

David Flynn

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Interviewee: David Flynn

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Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: Contained in this interview is a description of David Flynn and his years at Marist College as the former Director of Admissions. The interview begins with a brief summary of David Flynn's educational background and his years as a student at Marist College. David Flynn also describes his transition from working as an Admissions Counselor to becoming the Director of Admissions, as well as his participation in recruiting students to Marist. The end of the interview touches upon the vast expansion of the student population and campus since David Flynn's experience as a student and Director of Admissions at Marist. Within the interview, David Flynn reflects on the transition from Marist being run by the Marist Brothers to being run by a Board of Trustees with a similar philosophy as well.

“BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW”

Gus Nolan (00:07): Today is December 13, 2003. The interview this morning is with the former Director of Admissions, David Flynn. This interview is taking place in the Marist College Library. Good morning David.

David M. Flynn (00:22): Good morning Gus, how are you?

GN (00:24): Good, thank you. David, would you please tell us, what is your full name?

DF (00:29): My full name is David M. Flynn.

GN (00:32): Were you named after another member of the family?

DF (00:35): No, and I was born in Beacon, New York on November 26, 1941. I have one brother, Peter Flynn, and we grew up in Beacon, New York and Beacon is a small city, small town, about twenty miles south of Poughkeepsie and at the time, right across from Newburgh, New York. My parents' names were Marianne Flynn and Ralph Flynn; and my father was employed at Texaco, in Glenham, New York. When I was growing up my mother worked in a restaurant as a waitress initially and then later in the unemployment office in the city of Beacon.

GN (01:32): How long did your father work in Texaco?

DF (01:34): My father worked in Texaco for about 43, 44 years of his life. He started to work there I think, in 1931, I think and had stayed there all of that time. Those were the days, of course, when people did stay in one job a very long time and there was this thing that seems to have disappeared from the labor force of loyalty to both the employee and employer. So, he was there a great deal.

GN (02:08): I had a good fortune of having a sabbatical one year and I worked in Texaco, at the human resources center.

DF (02:14): Oh yea?

GN (02:15): Yea.

DF (02:16): Probably was there then because he didn't retire from there probably until about, let's say about 19.....

GN (02:29): 1975 or 1982?

DF (02:31): 1973, something like that.

GN (02:34): That would be a little bit later than, earlier than, I was there later than that. I was there in the eighties I think. I've met some friends from there that are continuing, they are also retired now. Let's talk about your education. Did you go to local schools?

DF (02:47): Yes, I grew up in Beacon, New York and went to one of the two parochial elementary schools in Beacon, which was St. Joachim's, and then I went to high school in the local public high school, Beacon High School. Then my college career took a couple of little turns. When I graduated from high school, I thought I wanted to be a physical education instructor and eventually perhaps a coach. So, I went to Cortland State Teacher's College right out of high school; and after a semester there realized that that isn't really what I wanted to do and then came back to Beacon, and I spent the second semester at Dutchess Community College. Then I, the following September, enrolled here at Marist College from which I graduated in 1964.

GN (03:55): What drew you to Marist basically, locality or the opportunity?

DF (04:01): I think what drew me to Marist at the time was a combination of things. One of the things, of course, was that it was a Catholic institution and it was small and provided me the opportunity of commuting back and forth, which at the time, I felt I wanted to do. It had a strong liberal arts program and I majored in English during that time and graduated as an English major with the expectation at that point of teaching English at the secondary level. I had the opportunity during the time I was here to be involved with Bill Murphy, who at the time ran the Teacher Education program at Marist. Maybe indeed it was the first one that was run. I'm not even sure, it probably might have been.

GN (05:02): Yea, the Brothers probably had somebody but it wasn't called Teacher Education.

DF (05:06): Yea, the lay people, it was probably their first one.

GN (05:11): How about your majoring in English, do you recall Dr. George Sommer?

DF (05:15): I do, I remember all of the people. I remember George Sommer, I remember Milton Teichman, I remember Dr. Schroeder. Dr. Schroeder was the professor of American Literature at the time. I had Bob Norman for speech during that time. So, I remember Bob Lewis...

GN (05:39): So, Bob Lewis was here?

DF (05:41): Well, he wasn't here when I was a student. He was actually here when I started to work here. I graduated in 1964 and then started to work that

summer there as an Admissions Counselor to Tom Wade who was then the Director of Admissions. How that all came about was that during the time I was here, I played basketball here and Tom...

GN (06:08): He was the coach?

DF (06:09): Tom was the basketball coach besides being the Director of Admissions.

GN (06:11): Yes, we multi-tasked in those days. [Laughter]

DF (06:14): So, I said well, you know, at the end of it Tom said to me, "Why don't you stay on and work with me in the Admissions area?" and I said fine, I'll do that. So that's what happened and then two years after that in 1966, Tom was, had the opportunity of going on to become the Dean of Students. He said that if I were interested Linus would be willing to appoint me as the Director of Admissions at that time in 1966. I said that would be fabulous and that's how it happened.

GN (07:01) Ok, go back a little bit. Before you graduated, did you ever live on campus?

DF (07:05): No, I was always a commuter student. At the time I started at Marist, the dorms were all in Donnelly Hall and there were only a few resident students here. There were more of us in the beginning, us meaning commuting or day students than resident students. Then, as time went on, Sheahan went up and then Leo and then Champagnat and then all of a sudden there were more resident students. But that was also at the time I was working in Admissions to bring more students here from beyond what would be a commuting area. That was the direction the College should have been going at that time to get more...

GN (07:56): Where there much brain sharing or brainstorming on whether the College should put up one dormitory and then another dormitory. What was the thinking behind it?

DF (08:12): I would say that the thinking behind it, I don't recall that I had any first hand information but I would say what I understood, if we didn't begin to develop more housing, we would run out of people... So we would be really short-selling ourselves by not expanding our reach and so therefore we did it in a very responsible way by doing one at a time, so to speak, so that we didn't throw three dorms and then have to go out in the next year and fill them. So as the College became more and more known and respected, it became that much easier to go out and recruit students. Of course, when I say known and respected, the Marist Brothers always were respected as educators and primarily at that time in the secondary area and it seemed to me at that time that there was some skepticism from some of the, even from some of the Marist High Schools

as to how strong and how good a Marist College could become. Also, I think there was some, I think I can recall hearing skepticism, if you will even from which Marist Brothers ended up having the opportunity to teach here at the College, as opposed to staying behind and teaching, so to speak, in the high school, so there was kind of ...

GN (09:56): a tension between the schools?

DF (09:59): The yin and yang with that, we had to deal with. In terms of the commitment of the Marist Brothers and their ability to teach and to be there for people, that never was at issue. So, it was a matter of getting people to understand that we were a solid liberal arts institution, that we had a strong commitment to educating a certain kind of student, mainly at that time and only because of the time, it was a generation of Italian and Irish kids that mainly were coming out of Long Island and New York City.

GN (10:40): And their parents are probably not going to college?

DF (10:42): So, this would be a first generation opportunity for them and they were looking for that kind of combination of a good education coupled with a strong religious background.

GN (10:56): At a college not too far away.

DF (10:58): Right, it was a convenient, beautiful location. So, all of those things helped us a great deal. Being young, in terms of our age and that area I think hurt us a little bit because we needed to develop scholarship offerings and to also attract not only good, solid candidates, but even the brighter ones would take us some financial assistance.

GN (11:25): It was a rather awesome charge trying to get them to come here, the gym was not even actually the most attractive at that time?

DF (11:30): No, the gym was, as I recall, had a stage on one end and Brother Tarcisius' head, his print shop, on the other end [Laughter] and in between there was a laundry room. So, there were a lot of things going on in there, not to mention trying to play basketball or whatever else. They wanted to have graduation actually in there as well. So, you know there was no seating.

GN (11:58): There was a gym without stands.

DF (12:00): Yea, and we had folding chairs, only two rows of them. The crowd that came to the games were a crowd of Marist Brothers, scholastics, that was a night out for them and an opportunity for some relaxation and rest so that's really was all that we had.

GN (12:20): In your move from 1966 to 1967 through 1968, is that the period then of the expansion that is Leo, ah, Sheahan the first to go up?

DF (12:33): Sheahan, and then Leo and then Champagnat.

GN (12:36): And did you have candidates that were ready to come, were you able to sell the possibility?

DF (12:44): Oh yea, I think at that time because it was going by a year by year, maybe two year progression, the reputation of the institution began to precede it so it became easier for us to go out and attract those kids. And then at that time we also began, we not only began to saturate Long Island and the City but we got into Jersey and get into Connecticut and a little bit into Massachusetts, not so much there but mainly Connecticut and New Jersey were the two other new markets that we tried to hit. In addition, we would be adding some sports so besides basketball, we had crew and that opened up an avenue for us in Philadelphia and south Jersey and in places where they had high school crew programs and then we were able to...

GN (13:40): Howie Goldman, when did he come?

DF (13:42): Howie Goldman, actually the first Director of Athletics also was Bill Murphy that I remember. He was the first, and in fact the first basketball coach that I played for was George Sturber and there was some funny incidence with Bill Murphy where one of his games that he wanted us to play at that time was to take us down to play Cathedral Seminary. He had been, I guess, an athletic director or something involving athletics down in maybe Bishop Dubois.

GN (14:16): Actually, Molloy.

DF (14:18): Molloy, and so he had a great tradition of looking at basketball from a New York City perspective so he would take us down there and then he would say now you can't embarrass me now. The game that he scheduled was the day that we ended for Christmas vacation and so we all went down by bus of course and no one was in the spirit to play basketball. We were in the spirit to do other things.

GN (14:42): Yes.

DF (14:43): So, we went down there and naturally got beat soundly and he was ranting and raving the whole time that we embarrassed him on his homecoming back into the city [Laughter] and you know, please don't do that again to him. So, we just got killed down there primarily because we weren't in any mental frame of mind to be playing, it was a bad time to schedule a game as it turned out. It was kind of funny in that way and then of course, aside after he left, then

Howie Goldman did come in as the Athletic Director. He came in after I had graduated and during the period of time I was working here in Admissions.

GN (15:30): He brought soccer to the College.

DF (15:32): He brought soccer into the fold and then they had crew. They never had baseball while I was here, that came I think sixteen years later. And then of course during that time, we were all men so there were no women's sports naturally and then during my time, I think 1970 was the first class, I admitted the first class of women to Marist. I would say they were probably a hearty group of maybe thirty or forty women that came in and that was the beginning of co-ed.

GN (16:10): Did you have anything to do with women coming to the night school?

DF (16:12): No.

GN (16:14): Was Admissions part of that?

DF (16:16): No, the night school was actually run by I think at that time if my memory serves me, by John Schroeder.

GN (16:21): Correct.

DF (16:22): And so no, that was a whole separate operation and I think Dr. Schroeder had initiated that even many years before that, bringing in adult populations and so forth. We had nothing to do with that. The full-time and also living on campus, we had something to do with that in 1970.

GN (16:48): Going back to maybe 1968 or 1965, there an appeal one time from the nurses at St. Francis to come here and we were putting up a nursing building and program and that was turned down by the faculty for strange reasons, but nevertheless.

DF (17:09): Yes, I remember that clearly. That would have been a great benefit to us and to them at the time and naturally we on the Admissions side were very much in favor of it but the die-hard faculty, if you will, that were really liberal arts-oriented and not technically, if you will, or career-oriented...

GN (17:29): And also male.

DF (17:30): Right, they wanted nothing with that. We also during that time had conversations later, not too much later, with Mt. Saint Mary's about trying to become co-institutional, if you will, where they will still maintain their autonomy, so to speak, but we would be under one name and they could keep their nursing program and their elementary education program and anybody there that wanted

to take courses here and vice versa, we would be able to. I don't know, that didn't get anywhere either.

GN (18:04): In time, it does on the educational level.

DF (18:09): But at that time I think, I don't know if it was so much the faculty at that time as much as the President, as I understand, of Mt. Saint Mary was a little concerned that we would somehow...

GN (18:22): Dominate the work.

DF (18:23): The institution and then they would go out of control I think.

GN (18:28): Okay, let's go back to your early years as the Director of Admissions. Nowadays there are print-outs and run-offs of where students want to go. Was there anything like that available to you in those days?

DF (18:46): No, we didn't necessarily have the print outs, the sophisticated print-outs that they have now but we did keep track of students and we did it mostly by hand of high schools they came from, their SAT's, their high school averages and so forth and so on so that we did know where we were getting our students from and which high schools were feeder high schools and which schools were not. And then we evolved, into while I was here, into the computer generation. In fact, one of the first machines that IBM came out with that supplanted the typewriter was an automatic typewriter that for lack of a better name that I can recall, was called a "misty-misty machine" where you could actually set up a letter there and then it would just keep doing that same letter but changing the names of people but that was the very first one and that's when we had the office set up in the back of Greystone, one of the offices back on the main floor there, in the back, as an area where we reproduce a lot of canned letters but make them look like they were personalized. That was a big thing that we wanted to do, we wanted to let people know that we were really a school that was concerned about the individual and that we would do everything we should to make sure that we gave them personal attention and that was one of the ways with lack of staff that we were able to do that. And also, at that time or around that time, talking about staff, we didn't have enough staff so I was able to introduce an intern program, whereby we would take a junior or a senior college student, and for the first part of their junior or senior year, hire them as an Admission counselor and give them the responsibility of going out and visiting high schools. So rather than having just maybe one or two full-time people which would limit our ability to get out, we were able to get six or nine, depending on the year, interns that we were able to send out in various parts of the country. We would rent a car for them and provide them with food and money and hotel money and so forth. Also, at the same time they were doing this, they were receiving a stipend towards their tuition, maybe a modest stipend, maybe fifteen

hundred dollars or whatever, but of course in relation to what the tuition was it was probably pretty decent.

GN (21:39): A quarter of it maybe.

DF (21:43): And then we would also give them credit. We would give them six college credits for this. So, they were able to take six other credits so they would be able to maintain their full-time twelve credit status.

GN (21:56): Where did that idea come from? Is that unique or were we the first to do this?

DF (22:02): At the time, we were unique. There was an article that was written by the *New York Times* on this in the 60's. The idea really came to me because I knew someone at Dayton University that had a similar, but not for credit and there were a lot of variations that were different but the idea of using students, current students, came to me from them at Dayton University and so I said maybe we could do this. Now another thing that I introduced it at that time was television advertising, in other words, we had hired a firm and we had done, I may still have them actually, commercials that actually were shown, not on the major 2, 4, 7 Networks, but were shown on market New York, or New Haven, Connecticut or Hartford, Connecticut. They were like thirty second commercials, sixty second commercials and that was at a time when colleges were really... It was taboo to even advertise, even talk about advertising. That was not something that any one ever wanted to even approach.

GN (23:19): My daughter was inducted into it...

DF (23:21): That's right. They can't, they shouldn't do that. Of course today, everybody's advertising everything so it doesn't really make any difference. In those days, it was kind of entrepreneurial to be able to do that and it worked. We would pick out around high school football games around Thanksgiving time when everybody would be around and throw these commercials in and get the name of the school really into that marketplace. It worked very well. And that was one of the great things of Linus, in my opinion is that he would hire you and then he would give you the opportunity to be yourself and to do all that you can do and not be a person that was micromanaging. In other words, he would just say, now if it flopped, naturally he would have words for you about that but not in the sense of don't you ever do this again, but just to go over what went wrong and let's be careful. And he was terrific like that. He gave me that opportunity when I came into Admissions when I was twenty-three years old. That would be unheard of even in these days.

GN (24:43) : And he was about twenty-eight.

DF (24:44): Right, so he was really known to say okay, let's do this, let's try it and see how it works so I'm grateful for having been here at the time he was here. I wasn't here when Paul Ambrose was the President and naturally I had gone by the time Dennis Murray had become President, so the only one that I have any experiential knowledge of is Linus' style and his ability, I think, to choose the right people at the right time to do the right job.

GN (25:21): For some reason the name Paul Brown is in my head for one of these internships.

DF (25:27): He could have been, I can tell you some others, like Jim Daly was an intern.

GN (25:33): Was he?

DF (25:34): Brian Maloney was an intern. The two Mooney's, Brendan and Jerry were. The Kuffner's, one of the Kuffner's was. I think it was Billy Kuffner.

GN (25:47): Was it a fact that they went back to their own high schools?

DF (25:51): No, they didn't, they could do that but it wasn't ever given, we used to be something like that where we would say to people if you go home on vacation, Thanksgiving or Christmas, and you could go back to your high school, we will give you a packet of information that you can take there but these particular individuals were not specifically, if it happened to be that it was in the geographic area then that would be fine. That's where it would be but it would be for them to go out, you know, to Connecticut and Jersey and Pennsylvania and pretty much within a five hour radius of here. But it gave us so much more coverage, the ability plus the fact you're showing people your product, it was your student...

GN (26:35): These too were presented.

DF (26:36): Right, so they made good impressions, which we hope that they did and I'm sure that they did, that would benefit us as well.

GN (26:45): What was the competition like?

DF (26:47): The competition in those days was pretty stiff in some sense because naturally in the late sixties and seventies, the Catholic colleges that we were competing with had been in business much longer than we were and so therefore, they had a much better reputation. So, we were, at that time competing with the Fordham's, with the St. John's, with the Iona's with Manhattan. Not so much the Holy Cross's of the world, not those schools.

GN (27:19): Siena, St. Francis?

DF (27:20): Siena would be. Not so much St. Francis was a big competitor of ours, but those schools of St. John's, Manhattan, Fordham, and Iona were the four that I think that those Irish and Italian kids also wanted to go to. So those were the big ones that we had. And I imagine that as we grew competitively, naturally other schools, other Catholic colleges, like maybe Providence would come in and maybe Holy Cross every once in a while, or Villanova every once in a while, would come in. So that's what would happen.

GN (27:56): What other programs were you involved in terms of the Admissions and in opening it up as the college was getting more and more established and there was more and more room to take people in? You said women were the first...

DF (28:15): Women were the first in 1970.

GN: Were they permitted to live on campus?

DF (28:17): Yes, they were, they lived on campus. They had carved out a space for them, I'm not sure if it was in Leo or in Sheahan, it might have been in Sheahan but it was a small little building. But yes, that's where they were. And another program that emulated, or that developed from something that I did while I was here was the whole program that now is for students with disabilities. There was a young man, and I wish I could think of his last name, you may know him. Mike was his first name. But in any case, he came and he was a quadriplegic and when he was brought to my attention by counselor from New York City who said you know I'm bringing my company, Michael to see you with his parents, he's you know severely handicapped. We had the dorms at the time and I said well, this was before it was known to do anything like this.

GN (29:23): Federal regulations and we had to do anything like that. Yea.

DF (29:26): As a matter of fact, it was at a time when people would look, shame on us perhaps to do otherwise. So, he said well, can I bring him up? So, I said okay, bring him up. So, he brought him up with his parents and I said why does he want to come here? He said, well his parents want him to come here because they're getting older and they want to know that he can survive without them, because there's going to be a time when it will be without them. So, I said fine, that seemed to make a lot of sense. So, he said, when you interview him, I'm going to bring him back, he gets very excited and as he gets excited, his speech is even more difficult to understand. You just have to say to him 'shut up' Mike and then he'll calm down and then I'm thinking to myself at the time, I'm going to say to this poor child 'shut up?' [Laughter] I don't think I'm going to be able to do it, which I couldn't do. But anyhow, he did get excited and everything went along. He was a very bright kid; he was a kid that was probably a 90 average kid in school. He had to do things in a totally different way. He loved

Marist, loved everybody around it. We admitted him, he paid his deposit, and I never told anyone of his handicap. The day that students came on campus was the first day anyone would have knowledge that there was this one person was different from everyone else. And the first person who called me, which I knew it would be, was Fred Lambert.

GN (31:16): Director of dormitory residences.

DF (31:18): So, he calls me and he says “what the hell are you doing?” And I said I don’t know; right now I’m sitting down, why? [Laughter] He said “you know damn well what I’m saying.” I said no, what are you saying? He said, this student, Michael. I said “what’s wrong with him?” He said “you know what’s wrong with him.” I said “well, he had a very good average, very good SAT scores. No, what’s wrong with him?” He said “where am I going to put him? Who am I going to put him with?” He said his roommate already came in and they got all upset and walked out. I said “well, I’ll tell you what. We’ll have to find a place for him. That’s the way it’ll have to be.” So, he didn’t find someone right away and eventually in the shorter period of time, Michael called a meeting of all of the resident advisors in Champagnat but they didn’t know that it was him that called the meeting. Then, when he got them all there, these were all students and his parents in the meantime had called me and said what’re they going to do? And I said listen, I can guarantee you that there is one student here that will live with your son as a roommate and they said “who is this student?” And I said, I don’t know but there will be one student. He hasn’t come to the surface yet but he will. So, he calls a meeting, nothing happens. Thankfully, a day or so later the center of the football team became Michael’s roommate and then took him to basketball games, took him to everything else. Michael graduated from here and I think actually now works for the Department of Rehabilitation and so forth in Washington. So, it was from that point in time that people then thought that we should not only invent stuff but it was because we kind of backed into it rather than dove into it.

GN (33:29): And the other programs that I recall now that you say that, Dan Kirk had a day that he used to have where we would get wheelchairs.

DF (33:43): Oh yea, it was the day where you...

GN (33:45): ...Sat in a wheelchair all day to see what these kids went through.

DF (33:48): See how you could go through a doorway, how you could get over a curb, how you could even get a plate of food, go to the men’s room. Yes, he did have that kind of a day so there would be that sensitivity to the needs of people that are in those circumstances where as before...

GN (34:05): Did we have them yet, in other words were there none of them on campus already?

DF (34:10): Yea, I think Mike was there. I also admitted at the time, Joe Hines as a blind student, a visually impaired student and we didn't have at the time we admitted Joe any visually impaired students either. So, he became first, you know, he had a seeing-eye dog. Those were the early days of when now it's much more programmatic, but in those days it was much more spontaneous. You either said yes let's do something because it's deserved to be done or let's make another reason why we can't do it.

GN (34:54): The Joe Hines story, his first wife died early on and sometime later he had an occasion to meet his new wife, who he's married since, and she's Irma Casey's daughter.

DF (35:13): Yea, I saw them this last, Linus's dedication.

GN (35:17): Did you? at the dedication appearance? And the story of their first date is they called up and asked to speak, Tom Casey gets on the phone and he said I don't want to talk to you, I want to talk to your daughter and then he gets her to go to a movie. So, here's a blind guy

DF (35:36): Oh yea, going to a movie for a first date. [Laughter] He's quite a catch, he's quite a guy.

GN (35:37): Yea, he is.

DF (35:42): He's now a counselor for the New York Fire Department I think in the City. But those are the kinds of things that in those days, you could do those things as long as you were able to back them up substantially as to why you were doing them. And you didn't need to be legislated into doing them. You did them because it was the humanistic thing to do. And we got no grief from Linus about that. The only call I got about Michael... I know what his name was, it was Michael Ward. It just came to me, Michael Ward. And subsequently he used to come and visit us in the Admissions office all the time. He used to come over and wheel himself over there, very proud of himself to get there and if you recall there was a dip down towards the gym and he used to get in that wheelchair and just go down there. And I said 'holy mackerel' if this kid goes shooting out of his wheelchair, lawsuit waiting.

GN (36:42): Well fortunately nothing happened.

DF (36:44): Yea, nothing ever happened like that.

GN (36:47): Let me come back to your time, how long were you here as Admissions Director?

DF (36:56): I was here from 1964 until 1977. So, I left in 1977 to go over to Fairfield University so my period of time was thirteen years as either an assistant and/or Director of Admissions. And before myself, Tom Wade was the other lay person and then John Malachy was before him. So it was John Malachy, Tom, myself, and then Jim Daly would come in after me, and then Harry Woods, and then now Sean.

GN (37:40): So, they stay a fairly long time don't they?

DF (37:44): They tend to, they tend to, yea. Although I don't know if any of them stay thirteen years.

GN (37:49): No, my mathematics would be really off course to say that.
[Laughter]

DF(37:55): No, I don't think that they do but they do stay a long while and more today, it's more around the Presidency. For instance, if Dennis Murray were to leave, it may mean that Sean will have to leave because a new person may want someone else, not because he's not qualified or he's not doing a good job, it's just that it's different today.

GN (38:21): So technically, is the Director of Admissions the person really who accepts the candidate to the college?

DF (38:28): Yes.

GN (38:29): So, in other words, it's not the Dean of Students or Counselor of Admissions?

DF (38:33): Nope, everyone comes through Admissions.

GN (38:38): Okay, in talking this way about the past, tell me about what your view of the students were. How is a Marist student like a Fordham student or like a St. John's student? Are all college students the same?

DF (38:54): They're pretty much I would say. In those days, they were pretty much all first-generation students; they were academically average to above average students so they were very competitive I think. A lot of the students in those days that we admitted went on to do some great things. It's quite remarkable that an institution that kind of started and graduated its first class of lay people maybe in 1960 or 1959, it was able to do that so soon and it's a credit to the Marist Brothers and the job that they had done with those students. And the few lay people at that time because the Brothers outnumbered the lay people at that time in terms of faculty, which actually went in the other direction. In those days, it wasn't that way and in those days, we had Brother Paul Stokes as Dean of Students that he pretty much had a...

GN (39:54): He ran the ship his way? [Laughter]

DF (39:55): He had a very lead hand on everything and whatever he said, that's what went. During my period here, besides the basketball, I was the President of the Senior class and eventually President of the Alumni Association after that for a couple of times and so...

GN (40:19): Paul Stokes was here then when you were a student?

DF (40:23): Yes, and also when I was initially and then he went from here out to Marist in Chicago and I think that's pretty much where he passed away out there in Chicago I think. So, yes, I think the students were very similar; they wanted to get a good education. Their parents wanted better for them than they had for themselves. They were really mostly Catholic students, very few students that were non-Catholic. Most of them were from Catholic high school rather than public high school. Now that's changed a great deal.

GN (41:03): How about the financial aspect of it? Were you able to make deals for prospect students?

DF (41:08): We would, not deals so much as we were able to deal with the financial aid of the Marist money and then the financial aid office would deal with the government, the state and federal government money. So then when we put that whole thing together, how much Marist money and how much federal and state money, that became whatever their package would be. In those days, there wasn't a sense it's grown now but, in those days, there wasn't so much where parents would say well can't you sweeten the pot? They would be just grateful for whatever you could do for them in those days. Today, it's different. Today, everyone is "let's make a deal." You see, so it's much different today.

GN (41:59): Well, the competition is now doing the same thing.

DF (42:01): Right, everyone is doing that. In those days there were more students than there were places so you didn't have to make the deal. Today it's a little different.

GN (42:16): That's a very complex picture I'm sure and much more complex today maybe than then. First of all the price has changed considerably.

DF (42:24): Oh yes, the tuition when we were here might have been \$1,500 or \$2,000 and maybe room and board was another \$1,500 or two or three thousand so maybe you're looking at a \$5,000 package as opposed to today when you're looking at a \$25,000 - \$28,000 package.

GN (42:43): What would you say about the student body now? Do you have any sense of who's here and the kind of comparison between these kids who are paying \$25,000. Are they coming from a more substantial background financially than those students you had to deal with?

DF (43:05): Yea, I think that they are. I think that what has happened is their parents were the students of the people we were admitting and they have benefited from an economy and a situation where they can earn a great deal more money than their parents were able to and then they also have the same thing where they want more for their children and they will give it to them the best way they can. And naturally, by the same token, Marist has developed into physically into a huge complex. When I was here, there may have been five buildings or seven buildings at the most and now when you look around, it's going up North Road here and going over in this direction. It's enormous and it's beautiful and so what I have found over the years is listening to people talk about Marist now, will say that it's a great place. You don't even have to, in the days when I was here, you had to go out and sell it. You had to convince people that it would give them an advantage. Today, it has, because of its reputation; it helps sell itself both from the point of view of people graduating and getting positions and so forth plus the physical environment. It's competitive with all its competitor places, so it's different and naturally also, with that you're looking for more students. When I was here, we were trying to bring in a class of 400, 500, or 600 depending on the year. Now you're probably bringing in 900, 1,000, or 1,100 depending on how many transfers and so forth you throw into the mix. So, it's a lot different and for the most part up until 1970 we were just going for men so we only had one half of the population.

GN (45:10): Right.

DF (45:11): And so it's different. And I bet today there are probably more women than men.

GN (45:20): I think there's fifty-two to forty-eight.

DF (45:22): And that's not unusual. There are other places where it's even higher, maybe sixty - forty women to men. So, it's much different but it enjoys a I think a very fine reputation all over and I have been in many places especially in the Northeast over in Massachusetts or Connecticut or New Jersey or Pennsylvania. It has a good, if you mention Marist, people will shake their heads and say yes we know of it, it's a fine school. They have good things to say about it.

GN (45:52): Yea, I think this is the first year where we crossed over the fifty percent acceptance rate. More than half of those who applied were not able to get in so we've been turning away over half of those who are applying to get in. I don't think we would have envisioned that in your days.

DF (46:15): No, we didn't have that problem or that luxury. We were trying to get everybody in.

GN (46:24): When you were here the Brothers, at the beginning at least, had a dominant force and control in running of the College. Was there tension between the lay people and the religious in terms of administrative goals and objectives?

DF (46:45): I don't think there was when I was here because I think under Linus's administration, he was able to demonstrate to people through his example and his leadership that we're in this for a particular purpose and a common purpose and if there's a lay person who bought into that philosophy of the Marist Brothers, then you didn't sit around and complain about it. Did people complain? Oh, absolutely but not to the point of almost insurrection, not at nothing like that. I think that every year I can remember we had a Christmas party where the lay people and the Brothers and everyone got together. I know as a student, I came to know a lot of student Brothers and had good relationships with them so I don't think there was that tension between, I think it grew a little bit toward the end of Linus's administration. There was a lot of

GN (48:00): financial difficulties that developed.

DF (48:02): There was a lot of complaining about well, we're not doing this right or we should change. Maybe who knows, I wouldn't say they're right but that's when it all began. So, I would say in 76-75.

GN (48:19): At what point did the College cease to be run by the Marist Brothers? Do you remember?

DF (48:24): Yea, I would say that what happened was and I don't remember the exact date but what happened it seems to me is when New York State said, that they adopted the law, the Bundy money, that you could get money from every graduate, so many for bachelors, so much for masters, so much for P.H.D. and tap money. If you demonstrated that your Board of Trustees were comprised of mostly lay people and not controlled by a religious entity, then you could give all that. And I think at the time, let's say it was the early 1970's, I think that's when it was, there weren't many Catholic colleges that chose not to do that. To my knowledge, the one that I can remember that stood out for a number of years that wouldn't accept it was Le Moyne College in Syracuse. But everyone else changed and I look at it as a change more of convenience if you will, convenience so that you could share in the moneys that will be available so that you could make your institution better. As opposed to changing the true root in philosophy of what Marist College really is all about. I don't think the root of all of that changed, I think it just changed, it was more of a change physically that you could see in terms of the composition. But even at that, I'm sure that those people that chose it bought into what the philosophy of the whole institution

would be. Otherwise if that weren't the case we would've gone out and looked for someone that was wealthy and said we'll name the school after you and we'll have your philosophy and that's what ours is. [Laughter] If you have \$60 million dollars then we'll call it 'Bababa.' We didn't do that so we selected people from the Trustees that were appropriate to the mission that the Brothers felt and still do about how we should go about educating young people and I think those people that came in engendered that same kind of philosophy.

GN (50:49): That's a good review of that whole transformation of the Board of Trustees at becoming secularized and at the same time maintaining the goals and mission of the College. They didn't change anything there.

DF (51:03): They didn't abandon those at the time where we could've easily had done that. I don't think it ever came to that at all at least from my point of view. Maybe some others will say that it did, I have no idea.

GN (51:16): You were here for thirteen years as Director of Admissions? Why did you stay so long? Could you get another job? [Laughter]

DF (51:24): I guess I could have and actually after thirteen years, the only job that I ever wanted to have interestingly enough, was Fairfield University because it also at the time was a young university and it had a nice campus and so forth. So, when that job came available, I just applied for that job just because I was just doing it for my own piece of mind. I didn't really think it was going to happen because they had some internal people that I thought would inherit the job but as it turned out, I did get the job and I certainly would have liked it. To be honest with you, if that didn't come along and I stayed and Dennis Murray would have had me I probably would have been a year behind Tony or two years behind Tony in terms of years in service because I would have stayed that long.

GN (52:27): Looking back on that long spell of directorship in that area, as you see it now, what would you say is one of the principle feelings you have of success, that you did it well? Is it the growth of the College?

DF (52:54): Oh yea, I think that to be part of something when it was in its infancy stage and then to do the best you could do with it during those times, we didn't have a lot of funding to do things as they do now. In other words, I look around and see all of this stuff I can remember that my wife and a friend of hers used to sew the names of the players onto shirts in athletics and do things like that. We would go on trips with the crew team, my wife and I and my children, and we would cook because they didn't have money for food. We would cook hamburgers and hot dogs and potato salad. In those days, you were much more as you would put it before you wore a lot of hats, you were much more of an integral part of a lot different things, rather than a specialist in one thing. And so what I consider to be beneficial from my experience here is to see that it has grown from that to now this operation that is next to none actually. I stopped

over today for a few minutes before I came over here to see Shaileen and the office that Advancement has from where it was in Greystone next to my office and then over to St. Peter's and then over to this building is like, you know, a different century. It's fabulous. So, you look around and you say God look at all this stuff and as I look around I mean I look at these buildings and I look at one of the windows there in Greystone and I say that was my office there in 1964. And now, I don't even know where the Admissions office is, if it even is still in that building, it probably isn't. I don't even know where it is but that's where it was. And we used to be so proud to bring people into that old kind of coach-house looking building because it was a beautiful building, it still is. But it's not the only beautiful building on the campus now. So, I'm just proud that I was able to play a part in the growth of this school to where it is today.

GN (55:37): What would you advise Sean now, if he asked you for your advice, how can you maintain this kind of spirit in this age that we're in?

DF (55:52): I think what you have to do is what I always believed was important to do and that is to continue to develop relationships. In other words, I don't think you want to become so scientific about the process that you lose sight of the art of the process. So, in other words, when in Admissions years ago, it was more of an art than a science. Now it has become more of a science than an art but I think there's a rich balance that can be had between scientific material, the printouts, the crunching of the numbers, as opposed to developing relationships with people so that if you build those relationships, continue to build them or develop new ones and you have people that trust you and respect you that are out there in the secondary area, that is dealing with young people everyday and if they respect you and trust you, they will continue to send you the quality in the kind of kids that you need to have to take Marist to its next logical step.

GN (5705): So, the interpersonal with the Admissions counselors and schools?

DF (57:09): I think it's very important. I think a lot of people lose track of that because they get into so much direct mail, email, telecommunications, so that it's an easy way to pull away from being face to face with someone. I think there's a lot to be said in that relationship building face to face. Sure, you need to do those other things but I don't think you want them to totally bore the interpersonal thing.

GN (57:37): Did you already accept students without interviewing or your staff doing it?

DF (57:43): Yes, we have because we didn't have enough people many times to interview so what we would try to do is to admit as many people that we did interview as we could admit because that we felt that if we interviewed them and they were on campus, we had a greater chance of them coming to Marist than if they never had come here. So yes, we did do that.

GN (58:07): Good. Is there anything we didn't say that you would like to say for the record?

DF (58:13): No, I just certainly hope and I'm sure it will happen this way, that Marist just continues not to forget its past and to carry on with taking it to the next level, whatever that level happens to be. Unlike a lot of places, I think that Marist still has a place to find. A lot of places are already at that place but Marist, I think, is still searching for that level wherever that will be. I think it will be different than where it is today, better than where it is today but how much better I think will depend on a lot of different things that go on.

GN (58:54): Good, well thanks very much David.

“END OF INTERVIEW”