

LINUS RICHARD FOY (Part I)

**Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
Transcribed by Jamie Edwards
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections**

Transcript – Linus Richard Foy (Part I)

Interviewee: Linus Richard Foy

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Summary: This interview covers the life and times of Linus Foy, Marist College's second official president. The interview gives a brief detail of his birth, then goes directly to his beginnings in the Marist community with the sort of subjects and teachers he had. After that, it transitions to his becoming the second president of Marist College. It covers some of his specific duties and objectives in the growth of the college and its many changes over the years. The first part of the interview ends with the construction of some of the dorms and the diversity that the college tried to achieve.

Gus Nolan: This is an interview conducted with the former President of Marist College Dr. Linus Foy. We are in the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room on the Marist College campus. The date is October 11th, 2001. It's the morning and the interviewer is Gus Nolan.

I think through the interview I will call you Dr. Foy, sometimes Linus, occasionally Richard [laughter], you're under three different names. What is your full name?

Linus Richard Foy: Linus Richard Daniel Foy.

GN: Were you named after another family member?

LRF: Not the Richard, no. The Daniel was after my uncle. That was my confirmation name. In those days you used to get a name at confirmation. I don't think that's the custom anymore.

GN: And where did the Linus come from?

LRF: When I became a brother you had to pick a name and I picked Linus because I admired Brother Linus William who had been the headmaster in Esopus. Also, in French it's Lin. And there were ten thousand brothers and you couldn't get a duplicate, so I was pretty sure if I asked for Linus Richard it wouldn't be duplicated.

GN: Nice choice. Where were you born and when?

LRF: In Wakefield section of the Bronx. November seventeenth, 1929. 684 East Thirty-seventh Street. I was born in a house. That was customary in those days.

GN: Have you any siblings?

LRF: One brother. Peter.

GN: And he is...he is--

LRF: --He's about two years older than me.

GN: And where is he now?

LRF: He's retired, lives in California.

GN: Where did he grow up?

LRF: In the Bronx, for the first...Wakefield is the section at the very north part of the Bronx.

GN: And did you have an elementary school in the Bronx or a private school?

LRF: Saint Francis of Rome. The Presentation Nuns, taught me all the arithmetic and English grammar that I needed to know.

GN: I believe that. Moving on to developments in your life now. What drew you to the Marist community?

LRF: I was recruited by, actually by a brother [Brother Joseph Damian] from Mount Saint Michael who came around and spoke to the eighth grade classes. And he used to give out tickets to the football games, which was helpful. And I signed a card and that summer Brother Gabriel Vincent came in to visit me and showed me some movies and he recruited my brother and myself to go up to Esopus.

GN: What year was that?

LRF: In 1942.

GN: You went to Esopus in 1942 as a freshman?

LRF: Yes.

GN: Beginning your high school career?

LRF: Correct.

GN: Can you summarize those years in Esopus? What was your take on it now sixty years later?

LRF: I think that first year was probably one of the years I remember most in my life. Recently, about ten years, ago, when “Annie” came out, my daughter used to say she wanted to live in a mansion. And I lived in a mansion. Esopus was an estate, which was built by Oliver Hazzard Payne, one of the founders of Standard Oil. It had been rundown when we went up there in 42

and 43. It was exploring a new world. Coming from a three-bedroom apartment to a two hundred acre estate, things just get etched in your memory. So I thought it was a great year.

GN: What about the educational part of it there? Was there a regular high school there? Were there classes? What kind of schedule did it require?

LRF: It was a regular high school. You had the first three years of high school. Brother Linus William, the new headmaster, insisted on several changes. Previous to that time in the high school had been over here in Poughkeepsie and he [Brother Linus] insisted on getting highly qualified teachers. So he brought in, I would say essentially a whole new cast of characters: Brother Kieran Thomas, Brother James Bernard, Brother George Robert came the year after, Brother Richard Alban. These were all young, very good teachers and the only old teacher that we had was Brother Joseph Cadroes. He was a gentle old man who was one of the best teachers I ever had. But he probably wasn't a strong enough disciplinarian to survive in a typical high school.

GN: You happened to mention mathematics in high school. Do you remember a math teacher?

LRF: Brother James Bernard was my freshman Algebra teacher. Sophomore year we took algebra with Brother Linus himself, who was a masterful and dramatic teacher. Junior year was geometry with Brother Joseph Cadroes. They were all excellent.

GN: Following the Esopus years, where did you go further for your education?

LRF: For your fourth year you came over here [Poughkeepsie] to the novitiate, and you spent a year as a postulant. We had some good teachers there too. Looking backwards, a lot of this was pretty regimented. One of the things I picked up in Esopus was a sense of time management. You were only allowed to study two hours. The rest of your time was spent in recreation or work. You had one hour written work, one hour, study. And if you got an eighty-five average

you could take books out of the library. That was a reward. So you learned really to get your studying done in the allotted time.

GN: When you were here in the novitiate were there other responsibilities that you had that became useful later on in life? Painting, or gardening, or--

LRF: --Bee keeping [laughter]. For some reason Brother Henry Charles decided I was going to be the bee keeper. Luckily, he broke his leg and I wasn't [continued as beekeeper]... one of the worst experiences I had when bees swarmed, he made me stick my hand through the swarm and gradually pull it away and bring it over a box and snap it. If you kept the queen bee on your hand, the swarm would follow it. They wouldn't bite you, and then you'd snap it and go down. I was slightly frightened.

GN: Amazing little story.

LRF: Basically, there were little chores – painting, growing strawberries, various things. Nothing spectacular though.

GN: Moving on from the kinds of things that everyone did. Did you have any particular key or assignment where you were in charge of any area or... during your college years then, following the novitiate?

LRF: In the college years, I did two things: I was sort of a secretary to Brother Paul Ambrose, more or less his gopher rather than somebody who takes dictation.

GN: Could you type?

LRF: I learned to type. That was one of the first things I did when I got to college. Not having a girl friend, or somebody had to type your term papers for you. I found that typing was a very useful setup for taking notes and everything else. The other thing I did for three years at the college was act as a librarian. But I had done that in the Juniorate in Esopus. There for three years, we had [student] librarians and Brother Kieran would check us. And we did everything

from cataloging the books, typing up the cards that go into the catalog, to determining what the topics were. So I had a good background in the mechanics of a library.

GN: In your memory, now, do you recall anything in particular about the provincial house or the major house in which you lived, or the parts of it that come back with fondness or distaste?

LRF: Not really. The old house, which was the Beck house and what's the other house?

GN: MacPherson?

LRF: The MacPherson house, and a long, narrow, dark, dingy chapel. The thing I remember most was the infirmary and it was on the second floor and the old brothers could wheelchair into the balcony and attend services that way. There was a dining room there – I didn't particularly feel that it was decrepit or anything, but it's not something I regretted seeing torn down.

GN: No? Was there... do you know the expression *caveau*? Was there a *caveau*?

LRF: Yes, yes.

GN: And what was the function of this *caveau*?

LRF: The *caveau* was to...actually, there were two *caveaus*. One was to store potatoes and vegetables. The other was actually a storage for the cordials, something the old French brothers used to make. I didn't get to [taste them] when I was in college. [I later sampled them copiously on feast days when I taught at the college in the summers of 1954 through 1957.]

GN: When did you get your degree and what was it in?

LRF: August 1950. My degree at Marist was in mathematics. You had... there were very small classes. So you had everybody in one class wound up with one major. So two years before me, there were like thirteen, they all had English majors. The next year there were four Spanish majors. And we sort of manipulated that we could break and we could have six of us in history and four of us in math. And we wound up doing all math teachers here so we wound up importing teachers. One was pretty famous a brother called Brother Terrance Jones, that used to

come up on weekends in my sophomore year, and then my last year was a brother named Joe Marano who is a teacher in Manhattan College. Very good teacher.

GN: What were the numbers like in the rest of the college? You were talking about a graduating class of twelve or fifteen. Were the other classes equally small, or were they getting bigger, or how was--

LRF: --They got bigger after I got out. I think the two classes, your class was two behind me. How many were in your class?

GN: Twenty-five.

LRF: Twenty-five. So that practically doubled the size.

GN: The other buildings on campus – do you have any recollection of those? You were mentioning, just now, three really: the provincialate, the scholasticate where the studying went on, and the novitiate.

LRF: When we were there, the gym, which is now Marian building, was being built. I guess I was in the novitiate when they poured the foundations and had outside contactors, bricklayers, to put up the brick. Then the brothers did all the rest. So my first year there I helped put on the roof and then we had to pour the floor. My job was to lift up ninety-two pounds of cement and dump into the hopper. Somebody else had to put into three cubic feet of stone, three cubic feet of sand, mix it up--

GN: --Do you recall the name of the director of operations?

LRF: Brother Francis Xavier. Papa Frank.

GN: Could you say a few words about Brother... and is he going to be remembered on this campus in any way?

LRF: One of the houses, Benoit, is named after him. His family name was Benoit. And Francis was, he was... we all called him Frank. I don't know if we called him Frank to his face, but he

was Frank. He was a very talented person. He taught history, psychology. When Brother Paul went away in the sophomore year, he sort of filled in as the master. And I got to know him pretty well and I got to watch him prepare classes. And I think I patented a lot of my preparations from the way he would prepare, the way he would get a table as large as this and spread all the books out. Rummage through this, rummage through that, and eventually his lesson would be prepared. And so I got the notion on how you would research things from him. He also built... you could say he was an amateur builder, but I'm sure somebody else made the plans but he was really the man who managed to... he always put foundations in. Once he did this in Esopus, the architect told me you could build the Empire State Building on those foundations. He never was one to stint. One of the worst parts was in the Marian building, we went to put the heating in, and we had to dig a trench right next to the building which was used with blasting and jackhammers. And then we had to go through the foundation that he had poured the year before and you had to use the jackhammer, not vertically but horizontally. And that was some job. It took us three days to get through... my guts still feel it [laughter]. At a hundred and forty pounds it was rough.

GN: Well time moved on and you graduated, and what was your first teaching assignment?

LRF: At St. Ann's Academy.

GN: Where is that? Or, where was it?

LRF: It was seventy-sixth and Lex. [Lexington Avenue] Right opposite Lenox Hill Hospital. It was basically... there was a bunch of brown stones together with the old chapel, which had been the old St. Jean's. [St Jean Baptiste] That became... that was a bandbox, but it was good for basketball. There was only one building, which was built as an academic building on the corner of seventy-seventh and Lex. The rest of it was just a series of brown stones. And there was a courtyard in back and they were old. They were barely kept together with bailing wire.

GN: What did you teach along there?

LRF: My first year actually, two senior year histories, two intermediate algebras and mechanical drawing. I had never taught history before, but in those days you taught what they told you. They sent me up to Mount to speak to Brother Richard McCarthy, who was a good history teacher. I had never done any mechanical drawing, so they said, speak with Brother Edmund Conrad. That was hard to do because he had left on July 1st for the Philippine missions [laughter]. So, I had to sort of wing it, and then one of my cousins taught at Long Island City and I went out for a day to Long Island City and stayed with the fellow who had done... he must have been teaching mechanical drawing for fifty years.

GN: I have some recollection of you being an electrician in St. Ann's Academy.

LRF: Yes.

GN: Did you study that, or learn it from the ground up, or what was the background for that?

LRF: My first year, there was a fellow there by the name of [Brother] Lawrence Hanshumaker. He was a photographer, and he was a radio ham expert. So he... somehow, I got tapped as the next photographer, and he showed me how to develop film for the school paper, for the yearbook, and how to take pictures. I remember the first actual picture I took he... in those days you didn't have strobe lights, so he sent me down to the garden for a track meet. And he said, "Don't take them side ways because they blur. You've got to take them head on." And he said just to take them at the bends. And it's one of the best pictures I ever took because the kid from St. Ann's decided he was going to pass on the inside, which you never did. He surprised everybody, he passed the runners on the inside. So I learned photography and did that for about two, three years. And he [Brother Lawrence] also got me involved in maintaining the PA system, which is used for the... which is very complicated. Which had been originally installed by Brother Nilus Donnelly, about ten years before. It basically went into all these brown stones,

the gym and every classroom, and the equipment was constantly breaking down. It was also for Wednesday bingo for benefit of the missions, so you had to keep that going. I learned a little bit of electricity there but by this time, in summer, I came up to Poughkeepsie – not Poughkeepsie, to Esopus – because Brother Francis was putting up a large building there. And I got into electricity there, by a fellow of the name of [Brother] Gus Landry. Gus was a World War II veteran who used his GI benefits to go to electrician school in Chicago. Jack Craven and myself worked under him, and we learned a heck of a lot under him. It was tough, too. If you put a box on the wall and you used a small screw he'd hang from it. If it fell down, you'd have to put it back up. So, going back to St. Ann's, St. Ann's was tricky because it was DC. Many of the buildings were DC [direct current] – you had to be careful.

GN: For us who are not electricians, what is DC versus--

LRF: --Direct current versus alternating current. Direct current was used in the time of Thomas Edison. It can't be used through transformers, so it can't be transmitted very far. So that's why it got replaced by AC. And St. Anne's was right in the middle, so some of the buildings were AC, some were DC. Some were a little of each... So you had to be very careful of what you did there.

GN: So you were then... did some work in keeping the place afloat, and you did some teaching, you did work at the Bingo. And did you do any graduate studies while attending St. Anne's?

LRF: Yeah, after a year or two, I went to St. John's and got a master's in math. And then switched to NYU to get a doctorate.

GN: I would like to move on because there's such a long list of questions that we want to try to get to. But while teaching at St. Ann's and then the summer going to Esopus, did you ever involved yourself with Marist... Marian College. Were you ever doing any teaching here?

LRF: No, not the first couple years. But when I graduated in '54, from St. John's, my friend Brian – who had been a classmate with me, Brian Desilets – we both had fellowships to RPI [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy New York] for the summer, which was for high school teachers. And we were pretty excited about that. But Linus called me in and he said, “You’re going to teach advanced calculus at the college for the summer.” I said, “But I’ve got these fellowships.” And he said, “Okay, take the fellowship, just get somebody else to teach advanced calculus.” [laughter] The only one I knew was Terry Jones. Terry wasn’t going to come near this place, so Brian and I wound up giving up the fellowships and teaching calculus here in the summer. And then that fall Brian was appointed to teach here, and he taught physics and math here for many years. I came back... I think for the next three years, and taught math during the summers. And then while it happened, it was like a compact course, it would start practically as soon as you finished the Regents in high school you came up here and you were finished by the end of July. And then for August I’d go over to Esopus and help Frank because he was finishing up those buildings.

GN: Let’s talk about a new phase in your life. The call to be the president of the college. What was the genesis of that? When did you first hear that you might be named president or be called. Did it come out of the blue? Were you given any preparation? Did you want it, did you seek it? Could you say something about those things?

LRF: St. Ann’s closed down in ‘57 and it was relocated to Queens, became Archbishop Molloy high school. I didn’t want to go out there because I wanted to... I had finished my course work, but I wanted to study for my comps.

GN: At NYU.

LRF: At NYU. So I got transferred to Hayes. And I was teaching at Hayes.

GN: Where is Hayes?

LRF: Cardinal Hayes High School is in the south Bronx.

GN: Yeah, but where... the location of the house of the house you were staying--

LRF: Fifteen East Eighty-First Street. Right near the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] and you'll see a house, and there were about sixteen or eighteen of us living there, teaching up at Hayes. The brothers used to have a convention around Thanksgiving. And by this time Brother Linus William was the provincial when he called me in and he said, "You're going to be president of Marist." So that was the first I ever heard of it. What was explained to me after was... very often they say there were only three presidents here. There were actually about eight of them. Because when the college was first founded in '46, whoever was the provincial automatically became the president. Brother Paul, even though he was the genius behind it, was really the dean. In 1957, Brother Paul... the state education department complained that they kept changing presidents. I guess to use a more modern thing, the way Steinbrenner used to change management: "what's going on down there?" So they named Brother Paul president, and then in 1958, he was elected to become the assistant general in the Marist order to go to Rome. So he told them that they should go for somebody young who could stay with the college for a long period of time. And Brother Paul already convinced them to open the college up to outside students, lay men, commuting men. And basically, he saw... from what I hear he was the one who suggested myself at the time.

GN: And then when did you actually come here?

LRF: Well, that was November... I stayed at Hayes, but I used to commute up about once a week and give talks because one of my major jobs was to talk to groups to spread news about the college. It was really a recruiting emphasis. And then I would meet with the faculty, and see what was going on. Most of the planning was being done by the two officials: one was Brother Paul Stokes, who was the acting dean and he really ran the college, and Brother John Malachy

[Hoffman] who was the director of admissions. They were the only two administrators you had at the place. So I didn't move up until July. In June I went down to Catholic University and took a three-week intensive course in college finances, because I thought I better get a good a handle on that before I came up.

GN: When you did come up, who was the staff here? Do you remember the key people here? Paul Stokes you've just mentioned, and John Malachy—

LRF: --Brian had left and was going down to Catholic University for his doctorate. Dan Kirk was here in psychology with Richard Edward in History. Brother Francis Xavier left. I wanted him to stay, but he said no, it's time for younger people. So we were without a philosophy teacher. I think the year after we got Richard Rancourt up here, Brother Adrian August was the chemistry teacher. Stokes taught biology. John Schroeder was probably the most prominent teacher here; he was a layman who had become a full time teacher in '49, '50 and was there. He was my pick to head the night school, the evening division.

GN: What kind of counsels and staffs of meetings do you have to make judgments like developing the night school? Was that pretty much done between you and another person or was there a counsel?

LRF: There was no formal counsel but we met. The weakness behind that... one was Dan Kirk, the other, Paul, had indicated that we should look into an evening division.

GN: This is Paul Ambrose?

LRF: Paul Ambrose. And he gave me a contact. Strangely, not an IBMer here, but an IBMer in Kingston. I forget his name, it was Andrew something. So on one of my trips up here I went up there I met with him. He introduced me to people down in Poughkeepsie. They had a clear reason why they wanted an evening division. They used to hire a great number of people who had two-year degrees, typically from Hudson Valley. Dutchess was just coming on line at that

time. And they were looking for something so these people could advance. They found that people looked down on the courses, which IBM gave itself. They didn't feel they had... they didn't respect them that much. So they were sort of very interested in for them for night direction. We were interested because we could handle... we had the facilities to handle it. We figured we'd bring in about a hundred and fifty hundred and eighty people, which it did the first year. So that decision was really made when I was still living down in New York. The decision was made to go, and then it was just a question of making sure we had enough teachers to cover all the courses.

GN: The decision to open the college to non-Marist was also made in those years?

LRF: That was made before me. So when I came up here, there were already one or two classes of freshman and sophomores who were lay students.

GN: What about your own physical location where you came here. Did you have an office, and where was it, and what did it consist of?

LRF: The office... I had a bedroom and an office. There was actually, in the Fontaine building, which was located where this building is, and there was an entrance that had a small office and a small bedroom right behind that. And then across the hallway, was Brother Paul Stokes, the dean, and John Malachy. So that was the total administration. And then behind that was the dormitory of the student brothers, and their dining room, the study hall, and the chapel. So that was... I stayed there until 1965.

GN: And in 1965 what happened?

LRF: When I first came up, the Donnelly building was under construction. It was under construction for several years. So the first year, for example, the night classes were not held there. It wasn't ready. They were held in an old wooden building, which was here, which had about three or four classrooms. And then as Donnelly began opening up, one of the moves was

to move the library out of Greystone. And when I came back - I took a sabbatical in the fall of '64 went to Europe to Fribourg [Switzerland] came back – Nilus had prepared the top floor of Greystone as a presidential office. So I moved in there.

GN: That was a Nilus decision?

LRF: I guess so. [laughter]

GN: There are other kinds of things in terms of Nilus making decisions. One of them is the famous wall decision. There used to be a cement block wall around the perimeter of the campus. Do you recall that?

LRF: Yes, sure, it was there when I was a student.

GN: When did it come down? Was there was a big meeting about deciding to take this down? Was it falling down?

LRF: No. We had to take part of it down, to widen the thing and then somebody said why not take it all down. So Nilus got his bulldozer and took it all down.

GN: Decision made.

LRF: We did things very simply. I think you have to put into context of how religious orders were founded, or how they were organized let's say back in the 1910s and 20s. Most religious orders had sort of a mother house or main place. That was the place where you got your training. You were separated from the world and then you came back there to die. That was your family, and there was a cemetery. And that wasn't just the Marist Brothers, that was very common [amongst religious orders]. It's probably taken after the monastic life, and the abbeys in Europe. A lot of groups of nuns and even the Episcopal orders like Holy Cross Monastery in West Park. So the concept was to get away from the world. And the world, in a certain sense, separated them from that. One thing that I had to do... and, also, there was... this was basically protestant territory.

GN: The Poughkeepsie area?

LRF: Yes, they burned... the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses outside that wall in 1929. So when I came up, we had the problem we were now saying we're open for business, but for sixty years, we've been closed for business. We could have been located in any place in the world, we happened to be located in Poughkeepsie, now we say we're part of Poughkeepsie. So one of the things you have to do is to change the whole attitude that we are open. There were several things that we did. For example, when we went to lay trustees. The first four trustees were Protestant and Jewish, not Catholic. We wanted basically to show to the community that we weren't just servicing Catholics. It was an extension of what was here before. So taking the wall down was a natural extension of our policy, which was to say we're open to everybody.

GN: So there were all kind of a symbol previously in taking that wall down you're opening the world to--

LRF: --Yeah, all of a sudden, people could look in and see what's there.

GN: And that was along with the night school? That is, that more people were coming here and taking advantage of the opportunity?

LRF: Yes, I think basically – you grow into these things – but basically, the night school was one element of opening up... the day school, obviously. At the time Brother Paul decided to open it up, the only way a young man could get an education if he lived in Poughkeepsie was he then to go to Albany or New York. There was nothing between. You had West Point, Vassar didn't want them. Vassar actually took men right after WWII for a while, but they unloaded that very quickly, and they really weren't interested in servicing the local community. And New Paltz was not a regular college; New Paltz was a teacher training institution. And Dutchess Community College was just founded in 1957. So there was really nothing here. And what Brother Paul said is we have to provide something. So his vision was... his vision always was

that it would go outside. You can trace that if you look at the temporary charter, which the brothers... the school got from the state in 1946. It said, "for the education of Marist Brothers."

When the permanent charter came through, it said, "for the education on the college level."

GN: "Brothers" are gone.

LRF: I think that's Brother Paul Ambrose's slight change. So even back then, he had in mind that he wanted a college, which was open to everybody. But he lived under very tight financial circumstances, and probably amongst a group of people who didn't see things that way at that time. So he basically had to move it any way he could. I don't think there was any announcement that he changed that charter, he just changed it.

GN: Is there a correlation between the agricultural nature of the campus and the finances? That is to say, weren't they producing some agricultural products in the farms and the barns and so on more for a front that we're still interested in this, but it didn't really supply us with the needs that we have?

LRF: I think that's an extension of, again, monastic life but also that the brothers came from southern France. They didn't come from Lyon, they came from the country. And what you did, in those days, was you were self-sufficient as you could. So they basically worked with very little money. It was almost a bartering situation. And they wanted to run a farm, and they had cows, and they had chickens and pigs. And they did everything they could, they grew things. They also had brothers who probably weren't capable of teaching. You know who weren't that well educated, and they were happy to be farmers. There was a brother here when I came here, Brother Abelus who was a farmer – very quiet, lovely old man. There was Brother Sanctus, who used to take care of the orchards. It was... if you look at the growth of most colleges in the United States, many of them started that way, particularly in the Midwest. They started out on a farm some place, and in many cases the students were expected to do farm work as part of their

tuition. But by the time I came here, I felt that that age had passed. The last vestige of it... the training of a brother. What used to happen there, after you became a brother - when you finished your novitiate - over half of the Brothers, instead of being sent to College, were sent out to work. People were sent to cook in Esopus, cook in Tyngsboro, to work in the garden, to--

GN: --Run the laundry?

LRF: Run the laundry. And vestiges of that occurred... Brother Francis Xavier changed it, he said, "I put in a hundred thousand dollar kitchen in Esopus, and they're putting seventeen year-olds to cook. This is crazy." So he convinced them to send college graduates over [to Esopus] to cook. So when I came here, my first year, there were two brothers who were college graduates. And I said, "*This* is crazy. They are kids who for five years were looking forward to teaching, and they're so surprised they're going to cook for you. So within a year, I convinced them not to appoint brothers – hire a cook. I said you're hiring lay teachers, [don't] send these young guys out, hire somebody who knows how to cook¹. And you could find them; they were around. So, my notion was that the whole financial structure, and this is probably where I would differentiate myself from Paul. Paul was under such limited finances that if he could squirrel money away... for example, he had a chicken farm here, and brothers who were taking courses would drive an egg truck down to the city and deliver to the parents of the student brothers. And that brought money in. Anyway he could he make money, and some of the ways... when I was in Esopus and when we were here, we used to go apple picking and the deal was you got a certain portion of all the apples you picked. So we all worked particularly during WWII, and you got to go out to the orchards and pick a lot of apples, and then you'd have to peel them. So my concept I had before I got here [as President], I had thought a lot about secondary schools, and the whole financing of the brothers was based that there were two schools that made money:

¹ Check audio tape. Sentence is unintelligible.

Mt. St. Michael and St. Ann's. None of the others did. If you worked in a diocesan in school, you lost money. And the more brothers you could pack into those schools, the more money you made. So the concept almost was some brothers rally was how much money he saves hiring a layman. And I had determined that was wrong, that I had also determined that you couldn't maintain schools that way because there were growing requirements for a lot of facilities, for laboratory facilities, that you couldn't do it by putting another brother in. So when I came up here, I could see vestiges of this, the brothers who cooked and so on. And I said that's gotta go. If a brother is to be valuable to this place, he's got to be valuable for what he brings. For the spirit he brings, not for the money he saves. And I'd say that was the major change that I was going to try to implement as soon as possible. Get the thing on a sound financial basis.

GN: But then there's another big step now that comes. Didn't you develop a board, and then when did you go begin to go to the state for institutional college housing, grants, and loans? How did all that develop?

LRF: One of the changes the year when I commuted up, [Brothers] John Malachy and Dan Kirk had, I guess you would call it, polled all of the Catholic grammar schools between New York and Albany. And what they presented to me, was that Brother Paul's notion [wouldn't work]. Brother Paul's notion was that we were going to take in lay students, and their tuition was going to cover the cost of our student brother Scholasticate. Yet, [Brothers John and Daniel] showed that there weren't enough students. So Brother Paul's plan just wasn't going to work. The bodies weren't there. So one of my major changes was to argue we've got to go to dormitories. And that was probably... I did that probably '59 to '60. We actually recruited about ten or twelve kids. We put them in a motel called the King's Court. That lasted around a three months, and they--

GN: --Were invited to leave?

LRF: They were asked to leave. So there was a bungalow down not quite where the McCann where a lot of the... where the Sheahan parking lot is. And we put them in there, on a temporary basis. The Donnelly building was way too big for what we needed, so we decided to put dormitories in there at least temporarily. The beauty of the Donnelly building was it was just a huge shell and you could up partitions any way you wanted. So we put in rooms and we knew that eventually we'd have to take those rooms out. So at that stage, we went to the HHFA [Housing and Home Finance Agency, a government agency] to see if we could borrow money to put up a dormitory. First of all, they wanted to be sure that it wasn't for student brothers. They weren't going to do that. I assured them there weren't student brothers or anyone living there. I think they had gotten snookered by another college that put up a student brothers residence using HHFA money. They didn't want any of it. They said you're not a very strong place, so they would only give us about a half a million dollars, which really determined the size of Sheahan. Now we had some thoughts before that. I had visited a lot of dormitories. Most dormitories built in the fifties were built out of cinder block and they look like prisons. So we went to the HHFA and said we can build it cheaper using wallboard [for the interior partitions]. And the HHFA chapter said no you can't, no it can't be done. We said we'd like to try. So we did and we brought it in much cheaper than any of the other places. In fact, at that time we brought it in for thirty-eight hundred a student, and Bard, who had just finished building had sixty-seven hundred a student with cinder block. So we showed it could be done. Basically, we knew we wanted to get more, but we could only get that. On the basis of our success with that, they let us borrow a million three, which is why Leo is as big as it is. We went by the amount they let us borrow. The interesting part of Sheahan [Dormitory]... Sheahan originally was supposed to be located about where left field is on the new baseball field. As the plans were designed and they would be three or four Sheahans tucked next to each other. When they started construction, they

found out the foundation was about to go down sixty feet. There was just nothing there. So again, Brother said, “let’s bring it out. There’s rock over on the hill.” So that’s how Sheahan got where it is located. They knew that they would have to go very deep with the foundation. So there’s sort of a... you went backwards, we didn’t... we decided that we wanted, that we couldn’t get by with commuting students, we got to go to boarding students. They then said we got to get housing for the boarding students. And that, that first thing, the question comes now whether you put up an HHFA building. They have to have title to that land. They need title to the land right around the building, plus they need an easement out to Route 9. So at that stage – and that was in ’61, ’62 – we convinced the brothers to take all the land from the Waterworks Road back and deed it over to the college. So that’s when that land became part of Marist College and no longer belonged to the brothers. And at that stage, they [the Brothers] didn’t think much of it because the board of directors, or the trustees, were all brothers so it didn’t really make matter it was just another transaction. But eventually it became part of the Marist Corporation rather than the brothers. And then, gradually, that made it easy for Leo. We had already taken the legal steps to move it over and so on. But there’s another aspect in this. When I was trying to convince the board, was that the brothers... let’s backtrack. Brother Paul’s other plan was this faculty would be composed completely of brothers. And the way you get them was you would take the talented ones and send them down to a Catholic University to get their doctorates and bring them back. And I knew that you can’t have a college where everybody has graduated from the same graduate school.

GN: Some inbreeding goes on in there?

LRF: I said this just can’t work. And I said you’re not going to get enough brothers this way anyway and you shouldn’t have it that way. I was trying to convince my board here, that they did not have the resources to run a college. They were going to have to go out and get more

resources. They're going to have to extend it. And that was not an easy particular thing to do. But in one sense they were all worth it by keeping the north part of the campus. If the college failed, they still had the north campus. Then basically, we went to Champagnat. For Champagnat we switched from the HHFA to the Dormitory Authority because the Dormitory Authority let you put in classrooms, where as the HFA could only have housing or dining halls, nothing else. And we wanted a campus center but we also wanted to move the dining from Donnelly over to there. And we wanted the classrooms, which I think now are just used as rooms. I'm not sure. With the dormitory part of it, you can do a lot more. That came in someplace a little over three and a half million. When I was over in Rome in '64, I met with the treasurer of the Marist Brothers. And he said to me he was so happy that we had transferred the land. I said, "why?" He said, "if I were to go to every Marist Brother's house throughout the entire world, I couldn't get enough money to make one [annual] payment to your building." So from his viewpoint, I'm not sure he told the superiors this, the separation of responsibility was perfect because he could see, and one of my arguments was if this is a part of the Marist Brothers, and you default on this, then maybe they'll take over Mt. St. Michael or Archbishop Molloy because that's part of your property. So why are you getting it, you know? So there was an evolution in terms of , yes, we want to get boarding students, yes we need the money to do it. Then the question comes how do you get out and the answer was you've got to get a broad board. So that moved into the notion of let's get laymen on the board. Let's get laymen that would have an impact. So we went to John Roosevelt who was well known, Sam Aldrich who was [Nelson Aldrich] Rockefeller's nephew, Orin Lehman, who was well known in New York and Harold Spencer who had been the head of Western Publishing, across the way. So these were four very well-known names, both democrat and republican. As I mentioned, Lehman was Jewish, the other three were Protestant. So it was--

GN: --Quite a contrast from the usual Marist Brothers. On the item of development, when did women enter into the scene here, as candidates for the degree.

LRF: IBM put a lot of pressure on us from the very start. They said we've got women, and you're only training men. So I would go to my brothers and say we really have to let women in. And they would say it's against Canon law. So I would say show me the law, but they didn't have time. When I went to sabbatical in '64, part of our trip was to go back to some of the schools where the brothers were founded. I went to one school and I see boys and girls come out, and a Brother in cassock come out. I said, "You teach them?" He said, "I've been teaching them about eight or ten years." I'm saying I'm being told back here you can't teach women. And the Marist Brothers in France are teaching women... I said there's something wrong here. And you had a lot of... you have to realize that at one time, separate education was considered the appropriate thing both in non-Catholic and Catholic [circles] but particularly [among] Catholics. And their schools, like Lourdes, [Catholic school in Poughkeepsie, NY] which had opened, they had nuns to teach girls, brothers to teach the boys. But they're running our physics and the brothers taught the girls physics, and you know the nuns taught the boys... it was jumped. They were in the same place, they were all in the same hallways, but theoretically they were separate. Fordham announced that it would never teach women, at Fordham University. So they established a women's college, St. Thomas Moore College for the girls. If you went into class, if there was a woman, she went to St. Thomas Moore. If you were a man, you went to Fordham. So that type of a thing, I said was crazy. So when I got back, I said we really have to change. We've got to go co-ed, there's no reason not to. And I said basically we've evolved to a stage, where, if we're trying to service a community, we've got to service the whole community which means you have to service women.

GN: It's hard to believe that in any of your lifetime there has been such a change. That early mentality was there, and now it's so far removed from our experience. One last thing before we end this session. Could you say something about your concern for the disadvantaged and the then coming of titles for Upward Bounds and so on?

LRF: That came about in two ways. I think that's a fundamental thrust of the Marist Brothers, to take care of the people who, if you want, are the poorest. Maybe not financially poor, but poor in other ways. That's one thrust. The second thrust was when I first became president, another course I took beside finances was fundraising. And the guy talked about all these lovely foundations: the Ford foundation, Rockefeller foundation, and so on, Carnegie foundation. And you were told, do all these steps and hand this stuff in. I spent a year spinning my wheels doing all that stuff. It became very clear that foundations are very safe places. If they have a choice of giving money of Yale or Marist, they're going to give it to Yale. Because if Yale screws up, they're going to say, "you can't blame me, I gave it to the best." If they give it to Podunk College and Podunk screws up, somebody says, "why have you given to Podunk College?" So we began a policy of looking for grants, which were based on merit. We also had some very inventive guys. One fellow by the name of Bill Murphy, or [Brother] Joseph William, and he's the one who went after Upward Bound. I said let's give it a try. And he got the second largest one in the country. The only place larger was UCLA. Basically, they've always been happy with Upward Bound because we run one of the best ones in the country. Then we began looking for HEOP, which was opened up to students of color. These were state grants, which we would try to work on it. We worked towards prisons and we have some of our best graduates from those graduates of Greenhaven. But whom I remember the most is Gerry Hooks, who was a long-term prisoner who came out, became a residential adviser for black students, graduated [from Marist] and got his doctorate in psychology and is out in Detroit now. So you had some...

and our attitude was: nobody is beyond redemption. We're not being liberal or fancy. The only thing we wouldn't take on campus were people, who had problems of, let's say rape or something like that. We were all serious about that. But murder, that was okay. [laughter] And robbery, armed robbery, that was okay. And our fall was this: the fellows in Greenhaven they know they're there. If you talk to the guys in Comstock, which is upstate, they keep saying they're up here because their lawyer didn't do right by them. The guys at Greenhaven, they know they're there for a reason. They're long-termers. And what they saw was this was their way out. Their alternate is to say Ok your time is up, here's forty bucks and an ill-fitting suit and take the train and go right back to the city. And boom they're right back. Their only way out, really, was education. So they became terrific students because they said, "I've gotta break the cycle." And this was the cycle. And we thought that's good for some of our students to be exposed to criminals. You know, criminals are actually human, they walk, they put on their pants one leg at a time. We just thought... and I think it was a good mix. I think the state has sort of cut back on that.

GN: Unfortunately.

LRF: It's unfortunate, but not only could we teach the inmates, we also taught the guards. Because we soon recognized that the education of guards was really very, very poor. People really don't know what to do with the criminal justice system. And since they've gone, we've been caught out of it. But I think we were really looking for people that could work out.

GN: Very good. I think we're going to call this session to a halt now and we'll pick it up soon again. Thank you very much.

LRF: Sure.

“END OF PART I OF INTERVIEW”