

Gary Smith

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Smith, Gary

Transcript – Gary Smith

Interviewee: Gary Smith

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Marist College History

Marist College Social Aspects

Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Summary: Gary shares his experience of first visiting Marist (Marian) College as a young boy and then what brought him here as a student. He speaks of the faculty he fondly remembers and the leadership of the college at the time. Gary mentions his service in the Air Force and after working for IBM. He goes on to discuss his tenure on the Board of Trustees for the College and the decisions that were made during his time. He is joined by his daughter Jen and grandson Robert in the interview.

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

Well, this is a real special occasion. We have three generations of the Smiths here, grandpa who graduated in 1963, Jennifer, his daughter in 1993, and Robert graduating tomorrow in 23. That's 60 years, 30 and 30 in between each of you. So it's a remarkable occasion. Today is Friday, May 19th, 2023. And Gus Nolan, one of the interviewers along with Jan Stivers, who is offering, conducting this interview with a long time graduate of Marist, Gary Smith. Okay, Gary, let's start this way. The interview is divided into four parts. One might call the early life, Marist College, after Marist, work, and then perspectives, looking back and in the crystal ball maybe looking ahead. So let's start at the beginning, early life, say something about where you were born and what you remember of those years and the conditions and the times. Could you do that?

Gary Smith ([01:22](#)):

Sure, born 1941 in the city of Poughkeepsie, native son, several generations of family from Poughkeepsie. Went to Poughkeepsie High School, and probably my first visit to the Marist campus was back in the 1940s as a small kid when I accompanied my grandfather to sell balloons, pennants, and memorabilia for the Intercollegiate Rowing Association Regattas that took place on the Hudson River.

Gus Nolan ([01:54](#)):

Okay. You skipped over a little bit there. You had no childhood, you never went to grammar school. You know, you were sent to college right away? I know you're very smart, but let's fill in some of those parts, please. Where did you go to grade school?

Gary Smith ([02:08](#)):

Again, born and raised in city Poughkeepsie. Went to Christopher Columbus School on Perry Street in Poughkeepsie. And in fact, I was in the 30th graduating class from Columbus School, and my dad was in the very first graduating class from that school. Also a downtown Poughkeepsie kid.

Gus Nolan ([02:27](#)):

About how big were those classes remotely, as you remember?

Gary Smith ([02:31](#)):

28, 18, 20 students. At the most.

Gus Nolan ([02:36](#)):

How many? Only one class or several classes?

Gary Smith ([02:39](#)):

It was, it was an elementary school.

Gus Nolan ([02:41](#)):

So it was just one class.

Gary Smith ([02:43](#)):

Each, each teacher had one class and you progressed through the school system.

Gus Nolan (02:46):

Okay. So it was not one A and one B, it was just one.

Jan Stivers (02:50):

There might have been multiple first grades?

Gary Smith (02:52):

No, just one class.

Gus Nolan (02:54):

It was small, it has grown since. Now there are many of those classes,

Gary Smith (02:59):

No cafeteria. So you couldn't eat at the school. You either had to go home for lunch or bring a lunch with you. Teachers used to do their lunch at the Brown Derby.

Gus Nolan (03:08):

Oh, yeah. Is that open in those days?

Gary Smith (03:10):

It was open in those days. And continues today.

Gus Nolan (03:13):

Yes, I understand. Some people will go there who went to Marist. Tell me more about your interest in grade school. Were there any sports? Did you play outside? Did you play football, baseball, or anything like that?

Gary Smith (03:25):

I was never much of an athlete. I was more, organized activities, newspaper, yearbook, those kinds of things. I edited a newspaper in elementary school, and that prepared me for later years when I helped to edit the newspaper at Marist College. And I also did clubs and activities. I graduated well in my class, from elementary school onto Poughkeepsie High School, where I played a leadership role. I was president of student government.

Gus Nolan (04:01):

How big is the school?

Gary Smith (04:03):

Poughkeepsie High School at that time was about 1500 as I best recall.

Gus Nolan (04:10):

So two or three classes freshman? There wouldn't be 500 in a class?

Gary Smith (04:15):

Oh, my class was only about 500. But the entire school was about 1200, 1400. Okay. And at Poughkeepsie High School I joined the rowing team. I was a one of the coxswain on the, the Poughkeepsie High School crew. And in fact, I was on the crew team at the time when the boathouse burnt down on the Hudson River. And we lost two of the three boat houses that we used. And my rowing days at Poughkeepsie High School prepared me well for my days at Marist College were I and John Mylod and Jim Callahan formed the Marist Scholar Rowing club.

Gus Nolan ([04:56](#)):

Oh, very good. Now go back a little bit, there's a book out called The Boys in the Boat.

Gary Smith ([05:02](#)):

Yes, sir.

Gus Nolan ([05:03](#)):

Which deals with the regatta on the Hudson.

Gary Smith ([05:05](#)):

Yes, sir.

Gus Nolan ([05:06](#)):

Did you row on the Hudson? Is that where you rowed?

Gary Smith ([05:09](#)):

Yes, we rowed on the Hudson and nowadays in talking to the crew coach now, apparently they don't have too many races here anymore because of the conditions. But, we had in high school, a phenomenal crew coach, a fellow named Joe Catanzaro, who was born and raised in Poughkeepsie, knew the river well. And he knew the tides, how the tides ran, how to read the river, taught it to us as, as Coxswain. And as a result of that, we always had an advantage over competing teams because we could read the river. We knew which way the tides were beginning to change, and the tides always change on the shores, and then move towards the center. So we knew if we were in a race, we would want to get a position on the shore side so that we could compete and have an advantage.

Gus Nolan ([05:56](#)):

Would you think that was honest in those days?

Gary Smith ([05:59](#)):

It was, it was, it was inventive <laugh>. And then when we came to Marist, we were looking for a crew coach, and we had a couple of temporary coaches, and then we brought Joe Catanzaro from Poughkeepsie High School to Marist, and he was the crew coach at Marist for a while,

Gus Nolan ([06:18](#)):

Straighten something out for me, when did you come to Marist? About what year do we know?

Gary Smith ([06:22](#)):

1959.

Gus Nolan ([06:24](#)):

1959? Yes. Can you describe the campus? What dormitories was there?

Gary Smith ([06:31](#)):

Let me back up a smidge. I was again, I was a kid raised in Poughkeepsie, and down at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church was a wonderful young priest named Father Aldo Tos, T, O, S. And Aldo made himself known to a lot of the kids in the neighborhood. He befriended me, and I came from a rather poor family, and he saw potential in me to go to school. But I told him I can't afford to go to school, there's no place I can go. And Aldo said, there's a new school opening up the street. He said, the Marist Brothers are taking the seminary and introducing young lay students to the program, and you can go to school there. So Aldo Toss literally took me by the hand, put me in his car, drove me to Marist, which at that time was Marian College. And introduced me to a wonderful brother, Brother John Malachy.

Gus Nolan ([07:33](#)):

I know him, he was in my class.

Gary Smith ([07:35](#)):

Brother John Malachy was a supreme human being. And he sat with me with patience and decorum. And I told him my story, and he said that, I said, Brother John, I don't have the grades to go to Marist College. He said, Gary, we're a new school and we need something more than people with academic honors. He said, you've had a leadership role in Poughkeepsie High School. There are things that you could bring to Marist that we need, and therefore, I think we're gonna take a chance and bring you in here. And knock me over with a feather, but there I was a freshman student at Marist College, and true to my good friend Brother John, I did not wanna let him down. I did indeed participate in creating a yearbook, creating a newspaper, creating a crew team. The

Gus Nolan ([08:30](#)):

The Reynard

Gary Smith ([08:31](#)):

The Reynard and the newspaper was Reynard's Record.

Gus Nolan ([08:35](#)):

Oh, before the Circle, well Donnelly wasn't up yet.

Gary Smith ([08:39](#)):

Donnelly was not.

Gus Nolan ([08:40](#)):

We were starting, Donnelly was in the making

Gary Smith ([08:41](#)):

As we walked through, I was telling the kids that our entire library was the second and third floor of Greystone. And the bottom floor was where we did the newspaper and the yearbook, and all the student activities. That was it. And then when Donnelley was built, did you participate in the construction of Donnelley?

Gus Nolan ([09:05](#)):

In a very small way, because I built the chapel first. These hands, these hands, built the chapel. They say the good is up there, and up there on the, careful brother not to fall! <laugh> You know, you got a lot of good advice, you know, about running it, you know, I was out in teaching at that time at St. Anne's Academy, and in 1958, I come back to teach in Esopus, which is where the other part of was.

Gary Smith ([09:37](#)):

Yes, across the river.

Gus Nolan ([09:39](#)):

But I don't wanna take up your story. The business of, were you a commuter student?

Gary Smith ([09:48](#)):

I was a commuter student. In those days we went to what became Adrian Lounge. Nilas Donnelly,

Gus Nolan ([09:59](#)):

That was your lunch room

Gary Smith ([10:00](#)):

Nilus Donnelly had his office and quarters in part of the building. And the rest of the building was tables and chairs where the guys could come. We parked in the outdoor basketball courts became our parking lot. Yeah. And we hung out there and waited for our classes. And then we would either walk to Fontaine Hall, which was adjacent to the library. And then we would either have classes there. And then we watched Donnelly go up and, and I think it was my second year that we finally got into Donnelly Hall. Yeah. Maybe even my third year. I don't remember.

Gus Nolan ([10:37](#)):

And that was at the beginning, there was a dormitory on the bottom floor, and there was a cafeteria that was also part of that.

Gary Smith ([10:43](#)):

Well, strangely enough the dormitory days at Marist College start way before that. In my class, we started, we had the first resident students, and there were about a half a dozen of them. And Brother Paul Stokes

Gus Nolan ([11:05](#)):

The Sheriff,

Gary Smith ([11:06](#)):

Everybody rolls their eyes at Brother Paul Stokes. He was a little bit of a Gestapo. He was about two feet, nothing. But boy did he have a temper. And Brother Paul Stokes went downtown to Poughkeepsie and negotiated with the Campbell Hotel on Cannon Street, and negotiated for rooms for the dormitory students. And we got six, eight a dozen boys into the Campbell Hotel, which was the first resident halls from Marist College. One afternoon, some of the boys were frisky, and the boys on the fifth floor were swinging a lamp out the window, trying to swing it into the room of the boys on the fourth floor. Well they lost it, the bag, the lamp fell down into the streets, crashed into the streets, and Brother Paul Stokes got the phone call and faster than you could shake a lemon, we took those boys out of the Campbell Hotel and back in those days, there was a big wooden structure. If you, I can best describe it, if you're sitting in the visitor's stands at the football field, the roadway is behind you. And then across the roadway was a building. We called it St. Mary's. But I'm not sure if it was St. Mary's. You probably have a different name for it. It was an old wooden structure. And what Brother Paul did, <laugh>, he took the first floor of that wooden structure, and he put up partitions, and each partition had a bed, a dresser, and a desk and an open wall. And Brother Proctor would walk up and down the corridor, back and forth to make sure the boys were in their respective places doing their work. And that was the first resident hall on campus.

Gus Nolan ([12:56](#)):

Plus a sink at the end of the hallway where you <laugh>, where you brushed your teeth and you washed your socks in the same...

Gary Smith ([13:03](#)):

I didn't live there, again, I was a commuter student. But half a dozen of my friends from Albany and New York and Long Island were in there.

Gus Nolan ([13:15](#)):

I missed that part, I've forgotten about it. Okay. Back to, I was going to ask, why did you ever come to Marist? I mean, we weren't even known at that time, but, you know, Father Tos taught here too.

Gary Smith ([13:30](#)):

He did.

Gus Nolan ([13:30](#)):

He was highly esteemed by the students because he was a holy man, an intelligent man, you know, and a kind man. And so for all those reasons, we, you know, we really honored him and the work he did. Jen, say a few words from your perspective about maybe college at that time, what did he say? Et cetera.

Jan Stivers ([13:54](#)):

We want, we're gonna stay in this part one. Yeah. So tell us about the relationships that you developed there. Were there friendships that were meaningful to you? Were there any that endured?

Gary Smith ([14:07](#)):

Endured, no. I kind of believe that "greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friend." And there aren't a lot of people I'm willing to die for <laugh>. So I had a lot of acquaintances, a lot of

great guys that I knew, a lot of people that I enjoyed being with. But time has taken a toll and people have gone to different parts of the world, et cetera. So I haven't maintained many of those relationships.

Jan Stivers ([14:36](#)):

How about faculty or administrators that you've felt

Gary Smith ([14:39](#)):

Loved, loved, loved, loved the relationships I had with those people.

Gus Nolan ([14:44](#)):

Okay. Let me give you some names. Did you know George Summer?

Gary Smith ([14:49](#)):

George Summer? Yes. Absolutely. <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([14:53](#)):

I don't wanna go into detail. John Schroder?

Gary Smith ([14:56](#)):

Let me go back to George Summer. Back in the day. Now, you'll know this, back in the day on the north side of the campus, we had chicken coops and pigpens. And there was a pond out there that we used to refer to as the cool school pool. <affirmative>, that was the first Marist pool. In the pig pens there was a huge, huge pig that the students, George never knew it, but the students affectionately called George. That was George. Yes. George Summers, yes I knew, I knew Schroeder, John Schroeder. I didn't know John that well. He was the dean of the night program.

Gus Nolan ([15:32](#)):

Don Drennan, was he here yet?

Gary Smith ([15:36](#)):

Dr. D.A. Drennan. Dr. Drennan. Yes, sir.

Gus Nolan ([15:38](#)):

Were you ever in any of the book wearing ceremonies at the end of the semester?

Gary Smith ([15:42](#)):

No, I was not. That was, that was after I left, actually.

Gus Nolan ([15:46](#)):

I just, those names came back to me.

Gary Smith ([15:50](#)):

How about Roscoe Balch? Do you remember?

Gus Nolan ([15:53](#)):

Oh, history, your back to History now...

Gary Smith ([15:54](#)):

I was a history major, and Roscoe was a wonderful man. And did you know Roscoe well?

Jan Stivers ([16:01](#)):

I did. Yes.

Gary Smith ([16:02](#)):

I always referred to Roscoe as the Absentminded professor, because he was the epitome of the absent-minded professor forever looking for his briefcase. And what did I do with my hat and whatnot? Roscoe took a liking to me because he fell in love with a paper I did. My senior thesis, he wanted me to publish very, very badly, and I never did. And by the way, I still have it. I did a thesis on a comparative analysis between the Manual of Discipline of the Essenes of Qumran, and the Rule of St. Benedict. And I showed a continuity of monasticism from the Essenes all the way up to St. Benedict, and quoted my sources, et cetera. Roscoe loved it. He wanted me to publish that so bad, because at the time, you're talking late fifties, The Dead Sea Scrolls had just been discovered. Yeah. And it was, WOW, what's going on here? And today, I don't know, somebody may have done something more with that piece of work, but I'd be curious about that.

Gus Nolan ([17:08](#)):

I'll just add a note to ask the Professor. I followed him in teaching, at the end of the semester, the term papers were turned in. I'm surprised he ever read yours because, there was a pile them that he left at the desk, and I picked them up and brought them to him. Well, he's the most sorry guy in the world to find that I brought the <laugh> to papers to him. I think he's passed on, so it wouldn't really, he wouldn't be scandalized while by telling a truth story immediate really happened. But, uh, he was absentminded, maybe purposefully at times. I don't know. But he was a genuine, he was real historian, that's for sure. You know,

Gary Smith ([17:48](#)):

I had a great story about Richard Amsel. Ziggy

Gus Nolan ([17:53](#)):

Ziggy, the piano player. <laugh>

Gary Smith ([17:56](#)):

Ziggy was a strange character because he knew what he was talking about. But God bless you, if you could understand what he was talking about.

Gus Nolan ([18:05](#)):

Well he was from Lawrence, Massachusetts, that's a little town up there that's uh...

Gary Smith ([18:10](#)):

And then you take him and ask him to teach metaphysics. And in those days, we were required to take four years of theology, three years of philosophies. So we had to have all of this religious studies, and Ziggy taught us metaphysics. We were sitting in the Adrian Lounge waiting for our exam to take place. And three of my cohorts said, come on, Gar, it's time to go to take the exam. And we took the exam in the upstairs section of the old library. Look down,

Gus Nolan ([18:46](#)):

Down there is the dining hall

Gary Smith ([18:48](#)):

We took the, my mother worked in that dining hall. We took, we were going to take the exam. And I said, no, I'm not going. Well, what do you mean you're not going? I said, I'm not gonna take the exam. I said, I didn't understand a word that man said the entire semester. I couldn't begin. Come on, guys we gotta go. None of us. We're all in the same boat. Let's go. Some of my crew buddies, literally, now you gotta remember, I was on a crew team. I was 120 pounds. Yeah. Some of these big crew guys literally picked me up and carried me up the hill to take this examination. Well, don't you know, I gotta B! <Laugh> I just wrote in the book, just kept writing paper. And, and I got a B on the exam. So that was Ziggy. He was act in potency, those are the two things that I remember.

Jan Stivers ([19:34](#)):

Well, that's great if you can remember it fifty years later. Wow.

Gus Nolan ([19:39](#)):

He's another one of my classmates.

Gary Smith ([19:43](#)):

Ziggy was?

Gus Nolan ([19:44](#)):

Yeah. We were in the same profession group. And of course, he's a good singer too, in his own right. Do me it my way. He did, he did it his way, I must say.

Gary Smith ([19:56](#)):

Now, George Summer was a piano player as well, and the two of them used to have

Gus Nolan ([20:01](#)):

Competition. Yes. But some people want to turn the cover down on George's hands. Oh, yeah. Because they were like, he was just pounding away. No sense of music, but he knew the chords. So let's face it. I'm taking your view, your voice from you.

Jan Stivers ([20:19](#)):

After college. You ready to move on to after college?

Gus Nolan ([20:22](#)):

Yeah, yeah, after college.

Jan Stivers ([20:23](#)):

Because we're, we're at one 30.

Gus Nolan ([20:24](#)):

Well, we gotta go to the Air Force. Well, that's after college.

Jan Stivers ([20:27](#)):

After college, yeah.

Gary Smith ([20:28](#)):

Yes. Military. I, again, I graduated from Marist in 63. And things weren't much different than they are today. Young guy, looking around, what do I do with the rest of my life? Where do you go? What do you do? Jobs aren't available.

Gus Nolan ([20:46](#)):

Was there any war on at that time?

Gary Smith ([20:47](#)):

No. No. Well, the Vietnamese war was in its infancy.

Gus Nolan ([20:50](#)):

Oh, I see.

Gary Smith ([20:52](#)):

In Poughkeepsie, if you didn't work for IBM, you didn't have a job. I mean, Western Printing was there in Schatz Federal, and a few factories around. But for the most part, IBM was the place people looked to go to work. And I didn't particularly get excited about computers in those days, didn't want any part of it. Looked around, thought about it, and said, you know, my father said, "Gar, I can't do anything to help you, go in the service. They'll make a man outta you." I said, okay. So I indeed had my degree, and the Air Force offered me, three months officer training school, and they would commission me as a second lieutenant, which I did. And went through officers training school in San Antonio was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, and served for almost five years. I did, I was on a radar site on a mountain in Minnesota where the temperature was 40 below zero, and the winds blew through the night, the snow was so deep I walked out of our officer's quarters out of the second story and walked down on top of the snow from the fire escape, because we couldn't get out the first floor doors. The snow was so deep. Spent my time there. And then from there, I went to Germany and two of my three children were born in Germany. I did time in a place called Celle, C E L L E, which is a small, medieval town in North Germany. And then I went down to Southern Germany and spent another three years down there. And then we came home. Oh, yeah. Came home, looked around and said, what do we do now? And I said, well, if I'm gonna go to work, I might as well go to work for IBM. And I searched and searched, and I had a brother-in-law that was well established in IBM, and he tried to lay some groundwork for me, and he couldn't get anything for me. And someone said, you ever tried the sales office down on Fox Street in Poughkeepsie? No. So I went down to Fox Street in Poughkeepsie where

the IBM sales office was walked in the door, and I asked if I could speak to a manager. And a very delightful man named Vince Coughlin came out, sat me down, introduced me, and he said, you know, military background, he said, you make a great peddler. Come on. Go to work for us. So I went to work for IBM, and I stayed with them for 30 years.

Jan Stivers ([23:18](#)):

And you sold computers? mainframes?

Gary Smith ([23:21](#)):

No, no. I was never in the, I was in the office products line. So I sold typewriters, dictating equipment, office, copying machines, those kinds of things. <affirmative>. And, uh, and then at the very end of my career, I was, uh, in marketing management. And in those days, I was dealing with trade show operations and show and tell all around the world with a group of young folks that work for me. And that's when we get into some of the smaller personal computers. And then I retired. And, uh,

Gus Nolan ([23:54](#)):

Would you say some of your friends from high school went to IBM right away? <affirmative>. And then when you went into IBM, had they advanced very much, or, you know, in other words, wish there were much of a ladder for progression in IBM. You came in with this background of the military, and you had your diploma from college. So those two things kind of put you in a new area, I suppose.

Gary Smith ([24:18](#)):

Yeah, I think most of the kids back in the fifties went to work for IBM, were, non-college <affirmative>. Most of them were in assembly and manufacturing, <affirmative> and my route was to go into marketing and sales. And at that time, you had to have a degree, <affirmative> to sell. And in addition to that, the military training, at one point in time I was a commanding officer. So with my officer experience, my commanding officer experience, and with my tenure overseas, it was attractive to this marketing manager and said, come on, go to work.

Gus Nolan ([24:59](#)):

I'm gonna step back just for one second here. Describe your graduation from Marist.

Gary Smith ([25:05](#)):

<laugh>,

Gus Nolan ([25:07](#)):

Considering the weekend that we're in. Without a field out there.

Gary Smith ([25:12](#)):

Nope. My graduation day is a little bit fuzzy, but back in that day, you'll remember that the gymnasium, what is now Marian. Yeah. The Marian building back in that day was a gymnasium and <laugh>. And off to the sides of the gymnasium, there were adjunct structures. Brother Tarsisus had his print shop there.

Gus Nolan ([25:41](#)):

Print shop was there and Garages on the other side

Gary Smith ([25:43](#)):

Garages and landscaping, and all of that stuff was off to the side. And a couple of classrooms. In fact, that's where George Summer conducted most of his English classes was in a little side building of that building. It was a multipurpose building. We did play basketball games there in the very early days. But it was a peanut sized building, and there was no room for seating. There was a stage, uh, and our commencement took place in Marian, in the gymnasium where the entire graduating class, and all of their families, and all of the resident brothers, and all of the staff, and all of the faculty, were all inside the gymnasium. So if you look out on that vast common out there today, you know, contrast, a fraction of that would fit. And I think if my memory serves me, our commencement speaker was Cardinal Spellman. I think. I could be wrong.

Gus Nolan ([26:44](#)):

Could be, could be. He came up and spoke on one of those things, and he made a big contribution to the Marist Brothers, \$5,000. Wow. And it was said that it didn't even pay for the beer for the summer <laugh>, for the work group that was up here, you know? So that's it, I'm gonna be quiet. You go back again.

Jan Stivers ([27:07](#)):

So, I'm gonna advance this back to your career. You've given us a clear picture of how your military training, your officer training.

Gary Smith ([27:18](#)):

Yes, ma'am.

Jan Stivers ([27:18](#)):

Shaped you for success at IBM. Can you see a way that your Marist education had a role in, in your working life?

Gary Smith ([27:29](#)):

Sure. I have always said, and I can go back as far as forever, the benefit that Marist paid for me was, it taught me how to think. And again, my friend George Summer may have been the one to say, you know, we just want to teach you how to think, use your brain. The liberal arts education you're going to get here is going to teach you how to think, how to reason, how to rationalize, how to put thoughts together and be a better person. And with the background of the Marist Brothers in teaching morals and values and right and wrong, those concrete blocks were the foundation. And then good professors, quality people, like, you know, subsequent, not to me, but in subsequent years, guys like Lou Zuccarello, and I'm thinking of the chemistry, Andrew Malachy, and LaPietra, Malloy...

Jan Stivers ([28:32](#)):

Andrew Malloy,

Gary Smith ([28:34](#)):

Those good quality people giving you a real strong foundation. And then get the hell outta here and become something, you know, go do something. I mean, you go back to my earliest days, Marist was Marian. It was a seminary. It was that spooky place behind the stone wall that nobody knew what was

going on. I remember when I went to the board of trustees subsequently, one of the first things that the board, the lay board told Linus Foy, tear down that wall. Tear the wall down, because we gotta open this up. You've got, people have got to see what's behind here. And sure enough, once they did it, oh, I mean, I don't know how many times a Poughkeepsie boy had to tell people, I go to Marist College. No, I'm not gonna be a Brother, no, I'm not gonna be a priest. You go to seminary. No, it's not a seminary. It's a liberal arts college. No.

Gus Nolan ([29:32](#)):

There were brothers here <affirmative> in training, but you were in different, you still went to the same classes. Of course that's, was part of the complaint. I mean, you had social life, then you had a job to do, and you went home. These guys just stayed on campus, and all they did was study and be quiet and pray. And then they come back and study. And he went to class.

Gary Smith ([29:55](#)):

But, Brother Kieran, brother Kieran Brennan got even with us. Because every day when the Brothers said rosary and walked to the campus saying, rosary, he made the lay students follow along behind. So we had to be a part of that.

Gus Nolan ([30:09](#)):

I don't remember that part of it, but he was, his own way. Tough enough. Yes.

Jan Stivers ([30:16](#)):

Can we move to how you came to serve on the Board and your, your service on the Board?

Gary Smith ([30:21](#)):

After I left Germany and came back home in 1968, established myself at IBM, became somewhat successful as a salesman, Linus Foy was the president, and it was a mixed board of Lay and Brothers. And they were moving more toward a lay board. And it was suggested that the board seek some established graduates and bring them into the board as not to represent the student body, not to represent the graduates, not to represent alumni, but to be of that ilk. You've got the experience. You came from Marist. It's only fitting that you come back now to the board. So the call went out, the alumni association was asked to submit nominees. And my good friend Bobby Finn, who is still active in the city of Poughkeepsie, Bob Finn, put my name in and, and knew me personally, knew that I was successful at IBM, knew my military career, knew the success I had at Marist in establishing so many of the basic things that were created. He put my name forward. Linus knew me, and knew me well, and could reinforce the nomination. And so at that time, three names were brought forward. Gary Smith, Jerry Dahowski, and Richard, Dick Cole. Oh, Richard Cole. So we were the three alumni names Dick Cole, being from IBM in an executive position, myself, Jerry Dahowski, being from finance. And we came forward and sat on the board. I served for 20 years, over 20 years. Wow. And Dahowski, apparently is still on the board. And Dick Cole, may he rest in peace. God bless him. He was a good and wonderful man. The intent was that we would serve a term and then rotate additional alums through over years. I served for 20. And I can remember the meeting specifically when Jack Gartland and Dennis Murray called me to a side room and said, Gary, you've been on the board for 20 years. We want to try to start to rotate the board, so we're not gonna appoint you to another term. Well, I live in Florida now, it's a little bit difficult to get back and forth. That's fine. I'm okay with that. So I walked away.

Gus Nolan ([33:02](#)):

<affirmative>. Okay. Go back a little bit though. You were on the ward for part of the development of the campus. How about the McCann Center? Were you there for the construction?

Gary Smith ([33:16](#)):

Two of my crowning jewels in my tenure as a trustee, my first crowning jewel was to be asked by the board to serve as chairman of the capital campaign to raise money for the McCann Center. So I served as the chairman of the capital campaign for McCann. And, worked hard along with Tom Wade and Shaileen Kopek and those people. We worked hard to, to raise.

Jan Stivers ([33:46](#)):

How much did you raise? Oh, do you remember?

Gary Smith ([33:50](#)):

Jan, there's a little number way in the back of my mind that's saved....

Jan Stivers ([33:54](#)):

And it will come out tonight at midnight.

Gary Smith ([33:55](#)):

It's saying 7 million, but I don't remember. Think that was about it.

Gus Nolan ([34:02](#)):

Wasn't Jack Gartland bringing some of the McCann Foundation money into the operation as well?

Gary Smith ([34:07](#)):

Oh, yeah. That's why the building is named after them.

Gus Nolan ([34:11](#)):

I figured there might be some relationship.

Gary Smith ([34:13](#)):

Yeah. Mr. McCann was an interesting character. And people, that are far more qualified people to talk about him than I. But, as a native of Poughkeepsie, I remember that he had a feed and grain store up on Main Street in Poughkeepsie, and he was a man of modest means, but saved an awful lot of money and invested it well. And Jack Gartland had the good fortune of becoming his trustee. His trustee and as a result, the rest became history. The second thing that I did during my tenure on the board that was a hallmark, Linus one day, in a rather embarrassing place, mentioned to me that, "Gar, this is my last meeting as president. I'm gonna retire from the board, and retire from the presidency." And I was shocked, dismayed. And we had to find a new president. And so the board came to me and said, would you be willing, we had gone through a whole bunch of resumes and people, and got it down to two or three candidates. One of the candidates was a very young vice president for development out in California. And so Tom Casey and I, Tom Casey, representing the faculty and I representing the board, flew out to California and interviewed a young man in California, met the president of the college, the

trustees of the college, toured the campus, and came back to Marist with a recommendation that they hire Dennis Murray. And the rest is history.

Gus Nolan ([35:57](#)):

Years later, he's still involved

Jan Stivers ([36:02](#)):

So Gus asked you about the development of the physical plant mechanics. Tell me your perspective as a board member on the development of the programs.

Gary Smith ([36:15](#)):

Let me do a quick flashback. Prior to anything, I was a young kid, not even a teenager. And there was a man in Poughkeepsie who, a lovely man who gathered up young boys and took poor kids out and played games and taught us how to climb trees and whatnot. And he brought us up to this place when it was a seminary. And that was my first introduction. And this was a forest, I mean, nothing. <affirmative> a cemetery down at south end of the campus <affirmative>, a path to say the Rosary and Greystone and a couple of other buildings to watch it grow over the years, I mean, we as a board said, we're never gonna be a college of more than 4,000 students. We're never gonna grow off the campus. Our facilities are gonna be constrained to within this a hundred acres. And that's it. And we're gonna resign ourselves to the fact that we're gonna be a good quality Catholic institution. As time goes by, we discovered that you couldn't get your Bundy Aid unless you disavowed your relationship. So we had to become a lay board. <affirmative> and disavowed that. So then one thing led to another. Dennis came in. Dennis had a vision, and I will complement the man too, with my dying breath. He had a vision. He wanted this to be a high quality school. If he could, he would've made it one of the, you know, one of the Ivy League schools. Ivy, if nothing else, Little Ivy League. And he worked very hard to make that happen. Brought in quality teaching educational facilities, second to none, a campus on a river. Gorgeous. I mean, it's just the number of people come here just to stand and look down and say, this is beautiful. I've gotta come here.

Gus Nolan ([38:15](#)):

We got Hudson. Yeah.

Gary Smith ([38:17](#)):

And then he was smart enough to establish, Linus actually established a relationship with IBM. The IBM relationship endowed the school with, I mean, I can still remember Linus Foy bringing in the very first 1401 computer And learning himself how to program it so they could teach the Brothers how to program the computer. And now look, I mean, what was here? So to watch that growth over my 20 years as a trustee was a little bit overwhelming. Every time you turned around, we were gonna build another building. You know, let's do Lowell Thomas. Well, let's do Dyson.

Gus Nolan ([38:56](#)):

But I would have disagreed with you, when you were on the board I thought Linus made the move to secularize it in terms of well, two things. One is the religious aspects of it, because all the schools now have gone to their board. The Marist Brothers are not responsible for the school. <affirmative>, if the school gets sued, it's not the Marist Brothers, it's that board that will have to answer it, you know? <affirmative>. And the same thing for the college. You know, it wouldn't be able to, college student to

sometimes carry on and sometimes there can be difficulties. And Linus didn't want the Brothers to have to pay for misbehavior of the college. So, I mean, he was a personal friend, our weddings, our girlfriends and so on, were very compatible. And so, that's why I bring Linus' part back to it. But the other part is the decision making. He also helped, Nilus make the decision, you know, Nilus, the cement block wall, he says tear it down. But he got that from the board to do that. Another part was they were gonna build Champagnat out there in the strawberry fields. And Nilus said by the time we get to the bottom of the rocks it will be way down. Why don't we just put it out there on the Hudson? You know? So there was, yeah, go ahead. No, lot of conferences, research. No, you know, just do it. That's was kind of the can do <laugh> and did it, you know, and that's sort part of it. Uh, again,

Jan Stivers (40:37):

Gary, you were talking about what you looked at over your 20 years on the board, but also before that. So I want to tap into that perspective, that long perspective again. And I wanna ask you how you think the public profile of Marist has changed over? Well, you've been watching it for 60 years.

Gary Smith (40:58):

if you again, reflect back onto the grand Wall that went around this mysterious property, take it from that perspective to today where, you know, the president has a regular sighting of community leaders where activities take place on campus that are renowned. <affirmative>, where leaders of the arts, leaders of literature come to the campus on a regular basis and come here because it's got a reputation. It's got a, you know, people are knowledgeable of Marist College back in the early days. Marist College. Where's that? What's that? What, what is that? Where, where, where is that? Yeah. Marist again. Marian. Marian College. Yeah. So from to where they are today, I mean, again, look out at that field. Look out there, those people jammed into that, that quad out there. To give degrees to their, their posterity and, and their children.

Jan Stivers (42:08):

I'm gonna, I'm gonna hop right onto that. So if you were speaking to tomorrow's graduates, what would you reassure them about?

Gary Smith (42:19):

Take advantage of what you've learned here. And if nothing else, I hope you walk outta here with the knowledge that you can think. <affirmative>, you are a thinking. <affirmative> back in my day. You're a thinking man. <affirmative> You are a thinking person. You're capable of going out and thinking for yourself, figuring things out, and becoming a better human, a more moral person, a good human being, taking a better place in the world. You got the tools to do it. Yeah.

Jan Stivers (42:54):

That is reassuring. That's very reassuring. What would you urge them to spend more time doing or less time doing? Well, and I can frame that question a little differently. As you look back, what do you wish you had spent more time doing or less time doing in your early post Marist years?

Gary Smith (43:17):

My legacy, probably My legacy is sitting next to me.

Jan Stivers (43:24):

<laugh>. On both sides.

Gary Smith (43:26):

And I'm gonna tear up, I can't be more proud of her and him, and well, would I have done differently? Not a thing. Not a thing.

Gus Nolan (43:43):

How about the question, Wall Street Journal.

Jan Stivers (43:46):

Wall Street Journal reports in a survey that 56% of American adults do not think that college education is worth the cost. What do you say to that?

Gary Smith (43:57):

I would begin to think that maybe that's true. Maybe, you know, maybe two monks in an open field with a good book could serve the same purpose that I think is important.<affirmative> become a good human being. Learn to think for yourself. If that's what I believe, then, you know, do you need the infrastructure? Do you need the millions and millions of dollars spent on buildings and you know, a teacher has to endow themselves to take care of their family. They have demands that they need to meet. And as a result of that, when you get away from, you know, when you get away from the John Malachy of the world, and guys who are willing to sacrifice to give you everything that they possibly can to make you a better person. Yeah. You make it a business. And when it becomes a business, it becomes competitive. And to be competitive, you need the infrastructure. You need the teams, you need the football, you need the crew. You need all of that stuff to be competitive, to attract people in and all, and that costs money,

Jan Stivers (45:14):

Especially since we're so..

Gus Nolan (45:15):

If you just wanted to make money, if money is your end goal, you know, get a good job as a steam fitter, as a mechanic, you know, go to some kind of, open a McDonald's or something. You could get a franchise, you know, <laugh>. I mean, there's a lot of money in that kind of thing. But, there's a difference between learning how to make a living and learning how to live. <affirmative>, you know, what do you do after you go home?

Jan Stivers (45:45):

Well, I've got a question related to that. So what kinds of skills should we try to develop in our young people, in our Marist grads, that will help them to be the people who run our government, who do our healthcare, who propel our economy, thinking for themselves? That's one thing I, that's been a theme for you.

Gary Smith (46:07):

I think the skills that are needed can only be amplified by the bricks and mortar by the institution. Because the real skills they need have gotta begin with mom and dad at the dinner table. It's gotta begin

with, let's go to church this Sunday. Yeah. Church? Yeah. You know, Richie LaMorte, God bless him. I love the man. He's probably my very best friend in the world. Oh, wow. Richie LaMorte you know, he used to go the chapel and the room would be full. And now,

Jan Stivers ([46:47](#)):

Well, I go to the 6:30 mass here on, and he's, he says it, and he's wonderful. And he's a draw. He remains a draw. Are you, you know what I'm talking about? <affirmative>.

Gary Smith ([46:57](#)):

Definitely. It's, you know, those, you've gotta teach kids to be good humans at home. <affirmative>, once they learn how to be good humans, then, then you can bring 'em into a place like Marist and teach 'em to be good thinking humans. <affirmative> good learning humans, good skilled humans. How do we become a good leader? I mean, it's a liberal arts institution. You can paint in any color you want. It's a liberal arts institution. Yeah. It'll always be a liberal arts. It's not a tech school. It's not an engineering school. Sure. You can have a medical element to it. You can start a nursing program. It's a liberal arts school, and a liberal arts education teaches young people how to think and how to be leaders. So you get a job, you go out, you know, this young man wants to be in broadcasting. Did he learn the basic skills here to do that? Absolutely. Did he establish some relationships with people that can help him? Absolutely. Now it's up to him. He's gotta go out, find the job, establish himself, teach, show people that he's worth the investment that they wanna make in him, and grow and become a successful person. So Marist has got to enhance the skills that they bring here when they come. And if they don't have those skills, I don't know where they, they're gonna end up in McDonald's and <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([48:22](#)):

The investment is the one that kills them. Is college worth the investment? There's a money investment, there's a time investment, there's an effort, there's a relationship, you know, and all of those things, you know, they come back to roost, you know, a hundred times over. I have friends <laugh>. Well, the Brotherhood is always my background, so I have, I'm 90 years old. I have friends. The young fellows are only 80. Yeah. <laugh>, excuse me, <laugh>. But, this is the kind of background I have had to have, you know, in terms of learning. But you have managed to say the same thing in so many other ways, you know, your career at IBM, your experience in the Air Force, the decision to serve, you know, rather than just hang around, you know?

Gary Smith ([49:17](#)):

Gus, one thing I've said over the 60 years, when I came to Marist College, it was a commuter school. There were 24 guys in my class. My tuition was \$200 a semester for tuition. And I got a degree from Marist College. This young man is graduating from Marist College tomorrow with the same degree that I had. Is his degree any more valuable than mine was? Is mine any more valuable than his? I got the same one.

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

Depends on what he does with it.

Gary Smith ([50:02](#)):

Same piece of paper.

Jan Stivers ([50:03](#)):

Depends on the investment each student makes. .

Gary Smith ([50:06](#)):

I feel bad for him because he didn't know John Malachy. He didn't know Brother Paul Fontaine, didn't know those people. Well,

Jan Stivers ([50:15](#)):

We've got our own. And we got our own list of heroes.

Gus Nolan ([50:19](#)):

I mean, she was here teaching, you know, and I don't, I was here farther and you were teaching here, you know, so, John Malachy was in my class. So, he actually died on my birthday. If you really wanna know the detail, you know, it just happened that those lines fell out that way. We've been talking a lot, and you have certainly responded so well to all the stuff we put on the table. What are some things you'd like to say that we didn't ring up, or maybe you wish you had asked me there. So, something you might want to say that, this is gonna be recorded in the Marist history, and it's not what the historians are saying. It's what you are saying. You're saying now that's going into this record. So something you might want to say that, what does Marist need that it doesn't have, or does it have that needs to be taken away? Anything like that?

Gary Smith ([51:21](#)):

No, I, I had the good fortune of being part of the beginning and standing back and watching it grow. And throughout the entire process, I've had the good fortune of children. Her, her brother, nephews, nieces, my grandson, my other grandson, all of them had an opportunity to participate in something that I was part of the foundation of. <affirmative>.

Jan Stivers ([51:57](#)):

And that's very gratifying.

Gary Smith ([51:59](#)):

I alluded to it before, my mother brother, Kieran Thomas was looking for some help to help in the refractory for the student brothers. And my mother had experience in working cafeterias. She and another woman, Marge Button, were hired by Marist College to work in the refractory and help the student brothers in the cafeteria. If you think about that, there's my mother and myself. My wife was the assistant to the director of security at Marist. My daughter, my son, my grandson. We've had our legacy at Marist College is long and deep. Long and deep. We, and change anything? I wouldn't change anything. It's, it's, it's on a good path. I think the leadership of, of the college has been good. I don't know where the college goes now. Well, that's to be seen <affirmative>. Yeah. But, Linus Foy was a mathematician. Yeah. He was a good finance guy. He put the college on a strong financial ground. We, at the time, we were looking for a follow on to Linus, we were looking for someone to go outbound, go into the community, establish our roots deeper into the community. We need somebody who can develop the college. And we found someone.

Jan Stivers ([53:26](#)):

That's what we got.

Gary Smith ([53:27](#)):

And now, you know, where do we go from here, mom?

Gus Nolan ([53:30](#)):

Well, I, just where we are now, Kevin Weinman, at last year's graduation speaks, he talks about this spirit of Marist, the Marist Brothers was to do good quietly, you know, but to do good, you know? <affirmative>, that's kind of the part of it. The other thing, oh, we're gonna become a scientific on the computers kind of thing. He said, no, it's, it's a conjunction. You know, it's both the literary and the scientific. That's where he wants us to go, you know? And then the new little point that of course he made out for is a little bit more diversity. You know, we're more, you know, we need a little more color, you know? And of course, because we are tuition driven, who's gonna pay for it? So that's fair. The blind comes in, you know, but the ideal is there, open the door for more people to share what we have, you know? And I, enhance that. Okay. If Jennifer, what do you want to say ?

Jennifer Felice ([54:38](#)):

Well, it's funny when you talking about McCann. I have deep memories of McCann. Like I was at the opening of the McCann Center Oh, oh wow. In the seventies with my brother and my sister. I would go to crew races with my dad. I remember a train show that was in the Marian gym. Oh. You know, so I go way back. And so I just said, I grew up a red fox. And here, and watched it grow too. And I, there was no place else I wanted to be. So then when I came here and did that also, that giving back, I'm one of the founders of the Giving Tree. So, which celebrated its, that's a chapel thing, which celebrated its 30th anniversary last year. And I was able to come back and speak. And, you know, to say that Dr. Murray had said to me when I was here for a parent's weekend, he said, it's one of my favorite traditions on campus. So I thought, wow. We started a tradition. That's crazy. And we were just a group of kids. Who were taught, you gotta give back. And then to have him come, that was the icing on the cake.

Gus Nolan ([55:50](#)):

Let's turn the microphone to the broadcaster <laugh>. What do you see?

Robert ([55:54](#)):

My biggest reflection when I came to Marist, the first thing my grandfather said to me was, you're going to get an education. And that doesn't mean you're going to get straight A's. You're going to do this. You're going to do that. You're going to get an education. And during my time here, God, I'm tearing up now, dude, making emotional. During my time here, I learned how to make friends. I learned how to be an adult. <affirmative>, I learned how to live on my own. Pay bills have responsibility. I mean, this semester alone, I worked three jobs and I got a 4.0. So I learned how to balance my time and do all of those things outside of the classroom that you wouldn't necessarily, here's your textbook, this is how you learn this. But I came here and I'm walking away from Marist College, an adult ready to enter the world. And I got an education. And I am forever grateful to Marist for that opportunity. And I, when I came to Marist, I didn't want anyone to know who I was. Yeah. I get the legacy, whatever, but my mom and my grandfather know everyone here. But I'm gonna keep my head down. And that lasted about a couple weeks. First, once I found out I could get my car. But, I realized all of the amazing people that were here and the, the opportunities that were there to meet those people and to establish myself

within those people. And I looked at the impacts that my family made on this campus and thought to myself, how can I do the same? I want to get involved. I want to continue my family's legacy. Leave the lasting impact on this campus to help make it better. So that maybe one day, 30 years from now, perhaps my kid can turn around and have the same reflection. So I look at the things that he created that live on. I look at the things that she created that lived on, we spoke briefly as we walked in. This year a couple friends of mine, we started the Red Fox Report. It's a mini sports center segment that actually aired on ESPN during halftime of Marist athletic games. It is now, they've gone through a revision pro. Like we were the founding members. It was a little rocky. We had some hiccups. We now brought in younger members of the sports communication program that are going to be taking it over from us. They're going to grow it in for three, four years. So now it's going to be 10 times bigger than what we started. <affirmative> and under the direction of the new interim director of Sports Communication, Chris Riviezzo, so who is a producer at ESPN, like to know that these kids are now excited to step into that role that I helped create, just cuz we had a fun idea creation. That, that alone is, is so gratifying to me that that kid gets to take over that opportunity and get to have the same fun, the same enjoyment, the same learning, the same education that I had, simply because a group of friends. And I said, let's make this happen. Let's do this. And so I, I learned so much about myself, so much about the world and all of those things that are kind of unmeasurable beyond the classroom.

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

I always say the apples don't fall far from the tree, we gotta a whole grove of trees. <laugh>. Well, thank you very much. Thank you very, very much. It was such a pleasure. Thank you. And an honor, really, an honor. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.