

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

Edward "Ed" O'Keefe

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Erin Kelly

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Interviewee: Dr. Edward John O'Keefe

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: The following interview is with Dr. Edward O'Keefe, former professor at Marist College. The interview begins with a brief summary of Dr. O'Keefe's educational background and his connection to Marist through the Marist Brothers. Dr. O'Keefe reflects on his participation in developing the Psychology major and Master's program at Marist with Dan Kirk. The development of the internship program for the Psychology Department through the Cardinal Hayes' Home, now known as the Astor Home, is also described within the interview. The interview ends with Dr. O'Keefe's stance on the importance of a Core Liberal Studies program at Marist College.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
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September 20, 2002
MHP

“BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW”

Gus Nolan: Good morning. Today is September 20th. We're having an interview with Dr. Edward O'Keefe. This is part of the Heritage Project for the Archives here at Marist College. We are in the Marist College Library. Good morning Edward.

Edward O'Keefe: Good morning Gus.

GN: Edward, would you please give us your full name please?

EJO: Edward John O'Keefe.

GN: And were you named after any member of the family?

EJO: Well, my father's name was really Michael Edward but he was always called Edward Michael and they named me after him but it's a fictitious name from that standpoint.

GN: Where and when were you born?

EJO: I was living... My family was in New York City but it was adjacent to Yonkers. I was born in Yonkers General Hospital so technically Yonkers but the family was in the Bronx.

GN: That's the city next to the largest city in the world.

EJO: That's what we used to always plan Jim. [Laughter]

GN: Do you have any siblings?

EJO: Yes, two, two older sisters, Florence and Patricia.

GN: And are they still with us or have they passed on?

EJO: Yes, thank god. And we're separated, let's see, my older sister Florence turned seventy, my sister Pat is sixty-eight. So I'm the baby in the family Gus.

GN: Okay, and do they have children?

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

EJO: Yes, my older sister has three and my second older sister, Patricia, has four.

GN: Okay, we'll get to your children later but let's move on with your early education.

Where'd you go to school in grammar school, high school?

EJO: I am a product of the old Catholic tradition. Elementary school was St. Margaret of Crotona in the Bronx. This is Riverdale.

GN: Oh yea.

EJO: We always distinguish that from the Bronx. Riverdale was the special elite section as I tell people from Wakefield that teach here at Marist. Then I went to Bishop Dubois High School in Manhattan, 152nd and Amsterdam Avenue taught by the Marist Brothers. That's how I got connected to Marist. Then onto Iona College and then Fordham University.

GN: Okay, let's go back to your parents Ed. Your father and mother, what were their names again and what did your father do?

EJO: My father's name was Edward O'Keefe. He was the Secretary-Treasurer of Utility Workers' Union in New York. That's Con Edison. So he helped develop, start that Union and then became an officer in the Union through the fifties into the sixties. My mother was a housewife, Florence Marie King, born and bred in New York and lived all her life there and never worked after she was married.

GN: And that brings us to the next subject. How about your own marriage? Where did you meet Marilyn and when were you married?

EJO: Married in 1961 in Larchmont, New York, Westchester County. I met her when I was a counselor at Badger Daycamp. This too connects back to the Marist Brothers indirectly in as much as at Bishop Dubois we had Marist Brothers and priests. One of the

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

priests, Father Fahey, had a connection at Marist at Badger Daycamp, which was a daycamp in Westchester in Larchmont. And I was going to school in Iona so when I went over there for the job and we talked about backgrounds and oh... Jack Collins, who was the owner knew Father Fahey and that's how I got the job because they didn't hire too many hoods from the Bronx [Laughter] seen as this was Westchester. This was Larchmont. And in my second year there, I met Marilyn. She was a counselor and the rest as they say Gus, is history.

GN: Okay, and the development of this history now, tell us about the children and where are they today?

EJO: Oldest son Kevin is forty years old. He's a financial planner, a security dealer with Credential Securities in New Jersey, two children so I have two grandchildren. My second son, Kenneth, he is a manager/teacher of a Japanese American school in Japan in a city just north of Tokyo. He's the real scholar in the family. Right now he's working on the whole project related to his travels to Spain and just doing his project. He has his Master's Degree but he's just doing this project out of love for the scholarship itself. And my last son, Chris, is a buyer for Lady Footlocker and he works in Manhattan.

GN: Good. Okay, let's move on to your own career now and your progress through college and graduate school and so on. Where did you go to college, undergraduate and then graduate?

EJO: Again, because of Dubois, the connection with the Marist Brothers I was able to get the scholarship to Iona College, Irish Christian Brothers in New Rochelle. So, that's where I attended college. Started out as a math major, switched to biology and ended up majoring in philosophy. Again, I mention this because it does reflect on, it does represent

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

the background of my connection to the church and the Brothers, the Irish Christian Brothers, Brother John Egan.

GN: Alright.

EJO: A psychologist. You knew him? Great man. He really encouraged me in psychology. There was no major in psychology in Iona at the time so that's what I really wanted to major in. Philosophy was the closest to it. But he was instrumental in getting me a fellowship to... An assistance-ship to Fordham and so from Iona I went to Fordham to pursue the Doctorate. They had a Doctorate in clinical psych.

GN: Give us a timeframe. About what years are these now?

EJO: Okay, I graduated from high school in '55, college in '59 and then was at Fordham from '59 really part-time in the later years until 1970 until I got my Doctorate. I finished my dissertation in 1970 so those were the years.

GN: Did you have any work experience through those years? Were you teaching or part-time teaching and where was that?

EJO: In... I came to Marist in '61 so I was just finishing my Master's. In the second half of my second year, the Fairfield University, you know the Jesuit university, in Connecticut was initiating a psychology program. They needed someone to teach experimental psychology and I was recommended by the Chair of the psychology department at Fordham so I taught. Actually before I had my Master's, I taught at Fairfield, set up a psychological laboratory there and taught on the phone with government. Jesuit at Fairfield. Other than that, no. No other teaching experience until I came here.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

GN: Okay, and how has coming here worked out? What was the connection between your study, your finishing and then coming to teach at Marist and who played the key roles in that?

EJO: Well, since high school I stayed in touch with Brother Paul Stokes. He pulled me aside in sophomore year of high school at Dubois and said to me that he saw something in me, thought I was definitely college material. I was the first one in my family to go to college. So my parents always talked because I was a good student, and at least I had good grades and although they were encouraging it, there really wasn't any money available for it. So he pulled me aside and said "We can get you a scholarship if you work a little... So actually from sophomore year on, I worked to get a scholarship so when I graduated I had an opportunity to get a scholarship to St. John's or to Iona. I took Iona. I kept in touch with Paul Stokes. Actually I came up to Marist in Poughkeepsie, which at that time was a long drive through the Bronx to visit him. I also had Andy Molloy, Brother Andrew, later became another dean at Marist. I had him in high school. We taught a... Paul taught me biology. Andy taught me physics and chemistry. I came up to visit him. One time Gus, believe it or not, I was thinking of becoming a Marist Brother and so I actually stayed on the grounds when they were building the chapel. So I kept all those connections. Then of course I fell in love and that was the end of the Marist Brothers at least as far as the vocation and invited Paul and Andy to the wedding. Paul knew I was in the psychology program at Fordham. They were looking for another psychologist because the only one we had were then was Dan Kirk. He said, "Would you consider teaching here?" I hadn't really thought about it before. There was an offer from Iona hanging fire at the time. Came up and visited Paul here, met Linus Foy, liked it,

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

took the job. So it really wasn't connection with Paul primarily although Andy secondarily that brought me in. It might be interesting to know... Brian Desilet taught me at Dubois as well. He taught math. He taught the intermediate and advanced algebra. Well, I came here, I found out he was getting his Doctorate at Catholic U. In fact, so was Andy Molloy so when I came Paul Stokes was here. He was the dean. Eventually Andy Molloy came, finished his Doctorate, came back to teach and so did Brian much later.

GN: So the interview process was a rather simple one in those days was it not?

EJO: Yes, right.

GN: And we continue to develop them today for hiring.

EJO: Right. Quite obviously, quite different. Yea, I just met with Paul and we talked about the possibilities of it. He offered me the job and I recall when I came back up to see him, in my mind I had already accepted the job so we had a conversation on a number of things. And he said to me, and he was saying to me, "Well, so are you going to come are not?!" Of course! [Laughter] So that was the spirit at the time.

GN: It's interesting that Paul is doing the hiring, you know?

EJO: Yes.

GN: For the psych department.

EJO: Right.

GN: Little as it was, yea.

EJO: Right. I met Dan Kirk at the time but that was sort of pro-former "Hi Dan, nice to meet you..." but Paul did the hiring. Paul not only did the hiring and this is the spirit of the time, Paul, when I was married I came up here. I was living in Wappingers from July and August, we started obviously in September. Paul for his vacation came down and

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

helped me paint the apartment. And he and I hung out in Wappingers, right, and I stayed at Lourdes because I had no place to sleep. So he was staying at Lourdes High School at the time. I bunked with him for a couple of days.

GN: Very interesting. Okay, you're arriving at Marist and let's get a picture now of the kind of things you're doing. Your first teaching assignments, were you asked to give one course four times or four different courses each semester?

EJO: My recollection was, of course it's going to enhance my dedication and commitment within the four courses. [Laughter] It definitely was four courses.

GN: Oh yea.

EJO: We met three times a week and at least three different preps, I remember that. And so I made my two sections of Intro, one section of Experimental Psychology, although I feel that Clinical didn't matter and Social Psychology. There were at least forty, a minimum of forty students in a class in those days, closer to fifty often and I still have my role books...

GN: Amazing.

EJO: From 1961. So... But you did what was necessary. I mean, that was the spirit. Something interesting happened in the... In the second semester, Brother Kevin, it was Kevin Donohue, Ed Donohue, was teaching Philosophical Psychology in the evening division and he left to go back to Catholic University to finish his Doctorate. They needed someone to teach it. John Schroeder, who was the dean of night school came to me and said, "Well we have this Philosophical Psychology but we need someone to teach it." Well, that's a philosophy course, it's really rational psychology but it has psychology in it so he figured...

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

GN: Why not?

EJO: Anybody wanting... you could teach it! Fortunately I had a background in philosophy so I could teach it but it never occurred to me, no, that's outside my field. I shouldn't be doing that. No, you need it. Go do it and you just did whatever had to be done.

GN: Good. What other kinds of assignments did you have in those years? Was it just teaching and then you went home or were you a counselor for students or...?

EJO: No.

GN: This is even before committee works get going?

EJO: This is before we had committees.

GN: Yes.

EJO: Right. Yea, I was hired Gus for \$4,000 a year in 1961. Added to that I was paid \$1,200 to do counseling which was just whenever students needed it, they came around, you're a psychologist, you should be able to help them out and that was the idea.

However it occurred to me there was no formal counseling office. There was nothing set up. There were no guidance materials available so I convinced Paul to give me a storage room next to my office, which would be in back of where the switchboard is now in...

GN: Donnelly.

EJO: In Donnelly. And I set up a quasi counseling office there. At the same time I realized nobody was doing placement work so students were graduating and everybody graduates at the time but we now were taking lay students and so there was no one doing anything on resume, writing or interviewing and so I set up a placement office. And again, the spirit at the time was that something needs to be done, you see it, go and do it,

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

so... And I remember trying to get Marist to be a member of the College Placement Council it was called at the time and we couldn't. It wouldn't accept us for membership because we weren't accredited.

GN: Oh yea.

EJO: In '61 and you had to be accredited. So I did placement work, I did counseling and there was no one advising students on getting into graduate school so I set up a program where we funneled all the letters of recommendation through my office. So the students would come to me and say I need a letter of recommendation on such regardless of the department...

GN: Yea.

EJO: Because there weren't that many departments anyway. And so I wasn't alone in doing these kinds of things. I think clearly the spirit in the early sixties was this was a developing institution. Things need to be done. You see the need, you don't wait. You didn't go through a formal procedure, can I do this? You just went and did it. I mean, I had to do something to get an office. I spoke to Linus Foy about setting up the whole program for graduate studies but other than that, it was go and do it.

GN: Does Ed Cashin come on the scene yet?

EJO: I'm sorry.

GN: Edward Cashin.

EJO: Came on probably I'd say '63 but I'm not exactly sure.

GN: And Stokes?

EJO: I knew he was there in the early years because I interacted with him.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

GN: Yea, yea. I'm just trying to clarify in my mind how the process of getting space and salary increments and budgets to do things was worked out in those years. And I didn't have a clue myself so I can't even ask a good question on it but I do want to ask you about your interaction with Dan Kirk and then the beginning, what we might say the development of the Psychology Department. First of all the graduate program, do you remember when that happened?

EJO: Yes, if I could back up for a second maybe I could respond to some of the questions you were posing just before about salary increments and how that... And Ed Cashin because there's some events I recall in that regard and if that's okay, I'll...

GN: Sure, absolutely.

EJO: I recollect talking to George Sommer after my first year about raises. What do you do? Well, you didn't do anything. It just showed up in your paycheck and when I got it, which was \$200, I was... My total income at the time was \$5,200 and I got a \$200 raise. And I asked George because George Sommer, as you know, had been around.

GN: He was the Dean of...

EJO: Faculty.

GN: Faculty.

EJO: Had been around.

GN: By self-appointment. [Laughter]

EJO: Right, right. And he said that's about right. And that's how it was at least for two years and then like in the third year I was here, Linus Foy was President, called me in and said, "You're underpaid" and gave me a substantial raise, like \$600. Later I found out

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

the reason he said that is in the Intro, people had been hired after me who were hired at more money.

GN: I see.

EJO: And no one knew any of that, I mean, you just went along with it. And so he recognized that at a certain point and that's how you got a raise. You got called in and... Also, the first Christmas I was here, we got a bonus, the only bonus we ever got. I thought maybe this was an annual thing. [Laughter] Twenty dollars showed up in my mailbox and every faculty member got twenty dollars and I think at the same time we got honey. Maybe this is why you need to get George Sommer in here because in the early days, to sort of add some additional compensation... The Brothers had the farm here so somebody was a beekeeper but I got jars of honey as compensation along with the twenty dollars. And I think George used to talk about getting baskets of apples, of produce, as...

GN: Apple picking was a big thing in the fall. And some used to get free gas. Wasn't there a gas pump down next to the gym?

EJO: I never got free gas, Gus. [Laughter] I have to go back and look into that. Someone got free gas? And with Ed Cashin, you mentioned Ed, I recollect he was the Vice-President so he was there at least in '63 because for promotion I went to see him. I would... Everybody in those days was hired as an instructor except those who had maybe Doctorates. Most of us didn't have Doctorates at the time. We came with Master's Degrees and then we were working on them. And I went to see him...

GN: Even George? Even George came...

EJO: He was in NYU.

GN: And he didn't even do this.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

EJO: That's true, right.

GN: Yes, yes.

EJO: Right. And it was pretty much pro-former. After four years, you moved from instructor to assistant. You stayed in assistant until you got your Doctorate and once you got your Doctorate, again, in the early days it's pretty much pro-former, you became an associate. Things have changed as you know.

GN: Yes.

EJO: So after three years, I spoke to Ed Cashin who was handling promotions because I thought, rightly wrongly, that given what I had been doing in addition to the teaching that that deserved promotion a year earlier. My mindset was if I just hung around and did the teaching for four years, I would get promoted automatically because that was the way it was. But since I was doing other things, I was in the counseling, I was in the placement and those were the things I took on that it seemed just that I would move up. Well, he wasn't so sure about that and I learned a lesson then, Gus. The point was made "We're more interested in your scholarship and your movement on the Doctorate than we are those other things."

GN: Yea, yea.

EJO: That was an epiphany because I thought I was never again going to be teaching and writing.

GN: A lot of work.

EJO: ...The spirit to do it. But in retrospect, they were right. Those things were good but it took me...

GN: They should've told you sooner though. [Laughter] They should've told you.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

EJO: Someone should have mentioned that earlier.

GN: Let's go back to Dan Kirk and the graduate programs.

EJO: Right, okay. When I was hired, of course, I met Dan. Dan was the chairman of the department. We didn't have a major at the time so Dan and I hung out a lot and we were developing the department. But a couple of other things that are significant, when I was hired in 1961, Cardinal Hayes' home in Millbrook, it was a childcare agency, they were looking for a psychologist to do assessments of the children, maybe some psychotherapy with the children. It was mostly neglected, dependent, some emotionally disturbed children. It's a childcare agency in Millbrook, part of the Arch-diocesan Childcare System. So they came to Marist looking for a psychologist. Dan was the only one here but they were hiring me and so Dan asked me if I was interested in doing that kind of work, obviously I was. Dan, Paul and I went out to Millbrook and I interviewed with Mother [Escowin] for that position. They needed someone right away so what Dan did was work there during the summer, the summer of '61 and in a sense held the position so when I came in September, I was slide for it so...

GN: This would be a part-time position?

EJO: Yea, it was four hours a week and for the first six months, Dan continued to come out. He was doing more of the therapy, I was doing the assessment and then after that he faded out and I continued with Cardinal Hayes' home to this day. Now I'm on the Board of Directors but I was with them for forty years as I was here. And that was in part due to intercession of Dan Kirk and his willingness to fill in for that period of time.

GN: Yea. Moving towards the thinking that went on because psych is the first Master's program I think that we put on board.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

EJO: Yes.

GN: Isn't it?

EJO: Right.

GN: And was there a conviction on his part, A) that there was a need for it or was it just going to be dressing on the platter as it were?

EJO: Dan was way ahead of his time, really an innovator. Dan was deceptive. If you met Dan, when you first met Dan Kirk, the impression was sort of like easy, come as it may.

GN: Lackadaisical.

EJO: And he's sort of shuffling around, kind of slow and easy in talk and you'd say oh, this is not a whirlwind. But then when you got to know him, he was always way ahead of his time. The Master's Program... The Master's Program was initiated because there were so many childcare agencies, psychiatric hospitals in the area that needed more professionals. The only Master's Program at the time was in New York or in Albany. There was a need in the area. In one sense, the thinking at the time was we're not ready for a Master's Program. This is the late sixties if my date's right. I think '68, '69.

GN: Yea.

EJO: We're not... We're just developing our undergraduate and we're not that solid there yet. His thinking was there's a need, let's not wait around, we can do it. At that time, faculty in psychology, we just started the undergraduate major, been in effect for a couple of years. So Dan was right, there was the need. And he decided... And it was really his "Let's do community psychology," which was a double risk because no one ever heard of community psychology including most psychologists. It was a new field in

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

psychology but he saw that psychology really needed to do more in the community.

Psychology was important to be applied to helping agencies to helping schools, that the more traditional approaches which would have been a lot safer, clinical psychology or school psychology, which were established and well-known. He said let's break some new ground. Not only are we going to do a Master's Program in a school that's relatively young.

GN: And unheard of.

EJO: We're going to break ground into an area that very few psychologists are doing but needs to be done. So that was a major, that was a major innovation and we did it well. I mean, in the sense of the success and the history has sort of proven that. We have put an awful lot of psychologists into local agencies.

GN: Yea. Where in this development, Dan had this idea again that the seniors were kind of bored with just going to college so that the internship would be to get them out there...

EJO: Right.

GN: In the fields.

EJO: Right.

GN: Is that associated to this?

EJO: Well, of course Gus, there's two aspects to that. In the Master's Program, we built an internship but that for Master's Program was pretty standard fair for a psychology program. If you're going to have a Master's, well certainly a Doctoral program, you need to give those students experience but the major innovation with regard to work study that you made was undergraduate. No one in psychology, to my

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

knowledge at the time, no program in the country, was sending undergraduates out to do internships. He said we should be giving these students some practical experience in the community. Not only do we want to get them out there, but even more so he wanted them paid. That was totally unheard of for undergraduates. This is not, you know, like the accounting programs where somebody goes out for a year or a semester and works in an accounting firm. These are undergraduate seniors, very little if any experience, so they're gaining a lot obviously by being in these positions. So the idea of them being paid was like an anathema and I remember myself saying, "Hey, we'll be lucky if these agencies are willing to take our students. We'll be grateful." The notion of students being paid...

GN: Yea.

EJO: That's totally out of the question in my mind. Dan didn't think that way. He thought they're providing a service besides learning, they should be paid. So he and I went around the county and I remember it vividly. We went out to Harlem Valley Psychiatric Institute. We went to Wassaic Developmental Center. We went to Astor, Hudson River Psychiatric Center and not only did we, wait did he convince them to accept our students for training, he convinced them to pay them, which was unheard of. So, to the man's credit.

GN: Did that last long? Did that last very long that paying? I mean, it's not going on now?

EJO: No, to be frank, it was unfortunately too successful that at a certain point, maybe six years in it became clear that the students that there was differential being paid. Astor

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

Home was paying more than Wassaic Developmental Center [Laughter] and the students, instead of starting...

GN: Wanted to go to the one?

EJO: Right. So at that point, we said we better stop this because the experiences are not as educationally going to be...

GN: Okay, let me come back to the college and the development of the college, you must have scratched your head a few times saying why did I ever come to Marist rather than going to a fully developed college like Iona or Fairfield or one of those? What would you say was, what kept you here?

EJO: I would... I would say it was well, often being sort of the practical consideration. I was working on my Doctorate so the idea of leaving here and going elsewhere and trying to continue on the Doctorate probably would have been difficult. While there was no, in those days, there was no arrangements made. I mean, I went to graduate school probably on weekends, I went down on Fridays. So I would work here five days, going to the city, go to Fordham, come back but on sort of a practical reason, I wasn't going to leave until I got my Doctorate if I was going to leave. But more so, well, other practical considerations, the beauty of the position from the standpoint of a psychologist was not only was I teaching, but I was also doing psychological work. The opportunity for doing the counseling is very important. I didn't want to just teach. It's also doing the consulting at Cardinal Hayes' home. College was very sensitive to whatever working we're doing outside the college, if it tied in with the college, if it connected to your teaching, it was supported. So they always supported my work out there and in truth I always brought it back here although it's unused but the psychological reports I was

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

writing there, I brought them back here. So in a sense, to leave Marist would be to leave Cardinal Hayes which I enjoyed that clinical work, so again, the practical factor. I was able to bring students from here out there. My first undergraduate intern, Fred [Abers], is now the Executive Director of Cardinal Hayes. So I brought him out there in '68 as part of our other graduate program. I used it a lot for students to gain experience. In the early days, I ran a course for students who were doing volunteer work at agencies. Again, this is the spirit of the times. I set up a course at my home, special topics course, and I taught it at my home to break the mindset of the campus kind of thing.

GN: Yea, yea.

EJO: And the college, you know, encouraged that. So there was that kind of freedom. I just went to the dean, I think it was John O'Shea at the time and said I'd like to do that, "Good, go ahead and do it." Bingo, no committee...

GN: No? Okay.

EJO: No committee to approve it, all that. So, there were a lot of things that kept me here because it was so good. Also, there was clearly then the spirit that we were building a college. We didn't come into a place with a whole set of traditions. We didn't come in where this is the way it's done. Yea, you fit the mold. It was you make the mold.

GN: Yea.

EJO: You determine the way it was and that was exciting and that was thrilling. We developed the committees.

GN: Okay.

EJO: We developed the programs.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

GN: Let me just say that, say my mind, one of the reasons that we're coming to now is that you're one of the pillars of the founding of this whole developed college. In other words, the Rank and Tenure, the promotion, the academic review, the whole Core program, you know, that you've been a central part to the whole development of those things. And as that developed, was this being cut out of new cloth or was there a pattern that we were following or do you recall the movement as it were from the seventies and eighties, I guess?

EJO: Well, let's see, well first thing I recall in the sixties was at a faculty meeting. Faculty meeting was in Adrian Hall, which was run by the President. Deans played minimal roles in those days. And he said, "You people, you faculty, you have to be organized" and in part that was an anticipation of seeking accreditation. So it was... It came from on top. It was from the administration saying to the faculty, you have to get yourselves organized. You have to become an independent body from the administration. In those days, we all sat, we didn't really make a distinction. Administration, faculty, administration all taught. We just sort of hung around together and made decisions collectively. It wasn't them and us. He was saying in effect, there's got to be a you and an us. So that's how those committees and it's okay, what committees? And I remember, we should have a Faculty Affairs Committee. There should be something on academics, an Academic Affairs Committee. And then there probably should be, I'm not even sure it occurred at that time, some kind of overriding like an executive but it's faculty and you should organize yourselves and you should work out boards and so we did that. And you should have a handbook! We never even knew about it. Remember, most of us were neophytes in this business so oh, you need a handbook? You know,

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

faculty rights? We didn't even know we had them or that we were concerned about them?

GN: Right. If I recall, one of the first visits of the Middle States and we didn't get it was because we were too friendly with women.

EJO: That was one of the things, I know.

GN: There was no real, it was a big club. [Laughter]

EJO: Right, right. They got along too well, not enough tension and conflict.

GN: That has changed. [Laughter]

EJO: Well, and remember, yea, four years later we said boy, those were the good old days because we were out [hammering tongues].

GN: Okay, maybe we're a little off course on following what is ordinarily a pattern here. Let me come to this question, what do you consider, now, to be Marist's greatest assets? What does it have going for it now that makes it one where so many kids want to come to it?

EJO: Well, I think clearly these are not as, I would see them, oh maybe strengths but students come here, used to tell me the location for one thing. I mean, it's close to the city, they can get here and get back. The physical plan is very appealing to students and so on. We got some... We get some good notoriety out of the...

GN: MIPO?

EJO: That's the...

GN: Marist's Poll of Public Opinions.

EJO: Public Opinion, those kinds of things. I don't... And students, if you ask them, eventually they get to the academics but I personally don't think that is a major drawing

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

card for them. So I think what we have done with the campus over the years most certainly attracts now particularly like with the library and so on.

GN: Yea, yea.

EJO: But if you ask me what I think our strengths are, I think it's still the entrepreneurial spirit that is still here. I think it's our ability to be flexible, move quickly but not tied down by traditions. We're still growing. We're still in that developmental stage, we're looking for opportunities and that can work for you or against you. To this point, it has worked for us. That's what I think our strength is. I don't think everybody takes advantage of this but I think and I tell this to my students all the time, a major strength is that you can get a fantastic education here if you're interested in it because the faculty is very still... Still very much committed to helping students individually. That all you need to do is show an interest. Approach that and they will jump at the opportunity to work as opposed to other places where "You're getting in the way of my research" or "You're distracting me from other things." So, any student that wants it can get a tremendous education here because the faculty are very responsive to individual students and that's a tremendous strength.

GN: Do you think there's a weak point that we have now? Is there something we've lost in this development of thirty years, forty years?

EJO: Yea, and it was bound to happen. At first blushing, I'd say well we've lost the spirit, we've lost some of that spirit that this is my college spirit. That was bound to happen and there's a plus side to that but let me just stay on the negative. The kinds of things I've talked about before, that people look for opportunities when after them. They were less concerned about themselves, less concerned about their career, not that we were

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

all that, you know, altruistic or you know I don't want to make us out to be all heroic figures but it was part of being here. The place needed commitment to the place, to Marist, to our mission, the enterprise and so we were less concerned about is this a good move career-wise? Do I do this because it'll help me get promoted? We didn't think that much about that. Will this look good in my resume? Is this a stepping stone for some other place? There's much more of that now. Marist is getting, because it's gotten big and it's older like a lot of other institutions, okay I come here, what do you have to offer me as a faculty member? What are the opportunities to do research? How will this be good for my career? And in hiring people, I've heard them say that, both the administration and the faculty, this is a good career move for me at this point in time. So, with that comes less commitment to the place and more commitment to oneself and that's a real loss but it was inevitable.

GN: Let's come back to focus on the students now. Could you make some comparison between students that you had in your first years and students you have now in terms of their ability, their talent their maturity? They certainly have the more financially set now since we're a much more expensive institution.

EJO: Right, right. The distinction I would make, Gus, is it's gone through, as I see, it's almost gone through stages or phases. Students of all years have always been nice, pleasant for the most part, you know, with exception, pleasant, easygoing, comfortable, easy to relate to, somewhat naïve. That's always been the case and still is as I see it. In the beginning, they were pretty much the same ability wise, nothing spectacular, nothing really atrocious, average for the most part. And then one of the stages where we really became more bimodal, there were more students who were less able, really, we'd find

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

some students in your class that you couldn't figure out how they got through high school. I don't like to talk about that too much but that was the case. But at the same time we had those, we had more exceptional students, I mean, very exceptional students and in that sense it became more difficult to teach. You had to do...I remember what we did was we pulled out the really good students, identified them, gave them pep-talks about graduate school and so on and then worked very well as we could with the lesser students. The thing that I see today, Gus, that is different is I'm seeing more of a leveling process. I'm still seeing some of those lesser students but I'm seeing far fewer exceptional students. I always made a point because it was done for me to identify the students, the ones that were diamonds in the rough and pull them out and talk to them about... I can do less and less of that. The last couple of years, I'd say the last eight years, eight to ten years, there are fewer of those that I can identify. Still got some but that's a big difference it seems to me. There seems to be less of those really bright, extremely personable students. They're all kind of back to the same.

GN: They're bright but not as bright as the start...

EJO: Not as bright, not as enthusiastic. Before we had, some of them were really gung-ho. I don't see that much anymore. That's a big change.

GN: And moving onto another level now, you've had the experience of working really with two different presidents in your domain here, Linus Foy in the first years and Dennis Murray in the second. Could you just say something about the leadership that they had offered the college during their times in office and all of them, both of them, more than twenty years or twenty years and twenty-four years.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

EJO: Yea, and I'm sure you've heard this from others, Linus was the right president at the right time.

GN: Almost that same phrase. [Laughter]

EJO: He helped, first of all, start his leadership role of getting the place going, as I've mentioned before, getting the faculty or being smart enough to see that the faculty... He could've in effect kept them under control. Instead what he did was force that they're independents, go and develop yourself, develop, you know, your teaching, your scholarship, an administrative or your faculty governance. That was extremely important. Saw that we needed to become accredited and did what needed to be done there, established ties with the community, didn't try to emulate Vassar for example as the scholarly place. Marist will be community-oriented. That will distinguish us because in those days you said Poughkeepsie, people said "Oh, that's where Vassar." Very few people heard of Marist College. He was... This I'm sure is still controversial. He transitioned us from a quote "Catholic" college to a nonsectarian college for better or worse but the fact that he was a Marist Brother at the time able to do that took some courage, exercised obviously leadership and saw that that was necessary. A lay person doing that probably couldn't have pulled it off. A Marist Brother could. So all of that got us established, got us into a position where we are now a bona fide college, accredited, establishing the ties with the community and so on, getting the faculty. That was... That's a major accomplishment. I mean, he put us on the map. Dennis' accomplishments, again I'm sure you've heard it, he's done wonders. All you have to do, in fact I wrote him a note recently on that... Is I've been around before he came and look at the physical plant and look at it now. In particular, opening up the river. In other

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

words, the way in which the buildings are situated, the housing. The river and alcove, we always knew it was there but it was almost disguised. You couldn't really see it but now it's integral to the campus and... So the whole physical plant is a major contribution.

Him seeing the value of IBM and seizing that opportunity to work more closely with them. Obviously Linus was involved with them, we got that 360 computer and so on so Dennis was smart enough to establish more and more of the contacts with IBM and with... In that sense, bring in a lot of funds.

GN: Yea.

EJO: Dennis probably of necessity paid less attention to the academic side because he really needed to get the physical plant, the financial condition of the college in better shape. I remember because I was co-chair of the Middle States in '92, him saying that "Okay, we've pretty much established the college well in that area. What we really need to do is show off the academics." And he started moving us more in that direction.

GN: And about image? Would you say something other than being concerned about the image afar?

EJO: Well certainly in terms of his role, he helped establish that. Very sensitive to something like MIPO, seeing that that particular poling organization in effect could really establish Marist.

GN: Conscious with the media and...

EJO: The media concern. The Lowell Thomas built so he was astute at seeing where we could make the connections and get much more recognition. I'd say Linus was less concerned about that because he was trying to get the college itself going. I mean, there

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

was concern, we had the Great Contemporary American's dinner in New York City if you recall.

GN: I do remember that... Cardinal Spellman. [Laughter]

EJO: Right, so we did some of those things but at that point, let's get the college established well, then we can worry about our image.

GN: Okay, we're running down on time here but I think I have a few more key things I'd like you to comment on. From a personal perspective, what would you say is your principle contributions to the college? You've been here for more than thirty years, more like forty.

EJO: Forty, forty. This is actually my forty-first.

GN: Forty-first, yea.

EJO: Forty-second. Forty-second. I came in '61, I don't know, you lose count.

GN: And now it's forty-one, alright.

EJO: Senior moments, you can't do math. [Laughter]

GN: Tell me about it.

EJO: Okay, I would say major contributions really with the students, I've mentioned it before, being able to identify with students. Pulling aside, I can look back with some pleasure at the number of students that have gone on to get their Doctorate, the number of students I brought out to Cardinal Hayes' home that have really gone on to careers in psych. We've got some of them at Marist in the department, I mean, Joe Canale, John Scileppi, Midge Schratz, Beth Teed.

GN: Yea.

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

EJO: So, you know, at this stage, you like us, you should know, you look back and you say so what difference did it make that I will... And that's the major thing that I've done. I've worked with the students and identified them and got them with jobs and helped them get Doctorates and so on. In terms of the governments, yea, I was Chair of APC when we put in the Core liberal studies program which is probably in part why I'm so passionate about it and somewhat dissatisfied with its operation but that would be a major contribution. I co-chaired the Middle States review in '92 and we got a tremendous evaluation from that group. I was Chair of AAC when we established the school... So those kinds of things. However, I think in terms of programs, it's the self-managing program that I developed in consort with the Learning Center. That is the greatest organizational legacy because what we're doing is we are teaching a whole group of students how to manage themselves to succeed in college and succeed in life and I've come to the conclusion after all these years of teaching that without that, no success is possible. And while in the past we've kind of thought "Well, liberal arts education will do that," a lot of students don't get it for whatever reason. *The Self-Management Pro*, we wrote a book based on the teaching of it. I wrote it with Janelle Donna Berger. That... I think about it every time I see Oprah Winfrey or these other interview programs. We've got all these college graduates that have to go to these gurus to find out the meaning of life. They're college graduates. They don't know how to get along with one another. I mean, this is insane that all these educated people after all these have never learned what is worthwhile, what is meaningful and how do you achieve it and how do I deal with the problems in my life? What were you doing in college for four years? Anyway, that I think is...

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

GN: Okay, a little twist on that. What did not happen that you wished would have happened? Is there something there that is an unfulfilled dream?

EJO: Well, can...

GN: We only have two minutes. [Laughter]

EJO: Yea. Well, I would have to put it back into the Core Liberal Studies. I really believed that we developed that in the seventies, that we had something values-oriented program. Intro to Philosophy and Ethics had set the foundation for the distribution. I mean it is a... Even to this day I see it. It is a neat package. It is extremely important and substantive. If it were, these are biases Gus, if it were taught properly, if the students were helped to understand the significance of it, if it was implemented across the board, our graduates will be distinctive from any other graduates in the country. And the major disappointment I have is that the promise has never been fulfilled, that the students are still graduating, seniors because I've taught them in the Systems course four years. I query them on it. Almost to a person, 1) they resent to having to take those liberal arts courses, our requirements. They resented. 2) They had no idea why they were taking it other than "It broadens me." And that's the answer you get. So was there anything unique about it, anything special? They don't have a scintilla of an idea as to what it is and I fault us, I mean, I'm part of the problem since I'm here. So that's my major disappointment, that that opportunity has never been realized.

GN: Yea but the plan is there.

EJO: The plan is still there. We can still do it if I can convince the powers that be to require every teacher that's teaching it to explain the Core and see whether their students

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

understand its relationship to the course they're teaching. It's very simple but I can not convince...

GN: You might have to teach the teachers first.

EJO: Yea, right. But that's, you know the number of explanations for it. But that still bugs me to be frank and again because, maybe because I was Chair of the committee that initiated it.

GN: Finally, is there anything I didn't ask you that you would like to comment on in terms of your experience here and this opportunity.

EJO: Yea, it's basically this, which is not so much Marist as it is the teaching, counting on the teaching profession. And I said this at my retirement, I am grateful, Gus, to the teaching profession. At this point in your life, you look back and you try to figure out what difference did it make? Did I do anything worthwhile or significant? You know it would be nice if I could say in the beginning I had this master plan for my life that I would become a great teacher of young men and women and iron to that. I sort of stumbled along and opportunity was there and I liked teaching and that presented me with... And I think I did a fairly decent job with it. I would hate to look back Gus, at this point in my life and say you know, I was a great, and I don't mean to put anybody else down, but I was a great commodities broker, I sold a lot of stocks and boy, did I make a bundle you know, with bomb futures. I mean... I think about that and say what difference does it make? Who cares? You know, you made a good living and... But you can look back and say I was in a noble profession. That even at my worst I was probably doing something good. The opportunity was there and that becomes extremely important to you when you come to the end of the line, to be able to look back and say yea, I was in

Interviewee: Ed O'Keefe
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

September 20, 2002
MHP

a position to do something worthwhile, to make a difference and teaching in that sense, enabled me to do that. That is a... a noble profession. And the other thing then, you know, I don't mean this just because you're here but I'm grateful to the Marist Brothers. You know, I had them in high school and then here. I never fully appreciated... These are men who gave up their lives in effect, well it's part of it anyway, to go out and teach you know, these little hoods from the city. That's a major contribution. That's a major sacrifice and they founded this place and developed it and then had the foresight to open it up to the community. Obviously have had a major impact on my life. I think of Paul Stokes and Andy and Brian and I don't think that they get all the credit that they deserve. To Dennis' credit, he does try to keep the Marist Brothers central to our heritage but I'd hate to let that slip away. Who knows...

GN: Well, let me just end then on that same thing. You see the Marist Brother's tradition is to live simply and unknown to the world and I think part of their thing is the humility that's a, you know, we were blessed to be able to do it but it wasn't us. You know, we have... We have to be in that place at that time where we'll helped. And I think the college would say to you that you really had a great instrument in bringing it to where we are today. So thank you for this opportunity.

EJO: I thank you.

GN: It's been good.

EJO: I appreciate it.

GN: It's been a good ride.

EJO: Thanks Gus.

“END OF INTERVIEW”