

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Ted Morrissey

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
People of Faith-Mosaics of Faith Oral History project

Interview # PFM-A-L-2020-027

Ted Morrissey, who grew up in a Catholic family but became an atheist over time, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *People of Faith* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 13, 2020 Location: Interview done during Coronavirus lockdown, with Morrissey in his Sherman, IL residence, and DePue in his Springfield, IL home

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:58 / 2.97 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 28, 2020.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Transcript being
processed

Abstract

Ted Morrissey, People of Faith, PFM-A-L-2020-027

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: John Theodore (Ted) Morrissey was born in Galesburg, Illinois in September 1962, and grew up there, attending public schools. He and his older brother were raised in a traditional Catholic family, although while Ted was a teenager the family stopped attending church for a period of time, reasons for which Ted was unaware. He grew up in a family of avid golfers, and he always loved to read. Ted began working at the local newspaper at a young age and began writing articles for the paper. He graduated from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in 1984, where he majored in English as well as earning a teacher's certificate. His first teaching job was as a high school English teacher at United Township High School in East Moline, Illinois. He was married in 1985. Ted moved to the Mount Vernon High School in 1987 after the Quad Cities area fell on hard economic times. Morrissey stayed there until 1998, when he moved to Williamsville High School, where he once again taught English courses. By that time, Ted had earned a Masters' Degree in English from SIU-Carbondale. He also is a prolific writer, working in a variety of genres.

During this period Ted considered himself a Christian, and occasionally would seek opportunities to reconnect with a church, but he had many unanswered questions. In 2000 he began working on a Ph.D. in English from Illinois State University, a long process considering his heavy teaching schedule. The more he read during this period, the more he questioned his religious beliefs, returning to the doubts he had struggled with since childhood. Over time, Morrissey increasingly identified himself as an atheist. He became critical of organized religions and viewed many religious people he encountered, who were mostly Christians, as being hypocrites. He earned the Ph.D. in 2010. By that time, he believed that the benefits organized religions had on society were outweighed by the considerable harm they had historically inflicted. During the course of the interview, Ted talked about his gradual evolution which resulted in him identifying as an atheist. He also addressed several of the main philosophical questions that have always been at the core of the world's religions.

Subject Headings/Key Words: atheism; growing up Catholic; Galesburg in the 1960s-1970s; criticisms of organized religions; teaching English at high school level; Mount Vernon High School, Illinois; Williamsville, IL High School;

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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