

DR. JOHN RITSCHDORFF

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Ritschdorff, Dr. John

Transcript – Dr. John Ritschdorff

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Marist College History

Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Marist College Social Aspects

Marist College Administration

Summary: In this interview Dr. John Ritschdorff talks about his early education as a Marist Brother and attending Marist College. He also speaks about his early years as a Mathematics professor at the college and how things have changed both with Faculty and Students over the past 40 plus years. He shares his insights of where the college may be headed in the future under new leadership and his hopes for the future of Marist.

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

Today is Tuesday the 14th day in December, and we have a chance to interview Dr. John Ritschdorff again. We did this 20 years ago or 21, 19 years ago. I think it's '02 that he first volunteered to come and give us an insight about his take of the college. We're pleased to have him back now and review what he thinks about the college. So, John, this is the general view. We'd like to talk about a number of different areas. The first will be the college itself, its growth and development. How did it happen? Let's talk about the physical plant first. What would you say was the driving force for the development of the campus to be what it is now, compared to the form that it was back in the sixties and seventies?

John Ritschdorff ([00:01:12](#)):

Well, I would always say it's the mission of the college, the college mission always valued education, it valued community and it valued service. And as we progressed through the years, those manifested themselves in many different ways. I think a turning point for the campus was certainly in the late seventies, when we received a Title Three grant that gave us the opportunity to go into a number of new areas. We tried nursing, medical technology, few other areas that gave us a chance to revitalize our core program and right around that same time, a transition to a new president. So when Dennis Mary arrived I think it took him a number of years to develop a vision for what Marist could become <affirmative> and he described it as the great American campus. So when Lowell Thomas was under construction, there was a sign right by Waterworks Road, indicating this was part of the development of a great American campus. And it developed in all those different ways through the Murray presidency. I mean, education wise, we expanded programs.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:44](#)):

Okay let's stay with that for the moment and the driving force, I guess, would be Dennis Murray's concept or vision, as you say of the future and making this the great thing.

John Ritschdorff ([00:02:59](#)):

I mean, in retrospect, that was his greatest contribution to Marist, was the vision he had for what it could become. And he was very practical about it. I remember many times suggesting we do different things or we try something and his criteria was, I'll say yes, if it benefits the vision or if it contributes to the vision. If it's not explicitly connected, let's wait till we find something that'll contribute better or more.

Gus Nolan ([00:03:29](#)):

Okay. <affirmative>, let's take that step now next about the academic programs. What could you say that would explain best this growth from simple well, simple, moving from undergraduate to graduate and expansion of the fields. You have Math, Science, Political Science to Polling Communications, Sports Communication, all of these, how did this happen?

John Ritschdorff ([00:04:06](#)):

It happened in multiple ways. I think one driving force was certainly the faculty themselves. The faculty saw opportunities to go into new fields, different experiences. For example, when we had the Memorial for Jep Lanning, it became very clear through some of his writings that the formation of the Communication department in the, in the mid-seventies, was a critical transformation. It was driven by faculty. Some of the graduate programs, I mean the first graduate program was the, the MS in Psychology, Dan Kirk drove that in the early seventies. The MBA, Jack Kelly and Ted Prenting drove that.

So it was very much faculty driven by interest and seizing opportunities to be more current, to be a more viable institution. In later days, it was the market, the marketplace. Where enrollment would sense that there are students, potential students looking for programs, especially the health services programs, Physician's Assistant, Doctorate in Physical Therapy. These were just market driven. We could make a contribution. We don't have any immediate competitors in the area. It's something we could do. And so you just generated a business model that can make it happen and it worked.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:43](#)):

How would you explain Fashion coming into the college?

John Ritschdorff ([00:05:47](#)):

Oh, Fashion, that's a great story. <laugh> fashion.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:51](#)):

I was there, go ahead...

John Ritschdorff ([00:05:52](#)):

Oh yeah. No, I it's. It's like, it was yesterday.

Jan Stivers ([00:05:55](#)):

I heard the story.

John Ritschdorff ([00:05:56](#)):

Bennett college in Millbrook, New York, a two year finishing school was going out of business.

Jan Stivers ([00:06:04](#)):

Literally, it was only two year. I didn't know that.

John Ritschdorff ([00:06:07](#)):

Yeah. It was a two year school. It was a finishing school. You went there after high school for two years to learn how to become something.

Jan Stivers ([00:06:15](#)):

A lady.

John Ritschdorff ([00:06:16](#)):

And their enrollment was bad and they decided they had to close and they came to Linus and said, could you help us out? And this was like in July or August and Linus said, sure, we'll help you out. So we took on certain programs. Fashion was one of them, Sociology was the other, we didn't have a Sociology Department at that time. And we took on a number of faculty. So we had some of the fashion faculty came over, Jan Casey came for English. Don Calista came for Sociology.

Jan Stivers ([00:07:00](#)):

Well had no idea.

John Ritschdorff (00:07:01):

Yes. And they well we were in need of enrollment support at that point in, it was a real challenge late seventies and they provided that and they provided us with a program that took a long time to mature. But in the past 10 years has become a real strong program. I mean, there are over 450 majors in Fashion.

Gus Nolan (00:07:30):

It's strange that fashion went into Liberal Arts under the Liberal Arts and under Communications as the Dean I supervised that program in a way, I didn't know exactly know much about it. In fact le me put it another way, I knew nothing about it, you know, but nevertheless, we were able to work it in and you know, it developed on its own and after that with its own criteria.

John Ritschdorff (00:07:55):

Yeah. I mean, it came in with a Bachelor of Professional Studies degree, which had a minimal Liberal Arts requirement. And that's how we made it work. Only 30 credits required by New York state. I'm going to say five to eight years ago; the Merchandising program became a Bachelor of Science degree. And the Design became a Bachelor of Fine Arts So they went to the more traditional bachelor's degrees. <affirmative> Very glad to get rid of Professional Studies. <affirmative> the graduates always felt funny at commencement <affirmative>

Gus Nolan (00:08:28):

Yeah. <affirmative> you mentioned the passing, the Nursing program, was that a mistake to let it go? Or should we have tried harder to bevy it along and develop it? Or was it just other schools are doing it better, so we let them do it?

John Ritschdorff (00:08:50):

You want my opinion? My opinion is it was good to let it go. We had tried with Title Three funding to do a fairly avant-garde, computer based instructional and practicum program. And it just didn't hit the market. We just couldn't attract students. Mount St. Mary's had a much more traditional program that just had a much more traditional program that transferred to Mount St. Mary's much easier than to Marist <affirmative> And while it was a noble effort, in hindsight, it probably was the right thing to let go at that time because the following decade and a half was horrible for nursing. And then nursing came back big time later.

Jan Stivers (00:09:38):

<affirmative> I wonder if it might have been a little ahead of its time.

John Ritschdorff (00:09:41):

Oh, it was definitely ahead of its time.

Jan Stivers (00:09:42):

Yeah. Yeah. Because of the technology component there. Yeah.

John Ritschdorff (00:09:47):

Because we tied it in with that Title Three grant, we tied it in with the IBM joint study <affirmative> and it just was out of sync with other nursing programs. And students at that time wanted traditional nursing programs.

Jan Stivers ([00:10:00](#)):

It took a long time in education in the field of education to get an accreditation for an online program because people assumed that this needs to be hands on. I imagine there was some of that too.

John Ritschdorff ([00:10:13](#)):

There was no online. Nope. It was, it was just

Jan Stivers ([00:10:17](#)):

Computer supported.

John Ritschdorff ([00:10:17](#)):

Computer supported. Yeah. Online didn't start until probably the mid-nineties.

Jan Stivers ([00:10:24](#)):

<affirmative> okay.

John Ritschdorff ([00:10:26](#)):

You needed the internet for online. So roughly I always remember when those 95 and 1995 go hand in hand. <affirmative> with the internet becoming available within online program start <affirmative> so this is between 79 and 86 87.

Jan Stivers ([00:10:41](#)):

Okay. Okay. Long before that. Alright.

Gus Nolan ([00:10:44](#)):

Another program I'd like to talk about if you could, our teacher ed program. Should we give that up or should we, it's been a tradition here for, since the beginning. In fact, before the beginning, if we can use that expression

John Ritschdorff ([00:10:59](#)):

Before the beginning, it was definitely here. Yes. I think the faculty are very interested in keeping it, it's been revised so that we now do a five year program so it's a Bachelors and Master's degree combined and in subject areas, the special education component is, makes it a very distinctive <affirmative>. I mean, it it's special education is part of every teaching program now. So it makes it a very attractive program. It's been before plenary faculty and three, four years ago and been endorsed <affirmative> so it's...

Gus Nolan ([00:11:37](#)):

Does that have an attraction in the market? Are we getting students for it?

John Ritschdorff ([00:11:41](#)):

We're getting students. Not as many as we'd like and getting faculty is a challenge. Getting faculty in education is a challenge, but it's still one of our premier offerings, definitely.

Gus Nolan ([00:11:54](#)):

Another program, not so much academic but, speaking, cause you know, a lot about this, the sports program, what can you say about the sports program in terms of Marist growth and development? We were big time once in NCAA basketball. I think we're less now because of climate change and development and a number of things, I'm not even familiar with, but I think you are, what do you say about it?

John Ritschdorff ([00:12:24](#)):

Well, sports programs. I mean, when I began as a faculty member here, we used to play our basketball games at Dutchess <laugh> there was no McCann Center. There were maybe six, seven sports. They were all male sports. At that point I got involved in athletics with a management council that Dennis had in 1980 and that was to make a move to Division 1. We had problems with some of our New York conferences. We were in the big apple conference and that was falling apart. So our plan was to go Division 1 and form the Northeast Conference. So in 81 we did, our biggest success on the men's side was 1988 with Rick Smits. <affirmative> beginning in 89, I started working as the faculty athletics rep. So I still do that today till today. And in the early nineties, we must have added five to six sports, mostly women's sports.

Jan Stivers ([00:13:32](#)):

Is that a Title IX?

John Ritschdorff ([00:13:35](#)):

You know, it wasn't called Title IX at that point it was called gender equity. Okay. Title IX was more, that was Title IX. You are right. Title IX is changed to be something different today.

Jan Stivers ([00:13:49](#)):

So Title IX, meant that the college had to devote equal resources to men's and women's

John Ritschdorff ([00:13:56](#)):

And that was always a challenge for us because we had football <affirmative> that was a tough thing to do. And you know, we progressed well in the nineties, we never won much. So it may appear we went down. I think the other real high point for Marist athletics was 2007 when the women's basketball team went to the Sweet 16.

Gus Nolan ([00:14:21](#)):

Oh yes.

John Ritschdorff ([00:14:22](#)):

Which was the highest they've ever gone. But they have gone to the tournament regularly since then. So I mean, we do have a very successful Division 1 program. We're up to 22, 23 sports and we're still fighting the man woman balance and making sure the resources are equitable. It's very viable.

Gus Nolan ([00:14:51](#)):

Say a word about baseball. We seem to have a big field and we have a number of banners out there that we've done well in past years I would say.

John Ritschdorff ([00:15:00](#)):

Yes we did. Well last year, did very well. Last year it was a shortened season.

Gus Nolan ([00:15:04](#)):

Yes.

John Ritschdorff ([00:15:06](#)):

But it was enough to qualify for

Gus Nolan ([00:15:09](#)):

To get enough games in to at least say it was a season. Okay. That's it. I've been talking on I, Jan, do you want to go somewhere with your questions?

Jan Stivers ([00:15:22](#)):

Can you talk about a time when the college faced a potentially devastating threat and dodged the bullet, averted it, took actions to avert it?

John Ritschdorff ([00:15:41](#)):

1974.

Jan Stivers ([00:15:41](#)):

What happened in 74?

John Ritschdorff ([00:15:41](#)):

Oh, inflation was horrible. It was post-Vietnam were just about the end of the Vietnam. Enrollments were challenged. Financing was difficult and the bullet was dodged because Jack McEnroe, who was on our board of trustees extended our credit line. Enough so that we could build the McCann Center, which then became the salvation for enrollment.

Jan Stivers ([00:16:09](#)):

That's a great story.

John Ritschdorff ([00:16:11](#)):

But, but I've always to this day said the McCann Center was built on the back of the faculty. We paid the price with no salary increases with limited resources with budget constraints. But that was a bullet. We dodged.

Jan Stivers ([00:16:26](#)):

Dennis might say, okay, it was on the back of the faculty, but it put kids in seats and you wouldn't have had a job otherwise.

John Ritschdorff ([00:16:35](#)):

Correct. And you know, the other, I don't want to call it a bullet cause it wasn't a bullet. It was just something that had to happen. This is when Linus got [?] his presidency <affirmative> there had been some decisions to me the carrier was food service where we should have made money on food service and we lost money.

Jan Stivers ([00:17:05](#)):

Oh dear mm-hmm

John Ritschdorff ([00:17:06](#)):

And you know, we were right back to that mid 70 period again where, excuse me, we're looking at having, you know, on an \$11 million budget, 600 surplus at the end, which was just horrible.

Jan Stivers ([00:17:23](#)):

Oh My gosh.

John Ritschdorff ([00:17:23](#)):

It was horrible.

Jan Stivers ([00:17:24](#)):

Oh, that must have been such a nail biter \$600.

John Ritschdorff ([00:17:27](#)):

It was, it was nail biter. Cause you'd never, if your enrollment wasn't good. If you didn't get deposits, you were in trouble for payroll. [Oh my gosh.] And I think what happened is that, um, you know, the board recognized that, you know, Linus' 21 years were definitely periods of growth for the college and making the college more qualitative, quality improvements. But that there just had to be, there had to be a change. There had to be something different.

Gus Nolan ([00:17:58](#)):

That growth follows as far back to Linus building the dormitories, you know, first Sheahan, and then Leo, and then Champagnat, you know, which we were not going to be simply a local college. We were going to be...

John Ritschdorff ([00:18:15](#)):

That's a major touch, correct. Became regional at that point. No, the building of the residence halls and Champagnat was finished, I think in 65. That was the basis for growth. And then going co-ed in 69, brought in more students <affirmative> but then the national economy got us in 74. I mean between oil shortages, Vietnam winding down. It was just no challenging

Jan Stivers ([00:18:42](#)):

In 2008, were we just much stronger and able to weather that recession?

John Ritschdorff ([00:18:49](#)):

Yes. In 2008, we lost a little, I mean our retention went down, but we kept attracting enough students so that we balanced everything. We really never cut back dramatically. <affirmative> and we had a very fortuitous, I want to say error, that the business office made where they were supposed to move a certain fund, \$50 million into another fund. And they did not, if they had moved it into the other fund, it would've lost \$20 million. It would've gone down 40%. So it was a mistake, but it turned out a fortuitous. So it was a cash position, which you didn't want to have a big cash position, but if they moved the two investments, it would've lost. Because at that point in time, Vassar laid off 40 people.

Jan Stivers ([00:19:44](#)):

Oh they did. Because they were using their endowment for operating

John Ritschdorff ([00:19:49](#)):

They would use their endowment for operating.

Jan Stivers ([00:19:51](#)):

Yeah. And we never had a big enough endowment to do that.

John Ritschdorff ([00:19:53](#)):

The endowment, we have never used the endowment for operating. We used it just to grow itself. So 2008, we weren't hit immediately because we had cash reserve and the enrollment didn't suffer. Retention suffered, but enrollment didn't. Okay. So if we lost 50 students, we thought we were able to bring in 50 more.

Gus Nolan ([00:20:16](#)):

Talk about that. Financial in this perspective, in Dennis' last letter to the faculty kind of summarizing his career here and thanking people for the work and so on, he brings out that sum of money. When he came here, we had about a half, a million dollars when he was leaving there's 500 million. There's a 40 year lapse there. To what would you attribute that growth? Is it, were the members of the board very active in choosing funds or suggesting areas or is it, was the fundraising, does it come out really out of the Development Office? Is it Joan Gambeski's legal society or what do we call it?

John Ritschdorff ([00:21:10](#)):

The Legacy Society. Yeah, I mean it's all of the above. Yeah. I mean, the thing to remember is Dennis Murray was an advancement person. He came to us from Whittier College where he was a Vice President for Advancement. And that was really the charge that he was given by the Board when he came is "you've gotta improve our external funding." <affirmative> and that's a long arduous process, which he did well, he certainly used the Board to make contacts. He would use anybody he could to make contacts. So for example, Joe Belanger was a great contact for Raymond Rich, got us the initial contact for Raymond Rich, which got us the Esopus property. So I mean, it was whatever could work would work. And he never spent any of it, he just kept growing and growing. And the, in terms of managing the funds, the Board I'd say every three or four years, puts our portfolio out to bid. <affirmative> We interview different brokerage houses. I mean, we were with Bear Stearns, left them two years before they collapsed, went to somebody else. So we've been fortuitous in many ways. But that's something that gets done regularly, approximately every, probably every three years the investment company comes in and makes a presentation where we are and we look at alternatives. So it's a very sophisticated one. And Paul Mutone was key for that.

Jan Stivers ([00:22:54](#)):

And he wasn't here that long.

John Ritschdorff ([00:22:56](#)):

It maybe eight years.

Jan Stivers ([00:22:57](#)):

Was it that long?

John Ritschdorff ([00:22:58](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, Tony was great. Tony was operational and.

Jan Stivers ([00:23:04](#)):

I learned buckets from Tony.

John Ritschdorff ([00:23:06](#)):

You had his buckets, but that was a great way to think of things. Paul got us a little more sophisticated in terms of our investment and the Board worked with Paul to create different funds and it's paid off marvelously absolutely, marvelously.

Gus Nolan ([00:23:25](#)):

Another page to turn to, student enrollment, to what do you attribute the, I think all that maybe three states of the 50 states of the country are represented in the student party. That comes a long way from when we were Long Island,

John Ritschdorff ([00:23:43](#)):

And the boroughs right?

John Ritschdorff ([00:23:49](#)):

Yes, well, I mean it's a concentrated effort, so it it's an effort to reach a broader market. I think the one very visible office is the West Coast office. I mean, there's a person full-time who.

Jan Stivers ([00:24:06](#)):

is Corinne Snell still?

John Ritschdorff ([00:24:07](#)):

Yes, who's been out there 15 years and her responsibility is the West Coast, Hawaii big, big states. I think our alumni have been very helpful in that regard because they've moved across the country and they bring their story with them.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:29](#)):

Ah, yes.

John Ritschdorff (00:24:29):

Yeah. And so as we,

Jan Stivers (00:24:31):

What about the pioneer league?

John Ritschdorff (00:24:32):

The pioneer league is...

Jan Stivers (00:24:35):

That was one of the selling points, initially.

John Ritschdorff (00:24:37):

I know it gets us into a lot of different markets. I don't know.

Jan Stivers (00:24:42):

You don't know if it did or not. Yeah. How do to get track something like that?

John Ritschdorff (00:24:45):

I mean, I sort of do the reverse, I mean, do people in Poughkeepsie know more about Valparaiso now or more about Dayton or more about Davidson or more about Campbell than it did before? No

Jan Stivers (00:24:56):

Probably not. Okay.

John Ritschdorff (00:24:58):

No, <affirmative>, I mean, it got us the ability to recruit students from those areas because then mom and dad could come see the employee once a year.

Jan Stivers (00:25:07):

Okay.

John Ritschdorff (00:25:07):

So it was more to benefit. So it did benefit enrollment, but it was recruiting students from those different geographical regions. <affirmative> But my sense, it's a combination of enrollment making outreach. Enrollment is also now web based. So you can do other things <affirmative> you can buy clicks. You can buy, someone looks up Business Management. Okay. Well you've paid the premium. So your program comes up third. Hypothetically. So that's where our name's going to get seen.

Gus Nolan (00:25:43):

Sending the football team to California, not a fair investment, you know?

John Ritschdorff (00:25:49):

It's a cost, it's an expense.

Gus Nolan (00:25:50):

It's a cost, but it's a publicity again, you can't come to Marist if you don't know it exists, you know? So it,

John Ritschdorff (00:25:58):

So they go to San Diego every other year. They've never, I think been there at a good time. I'm sure they have, but one time there were fires. So they had to leave early because of the smoke, it never rains in San Diego. Well they were there when it rained for two straight days. <laugh> So it's like, okay. And they never win. So it's like it's lose/lose.

Gus Nolan (00:26:23):

That's okay.

Jan Stivers (00:26:25):

So we thought that, well, I was on budget priorities and when the discussion about moving to the Pioneer League was in front of that group, it was all about putting our name out on the West Coast. It was all, this is, this move should be charged to admissions. This is absolutely, you know, not, a sports thing. It's not a student activities thing. It's an admissions expense. Yes. So that was seen as an opportunity for growth. Were there opportunities for growth that maybe we passed on or we missed?

John Ritschdorff (00:27:10):

You know, nothing comes to mind. I'm sure that there were <affirmative> but I mean, there's nothing that comes to mind that I say we should have done that.<affirmative> I mean, I'll hear some people say we should have stayed with Nursing. Because now it would fit into our Allied Health. Okay. <affirmative> but I don't think we'll ever go back to Nursing. <affirmative>

Gus Nolan (00:27:33):

What about the international situation? Is there an effort to bring more students from foreign countries here? Or are they just seeking to come here because somehow the name got out.

John Ritschdorff (00:27:49):

You asked great questions because the answer is yes to both. Okay. You know, we have a person in the admissions office who's responsible for international recruitment and that person used to spend more than half of their time on the road, visiting places, Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, and recruiting students to come. We also recruit needy students. We have a program with MasterCard that they pay tuition for, I think we have 12 students

Jan Stivers (00:28:26):

Mike, Mike Haddon, Haddon Mohamed

John Ritschdorff (00:28:29):

From impoverished areas in Africa. So we've had Rwandans. So I mean, so it's a combination of lots of different things. Some International students are very wealthy, okay. They come from, what do they, we

call them expatriates. It tends to be Americans who are now living and working in Europe. The child was born in Europe, but the parents want them to go to school in America and they know about us.

Jan Stivers ([00:29:01](#)):

Wow. I didn't realize that. Wow.

John Ritschdorff ([00:29:03](#)):

And we may have like, if we have 140 International students, there's probably 26 to 30 ex-patriots <affirmative>, which means they have dual citizenship. They're American citizens, <affirmative> but they've never lived in America. <affirmative>.

Gus Nolan ([00:29:16](#)):

What about the academic ability of the students today as compared to an earlier time?

John Ritschdorff ([00:29:25](#)):

I always say that I found the ability of students increased in the early two thousands qualitatively increased. And I based it just on my experience teaching and hearing other faculty talk. I mean, there were things I used to have to explain <affirmative> and I think it was like a class. It was September of 2005 and I'm starting to explain, and I'm looking at faces that are like, what is he talking about? Why is he talking about it? So I would ask them questions and find out that, well, they already knew all this stuff I can move on. So the preparation of students, I think did increase dramatically as we became more and more selective.

Gus Nolan ([00:30:10](#)):

Oh, okay. There's the point. Okay.

John Ritschdorff ([00:30:13](#)):

We became much more selective in the early two thousands. Many said it was the library. The library became that form and function <affirmative> thing where, you know, it had the appearance and the form, but it also had a function that was new. It said something about the values of the campus, but we were able to become selective.

Gus Nolan ([00:30:37](#)):

I was surprised. I thought Marist had was a rich school and a lot of the kids that come here, come from rich. And I guess I heard, I saw a statistic like the freshman class 7% were in the first one percentile, but I've learned since that more than half, maybe three quarters of a students get financial aid.

John Ritschdorff ([00:31:02](#)):

Okay. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:31:02](#)):

So, you know, there's a kind of a double take here. Some are very rich, but most are not, you know,

John Ritschdorff ([00:31:10](#)):

Some are very rich, many are upper middle class they're okay. And then there's a good number that need financial aid.

Jan Stivers ([00:31:21](#)):

Which is a mix we want in our classes.

John Ritschdorff ([00:31:23](#)):

Definitely. And you know, if there's any new initiative that is really being emphasized this past year with the new president it's to get that going. To get that going, coming back to Pioneer, the other thing about Pioneer is that's how we solved our gender equity problem.

Jan Stivers ([00:31:41](#)):

How?

John Ritschdorff ([00:31:42](#)):

Well the Pioneer is a non-scholarship football program so we could meet students need, and it doesn't count against an athletic budget. We don't give athletic scholarships in football.

Jan Stivers ([00:31:55](#)):

Okay. That's very interesting.

John Ritschdorff ([00:31:57](#)):

That's okay. So it's all need based aid.

Jan Stivers ([00:31:59](#)):

Yeah. Oh, that's interesting.

John Ritschdorff ([00:32:01](#)):

And that enabled us, keep the balance. Yeah. So I think, you know, I think we give maybe 72 equivalent full-time scholarships for men and 75 for women.

Jan Stivers ([00:32:10](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Gotcha.

John Ritschdorff ([00:32:12](#)):

The only reason, the only way we get in trouble at football is it's an expensive sport. Yeah. So the traveling the flights. . But that's...

Jan Stivers ([00:32:20](#)):

It keeps us in line.

John Ritschdorff ([00:32:21](#)):

The gender equity was very much behind also the decision to join that league.

Jan Stivers ([00:32:26](#)):

And I hadn't heard that one. That's very good. John, I want to piggyback on the question that Gus was asking about how students have changed. How has faculty, how have the faculty changed?

John Ritschdorff ([00:32:40](#)):

I do new faculty orientation every year. I've done that for 21 years. I get to meet them day one. They're older, they're much better prepared. They typically come now with some prior collegiate teaching experience and we have much higher research expectations of them. <affirmative>. So in a nutshell, the quality of the faculty has improved significantly over the past 20 years. And when I say retention,

Jan Stivers ([00:33:14](#)):

How about retention of the faculty? Do you think that the

John Ritschdorff ([00:33:18](#)):

If you discount the past two years, which were just an anomaly <affirmative> and absolutely anomaly, retention to faculty was, it was fairly constant.

Jan Stivers ([00:33:31](#)):

Okay.

John Ritschdorff ([00:33:33](#)):

I mean, we would lose five to 10%. So you'd lose 10 to 15, so it's a combination of moving on, retiring <affirmative> being asked to leave a combination of all those, all those three things. But that has not spiked except for fall of 20. That was..

Jan Stivers ([00:33:55](#)):

So let me ask about that longevity, and maybe we could start with you. What would you attribute your decision to remain at Marist for so long to?

Gus Nolan ([00:34:09](#)):

What's the glue that kept you here anyway? <laugh>.

Jan Stivers ([00:34:12](#)):

And what is it, do you think for others?

John Ritschdorff ([00:34:16](#)):

I always found Marist to be a very comfortable place that the people were good to work with. The environment was good. The students were good, challenging, but they weren't troublemakers. They were respectful. It was, I mean, it was a community that I was enjoyed being part of. I loved the river as a kid. I grew up on West 26th Street and Ninth Avenue, in New York City and saw the river every day. And it's a sense of permanence that I like, I mean, I had two opportunities to go elsewhere. One very early to go to Pocatello, Idaho and the Department of Energy was opening up a research facility and my wife said, "no way, are we going to Idaho." <laugh> And then the second one was 1984. IBM approached me <affirmative> because I had been, I had done some work in artificial intelligence at that point and I

had given a talk and they were interested in, and that was a tough one, but I didn't want to, I liked education enough. I didn't want to be corporate. <affirmative> And then I really didn't want to work at other institutions. <affirmative> I mean, I as an NCAA faculty rep, I used to do certifications. I got to travel and visit colleges all across the country, found it fascinating, always came home and said, I like it here. So it was a comfort factor, <affirmative> very much a comfort factor. I mean Judy Ivancovic just retired, she was here 40 years. 35 years as registrar. There are, longevity, I think, is a sign that people feel wanted respected that they fit in, that they're able to explore things they want to do, <affirmative> that there's really, you know, you're not pigeon holed into just doing this one thing, that if you have an idea and can sell it to somebody they'll support you,

Jan Stivers ([00:36:29](#)):

Boy, that is absolutely my experience. And I think other faculty here too, even though I was not looking at areas that are sexy, you know, that are glamorous, that are people said, well, that's what you're interested in. Go for it. Yeah. Oh, it's wonderful. Yeah. Yeah.

John Ritschdorff ([00:36:53](#)):

I wish faculty would trust administrators more. Because when I give them that message and I repeat it. I get to look like, yeah, really? <laugh> it's like, oh, you'll learn. You'll learn.

Jan Stivers ([00:37:08](#)):

Right. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:09](#)):

I hate to move to this next question, but it's just bothering me to get there. The crystal ball, look into the crystal ball, where's Marist 10, 20 years from now? What do you see? Is it here?

John Ritschdorff ([00:37:31](#)):

That's probably the toughest question you've asked because you know, as I get near the end of my career, I find myself getting more distant from the students, than I was. I've always heard people say, I want to go back into the classroom. I don't want to go back into the classroom.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:54](#)):

Haha.

John Ritschdorff ([00:37:54](#)):

They're too young.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:56](#)):

Stay with that.

John Ritschdorff ([00:37:57](#)):

I'm not going to be able to effectively communicate with them in subject matter, I support other people who do a marvelous job. They're going to do it. <affirmative>

Gus Nolan ([00:38:12](#)):

In terms of helping you see that, Marist has kind of changed its course, in as much as, well go back to computer science and go back to careers, communications, sports program. It's kind of a glamorous money making, big opportunities, are we treating people in this way of life? Which is not the Marist tradition, traditionally.

John Ritschdorff ([00:38:44](#)):

It was not definitely not. But I mean that change was well in place by mid-eighties, late eighties. I remember Bill Eidle, every meeting saying we are a Liberal Arts college you remember. To which we always go, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We know." We always had that professional emphasis <affirmative> it certainly exists today. It's what the market wants and you can't ignore the market. Because you need, we need the students you need the students. I think our big challenge is going to be the number of students available. I mean, in 2025 it drops off some 10, 15%, high school graduates people available to go to college.

Jan Stivers ([00:39:29](#)):

And even more sharply in the Northeast?

John Ritschdorff ([00:39:31](#)):

And very sharply in the most sharply in the Northeast, the only the Southwest I think is the, is the area that has some potential growth. So there's going to be competition for students, education's getting expensive. By watching, watching colleges struggle...

Gus Nolan ([00:39:53](#)):

Who needs college? I mean the concept about who needs college. I mean, is it going to be

Jan Stivers ([00:40:00](#)):

The devaluing of the degree of a college degree...

John Ritschdorff ([00:40:05](#)):

Yeah. Well it's becoming almost more necessary. I mean, I really can't speculate. I mean, I know that there were many who will say the technical fields or the you know, being a mechanic, being a construction worker. I mean the opportunity there, tremendous, why do I go to college? Why, why do I stop? I could be making more than I would be making. I mean, so I think the needs of the country in terms of sort of the balance of how employees are, what qualifications they have, those that college is a good, a good benchmark, a good threshold for say managerial posts or professional post, but there's a lot of very good careers elsewhere. I think that's a challenge. <affirmative> the work demands of the, of the country and, you know, as technology replaces more and more activities. I mean, I wouldn't want to be a toll collector today. I mean, it just as something that it was a great union, it was a great job, it was job for life, all of a sudden it's gone. Gone in terms of technology and efficiency. So those changes are going to affect us. One of the other challenges I foresee to some extent is we were on a real big building campaign when these buildings get 30 years old, like Dyson it's going to be a real challenge to restore them. The Library is 20

Jan Stivers ([00:41:50](#)):

And they, they were clustered, they were built in rapid succession.

John Ritschdorff ([00:41:55](#)):

Yes.

Jan Stivers ([00:41:57](#)):

Oh boy.

John Ritschdorff ([00:41:58](#)):

So we've gone through, well, I mean, after Dyson, the next academic building was Fontaine, <affirmative> so that was 10 years later. <affirmative> But then there was Hancock and then there was Allied Health and there was Steel Plant. So we got a bunch of them that, I mean, you hear that Dyson's going to cost 50 million. Well, wow.

Gus Nolan ([00:42:23](#)):

Yeah. That's rather interesting. Yeah, it look new, and it looks like it's more for us

John Ritschdorff ([00:42:31](#)):

Admissions will say that the attractiveness of the campus, the newness of the facilities is driving enrollment. Well as they are they may not drive enrollment.

Jan Stivers ([00:42:43](#)):

Well, when we learned that Dyson had been dropped off of the admissions tour, we were crushed.

John Ritschdorff ([00:42:51](#)):

It's deteriorated since.

Jan Stivers ([00:42:53](#)):

What opportunities would you like to see the college pursue today? What avenues for growth or development?

John Ritschdorff ([00:43:08](#)):

I think internally it needs to redo its professional infrastructure. So you guys, want to know what does that mean? You know, we do things as if we're a college of 3000 students. Now we're a college of 5,000 plus students. So our registration procedures, HR procedures, all the, our business office front, all the infrastructure that makes the college go is designed for a previous generation.

Jan Stivers ([00:43:43](#)):

And a single campus

John Ritschdorff ([00:43:45](#)):

And a single campus. Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:43:47](#)):

Well, that's a very interesting observation. Wow. Yeah.

John Ritschdorff ([00:43:53](#)):

Because when Judy retired, they don't have a registrar <affirmative> and it became very clear that registrar's office was kept together very well by her, but they did things a certain way that may not transfer easily to a larger student body or were being manually done to accommodate the larger student body. And the way you do things manually, they take your steps backwards.

Jan Stivers ([00:44:20](#)):

Yeah, yeah. No, that's very interesting.

Gus Nolan ([00:44:23](#)):

Just a shot into the dark, of all the colleges that you were seeing and you traveled to and so on, is there a college out there that you would like to see us imitate? Could we be like that college? You know, maybe the way they do things?

John Ritschdorff ([00:44:44](#)):

Dayton, Dayton

Jan Stivers ([00:44:46](#)):

Catholic college, a strong Catholic identity. Yeah <affirmative>

John Ritschdorff ([00:44:51](#)):

Yeah. I did a visit there 2004, so it's a little dated, but it's very well organized place. Got a great sense of their, you know, their commitment to everything. They did their ability to raise funds, their ability to cooperate with the city. When we went to that basketball game,

Jan Stivers ([00:45:15](#)):

We did, we did. I was there.

John Ritschdorff ([00:45:17](#)):

Yeah. They have a cooperative arrangement with the city <affirmative> and the city lets them use the park for the football stadium. It's one of these.

Jan Stivers ([00:45:24](#)):

That, yeah. That's a very good example.

John Ritschdorff ([00:45:27](#)):

That's what comes to mind.

Jan Stivers ([00:45:28](#)):

That could benefit Poughkeepsie. That's sort of a relationship.

John Ritschdorff ([00:45:32](#)):

Yeah. Definitely.

Jan Stivers ([00:45:34](#)):

That's very interesting.

John Ritschdorff ([00:45:35](#)):

Definitely. Cause they were losing, they were losing industrial NEC, the electronics company was based and they were pulling out. Or abandoned warehouses, abandoned factories so much like IBM downsizing<affirmative> Again that's 15 years ago, but it's still, that was happening to them. But they just had a way about them. Everyone I met was professional. Understood, not just what they did, but had a sense of a bigger picture and it was consistent. It was that's why they come to mind right away. Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:46:16](#)):

So Dayton is a place with a very strong sense of mission. And a strong connection to its foundations. How would you say the influence of the Marist Brothers mission and there, those values? How's that influence changed over time?

John Ritschdorff ([00:46:35](#)):

It's in the chemistry of the site. I mean there are people that asked me, why do we do this this way? It's what the Brothers did it. <affirmative> I mean, it hasn't gone away. <affirmative> Those basic values, for me prevail, the fact that there's a very limited presence you know, doesn't make them very exclusive. But there is the Novitiate Building

Gus Nolan ([00:47:07](#)):

Yeah, we got Sean Sammon.

John Ritschdorff ([00:47:08](#)):

Sean Sammon, John Klein on the Board are very active. Very contributory. Yeah. I mean, so there hasn't been a disconnect. I mean, as the Marist Brothers have changed and decreased in size, their ability to be a presence is not as strong, but those values are still

Jan Stivers ([00:47:28](#)):

On the, the front page of our website.

John Ritschdorff ([00:47:31](#)):

Yeah, and it's really funny was when David Yellen came and when Kevin Weinman came, they both couldn't understand about "doing good quietly." It was foreign to them. If you did good, you put it up on a banner. And to me that's the ultimate Marist tradition is just do good and don't talk about it. Just do good. And that's how we do things.

Jan Stivers ([00:47:57](#)):

But what you and I learned through accreditation work was if you don't talk about it, it's as if it didn't happen. The other side of that

John Ritschdorff ([00:48:06](#)):

About it. Yeah. It's yeah. So there are command performances that make drag them out of your value system.

Jan Stivers ([00:48:15](#)):

That's beautiful.

Gus Nolan ([00:48:23](#)):

I have a kind of run through my two pages of notes here and so...

Jan Stivers ([00:48:28](#)):

Oh, I've got a few. What lasting impact do you think if any, will the pandemic have on the college?

John Ritschdorff ([00:48:41](#)):

Well, it's not over yet, so

Gus Nolan ([00:48:43](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. That's right, right.

Jan Stivers ([00:48:45](#)):

Too early, too early. Say that.

Gus Nolan ([00:48:47](#)):

As we speak through our masks.

John Ritschdorff ([00:48:50](#)):

I, the thing that strikes me the most right now that's different than what it was in fall of 2019, are the involvement of parents and the claims of mental health and anxiety paid by students

Jan Stivers ([00:49:11](#)):

Which were already,

John Ritschdorff ([00:49:13](#)):

Which were there. They're always.

Jan Stivers ([00:49:15](#)):

They were already increasing.

John Ritschdorff ([00:49:17](#)):

Yes. And now they're, and you know, we're dealing with a freshman class that essentially did not have a senior year in high school. So they lost socialization. They lost the ability to talk with teachers and guidance counselors and each other about what to anticipate and expect in college, that never happened.

Gus Nolan ([00:49:36](#)):

Why they talk to their phone?

John Ritschdorff (00:49:38):

<laugh> Yeah. They read different they don't even talk on the phone. It's, so the socialization skills for the freshman class are challenging. No, not all, but it's something you would notice that people are just more skittish. sometimes more defiant. Sometimes "I gotta hand in on time?" Yeah. Gotta hand it in on time.

Jan Stivers (00:50:03):

It's so retro John.

John Ritschdorff (00:50:04):

And parents are too quick to, whether we're, all we do is make mistakes. And during that pandemic year, it was very difficult to do anything right. Because the world would change. We get everything in place in mid-March. And then the governor came out in March of 20 and shut that we had, our International students were going to stay and they're going to be able to work on campus. Things are good. All of a sudden they can't work. So now they're here. What are we doing with them? So we nurtured them for a year and a half actually before they could possibly go home.

Jan Stivers (00:50:40):

Yeah, my gosh. Do you want to comment on the prospects of a medical school for Marist?

John Ritschdorff (00:50:50):

I'll be glad to comment. I believe there will never be a medical school at Marist College. The work that was done was in many ways, a good attempt, I believe was a sincere attempt but it was not done confidently. <affirmative> They blamed a consulting company. <affirmative> Price Waterhouse Group was a consultant. They underestimated the needed funding to make the school work and the necessary size and space. When Health Quest merged with Western Connecticut, to me, that was the nail in the coffin. <affirmative> Because that first of all, Western Connecticut is a site for University of Vermont Medical School. So already have a connection to a medical school. So we weren't going to have a unique one and they had different experiences. And I know Dennis talked about meeting with Murphy, who was the president of Nuvance and they agreed the financial model would never work. We would never be able to vote enough.

Jan Stivers (00:52:01):

Wow. And it was Price Waterhouse, Company

John Ritschdorff (00:52:04):

We, Price Waterhouse was the consultant, but I mean, they were getting disturbed at the end. Because I was in meetings when we were talking about the building and there were things in the building that were there, things that weren't in, the building that should've been and Health Quest was saying they didn't have the funds. So the space to build the right size building. So this was, alarms were <affirmative> alarms were going off <affirmative> We came within two days of hiring, making the initial hires. [Wow]. I had been in interviews with people who were going to deal with assessment and be the

liaison to the accrediting body. We were about ready to bring them on. Wow. And we had finalists, we were about ready to go offer contracts and then we stopped. <affirmative>

Gus Nolan ([00:52:54](#)):

What, where was the the leadership to stop? Was it the, the Board itself or was it, you know

John Ritschdorff ([00:53:05](#)):

The leadership to stop, I believe is, there was, there was a special committee put together Board members from Health Quest board members from Marist. Okay. And when Health Quest became NuVance, that membership changed. And then on the Marist side, Yellen went and Murray came back and Murray and Murphy spoke and said, we're just going to put this on pause. We're just going to pause it. And I'm projecting it'll it's

Jan Stivers ([00:53:41](#)):

Not. Yeah. Yeah.

John Ritschdorff ([00:53:44](#)):

Because my understanding is that it just financially was not going to be funded right. There had to be a different model. You needed so much more external funding, not tuition funding.

Jan Stivers ([00:53:55](#)):

And then Vassar Brothers Medical Center was undergoing its own challenges.

John Ritschdorff ([00:54:01](#)):

They couldn't finish their building.

Jan Stivers ([00:54:01](#)):

So they were distracted.

John Ritschdorff ([00:54:04](#)):

Yeah. If you look at it, everybody involved at the top is gone.

Jan Stivers ([00:54:08](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

John Ritschdorff ([00:54:10](#)):

You know, the Health Quest person, Friedman and Yellen. They're gone. The head of their medical thing, I forget his name, but the Health Quest guy who thought he was going to become Dean he's gone. Yeah. So there, I mean, is there's turnover at the top, in both places, the one who

Jan Stivers ([00:54:33](#)):

Chief Operating Officer who was so good, I'm forgetting her name, the woman who was the chief operating officer, who was so good from Chicago, she came from Chicago, she's gone.

John Ritschdorff (00:54:41):

I forget her name, yeah, she's gone.

Gus Nolan (00:54:44):

Does funding ordinarily coming from private sources? In other words, you need donors to back it, or tuition based or,

John Ritschdorff (00:54:58):

I think at least 50% is private endowed support. Okay. And then you get your name on the school. Okay. So you make, you make your \$500 million gift that generates \$25 million in income annually. And you call it the Gus Nolan School of Medicine. Yeah. Tuition generates about another 25% and then research grants. Generate the other, in other words, grant, grant funded. So the big universities do well because they can get the state to commit a huge amount, they get the research money and then they charge tuition. So tuition would be a quarter of the income. Whereas undergraduate at Marist tuition is about, if you take residence halls out of it, it's about 85% of the income.

Jan Stivers (00:55:52):

Which is why the loss of 10 students hurts us. Gus, you had a very good question that we didn't get to and that was the national reputation of the college. What would you say that is fundamentally based on,

John Ritschdorff (00:56:14):

I believe the national reputation is based upon the accomplishments of alumni. That's where the reputation comes from. Doesn't come from our promotional materials, seeing how good or how we are, it comes from people who have graduated from here who talk to other people or who rise in positions and are very happy with what Marist did for them. Yeah.

Gus Nolan (00:56:47):

Wow.

Jan Stivers (00:56:48):

That's quite a it's it's quite a Testament.

Gus Nolan (00:56:52):

Yeah. I was gonna ask related to that, Lee Miringoff and Marist Poll, that has kind of given us national name, but I don't think it's given us a lot of money. Am I right?

John Ritschdorff (00:57:12):

You're correct. I mean, what, the only way the poll makes money is if they conduct the poll for you. So if you commission them to do something, they will charge and they charge mightily. The flip is they do polls, that'll get Marist's name out. So it is really, not to me, it's never been a money making operation. It's been a reputational item. It's been getting the name out. On a national level. It's getting things right. So it's a respected name. But the projects they do are, are occasional. Yeah. And that would be where they,

Jan Stivers (00:58:00):

I doubt that that's effective. Just if you doubt that that's an effective strategy, just look at Quinnipiac and Siena who really just followed in Marist's footsteps didn't they? It was a rip off!<Laugh>

John Ritschdorff ([00:58:13](#)):

Well, yeah, no, it's good to be emulated.

Jan Stivers ([00:58:15](#)):

Yeah. Right.

John Ritschdorff ([00:58:15](#)):

Right. You know, and odds are you can't name the person who's the spokesperson for either of them.

Jan Stivers ([00:58:22](#)):

Maurice somebody from Siena.

John Ritschdorff ([00:58:25](#)):

Okay. I've never, you know, whenever you see the polls, you occasionally see Lee

Jan Stivers ([00:58:30](#)):

Or is it Carol I think is right. Right, right, right.

Gus Nolan ([00:58:38](#)):

Is there anything we didn't say that you would like to say? In other words, so I'm waiting for them to say something about this and I to put my 2 cents to it.

John Ritschdorff ([00:58:50](#)):

No, I'm delighted all the areas you went to. I mean, this was, you came prepared

Jan Stivers ([00:58:56](#)):

<laugh>

Gus Nolan ([00:58:57](#)):

Well, we've been around a while. <laugh> As you have been, you know, and I just thought it was with your experience and where you have been in the college administration. Yeah. And

Jan Stivers ([00:59:13](#)):

Contributions across all corners of this college, the classroom, the Dean's office, the Interim Dean's offices,

John Ritschdorff ([00:59:24](#)):

Four of them

Jan Stivers ([00:59:24](#)):

Academic Vice President, sports. Oh my God.

Gus Nolan ([00:59:29](#)):

Chairman the Faculty, we're gonna vote

Jan Stivers ([00:59:31](#)):

Chairman of the faculty.

Gus Nolan ([00:59:32](#)):

This is, be assured of this, there'll be no tie because you voted last <laugh>

John Ritschdorff ([00:59:40](#)):

Unless I wanted anything bad then I'd need a tie.

Gus Nolan ([00:59:41](#)):

You would be breaking the tie. <laugh>

John Ritschdorff ([00:59:46](#)):

That was definite strategy.

Jan Stivers ([00:59:47](#)):

Thank you John, for all you did my gosh.

John Ritschdorff ([00:59:49](#)):

Definite strategy. I guess the only other thing is, you know, faculty governance, since you brought it up, has always been an interest and a concern of mine. And I think it goes back to when I was talking about professional infrastructure <affirmative> whether the plenary model should continue.

Jan Stivers ([01:00:10](#)):

Do you think we should move to a senate model?

John Ritschdorff ([01:00:12](#)):

I do

Jan Stivers ([01:00:14](#)):

Our size and our complexity is such that it's warranted?

John Ritschdorff ([01:00:17](#)):

It's size, it's more size than anything. Pandemic has exacerbated it because now they're in person and zoomed meetings. So the ability to contribute is not equal, the ability to meet people isn't equal. I mean the primary system worked back in the day when there was 60 faculty or 90 faculty, maybe 120 faculty. <affirmative> you know, we have, I think 240 lines right now. That's

Jan Stivers ([01:00:47](#)):

<affirmative> And geographically spread, it wouldn't be a big thing Route 9, but I think it is. I know, I mean, I think a lot of my colleagues had never visited the science building.

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:08](#)):

Yes. Yes. Unless you had a reason to mm-hmm

Jan Stivers ([01:01:13](#)):

<affirmative> right, right

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:15](#)):

Now last year, everybody visited the science building because that's where COVID testing took place. Everybody was in the science building Okay, saw the labs, saw the offices. You went in the back door and you went downstairs and you came around you

Gus Nolan ([01:01:34](#)):

Where is the science building?

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:35](#)):

It's on Beck Place.

Gus Nolan ([01:01:37](#)):

Oh across the road, Okay.

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:39](#)):

So if you, you start heading north Steel Plant is on your right. Science Building would be on you left.

Gus Nolan ([01:01:44](#)):

I always think of going to Donnelly <laugh>

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:47](#)):

Well, half the science still is in Chemistry is still in Donnelly

Gus Nolan ([01:01:51](#)):

Yeah.

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:51](#)):

Environmental science is still in Donnelly

Jan Stivers ([01:01:54](#)):

MedTech?

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:55](#)):

No med Tech's over

Jan Stivers ([01:01:56](#)):

Across the street?

John Ritschdorff ([01:01:57](#)):

They have a beautiful third floor lab facing north.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:02](#)):

Nice.

John Ritschdorff ([01:02:03](#)):

It's nice. Yeah. The underpass enabled us to connect, but for faculty, there was never, very few reasons to go visit.

John Ritschdorff ([01:02:15](#)):

Right. If you haven't been in the Steel Plant, you gotta see the Steel Plant, magnificent.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:20](#)):

I went to art exhibits, that's about it. Kind of around the back a little to the gallery.

John Ritschdorff ([01:02:26](#)):

Okay. The new one.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:28](#)):

I left in 18, I left here in 18.

John Ritschdorff ([01:02:32](#)):

Then you haven't seen the Steel Plant. Okay. Magnificent. Okay.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:35](#)):

Well, this actually is a good place for me to ask a personal question. I'm not on MARFAC anymore. I left in 18 and this past June, I don't get anymore MARFAC I'm off. So I don't know that I did not know that Judy Ivankovic had retired. I didn't know that we had Lessons and Carols on campus, I don't know about deaths....

John Ritschdorff ([01:03:00](#)):

How did that happen, Okay. Let me,

Jan Stivers ([01:03:02](#)):

Well I haven't actually looked into it, but I was wondering if there was a policy that struck retirees from MARFAC

John Ritschdorff ([01:03:09](#)):

I don't believe so. Do you get MARFAC?

Gus Nolan ([01:03:11](#)):

No.

John Ritschdorff ([01:03:13](#)):

I thought retirees got MARFAC. No, let me, let me find out.

Jan Stivers ([01:03:16](#)):

I did for a while. I did until this passed June.

Gus Nolan ([01:03:21](#)):

I don't, I've never gotten it, but I mean I've retired 20 years ago. So I don't know it existed, as suppose when I retired,

Jan Stivers ([01:03:31](#)):

I still have a functioning @Marist.edu account.

John Ritschdorff ([01:03:37](#)):

Right. You're just not in.

Jan Stivers ([01:03:38](#)):

<affirmative> But I don't get notices.

John Ritschdorff ([01:03:40](#)):

Let me, let me find out.

Jan Stivers ([01:03:42](#)):

Oh, thank you.

John Ritschdorff ([01:03:42](#)):

Yeah, because yeah, you should know what's going on.

Jan Stivers ([01:03:45](#)):

Well, you know, like not knowing that Judy retired, not knowing if there's going to, you know, I was the faculty advisor to the Marist College Singers forever. I love going to their things and I don't know where they, when they are now. So I would like that

John Ritschdorff ([01:04:02](#)):

The past year and a half, not a lot was going on. It's true. But now this semester things have taken place.

Jan Stivers ([01:04:07](#)):

I heard that they did Lessons and Carrols in the McCann Center.

John Ritschdorff ([01:04:10](#)):

They had problems with the church. <affirmative> there were, because the church was by where there were some shootings in the city. So it was a safety issue about students in the community that night. Yeah, and then the chapel was too close.

Jan Stivers ([01:04:27](#)):

Oh too crowded.

John Ritschdorff ([01:04:28](#)):

Yeah. So yeah.

Gus Nolan ([01:04:30](#)):

So it was the best place.

John Ritschdorff ([01:04:31](#)):

Well this is how new traditions get born too, which is nice.

Jan Stivers ([01:04:34](#)):

Right,

Gus Nolan ([01:04:35](#)):

This question that is related to one, you are one of those, we're going back to some of the earlier interviews to get updates about what senior, senior citizens of Marist think about Marist in the last 20 or 30 years. But some of the people I wanted to get to now, like Bill Eidle, I don't think he would be getting these news notes, you know? And so the list says to me, why are you asking people who are not at the college, what they think about it? So, you know, it's, but nevertheless I think Bill knows pretty much what's going on in the college, you know? And I think Bob Lewi.

John Ritschdorff ([01:05:16](#)):

I just saw him a few years ago, he was bringing one his grandchildren around for a visit.

Jan Stivers ([01:05:19](#)):

Yeah. She graduated just this, this past year. Yeah. I know that went fast. <laugh>

John Ritschdorff ([01:05:26](#)):

The sense of time really changes <laugh>

Gus Nolan ([01:05:29](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([01:05:29](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Like I didn't know about, um, President Weinman's gift to the college. Yeah.

John Ritschdorff ([01:05:36](#)):

That was nice.

Jan Stivers ([01:05:36](#)):

Yeah. And then I ran into him at the Giving Tree mass on Sunday night, introduced myself and then learned that he had given a quarter million dollars. So I would, it would be nice to know

John Ritschdorff ([01:05:50](#)):

Because it didn't get announced that thing until that next Monday.

Jan Stivers ([01:05:52](#)):

Yeah. Well this was just this past Sunday night and it was actually on the website when I went to look.

Gus Nolan ([01:05:59](#)):

And also that he was in the public arena, but he was not interested in the wines the other night in New York he went, was interested in the, so there <laugh>,

John Ritschdorff ([01:06:11](#)):

That's a difference, yes.

Gus Nolan ([01:06:13](#)):

He wanted who on a regular beer. With that happy note, I can't believe this, you can't believe it you had an out, looking at the clock, but we're just about one hour into this dialogue

Jan Stivers ([01:06:25](#)):

It's a delight.

Gus Nolan ([01:06:25](#)):

Constant interview. And let me tell you it's been wonderful, John, thanks for taking the time and working it into your busy schedule. To satisfy our needs. We wanted to get you up to date here. I think we did.

Jan Stivers ([01:06:39](#)):

I learned a lot, John and I enjoyed myself

John Ritschdorff ([01:06:42](#)):

Do you realize in September of 1964, Gus was my English composition teacher?

Jan Stivers ([01:06:47](#)):

Oh my gosh.

Gus Nolan ([01:06:49](#)):

English composition. No, I thought it was later on, but nevertheless, yeah,

John Ritschdorff ([01:06:53](#)):

September 64,

Gus Nolan ([01:06:55](#)):

You know, John Klein came after me after he got his award that I only gave him a B plus and <laughter> he wanted me to re-correct it. I couldn't write anything like he could write, but nevertheless, I'm sending to call me C plus here we,

Jan Stivers ([01:07:16](#)):

We, you know, John just told us that the quality of students has increased over the years. <laugh> I would agree with you all.