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**Title**

Patrick McArron Oral History Interview and Transcript

**Date**

August 30, 2005

**Extant**

1 hour 56 minutes (3 files) interview and 1 transcript

**Abstract**

In this oral history, Patrick McArron, a founder and leader of DignityUSA in San Diego, discusses being rejected from Catholic seminary due to homophobia. He remains committed to the Catholic faith and established publications and retreats connecting the LGBTQ Catholic community, as part of his work with Dignity.

**Biographical**

Patrick Terence Gabriel McArron was born March 7, 1947, in San Diego, California, to Terence and Rosemary McArron. His father was Protestant and his mother Roman Catholic, but his roots and connections to the Catholic Church run deep. McArron, an only child, attended Catholic schools through seminary. As a child he helped his grandmother, a housekeeper for the Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese at Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado. Every Sunday he would help

her count the Mass collections. After graduating from Marian Catholic High School in San Diego he applied for the local diocesan seminary, St. Francis Seminary, but was rejected because of allegations of homosexuality. Ironically Patrick had not yet identified himself as gay.

McArron then enrolled at Grossmont Junior College but his interest in becoming a priest remained strong. He applied to two religious orders, was accepted by both and signed on with the Priests of the Sacred Heart. He studied for a year in a preparatory school followed by novitiate. During his novitiate he was called before the rector where he was told of his dismissal from seminary—no explanation for the dismissal was given.

In 1968 McArron began a 33-year career with the U.S. Postal Service.

Through his work with the Newman Center at San Diego State University McArron met and dated Judy Carton. They were married in 1970; however it was a short-lived marriage. Therapy and counseling helped McArron come to terms with his sexual orientation. The marriage was annulled and their separation was amicable—they remain friends to this day. Coincidentally, years later Judy developed intimate relationships with women and both Judy and Patrick became leaders in Dignity—locally and nationally.

McArron began attending and joined the Metropolitan Community Church in San Diego. Soon thereafter he learned about a Catholic Gay organization, Dignity, based in Los Angeles. In 1972 McArron co-founded with Patrick McSweeney the San Diego chapter of DignityUSA. It was also in 1972 that McArron met his future husband Glenn Stokes.

McArron was among the early San Diego LGBT pioneers to “go public” in the press and in 1973 helped establish and produce the Pacific Coast Times LGBT news magazine. He created and edited the Hummingbird, the local Dignity monthly newsletter, and created websites for the Pacific Region chapters of DignityUSA. During that decade, he was featured in mainstream newspapers and on television and marched in some of the earliest Pride Parades in San Diego. He has been featured in the National Catholic Reporter, “These Days” on KPBS, and in a cover article of The Gay and Lesbian Times.

McArron’s passion and activism on behalf of LGBT Catholics and persons of faith has been far-reaching over several decades. He created “Advance Weekends” (retreats for LGBT Catholics) and spearheaded a first-of-its-kind workshop on LGBT issues for Catholic and Episcopal priests of the local dioceses.

From 1977 to 1979 McArron served as the first director of DignityUSA’s Pacific Region. In 1979, McArron helped organize the first LGBT Catholic Convention to be held in San Diego for DignityUSA. The event drew a crowd of 600 people from around the world and was featured on the front cover of the Catholic Diocesan newspaper, the Southern Cross.

In 1992 McArron created his own business, McArron Web Design, in part to provide complimentary website service for non-profit organizations. Later on he expanded his service to include commercial and professional websites to supplement his retirement income.

McArron served as vice president and then president of DignityUSA from 1999 to 2002. He is an active volunteer in civic projects in San Diego and is a volunteer with the Lambda LGBT Archives. In 2006 McArron was inducted to the Community Wall of Honor at the San Diego LGBT Center for his work in the San Diego LGBT community.

On Nov 2, 2008 McArron legally married his life partner Glenn. The marriage was conducted by a Roman Catholic priest (deputized by the County of San Diego) and witnessed by several friends and family at a Dignity Mass. McArron continues to stay active in the LGBT community in San Diego and enjoys traveling the globe with his husband.

## **Scope and Content**

In this oral history, Patrick McArron, a founder and leader of DignityUSA in San Diego, discusses being rejected from Catholic seminary due to homophobia. He remains committed to the Catholic faith and established publications and retreats connecting the LGBTQ Catholic community, as part of his work with Dignity.

This interview was conducted by Heather White, a specialist in American Religions with a research focus on sexuality, gender, and twentieth century social movements and author of *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights*. She has served on the advisory board of the LGBT Religious Archive Network, and is visiting Assistant Professor in Religion and Queer studies at the University of Puget Sound.

### **Access**

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/patrick-mcarron>.

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### **Languages**

Collection material is in English

### **Custodial History**

This tape was given to LGBTQ-RAN archives by the interviewer Heather White

### **Cite as**

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### **Tags**

Catholic (Roman)

Dignity

Activist (religious institutions)

McAaron, Patrick

San Diego

California

