

**JoAnne Myers**

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

**Myers, JoAnne**

Transcript – JoAnne Myers

**Interviewee:** JoAnne Myers

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**Summary:** JoAnne Myers discusses her early life, her interest in politics and feminist issues, and her time teaching political science at Marist.

Joanne Myers: 00:00 [Gus Nolan: ...Didn't take that.] [Laughter] Thank you. Okay, let me not kick you. [Laughter]

Gus Nolan: 00:10 Today is Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> of October.

JAM: 00:14 No, the 11<sup>th</sup>.

GN: 00:15 Oh, it's the 11<sup>th</sup>? We're a week ahead of ourselves. Next week is the 18th and we'll have something else. But today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, and we have the opportunity of [...] interviewing Dr. JoAnne Meyers, Marist professor of political science. Good afternoon JoAnne.

JAM: 00:38 Good afternoon Gus.

GN: 00:42 There's about five different major parts to this little interview. An introduction about your early years. Did you envision coming to Marist. Your experiences here. Kind of looking into the crystal ball, where do you see us going. Let's start at the beginning. Can you summarize kind of in a short way your early years? Where were you born and brought up, and early education, and interests in studies of music or art or hobbies? Who are you?

JAM: 01:14 So [...], it turns out that [...] I was almost an illegitimate child. And, so, my parents had to quick get married a month before I was born. But my parents were both raised on either side of a hill in Chelsea, Massachusetts. My father's side was German Jews and my mother's side were Ukrainian Jews. And so, there was a little [...], a little class issue there. But my parents left Boston and I was born in Miami Beach, Florida and we lived down there for five years. I have a half-sister who was my father's [daughter] by his first wife who had been my mother's best friend. So, there's a whole soap opera involved in there. And then we moved back up to the Boston area.

JAM: 02:19 [Pause for technical difficulties]. So, we moved back up to the Boston area [...] and this was in 1960 and so I was entering first grade. And it turns out that my parents could not vote because they did not pay their poll tax, which they should have paid in January of 1960. So, when my father went to register to vote cause this was that infamous Nixon/Kennedy election. My father couldn't because they had not paid the poll tax in

January, but they hadn't been living there in January. So, my parents basically got disenfranchised. But I remember playing in the school yard and we actually skipped rope to [the tune] "Kennedy in the White House, Nixon in the Lighthouse. Kennedy dancing as a groom, Nixon dancing with a broom."

JAM: 03:44

So [...], I became very political basically early on. We in second grade moved to Mamaroneck, New York. And I did most of my public schooling in Mamaroneck. And I was very lucky, in fifth grade, I was head of the LBJ debate team. And a good friend of mine was head of the Goldwater debate team. In fact, John kept on asking my mother through the years whether or not I was gonna run for president. But I became very much enamored of our political system in fifth grade. And I always thought that "hmm maybe I'll be a lawyer [...] maybe I will do that." And then in high school was the height of the Vietnam era, the height of the [...] beginning of the woman's movement. And I was very lucky that one of my teacher's best friend was William Kunstler, who was the lawyer for Abbie Hoffman for the Pentagon papers.

JAM: 04:57

So, all of these people came through my high school. And so, I had a very politicized high school. I was also very lucky that my favorite teacher in high school, Duke Shermer, handed me Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*. So, I became a feminist early on. I sort of knew that I wanted female role models and I didn't have them in our school library. In elementary school, we only had a bio of [...].

GN: 05:35

Washington and Lincoln? [Chuckle].

JAM: 05:36

No, mostly men. There was one of Joan of arc. There was one of Florence Nightingale, and there was a very simple one of Virginia Dare, the first woman born in the United States. But nothing really [substantial]. [...] I went to the librarian and we found more books.

GN: 06:00

Well when you moved out of [...]? This is going through high school and then going on to college?

JAM: 06:11

Actually I had been looking at schools. I [...] basically was going to graduate a year earlier from high school. But then I got caught up with a teacher who I was doing some work with, so I spent another, an extra semester [in high school]. And I, then, was interviewing [with]

different schools, different colleges. I interviewed at Colgate, which was just going coed at that point. But I basically stopped that interview because I don't think that the dean who was interviewing me really wanted women there. So, I got up and left the interview.

- GN: 06:52 Early on there's a certain independence here? (laughter).
- JAM: 06:55 Yes [...] I would say I was a strong-willed child. I would go to Beloit [...] or Williams College [as other options, as opposed to Colgate].
- JAM: 07:07 But then [...] a friend[']s, of my mother's, daughter was going up to Skidmore. So, I went to visit it, and literally I went up in November for an interview and they offered me a scholarship. And I ended up there in January. I basically left high school, like on one week, one Friday in January and was up at Skidmore that Monday.
- GN: 07:34 And that would be in the mid-sixties?
- JAM: 07:37 No, this was actually in the early seventies. So, this was '72. So, this was January of '72.
- GN: 07:45 Through college what did you do? What was your major concentration or major?
- JAM: 07:50 So, I was a double major. I majored in government and philosophy, and I was actually interested in revolution. I should go back and say that one of my favorite books growing up was *Johnny Tremain* by [...]. God, I just lost her name.
- GN: 08:08 Alright, and I can't pull it either.
- JAM: 08:11 Anyway, so much so that I had [...] the elementary school librarian, [realizes name of author] Esther Forbes, get Esther Forbes' biography of *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In*, and that was actually her dissertation, her history dissertation, and I read that in sixth grade. I was very much enamored of the American revolution and how that came to be. And so my working at Skidmore as a double major, I looked at revolution [...], and basically you need insiders and outsiders to actually have a revolution. And I, in fact, even today, I'm very enamored of how change happens. And so at

Skidmore I was the managing editor of the Skidmore newspaper. I also bartended my way through school. At one point [...] I used to say that I was one of the only white girls on scholarship there. I had a work study in a nursery school.

GN: 09:16

You graduated from Skidmore. Where do you go?

JAM: 09:19

So, I graduated in May of '75, and I end up at RPI [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute] in their communications program thinking that I was going to be a writer. I did not want to go to law school. I had gone to [...] some classes at Albany law and found them very boring. And they wanted you to think a certain way. And the minute you tell me I have to do something a certain way, I don't want to do it, I am strong willed. So, in communications I studied political communications and public policy. I then started TA'ing in urban environmental studies for Paul Zuber and I ended up going on for my PhD there. I was the first woman to get my PhD through his program.

GN: 10:17

Moving on to your jobs now. When did you first begin to get into the activity? I know eventually you're in New York City. How do you get there?

JAM: 10:31

So, all the way through my schooling, I was bar tending. And then when I was at RPI, I started doing projects for Rensselaer County. And at one point I turned to Zuber and I said, "you know what? What I really need to do is I really need to see how policy gets developed and implemented." And I said, "I think I want to go and work in New York City." And so, I got a job with Mayor Koch in his office of community board affairs. And I basically worked as a liaison between two agencies and the community boards.

JAM: 11:23

I was the first woman to be part of the street cut construction committee. And so, I got to implement my first law there, which was a small little local law, which said that citizens needed to be notified when a street was going to be opened up. So they would know that there was going to be a detour. But I also added to that, that anybody who needed to make a street cut for that street should be working at the same time. So you're not opening the street and closing it and opening it and closing it. And during a belt tightening, I was told since I was the last hired, I would be the first fired. But, Koch

very nicely just said, “you could go to almost any agency, which agency do you want to go to?”

- JAM: 12:19 And so I interviewed at a whole bunch of agencies and I always say that I got picked up by sanitation. And in the Department of Sanitation there was the Office of Resource Recovery and Waste Disposal Planning. And I actually got to teach other municipalities how to recover the methane that happens naturally as garbage decomposes. And so, I walked on landfills from New York City to LA.
- GN: 12:51 Did you do that with some knowledge of chemistry or how [did you educate these other municipalities]?
- JAM: 12:55 So, there's another part of me is that I got involved with Clearwater as an environmentalist when I was up at RPI. So, I'm a pretty good quick study, so I learned how I learned how garbage decomposes. And I knew that that as somebody who's going to be implementing policies, I don't need to know the exact how I'm going to do it, but for garbage gas basically you can actually sink a pipe in, form a vacuum and light a match, and you'll have a flare because the gas will go to where there's least atmospheric pressure.
- JAM: 13:36 So I had a group with Brooklyn Union Gas Company and Getty Synthetic Fuels, [...] actually now does a project on Fresh Kills, the world's largest landfill, and they recover and purify the landfill gas there. And about 20,000 homes on Staten Island are fueled by [...] my project. That project started in the early eighties, it's still going, gung ho now. So, I got to teach other municipalities how to recover their gas, how to use this resource so it's not a hazard. I also was the person that the Department of Sanitation brought out if there was going to be any problems. Like, people didn't want to mix their garbage and their sewerage. So, you know, they bring me out there. I also implemented the New York City Bottle Bill.
- GN: 14:37 I have to move on because time is an issue, in the sense [...]
- JAM: 14:39 So anyways, so I then [...] told my commissioner, “I've done everything here on the city level. It was now time to move up.”

GN: 14:47 So, you move up to Albany?

JAM: 14:49 So, I actually was on the train to Albany [...] to go see a Talking Heads concert and to deliver my resume to different commissioners and politicians that were working in Albany. And I ended up sitting next to an associate commissioner for Housing and Community Development on the state level. And they had just gotten chapter 403 of the laws of 1983, [...] passed that June and this was August. And they were going to have to implement and take rent control and rent stabilization, which were two different programs, bring them together under the state with no funding, but a whole bunch of mandates.

JAM: 15:34 And so I was hired to implement that. I worked on that, I left that to a deputy commissioner, and did housing policy for a second. And then I was [...]. Mario Cuomo, who was governor then [...] had Fort Drum, Fort Drum was just a National Guard facility. And the federal government was looking for a place to house the 10th Mountain Light Division, which is 10,400 troops strong, in a place where they could actually do something new, which was off base housing of families so that they would really be a light division. They could keep on training new people to come in to wherever the fort was. So, I did it with Liz Ritter. We were the governor's point people coordinating 48 towns, three counties, and two countries in developing this Fort Drum.

GN: 16:36 The year range for this would be when, in the late '70s?

JAM: 16:38 This was, no, this was actually in a '84 – '85, and it was up and running in '86.

GN: 16:49 Okay, cause you're gonna soon come to Marist now [...]

JAM: 16:52 And so as soon as Fort Drum was, now, going to be a reality. And what Liz and I had to do was we had to figure out what the housing impact was going to be in an area that had not seen any development since 1860. And not only where there are 10,400 troops, there were their 20,000 dependents and then all the other add-ons that come, the hangers on that come. And so, it was really going to change the greater Fort Drum area. Landlords were saying, you know, instead of charging \$135 for a whole house, rent per month, they could

charge \$735. That's what the federal government was paying.

- JAM: 17:39 And so there were little green dollar signs in their eyes. So anyway, [...] we also put together a water authority. We had to do a whole bunch of things to get this to happen. But then I turned to Governor Cuomo, I said, "Good, I've done this now I think I'm ready to go back to teach." Unfortunately, this was in April, which is not really the month that you go out on a job market for. But he said, "good luck, okay." [...] You know, write when you get work type of thing. And I actually interviewed at Marist with Louis Zuccarello. And I interviewed one day there [...]
- GN: 18:18 How did you know about Marist?
- JAM: 18:20 So, how [...]? Now in the background of all of my jobs, I've [...] worked as a cook on the Clearwater, so I was always sailing up and down here.
- JAM: 18:31 And one of my good friends was actually working IT here at Marist, Annie Wynn, and she said "Oh, I think there's an opening for political scientists." And so, Annie, who actually just retired from Amazon, was the one who introduced me to Marist. I did my research about Marist. And so, I interviewed here and I also interviewed at the Shiva. [...] The Shiva was very closed minded in so much as that I was only going to be able to teach certain courses, but they also didn't really know what they wanted in a professor. So I actually said that they had to figure out, you know, do they need someone to teach political communication or what? And so, until they figured it out, they shouldn't be looking for someone. But I really liked Marist.
- JAM: 19:33 I liked the values that I had read about, that Marist brothers had taken in other faculty from other schools that had been let go because they had protested, for instance, the Vietnam War.
- GN: 19:50 That's an interesting point. But at this time, Dennis is in place now. Dennis has been here for five years or more.
- JAM: 19:57 So Dennis came in, what, '79 and this is '86 [...].

GN: 20:04 So, he's president, but it's really Louis and [...]. Who is the dean then? Was it Andrew Molloy or Louis Zuccarello?

JAM: 20:13 No. [...] there was a woman who actually interviewed me and then Marc vanderHeyden actually was the one who I signed my contract with. Okay, so, yeah, Mark was just coming on board.

GN: 20:28 Okay. And then you're coming into this department, the Political Science [department]. Who's in it at the time? Who's the chair?

JAM: 20:34 Louis Zuccarello was the chair. Vernon Vavrina was there, Lee Miringoff [...]

GN: 20:46 Miringoff was in political science?

JAM: 20:47 Yes.

GN: 20:48 Okay. Do you recall the conditions on campus though? I mean, where was your office?

JAM: 20:55 My office was in the old Fontaine, which was [...] in the back. Actually, I was in the center of the building [...]

GN: 21:05 Did you have a Hudson view?

JAM: 21:06 No, I did not have a Hudson view until the last few years in the old Fontaine that I moved across the hall.

GN: 21:15 Of course the old one has been replaced now by this beautiful library. And the library in those days, that's another story.

JAM: 21:21 The school was unique. I mean one of our storage closets was actually an old shower that the brothers used to use in Fontaine.

GN: 21:35 How did you find the students at the time when you arrived on the scene here? You have had a vast experience of other kinds of exposures to teaching. How to define the Marist students?

JAM: 21:51 So, I've found that the Marist students hadn't learned yet that they like learning. They had been basically, and I still see it now today, that most of them learn by rote.

They don't learn to think, they think that they just have to sort of check off the boxes and go on. And [...] in the very beginning, Marist, this was still mostly first-generation students going off to college. That's what we got here at Marist. And so, the students really didn't know what to expect because they didn't have that heritage of learning. And it wasn't until their first or second year in, when they were really in, that often they realize that they like learning. That learning was exciting, that playing with ideas was exciting.

GN: 22:42 How did you do that? How did you get them to take this approach? Was it quite challenging in terms of activities? Papers?

JAM: 22:49 It was a combination of things. I would tell them about, you know, my life. I would make them [...] they'd read, they'd write, they'd do analysis. They would go out and do internships. So, there was a whole combination of things, but they had to learn that learning was not just memorization. They had to use the knowledge.

GN: 23:17 In the first years did you find yourself being the professor telling them, and that changed? Or from the beginning, you were able to bring a kind of [...] you wanted to know what they thought.

JAM: 23:28 Yeah. My background, because it's interdisciplinary from [varied educational and professional experiences] [...], I think that you bring in a whole bunch of different things. And as a feminist, I also think that [...] I don't know everything. I would actually believe that as Socrates said, it's the wise man, he was very gendered, it was the wise man who knows what he doesn't know and goes and seeks out information, and it's the ignorant man who thinks he knows it all. And I always start off my classes saying that. So, I tell my students, there's no such thing as a stupid question. Except for "if it's going to be on the test," that's a stupid question. But if they're not curious, then they have to learn to be intellectually curious. You know, they have to challenge things. And my whole life was always challenging everything.

GN: 24:24 Was there any issue of problem solving? Did you say, "here's an issue, let me see what we can do about it"?

- JAM: 24:19 Yeah. I would actually give them, you know, real life issues. Like how, how would you do this? How should we do this? I believe that [...] if we are in this modern liberal democracy, the citizen, and all of them are citizens, they are 'we the people.' I do now agree with Rousseau that a republic is the wrong type of government because a republic means I get to vote, and then I send somebody off to Albany or Washington or wherever and then I don't see them. I don't pay attention to them until they're up for reelection. And this is sort of how we got where we are now. Where for the last election, 56% of the registered voters, and that's only 80% of 100%.
- JAM: 25:12 You know, I always tell them "here's set theory, I've never thought I was ever going to use that after learning it in high school." But set theory is that if there's 100% of the population who could vote, that's everybody over the age of 18 who are citizens, only 80% of those people are registered to vote. And out of that 80% we get our shorts up in a knot. If 56% go out to vote, that's 56% of 80%. That's not that much.
- GN: 25:47 No, and then the whole US can just about get half. And not even in this case, this past election. So, most of the American people want this? No way [laughter].
- JAM: 25:56 So, you know, I get them involved. In fact, I was just at a conference up at Maxwell School and that was one of the things they were talking about was that citizens are not involved.
- JAM: 26:06 If it's a local election, a mayoral election, 30% of the pie, of that 80% come out to vote. And if it's a board of education vote, it's even less. So, I tell them how much impact that they can have. And I said, "and Jefferson, who was a states' rights-er, he said that it's the government closer to you that's actually delivering services to you. You should be more involved there."
- GN: 26:32 It reminds me of, this solving things this way, even in communications we have that kind of organization and communications design. There's a veteran's hospital in Chicago, [...] it must be eight stories high, it was a whole series of five elevators and there's an actual story of a patient being put on the elevator and going down and something happened. And for the next 24 hours he rode up and down on that elevator unattended. And so, the

question to the class is “Well, what happened?” Well, you can see them all kind of saying “when they got to the bottom, the attendant got off, he met somebody, the elevator door closed. So, he figured, the elevator took it [the patient].” So, without his [patient], you know, how can he correct it and then go to this whole process of saying, you know, checking out, signing, signing for delivery, signing for acceptance. I mean they are doing the solvation [...], the solution to: here is an issue, “what would you do with it?” Whereas when I first started teaching, I was told, “you're the teacher, you tell them. They don't know anything, you have to tell them what.” I found out, that's not true [laughter].

JAM: 27:43

No, and actually that's a really interesting thing. So, when I was in Grad School one of my side jobs was as a substitute teacher [...] in the Troy high schools. And I would get a call at five o'clock in the morning, “would I, you know, do Home ec?” and I'd say “as long as I'm not putting in Zippers.” And so, one day it was a math class and it was a sweat hog math class. Now math is not my long suit at all. Thank goodness I'm wearing sandals and my fingers are here, I can count to 20 almost. And so, I said, “well, I'm not sure about math.” And the guy sort of talked me into it and he said, “oh, the teacher will leave a ditto sheet, you know, just do it.”

GN: 28:31

Keep them busy.

JAM: 28:32

And so I said, “okay.” Well, I went in and I looked, I said, “oh look, they're 21 problems. Okay. And there are 18 of you.” I said, “so, here we'll do a problem together, then we'll do another problem together. And then each one of us will do a problem.” And we did the whole sheet and then we started talking, and I ended up subbing for this class for another month while the teacher was out. And all of these kids, you know, pass their [exams]. They had just been told they were the sweat hogs, they knew nothing, they would never do this. And I just, you know [...]

GN: 29:10

Well, okay. Come back to Marist. Have you found the students [have] changed in your 20 years, 30 years here?

- JAM: 29:20 So, the biggest change I think is that the students now know that they have to go to college. You know, so, I have a whole bunch of students that have to go to college. You know, to get a job. It's become a big marker for getting a job. And a lot of the students don't read now.
- JAM: 29:44 I think that our media has changed, where it used to be that you had to pay attention to what shows everybody was watching so you could be fluent in that currency. Now the students are on their iPhones or they're on their social media and they don't read. And if you don't read, you can't write well. So, I'm always pushing my students to read. And so, that's one change is that the students are not readers anymore. And the second change, I think, that's really important is that we are getting more students that have special educational needs. That we might not have seen before because Marist has always been very supportive of students with dyslexia, for instance. And [...] my brother was a severe dyslexic, so I learned how to deal with him. And he actually went on and got his degree from NYU even though he basically read on a fourth-grade level.
- GN: 31:01 Well, I had a student like that and I inquired about how to have him checked, and he was quite insulted that I would bring this up. But [...], at the time [Nelson] Rockefeller was governor, I said "you know the governor of New York [...] has problems reading, getting words mixed up, and so on." I said, "so, it's not a disgrace, [...] and maybe we can correct it [...]." Well, it was a hard pill to swallow. But, if you recognize it, at least you could maybe [...] solve it.
- JAM: 31:34 And that's what I tell my students. One of the good things about Marist is that we have such great support systems here. So, they can go to the writing center, [...] and when they're out in the real world, then they know that this is how they have to surround themselves. They have to surround themselves with someone who's a better writer or a good editor or whatever.
- GN: 31:54 [I'm] Turning a few pages here. Tell me now about your take on the spirit of the faculty at Marist. What would you say about that now and then? What was it like? How do you see it now? Or is there a change?

JAM: 32:11 There's been a big change in faculty. Not in values. I think that one of the good things about Marist is that we always have recruited people that really embrace the values [...]

GN: 32:31 Like learning more than money?

JAM: 32:33 Yeah, like learning more than money. I always tell my students, I'm not a capitalist, I missed that lesson. And that the people are really dedicated. My colleagues are very dedicated, not only to their own intellectual life, but the intellectual life of the institution. I have seen the [...], and let me just go back for a second. So, one of the problems with the fact that a lot of us are not capitalists is that we haven't stood up for ourselves sometimes. So for instance, we, during one contract negotiation under Bill Olson, we got a really bad contract. And when people went to complain about it, the board of directors, board of trustees actually gave us even a worse contract.

JAM: 33:32 And this is sort of when I lost a little respect for Dennis Murray because one of my colleagues went to him and he was told, you know, he's lucky that he even has a job. So, at that I felt that the faculty was a little beaten down [...] and that we didn't have a backbone. But I was the one who was sitting up in a faculty meeting and realized [...] how many people needed to have nominated my name to get me elected to [the Faculty Grievance Committee]. So, I became the first head of the Faculty Grievance Committee, the first female head of it.

GN: 34:14 Tell me what's the glue that kept you here for 30 years?

JAM: 34:22 So, what has kept me here is A.) the community. But also, I think that while it would have been easier for me to go to another school where there were more people like me, I always say that I'm the other, other, other. I'm not male, I'm not Catholic and I'm not heterosexual, but I get to be that grain of sand that makes the Pearl.

JAM: 34:47 So, I have been here working [...] to make positive changes, but also to get the students that we get, to get them to think differently, to think more expansively.

GN: 35:06 Have you been accepted?

JAM: 35:08 I think so. I think I've been accepted, and I think that there are some administrators that look at me and just go "oi." Or the Irish Catholic or the Italian Catholic, those were the big divisions when I first came here, whatever that version was.

GN: 35:25 But certainly you've had some very tender friends.

JAM: 35:28 I've had some wonderful friends. Jerry White was my bestest, of bestest, of bestest friends. I spoke to him not only here on campus, but we shared recipes, we shared politics, we shared books. We shared [...]

GN: 35:47 TV programs? [chuckles]

JAM: 35:48 Everything. LK [Linda Boyd Kavars] always says that I have an extra three hours a day because I'm not talking to him on the phone when I get home.

GN: 36:01 If you had a chance now to talk to the board, what would you recommend to the board? Give me two or three changes [...]. Or, one thing, what should be maintained and what'd be a good thing if we change this? Like, four and three teaching, or whatever.

JAM: 36:16 Well, it would be really nice if [...] and it's not just going from a four class to a three class. For the faculty, and this is what I was saying way back then, it's also what our students are learning. We still treat our students, unfortunately, as if they're in parochial school. They're taking five classes, we mark off their hours. It's very parochial. It doesn't allow them to be expansive thinkers themselves. I mean I really like to push towards more experiential learning and more flexible [learning], but they should be doing a four, four level.

GN: 36:59 Do you have a model or a place that does it kind of in an ideally [ideal?] way?

JAM: 37:04 Well there are a whole bunch of things. So, I would like them not to have grades because I think our students are grade grubbers and partly that's because you need a GPA to get a job or you need a GPA to get into it a school.

JAM: 37:18 But there are schools, such as Sarah Lawrence, where the professors would say "Gus, you'd do a lot better if

you open the book and write that down. Gus, you'd do a lot better if you came to class," and hand write these notes out to them instead of giving them a grade. Cause I think that you should be able to, you know, honors, pass and fail [honors-pass-fail]. I think that it would actually mean more if I'm writing it out and I've been trying [...], like at midterms. That's exactly how midterms should be, [...] to the student, [...] here's how you should improve, not to just say [how you did]. And one of the things I do with my students, because writing is so important, is that they get to learn to rewrite.

JAM: 38:05

So, I hand them back a paper and they have a week to rewrite to answer my concerns cause otherwise all they do is look, "oh, I got a C from that bitch," and throw the paper away. And the next time they write a paper they have the same mistakes. So, they get to rewrite. So, doing away with grades, treating the students as if they are 18-year olds and adults, okay, so that's one thing. I also [...] think that this push for online classes is money grubbing. Because if you're teaching a class for eight weeks to an adult learner, there's too much life that happens. I almost think that it shouldn't be an eight week online that it needs to be a little bit more open ended on that.

JAM: 38:57

But that's probably not in my purview. But what would I tell the board? I would say that Marist is not meant to be [...], higher education is not meant to be a moneymaker. It is not meant to be a business. It is in the business of producing good citizens who can think, who are critical thinkers. We need to get back to that business, and I think that their focus is not there. I also think that there needs to be a lot more turnover on the board level. And I would love to see faculty, even if they're not faculty members from Marist, faculty members from another school. We have all business people. They need to hear other voices.

GN: 39:54

What about social justice and things of that sort?

JAM: 39:56

Well, I've always been there on the ramparts for social justice issues, environmental ones, women's issues. Kate Millett [...] became when I came here [...]. And another thing was that I got to meet Kate Millett. *Sexual Politics*, I told you, was a book that was given to me when I was in high school. I became very, very close friends with Kate. In fact, her memorial is in a couple of

weeks. She just passed. I was supposed to be in Paris with her next weekend.

- GN: 40:30 Look into the crystal ball. Where are we going and how are we going to get there?
- JAM: 40:35 So, I think it's really interesting that replacing Dennis is David Yellen. David is sort of the un-Dennis [...] is sort of how I remember the Uncola, the un-Dennis. And I think that it's a move back since he actually had started off as an academic lawyer himself. That we're moving back, and maybe we'll value academics a little bit more, that intellectual life.
- GN: 41:19 But come back to other things now, I mean, how about, you mentioned online learning. How about online learning [for] undergraduate [level-students]?
- JAM: 41:26 So, I don't think that our students are disciplined enough really to do online learning themselves. And I think it could be a component of our system. I think what we do best is we energize our students by having [...]. So, I teach using the Socratic method [...] a lot. Getting your [the students'] opinions, I can decenter myself, I am not the landfill of all knowledge. Then I can learn from them as much as they can learn from me.
- GN: 42:07 If you had them on campus and you got them interested in wanting to learn. And then they were out and you're gave them a syllabus to complete, "do this [...], read these books and tell me about them when you finish."
- JAM: 42:27 I think that might be, [...] that you need to have them here and invigorate them and encourage them and empower them, give them the tools. Right. And then, because our students, as I said, they're late bloomers. They haven't learned to learn yet. And I think that for the past [...] 20 years our elementary and high school education system, our secondary education, has been teaching to the test. And our students are really good at, "I know this right now, then I can regurgitate it," but they don't know how to use it.
- GN: 43:05 It's gone tomorrow.

- JAM: 43:07 Yes. They don't know how to use that information, they don't know how to critically think. And so they have to learn that. And that's a skill that you learn sometimes with your butt in the chair, sometimes with your hands in the mix.
- GN: 43:21 How do you feel about abroad programs?
- JAM: 43:25 So, some of our abroad programs are absolutely, rigorously wonderful. The Hansard program, for instance, and some of them are just fluff. I think that the good part about our students going abroad is that if they get out of the Marist bubble or the American bubble, and they mix it up [...], and travel on their own, and they have new experiences. When they come back to the United States their eyes are open. I have a big problem with American exceptionalism when I teach human rights, for instance, most of the time. And then one of the reasons I don't use Nicholas Kristof's book *Half the Sky*, it's because he says all the problems are over there, wherever over there is, but we have the same problems here. We have abject poverty. We have people without [...], we have all of these things here, but if we always think that we're so perfect [...] we won't solve our own problems. How can we impose our problems?
- GN: 44:38 You know Joseph Belanger? Well cause he would go wild with this tourism. Just going to Europe and visiting the countries. Well, even that has its merits as you said, seeing other conditions, I imagine, really can change a person. I travel [a] limited [amount]. I've been to Japan, I've been to Australia, I've been to Iran so I have some [...]. And their way of thinking. I mean I couldn't get over, [with] Reggie my brother in Japan, and going to a coke machine and putting whatever the coin in and "do you want a large or a small?" You say "the small." Okay, no change. It's your choice, the price is the same whether you get the big or the small. Our thinking could not understand that, bigger means you have to pay more.
- JAM: 45:36 Yeah, that totally changes things. And [...] what I tell my students is that when you go, [...] when you're traveling abroad and you're meeting someone, they're not going to ask you about what TV show that you watched last night. They're going to ask you about those things that

your mother probably told you that you can't talk about: politics, sex, religion.

GN: 45:58

Yeah, okay.

JAM: 46:00

And [...] you learn to mix it up. You learn to have those civil discussions. And you can still raise a glass of wine with them. And we used to have that. We've lost that in our political discourse in the past eight years.

GN: 46:19

Finally, is Marist worth the investment? Now, investment is a complicated word. I'm talking about money. I'm talking about time. I'm talking about friendship. Leaving home, [...] social things. For high school, there's 10,000 students looking around here this season, 1,000 of which we'll accept for next year. Is putting four years of their life [into a Marist education] worth the investment?

JAM: 46:50

So, here's the issue, and I think that we have a few issues here. One, most of the students who are coming to Marist come onto Marist campus, look around and go "oh God, it's so beautiful." Dennis did a wonderful job and we are a beautiful campus. And they come here because they liked the campus. It's convenient to wherever they're living. They got a sports scholarship. They're not really coming here for academics. They might have heard about the Marist Poll. But they really are not [...], they don't know who's going to be teaching them. No, they're more wowed by McCann Center, or the new dorms or whatever. Yeah. [...] It's not until later that they learn, that [...] they realize we have a wonderful faculty that are invested in them. But I think that that's sort of normal for the type of student that we're getting. [...] The average [...] student who hasn't realized [...] what they really want to be or could be.

GN: 48:09

And the other side of that is their parents are very much concerned that they go someplace for the next four years [...] and have that experience. [...] You know more stories about this than I do.

JAM: 48:23

And so, a lot of parents are saying "well, if I'm going to be investing [...] \$40,000 a year," or some portion of that.

GN: 48:32

What job are we going to get out of it?

- JAM: 48:33 Yeah. And so, the conference that was just up at the Maxwell School. There was [...] one panel where this consultant said he'd rather hire someone with a liberal arts degree who knows how to problem solve than someone [...] who has a technical [background], who has either computer skills, or who has management skills because you can learn some of that. But someone who can look at an issue, and critically think about it and problem solve. He said, [...] and write well. And so, it's that writing well. And even a friend of mine who had been the associate police chief up in Saratoga Springs, one of the things he said, he always asked [...], when he was interviewing the people who had passed the civil service tests to write something. And he said, because if they can't write, whatever ticket they're writing or whatever report they're writing, would not hold up in court. You have to write well.
- GN: 49:43 Well, very good. I'm pretty much finished. Will you tell me, is there something we didn't touch that you think should be recorded, or [...] that would help us understand what might best be going on. An insight into Marist.
- JAM: 50:02 So, there's one other point that [...]. So, I've been involved in faculty governance. I was an untenured AAC [Academic Affairs Committee] for a second. Then I've been on FAC [Faculty Affairs Committee], I've been on Rank and Tenure [Rank and Tenure Committee], I've done all of that. But one of the things that still upsets me is, about a year and a half ago, a group of faculty [members] got together and they wrote a [white paper on] climate change. They said that we at Marist, we have an environmental science and environmental policy program. We have a lot of students who are really interested. We're here on the Hudson River. There's a lot of climate issues that we need to be involved in. So, they wrote a white paper that the faculty all endorsed and we sent it to the board of trustees. The board of trustees has not officially responded. To me, that is totally disrespectful, but that's exactly how the faculty gets treated. Like if it wasn't for our faculty, there wouldn't be a Marist College.
- GN: 51:11 Yeah. This is a point that I've often made. "What made Marist happen?" And a lot of people will say, well, Linus put the foundations in, but then Dennis came along and

we really built up what we have now, and this is the image that we have, and so on. Which is fine, but I never heard anybody come here for a course by Dennis, you really come here for the school, even though you don't know who your professor is going to be. But you have friends that are here, for the most part, and they're happy, so I'll be happy. So, that's it. Well, I want to thank you for coming JoAnne. It's been a delightful hour, or whatever it is, just talking to you and getting your insight. And so, [...]

JAM: 52:01

And I'm sure [...] there's so much more we could have talked [...] about.