way?" and all of a sudden the light went on. The ladies, "We train them."

So, you can take a look at what an institutional church can do. Who is forming who? Real people or institutional idiots who have fine, happy, contented, protected, sheltered lives, or the people who we really want to serve? So, Joe Harris brings that home by saying, "No, we're going to locate the house where the poor are. We're not going to ask for any privilege. If we're going to live there, none of the people who live around us have a cook or a housekeeper, nor shall we." So, I think a lot of this really good stuff are hard lessons to learn, but very important ones.

DeFries: What was it about—I can see how his message—how did his message speak to you? What was it about that message that made you think, "Yes, that's what we should be doing," that drove you in that direction? What about it, like, called to you or spoke to you that—

[00:55:38]

Walsh: It takes a while to really allow it to penetrate. Yeah, it's—I think other young guys in the Spiritan community believed it also and they modeled well. Putting up with—not putting up with the challenge, but standing there in the face of the challenge. That was very helpful, but then uncovering it as a value for myself that I was willing to—

DeFries: It gave you an idea of direction or purpose for your own priesthood?

Walsh: Yeah. Having then—at each step, seeing that some of the skills that were being articulated or some of the attitudes are articulated and that this is how purposely we're going to live our lives and then seeing how it's received. And the poor also being your educators that you will learn as much if not more from them than from some of your professors. At least to open up, that's part of the learning task can be very, very helpful.

DeFries: So, what kind of work were you doing with the poor in Brazil on a day to day basis? What did you learn from them?

[00:57:10]

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) On a day-to-day basis, I was working with them in whatever was going on in this little, basic Christian community. From—I didn't really work a whole lot in the daycare, although they had daycare. I would be around there, but like some of the little children, they would have rice and beans every day. It was kind of a government program for the children of the poor, it might be the only meal they get, but if they would put a piece of meat in their lunch, a lot of kids wouldn't eat it. They didn't know what it was. Engaging in helping the community to learn the Gospel. They would have Mass only twice a month. They could have had it more, but the decision was this is their community. So, helping them to understand

the Gospel, to prepare the celebrations, to prepare the catechism for the children, everything that was going on in the community. If they were trying to get something done within the city to clean up garbage or to do something. (chapel bells ringing) Anything that was going on in the community, we were asked—I was asked to be with them. And then going around and visiting. And I was learning Portuguese, so they were my teachers, but just gentle, kind, loving, wonderful people. Then I was doing one class a semester in the theology school. So, it was—

DeFries: What was the most surprising thing about that experience that you—

[00:58:55]

Walsh: That I didn't fail. (DeFries laughs) In a sense, you come from a wonderful happy life with a great family and great opportunity and put into a place where there isn't the same. And allowing the people you meet to be your teachers and your community and your family. It was remarkable that I didn't screw it up worse than I did.

DeFries: What did you learn from them? How did they inform you as a priest? What did you learn from the people you worked with?

Walsh: I think how much people appreciate that you become a part of their lives and that their priorities then are yours, and not the other way around. I think that to me was very important. The skill of listening, the skill of trying to develop community. The critical thinking, not to accept what it is that we're living as the only reality. That if you were to critically think about how you got here and what you have and why other people don't have the same opportunities is, I think, very, very important. Once you get to know the poor, their many, many gifts, why don't they have the same opportunities? You have to really sit with that. And if they don't, well, how can we contribute to allowing them (clears throat) to have the same opportunities?

DeFries: What did you see as why they—what ways did you see that they were—other than the government forcing them out of their area, what other ways were they consistently marginalized or kept in their community as a poor community?

[01:01:16]

Walsh: There are a number of different things. You take a look at the opportunities that the rich have. They can afford themselves the opportunity to be excluded from taxation on investments. They can have so many advantages because they have access to the power that can give them that. (clears throat) In terms of the kind of the world economy, the smaller producer of coffee, of farming, they have no control whatsoever over the price for commodities. (clears throat) Sometimes they can be devastated because of the drop in the price of whatever it is that they're growing or producing, where the larger companies are immune, just like the banking crisis that we went through a few years ago. These mortgages that were based on nothing. Every—all the—some of these guys should be in jail, but they were kept out of jail because they were the only ones who knew how to unwind the corrupt things that they did. If it's a poor person, they don't have those opportunities.

DeFries: Were there efforts by the Spiritans—did they run a parish school or was there any effort to lead the community more towards education to help empower?

Walsh: Down in Brazil, there are no church schools.

DeFries: Okay.

Walsh: Down in Brazil the university education is free.

DeFries: But it's getting to the university.

Walsh: Yeah, it's—when you're a poor person who has to work, they would build one school building and in the morning it was the little children up until fourth or fifth grade. In the afternoon, it was fourth grade to eighth grade and at night, it would be high school.

DeFries: Oh, wow.

Walsh: So, if—there were private schools, but you would have to pay a fee for that, so the poor couldn't really go there. They would have some of the best teachers, all of the resources, and the time to be able to study because they didn't have to work. Well, the poor kids would have to work selling pencils, selling something on the street to help to support their family and they would come home exhausted after class and not be able to study. So, the free education went to the people who had the means. It was very difficult for the poor.

DeFries: So, many layers of things working together that created the system.

Walsh: Yeah. Um-hm.

DeFries: When it was your time to move on from there, how did you feel about leaving when it was time to go?

[01:04:37]

Walsh: It was—I would say I learned a lot. I really loved the experience. It gave me the confidence that I could do something that I didn't think that I was capable of doing. You became very close to these people. As the two years went on, my Portuguese got to be very—I got to be very capable in it. It was hard to leave, but the next phase would have been the last year of studies before ordination. So, (clears throat) in a sense for me, I was having the opportunity to complete that which I had started and it became—now going back to school, which wasn't a burning passion to me, became much more real. Now I know how I want to study and for what purpose the studies will serve. It's not simply, "Oh, I've got to get this degree," "I got to get this degree so I can do this." It really made theology come alive. You study scripture not so you can talk to some egghead who's gone on for his PhD. You learn scripture so you can talk to little Maria and José, who are trying to figure out how God loves them in spite of their poverty. Is richness a sign of God's favor? So, you try to bring scripture alive for people who you are going to serve. So, that helped a great deal. Leaving was hard, but my hope was that I would return. Probably not to the same place, but to at least to Brazil.

DeFries: So, you went back with a new sense of purpose and the ideas were in action.

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) Yeah, and having acquired different skills.

DeFries: Now around—was it around 1990 that you returned back to Chicago?

Walsh: Yes.

DeFries: And that same year, your mother passed?

[01:06:58]

Walsh: Yeah. My mom passed away. I returned probably in May or June—May, and mom died in August. So she was—she didn't last long after the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. So, I came back, arrived, and stayed in Texas for about a week, kind of to reorient myself. Went home for a week or two weeks and then I was going to go out West to help with mission appeals, but as soon as I returned to San Antonio [Texas], we got the call that mom got these tests. They were very, very bad. So, I decided to—that I would go home. Or actually, mom died in October. My brother, the next year, died in August. So, I returned to Chicago and each weekend I would get—my dad gave me a car. Mom—dad kept mom's car and gave me his car. So, I would drive back and forth every weekend to kind of be with the family. We didn't have classes on Friday at CTU, so I would leave Thursday night and come back Sunday night. And as hard as it was to watch your mother die of a very painful, horrible disease, I think it made me a better priest. My mom was just a saintly woman, always looking to the needs of others. And you would go in and she would be in bed unable to get up, "Are you doing okay?" she would ask, like, "Mom, you're the one with cancer," but being attentive to what was going on. She was cared for. She received wonderful care by the family with the help of hospice, but it made me really engage faith at a level that you don't really want to be forced to do.

So, after mom died, that was really rough. The community at CTU was great. Then actually at mom's wake, my brother had been experiencing pain and he came to Pittsburgh, went to the doctor, and they thought it was a pulled muscle. They misdiagnosed his cancer for about four or five months and by the time they had that diagnosis, it was too late.

DeFries: What was he diagnosed with?

[01:09:42]

Walsh: Cancer, lung cancer that metastasized. Mom's was pancreatic. So, mom was the first funeral I did as a deacon and my brother Tim was the first funeral I did as a priest. So, that last year of theology was kind of—it was a rough year. Dealing with the family and being able to come back, I didn't see my brother every weekend. It was frequently, but not every weekend.

So, Timmy died in August and I was ordained a priest in August—the very beginning of August and Timmy died at the end of August. And he didn't—mom made it to my ordination to the diaconate, which was here at Duquesne and the priests over at Trinity Hall were absolutely wonderful. We hurried everything up to make my final

vows, get my ordination to the diaconate and the guys over at Trinity said, “We’ll have your reception here and there’s a bedroom for your mom if she’s tired at all. She can come early. She can stay as long as she wants. When she’s tired, she can go up and rest.” She was like the queen.

DeFries: So, she was able to make it to the—oh that’s wonderful.

Walsh: She was able to make it to the ordination, but then my brother, when the next year for my ordination to the priesthood, Timmy was too sick and couldn’t make it in. So, after the ordination, the next day I went up and said—I did my first Mass at our parish, then jumped in the car and the second Mass was with Timmy in his house.

DeFries: Tell me about the experience of your ordination and the first Mass and the Mass with your brother.

[01:11:28]

Walsh: They were—they were joyful. It’s kind of a—muted. It was—it was coming to the end. I was grateful for the guys out West to move things along. You have to go through some paperwork and they made everything happen very quickly. (clears throat) The guys here at Duquesne—for making the chapel available and everything. It was all really, really good. The celebrations, having your family come together for something like this—on both sides of the family I’m the only priest, only religious. So, it was kind of a memorable thing for both sides of the family.

DeFries: You were the only one ordained that day?

Walsh: I was.

DeFries: Okay.

Walsh: Yeah, I was the only one that year for the Spiritans in either province.

DeFries: Oh my gosh.

Walsh: And for Timmy, it was—mom, it was a great joy. She was exhausted and wiped out, but it was something that she wouldn’t want to miss. For Timmy, it was—it was pretty tough. He really wanted to be there, but there was no way that he could come down.

DeFries: And he was still in Ohio at that time?

Walsh: And he was still in Ohio.

DeFries: So, the following day, you did your first Mass at your home parish?

Walsh: First Mass at my home parish, which was Saint Scholastica’s and then jumped in the car and went over to Timmy’s, (chapel bells ringing) which was near Cleveland [Ohio].

DeFries: Who else was at the Mass at your brother’s home?

Walsh: My sister-in-law, my dad, Kathleen, probably just a couple of his friends up there.

DeFries: And you did that in his home for him?

Walsh: Um-hm.

DeFries: Oh, wow.

Walsh: Yeah.

DeFries: That's really special.

Walsh: Yeah, and his wife, Kate, so yeah—I don't remember (clears throat) who was there, but it would have been his kind of group of friends and people who cared for him.

DeFries: It must be a nice memory to be able to have done that.

Walsh: It was and Timmy, the same thing—he was very concerned about everybody who came. I spent that summer building a deck with his neighbor and Timmy, I mean, he was a genius—he was the captain of [University of] Notre Dame's lacrosse team; very, very smart, and he wasn't able to get up and do anything, so Mike and I built this absolutely massive deck. And Timmy would be in his hospital bed and a certain point he would hold up a mirror and look and say, "You know, you're doing something wrong." Shut up!

DeFries: (laughs) Keeping track of you.

Walsh: Keeping track of us. Sitting in a hospital bed and being right, "You should move the stairs over there." Oh, come on.

DeFries: So, he was in hospice at that point. Okay.

Walsh: Yeah, yeah he was. He went down quickly, but—

DeFries: How did you get through that time, losing your mother and losing your brother who you were very close to?

[01:15:03]

Walsh: You know, it was really, really difficult and after mom, that's a body blow and then Timmy, that was just—that was really hard. Yeah, just—sometimes you just have to slog through it. The meaning will come afterwards. You just hold on. For my dad, it was—it was brutal. To lose his wife and then his oldest son was devastating. How can you console your dad? So—

DeFries: Takes a lot of time.

Walsh: It does. It does and you just have to show up. You can't sweep it under the carpet. You pull it out. You sit with it for a while and then you move on and pick it up the next day and look at it again, (clears throat) but, yeah, it was hard.

DeFries: How do you feel that those experiences—you said it helped to make you a better priest, having to deal with both of those?

[01:17:00]

Walsh: How—when someone shows that love and concern for others while they are the ones who are so ill, isn't that the sign that Jesus is present? If it's that deep within that person to care for others and that they are attentive to the needs of others, if Christ is with them in his place that—there, then he is not absent in the suffering. And if he's present with them at that moment, then what are we worrying about?

DeFries: The feeling that you're not alone. There is something beyond.

Walsh: Yeah, that to me is the presence of our Lord in the lives of people who take and live faith very, very beautifully. And if he's there and present, then I don't have a whole lot to worry about.

DeFries: You feel that he's walking with you through whatever it is.

Walsh: With them. With them.

DeFries: With them, okay.

Walsh: Because I think, they're expressing what our Lord has done with them and for them throughout many years. So, although everybody is experiencing loss, if we stop, we should also be aware of a presence that's glorious, significant, and very, very real. If that makes sense.

DeFries: It does make sense. (laughs) Thank you for sharing all of that. I'm sure it's difficult to talk about, but I thank you for—

Walsh: Yeah.

DeFries: —sharing. Now, how—how long after both—how long after your brother passed and your mother passed did you have to move on to Arkansas?

[01:19:28]

Walsh: Well, I was in Arkansas (DeFries clears throat) for the period between. Actually, when I was ordained a deacon, I was assigned to that community after my ordination and then I went off to Brazil. I was there probably within two months after my brother's death.

DeFries: So, this is nineteen-ninety—

Walsh: Ninety-one. Yeah, I can't remember exactly when I left, but I think I was there for Christmas. I think I was there even for, like, Thanksgiving.

DeFries: What were you having to do as a new priest?

Walsh: The first part was kind of getting oriented to the Amazon. It's a whole new vocabulary—

DeFries: Oh, wait—I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Arkansas. I'm sorry—you said—

Walsh: I was in Arkansas for a period—I can't remember. Maybe eight or nine months.

DeFries: Oh, so it was a shorter—

Walsh: It was short. And it was the closest work of the USA West to Pennsylvania.

DeFries: Okay, okay.

Walsh: It was the nearest community that we had. And also a very vibrant community. Very good people.

DeFries: What is the parochial—you were the parochial vicar pro-tem?

[01:21:04]

Walsh: Pro-tem, yeah.

DeFries: And what does that mean? (laughs)

Walsh: Parochial vicar means assistant pastor and pro-tem means until you get moved.

DeFries: Okay.

Walsh: It's not—don't expect him to be here for too long. It's kind of a transitional—transitional assignment.

DeFries: You had already decided that you were going to go back to Brazil prior to that?

Walsh: I already had my first mission appointment.

DeFries: Okay.

Walsh: You get your first mission appointment when you're ordained a priest and the first appointment was to the Amazon, but kind of—you'll get there after you attend to the family needs, so—

DeFries: I see, okay. So this was a way to keep you close and do the things you needed to do?

Walsh: Um-hm. So, it was a very active, very vibrant, very wonderful parish and I enjoyed being there. They were just lots of young families, kindergarten through high school Catholic education in a state where Catholics are less than 5 percent of the population. Founded in—in about 1878, the same year as Duquesne. The community began in Arkansas at about the same time as Duquesne, Father Strub and some of those guys. Really, I liked kind of the small town. I like small town compared to the big city. Country folk are nice, nice people. I still keep in touch with a lot of people from there, but it was kind of a transition. But you'll always remember kind of the

first places you're learning and, yeah, I loved Conway [Arkansas], but then that came to an end.

[01:23:15]

Went off to Brazil. There, although I spoke Portuguese reasonably well, had to learn a whole new vocabulary. In the city, you have all sorts of different things. You don't know the names of the fruit, the fish, the stuff you eat, the parts of a boat, all the different things that you're going to find. It was a learning experience and I didn't really have a place where I was going to land. I was kind of in-between and I was more interested, "Let me get to work. After a couple years, we'll—if you need me somewhere else, but I'd really like to kind of unpack." And the group down there, "Oh, no. You've got to get to know the whole—" and I'm—(groans) I'm very work-oriented. Send me to do the work and I'll do the work. I don't need to be a tourist. I don't have to figure everything out. I'll just –

DeFries: (speaking at the same time) Jump in and go to work.

Walsh: Yeah, go to work until you tell me to move. It was interesting. I worked with a priest from Holland, who was my father's age and had been there since I was born, and he's still there, so—

DeFries: Is that common to have some kind of—like, a long term or permanent appointment like that?

Walsh: In some provinces, some groups, it is. In others, it's rare. I didn't think I was going to be there all that long. I thought I would be there longer than three and a half years, but I got hepatitis twice in these three years and the doctor said, "There's no way. If you get it again, it'll be the end of you." (clears throat) But it was—I lived on a boat about two to three months out of the year and people would have Mass once a year. So, got to hunt and fish and learn all sorts of stuff about boats, people of the forest. It was really cool.

DeFries: I can't wait to learn more about it. I know we're coming close to the end of our scheduled time today. If we—

Walsh: (speaking at the same time) I'm going to have—I'm supposed to do the noon Mass, so—

DeFries: Okay. Well, once we stop the recording, we can maybe discuss another time to meet, but thank you so much for sharing all that today.

Walsh: You bet.

DeFries: It was fascinating to learn about the different things you've been doing and we'll meet again next time.

Walsh: Sounds good.

DeFries: Thank you.

end of interview

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