

Robert Lewis

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

Transcribed by Wai Yen Oo

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript: Robert Lewis

Interviewee: Dr. Robert Lewis

Interviewer: Kieran (student)

Interview date: 16 November 2010

Location: Marist Archives and Special Collections Reading Room

Topic: Marist College History

Subject Headings: **Lewis, Robert**

 Marist College Faculty
 Marist College History
 Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)
 Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: Robert Lewis talks about how he arrived at Marist College, the social and political climate on the campus at the time and the demographics of the Marist College students in the Sixties. He also reflects on the changes made to the curriculum, the courses, and the learning outcomes for students in 2010, comparing it over the decades since the sixties. Robert Lewis finally reflects on the difference in leadership between the two different administrations on campus, Presidents Linus Foy’s and Dennis Murray’s.

[00:01](#) **Kieran:** This interview is taking place in the Library of Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. As part of the Marist Heritage Project. Interview is with Dr. Lewis of the Marist History Department.

[00:10](#) **Robert Lewis:** English department.

[00:14](#) **K:** English department, I apologize. The date is November 16th, 2010. And the times is 11:09. Good morning Dr. Lewis.

[00:21](#) **RL:** Good morning.

[00:23](#) **K:** Oh, some interesting questions when you first... how you first come to Marist College? Just kind of talk about how you were recruited, how you came to apply to be a professor at Marist College.

[00:36](#) **RL:** Well. I was in a master's degree seminar at Columbia University in contemporary literature and my instructor, I think made me aware of a message about a job being opened at Marist College. At least I think that's the source of the information. And then Dr. Somner, who was chair of the English department, he is deceased recently, contacted I guess somebody at Columbia and so I came up to Marist for an interview with him and with several other faculty for lunch and. I was finishing up my master's degree then and at that time, this was in the early 60s. The colleges were starting to expand and unlike today, there weren't really enough people with PhDs to staff the positions I'm sure if I were the same age I was then which was twenty-three years old, I would not have gotten a job with a master's degree. But at that point the job market was such that there was an opening and I took it. And I've been here since.

[02:01](#) **K:** So the application process, was it very formal? Was it informal?

[02:08](#) **RL:** I would say it was informal at least in the English department. That is to say I don't... I'm sure I had my records from undergraduate degree and my graduate studies forwarded to Marist at some point. But I didn't write a letter of application at that point. I had been contacted orally. So it was rather informal. Marist was a very informal place in many ways then. The faculty was small. The student body was small. I think the year that I started in 1963, the fall of 1963. I remember an edition of the Circle, I think, saying that the student body had mushroomed to eleven hundred. And I'm sure there was well less than a hundred faculty then too. And...but things were very informal in those early years. Marist was sort of learning how to become a four-year college in many ways.

[03:24](#) **K:** Okay. So as 1963, you've seen a lot of different changes. One of the most drastic change would have been you could say introduction of females on campus. Could comment on the introduction of women to the campus and how the campus responded to that.

[03:40](#) **RL:** Well, there are others like Linus Foy, Richard Foy who would know the details of this better than I. I think it occurred around 1969 or '70. There were there were only a couple female faculty too as I remember. Women in anthropology. Maybe one or two others. I know that women I think may have come in through the night school. In the mid-60s, the evening school was very large. IBM was subsidizing its employees to get bachelor's degrees and paying for them. And so they were awful lot of, for example, physics majors. There isn't even a physics major now at Marist College. But physics was one of the biggest majors in terms of numbers of students enrolled in the 1960s because of IBM. And I think but I don't know exactly what point women may have been attending Marist classes in the evening before they were attending during the day. But I don't remember any particular problem about faculty accepting women. I mean it was not a big dramatic change. It happened. And slowly the number of women increased over the years but there was no particular problem for the faculty and I don't think in accepting them. I know that one of the early proposals was for Marist to create a full-scale nursing program St Francis wanted to give its nursing program and the faculty turned that down. I'm not sure that was because we had not at that point voted to admit women or the possibly more likely because it was a risky financial venture to take on nursing because it's a very costly program to mount.

[06:03](#) **K:** 1963 became one of the main complaint against leveled students by such things in the Circle newspaper is the students at Marist are very apathetic. But in 1963, there are several clubs are more political, of political nature. One of them I don't know if you remember was the Young Americans, which had the objective of help fighting off communist influence on campus. Took place in 1963. Do you remember anything such as that as communist clubs or anti-communist clubs?

[06:31](#) **RL:** I don't, I don't remember the organization you cite. What I do remember from a little later than when I arrived in '63. After the Vietnam War heated up and with the riots in Kent State and Nixon's bombing into Cambodia, I do remember an upsurge of ... The assassination of Martin Luther King and the assassination of Robert Kennedy. I do remember a ferment on campus on the other side of the political spectrum was much more prominent. And I do remember a big teach-in. That was occurring at colleges across the United States in 1969, '70, '71 in that period. I do remember a big teach-in in the campus center. I remember classes being called off. I remember students campaigning to have final exams cancelled because of the climate of political unrest. Nothing really violent, or disruptive, very disruptive happened at Marist as it did at Columbia and schools like that. But Marist did feel the wave of political upheaval that went along with the Vietnam protests. But I don't remember, I mean it makes sense that would have been true in the early 60s. You still had the kind of the lingering influence of the McCarthy era. And you know the kind of paranoia about communists being everywhere. But I don't remember it really surfacing in the classroom that much.

[08:34](#) **K:** Okay. In 1963, you came the fall of '63, that was the same time when J.F.K. was assassinated in November of '63. As a Catholic institution, I'm sure... There must have been some kind of unique response to that this whole Catholic president. Do you member any response to the student body or faculty members to JFK's assassination?

[08:56](#) **RL:** Well I mean I remember being in class the afternoon it happens. And I remember the dean, the academic dean, Brother Paul Stokes knocking on my classroom door or maybe just opening it and telling me that classes should be cancelled because President had been shot. I can't remember if he said, "He was dead." I don't remember any particular event other than that. It was certainly very sad occasion.

[09:40](#) **K:** So over the years, there's been like a change of between the relationships with students and faculty. When I think back in the early 60s, there was a little more of an outside the classroom interaction between faculty members and students. And I think you were head of a dorm floor in one of the halls which I think is kind of turned away from now... It's now more of a professional formal relationship between professors and students. Do you agree with that, you find that similar or?

[10:08](#) **RL:** Well, a lot of that had to do with the size of the college. I mean it was just... It was a very compact institution. First of all, it was all male. So you're right. I was a floor proctor for my first year of Marist, only one year. It's also a different world, a world in which people assume that kind of proprietary supervision of young people in a way they couldn't today. I mean for example I was charged on the student who helped me on the floor was a senior were charged with making sure the people were awake for Sunday mass. Now they didn't have to go. We didn't make them go to Mass but what we were supposed to wake them up. I personally never woke them up. I'm not sure I really made the student who helped me wake them up either but I was part of the understanding that sort of you know you were to create a climate in which they did this. And also students were actually required to sit at their desks for an hour and study in silent study at a certain time of night. I can't remember exactly maybe it was like on 7.30 to 9.00 or something like that and then after that they could take a break. Back to your general question, yeah, you got to know people outside class. This is particularly true among the faculty. If you look at Marist today, you will notice that the faculty are segregated physically. So that of all the psych and sociology and ed people are in one floor of Dyson and the business people on another. And the liberal arts people are a couple hundred yards away in a different building. And the chemistry people are a quarter of a mile away in Donnelly Hall. And you'll find that these people generally only mingle during the daytime with people from their own departments and divisions. That was not the case when I came here I mean some of my closest friends were in other disciplines. And when you went to a faculty meeting which may have had sixty or seventy people at most, you know, talking. You got to see everybody and you got to hear everybody. It's the way the faculty runs its business, I'm not saying it's not as good. I'm just saying it's much more sort of detached and bureaucratic and business-like. Now does it hold true of students well I don't know. I think there's still a commitment at Marist to sort of to emphasize teaching. It's probably still easier for students to see their professors at Marist than it is at comparable kinds of institutions. But I don't know too many students outside of the students that I have in my classes. When I was here in the 60s, I found myself going

to student events. For example I might be asked to chaperone a dance or I'd be going to student drama productions. Or in my case, Dr. Goldman who recently died, he was the original athletic director at Marist College and started the soccer team. He asked me to be a cross-country coach even though I didn't know anything about cross country. So I was sort of plugged into the students and through that means. So yeah it was just, it was a much smaller world. And a more intimate world in many ways. And of course the Brothers were very much more fully present than they are now. And I think something of that spirit of the Marist Brothers, that sense that somehow that you should cultivate and nurture community was very much present there. Some of that still lingers at Marist but the sheer size of Marist now makes that more difficult.

[15:11](#) **K:** If I remember, you retired from cross-country with a winning record.

[15:15](#) **RL:** Someone just gave me the other day, a friend of mine whom I taught with years ago, he gave me a photocopy of an article in the circle about winning the, what was it called the Central Athletic Conference Championship, C.A.C.C (Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference) that we won in 1965 or 1966. I can't remember. I tell people that I think I may be the youngest retired coach in the N.C.A.A.

[15:47](#) **K:** I was actually going to read you a quote. So you came here in 1963, you were interviewed by the Circle newspaper as a young faculty member and one of the things you said was integral to Marist, an advantage. You felt the campus had an open and industrious atmosphere that was quite stimulating. Do you still feel that's true today or has that changed over the evolution of Marist history?

[15:08](#) **RL:** An open and industrious... Is that what I said?

[15:11](#) **K:** Open and industrious atmosphere that was quite stimulating.

[15:16](#) **RL:** Well. Part of the limitation that I have responding that question now is that for the last eight years I've been retired. And I've really been kind of a bit of an outsider. I mean I come and I teach my two courses. And I do talk to my students. I try to hold office hours. But I don't participate in any committee meetings and I don't draft statements and so on and so forth. What I do remember as a young faculty member was that. I wasn't excluded from anything. It wasn't a matter that somehow there were people who had been here longer and had seniority over me and that I had a kind of a waiting line to get to do things. That's what I mean by open. It was a young institution. It was very necessary for everybody to kind of chime in and build the institution. I mean develop the structures of governance like promotion committees, tenure committees. So I mean I found myself serving on a wide variety of committees and learning a lot about campus politics. Industrious too, in that I think, I guess what I might have meant by that industrious in reference to the faculty is that there was definitely a primary emphasis placed upon teaching and upon community service, service to the community of Marist. Now I think it's no secret that as Marist has matured and it's tried to gain some acceptance and recognition in the wider scholarly world, there's been something of a shift of emphasis and much more is required by way of writing and publication of faculty now for tenure and promotion than was true in my early years. I mean they hired me with a master's degree. Now you wouldn't hire anybody who didn't have a Ph D plus having written something and have it published. Not that doesn't mean it's not still, you know, open and industrious. But I think younger faculty have to be sort of looking to solidify their own credentials for college, for promotion, for tenure. And so maybe the industriousness is not focused as much as it used to be on college activity. I hope it's still focused on students because I think that really is the heart and soul of Marist, the students feeling that they're paid attention to.

[19:12](#) **K:** When you came to Marist in 1963, was there a tenure system in place or that?

[19:15](#) **RL:** No there wasn't. I got tenured by default. Yeah. I did. I'm not proud of that, but I mean there really wasn't a tenure system. I'm sure that my chair evaluated me in some fashion to the Academic Vice President. But it was only about nine or ten years into my being here that we developed a mechanism for actually a peer review of faculty in tenure process.

[19:46](#) **K:** So one of the goals of Marist throughout the evolution of the campus is to diversify the staff and faculty of Marist College.

It's one of the things cited by the middle state evaluations, I think on two occasions. Do you think Marist has try to accomplish, you think they're more successful in that diversifying the faculty or think it's a little still more fragmented?

[20:13](#) **RL:** Still not as diverse as it should be. I'm sure we have diversified. I mean I'm sure if you studied the profile of faculty back in 1963 where they got their undergraduate degrees from, where they got their graduate degrees from, whether they were male or female, or whether there were White or Black or Hispanic. You would have found a fairly homogeneous group of people mostly male, mostly White. Almost all White. I remember one Black person in my English department who was a Marist Brother. But I think he was the only, he may be one of the only or the only two African-American Marist brothers in America. And probably mostly coming from Catholic Colleges undergraduate. I came from Manhattan. And a lot of them with higher degrees from Fordham. Now none of this meant that they were not as competent as people, you know for more diverse backgrounds. I mean they're quite good I think. And the students that I speak to from those early years are very, very appreciative of their Marist education. I mean I can't say it's not better now or that it was better then. But I can say that people... And these are people who have been successful in their careers. They really thought that the level of instruction that they got. I'm talking about this is the 60s and the early 70s was very good. Even though we didn't have very much of a reputation. So, I mean I'm sure that the institution can trot out figures that will prove. And I mean that I think they're right that there's a higher percentage of minorities on the faculty now. Certainly a much higher percentage of women and a higher and much higher percentage of women at the upper ranks and so on and so forth. That's all to the good. I mean I'm not against diversity at all. But I don't that the narrative about Marist is as simple as saying, "Well, Marist was once a very homogeneous non-diverse College and now it's much better because it's much more diverse." I mean the homogeneity was also a source of strength. You know.

[22:55](#) **K:** One of the more controversial parts of Marist history, not controversial, was the use of student evaluations when they first were brought about there was a tirade, a strict resistance by many faculty members to the concept of student evaluation. Do you remember any of that?

[23:15](#) **RL:** Did you have any remembrance from your research of when they were actually instituted?

[23:18](#) **K:** The student evaluations. They were tried for several years, I believe in even the lower 80s.

[23:25](#) **RL:** So it's only since the 80s.

[23:27](#) **K:** There was a concern whether they'd be published whether they be signed anonymous. I mean, I know today we have anonymous student evaluations of our professors.

[23:39](#) **RL:** Right, right. You know I don't remember too much of the controversy or maybe I will after I leave here. I remember lots of things now about an hour or two after. I was wondering myself when student evaluation became widely used. I know what has happened is that it's kind of graduated from, you know, having one or two courses evaluated each semester to now all your courses are evaluated every semester. Irrespective of whether you're going up for tenure or promotion or not. It used to be that for X number of years prior to being tenured or promoted, you had to have all your course is evaluated. Now it's everybody gets everything evaluated. I'm not a student of the research on student evaluations. But I have a lot of misgivings about them. I don't... I have to be convinced by somebody that they really have contributed to the betterment of education. I'm certainly not against students evaluating courses but I wonder how seriously they take that evaluation when they fill out these forms so routinely and anonymously. I've served on tenure and promotion committees for a number of times during my career. And I've read thousands of students' evaluations and I learned how to read them. You know, take some of them with a grain of salt. I learned to compare them with faculty grade distributions and so when someone got praised extravagantly and I noticed he was giving out all As. You know. I took the praise with a grain of salt and vice versa. But I don't remember – to get to your specific question - I don't remember too much of the discussion back then. I'm sure there were some resentment about it. What I do remember that over the years it came to be felt that education should be like a corporation that just as you have a review of your employees at IBM annually. You should evaluate faculty that way. The evaluation of teaching is

an extremely difficult and tricky thing.

[26:43](#) **K:** Sometimes you know realize the value of what you learn until more after.

[26:46](#) **RL:** Exactly and I always felt that I would want somebody to speak to some of my better students a couple of years after they had me. Well not even a couple of my better, even a cross-section of my students several years after as an alumni, it's very difficult to recruit opinion of alumni about a current faculty member, but there is a way in which you need to be separated from the immediate emotion you feel.

[27:27](#) **K:** So one of the things I think as a young professor coming here perhaps it's because you're such a younger professor and Marist is such a young institution. You brought a... You had a unique teaching style where you specialize in more of individual works than a broad survey of literature. Can you comment on how you came to evolve that teaching style of focusing on individual works?

[27:50](#) **RL:** Is that what I did? I mean I did teach surveys of American literature in the early years quite a bit because at the time I was focused more on American literature when I ultimately got my PhD. I had shifted over to British literature. That's a good question and I don't know, you know, how did I come to do that or why did I come to focus upon longer works. It may go all the way back to my undergraduate years at Manhattan College. I was in a very good liberal arts program there which was organized around the idea of the great books of Western civilization. So I can remember commuting from Brooklyn to Manhattan College and reading the Iliad the whole thing and the Odyssey the whole thing. And the Aeneid and St Augustine's confessions, the whole thing. And Plato's Republic the whole thing you know on the I.R.T. subway on my way to Manhattan College. In other words, I'm sure that's part of it. I had an education which did not focus especially in those areas so much upon textbooks as it did on classic works. You know. And I did have courses that had textbooks in them. So I guess that's part of it, maybe a large part of it. And then I wound up teaching a lot of fiction courses where you dealt with novels and whole works. I mean there were courses where I still use an anthology in classics of western literature. But you're right even there I try to use as many whole works as I can. I think that I think you have to combat. I sound like an old fogey here. But I think you have to combat what may be happening in the culture, a tendency to kind of read snip bits and pieces of things. I mean that may be a result of the habits of doing reading and research on the Internet. Or it may have something to do with the media revolution. But reading whole books requires a kind of discipline and concentration that's sustained over time that I think is a really good discipline. You probably know better than I but my guess is that if we were to take a survey of Marist College seniors and ask them, "How many books did you read outside of the ones that were assigned to you in your courses this year?" I don't know if we get very high numbers. I don't think they'd be very different from most other institutions either. The culture's, the reading habits have changed quite a bit. I mean I even have colleagues in the English department who will tell me that they find it very difficult to have to get students to read whole novels anymore. They have to kind of go with the shorter work; short stories, plays. Isn't that terrible?

[31:30](#) **K:** It's kind of counterproductive. In terms of students and grades, do you think there's been out a change from their earlier days of Marist history to now where I think now students they don't get the A it's all most as if they didn't do as best as they could they want the A. An A is they... what they are willing to accept. Back in 1963, you know, throughout your time at Marist, was it a little bit different? Was students always so concerned with the A versus actually getting the knowledge?

[31:59](#) **RL:** Well, I don't know that they were necessarily more noble in their motives than students are today. But I'm fairly sure of this that I was less, I felt less pressured when I gave out C. And I gave out quite a few of them. And I mean I can go back to my old grading books. And I look down. I had some big classes then too. And I'll see lots of students with C, C+, some cases D+ And you know smattering of B and smaller smattering of A. But. it's not just me too I have a colleague in the Spanish department and he told me the same thing. Now, it's that because students are coming out of high school, better prepared so they are earning those higher grades. I don't know. But I think there is a sense of... there is a greater sense of entitlement. Lord knows what's causing it. I mean Marist. It costs a lot of money to go to College now. And there's a lot more family and cultural pressure to make that experience financially pay off. So students feel the pressure to have a certain index in order to get a certain kind of internship, let's say or a certain

job. So and then, the cost as I say. But there's definitely, I think. It has made faculty more self-conscious. In some ways, it put more pressure on faculty along with the student evaluation system. Because so much of the student evaluations are the students' estimate of faculty member, hinges on their perception of what kind of grade they're going to get. And if they're doing real well in a course and they're running a B+ or an A, and they look like they're going to get on the final. Well. You know. It makes a lot easier for them to check number one. But you know I remember when I went to College in the late 50s, the early 60s in Manhattan. I had people taking the same liberal arts program that I took who were fully prepared to go on to sell insurance work, work in business and corporation, public relations and so on. You didn't have curricula that were designed specifically for those kinds of jobs. Like mean that now we have a degree in communication within a track in public relations. Well. When I went to Manhattan, nobody would have thought of majoring in in public relations. They would have said I can go do a job like that if I major in History or if I major in English. But obviously curricula have become a lot more professionally focused. I am not always sure that's for the good, I mean for the students' good. In that respect, the question about grading is true. In other words, part of that concern about grading is student's resentment that they might not be doing well in a course which they don't see as being relevant to their real education. In other words if they are convinced that they want to be an accountant or a public relations person and they're taking major level courses in that and they're not doing well in their philosophy course. There's a kind of resentment of that in some cases. You know. Whereas I remember going to school, I thought the Philosophy course was the most important course I was taking even though I was an English major.

[36:12](#) **K:** Do you think on that want of a higher grade or expecting a higher grade... What I really think the grade has had on the science of man program which was the unofficial honors program, I would say of Marist College which you were an integral part of, would you be able to comment on that?

[36:32](#) **RL:** Yeah, the person who started the program was. Dr. Xavier Ryan. A New Zealand Marist Brother who subsequently left the brothers. And is now back in New Zealand in fact recently I communicated with him. And he drew me into the program as someone who read the student senior thesis. And then when he left in 1981 or 82. I had agreed to take the program over and I actually taught the science of man one and two which were essentially philosophy courses. I mean, I was really all in my head. But it was tremendously liberating and expansive for me because it forced me to think about things and thinking ways that I hadn't before. That was a very good program, I think especially when Xavier ran and he had a kind of charisma in inspiring students to kind of go beyond themselves and to think outside the boxes of their disciplines. What happened? What happened around the time that he left and then I took over was that there was a major shifts in the. demographics of majors. So it was in the early 80s that we had the computer revolution – the beginnings of it - so computer science and computer information that didn't exist before 1981 or 82, I don't think. But there were larger numbers of majors came into that field and larger number of majors came into communications. The communication department grew out of the English department and so you had a much more, much more intense emphasis upon the notion of College as essential career preparation. So in that climate the science of man program became harder to sell students. Even very good students. Because it required a lot. It required a senior thesis of like fifty, sixty, seventy pages. And it wasn't in your major like now your capping paper will be in your major. Oh well that's my capping paper. I'm an accountant so it makes sense that they had me do a fifty page paper. But this was not in your major. This was in the core, your core. So it just became... people became more concerned about how well they were doing in their major course and they didn't want to as much to embrace the rigors of that course.

[39:33](#) **K:** So. And is that kind of also in '66 you commented you saw a hesitancy of student to take intellectual risk. You thought as one threatening the student body.

[39:44](#) **RL:** I was saying that as far back as '66.

[39:45](#) **K:** Yup 1966. Do you think that's still a prevalent defect in students today or you think that's kind of changed over the years.

[39:16](#) **RL:** Maybe it's a perennial thing. I don't know I mean I can. I'm sure there were courses that I shied away from in college. You know which I'm ashamed to say I shied away from them probably because it was a professor who was thinking in ways that I found

too threatening either to my grade or to my general outlook on life. Is it worse now? Well maybe. I mean, I think, I think that. The tendency to kind of. Stay close to home in terms of thinking about education as being your major field in your career preparation still very insistent. But I don't know I don't know if students are worse than that. I'm interested I said that as far back as '66. Well I am sure that students tended to come from a certain kind of socioeconomic background in the 60s. You know it was largely people coming from Long Island New Jersey. Catholic high schools. You know. Irish and Italian Catholic families. Fairly traditional and conservative politically. And that's probably what I meant then. Some of that a lot of obviously a lot of that's changed now in terms of the background. But. So I think that. I don't know if it's any worse if it's there though. And I think the difficulty in taking a risk may stem from economic reasons. It's just it's just not the kind of world in which you can risk departing from the norm too much if you want to pay your college loans back.

[41:53](#) **K:** Yeah. Coming from a blue-collar family, iron-workers, I remember correctly.

[42:00](#) **RL:** My family was.

[42:01](#) **K:** So you know I think I agree with you with that in the risk. Probably in fact that failure is really something you don't want to do and I come from a similar background so I could actually see where that comes from. As you know the interview is coming to a conclusion, still going more broad questions. Do you think that overall change of Marist over the years has affected its ideals? From when you first set out when you first came here in '63, you know prayer and commitment and work. Do you think over the years a change almost now it's more of getting to the diploma and less of the emphasis on the surrounding community where it was a little more back in the 60s when...?

[42:43](#) **RL:** Yeah. Well certainly the prayer part. I actually. We actually were mandated as faculty to lead a prayer. At the beginning of class with a crucifix up in front of the room so that's long gone. And Marist still retains something of a spirit of service to community. I mean there's an awful lot of ... Campus Ministry is one of the biggest groups on campus and there's a lot of community-oriented thinking in its praxis programs and its internships programs and so on. and I'm sure that's part of that Marist heritage. I think it's sort of inevitable given the... I mean there was a real homogeneity which had its upside and its downside in the faculty, the early years compared to the faculty now. I mean there was probably 80-85 percent of the faculty that I knew were Roman Catholic, practicing Roman Catholics. And although they didn't preach in the classroom, they carried over that ethos in the way even if they were teaching accounting or economics like Jack Kelly, that was the head of the business department. You know something of that idealism about the purpose of education, being not just getting what wealthy but you're acquiring the skills and the outlook that you could contribute something to society. I think that carried through and it carried through from the Marist Brothers. Now has that gone? Well not necessarily so it's probably not there and in the same ways, what I do worry about is a certain kind of fragmentation in the basic curriculum of a student. I worry that students are not acquiring a kind of basic understanding of the history and I don't just simply mean political history but I mean cultural and philosophical and religious history, the heritage of the world that they inhabit. I think. I remember from college and I remember from working on the core program at Marist in the 70s and in the Science of Man program that it was more of consensus that a core curriculum should be doing something to acquaint students with some of the basic ethical and spiritual values that have come down to us from that tradition but it's in a faculty and in a culture that is as diverse as ours has become. It's very hard for faculty to agree anymore on a common body of information or a common body of historical knowledge or a common body of texts that everybody should read because these are important. So in that respect I do have some concern about the change.

[46:39](#) **K:** Okay, coming to conclusion now is now you've worked under two different presidents of the College, Dr. Linus Foy who I believe, was there when you were hired and then now Dennis Murray, Dr. Dennis Murray, the current president of the College. You see any differences in their leadership styles or... you may see as a matter of fact that when Dr. Foy was the President of the college it was a much smaller institution versus now, a larger institution with Dr. Murray. Do you see a drastic change in their leadership styles?

[47:14](#) **RL:** Well I'm sure their leadership style differed as individuals as different people and also, they were running the College at

different times. So part of the difference between them is a function of their personality and their style. And part is their function when they assumed the reign of the institution. Linus Foy was closer personally to the faculty. He was in his late twenties when he became president of Marist. And then it is in his early thirties, I guess when I arrived here. And he had got his PhD in Mathematics. And he taught. He was a classroom teacher. Both as a high school teachers as a brother but then in College. So he had the profile more of a faculty member and you related to him not as the distant president of the College but as a kind of colleague on the faculty. I mean you had you had a certain respect from his president so. But I guess what I am saying the role of president wasn't quite so exalted and removed. And then the other thing is that maybe because his own temperament was shaped primarily by his being a Brother first and then a faculty member here. He had a very collegial style of administration. In other words, he was fully prepared to kind of let faculty do their thing and develop, what needed to be developed. I think Dr. Murray. When he was hired, Marist was concerned about financial problems being viable. You know, being able to sell itself to a wider constituency, staying alive. I mean it was some financial difficulties. Dr. Murray has solid academic credentials. He wasn't perceived primarily as a classroom teacher and receive more as somebody who would to give Marist more of a public face and a public presence, someone would be good at publicity. Publicity and public relations and making fruitful ties with the community and fundraising. And so on. No one really talk very much about fundraising when I first ... here. And also. Although I mean I don't think Dennis Murray is autocratic, he's not as personally present to faculty in the way he ran the College but in his own way. I think Dr. Murray has assimilated the Marist spirit. He's very... he acknowledge the Marist heritage in his decisions and his public statements. He's very appreciative of that whole tradition that comes down from Linus Foy. And the Brothers. So I think he's been a good president.

[51:58](#) **K:** Do you think that the Colleges is enough to exemplify the appreciation we felt for those who you know as such as yourself who came here in 1963, dedicated pretty much your intellectual academic life to Marist College. You could have been writing books and other academic pursuits. Do you think the college does enough recognize some of the heritage we've been passed down from some of the founding faculty members?

[51:25](#) **RL:** Well I think on the whole it does. I'm sure that there are people who may have been overlooked in some ways or something like I could wish that I had an office of my own but I understand that this... They're at a premium so I take my table down in the...

[51:40](#) **K:** In a large office ...

[51:43](#) **RL:** Yeah. But I think. Dr. Murray is. It's one of his strengths. He's attentive to who has served Marist and he's solicitous about having them recognized. Yeah. There's little perks you know you'd like to have but Marist has only so many resources. I mean if you go to Vassar for example. You'll find retired professors. I have a friend who teaches over there who have a cubicle in the library where they can go and leave their books and do their research and so on and so forth but Vassar has a lot more resources than Marist does but on the whole, I think Marist has been good to their professors. Their retired professors.

[52:34](#) **K:** Thank you for the interview. Thank you very much.