

Irma Casey

IRMA CASEY

**Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
Transcribed by Alyssa Hurlbut
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections**

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Marist College (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)

Summary: This interview discusses Casey's time at Marist College, her teaching career, and her observations of the school's evolution.

Irma Casey

GUS NOLAN: Today is Thursday, the 22nd day of June, and we have the great joy of interviewing Irma Casey, she has been a professor here at Marist for 37 years teaching and before that involved in various matter and activities. She was married to the famous Dr. Tom Casey was in residence here teaching here for many years

IRMA CASEY: 1964

GN: Since 1964

IC: Oh, 63, excuse me

GN: 63, correction. Irma just an overview, this is for the historical oral collection trying to get an account of Marist College, its early years, its development, and a projection into the future. And you have a long experience here and can talk about that with great detail, I'm sure. But before we get started, I'd like to have a little thumbnail view of your background, your early years, early education, going to school, etc. What would you say?

IC: Okay well my education I started with Catholic schools. I'm from Puerto Rico, and I was in a boarding...during my time, a lot of girls were placed in boarding schools with nuns. And um, my parents would go once a month...excuse me, every weekend, and then once a month I was allowed to go home. And obviously in the summer, you go home. But you live there with the nuns and all the rules and regulations and everything.

GN: For how long? All through grade school?

IC: Elementary school until sixth grade. Then 7-12, I went to another...you transfer to another Catholic school, and this was run by nuns, that half of them came from Michigan, so they were Americans. And I got weighted there. Then I...

GN: Where'd you go next?

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IC: Then I went to the University of Puerto Rico, and I got weighted with a degree in psychology. And then after that, I came for a master's degree at Fordham University where I was...

GN: Also in psychology?

IC: In psychology, which now I think psychology is just common sense. Don't tell psychology's that.

GN: Well a lot of people would think... I thought you would've went for Spanish because you teach Spanish here now.

IC: Well no, my education in Puerto Rico, we learn Spanish since first grade, all the way, so you develop your Spanish and you also learn English. Now, we don't really use English except occasionally here and there but you learn it in the classroom. So when I came to Fordham, I came because I was granted a full scholarship by Fordham University.

GN: I see. To study psychology?

IC: To study my master's degree in psychology and that's where I met Tom.

GN: Aha, I was gonna bring that up. When did you meet Tom? At Fordham University.

IC: At Fordham.

GN: You were both students at the time?

IC: He was a student doing his masters in philosophy at the time and we had to take a class in a foreign language that was not your native language, so we were taking French. And that's where...we met in the classroom. And um, that's...

GN: That's the background of that. Now, on the side, besides going to school, can you tell me something more about other interests? Did you have a club, did you belong to the choir, did you collect stamps, did you do anything like that?

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IC: Well, um, since elementary school I participated in little plays, that they known to develop.

GN: Oh, drama?

IC: Oh, I love acting.

GN: I could see it.

IC: I think teachers are actors, that's how I see it. You know that was one of my interests and different than other things, you know?

GN: Right. Besides that did you have any particular other interests, or did you paint at any time? Or did you...

IC: All I did was kind of abstract, I love abstract painting. And um, but anyways, the reason I started teaching was because Maurice Bibeau encouraged me, because Maurice had called me to teach Spanish several times because they knew me through Tom. And I kept saying no I'm not interested in teaching, I was never interested in that but Maurice Bibeau encouraged me.

GN: Where did Maurice Bibeau find you? Were you already in the school?

IC: He knew me through Tom.

GN: Oh, oh through Tom, okay. But you were not in education here?

IC: No. Then, what I did was did courses with Maurice Bibeau to get my certificate to teach and then I went for a master's degree over in Albany, SUNY Albany, in bilingual education and teaching English as a second language, and again, I got a full scholarship.

GN: You must be very smart to get these scholarships...my god.

IC: [laughs], I did, I graduated with honors, always. So that's how I became inter... I got my two certificates to teach elementary...elementary education in a bilingual school, which I did, in Beacon.

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GN: Did you have practice teaching then?

IC: Yeah that's what I mean and I was hired one semester before I started at Marist.

GN: Who supervised you while you were doing some of this practice teaching?

IC: I...Who hired me?

GN: No, supervised, visited you in the classroom?

IC: Oh, Morrie Bibeau...Maurice Bibeau.

GN: Alright, so he was your contact person, because that's the next question, how did you find Marist? Well Tom was working here was that right?

IC: Yes, and they knew me through the social activities.

GN: Oh yes, that's right.

IC: That was one of the historical aspects that I'm going to be talking about

GN: Okay, now

IC: What?

GN: Before you could come here, you had to have gone through some sort of interview. Did anybody interview you at the time?

IC: Yes, your wife.

GN: Oh no, Elizabeth?

IC: Liz, and Mor Bibeau, and uh...well, to start with my certificate. At Marist, there was the comedian, I was hired right away.

GN: Okay. Well was Don O'Shea the Dean at the time, or was Richard LaPietra in office yet?

IC: I think it was LaPietra, I'm not sure, because I started full time in 1979. I started part time from 1977 to the spring of 1979, and then I was hired, okay full time.

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GN: Okay so from that time on you were on here. Okay when you first started teaching here, how big a class did you have, did you have five, 15?

IC: They were usually smaller, 15 no more than 20, sometimes, at the elementary level, they would be like 21, 22. It was always kind of eliminating foreign languages

GN: Was Jerry Wise still with us, or had he passed away?

IC: Oh sure, no, he was still,

GN: He was still here, okay

IC: He was still here.

GN: Soon after we got what they call a language lab, were you here for that?

IC: Yes, what we did was, at that time, everything was in Donnelly. All the classrooms were there, all our offices were there. Like my office was in the basement, that's where foreign languages was. And um, so we started a language lab, over in Donnelly as well.

GN: I see.

IC: I remember taking my classes there, we would take turns to take our classes and they would be using the microphones and different things...

GN: And recording, and listening?

IC: Right, right, but it was not constant, it would be you take one class here, you understand?

GN: Yeah

IC: But everybody was in Donnelly, which facilitated the aspect that everybody knew each other

GN: Alright I'm gonna get to that rewind about how Marist has changed and in a way how has it stayed the same. Were the students in your day coming here, was it a requirement, did they have to take a language, or they wanted to study Spanish for the sake of Spanish?

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IC: Most of them studied it because they wanted to. There were a couple of areas I guess that may require elementary, maybe or intermediate, but it was not a required type of language.

GN: And there was no required language in those early years?

IC: We still don't have that.

GN: No I know, I thought it was either gonna be French or Italian or Spanish, I'm confused I, I, was talking like that...Now the classrooms, do you remember the classrooms in Donnelly?

IC: Yes

GN: What was your remembrance of those?

IC: Well a couple of classrooms were small, others were bigger, but it was wonderful. The reason again I emphasize, is that, we were all in the same building. And it's not like it was five stories high or anything like that. Being round means almost, like family like.

GN: Sometimes you ate in that building.

IC: Oh we did, everything was there. Of course the students had the cafeteria over there. But it was so nice, so familiar and everything...

GN: I remember a story maybe you can confirm it, that one day or something, it must have been hot, you took off your ring, and you left it on your desk, and the next day, you looked, the diamond was gone.

IC: I couldn't find it

GN: And then another teacher comes in the next day, and that teacher, was Tom? That's a true story?

IC: He found it, he found it...it was on the floor in the corner.

GN: He found it, and it glittered

IC: It was in his office actually

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GN: Right, so that was a great find, he went home with great joy that he had found it

IC: Definitely. I guess it had fallen where the office was. Most of the offices of the teachers were on the basement of Donnelly.

GN: Yeah, mine wasn't though I was with George Summer, and we were up above...Milton Tysmon, myself, George Summer, I forget who else was in our little cube, we had cubicles... we didn't have doors on them, separate areas

IC: Tom had a small office...the offices were small. I was, foreign languages, we were in one room like this, and it had little separations. Foreign languages we were there, Tom had his own little office. If you want me to tell you stories about George Summer, when we were in Fontaine,

GN: Well, I don't want to go into George Summer stories now, we might have another day. The classes then, were ah, I remember though sometimes students would come with some, they took one or two years of Spanish in high school and then they come here and they want to take introduction, and Morrie Bibeau said oh no no, you can't do that.

IC: Mor went...oh my god, we used to go through...we didn't have a test, so what we did, we all got together in the summer, and it took us, maybe the whole month of July, to look at their applications and we would look at everything that they had taken and that's how we would place them, you see?

GN: Right. If they took two years of Spanish then they would not take...

IC: Then we would not place them in elementary. But it took us the whole month of July

GN: They wanted to take it all over again, with guaranteed an A, or a B at least, you know?

IC: Exactly, but we had to look at each folder, each student individually, whereas now they take a test and they're placed automatically more or less.

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GN: Alright, um, the beginning years, the great thing about it was there was certain unity, the other part of it was that it was kind of small, and was it going to be able to survive and we were going to be able to continue it. But you look at the campus now and you say what a difference. So the development of Marist is the next question. And so, what I was saying coming here, the question is how did this happen? And so I have a feel for ideas, like what are the principle factors that were involved in bringing this great development apart? You'd say, well, the leadership of Dennis Murray would be one of course, and then of course the Marist tradition, because there were schools, Marist Brothers were teaching here at the time and they had a tradition, so on. And then you'd say the proximity, we're only 70 miles from New York City, we're on the Hudson. There's a kind of, everybody could go home on the weekends if they wanted to, Long Island. Because there was only one island, that was Long Island, and they all lived on Long Island, and so, anybody going to the Island, they would get a ride. What do you remember of those days? What would you say was the instrumental thing of this development?

IC: Well, I think what happened was, for example, Tom was chairman of the faculty, for eight years, twice, and um he, and there were other prof...like Peter O'Keefe, a few more, they had been told...the faculty had been told that Marist was going to go into bankruptcy, and um, that's when I think all of the faculty started looking, what are we going to do, and they started talking to members of the board...I remember, they would have meetings.

GN: Yes, Central Hudson had a man here who was very much in charge.

IC: Yes, so they started talking to them and saying how can we save? So it was a group, it was not just one person, it was a group of the faculty and the board and some administrators, they started to get together and say, what can we do? We need to save, this is a great institution, the brothers have done great.

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And that's how they started thinking, that maybe it was time to get a president that could get something from the outside, like, I don't know but maybe funding.

GN: In the beginning it was funding, he would have contacts. See the period, Linus Foy, helped to build it, he was here for 20 years, and he was very economically based, didn't want to raise the tuition, no increase in fees for the labs..

IC: It was great, he did great

GN: He brought this thing and then Paul Ambrose came along, and he was able to get the charter, well Paul was before Linus but Paul came here and it was a farm. I mean, we had pigs and cows, we had the trees, we had a cornfield

IC: I remember a swimming pool around this area

GN: The swimming pool, that where Lowell Thomas is now, you know, it was actually a swimming pool. And it was great. But, as you say, there was a need...there was a terrible winter there

IC: Something had to happen to keep it going

GN: And so the whole budget got out of kilt. And so they went looking for a President, and I think Tom was involve in going to the West Coast?

IC: Huh?

GN: To the West Coast right, they went to Cali...go ahead

IC: Well Tom, being the chairman of the faculty, he went... there were several people who had applied and Dennis was one of them, so he said well let's take a look at this, the faculty with the board you know the people, and so he went to California to look and meet him. He went with somebody, I'm not sure who it was, two of them went together, he didn't go alone, no, two of

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them went together, and you know, they finally, when they came back, he said he could be one of our candidates let's bring him over. So I don't know how many candidates they had, but I know that Dennis was one of them.

GN: They accepted him and he said, yes, he would come, course he was very young too...

IC: Actually, he wasn't even sure from what Tom had told me, that he wanted to come but he said I'm willing to give it a try, and then, they fell in love with this.

GN: Right, so that was the coming, that was the leadership thing, of course the other things happened, one man doesn't make, no one ever come here to take Dennis's courses, the school the faculty had built up a tradition, they had a spirit among themselves, you just talked about that in terms of Donnelly, cooperative, and so one person I interviewed talked about Marist and she said, I think I came to three different colleges, depends on when I'm here, one is survival are we going to be able to make it, you know, so that was the first, and the other was, Dennis is a dictator, we have to all accommodate... he won't give us our money. He wants to build walls rather than to pay us, expand new lawns and buildings and faculty minimal increase and fair, but you know we're not going to get rich here in terms of that. And now, people come here just to be here for a while, and then they fly off to something else you know so there's that tradition...I'm talking too much....

IC: No, no that's fine

GN: So I think in terms of...all of those factors I guess would have played, Dennis certainly increased the board of trustees, he got some rich people on, uh

IC: Funding, money, everything

GN: Money, he was able to bring some people to the faculty, for prestige and names and high written books and so on, do you remember Don Drenan?

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IC: Oh yes.

GN: Yes, not very popular with some students sometimes. They would burn his books outside the dormitory

IC: [laughs] I have a couple of stories about him

GN: I don't wanna go there now either [laughs]. So those were the aspects of it

IC: Well I think Marist, that closeness, that familiar ambiance that we had at the time, knowing each other, supporting each other, the bigger you get, the more you're gonna lose it.

GN: Oh right now, we're in separate buildings,

IC: Well, exactly, I don't know the people in science, I don't know the people in...

GN: Communication Arts,

IC: No

GN: Mathematics and Computer, all of those have separate

IC: Exactly, it's like...families for example, I'm from Puerto Rico, we're close together. So you see each other, you get together. Now here, my son lives in California, I can only talk to him either on the phone or on the computer, because he lives there, he works there, but I'm here. You see so that's what has happened here. We all distanced, split all that, so I don't know, there are things you may gain, but there's things you lose. That closeness, that familial closeness, and being supportive of each other.

GN: You don't know the strengths of the other person, and you don't know their weaknesses, you don't know their accomplishments, and you can't really, you know, we're on the same team, but we don't exactly are able to work together. We used to have CA classes, you know CA teaching

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IC: Well, for example, I'm in Fontaine, so the School of Liberal Arts is there. But we have two different floors. Most of the time, I know the people that are on my floor but I know them, from the second floor, we don't get to see each other, and we're in the same building. You see?

GN: Only if you're on the elevator together going up, but one floor, because then they get off and you're going up one more floor.

IC: One more, I mean so...I guess that's happening in life now a days too, families are changing, life is changing but I mean, not always for the better.

GN: How do you like your office? Are you able to put everything in your office?

IC: All of my trinkets? I'll tell you, yes I did, but uh, the fire people came one time—the secretary-- one of the secretaries told me she was going with the fire looking at all of the offices and when they opened my office, everybody was silent, they took a look, and they backed up and closed the door and didn't say one word. Now this past year, they came and I was in my office and with the fire people here at Marist, they said you have to have some of the walls a little bit clean, so I had to take some things out, but I'm still...

GN: You're still showing your different topics. Well it's learning experience, they're all in Spanish which is....

IC: Well, I am a great believer, language is visual too. It's not just feelings, it's not just the sound, it's visual. So it's feelings, visual, you know? But no I still have a lot of trinkets.

GN: Right. I heard once you were gonna move your office, and then they said oh we're gonna change it, you're gonna move back, you didn't like that idea. Think that was a trick or something...

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IC: No. That's one thing that, again, when we moved from Donnelly, they moved us, you know languages, philosophy, English, they move us to Fontaine, you know, the old building that was here, the old Fontaine...and uh, we still work together caus it was a small building.

GN: Did you get a U-Haul or something? How did you move?

IC: (Laughs). Well, I remember moving, it was all by December, and um.... it was until late one time it what almost midnight and Tom helped me, and some students helped me move.

GN: Yeah, that was something

IC: Because being in Donnelly, I didn't have that much.

GN: There are two aspects to the next thing, and one is negative one is positive. What were some of your disappointments in terms of things that did not work out the way they should have, in terms of courses being approved maybe, or students' success, or time to do or testing or requirements for academic thing. Some disapproval...or some disappointments that you had, were you able to say something?

IC: Well, listen, some ways, I'm still disappointed in the emphasis that Marist is giving now like to things that you can show like professional, how much you have published, versus helping the students

GN: Print or...publish or perish

IC: Publish or perish. The emphasis has changed

IC: Right. Publish or perish. Where the emphasis has changed, and if you devote more to service maybe, it doesn't count as much as professional...we call it professional

GN: Professional development

IC: Yes, exactly. So that to me is a disappointment, but I mean, I can live with it, I don't pay that much attention to it. That and the fact that you have to have a specific number in classes,

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everything is numbers, and uh show. That...you see that disappoints me, versus all the times when we were more involved.

GN: Do you still get yearly evaluations, in the class...A chair comes in and sits and sees what you're doing and writes up evaluations. I didn't like to do that as a chair.

IC: Um, I don't get it as much, because, you get it more now because we are so big, if you're going for a promotion for example, or if you're going for tenure, you see. But the numbers, that's what kills. Where let's say you may have in terms of service, um, 20 different activities, well that's not gonna be enough, or it could be 30 activities, that's not gonna be enough. I mean it's up to whomever, well to the Dean really.

GN: Do you still get three courses and four courses?

IC: No I always teach 4/4. Because I am only an assistant. Now the people that have, that are full professors, and, because then they're required I guess more publishing, some of them teach only two per semester. Um, yes.

GN: I see. Really? Two?

IC: Or three two, or three four. Oh yes.

GN: Is summer still an option, you can take a summer course?

IC: Oh yeah, that's still optional.

GN: You can always have that

IC: Yes.

GN: Do they still have inter-semester between December and January?

IC: Yes they still do, I'm not talking about foreign languages, but yeah we still do. Or now we have a lot of classes in computer. By computer, which I particularly, I just think ok may be good to have but there is no human interaction.

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GN: Yeah I want to get back to the future. But what are some of the more rewarding things?

What are you pleased with? You've had students that had success, you met, you know you get on with the interaction... you had some friends, you still talk to Mor Bibeau?

IC: Oh yes

GN: So you have friends.

IC: Let me tell you something I put in my evaluation this year: you never know what you have accomplished sometimes until years later. I received a letter this past winter, from a student that graduated in 1989...

GN: Really?

IC: ...thanking me for what I had taught her, because she is using it as a professional now. She's into social work, and she's using it. I said what? I couldn't even remember her name. But I started looking, and her name is there. You know I still keep all my files, and she's thanking me, for what she had learned, that I was instrumental in who she had become. Then another letter from another student who never thought she wanted to be a teacher, after taking my course, now she's a high school teacher in Spanish. Two letters this semester. So you never know.

GN: Really, that's something? That's 25 years, that the one, '89, that's uh, 11 and 17 is 28 years ago that she...

IC: Oh yeah, I said who the heck is this person 1989

GN: So she's an old lady now

IC: No, no she's into social work, she's not a teacher. But she said it was learning how she could behave in my class, and my interaction with the students, she's thanking me for it.

GN: You're a very human person, that's the good part of it.

IC: Yeah, well, I have received letters like that, I still am in touch with some students

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GN: Alright, next part is look into the crystal ball and say what are you going to see happening?
Will Marist be here?

IC: Oh definitely. Oh yes, the way it is now? It will be here.

GN: Will it be uh, changed much? Because of what you just said before, online learning, students don't have to come... you have to be here to share don't you?

IC: That human interaction, that's what teaching is.

GN: Well, you know, uh, to keep it going, we seem to have to have an open, we seem to have to have an open, we need more diversity, we're not doing bad now with diversity.

IC: No I don't think we're doing bad at all. It's not just diversity, you cannot just, with sometimes I find that in my classes, are we getting student with low grades from high school because it will bring diversity? I'm sorry, I'm Puerto Rican, I'm not into that. But that's what some of us talk about it

GN: I just have to make sure we're on time here, ok, plenty of time.

IC: So um, I think we need quality of students.

GN: Oh okay, if you're gonna have a college, you have to have that kind of thing.

IC: Quality, right. This is not like high school, I know education has changed, but educare, from the Latin, means to bring forth from the inside.

GN: They have to educate themselves, and get into

IC: Exactly, exactly. So it's not just a show out there.

GN: Ok, there's a move of course, among the Marist Brothers now, that those who are gonna come to train, have to learn a second language. You have to either be advanced in Spanish, or French, or Chinese, you know whatever, you know. You need to have some more diversity, because the world is not just one language, you're gonna be involved...by and large

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IC: Well, let me tell you, there is a standard joke, what is a trilingual person, a person that speaks three languages, what is a bilingual person, a person that speaks two languages, what is a monolingual person, an American. I think Americans believe that...

GN: They don't have to do anything

IC: That the rest of the world...you do it my way or that's it.

GN: Then you must be Trump (laughs)

IC: (Laughs) exactly. This is how I explain it, if you want to do, you are in a company, and you want to go and mix and do business with China for example, or Japan, and you go there, and you have the courtesy of at least being able to say hello, nice to meet you, how are you, and follow some of the cultural traditions, and then you have another one who only speaks English, who only says my way or no way, from whom are they going to buy? And they're selling the same product, okay?

GN: Yeah, good example

IC: For example, Obama had gone to Japan, I don't know if you remembered that and he was criticized because when he met the Prime Minister of Japan, he bowed. But he was in Japan! That was courteous, you see? I know English is being used more and more but that's the beauty of the human being. That we can all speak...

GN: Right, the courtesy involved.

IC: Well, wouldn't it be boring if we were all the same height, same everything, same color?

That would be boring. So the same thing with languages and culture

GN: Alright that's good

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IC: No I think we should learn, but it's not emphasized. Not at Marist, anyways. Other institutions they may do it, I've looked into some, but Marist, nothing. Not business they don't have to take...

GN: Right, we used to have a requirement, well, I don't know

IC: Social work, excuse me, social work, I go and make presentations every day, they don't require even a culture course. What are they going to be

GN: Yeah, something is missing in the education. I mean even to learn different cooking

IC: Right, you know. It's a human courtesy with each other

GN: Well yeah, so on, music. A lot of things are...

IC: Everything, everything

GN: Alright, uh, The Kirk house by the way is going to become the Marist Brothers training center, they're gonna put that here now, or so, the Marist Brothers will initiate on the campus next year.

IC: Wow nice. That's...next year?

GN: Yeah

IC: Wow that's great, that's wonderful.

GN: And there's Brother Sean Sammon, who's on the board, is gonna become the director

IC: That's great, to bring it back.

GN: Yeah, and they're gonna try to see...and they're hoping that he will draw a few more older guys in, not grade school

IC: No that's great.

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GN: Change again. If you had a chance to talk to the board, and say I wanna suggest that we look into this need that we have, what are some needs that Marist has? It doesn't have everything. What could it use, what does it need?

IC: I think we need more human support in different areas. We need more supports for areas that might be as big as other area. Foreign languages, we're not as big as business, we still need support. So instead of just supporting the areas that are booming, in a booming way, we need to support everyone. That was from the Marist Brothers. We need to emphasize that familiar relationship that we used to have instead of that separation and we need to include more of the regular people instead of just special.

GN: Right, special, yeah, PhD, well, accomplished

IC: A major, in Italian

GN: Well we have a school in Italy, we have Florence

IC: Our students go to Australia, they go to Japan, occasionally they go to China, and so we're trying to interact with a lot of different countries. You know that four of our foreign language students have won that scholarship, what is it called?

GN: Oh right, yeah yeah, oh...it's very prestigious. And it's uh yeah...some family in Congress, senator's family started it.

IC: Fulbright. They have four of our students have won Fulbright scholarships.

GN: They're all language students?

IC: Yes.

GN: Really?

IC: Yes. Three of them in Spanish and one of them I can't remember, in French. Four of our students. Name me any other discipline where four of their majors have won a Fulbright.

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GN: We used to get one, maybe two. One time a Nolan got it. He was uh...he went to Spain., and uh, he was both a computer science I think and a Spanish, code, uh, you know, and he taught computers in Spanish...and so they, I said what was the key to it, he said it's all in the essay. You got to say what you wanted to say. He had refined the essay and he had two pages to put it down, then they come to see you and they just confirm what they already have made up their mind about.

IC: Then we have students that have, so many have gone to masters degree with full scholarship. I also teach bilingual education and teaching English as a second language, well two of my students have won scholarships to continue for their graduate degrees and one is a teacher in college at the University of Chicago Urbana..in Chicago of Illinois or whatever, and that's the program that she's directing and everything, and she's a full professor.

GN: Really?

IC: One of my students, right, and she came to make a presentation here for our students. So there are possibilities out there. We just need also to emphasize to be more inclusive, instead of just...

GN: That should be a special booklet by itself, what you're saying.

IC: Right, right, right.

GN: Alright another point, a Marist graduate now, when he graduates from here, roughly it costs \$15,000 a year to come. Four years, that's \$200,000 you know...is it worth it?

IC: Oh I think it is. [Laughs].

GN: Well it's gonna take a while and they may not get a good job if they're a Spanish teacher, they may not get a good job if they're an English teacher, if they're computer science they might.

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IC: They will. But, I think, you cannot just look at what kind of job I'm gonna get immediately. Your education is going to prepare you for the rest of your life, not to get a job.

GN: Not to make a living, but to live.

IC: To live, you said it, you know, so you're not gonna look at two months later I got this wonderful job, no, you have to allow it. Your education is to open your mind, to all possibilities for you out there as a human being. So that's why, you cannot just judge an education on the degree that you get.

GN: Yeah. Well I have a nephew who got an MBA in math and business. Okay, he worked for uh the uh,he got a big job, very well off. He hated it. He went back and got an English degree. He's happy as a lock, teaching in Vero Beach in Florida. He's got an honors program. And he... they deal with books and stories and poems, he has a delightful life. Whereas the other, he hated going to work. Now, he loves to see the kids, and it's a different life you know?

IC: The purpose of education is not for you to get a job. A lot of people may find jobs in other areas that they never studied. I'm not talking about medicine you know or anything like that. But the purpose of a college education is to make you think, to prepare you for what's out there, all possibilities. And it's not going to be just within two weeks or a month, it's throughout.

GN: It's 50 years more than likely. We work now when we're 70, you know, they're 20 when they start, oh I don't believe that.

IC: [Laughs]

GN: I gotta go...no we got time here, for a few more things. So, um, you see the idea is that it's money is one thing, but then the time you have to but four years into this, is there another way, could we use two years to learn how to become an electrician and one a mechanic, car material or something, whatever, you know

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IC: You want education to prepare you for a job then go do that. If you want education to be more than that, to prepare you for life, then do the other. You see?

GN: Oh okay, I was wondering what you might think about that. Because I've had some people come here talk to me and say, you know Marist is good, but they don't, some are not ready for four years of it. Two years might be good, then they should learn how to do something else

IC: You know why they're not ready, because even when they come for their interviews, it seems that some of us, not this lady, emphasize, you're gonna get a good job when you finish with Marist. You see, that's not it. That's not it.

GN: Well you won't get any job at all if you don't finish.

IC: I mean, a lot of, I see it with some of my students, where they think, how come you gave me a B, when I deserve an A. 'Scuse me, I don't give grades, you have to work for them. And this is how you did your job.

GN: You decide that at the beginning of the course.

IC: Oh that I do too. I put it in my class outline. Classes begin on the first day. You don't want till two months, three months later to say, oh what can I do, can I do extra credit?

IC: What do you think is gonna happen when you get a job?

GN: You gotta come everyday

IC: Exactly, and you have to be prepared and you have to do everything you're supposed to. Even when they come, when they come for that um,

GN: Orientation.

IC: Orientation, nobody tells them anymore. If they ask me to do it, I do it in my presentation.

Twice, especially one of them when I finish my presentation, a father and a mother came to me

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at the end and said we are so glad that you said that, because our daughter doesn't believe in it.

GN: Oh, oh oh

IC: Doesn't think that's the way it is, because I mentioned that

GN: Yeah it's social life, have a good time away from home.

IC: I said 'scuse me, this is how I start. I said how many hours most people work in a day or in a week? Let's say eight? Forty hours a week. You know how many hours you are in class? No more than 15. What do you do with the other, until you finish, for your job? This is your job.

What are you gonna do. Are you gonna wait, is that what you do when you work? Oh I think I'll do it maybe next week or Saturday. Oh don't worry I have until whenever. No you have to work, here at Marist, for 40 hours. And this is what I say, okay, I'll tell you what, I'll give you 38...35 hours, you can pick up five to be, to be socializing but you still have to do 35.

GN: Very good, alright

IC: And that's when these parents came

GN: That means read the book, write the paper, whatever it takes

IC: You they have to work everyday, and this is when these parents came and said we are so happy you said that.

GN: You've been here for so long. Why are you here for so long...why aren't you...

IC: [Laughs]. I always say I love inflicting pain and suffering on young people and I do it very well

GN: That's not true, I will reject that.

IC: I don't know, well, not having Tom in my life anymore and you know

GN: Well everyday you wake up and you say....well, you like to see the students

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IC: Let me tell you something. Some days I get up and say oh god I have to teach oh god do I have to. And I come and I'm very down let's say I don't want to be here. Then I go down to my classroom open my door and say huh, love is in bloom again. And you know who made me? Maurice Bibeau, and Liz.

GN: Oh you're very kind.

IC: No I'm not kidding you, they encouraged me, especially Liz, encouraged me to become a teacher. I never wanted to be a teacher.

GN: Well rather than be a cop. Oh 'scuse me, I didn't mean to bring up your son into this. How's he's doing?

IC: No he's not in computer.

GN: Oh he's in computer?

IC: No he's not. He's a police officer. He, that's why... I mentioned him sometimes, he never studied anything to dealing with criminal justice, or sociology, or psych, no, his degree was in business administration, uh he took philosophy, he went for a masters degree in sports administration. And guess what? First thing he found a job immediately, he went to visit a friend in California they gave him a job.

GN: Well he's bilingual.

IC: Well that was another thing. Because he knew Spanish very well. But he never studied anything like that. So I said don't close your mind, you see. And Karen, she is at Vassar College in the Museum of Art. And people...I remember people telling her, my husband said no, you study what...art, what are you going to be able to do with art? Guess what, she loves it, she's a Vassar College. She's a system register at the museum.

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GN: Yeah. She's very helpful I went there once, I was looking for..the Benedictine have this thing and the main, one of the first foundations and they have.. Vassar College has Benedictine the person... My Brother is as Benedictine he wanted to come and see it, so we went and saw it. Okay we're getting to the end, is there something I didn't ask you that you're dying to tell me.

IC: Well no. I just wanted to tell you how when I started, everything was so familiar and mostly men. The first three lay professors you know, full time, were Tom, Jerry White, and Bob Lewis in English. Bob lived outside, but Tom and Jerry lived at Marist. And they were...what do you call them, in the dormitories?

GN: Oh yeah, Proctors.

IC: Proctors. And I just, Tom used to tell at night, they would from 7-9, all the students would have to be in their rooms with the door open, studying.

GN: Studying, yeah, No talking, no radio.

IC: Nothing, studying. And the, uh, Tom and Jerry, whoever was the proctor, they would walk the halls back and forth to make sure they were studying.

GN: ?

IC: Nothing, no no no no. The other thing I wanted to say, we used to have a group called the faculty wives. And I remember, since the Brothers were not married, we would be the one anytime they had anything social, the faculty wives would be the ones to serve coffee or whatever, and we would have a brunch [laughs] I remember doing it. So that familiarity...

GN: Was so precious in those days

IC: Right, very precious.

GN: We had a re...what was it, last year, the year before, we did have one reunion. Maybe I can...few and few though....can't come I mean they passed on and even Liz has a hard time

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getting around, you know, so, nevertheless, the years are passing. No it's very nice to have this chance to talk to you cause you bring the historical past and you're still with it so you got a view of Marist in a quarter of a Century and more.

IC: I do miss that familiarity. I wish we could still have it because I think that also helped build Marist College.

GN: It's the price of growth, though, as you said before, the bigger you get, the further out you go, like the family

IC: Eventually though, we have become this, and it's nice because it's still functioning and everything but that familiarity is not there anymore and that was one of the greater things that we had.

GN: Yeah, well thank you very much, I'm gonna close this off now.

IC: And I wonder if we could...well I didn't mention all the trees and everything but you know about that. I just wonder if we could have those Archives? Because there's this teacher who want...who is from the sciences. You know how they have their burrito on the...

GN: Bill Parrot? Bill Parrot? He was in biology

IC: Yeah but it wasn't Bill Parrot..

GN: Botany?

IC: Huh?

GN: He was...

IC: I would have to find out...it was this teacher and Tom, maybe was it Bill? I don't know for sure but they were the ones that did all the trees and everything. And you know what I did when they tore...they were gonna kill the Ginkgo that was there that was over a hundred years old? I went that spring and I pick up all the seeds, which were smelly, I pick up about 20 or 21, and I

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took them home, put them in water, and they started to...the seedlings. And I brought them to the burrito. And I know one of them was planted, they told me, by um, by where the McCann Center is, somewhere there, so that's from that tree, I did that.

GN: Oh really? It's still going?

IC: I guess so. And some were kept there so that the students could learn, some of the seedlings, and uh you know in Donnelly. And I give another one to a part time Benediction Nieves... part time teacher in Spanish, and I have been to her house and the tree is blooming like you wouldn't believe.

GN: Really?

IC: Mhm.

GN: Now Tom was from Collinsville Minnesota? Where is he from?

IC: Tom was from Le Sawyer, you know the Green Giant?

GN: Yeah

IC: Le Sawyer, Minnesota. And he was studying to be a Priest.

GN: At the College of St. John? Benediction?

IC: No he was at the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. And then he was supposed to.. he and a friend were supposed to be ordained, he had done his eight years, and they told him and the friend from the class that they wanted to wait one more year. He had done his solemn vows and everything, and they told him that they wanted to wait one more year, he and they other guy. There were about six of them. And Tom said, no, I want to be a priest right now, I've been here eight years already. And they said no, we're the ones that make the decision, we think you and... you're gonna wait one more year. And Tom said no, that's it, I'm leaving. And uh, when we were going to get married, we needed the Pope's dispensation, because he had made his solemn

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vows. So from Oblates of Mary Immaculate, which was in, I can't remember it was in the middle of the United States somewhere, I can't remember.

GN: Some place in Minnesota.

IC: No it was not in Minnesota it was in another state.

GN: Well Dakotas...South Dakota, North Dakota are right next to it, uh Fargo North Dakota is uh

IC: Of the Oblates?

GN: I don't know where the Oblates are but I know...

IC: Oh, I forgot I mean I have it at home.

GN: My brother is in Collinsville, that's why. I went there for a degree in theology.

IC: Oh, yeah that was one of Tom's degrees and philosophy. So he left and he applied to Fordham and he was accepted right away too, so that's where I met him.

GN: When did he come here?

IC: 1963. He started at Fordham in '61, '62

GN: Yeah. But when did he come to Marist?

IC: '63 he started.

GN: What happened?

IC: He was hired right away, he came for an interview. Yeah they were looking for philosophy teachers, and he was hired right away. But he was still going for, trying to finish his PhD after the masters. He would drive to New York for that even after we were married. But he started, yeah, right away.