

Brother Paul Ambrose and Jack Gartland

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Amy Dugan

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Ambrose, Brother Paul

Gartland, Jack

Transcript – Brother Paul Ambrose and Jack Gartland

Interviewees: Brother Paul Ambrose and Jack Gartland

Interviewer: Anthony Cernera

Interview Date:

Location: Lowell Thomas

Topic: Marist College History

Subject Headings: Ambrose, Brother Paul
Gartland, Jack
Marist College Executive
Marist Brothers – United States – History
Marist College History
Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)
Marist College President
Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: Brother Paul Ambrose and Jack Gartland discuss the history of Marist College and the importance of its heritage so that we can save these thoughts and recollections for future generations.

Dennis Murray (00:00:10):

Heritage. It's a very important part of any college or university in America, but perhaps even more so at Marist college, because it is our heritage that we have built upon. And we attribute much of the success that we have enjoyed in recent years to that heritage that has been given to us by our founders. Today, we are very fortunate to have with us, the two individuals who have help laid the foundation for Marist College. Two individuals that have done more than any others to contribute to the numerous successes that the college is enjoying today. We're honored to have with us Brother Paul Ambrose, the founding president of Marist college and Jack Gartland, a life trustee, a former chairman of the board of trustees, and an individual who has contributed more in many different ways than any individual to the successes that the college has enjoyed. We hope to, through these interviews, capture their sense of the history and heritage of Marist College so that we can save these thoughts and recollections for future generations. Conducting the interview today with Brother Paul and Jack will be Tony Cernera, our vice president for college advancement. Tony is a graduate of Marist colleges, Marist schools, and knows well, the history that we have enjoyed here at our institution. We hope you enjoy hearing and watching this tape and learning a little bit about the history of Marist College, from the perspective of individuals that have helped contribute to its success.

Anthony Cernera (00:02:33):

The celebration of the Marist centenary, celebrating a hundred years of Marist Brothers service in the United States of America. Brother Paul Ambrose, one of the leading Marist brothers in the United States, will tell us a little bit about that convocation in a few minutes. But I would like to ask him to help us to understand better what a Marist Brother is and what kind of work the Marist brothers are doing around the United States and throughout the world, Brother Paul?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:03:09):

Well, Tony we're an order of teaching brothers. Somebody said once to the brothers, "well what is a brother?" And for one of a better answer, he said, well, "he's a female nun", but that's not why we become brothers. Our founders started the order of the Marist Brothers because of the number of kids in France who are without education. The Lasal brothers, who are expert educators, started a hundred years before we did, but they were taking the children of the city schools, the big schools and the farming school, the village schools, there were none. Our founder felt pity for these poor kids, abandoned kids, and he said, I want brothers to imitate the Lasal brothers in the meat teaching methods, but to maybe have lower tuition costs and operate a little bit more economically and we'll be like a family, brothers will live together, and that's how it all started. It started in France, in 1817 with two candidates. And now we are over 7,000 Marist Brothers in 846 schools, in 72 countries of the world. And one of his fortes, one of his strong points was to go to the poor and as the Jesuit we're dedicated to Jesus, to Christ, he wanted his brothers to be known as the

brothers, the little brothers of Mary, the Marist brothers. And as part of our charism to spread devotion to our lady, because there's no one who served Christ as well as Mary. So we try to imitate Mary and our service of Christ for the poor. And because the poor are not just here around us. Another part of his charism was to go forth in any, in every country of the world where we could find poor children needing education. And his great saying was every diocese of the world falls under our jurisdiction because there are needs everywhere. And that is why we have spread so rapidly all over the globe.

Anthony Cernera (00:05:47):

Well, now you've been a Marist brother for almost 57 years. Is that right?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:05:50):

Correct. Yes.

Anthony Cernera (00:05:51):

Could you tell us how that first inspiration or calling came to you when you were a young lad?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:05:57):

Well, it was an inspiration of course. I was very young. I had never seen a brother in my life. I went to school to the sisters and I was in the seventh grade and this gentleman come over, dressed up the way I am, to speak to us about the need of brothers. And he was looking for brothers. Well, I was an alter boy and I wanted to become a priest. It was all decided that I would become a priest, but after listening to his talk, what the brothers were, what they did, the work for the poor work, dedicate your life to youth, to spread devotion to our lady, which had been inculcated in us and my family from birth, and to go to the missions and not to be afraid to be sent as Christ sent the apostles to go out. And he told us where the brothers worked. This, there was a certain sensation that came over me. I said, this is it. I went to see him, I was ready to join at once. And he told me, he said, no, you need permission from your parents. He said, I'll be here tomorrow. Ask them tonight. I went home and my dad wouldn't hear of it. "You're Too young. You don't know what you're doing." My mother said, "if this is what you want to do, you always wanted to become a priest. What happened?" I said, "well, I don't know, but this is it." She says, "well, if this is it, this is what you want to do. I'm for it." So I asked my dad, are you against my going? He said, "I won't be against it, but I'm not encouraging you." I went back and I told the brother the next day that I'm ready to go at once, 13 years old in the seventh grade, ready to go. He said, yeah, taken my statistics. And he said, I'll let you know when there's room. There's no room now. He sent me a picture, post card for my birthday, August 28th. And on the picture, in back of the picture post card, it was marked, "Happy birthday, we have room, come." I went the following Sunday, September 1st. My father wouldn't say goodbye to me. I had to go to my aunts where he was. He didn't want to be around the house when

I left, I went to find him to kiss him goodbye. He didn't come. I left. We were five new candidates that day, four of them left within the first couple of months. And I'm still here.

Anthony Cernera (00:08:40):

You're still here, very good. Now, when you left home and you joined the brothers, where did you go?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:08:45):

To Tyngsborough, Massachusetts.

Anthony Cernera (00:08:47):

And then did you have-

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:08:48):

Tyngsborough had just been built in 1924, the first year of its operation was 1925. I entered September 1st, 1926.

Anthony Cernera (00:09:01):

And did you ever study here in Poughkeepsie?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:09:03):

Oh, yes. I studied there for two years in Kingsborough and I came here in 1928 in Poughkeepsie to complete the high school. For the high school, we had started the high school in Tyngsborough, completed it here. And because of a shortage of brothers at the time a group of us were taken from the larger group and sent home on vacation and we were sent on a mission a little bit early, a year or two in advance. And I was in that group and I went to the novitiate in 1930 to become a brother. I received this religious habit and a June, July 26th, 1930...

Anthony Cernera (00:09:46):

Feast of St. Anne, right?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:09:47):

Feast of St. Anne. This used to be called St. Anne's Hermitage...

Anthony Cernera (00:09:50):

I remember that.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:09:51):

The old building. You remember that. St. Anne's Heritage... Our brothers first came here in 1906. The brothers were connected with Canada. We started in the

United States in 1886 in Lewiston, Maine and then 1918, 90 and Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1892 in Lawrence, Mass, New York city. We had two schools in New York city- St. Anne's academy and St. Agnes, and it developed, but we belonged to the Canadian United States province and we needed, we were getting candidates sending them to Canada for training. So we decided to buy this first in the state, I think it was. And we bought this big property, which became a junior rate, a training for young candidates. I was here in 28, then we had our own novitiate where the McCann center is now and went through the novitiate training and where the Fontaine building and the chapel is, is where the scholasticate was. And this is where we started the- we did our post novitiate training, our first college training. We had a two year training college called the Marist normal training school. And this normal training school was affiliated with Fordham university and automatically all the brothers, when they left this training school, they were assigned to teach in the various schools whether it was new England or New York or wherever, and they had to finish their degrees on their own. Those in New York could go to evening classes and all of them took courses all summer long and all of them took courses- who were in New York- took courses on Saturdays. I finished my degree by evening classes and Saturday classes and summer work. And this is how all the brother at the normal training school.

Anthony Cernera (00:12:15):

Now, Jack, around the time that brother Paul was getting involved with the Marist brothers, you were a young boy here in Poughkeepsie. Did you have any contact with the Marist brothers in your early days?

Jack Gartland (00:12:27):

Yes because I was born and raised in Poughkeepsie and I went through St. Mary's grammar school and the first Catholic high school in the city of Poughkeepsie was started by the Marist brothers down at St. Peter's church. And they had the upper floor, I think it was, of the St Peter's boys grammar school. And so my parents sent me there and that must have been in the fall of 1927. I stayed there for two years and I switched to Poughkeepsie high school. So I knew who the brothers were, I knew they were Marist brothers, I knew they had an officiate up here and gosh, when you mentioned St. Anne's Hermitage-the building that was out here in front where the Lowell Thomas, right where this building is here now- and that was the novitiate, is that right Paul?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:13:17):

The juniorette and provincial house

Jack Gartland (00:13:19):

Later on when they when his house really became obsolete, I remember the Marist brothers asking permission to tear it down and the fire department said, "hey, we'd like to run the experiment up there." And they got all the fire

companies from locally around here to come up and they burned it down. And they had all the fire companies all, you know, going one against the other. They were running crazy because I happened to go here as a spectator at the time and that's why I remember it so well. It was quite interesting because the fire departments claimed they got a lot of training out of it for a lot of their volunteer men and all. Were you here then Paul?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:14:03):

No, '28 I came here. I was out out of the place when the building was burnt. It was Nialus who took care of it.

Jack Gartland (00:14:14):

But that was after he came I guess, yeah.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:14:17):

After Nialus came. But under St Peter's bit your St Peter's high school, the brothers lived on campus here and they went to teach at St. Peter's and that little building that still exists called St. Peter's, that was their residence.

Anthony Cerneria (00:14:32):

Wow.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:14:32):

And there was a wooden addition to it that was where brother started the printing in the cellar of that wooden addition. And he was a printer for the college of 50 years, at least if not more. But that addition, wooden addition was remove. And what is now office building in that little St Peter's was the original residents of the brothers who were teaching at St. Peter's high school.

Anthony Cerneria (00:14:56):

One of the things I discovered last summer when the brothers were here for the convocation was that my freshman homeroom teacher, religion teacher, and geometry teacher at Mount St. Michael brother, Joseph Damien had also been Jack's teacher in 1927 geometry so we had a connection there that I wasn't aware of.

Jack Gartland (00:15:15):

It was interesting. I think probably the fact that the Marist brothers had started St. Peter's high school in the city of Poughkeepsie is what started the agitation among a lot of local people to when Marist Marion college at first, you remember, when it first got their charter, started local people agitating about sending young men up here as commuter students. And that started, oh, that went on for three, four years before brother Paul finally got involved in it.

Anthony Cernera (00:15:49):

We wanna get to that point, because that'll be a, an interesting part of our history, but let's take a few steps back and tell us brother Paul, about the time around 1943. I think that's when you came back to the college in some official capacity.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:16:02):

Yes. But let, if you allow, let me go further back.

Anthony Cernera (00:16:07):

Okay.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:16:07):

That's something that will tear your hearts out. When our brothers wanted to buy this property and also the Becca state and the Bishop property, we got this for a very reasonable price. They were offered from north road all the way up to violent avenue, for an extra \$15,000. They could have had all the way up to violet avenue. And they asked our superiors in France at the time, if it was okay to buy this. And they said, well, you have a big property right on the Hudson? Why do you need so much, that's going to deprive people of this. No, we didn't get the permission, but looking back now, you wouldn't have Marist east or west, you would have the whole world. You see. But at that time it was offered to us.

Anthony Cernera (00:17:07):

Just not able to do it then.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:17:09):

Well, we were advised not to. That it would've been looked upon maybe by the people as being gluttons, taking over everything. You remember that the Jesuit had properties way back also.

Jack Gartland (00:17:20):

That's right, the Jesuits had around 900 acres up here and they went all the way to violent avenue.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:17:26):

That's right. And we had the same offer.

Speaker 4 (00:17:28):

And all that property that brother Paul is talking about, later was purchased by Fairview improvement company. And all the development of a Fairview is all that old Beck property. They purchased a Fairview improvement company was formed by the Canos and the Shaz family's here and they developed that starting

it around 1911 or sometime like that. At one time I was president of Fairview improvement company. That's how I know about it.

Anthony Cernera (00:18:00):

Well, Paul, take us back to 1943 now.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:18:04):

I'll take you back to 1941. I left here and I taught in the grammar school in Manchester and in Lowell. And I went to New York from '37 to '41 in high school. And my career as a teacher ended in 1941. I got the degree from Fordham summers. I got a degree from Villanova university in library science summers. And I went to CU for two years to get my degree in from CU in English literature. And I remember to this day that I got a phone call from the provincial in Washington, DC, where I was the director of a community of four brothers studying. Right. And we're living in the building of the former ambassador through China, Mr. Johnson. And that is the house we had purchased. And the provincial told me "when in the world, are you gonna finish your degree?" This was in the beginning of August. I said, "I just got word this morning that everything is finished. I'll get it the degree at the convocation or in September or whatever it was. But that everything was finished, that I was guaranteed, that everything had been accepted." He told me, take the next train to Poughkeepsie. That was 1943. I said the next train to Poughkeepsie leaves at 12, this was nine o'clock in the morning. He says, "be on it."

Anthony Cernera (00:19:36):

Not a lot of time to pack, huh?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:19:37):

Well, that was the system in those days. So I came up to Poughkeepsie, come up from New York, from Washington to New York and the New York train to Poughkeepsie station, come over here to see the provincial. And I said, what gives? He said it's good to see you here. Congratulations. You must be tired. Go to bed. I'll see you in the morning. So in the morning after mass, he calls me in and he said I want you to go to the scholasticate where the brothers, the young brothers were going through these two years of normal training school and stay there for a week with a brother who's there now. And at the end of the week, you take over and there were close to a hundred young brothers, students going through the first two years of college. And he said, but that's not all. He said, we're putting all our men through the same routine. He says, I don't mind everybody getting an education degree in education, but some want to be specialists in other fields. He says, I'd like you to work at making this a four year college and disassociated from Fordham university. So we won't all be Fordham graduates. Now this was in the beginning of August. I was 29 years old. I became 30 years old on the 28th of August. And this was dumped into my lap then. I said, you don't know what you're asking me. Oh, he says, I think I do.

He says a lot of work. And I said, I'm gonna need a lot of help. He said, you'll get the help. I said, you're gonna have to bring in teachers. We'll bring them. It's going to take money. Well, we haven't got too much, but he says whatever we have we'll dedicate to it and it will take time, but get it. And that was how I was commissioned to work at making normal training school into a college. There was no question that the name at the time...we weren't worried about a name there. We said, well, what do we do next? And I believe that what helped me tremendously, and I wish to give credit where it's due. I had been pretty much taken up at CU with the setup at CU and registrar and the man in charge, there was Dr. Roy J. Day Ferrari. And I became very friendly with him while at CU at the superior of the Marist brothers at that time. So I hightail it back by train to see you to see an appointment with Dr. Day Ferrari. And I said, here's what the mandate that I have. This is good brother I said, I'm gonna need some help. I said, we are affiliated for them. Is there a possibility of our first being affiliated, also being affiliated with Catholic university? I thought that was an initial step that we should go through. So I got him to come over here to see what was doing and to help me with the plan for the extra year. The provincial had told me, we'll leave the men here three years and three summers and they should be able to do four years work at that time. That was the frame schedule that he had given us. Dr. Day Ferrari agreed that it could be possible. We planned the courses and we were first affiliated with Catholic university. And then he says, you should make your move to the University of the state of New York. I said, okay, I'll go to Albany. But I said I need your help. Who do I contact in Albany? Oh, he said, there's a friend of mine there working on the charter graduate schools and so on. He says, go see Dr. Jay Hillis Miller. So my next trip was in Albany and saw Dr. Miller explain the situation, mentioned Dr. Day Ferrari and that gave me an in immediately. We got Dr. Miller interested in what we're doing and I explained to him that there is no college facilities between Catholic, between Fordham universities, and Loudonville Sienna college. And I said, this would be a Catholic college for the brothers. Eventually, it was the intention, eventually to open it to outsiders. Well, he got very interested in this work. He came down to make two or three visits and inspections and all kind of suggestions. But one time when he came, I surprised him and I surprised Dr. Day Ferrari, I invited Dr. Day Ferrari to come for a visit, I invited Dr.- But I didn't tell him that they were gonna meet. They hadn't met in a long time, they met, they got very much interested and I believe that they adopted the idea of the brothers having their own college and CU was back in the south. We had our affiliation with CU and Dr. Jay Hillis Miller went to bat with us with the powers. This, these transactions went on from 1943 to 1946.

Anthony Cernera (00:25:16):

And then in 1946, what happened?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:25:19):

In 1946, the board of trustees of the university of the state of New York approved Marist College and sent us what they call a temporary charter, a

temporary charter. And that kind of gave me a blow, a temporary charter? I says, we want the real thing. He said, well, everybody goes through the same system. You have the charter. It was dated September 20th, 1946. I remember the date because I sent a telegram- we had a convocation in Rome at that time of brothers from all over the world, 167 brothers from all over the world. And they were studying, you know, the growth of the order and so on. I sent a telegram to the new general, Marist College has its approval as a college, normal training school, as a college. And they, they all celebrated and they all cheered. And the news went out worldwide from our center in France to the people. But I get back to Dr. Miller and I said, hey, why the temporary- he said, this is normal. He said, you have five years in which to qualify for a permanent charter. And in the recommendations which they had about additional staff, lay staff, bringing in outsiders and so on... board of trustees, everything was there. We started at once to implement, and we got the permanent charter. Now, there is a point that I contest here. I may be wrong and I think somebody should look in on it. We received the information that the board of trustees or the University of State of New York had approved Marist College permanent charter on December 15th, 1950. In other words, we didn't need the five years, they approved us then. And several times now I've seen that the date is December 19th. It could very well be that the secretarial work of the university of the state of New York sent us a document on the 19th, but we were approved. I would like that to be traced. On December 15th is when we got the notification after that, after their session of that meeting, Dr. Miller called me to tell me at once that's how close we were. So that is a little point to be clarified. I believe.

Anthony Cernera (00:28:03):

Was it incorporated by the Board of Regents as Marion college or Marist College?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:28:08):

As Marion college. We had decided we had, we had bantered back and forth. There were Marist fathers out of college in Washington DC. There was a couple of Marist College. There was also a Marion college out in west forger and the brothers were asked to vote and they voted on Marion College because they really went through St. Anne's Hermitage and where Marist brothers, St. Anne's was the day when we renewed our vows on July 26th, every brother for years. So Mary and Anne was Marion College. So it was a blend of the two names. And this is how we were approved originally. It was after I left that Paul Stokes, to his memory I say it, and a hard worker dedicated the college that he, they pushed to change the Marist College. At the time, they changed the college colors, they were blue and gold to red and white, and they changed the mascot to the Fox, the Red Fox. See that was all changed at that time. And the request for the name change was approved very easily.

Anthony Cernera (00:29:29):

Paul, on May 23rd, 11 days from now, the college will hold its 41st commencement and over 700 men and women will walk across the the stage and receive their degree from the president of the college. Tell us about the first commencement.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:29:47):

You won't believe it. We graduated brothers. They were all brothers of course, it was only later we had agreed the first class of lay people consisted of 10, then 26 and just grew. But the brothers, the first graduating class naturally had to be after the date of the charter. Even though the charter was only a temporary charter, we were authorized to grant degrees to have the college course. The charter, I saw some place that we got the college approved in order to take lay people. Well, that would be wrong. We just asked to get the college approved as a college for brothers. Eventually we were to take people, but we, the charter authorized us at once to grant degrees to the brothers. We already had the permission to extend it to grow. The first graduating class was a class of four brothers and it was held during the summer. They had finished their courses during the summer. We had no parchment, we had no diplomas. We were having the diplomas engraved, and we had just received the approval. We had the diplomas, a quantity engrave. They were not ready yet. We had a ceremony out, next to Greystone, where there are a lot of trees. There's that little Japanese maple tree that we stole from our property in these sopas to plant there. I planted it when it was about one foot high, and it's our beautiful, we used to have a stone table and benches that brother Nilus made. We used to have our Sunday evening suppers out there, or we had the graduation class out there. We had the graduation there and we cheered these four brothers who had completed their work. And we had a supper in their, we had a supper in their honor. They were assigned that same night. They were told where they would go out teaching and they would be sent their diplomas in the various communities where they were and they were promised to have another celebration locally with the brothers where they went. But I felt very badly that we couldn't do anything more for them, but I had arranged that right after the supper, this was about five or six, five o'clock. I put the four of them in the station wagon that we had with me. And I drove them to Torrington in Connecticut. And we went there for a nice ride and they were having a lot of fun talking about their assignments and it was okay for them to be alone with me. And we went out for banana splits and we had a drink and we came back and that was it. That was the first graduating class and these four brothers, and for the record, I mentioned their name Brother Bernard Frederick Toey. See the alphabetical order went by your brother's name in those days. Brother Christopher Emerol Connelly, Brother John Benedict Normande. These three left the brotherhood after Brother Patrick Eugene McGee. Pat McGee was the hose diploma number four and the celebration of our centenary of work in America, the college very graciously awarded Brother Patrick McGee, an honorary doctor.

Anthony Cernera (00:33:48):

Yes, I remember that.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:33:49):

He has been an exceptional person, educated, dedicated to all the schools and the hard work and he's been the counselor, he's been the secretary of the provincial councils for years.

Anthony Cernera (00:34:02):

And was a director of Mount St. Michael when I was a student there so Brother Patrick and I go back a long way together. I wanna move up in history a little bit. The permanent charter happened in 1950. And you had in the back of your mind even years before that, the idea of eventually bringing lay students to the college. I think the gentleman to your left played a key role in helping the college to get ready to deal with the question of bringing lay students in. Jack, tell us about your first involvement with Marist College.

Jack Gartland (00:34:35):

Well, I can remember reading in the papers that local parents were agitating the Brothers up there to take some lay students in and Brother Paul here gave a couple press releases saying that eventually they probably would. The Brother Paul and I were the only two men on the board of trustees of the St. Frans hospital school of nursing, and are either four or five women on that board. And I can remember, I think it was in the spring of '56, although I'm not sure if it was spring or fall, but we were at a meeting up here at the hospital and these women were talking like mad for a long, long time once things had nothing to do with the school nursing, you know? And so I turned to Paul because we were sitting next to each other and I said, you know, these women are cutting into my cocktail hour. I said, I think we better get out of here. So he says, I'll go with you. So we excuse ourselves. And, and he said to me, come on over to my quarters. He lived in Adrian at that time. Do you remember? He's gone over there. He said, I'll buy you a drink. I said, good. So I'm over with him and we had a scotch and water or something like that. And during the course of our conversation, he talked about bringing lay students in and he said that there were no lay trustees on the on the board of trustees at that time, they were all brothers. And he said, I'd like to have some lay participation, give me some advice on how to handle lay students. I wonder if you would help me get together a group of men that would help me out. Remember that Paul? So we got fellas like I remember Jack Muvley was a lawyer here in town and Dick Small across the street was president of Western printing and we got George well from Millbrook and Nate rifle who was a local businessman. He was head of an electric supply company and a great friend of Nilus' at the time. And we got Kim Dwyer who was a banker up in Kingston. I know maybe I missed some, but we got them together and had a meeting. And I can remember Paul sat next to me, I sat next to him, and he turned to me and he said, Jack, well, you should have a chairman. And I said, yes. And I turned to Nate Reifer and I said, you make a good chairman. He said, oh no, no, I don't wanna do that. And we're all

around a room and finally it came back to me. So Paul says, you're it. So I was chairman of his lay advisory board. I think we called it or something like that. And we start making plans for the admission of some lay students. And it was quite interesting. Paul Stokes at that time was here. And I think he was made Dean of discipline or something.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:37:33):

Dean of discipline. That's right.

Jack Gartland (00:37:34):

And he was scared of death of lay students. He's like I can handle the brothers, but I don't know what I can do about these lay students because they were gonna come in cars, you know, and everything like that. And he didn't know there were not any parking lots up here and he didn't know quite how he was going to handle it but gee I miss Paul, you know but the Nilus was very active at that time. Nilus Donnelley. That's who the Donnelley hall's named after. Well Nilus went around town and he picked up anything he possibly could. Bulldozers, cranes, anything that he could use and building. And previous to that, while they were putting buildings up here, the brothers themselves did a lot of the physical work. And during the summertime, the brothers from all over, probably the novices anyway. Roy asked to come here and pitch in, on building. And I always remember knowing that the help was not expert contract expert builders and all. If a wall would call for say 12 inches or 18 inches, he made it 36 inches wide. In the Fontaine building as an example where the library is now, that used to be the residence for the brothers. The dining room was there and everything and when later on it was to be converted into the library, the contractor had the job, he had to dig, put new doors in, new windows and he had to dig through some of these walls. And one day he said to me, I don't understand how the heck these things were built. He says, here's a nonbearing wall and it's three feet thick. Of course, concrete was cheap in those days, you know? And they used a lot of concrete in those buildings. So one time he asked Nilus about it and he said, well, we always wanted to make sure that it would be substantial and the building would stand there for a while because he said, none of these brothers were experts at Masons or carpenters and like that. But they certainly did a lot of work around here. And in any event, finally, that was in 1956. And I've forgotten whether '56 or '57 that the first lay students came and I do remember that Paul had the idea of only admitting 20 at a time. And I think the first time he had like a hundred applications for 20 positions in the college and it kept growing like that and it just never stopped. And our lay advisory board was in existence and we met, oh gosh at Paul call, but we met practically every month for maybe 10 years or something like that. I do remember one interesting thing. Shortly after that, one day, Paul called me up and he said, can you come up for lunch? And I said, sure. He said, I want you to meet a young brother. He said, he's just completing his work for a PhD in mathematics, out at New York University. And he said, I'd like to have you meet him. His name is brother Linus Richard and I come up to meet him and just before that Paul said to me,

he said, he's a nice young man and you're gonna like him. And we just selected him to be the new president of the college because I'm gonna leave here and I'm gonna go to Rome. He said, I'm gonna be one of the generals of the order in Rome. But he said, don't tell anybody, because it isn't public yet. Besides that, don't congratulate Linus Richard because he said he doesn't know anything about it yet, I haven't even talked to him about it yet. So I sat there during the whole lunch and I kept looking at this young man and I kept saying, gee, he looks pretty good. I couldn't dare. I didn't say a word. You know, I didn't dare say a word because I'm afraid that I'd say, gee, congratulations, you know, or something and never had that before. That's right.

Anthony Cernera (00:41:57):

Well maybe you could recount a little bit for us. What happened? How did you get called to Rome and did that come as a surprise when that happened?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:42:04):

Completely by surprise, completely. But you see, I'd like to pay tribute before I go into this now. Glad to do so gladly. When the board of trustees, when the board of regents gave us some advice and suggestions and parameters to follow, it was the, to bring in the board of trustees, which were Jack, we did, it was to put up more buildings. It was to bring in lay teachers, bring in lay teachers. And at that time we needed help. I needed professional help. So we hired Dr. Schroeder and then we got people to come like George Summers, who's still here, he came to teach part-time from Manhattan, with Joe Morrano came also at that time. And we had a number who we got some of our brothers with their doctorate. As soon as a Brother got a doctorate, he'd be brought up here. And I have to say that when there's a question of getting brothers up here, number from any community or any school, when the college in this infancy asked for these people, I was never refused. Any money that I asked, we got it. There was never any question of what we're going to do, how we're going to do it. They had complete confidence in Nilus' work and Nilus and I worked together. And you know, I sit here, and as the, as the first president, which I was, but the credit is not mine. The credit is teamwork. Family work. As a matter of fact, if you look carefully at the archives, you're gonna find out that my name is not down as president. And in the first years when we first got this charter, I was the master of scholastics. That was my title then. I organized the college and so on. But the provincial and his five counselors were the board of trustees. So for then under place on default for the name of the president of the college, we put the provincials name. And board of trustees, the others. And the provincial change every three years. Well, there was a new name there, a new name there. I kept sending these reports in, but they never even came here. They were never here. They, they had nothing to do with it, you know? I see. So it might lead to confusion, you know, to say, well, we have a lot of names of the first presidents and they might mention brother Linus William that he's still living. But I mean, he was provincial, but he endorsed everything I did. And brother Lewis Omer the same thing, and brother Kirin, Thomas came after it. But I really was the

first president and I mean in de facto but not on the list, not on the program. And nobody cared who was president or who did what. Everybody pitched in together, you know? And I had tremendous endorsement to help from every body.

Anthony Cernera (00:45:21):

In that regard, I do remember one time you asked me to come up here because all the trustees, they were all in New York City and they were gonna come and look at Marist and the whole group came here and you took him to lunch down to Nelson house, the old Nelson house down there. But there was one little short brother who was only like, I bet he wasn't even five feet tall. Was he the treasurer or something at that time?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:45:46):

Yes. Brother Mary Andrew. It was brother Mary Andrew.

Anthony Cernera (00:45:49):

All he wanted to talk about were the finances.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:45:50):

He was in charge of the finances.

Anthony Cernera (00:45:54):

He was scared. He was scared of the college. He really was, that it was gonna flop. Yeah. And I remember we all we went to lunch down in Nelson house. That was all he talked about was what would happen if this, you know.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:46:07):

But he did his homework. He got the plans and what we wanted. He went to see manufacturers' trust with his buddies there and then Meryl Lynch and he checked everything out thoroughly. And then he gave me the go ahead sign. I never was refused anything, you know? And you know, you could, you could start out a fantastic thing like this and be blocked right and left. And with Nilus for example, he was so busy that I'd see him rarely. But when I needed to see Nilus, I'd put a note at his door, if he needed something for me, put a note on my door and there was understood. At once we would go out to dinner, we'd go up to Hyde park, and we'd have dinner, we'd talk over all the problems, all the plans forthcoming and that's how we operate.

Anthony Cernera (00:46:56):

Now what was Nilus' role or position?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:46:58):

Nilus came here as a teacher of physics, but he had just put on this massive gymnasium in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the brothers put up the gymnasium in Lawrence, Massachusetts on their own. Now this is 160 feet, 163 feet square. And it's a three story building, the gymnasium and classes all the way around on the second floor. It is the largest hall in the whole city of Lawrence and which is used for big political rallies, for doctors conventions. And to this day, and this is built, as Jack said, cement three feet thick, solid. Nilus had just finished there. So we got him over here, because I knew the university asked for new buildings and with Nilus there, he was teaching here in the beginning and planning the buildings and working. And after one year I said, well, this is ridiculous. We got somebody else to take his teaching and he concentrated on the construction.

Dennis Murray (00:48:05):

So he became director of construction for the college?

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:48:08):

Yes.

Anthony Cerneria (00:48:09):

And tell us something. Jack alluded to this fact of a lot of the younger brothers helping in the building project. Is that what happened? Summers, the brothers came back and...

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:48:18):

A project cannot go on just during the summers, you see. So Nilus would plan the project and I told you, I had, I always had at least a hundred brothers. One year I had 146. I never had less than a hundred. During the 15 years that I was master of scholastics and president of the college. Well Nilus needed a group of 15 or 20. So I got them in together, other brothers. And I said, now we need help to work physical hard work. You're all going to be assigned a week, no or 10 days, or whatever it was. During that time classes are going on. You are missing classes. Make sure that your buddies take the notes for you. You will be held responsible for everything that's going on in the classes. You won't be there, but you'll be held responsible. The term papers and everything. Well, I said together, we will get these buildings put up, but we, we will manage. The brothers accepted that. They, I could have had a riot. They accepted that. Nilus would take his 10 men and they worked for him. From eight in the morning until five at night and we've come in and wash and shave, clean up, and shower, and then we'd have our prayers and dinner and so on. And then they'd about what they did and the brothers, they'd be filling in. They'd stay up late to get some of their studies in, but the next 10 days would be another group. So Nilus had people going continuously. So each brother had two or three times during the year when he had to lose a week, 10 days of his studies, and continue. During the holiday period, Easter holidays and Christmas holidays, everybody would

pitch in. During the summer holidays, we'd get some of our brothers from the various schools and we'd bring in 50 to 60, sometimes 75 brothers in the old Bishop with little brother, Eddie Mike as their director, Brother Peter Giniti, God rest his soul, he just passed away. He was the cook for every summer for these men. Where did Brother Scotty fit in on that? Brother Scotty, he was, he came in from Scotland and he was teaching in the school. He'd come in to work and he helped Nilus with the equipment. And Brother Gus Landry, he would like clerk of the works when Nilus couldn't be there, Gus knew what the project had to be done and the brothers worked at. And they loved to come for the summer. It was a way from teaching. The brothers who were not finished with their degrees would continue their Summer work. But since the brothers were graduating from here and those who graduated from here went on to get graduate work, but they were happy to come back here. See when you put up a house and it's your own, you're gonna take care of it. If you're living in a rented house, well, somebody else's headache. But the brothers come to this campus and that's why we have to be very sensitive to tradition and I appreciate what goes on here, this concern. Dennis' opening word heritage. And they're not many colleges that are this concerned about heritage, but we have to be sensitive to this. The brothers started this and they put their blood, sweat, and tears and it's the hard work. And they loved it and they loved, they love to come back. You know, and psychologically, when we could not continue, we couldn't afford to continue because we didn't have the contacts with the foundation. We needed to pass this on to the lay board of trustees. And it was passed on at very reasonable terms to the board of trustees and no longer the brothers ownership. This grasped the brothers to the core. Many did not understand. Why are we giving up? Because they had worked so hard. And we were in a very difficult position, the superiors, where you try to explain to them that we're not giving up. Our work is continuing, it's carried on because we cannot physically do. See, we don't have anymore a hundred brothers coming in for studies and so on. It's a new year and we have to adapt. They realize it. And last summer when these 350 brothers came here to spend us four day convention here, and they brought them all together, it brought them back to roots. This, this did more to smooth, that difficult feeling than anything else because they saw what the college is all about, where it's moving, the direction it's moving. They were so well treated. They were so proud of everything because there were a few things that happened that had to happen that were a bit sad. For example, where we had 48, 47 brothers and one priest buried in that little cemetery. And one day we opened a new cemetery in Esopus. But these were the founding brothers. And even some of the men who are in a college teaching today who were here as brothers. They know that the last brother to be buried in that cemetery is brother George Francis, head of the history department who got his degree at Fordham and traveled back and forth to continue. And he was a fantastic, his name was George Burns from Highland, the last brother, the first brother to be buried from our lady theater with chapel in 1953. The chapel was dedicated for December 8th, 1953 to start the Marion year. It was in October, their brother, but here was a man who had driven his life here to this place. And the brothers remembered

him very recent besides all the old founders. And the cemetery was, the tombstones were just closed in, and the wall, which was a four foot, four and a half foot wall, was filled in with sand and all around the whole thing was bulldozed and where that Memorial stone is, is about the site, but it was a much bigger site naturally. Well, the brothers felt that that should not have been done. You know, it wasn't done. And it was done in a hurry and it was, there was a lack of communication. It was only after that, they found out things. So there was a lot of hurt in all this, but time and the relation with the chap, with the college now, as it healed a lot of wounds.

Anthony Cernera (00:55:25):

Certainly this summer, there was a real sense during that convocation of reaffirmation of our heritage in roots and of the brothers vital role of the college.

Brother Paul Ambrose (00:55:35):

I cannot command a college and Dennis, particularly enough because he went all out and it was tremendous. The brothers then, and there was a tremendous surge all over the province, not just all, when they went back, it changed the complexity of everything, the relationship. And I have always stood by this college. I cannot deny that it has been the work of God from the beginning, you know, using people, using instruments, but there were many miracles performed, you know?

Anthony Cernera (00:56:12):

Jack I'd like to go back to that for a moment. In 1956, there were no paychecks attached to being on the lay advisory board. And through the last 31 years there hasn't been any paychecks for you. Why have you stayed as actively involved in Marist college? What was it that in that early conversation with brother Paul, that interested you in the project of this college, but has kept you involved for over 30 years?

Jack Gartland (00:56:38):

When I first met Paul, I had tremendous admiration for him, not just as an individual, also what he was accomplishing, and he was doing it in such a nice and smooth way, and he was helping the community here because his concept when it was opened up to lay students and everything was really gonna help the whole community here in Poughkeepsie. And of course I was always very community minded and so was my father ahead of me. We were born and raised in Poughkeepsie. So with my father and like that, we appreciated what he was trying to do just for the community here. And I think that's one of the main reasons why I have kept my interest in Marist College is that everything they've done up here. Going back to that period, you know, from '56 on, we'll say for a period of almost 10 years, the transition of changing this from a almost like a religious affiliated college, to like a non-sectarian college was very hard on the

brothers. And just as Paul was mentioning, a lot of the brothers didn't like that. In fact, I often was suspicious that at one time we had inquiries after that from the curator in the Vatican and why the Marist Brothers gave up their college in America almost as if it was a mortal sin. And I collected a lot of the data together as the attorney for the college and I sent it to Paul and Paul took it to your mother house. I presume to the curator explaining what went on here in America and why the transition went from a religious college, just teaching brothers into a full fledged lay college in which the brothers could still go to, but I mean, it was primarily a lay college. And I think one of the impetus that helped that along was the Bundy money that came in the state of New York which was a, back in the mid sixties where money was granted to private colleges, for giving a degree, got X number of dollars for each degree that was conferred on a graduate and X number of dollars for graduate degree and like that. So that in the mid sixties, the brothers themselves decided that the best thing to do was to really change it over into a, with a labor board of trustees, into a non-sectarian college. At that point I think Harold Spencer was the first lay trustee that was put on the board and brother Linus Richard later took the Linus Richard Foy, which was his family name, was the president at that time. And gradually they added more and more lay people and it became a predominantly lay board, although it was always the intention and has always been, and it is true, we always have several brothers on that board. There's always four or five or something like that. And the fact that we made a policy statement, just set the time of the transition between Linus Foy and Dennis Murray on the structure of the board so there would always be four or five representatives from the Marist brothers on our board of trustees. In fact after that transition occurred the Board of Regents, no, I think rather than that, but at the time that the first thought was building dormitories here in the college, many of the students, lay students, that came here, came from various Marist high schools in Long Island and New York city and New Jersey and they had no place to live. So the college had to start finding places to live and they run it in a number of rooms in the Nelson house, in a number of rooms in all Kings court, on Ken street in Poughkeepsie. And I can't but laugh, I remember Paul Stoke's still Dean of discipline and he used to come down to make a bed check at night. And he had some surprises, you know, and gosh, he used to get all excited about it. Students will be missing from the rooms and things like that. And he was an all time disciplinarian. And he'd call me up as I was turning on and he'd say, "hey, what should I do?" He says, "so and so wasn't in his room and I, don't where he is. His parents will be after me." And so I said, wait a while and check it in the morning and see if he comes in, of course the morning he'd be back. So they thought the only way they could have real control of these students was to build a dormitory. At that time, United States government set up a dormitory authority and money could be borrowed at 3%. So we started with Sheahan, was the first one, then Leo became the second one. Nilus Donelley was given charge of hiring the architect and arranging everything on Sheahan. He hired an architect from Middletown to get his ideas and he didn't like him. So he fired him. And later on he started a lawsuit against the college, which we defended

and succeeded because he really hadn't done any work on it. And then he hired another architect whose name I won't mention. And Nilus had a conflict with him. He didn't like what he was doing. But he had to go through with it because he'd been certified to the United States, dormitory authority and they had approved him. So in fact that man is not an architect anymore. He left the business and went into something else. But we finally got Sheahan up, there were all sorts of modifications that Nilus put into it, which he thought was for the better, which I think it was myself. It was probably at that time I got interested in the building the grounds of the cops, really, because Nilus used to call me all the time and I'd go over and help me to say, if I change this now will they renew on the money coming in. I had to call somebody in Washington and say, "hey, we wanna put a change in it." And the man that we kept calling had an Irish name, I've forgotten it in Washington. And finally he said to me, "hey, go on and get the building finished. We don't care about what you do with it." And so we finally, got Sheahan finished. That was the first dormitory. I've forgotten how many it holds over there, but if it was holding a hundred, we had 300 who wanted rooms on campus. So immediately we went to work on Leo. That dormitory was designed by Paul Kanen. In fact, Paul Kanen the architect, who was a college architect for a long time. And I understand now Paul's living over in Spain. I don't know whether he's in semi-retirement or what, but in any event, Paul Kanen got an award from the architectural society for the design of Leo dormitory hall. Because there's a lot of Nilus in that too. because Paul Kanen was that type of an architect that if you had ideas and they were good, he'd change his plans for it. Paul was very receptive to any change of plans that might come along and Nilus had always had suggestions and ideas to change things. So that was put up as a second dormitory. Well, at that time, we had to convey property from the Marist brothers who owned the whole campus here to the Marist college, which was an educational corporation by charter from the Board of Regents to State of New York. So as attorney, I was given a job of preparing necessary deeds for the brothers to convey it to the college. And we had to have, at that time, if my memory was correct, show to the dormitory authority that they had the ability to pay this loan because it was theoretically supposed to be self-sustaining, but then there had to be reserves set up and I think today the college maintains a trust fund down in the Dutchess bank which is for repairs and restoration and improvements and like that to the dormitories, which are under loan from the United States dormitory authority. After that, it was still a demand for more as the college kept growing because all of a sudden we were growing at a very rapid rate and by mid 1960s, only like 10 years in existence, we had gone to like 1600 students or something like that. And of which eight or 900 wanted to be on campus. And they had facilities for like for 250 or 300. A little sideline in relation to that, the old legal descriptions of this land was always in the old days, any farm was described like west by the Hudson river, north by Smith east by route nine or Albany post road it was a always used to be called in south by waterworks route or something like that. Well, waterworks road was put in by the city, like in 1870 to the old filtering beds and the intake from the Hudson river they had for the water system for the

whole city of Poughkeepsie. Well, the deeds had committed all people and stayed there for several generations, like in McPherson farm and later the Beck farm, he never mentioned anything about waterworks road so there was no way of knowing exactly what the descriptions were, whether they were good or the bad and the college really couldn't afford. And the brothers couldn't afford to have a survey made because that was a lot of money to make a survey in those days. So what we did, we had one of the brother historians who was, I think it was brother Adrian. Well, I'm not, I don't remember really, that gave me the old deed to draw for the Southern side of the campus. We had to certify the college owned it, and I had to certify it personally to the United States dormitory authority and which we did. So I just used the description he gave me and we did it that way. Later on the New York state dormitory authority was contacted and they have a different legal procedure. They actually own the land upon which any building is built. So if they want to put up Champagnat Hall, the the next dormitory was gonna house around, I don't know, three, four hundred. So we certified that to a title company that, that land was owned by the college and we gave that section of it to the New York state dormitory authority. A very interesting thing is that a history student here at the college, a history major, decided for his senior thesis to write the history of the college, the physical history of the college and everything. So after he did that, he came down to see me one day and he said, you know Mr. Gartland, he said, I'm a little puzzled by the description that was used in conveying the main campus from the Marist brothers to the Marist college. And he said, I went way, way back into the 18th century. And he says, I think the description that property is what's north of Water works road, not what is south of it. So with that, I dug the whole thing out and I researched it myself personally and found out it was true. But just at that, the brothers at that time had built Greg Lee and Bernard, and they owned that, the soupus province owned that on the north side of water works road. They wanted to convey that to the college because the college had guaranteed the mortgage that they put on there. So I said, fine. So I cut out the other description that they had been deeded to the Marist brothers, like in 19 four or sometime like that, which actually, the one I used then was, I let the other one go. That was north of it. And I used the one that was south of water works road. So that corrected the mistake I had made about eight or nine years earlier. So that history student was correct in discovering the mistake. So we had to correct it and then that okayed everything that we had certified to the United States dormitory authority and to the New York state dormitory authority.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:10:34):

Had it not been for the lay board, the brothers could not have had funds from these different government authorities because of the separation of church and state and so on. But when the brothers signed over to the board of trustees, the reason for the little flack or the little trouble that they had was any religious order like ours is considered working for the church, that we belong to the church, and anything we have belongs to the Catholic church. And a brother, in

signing this over, was accused of alienation of church property without permission. So this was... We had failed to clear in Rome before, you know...

Anthony Cerneria (01:11:29):

Well, I'm very familiar with alienation of church property, you know, and we've bought Eden terrace. We had to wait to get an approval from Rome to buy the house from the Marist brothers side.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:11:37):

This is what it is. There was no problem with the college, except that they had done it without clearing it first and that's where the flag was.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:11:45):

Jack. You've been involved in every major building project on this campus now for more than a generation. What concepts have motivated you, what ideas have you had behind that driving impetus to build new buildings, develop renovate beautify the campus?

Jack Gartland (01:12:05):

Well, I think going back, the dormitory authorities were, I mean, the dormitories that were built rather, were forced on us by the students wanting a place to live. So that was easy enough to do. When McCann foundation was started in 1969, and we started to do projects for that, like building the golf course in the city, and rebuilding St. Mary's church, putting McKeean ice arena in with the civic center, downtown Poughkeepsie. One of the next concepts that we had, or for a project to do, was an indoor swimming pool that would be available to the community. Well Linus Foy and I sat down many times and discussed the future of Marist college.

Jack Gartland (01:13:07):

And one of the ideas that we had was that, and of course we had lady students at that time, or girl students, but I I wanna go back on that because that was an interesting concept we had or time that we had at debating that one over. But one of the concepts that Linus and I came up with was that in order to attract students, we had to have good recreational facilities here. Leonidoff field as an example, was built. That concept, we purchased the land from New York state, our New York central railroad, and then filled it in by waste material that New York state had when they built the north/south arterial in the city of Poughkeepsie. In that whole practice field south of there was all filled in and built on that seven acres that we purchased from New York central railroad and the field we got and then covered up, we put drains in there, we did everything possible in order to try and make that facility available with softball diamonds in the practice field and different things like that. That wasn't enough, we had to have indoor facilities and the old gym, which is now Marion hall, was really not sufficient to take care of the increase in students that were coming in here. So

the idea was there ought be a field house. That was Linus' idea. And my idea was that we needed a swimming pool, so, and available for the community. So we combined the two together, and McCann then agreed to finance a lot of it, some was financed by the college who a mortgage, which had been paid off in the meantime, to make that available for the students in a multipurpose type of building, an auditorium that would be used for basketball and track and convocations and meetings, graduations, and like that. Along with the swimming pool that we made available so there could be changeover to metric system which is 25 yards and 25 meters. So we have a moveable bulkhead to go back and forth. And at that time we built it, which is just 10 years ago, it opened up in I think it was April, 1976. Everybody here in America was gun-ho about the metric system. It seems a form by wayside too many times, but that's why we have a moveable bulkhead and that was conceived by Linus and myself when we were sitting down and trying to decide on this. And we thought that was easiest way to do it, we contacted Paddock pool company and they researched it out and they came up with this idea of a movable bulkhead and it could be moved back and forth. And oddly enough, after that, I think Fordham university copied that and several other colleges and eastbuilt pools copied that. In any event, I think it's proven true that in having that recreational facility, indoor facility, and the usage that it gets, what I haven't heard recently, but I remember four or five years ago, they said there was more than a half a million people, or, you know, using our time. A lot of repeats nationalizing, but the students use it to at least a half a million per year. In any event, we thought that would be the hub of helping to increase enrollment. And I think it has because the enrollment has certainly increased every single year and I think one of the sales things is that... the other idea also to help enrollment, the concept of students going to college today is different from when I went, when everybody was in a dormitory, because I went to a Jesuit college and they had a prefect there and you had to be in at a certain hour and in bed at a certain time and things like that, but the dormitory life has changed and students like something a little bit different. That was one concept we had, but also, in the event if enrollment ever went down, we thought places like townhouses, as an example, would then become available that the college could lease out to faculty or to the public or some other way. And, but it's proven to be very attractive for students to live that way. They seem to enjoy living in townhouse style, rather the old dormitory style and the same concept we had in relation to the apartments and the north end of the campus. That idea was the same, except we made it into apartments rather than townhouses but those type of apartments up there could be converted to townhouses if needed. But again, was the same idea. Also, the athletic fields that are built on the west of the apartments towards the river, that was very rough land down there. In fact, the McCann foundation had spent over a million dollars in purchasing that and fixing it up and getting it ready, and the concept there was to help the female students have an outdoor recreational facility, which they didn't have because the male students were dominating Leonidoff Field and the practice field down there and it was very little spot for the female

students so the concept was we'll have it available there and they can spread it out so that the female students can have.

Anthony Cerneria (01:19:11):

You certainly were a driving force in those trustee discussions about the need for athletic facilities, for women on the campus. From what I understand, you were deeply immersed in those discussions about women coming to Marist college. So maybe you could take us back to the late 1960s when that issue was being debated, whether this all male college should allow women students to come.

Jack Gartland (01:19:33):

Certainly the original concept Paul had was an all male college.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:19:36):

That's right.

Jack Gartland (01:19:36):

And all the, we had commuter students. And originally I think it was all to be, only to be commuter students. And then with all the students that wanted to come here and live on campus, we had to go into dormitories and the brothers, while they were in charge of it, never had any idea of having any female students here. But when our, when the change in transition came to transfer the college over with a lay board of trustees or predominantly a lay board, Dr. John Schroeder, who was in charge of the night school at the college here, came to the advisory board first that was still in existence and said he wanted to take in some female students. So if a lot of debate, the idea was okay, we'll take him in for an evening, but not in a daytime. So they were first allowed into taking night classes and the enrollment of female students started to increase rapidly, very rapidly at night. So then the transition period took place. So then the regular board of trustees had the, had it. Should they allow female students in the day school? In hindsight, I think I was wrong, because I was one of those who thought, no it should remain an all male college because I went to an all male college and I sort of enjoyed it. And I had a couple of my daughters went to an all female college and a couple of my sons went to an all male college, like Holy Cross, Fairfield, and like that. But then I began to see the Jesuits was allowing most of their colleges to go co-ed and I was very close to a lot of Jesuits and I spoke to a lot of them and in relation to it. And I they thought that for the future survival of a private college, they had to go co-ed. And if it didn't, they didn't think the either all female or all male could last very long as a private institution, because the expense of it was going up and the scholarships and all should be opened up to females as well as males and all.

Jack Gartland (01:22:16):

So after, I don't know how long we'd debated it, but it was a long time, maybe I'd say six months, nine months, something like that. And finally we've said, we took a vote, the vote was pretty close, but the, to a lot of the co-ed went out. And so finally we open the doors then to female students. And I think now it's more than 50% female.

Anthony Cernera (01:22:38):

51%.

Jack Gartland (01:22:38):

51% in the college here.

Anthony Cernera (01:22:41):

One quarter of our alumni association are women so it's been a dramatic change.

Jack Gartland (01:22:47):

Well, I don't think we regretted it under any circumstance. In fact, I think it's been a very big plus, but the transition during that time is always debatable. And I suppose it's because of tradition really that causes that. I know a lot of the feminists would criticize all the males who were not a hundred percent in favor of it or something like that. But I think the beauty of it is that we've been able to accept it and then try to change our physical plan and make it available so that the female student has just as much rights and opportunities as the male student. And I think that is a real plus for the college and particularly for increase enrollment

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:23:41):

When you refer to the all male and all female, I remember the only two colleges in Poughkeepsie at the time were Vassar and Marist. So when we had meetings in Albany in any academic procession, I was always booked to walk along with the president of Vassar college.

Anthony Cernera (01:24:01):

Well, listen, let me, let's take a broad look back. I'm sure there's been a lot of serious moments in the last 40 years of this institution, but there's probably been some funny moments along the way. You've got a funny story to tell us Paul, from the early days, and Jack, I'll ask you to maybe recount a funny incident or two along the way. Anything that kind of sticks out there as a time that really made you chuckle and laugh?

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:24:27):

Well this is not a chuckle, but it's an admiration. And I'm happy to say this because of the nature in which the college developed. You see, it started as, and I'm very proud of this incident. And I'm referring to Dr. Schroder, Dr. Schroeder

was the first layman employed here full-time and he's a wonderful person. He was head of the English department at Arlington high school.

Jack Gartland (01:25:05):

I thought it was Oakwood school.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:25:07):

No.

Jack Gartland (01:25:07):

He was a Quaker wasn't he?

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:25:08):

He is a Quaker but he was teaching head of English department at Arlington high school. And he, I checked back his credentials. He had a doctorate in education and a doctorate in English. I went to see the man and I asked him, I explained to him what we're going to do. We're getting in on a ground floor was starting a young college and you know, when Albany told me to get lay board of trustees, I went to you and they said, well, they said, you need some lay teachers. Well, I mean, doctors, I got some of the brothers, but I needed more. So I went to see Dr. Schroder, and I said, you have two degrees that I'm interested in. I explained that we're starting and he said, "sir, I would be very, very much interested in this, getting in on the ground floor of a young college." I said, "but there are a few drawbacks." I said, "I cannot pay you the salary that you're getting now." He was ahead of the department, the English department. I said, "this is what I'm able to afford to give to you now but the college will grow and the salary will grow and everything will grow with time." He said, "well, if it's a young college just starting out, I would very much like to be associated with it and it's not a matter of salary." I said, "well, I appreciate that because then it means it's a matter of dedication." He said, "yes" and everything was wonderful. He had agreed to come and we drew up the contract and one day we were waiting for him to finalize the contract, he had the copy. We were down in what is now the library that is the brother's dining room. And one of the brothers told me, brother master, there's a gentleman out there waiting, calling and would like to see you. So I came up to where the chapel is and it was Dr. Schroder and the other contract. He said, "brother, I'm ready to sign this. But he said, "I have some obligation to fulfill." I said, "what's the matter doctor is the contract unsatisfactory?" "Oh, no, very, very satisfactory." But he said, "there's something that bothers me that I must tell you. I said, "well, what is it?" He said, "I look forward to coming here. I know it's a Catholic college. I know it's all brothers." But he says, "I don't know if you know that I am not a Catholic." I said, "it never entered into my mind." I said, "I know we're hiring you for your doctorate doctor, not for your religion." He said, "I am a Quaker." I said, "doctor, answer me one question." "Would you say that you're a good Quaker?" He said, "well, I try to be." I said, "that's all that matters." So we hired him and

from that moment on, we never questioned a person's religion in what started it out as an all religious college. We never question the person's religion, you know, but his qualifications. And I think that I give credit to Dr. Schroder willing to come to accept a lesser salary to get in on the ground floor. That man has worked very hard for the college. Jack said of the night school, eating school, he was awarded an honorary degree, he's retired and I'd like to say that I keep in touch with him. He lives in Venice, Florida in the winters and back up here in pleasant valley in the summer. And in the winter, I go to Florida and I visit him, stay over, and he would've come, but he's an author. He would've come to our convocation. I invited him for June 6th, but he cannot travel too much because of his legs, but he is a great person.

Anthony Cernera (01:29:18):

In 1967, was the first presidential award that was given to anybody at a breakfast like they have every year. And Dr. John Schroeder and myself were the first recipients of that. I remember that very well. And it came as a surprise to both of us. I was very friendly with John Schroeder. And we went to that breakfast that morning. The two of us were sitting there together, and we were kidding about some of the things that were happening on campus here and at the college and all. And we weren't paying any attention to what was going on. And all of a sudden I hear his name called out and I said, Hey, John, I said, they just called your name out like that. And he looked up, you know, he wasn't paying any attention and Linus Foy's sitting up here and he's got a scowel on. He had already asked Dr. Schroeder to come up for his award. And we were just talking, you know, wasn't paying any attention. So, because I always butted in and I said, in front of a couple hundred men at the breakfast hall. And I said, what'd you say Linus? And he said, I asked Dr. Schroeder to come up here. So he went up and he got the award. Next, they gave me one. So we were a little embarrassed that day, not paying attention to what was going on.

Jack Gartland (01:30:41):

You talk about a humorous incident. I was chairing the board of trustees in 1973 and at the graduation that was '72 to '73 and the graduation in '73, it was in the afternoon, and it was in Leonidoff field, and the podium was always on the east side so that the afternoon sun, you know, came right into your face and the students were out there in front of you. So it was in the afternoon. So I went down and played golf that morning and had lunch. I guess I had a couple of beers and a good size lunch. And I come up here like at two o'clock or so for the graduation and while I was going on, and they snap some pictures.

Unfortunately, I had dozed off, in my picture you can see me almost sound asleep. The following year, Malcolm Wilson was governor of the state at that time and he was coming down here to get an honorary degree and to be the commencement speaker and there had been a man that was in the customer state hospital, who was sent threatening letters to Malcolm Wilson. And he had been let out and they were trying to recapture him and they couldn't. And that morning at graduation, again, it was the same thing, it was hot sun that day and

I played golf that morning and came up here and like that. But that morning, up in the parking lot at St. Francis hospital, they found a van up there and it was full of guns and a lot of different kinds of weapons and everything like that. So the BCI, the state troopers, came down here and drove, and looked over the captured stuff that was up there in the hospital grounds and they figured out that they may have been up there in order to make a threat on Malcolm Wilson's life. So in the processional coming down, they must have had about 10 state troopers who were dressed up in cap and gowns that sat amongst the students. And there were a couple up on the podium with us. So Malcolm Wilson and I are just sitting here like this and we're chatting and all, and this fellow behind me, taps me on his shoulder and he said, Mr. Garland, would you mind moving a little bit to the left? He says, you're in my line of fire. And I must say, boy, I didn't doze that day at all.

Anthony Cernera (01:33:14):

We've had sitting here on the table here a plaque and Brother Paul, I'm gonna ask you to give a little bit of background about what this award is after I mentioned it and to talk about why Jack received it. It says the congregation of the Marist brothers of the school, wishing to express gratitude, appreciation, and for the devoted service to the Marist brothers and to the community of Marist college. For that purpose on a general session of their congregation made Mr. John Gartland Jr. An affiliated member of the Marist brothers congregation. Are these kinds of rewards given out often? And what's the significance?

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:33:55):

This stage from way back in the beginning of the order, when we, you know, we sometime we have a hard time to manage, we need, we need help. With the help of doctors or lawyers or financeers and so on. And where a person has been exceptionally helpful, not only by his contributions, but by his loyalty and his dedication to what we stand for, not for an individual project, or this, we're putting up this so we want help for a situation, but consistently dedicated and loyal to what we stand for and not ashamed of it and willing to, and he's a man who's after our founder, doing good quietly, who's not looking for that type of award. We allow the individual provinces like United States as a province or two provinces. They can give a little local award to an individual in recognition of what he has done, but a man who has done exceptionally has been proven exceptionally loyal to the order from headquarters decides to affiliate him. The affiliation includes his wife and his family, and we are obligated to daily and forhid the duration of his life to keep his family and his intentions in our prayers. And this list is all over the globe. Since the beginning of the order, the beginning of the order, in 1817, which is now spread in 72 countries, in 846 schools and so on, it's widespread, there has been, you know, one or two or three a year. We have a total right now I believe of 406 affiliated members all over the world. It gives them a right to come into our mother house at any time to visit, to stay there and so on. It's an entry card into any Marist house, besides the assurance of prayers for the duration of his life for our family. And Jack

highly deserved this because I'd like to say something which is maybe out of water, but I'm saying it anyway. When I went to get Jack for member of the board of trustees, because I needed them, we needed it. But I knew of his loyalty to the brothers of his work with the brothers. I knew his work as a lawyer, I knew that he had been in our school and there was no question at that time. Jack had absolutely nothing to do at that time with the McCann foundation. So we were not going after the Jack because of the McCann foundation. We went because of what Jack had to offer in his own quiet, simple way. He's a man who does a lot of good quietly. Very few people know the extent of the good that he does. He is living his life according to the spirit that our founder gave us. We cherish that, we appreciate his dedication to us, to our cause, to furthering that. And not only is it well deserved, it's one of the few in this country that's well deserved. Glad to say this publicly because he has it coming to him.

Anthony Cernera (01:37:47):

Thank you, Paul.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:37:48):

One of the, you asked for an interesting, it's not humorous, but for example, when we put up this seed of wisdom chapel, the seed of wisdom chapel was put up in 1953, it was supposed to be dedicated for the Marion year. All through the church they celebrated the Marion year, dedication to our lady and we decided that our chapel would be ready for the Marion year which started on December 8th, immaculate conception, 1953. Our chapel was ready for that. And this chapel, and I say this with pride, that Nilus designed, and we talked over and so on as Octa alone, right? It was the first chapel or church ever built with the altar in the center and the fateful around it. And when Cardinal Spellman came to dedicated in May of 1950, he was up there pontificating in the chapel and he grabbed my hand and he said, Paul, this is the church of the future. That was a privilege. I mean, that was a compliment that he made. But what the story that I want to tell is that the beams of this chapel, which are maybe 36 feet long, all laminated the two by six is laminated 10 deep. This was all made in on the west coast in Oregon. And this was brought here by freight trains and it was delivered behind the do so chemical. Remember do so chemical landing across route nine, the back of Western, there's a railroad landing and those low bottom flat cars where all these beams were on there. And Nilus had a crane and he came up with the crane and how in the world was he gonna grab a beam and go all the way down, and bring this thing over to put him in place.

Anthony Cernera (01:40:05):

And this was an old used crane too.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:40:08):

And I had not too much confidence in the crane, frankly. I said, Nilus forget it. I said, I have a solution. I gave him 32 or 36 brothers, I says, you go and I forget how many beams there are, maybe 10. I said, you go and see how many brothers you need to lift one of those beams and carry it. The brothers carried, he said he needed 32 or 36 or whatever the number. I chose all the Huskies to go over with Nilus and they came and I stood in my casing and route nine stopped all the traffic both ways and let the brothers pass. They carried the beam over to the building site. Then, we resumed the traffic. We did that for every one of the beams. We didn't need a truck, we didn't need a hoist or anything.

Anthony Cernera (01:41:08):

Listen, in our closing few minutes we've spent a lot of time today talking about the history, but Marist College is not only rich in its history, but it's also rich in its promise for the future. What must Marist College do to remain a vibrant, strong institution as it looks forward to the 21st century? I'd like both of you to maybe dream a little bit.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:41:33):

I think it's on the right track with this communication center that we're in. This is something terrific. And it has, it has gone, gone whole for computers, which is what the people need today. And I'm very proud of what we are offering. I have a concern, I expressed it. And I repeat it. Your use of this Whitman building on what they call the Marist East, that bothers me.

Jack Gartland (01:42:03):

Bothers me too.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:42:08):

There may never be an accident on route nine, but this is a main archery. And I feel that if there should be one, it would be almost unforgivable. You know, I am looking forward to the day when we have a building, a classroom building, our academic building on this side of the road. I look forward to that day.

Jack Gartland (01:42:30):

That's in the works, Paul. That is in the works, you know. I don't mean to know or not, but we as you know, or may have seen rather, that big rock pile is out there. Well, the architect that designed this building, we asked him to look at that site out there as a possible new classroom building so we can bring all the students back over on this side of route nine. And he said, the first thing, we have to get rid of that rock pile and bring it down to a level. So this past winter, we were able to get a company to give us a good figure on blasting it all so it is all loose. However, we do not have permission from the town under their zoning laws to get it down, but we have an application out there right now. So they will give us permission to get rid of all that rock. What we are going to do is we're gonna bring in a portable rock crusher, we'll crush up all that rock into little

pieces and use that as a bed for the various roads that will be built on campus to tie in the north end and the south end, really to make it so that students don't have to drive out on route nine and go around. They'll be able to do things on campus here.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:43:48):

You're going back to our roots because we used to have a crusher on campus because there's a lot of granite in Champ and we used it to fill it out.

Jack Gartland (01:43:53):

And once we do that, we also have plans of being designed by the architect for a possible classroom building and incidentally Jack Newman, now one of our trustees, is heading up a capital campaign, which hopefully will be used to raise funds for the- there's no classroom building. I know Tony can tell more about that because that's under his jurisdiction here at the college. And I do think that would be a big plus.

Anthony Cernera (01:44:28):

It's definitely a major concern of the trustees and there's a solid commitment on our part to try to make that new classroom building happen.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:44:39):

Another concern-

Anthony Cernera (01:44:40):

Within four years.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:44:41):

Well, I'm very happy to hear that

Anthony Cernera (01:44:44):

So when you get back from Africa, you'll have a new classroom building.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:44:47):

This would please me very much because I believe that the college will grow more, but I hope it won't grow too much. I think it's good to keep it as a small college. I don't know what you enroll now-

Anthony Cernera (01:45:00):

Just about 3000.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:45:01):

Well you might go to five, but I wouldn't go beyond five if you have to. I would like it to keep as a small college, but exclusive.

Jack Gartland (01:45:13):

Is what about 3000 full-time equivalents?

Anthony Cernera (01:45:16):

Yes.

Jack Gartland (01:45:17):

About 3,600 bodies altogether is that about right?

Anthony Cernera (01:45:19):

That's right. That's about right.

Jack Gartland (01:45:20):

So, because there are part-time students that's why that happens on it. But one of the, another thing that we've got vision to do is to put in what we call a Marist village which will be a little commercial venture on route nine where the bank, Texas bank building is now, and to the east of the apartments. And we'll take in south to where the gas station is there. We hope to eliminate the gas station and build this in there whereby the college book store, as an example, can be moved in one of those buildings. And then there'll be maybe a convenience store, which will be to the benefit of the students here. There might be a fast food place, we don't know yet, but then there'll be perhaps a, maybe a barber shop, maybe a laundromat and things like that, that would be available to the public, but also be available for the students and the students really need that. And I think it would be a big plus, plus it would produce a little revenue for the college and, but the main thrust of it is it would be for the convenience of the students because we have, what do we got, almost 2000 on campus, resident students on campus, you have 2000 students plus the faculty here, that's a big drawing group right there for that. So I think in relation to the future plans, we'll have then a master plan for the whole college, which the architect is now designing, which will show where the roads will be and where everything will be. And we still have room for two more townhouses on this side of that big parking lot out there. Just to the west here of this Lowell Thomas building and we probably also have probably not too many more places on campus for, for dormitories or for apartments or townhouse like that. But we're gonna try to keep it at around a 3000 level. I don't think we want to go to 5,000.I,

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:47:32):

But I would hate to see it go to 5,000 or over, I think it should be kept rather small. And stress the efficiency, that its it's worth its quality.

Anthony Cernera (01:47:46):

When this interview started, an hour and a half of ago, we asked Brother Paul about what was his inspiration to become a Marist brother. And he recalled the concept of mission that the Marist brothers were sent on mission. It may surprise to those of you who will watch this interview to find out that this concern for mission is still a driving force in brother Paul's life. In fact, on his birthday, August 28th, this year, brother Paul will leave the United States to go to work in one of the developing nations of the world, Liberia, to help a new church, a developing church in that country to grow and to become strong. Paul, can you give us just a few words about that impending mission and responsibility.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:48:36):

I've always wanted to be a missionary and when I asked to go out here, when I, when I took my vows, I asked to because we take three, four vows, the, the normal three, and then some take the vow with stability, the vow, never to leave the order which I took. And when I was commissioned to get this college organized, I worked from 1943 to '46 to get it. The college charter was given to us in '46. I took the vow never to leave the order in '46. And I asked then to go, I said, now that you got what you asked of me, let me go to the missions. He says, you're not finished. There's a lot more work. You've gotta stay here. So I stayed here and I asked repeatedly to go to the missions as irony would have it I went to Rome for 18 years to work for my order and the Vatican. And I held the Vatican diplomatic passport to work for them. And I've, I visited missions all over the world, you know, traveled all over the world. I traveled eight months out of every year for 18 years and visited missions. So I know missions and I've been attracted to missions. And the last convocation which we had because of the brothers, August 15th, that you refer to, the Bishop where we, the brothers are going. We decided that to thank the Lord for a hundred years of service in the United States, we opened a mission in a poor country for poor boys, poor students. And we sent a team to investigate, they decided on Liberia. I had nothing to do with it and they went there and the Bishop had only four or five priests. And the brothers opened the school, which is going to be 12 classes, eight elementary and four high school. We sent three brothers, another one went in February. I told them, then at that time I'd be willing to go. So they looked at me rather strangely and my buddy brother Norman, my age, my group said the same thing. At the convocation that year we all had with us, the two of us, we had a white cassock ready in case we were, they finally accepted. They thought we were kidding. The Bishop heard that I was anxious to come. He came and he pleaded with me to accept, to go there as administrative diocese. He only has four priests, and the priest who was being administrative diocese was also in charge of the seminary and it was too much work. I told him, Bishop, if my superiors allow me to go, I will go gladly but not before September '87, because I'm committed to this present job until the end of June. So he asked the superiors, if I'd come. The superiors asked me. I said, well, you're asking me to go to India and I was willing to go, but you can't get into India. They don't want any more missionaries in Pakistan. I started, they asked me to come. I said, I'll

go Pakistan. I'll go to Liberia, whatever you want, but I'll go at any time. And I am very, very happy that I was the brother, Charles Howard superior said, well, the brothers are just starting in Liberia. We'd like you to go there and help out because you can. You're an older person and brother Norman is of my age is also there. The young men that are trained there, I've had him here in training, in Poughkeepsie. I've trained all of them and they asked me to come so I'm going with a thrill, I'm anxious to go. It's poor, there's no electricity, we boil the water, we have to travel 350 miles for the nearest post office, bank, or shopping center. And we need a Jeep because it's muddy road. But here is a challenge to me. I say this in all humility. I believe I am a GTD man. They put me in this job here to get things done. And I'm a mover, you know? And this is a challenge, but this is for me, reverse discrimination. Here is a person who had a significant job in his order, going to be the secretary of a young black Bishop. This is a tremendous tribute that the church wants to manifest to the black people of Africa. You know, I am willing to do this. I have been psyching myself to keep the breaks on, you know, to be a John the Baptist where he must increase, I must decrease. I've gotta act in the back, advise him quietly, not to put him on the spot. So it's a tremendous personal challenge to me that I am facing. Very happy to do so. I spend this whole year contacting foundations. I've already picked up about no money for the furniture of the school and money for one generator. I have to get money for another generator. I have a foundation in session on the 15th of May to answer me if they will furnish me with a Jeep. I have a Lee Iacocca letter that he's studying to find out whether he can help me. So you see, I'm way back in 1943, all over again at 74 years of age and I am very grateful that the Lord is giving me this challenge. I accepted for three years because in 1990, I'll celebrate 60 years as a Marist brother, I will come back to celebrate with my buddies, but if my health is still good, if I am a help and not a hindrance, I'll go back there. If I cannot go back, I'll retire here at Marist college in that building that you're going to put up.

Anthony Cernera (01:54:48):

Okay. We'll have room here for you, Paul,

Dennis Murray (01:54:51):

As you can see the reason why Marist college is the vibrant growing institution that it is, is because of these two GTD men, men who have gotten things done here at Marist college and are continuing to get things done. Jack and Paul, thank you for what's been an inspiring moment for me.

Jack Gartland (01:55:12):

Thanks.

Brother Paul Ambrose (01:55:12):

Thank you.