

Louis Zuccarello and Gus Nolan

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

Transcribed by Wai Yen Oo

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Summary

Louis Zuccarello and Gus Nolan discuss the intertwining history of Poughkeepsie and the Marist Brothers and the role they played in the early years of Marist College as Marian College. They additionally discuss the role the Marist Presidents, Paul Ambrose, Linus Foy, and Dennis Murray have played in making the College what it is today.

Ian Dolan (00:00:02):

Right. So this is Ian Dolan with the Archives Special Collections: Oral History Project. I'm with Louis Zuccarello and Gus Nolan. And if you guys just want to give a quick introduction of yourselves, we can start with you Dr. Zuccarello.

L. Zuccarello (00:00:15):

Okay. I came to Marist in 1966. I taught history at that time and then introduced a major in Political Science. I served in some administrative positions. I served as Academic Vice President. And when I resigned that office, I returned to the faculty and I concentrated my research efforts on the growth of the Catholic community in the Poughkeepsie area. So that led me to really develop a topic that is related to the Brothers, Marist Brothers, and also to the college. And I think that we will be speaking about that during the course of the morning.

Ian Dolan (00:01:08):

Okay. And then professional [...]

Gus Nolan (00:01:12):

I'm Gus Nolan. I came into the Marist Brothers in 1944 as a freshman in high school. I continued that high school preparation. Then came to Marian College in 1947. Then I graduated from college in 1952. Today how it was a very significant day of my [...] Because in 1945, on this day, I stood on the porch in Esopus and witnessed the burial of FDR where there are planes flying overhead, April 12th, 1945. That was a long time ago. But it seems like yesterday. I eventually came to teach at Marist full-time in 1968. I came as a part time instructor as a coordinator in the Esopus, and I was the person who originally showed around the first examination of the premises by the [...]. I'm trying to think of the group now... The tenure thing that we go through the visit by the Middle States. Exactly. And the Middle States Authority wanted to know why we did not develop the campus in Esopus rather than Poughkeepsie. And the explanation was that the train station was in Poughkeepsie and there was nothing in Esopus. So it was more logical to develop where the traffic would be met. Moving on. I came to teach here in '68 and I continued on in various roles as a first-year teacher in English and then a teacher in communications and then religion and English. So theological themes. Then I became a chair of the department. And then in 2002, the college asked me to stay home and I've retired. So I've been now active at the college in this kind of work, doing interviews with the founders of the college, starting with Paul Ambrose. Well, dr. Linus Foy. And there was Louis Zuccarello who is here and then van der Heyden before him as academic deans. Enough of me. Thank you.

L. Zuccarello (00:03:53):

Van der Heyden's after me.

Gus Nolan (00:03:54):

Right, right. Van der Heyden came much [...] Molloy came after you as Dean. And then, then there was another person. Correction accepted.

Ian Dolan (00:04:08):

Alright. So thank you guys. And then, we'll just get started with the first question I want to start kind of early. So, the Brothers, they first arrived in the U.S in about 1886 and they settled in. They built a school in Maine and then they eventually settled in Poughkeepsie. And I wanted to know what was so attractive about Poughkeepsie? And why did they decide to set up their training school in this area?

Gus Nolan ([00:04:34](#)):

The Marist Brothers established diverse teaching school in New York city in 1893. It was called Saint Anne's Academy and eventually became Archbishop Molloy High School in 1958. The Marist Brothers were invited to open that school in New York City by the priests who were French priests at St. Jean the Baptiste and they wanted a school. So they got the Marist Brothers who were also French-speaking as they were to establish a high school or grade school and a high school. The Marist Brothers in their process of training, they will also encourage young fellows to join the brothers. The Brothers were going to Canada for their training, which was French-speaking. New York City boys in Canada did not make out too well. So it was decided that they would establish a training school in New York someplace. And Poughkeepsie happened to be a good place because of two reasons. The Jesuit Fathers were two-miles north in what is now the Culinary Institute of America. And they were to be serving as the chaplains for the Brothers as they established their residence here, a training center and a Novitiate and then coming over to college. Okay. So that's why we're in Poughkeepsie. Okay.

Ian Dolan ([00:06:06](#)):

And also, I mean, when I was doing some research on it, I noticed that Poughkeepsie had a ton of industry. Like I mentioned, like there was silk, locomotive, ice storage, railroads. So basically, there was just like a really strong industrial and economic industry in Poughkeepsie. And I wanted to know, for you, Dr. Zuccarello did Marist play a role in any of this? And were they accepted into the community as Catholics? Because I know there's been anti-Catholic sentiment throughout really throughout the history of the United States.

L. Zuccarello ([00:06:39](#)):

Well, the Marist Brothers, I don't think really participated in that period that you're talking about the 19th century when Poughkeepsie was booming and all these industries were developing. There were people like [...] George Eastman, who was a big entrepreneur and encouraged a lot of this became Mayor of Poughkeepsie and he had his own business interests. So my awareness is that the Marist brothers really come on the scene at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1903. Did you say Gus[...].

Gus Nolan ([00:07:22](#)):

In one sense now[...].

L. Zuccarello ([00:07:25](#)):

The founding of Marion College to the Poughkeepsie.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:31](#)):

Okay. Well, yes, it started in 1908. Then the 1920s, the establishing of the high school or it was a juniorate at the time. And then the beginning of Marian College. And Marian College was what they call a normal school. A normal school is a school for teaching teachers and their expression "normal." Not because teachers are not normal, but it comes from the French expression, *ecole normale*. Which is they set the norms by which how much should an eighth grader know in geography, how much should they know in mathematics? And those norms were taught to people in those normal schools. And then as teachers, they didn't have college degrees what they had to experience and they could teach. And they know how hard to go in Math or Science or Geography or [...]. Those were the key points in those early days. And Marist became then a normal school from 1929 until 1946. In 1946, we get a four year college. We graduate students with a baccalaureate degree in 1946. But still Marian, then it became Marist because we was confused with being a girls' school and we were just a boys' school. And so they changed the name from Marian to Marist. Okay. They were going to call it the Poughkeepsie College, but the Brothers decided against that advice.

L. Zuccarello ([00:09:10](#)):

Just on that note, there was also an association with Fordham University. Wasn't there?

Gus Nolan ([00:09:15](#)):

Yes. That's where... It was under their tutelage that we became the whole 1929 to 1946. And then the Catholic [?] of America adopted us as we began the four-year program until 1951-52. When we got a permanent charter under Brother Paul Ambrose.

L. Zuccarello ([00:09:38](#)):

Okay. Now you had asked about the relationship of Catholicism to Poughkeepsie.

Ian Dolan ([00:09:45](#)):

Yeah.

L. Zuccarello ([00:09:46](#)):

So the first Catholics really came to Poughkeepsie. You could say to this general area of Dutchess County [...] at the time of the revolutionary war. They were mainly soldiers who had come and had a presence in Fishkill for the war. In fact, you hear about it. The controversy in Poughkeepsie now about the Office Depot, about the Depot, where they first stayed. And so there were a couple of priests that came to serve the Catholics there. (For) the origins of Catholicism in Poughkeepsie, I think you have to give credit to Irish families that were scattered along the Hudson from, you could say Fishkill to Hyde Park. Yeah. And what they did was they formed the Catholic Association in 1832 and what their objective was to actually form a church. So that was not met with a lot of enthusiasm by many segments of the Mid-Hudson population, because they were primarily Protestant based. They were worried about Catholicism spreading because Catholicism was viewed as a foreign religion because of the allegiance to the Pope. So, they collected money. They were visited by a priest. And the only reason we know this is that there's a record that they were visited by a priest who used to travel up and down the Hudson. And we know that his mail was located in different spots along there. And so he was the first one to serve them. So time came to build the church. It was a wooden church and it is on the spot

with the current Mount Carmel Church is located down towards the railroad station. And when they built the church, they were in the process of building the church. There were some Protestant clergymen or elite Protestants who had devoted their lives to condemning Catholicism, to rejecting Catholicism. And one of those, the month before the church was going to be dedicated. And don't think of any like these monuments that we have now that that we call churches, it's a country church. And one of the, I think he was a Jewish doctor in Poughkeepsie, Dr. Pine offered the Catholics, the small community of Catholics, a cannon to defend the church. So because there was fear that it would go up and it would be torched. So that never happened. And they said, thanks, but no thanks. And they had, you know, like a guard to protect the church. So that was the beginning. And then of course, you know the kind of economics development that was taking place would draw many immigrants. And the immigrants who came to Poughkeepsie, like the first wave of immigrants to come to Poughkeepsie were the Irish and they were not well received here. They were not well received because they were Catholic. They were not well received because they tended to be less educated. They tended to be taken to drink. You know, which was a big stereotype of the Irish really. At that time, it expressed itself here at Poughkeepsie. And I'll tell you why that's important. Because later when the Irish, you know, they were here for a couple of generations and they would be becoming more educated and all, they went into public life, and some of them became policemen. Others of them became prominent. You know, I'm talking now that we're going from the 1830s, 40s, 50s to the 1900s. And one of the things that in the case of Judge John Mack, who was a Poughkeepsie man. And Mack is a big, big Poughkeepsie family. When he was on the bench in Poughkeepsie and in this area, everybody was excited about him because he was firm with the drunkards. You know, who would be picked up on a weekend. You know, it could be Marist students, you know after a party. People said, "No, see that. Now that's something that's really good." Priests came too. I mean, when the church was established... One of the priests who was dominant, and I would say he was the real first permanent priest in Poughkeepsie, was Father Michael Reardon. And Father Reardon was a good man to have in that position at that time. Because number one, we're approaching the civil war and Father Reardon made a speech in the 1860s, To primarily a Protestant audience, you know, it was a public demonstration. But, and he says, you know, I give my heart, my life, my head to this flag. No. So he had become an American. And the Poughkeepsie Journal wrote a story about that, how wonderful that was. You know, 'cause here is if you, if you get my sense, the foreign religion, having a leader of this that's so, you know, in love with America. So, but the early years, the 1840s Catholicism was on the rocks because the people were poor. They could not, you know. In one of the correspondence between the Bishop and Father Reardon, he says, I don't know how long I can keep this thing together. He says, the people are very poor. The collection is very small and they're fighting with each other. At that time, there was a controversy called the trusteeship controversy where trustees sometimes had more power than the priests and they wanted to calm that down. So they would vie for positions as trustees of the church. And as a result, there was conflict. The other conflict that develops in the 19th century, in Catholicism is that you're an Irish Catholic. He's a German Catholic. We don't really want to have too much to do with each other. You have your church. He wants his church, right? So that ethnic parishes became the norm. And it's interesting because once things got a little bit more established for Catholics, for the Irish and for the Germans in the middle of the 19th century. One of the things that people commented on was that the Germans will much more desirable than the Irish. You know, it reminds me of my mother who always had this stereotype of Germans until she went to Germany on a tour. And that, you know, that they were

clean, that they were organized, that they were efficient and all those attributes that we know on different nationalities. So they said we can preserve our faith by staying among our own. There's an expression that came out at that time. There was a battle, you know, among different groups of Catholics nationally, and it affected Poughkeepsie, but language saves faith. So if you lose your language, German. In the case of the Irish, they spoke English, German was the battle really. If you lose German, you're going to lose your faith because we pray in our faith in all.

Gus Nolan ([00:18:59](#)):

To that point, though, I would just comment about three weeks ago, Holy Saturday, in St. Mary's church, the liturgy was celebrated in the three languages. You had English, you had Polish and you had Spanish and readings were done in all three languages. You know, to the faithful who were also Polish people, Spanish people and English people. So yeah, the others two didn't like, what was, why they're reading Polish in my church. Why are they reading Spanish in my church. Yeah. The three parishes have been united onto one leader onto one pastor but there were still distinct personalities and traditions, et cetera.

Ian Dolan ([00:19:46](#)):

Interesting. And I just have two quick follow-up questions to that. You mentioned that a lot of the Irish immigrants that settled in Poughkeepsie were Catholic. Were a good portion of them Protestant too? And then also when you said Catholicism was kind of on the rocks in the late 1800s, did the Marist Brothers arriving in Poughkeepsie... Did they help kind of stabilize Catholicism in a way in this area and kind of give it more roots?

L. Zuccarello ([00:20:12](#)):

They were a Catholic presence in the area. But I never [...] I didn't find in my research that the Marist Brothers in the 19th century, those early settlers were that involved in the community.

Gus Nolan ([00:20:29](#)):

No, au contraire. The Marist Brothers built a wall around the outside of the property, you know, to protect us from the outside world. You know, we didn't want anything to do with those Protestants out there. And sometimes when they went for a walk, they rather just be [...] we didn't have a gym or anything of that sort to exercise. And in those days, walking was a popular thing. They would go out to walk, but often times they were spit upon and, you know, yeah. So that they were not highly esteemed. That's all before the college were opened. Eventually, we took the wall down and then Dennis put a fence up. Not to keep them out, but to keep [?] who are from.

L. Zuccarello ([00:21:16](#)):

Gus. Can you tell the story. At least the story I heard of how they bought the property that we're on now. That Brother Zephiriny wasn't that his name?

Ian Dolan ([00:21:33](#)):

Oh the Bech Estate?

L. Zuccarello ([00:21:37](#)):

Brother Zephiriny. That they used, his sister[...].

Gus Nolan (00:21:42):

His sister's money [...].

L. Zuccarello (00:21:42):

As a front. As a front to buy the property so that it wouldn't become known that it was a Catholic group that was buying that property.

Gus Nolan (00:21:54):

It was a huge estate, you know. It was (?) estate of Bech family. In fact, I think it's still in business. The Apple industry. But that's what we bought and I have a picture of it. I could show you later.

Ian Dolan (00:22:10):

I did do some research on that and that he used his sister. His sister purchased it as collateral and they were using like family funds to purchase the land. Yeah. It's pretty funny. And which actually [...] that's kind of interesting because after he purchased the estate and it was 1908. That kind of led to a domino effect of more land being purchased that turned into Marist campus, like McPherson, the Meyer's Parcel, land on the other side of Route Nine and, the amusement park too, Woodcliff Pleasure Park. So [...] Did Marist [...] did they use methods like that to purchase that land or did they, did it kind of?

Gus Nolan (00:22:53):

Many of it was donated. I mean, as Dr. (what's the name of the...) Leonidoff? He... His family gave, I think what is now the mental health facility up there. That was ours. And we rented a tenant for a dollar a year for a number of years, and then it was bought by the mental health, but we used to own that. Okay. And always given to us as a ballfield. And eventually what they do is they named the only Leonidoff Field in honor of the doctor who had given us. And he had been [...] I was, I knew the man, he had an interesting story. He was a Russian. And during the war, one of the early wars, I don't know if it was World War I, but, he's working as a janitor in the medical school. And he gets to know a doctor and the doctor is talking to him. He says, "Well, why don't you sit in and see what you can learn from us." He eventually becomes a doctor. And then he goes through the whole Russian war. When he comes to New York city and looking up at a skyscraper, a piece of stone falls and takes out his eye. And so, you know, he, for the rest of his life, was with one eye. He didn't operate but he was the doctor. I wrote one of the first Marist Brothers who was his patient. [...] But I was with him in the ambulance on the way to St. Francis when he passed away. And lastly, Leonidoff was the doctor who is receiving him. So Leonidoff and that field... Then that what you're saying now the property donations, that's all part of the intertwined story. Some of the properties we bought. Some of it was given to us. The Northern State [...] a contractor owned a number of acres North of the property at the time. And we also had a pig farm on the edge of [...]. And he would give us the property if we would bury the remains of the pig farm, when we got rid of the pig farm, you know, just to plow it all under. And that's that Northern part. I didn't know what I'd have to go back and look at it now to see the territory. What's built on it. Maybe the Foy house or the Foy buildings would be in that area.

L. Zuccarello (00:25:38):

That's the Foy Townhouses?

Gus Nolan (00:25:40):

Yeah. Something in that area.

Ian Dolan (00:25:43):

And there was a fire at the pig farm right?

Gus Nolan (00:25:47):

The fire on the property [...]

Ian Dolan (00:25:50):

The pig farm, didn't the...? Weren't there pigs on campus? And then a number of them [...]

Gus Nolan (00:25:57):

No, the fire is of another building. One of the [...] I haven't got a picture of the fire. I'll show you. It's a dormitory actually. It's what we refer to it as a pig farm. We were not necessarily the most clean but I don't know about the pig farm part, but I do know, and have a picture of the dormitory. We used to have Brothers stay up all night on tour as a protection against a possible fire. It was such a fire trap. And then when we invented it and (...) to a firm. We gave it to a contractor to take down and he had what you call a Jewish fire. You know, one night he just split it up. The whole thing that... the embers of that wound up on Western Printing roof, and they were not happy with that either. But that's another story.

L. Zuccarello (00:26:50):

Western Printing was where Home Depot is now.

Ian Dolan (00:26:54):

Oh, okay.

Gus Nolan (00:26:54):

Yeah. We had classes. That's another story.

Ian Dolan (00:26:59):

You can expand on it. It's okay.

Gus Nolan (00:27:01):

Western Printing when they moved out, we bought the property. At least we rented it. [...] We didn't want to buy it because so much ink and some had gone into the ground from their printing. We'd have to spend a million dollars to environmentally make it suitable. So we lived in and rented the [...] it was somebody who (?). You had pillars in the middle of hallways because we've

just made classes on the open space. And, you know, that's just that's the way the architectural structure went. Well, just be careful Brother, going down the hallway, try not to hit the pillar.

L. Zuccarello ([00:27:43](#)):

You know, it was not a delightful place to study it or to teach in.

Ian Dolan ([00:27:49](#)):

And I just wanted. One more about the land that eventually became Marist campus. I just have one more question. So the Woodcliff Pleasure Park, which [...] made up the Northern end of campus. I thought that was very interesting because [...] it seemed like a pretty major amusement park for the area. [...] You know, it suffered during the Great Depression and eventually closed its doors in the forties. But, you know, I think they had like boxing matches like thousands of people there every weekend. And then it closed then [...] became part of the infrastructure of Marist College. And I was wondering if you guys knew more about it or like the role it played or anything like that.

Gus Nolan ([00:28:26](#)):

It was closed before I arrived. But there was a story that there had been a tragedy there, in one of the rollercoaster things, somebody had been killed. And that, you know, was kind of a damper along with the Depression where people didn't have the money to come for a summer entertainment. You know, firstly from New York or from other areas. [...] There used to be the boat rides to Poughkeepsie. The state daily arrived from New York Harbor up to Poughkeepsie and then back the same day. That was as far as they would go on a given one day, for the boat ride if you had gone to Kingston and you stayed overnight. So that was the difference. Poughkeepsie was the last stop on the boat. There was no [...] it wasn't going further.

L. Zuccarello ([00:29:16](#)):

One other thing that I had heard. But I think I read a newspaper article on it. Was that one of the reasons that contributed to its demise was the fact that you had minority people coming from the city to go to the park. You have racial tensions and racial disturbances there. [...] I guess, one of the last ones was very nasty.

Ian Dolan ([00:29:49](#)):

Wow. And then I also just want to ask one more question [...] kind of race related. [...] We talked about it earlier, before we started the interview with the KKK and how Professor Nolan, when I heard your interview, where President Foy mentioned that they burned a cross, outside the wall of Marist campus. And then Dr. Zucarello, we've talked about this too, how that they really just represented the anti-Catholic sentiment in the area. And I really wanted to know if you guys, if you knew Marist experienced this kind of stuff often. And if Marist had any sort of response to the threats besides the building of the wall?

L. Zuccarello ([00:30:32](#)):

Well, you know, I think one thing. You know, when you use the term Marist. You know, I think that that conveys a certain picture of the college, you know, with students and all. Where it was much different. [...] In the 1920s, it was called [...].

Gus Nolan ([00:30:51](#)):

Saint Anne's Hermitage, and that's more of a proper way of defining it. It was a hermitage. They didn't want to do with the outside world. The outside world didn't want to do with us.

L. Zuccarello ([00:31:04](#)):

But I never heard of an incident dealing with Marist. But I did hear that when they had the parade down Main Street in Poughkeepsie in the 1920s. The 1920s was a period of anti-immigrant disputes. And they came up with laws that limited the number of immigrants coming in. But there was a parade up at Main Street that ended up at what they called the driving part near Hooker Avenue. I don't know, Vassar probably has a soccer field there now that a new area there. And it was for the Klan and they were dressed in the robes and the whole thing. And when they had it there, some people who were young, like teenagers or so tried to see what was going on there, because it was limited like that they had like a rally or something there who was there. And during the rally, supposedly some guys took off their hoods and they were shocked to see who they were. Because you know, it was people who had some stature in the community. So that was one. The other thing I wanted to tell you about is that the Klan did successfully block some Catholic candidates from winning the election for the Board of Education in the Arlington school district. They were among the first Catholics to run for anything. The Klan really had a campaign to stop these Catholics from getting on that board. And it was successful.

Gus Nolan ([00:33:08](#)):

Before one last thing about the wall. We talked about building it. Let me tell you about taking it down. It's in the 1950s. And I was here at the time. It was a cement block wall with a cement covering of it. So it always not poured concrete or anything. It was very vulnerable and it had some holes in it. Things were beginning to decompose. So the discussion between Nilus Donnelly, who is the builder [...] at the time and Foy was the president. And the two of them have a discussion out by Route Nine. And Nilus says, you know, this needs a lot of help. So Foy says, what do you suggest we do? And Nilus says, I think we should take it down. He's like alright take it down. No conference, no committee, no discussion. You know, it's just how we should take it down. We'd take it down. A similar story, the building of Sheahan or if not Sheahan then the next one, Leo, they started to drill in the fields that is now the ball field, but that's all filled in stuff. That was an era of beginning that came from when they started doing the highways. They contracted wanting to get rid of the dirt. And we said, Oh, okay. He was being paid to get rid of it. Rather than pay someone to take it, he was happy to give it to us. And we filled in that whole area. Okay. Now when you start filling for new buildings, you gotta get soundings. And so you're going down to a hundred feet, 200 feet, and Nilus says, [...] what you think? Well, we have solid rock over there on the Hudson we can build it over there. Yeah. So they put Sheahan and then Leo, after that. Apparently I understand without counsel, without going to New York State for approval without, you know, [...] we're going to move it over here rather than there. And then of course later on the engineers [...] some of the Brothers never a hard (?) Or anything like that, but I'll show you a picture of that later.

Ian Dolan ([00:35:17](#)):

And did they keep up any of the wall or save any of it just for history?

Gus Nolan ([00:35:22](#)):

No, it's gone.

Ian Dolan ([00:35:23](#)):

Completely gone?

Gus Nolan ([00:35:24](#)):

It's been redone now. Dennis had redone it in stone on the South Side. [...] North Side. The rest of it is just wire fencing. You know, that's been put up just to separate the outside from the inside as a demarcation. They can go and see it, the fence is right there.

Ian Dolan ([00:35:48](#)):

Yeah. [...] In terms of the buildings and building them, we went [...] I went to Esopus and I spoke with Brother Nash. And he was telling me that the Brothers built the buildings and he was a plumber in Donnelly. So.

Gus Nolan ([00:36:03](#)):

[...] that's why there are leaks in many places.

Ian Dolan ([00:36:05](#)):

(laughter) Brother Nash's fault. (laughter) So do you know which buildings the Brothers contributed to?

Gus Nolan ([00:36:12](#)):

Totally the chapel.

Ian Dolan ([00:36:14](#)):

Yeah. Okay.

Gus Nolan ([00:36:15](#)):

These two hands filled part of the [...] well, I [...] that. [...] I would say the advice was to be careful, Brother, you may fall. There was no hats or anything. If you fell, you fell onto hard floor of cement about 20 feet below. You know, so be careful up there. Thank you. And then, Donnelly, again, I can show you the Brothers digging the piers for Donnelly and then the pouring of the concrete. So Donnelly and the chapel are the basic two buildings. Then there was another one called Adrian Hall that always across from what is the Donnelly building. That went up almost overnight. And then it was there for like maybe 20 years. And then to increase the lawn space, they just took it down and they put the computers that were in there, back in Donnelly in the basement of Donnelly. So those were the three major buildings. They did a lot of internal work once it was up. Well after the Chapel, they put an extension and that has gone down now. That was a dormitory for their Brothers getting out of the fire trap. That's where they moved to.

L. Zuccarello ([00:37:30](#)):

It was the original Fontaine Hall.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:33](#)):

The original Fontane hall, right.

L. Zuccarello ([00:37:35](#)):

Now Fontaine is at the end of the property.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:38](#)):

Now it's concrete and it may come down soon because it doesn't match the other stone buildings that are up there. They look like West Point. And that was like a sore thumb.

Ian Dolan ([00:37:50](#)):

It does look out of place surrounded by those stone buildings.

L. Zuccarello ([00:37:54](#)):

You know, the chapel, I remember Richard used to tell the story of the Brothers, carrying the things, carrying the beams. If you go into the chapel, you see the beams that are up there. So they arrived at the railroad depot.

Gus Nolan ([00:38:09](#)):

Yes, there was. You can still see to this day, there's a link on the railroad comes up and there's a tunnel right there. As you're at our South gate and then that continued right up to what is now. What it used to be the Hudson River State hospital. And they used to [...] 'cause once a week or so a freight car would go up there with two or three loaded cars to bring in supplies for the state high school. So that I know it was a siding there. So Nilus was able to get the contractor to ship the beams to this siding in Poughkeepsie. And what was then going around the Western printing place. Well then when it was there, how are you going to get them from there to the Chapel? So you had to carry them down and across Route Nine. So what they did was they got the Brothers to get pieces of wood (two by fours), about three feet long, one on each side and maybe six on each side. Now the beams had to be put together. They're only about 18 feet tall and the other 18 feet. And they were put together when they were on a (?), but it came in two pieces, but they were quite substantial. And you had to carry them. This group of guys would be coming along, carrying these rods across Route Nine and what Paul Ambrose would be out there stopping traffic. We didn't have police or anything you know, we just decided. [...] They built the chapel. I mean, there's a picture also about the college that the brothers built and how these guys [...] work with wheelbarrows and things of that sort. Again, another how a picture says a thousand words. The interesting thing is maybe some of the stories being told about it. I've been told by people who heard about it but they weren't there. But they were studying, they were at Catholic University getting their doctorates. And so it was us four guys here carrying those beams that, that got the thing done. So of course, the story also has been enhanced. Sometimes they're saying they carry them from Poughkeepsie pretty soon they're carrying them from Beacon. You know, the story gets enhanced as it were, you know?

Ian Dolan ([00:40:42](#)):

So the chapel, that's the original chapel built by the brothers?

Gus Nolan ([00:40:46](#)):

Yes.

Ian Dolan ([00:40:47](#)):

Has it undergone any renovations?

Gus Nolan ([00:40:48](#)):

Yes.

Ian Dolan ([00:40:49](#)):

It has?

Gus Nolan ([00:40:50](#)):

Yeah. Internally, I mean the floors and so on have been done. The altar has been [...] there was always a chaplain around. Okay. [...] We used to have a communion rails, and the communion rails are gone and then stained glass windows had been put in. We used to have a picture of a model. She was the daughter of, one of the contractors that had to pose in these pictures as the Virgin, Mary, you know. And people would sit there and invited the Virgin Mary. But if it's like [...].

L. Zuccarello ([00:41:30](#)):

The other thing is that the chapel was one of the first circular chapels. And it was built before the Second Vatican Council.

Gus Nolan ([00:41:41](#)):

So it's ahead of its time.

L. Zuccarello ([00:41:42](#)):

It was way ahead of its time.

Ian Dolan ([00:41:44](#)):

That's impressive for a bunch of Brothers to build something like that.

Gus Nolan ([00:41:49](#)):

Progressive thinking. The whole story about this whole campus is that same, you know, the vision that they had that they were gonna do. And it was, you know, part of it has to be that... They, at one time they thought that we would just be a community college. We can put a college up here and bring lay students and then they would pay for everybody, you know? And then Dan Kirk is one who did the research. There were not enough students in the Hudson Valley to support such an enterprise, but the Marist Brothers had 10 high schools in New York City with thousands of kids graduating every year. You know, are trained right away. And then building a

campus, they can come here and be away from home, which was beginning to be the ideal thing in the fifties for college students. That's where this whole thing began to emerge. So it came to actuality with the building of the dormitories. That was Linus Foy's contribution starting that.

Ian Dolan (00:42:51):

Okay. And I'm going to get to a couple of questions on Foy, but I just [...] Real quick follow-up. So where did the Brothers worship before they built the chapel?

Gus Nolan (00:43:01):

They worked at in the old fire trap that I talked about before, where the dormitories were and the dining room was down below. And the chapel is in the middle. And they gathered there at 5:30 in the morning and they were there until 8:30 at night. You know, prayers through the day. For different exercises, they had morning prayers. They had office, they had meditation, they had benediction. All those traditional Catholic practices were carried on in that chapel. And the priest came from St. Andrews. Again, why are we here? Two miles north is a whole group of priests who have nothing else to do, but to come down and take care of us. Well, they were retired. Some of them, and they should have stayed retired. We had some terrible at night [...] unbecoming incidents with some of the retired priests but that's another story too.

Ian Dolan (00:43:55):

In terms of Foy, when I was researching him, I noticed how [...] he was a Brother and then he left the brotherhood when he became president. [...]

L. Zuccarello (00:44:06):

No. While he was president [...].

Ian Dolan (00:44:09):

While he was president [...].

L. Zuccarello (00:44:10):

not when he became president. So he was president for a while. Yeah. Without being, he was a Brother. I think more is more of his presidency was as a Brother then as a married man.

Gus Nolan (00:44:24):

He probably, Yeah, yeah, yeah. [...].

Ian Dolan (00:44:26):

He got married in '74. Right.

Gus Nolan (00:44:29):

So yeah. Yeah. That would be right. And he became president in '62.

Ian Dolan (00:44:36):

It was '58,

Gus Nolan ([00:44:37](#)):

'58. Yeah.

Ian Dolan ([00:44:38](#)):

[...] He, you know, he let women into the school and then he also [...] One interesting thing I saw was in terms of the board of trustees, he was [...]

Gus Nolan ([00:44:50](#)):

He laicized it.

Ian Dolan ([00:44:52](#)):

Yeah. Laicized it. So there was more laymen than there were Brothers on the Board of Trustee.

Gus Nolan ([00:44:56](#)):

Right. He took away the responsibility of the financial debt to the college. He moved our (school?) from the Marist Brothers and made this a separate entity with a Board of Trustees and so on. He was the first to do that. Now, virtually every Marist school has done it. They have their own board.

L. Zuccarello ([00:45:18](#)):

And the archdiocese has tried to copy that with the churches.

Gus Nolan ([00:45:22](#)):

Yeah. Oh yeah.

L. Zuccarello ([00:45:23](#)):

You know for the high schools.

Gus Nolan ([00:45:25](#)):

The high school. Yeah.

Ian Dolan ([00:45:27](#)):

So he did that for economic reasons for the most part?

Gus Nolan ([00:45:30](#)):

Well, he did it as a safeguard against undue responsibilities to the Brothers at the time. And for the same thing. In other words, the whole Order would not be responsible for a mistake that was made at Poughkeepsie. I mean, we could call [...] go into a bank failure. And then we would close but it would not close schools in Chicago and New York so long because we were in debt.

Ian Dolan ([00:46:01](#)):

Okay. And just in terms of like the finance of the school, I noticed when he built McCann, he did that on a super strict budget. And he did like a lot of pretty, pretty, pretty impressive things for having such a small budget for the school. I just want to know, because when I was reading a lot of documents in the archive center, it seemed like Marist was in some sort of financial crisis when he was leaving and Murray was coming in. And I just want to know if you guys agreed with that or if it was more just people panicking or?

L. Zuccarello ([00:46:35](#)):

[...] I think that the reports were overdone. Linus Foy was a very frugal, sensible administrator. The times were a time when people were worried, are there going to be enough students to carry on the mission of the college? Because Marist at that time, pretty much like today is heavily tuition dependent. So our endowment has grown. You know, the times have grown it's a different year now. But Marist was [...] there was a fellow up at the State Education Department whose responsibility was to interact with Marist. He is alleged to have said that Marist is probably one of the best-kept secrets in New York. You know, as far as its competence, its curriculum, we initiated a core curriculum, a new core curriculum, and we invited this expert from [...] national expert. And we had to send him papers and everything. So he could evaluate our programs. He says, you know, he says, I'm supposed to be the expert. He says, "What you've developed here is really cutting edge." He says, "I should be talking to you to learn from you. I mean, not me or anybody had known that he was saying." What your college has done. So we were a [...] A prophet is never respected in his own community.

Gus Nolan ([00:48:23](#)):

Academic levels and the other part of it is that there was a discussion about raising the fees, you know, for the tuition to go up. Linus kept putting a lid on it, because most of the students coming were the first-times. They were coming to college [...].

L. Zuccarello ([00:48:40](#)):

First-generation.

Gus Nolan ([00:48:40](#)):

Their parents never came to college. The post-depression babies, you know, these are the first ones going on to college. And so they were policemen and firemen and so on, but they didn't have the kind of money for a high tuition, you know? So he kept a lid on that. And then another [...] product of this was of course, one place where we did help out in the industry was IBM. We opened the doors for IBM people to come here for evening courses. So that they could get degrees and finish their degrees because they were just ordinary laborers. Many of them had not gone to college and here was a chance for them to come in. But in one case, I remember they had cash and telling me about they come and I'm looking at their premises and saying, you know, well, what would you charge? And again, we were giving the bottom line, you know. We said, "Well, could you give us?" And he says, Oh, "Well, it'd be generous." You know, this deserves more than that. So you had the buyer offering you more money than you were requesting. You know [...] they said, Oh, okay. So we did that along with that is maybe we'd eventually get this. There was some woman who wanted to come to the college, so we allow them to come at night.

So no one would see them. And they came at night. And that's a woman how they first began coming to college. It was what IBM [?]

L. Zuccarello ([00:50:09](#)):

I always found that interesting. Those were my early years here is that, St. Francis Hospital approached Marist and said, you know, can we have some kind of a relationship? And we had faculty meeting and everything. And I think one of the issues was that the brothers were not allowed to teach women. You know, cause that was part of their charge. So eventually it was voted down. You know, we can't do this. [...] that was [...] what was it? Was it about six months or a year before they made college (co-ed)? Right. (laughter)

Gus Nolan ([00:50:49](#)):

The reason that happened is that Linus took a year off as sabbatical and went to what we call a second novitiate. He was a Marist Brother at the time and he was visiting France and they went around. Then he saw Marist Brothers were teaching women and all over the place, you know? So he said, what is this? The Brothers can't teach women. Oh, we don't bother with that. So he came back and said, "Well, if they don't bother with over there, we're not going to bother with it here." And so he allowed them to come. And the other unbelievable thing is that there was a time when IBM would actually close for two months or two weeks in the summertime. And they did it for cleaning the plants and refurbishing their plants and so on and so what. So in the middle of August, we would have no school here, you know. Because IBM closed, we had no summer school and we fabricated some story. Like we had to [...] clean the campus. We didn't have enough times during the day to clean the classrooms at night. So we needed to close down for a whole week paralleled, but we never said we're doing it. It just happened that they worked at the same time. They both closed at the same time. And then they opened again conveniently for each other.

L. Zuccarello ([00:52:04](#)):

And I think also, you know, two things I would just bring up as a layman, the Marist Brothers had the motto, "Do good quietly." And we were in an age where that wasn't going to work for us. Doing good quietly. You have to do whatever you do loudly. And so, you know, I think Linus was very modest. I was an administrator at that time and I wish he wasn't that modest because his salary was the ceiling. Yeah. You know so, push your salary up a little bit. So we'll get our salary up a little bit. (laughter)

Gus Nolan ([00:52:45](#)):

Yeah. For that. I mean he himself did a lot of the physical work. You know, [...] he was involved in [...] doing the electrical work here. So, you know, he did some of it here. He also took care of his own house. I could not imagine Dennis Murray putting down carpeting in his own living room. I mean, [...], not to take anything away from Dennis. It's just that Linus' sense of [...] poverty and thriftiness is, you know. Why hire someone else who can do it when I can do it? Meanwhile, there's a board meeting at the college that he was late to get to.

L. Zuccarello ([00:53:24](#)):

I was there. He said, he was going to be a little late.

Ian Dolan ([00:53:28](#)):

Was he late? Cause he was laying down the car-

L. Zuccarello ([00:53:29](#)):

He was cutting the carpet on the outside on the wall. The other thing I wanted to say about Linus is [...] I think a lot of our relationship with IBM was started by Linus who appreciated as a mathematician and his training who understood where this was going, you know, in the 1960s. I don't think that any of [...] I certainly didn't have any, any idea that we would be the society that we are today with the way we rely on digital learning and all of that business. But I think he had the foresight to see it and he was able to set up a positive relationship with IBM. So I give him a lot of credit for that and I give Dennis credit because he was able to build on that and capitalize on that.

Ian Dolan ([00:54:28](#)):

[...] In terms of your foresight, I remember [...] when I was listening to your interview with President Foy. It was like 16 years ago and he was talking about online, distant learning. And that wasn't really even a thing until. You know, I think "Do good quietly" perfectly sums up Foy's tenure. Because of all the documents I read and everything he was like, you said, super frugal, really clever. And the way he [...] laid the foundation for the school. It might even been Dr. Zuccarello, the same person when I was reading about, the outside consultant that the Board of Trustees hired to give a financial overview of the school.

L. Zuccarello ([00:55:06](#)):

Larry Muniz.

Ian Dolan ([00:55:06](#)):

And he said, yeah. And he said the same thing. He said, "Oh, they're set up perfectly for the future. They're doing all the right things."

Gus Nolan ([00:55:15](#)):

We're talking about the two: Dennis and Linus. Let me just say a word about Brother Paul Ambrose who proceeded them. He was the president from 1946 through 52 and then on, until Linus came in. So, he was here for 20 years. Linus was here for 20 years. And Dennis was here for 40 years or 38. So that's the breakdown. Now just to get a picture of Paul Ambrose. He's a young guy, 32-33 years old, just got a degree in Library Science at Catholic University and is named to become the director of the college students here. And they said, "By the way, see if you can develop a program to get a four year college degree." So he comes out now without any faculty of sorts. He had four people on the faculty. He had 50 students. He had no secretarial help. He typed himself. He did it with two fingers. Okay? He had no legal events, no backing. He had no expense in terms of having a fund, a background and an endowment. And he writes this application to Albany to get us a degree, to get a charter set up here. And he gets a positive answer back. "Yes. Okay. You can do it." And I mean, that's the beginning of the vision of saying, "Well, we can do something here." We can educate the Brothers and get them with the degree that they need to be able to be accepted and go on to other degrees, you know? And so he

developed that whole program to develop the college as an academic institution. So, I mean, I just want to give him credit for the 20 years that he was the President here.

L. Zuccarello ([00:57:13](#)):

I think each of the presidents made very distinctive contributions. You know, I think that we had the right person at the right time. [...].

Ian Dolan ([00:57:23](#)):

Well, just in terms of where Marist is today, I feel like they both did such a good job. And I just have one more question for us. There is Foy in previous interviews, he mentioned a program that he initiated or at least Marist initiated during his time. It wasn't sure if it was exactly him, but they started allowing former convicts into the school. [...] I felt like it was difficult to find information about the program but he mentioned that like people who were rehabilitated through prison he had a program where they could attend Marist and receive a degree.

L. Zuccarello ([00:58:01](#)):

No. [...] Let me see [...] you're saying it differently than I would say.

Ian Dolan ([00:58:06](#)):

Okay.

L. Zuccarello ([00:58:08](#)):

They had a program in the prison.

Ian Dolan ([00:58:11](#)):

Oh? Okay.

L. Zuccarello ([00:58:11](#)):

To give the students degrees and if their time was up and they came out and they wanted to continue their education. They could come to Marist. [...] So I mean, it wasn't all on campus. It was mainly in the [...] institution themselves [...].

Gus Nolan ([00:58:31](#)):

Marist faculty went down there to [...].

L. Zuccarello ([00:58:33](#)):

Green Haven and Downstate and Fishkill.

Ian Dolan ([00:58:38](#)):

Because I heard it in a couple of interviews with Foy but I couldn't find any information. So I wasn't [...] I wanted to know more about it.

L. Zuccarello ([00:58:45](#)):

Where, where would that go [...].

Gus Nolan ([00:58:46](#)):

Doctor Donohue would have been the leader of that program [...].

L. Zuccarello ([00:58:50](#)):

He was the catalyst. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:58:51](#)):

And he went a long way. I don't know where it would be filed. The archives might have it but I don't know.

L. Zuccarello ([00:59:04](#)):

I mean, you know what that was what we had [...] called an Office of Special Programs. And that would be with the executive vice president. Wouldn't it? Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:59:18](#)):

Yeah. Ed Waters and Lahey [...].

L. Zuccarello ([00:59:21](#)):

Later, John Lahey. John Lahey. Mark Sullivan. That's something that [...] I don't know how much time you have to do this. You have to get it done before you graduate.

Ian Dolan ([00:59:35](#)):

Yeah. I have time. I have a few weeks.

L. Zuccarello ([00:59:39](#)):

If you ask them some questions about [...] if there are records of the office of special programs. It was under the administrator was Ed Waters. Who's deceased [...] Brother Ed Donohue has passed away also.

Gus Nolan ([01:00:00](#)):

One reason it was kept quiet, it was that a lot of parents here did not like the idea that we're [...] They were paying for their kids to come here and we're going down into the prison to teach [...] those people. Now, what they didn't realize is that was a saving. If we could get them out of there rehabilitated and getting jobs, you know, it would save everybody a lot of money, you know? Moreover, one of those who we educated eventually came here as a professor.

Ian Dolan ([01:00:33](#)):

Oh, wow.

Gus Nolan ([01:00:34](#)):

So that was [...] I forget his name now.

L. Zuccarello ([01:00:39](#)):

Fred McManus. Psychology. [...]

Gus Nolan ([01:00:44](#)):

And he got a doctorate and was accredited and came and taught here for a number of years. [...] And that is his background. Yes. He had come out of the penitentiary. [...] Let's go on and teach whatever he was doing.

L. Zuccarello ([01:01:00](#)):

But also, I mean, if you're opening up another whole can of worms here. In the 1960s, at the time of the Civil Rights Movement, Marist had a decent African American population here recruited specifically through HEOP. Higher Education Opportunity Program. And, [...] really made it a mission to try to get people on campus who did not have other opportunities.

Gus Nolan ([01:01:39](#)):

They just celebrated their 50th anniversary of being on campus [...] last time or the summer before. [...] What do you call that program?

L. Zuccarello ([01:01:51](#)):

Upward Bound.

Gus Nolan ([01:01:53](#)):

Upward Bound.

L. Zuccarello ([01:01:54](#)):

That's for high school students who [...] are going to college or [...] starting college. It'd be support networks for them. So I mean, that was [...] part of the Brothers' mission to serve those populations and they did it.

Ian Dolan ([01:02:13](#)):

Yeah. Definitely, it seems like they ended up having a really big influence on the community eventually.

L. Zuccarello ([01:02:20](#)):

Yeah. Well, yeah. The Brothers sure. With the college as the college is becoming influential.

Ian Dolan ([01:02:26](#)):

Yeah. [...] Well, I think I'm gonna end it there guys. So thank you very much.