

James Constantino

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Wai Oo

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Transcript – James Constantino

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Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: James Constantino is a Marist alumnus from the class of 1972. He discusses his upbringing and his pre-college education at Christ the King. He discusses the social aspects of life at Marist College while he was a student. He talks about his post-graduation work in the Navy and later at IBM. He discusses his work as part of the Marist College Alumni Association Executive Board.

00:09 **Gus Nolan:** Today is Wednesday, August 3rd. We have an opportunity to interview a graduate of 1972. I think it is James Constantino. Good morning, Jim.

00:18 **James Constantino:** Good morning.

00:20 **GN:** Jim, this interview will be in five or six parts before Marist, coming to Marist, years at Marist, and after Marist. So a little thumbnail of the early years where were you born, brought up, grade school? Do you remember that?

00:33 **JC:** Oh yea, I was brought up in Richmond Hill in Queens, New York City. I went to Our Lady of the Cenacle and then after that it was all Marist. I went to Christ the King high school and then came here.

00:45 **GN:** Is that so? The activities in those early years. You have hobbies? Summer work? How did you keep busy?

00:55 **JC:** Well, I was always working simply because we needed to. So the summer was my time to do that and I had various jobs with the Parks Department and Burns Security and things of that nature. At school, certainly at Christ the King, I think I got the foundation which led me to want to come here. I very much admired the Brothers and lay teachers who taught there and when it came time to select a college, I had a couple of offers and such. And I said I want to go where these guys went because they're a nifty group of people. And at that time Christ the King was a very young school. We were only the third graduating class and the Brothers lived up on the fourth floor of the building and it was very much a fraternity of sorts. It was a fun place to be. I played basketball for them for four years and was on student government, you know school paper things of that nature. So at that time since the school had, I think we were the first class that actually entered the building when it was when it was completed. The two before us, one spent their entire first year in Montecristi? (Mater Christi?) and then the second one was there at the school but the school still being constructed as they were there so. So we had a very tight knit group of kids and they all participated in extracurricular activities across the board.

2:25 **GN:** So and since you're almost answering this why Marist. And I guess because the familiarity with the whole [...]

02:30 **JC:** Oh yeah. In fact, several brothers, Donald Kelly as an example when I was a senior, he was freshman basketball coach at Christ the King and we always used to watch him with all his little freshmen following him in line and we call them Donald and his ducks.

02:49 **GN:** He's still around.

02:50 **JC:** He came here. Yes. In fact, I ran into him at the CIA dinners and such. And he recently was elected to the Christ the King Hall of Fame. So they were [...] you know Brother Frederick Lambert came over and became a housing director. And there were just

tons of reasons why these guys kind of inspired me to go to a place like this because I thought it would be like home and it was the minute I got here I felt like I was still in Christ the King kind of environment.

[03:17](#) **GN:** But it wasn't much when you came here. Let's go back what year was that '67/'68?

[03:21](#) **JC:** '68. Yeah well, the core was there. I mean they completed Champagnat Hall, Leo and Sheahan and such. And the center was there. At least it had the theater there. And of course our basketball practices were in what is now Marian Hall which was kind of a shoe box. We wound up playing our games at Lourdes and Dutchess Community College right so. So yeah, a lot of the things that they kind they promised us to come here, you know, we finally saw happened. They just didn't tell us we were going to pay for it.

[03:57](#) **GN:** Okay. Then staying on, was it a natural thing? There's a natural bonding and you really don't want to leave when you [...]

[04:05](#) **JC:** I had a ball here. You developed friendships and there was already a core of Christ the King folks here. I can remember when Ron Pietro brought me up for a tour of the place. Ray Manning turned up in excellent basketball player. He's a thousand-point man and a genuinely great guy. He was taking around campus but while he was taking around campus, I basically got pulled off by a couple of ex-Christ the King guys who said, "Don't worry. We'll handle it." So they, Bob Scott and such kind of walked me around the campus and I was sold. I mean, it was a nice area. I mean, coming from Queens, this was the country so it was nice to start with and I saw the potential. And I saw the Brothers and you know it didn't have much of a basketball court. But it still had a round hoop on it so that was good enough for me.

[05:02](#) **GN:** Well then into Marist now we come. You used the word, "core" of things. Do you remember what kind of program? Was it a core program? A sixty-sixty?

[05:14](#) **JC:** I think the program core you have right now actually came on board in my junior year. I kind of remember that because I was on student government at that time I was corresponding secretary. And the president was Chuck Mara. He kind of called us together and said, "The faculty and staff are putting together this grand plan and it's rather extensive and we should find a way to basically put our opinions into it." And we all kind of agreed that, "Yeah that's a good thing to do." And the next day in the student paper, it was a front-page article with a quote there, that was a proposal from the student government to participate. And we wound up having a meeting in the auditorium. An open meeting where students were involved and I think it was Brother LaPietra was a monumental man, unbelievable guy. Zuccarello, the gods walk side by side in that case. Ed Winters. In fact later on, Ed was the vice president who handled the computer center conversion here when you guys decided to get your own system. So paths seem to cross but it was an open dialogue. And although at the end we kind of felt like, well now, we know what the establishment is like because we really did make inroads, we wanted to make. But in essence are our opinions were reflected in fact I think in retrospect there was little we could have added to the thought process that went on you know the people who headed up that that program to come out with a new core curriculum really had a head screwed on straight and I think that's why it's still in such good stead over time. Prior to that, I think we had some sort of modified version. I mean I didn't really feel a major change between my junior and senior year.

[07:08](#) **GN:** Yeah well I think the concept was that you were free to choose sixty credits on your own and the department decided another sixty what you should too in terms of well you were in business there were certain standard that you would have to take in business. Then you are free to take literature course, or so you were free to take a history course and then later on they said, "No, you

have to take a philosophy course. Now you have to take this history course. Now you have to take a writing course.”

[07:38](#) **JC:** Yeah but I think at that time you had more to offer. You know in our case, we took those courses because they were our electives. You know there wasn't that that amount of variety. I think the program was broad substantially and it did very quickly.

[07:56](#) **GN:** You mentioned LaPietra. He eventually came a proctor in the dormitory. You weren't in his.

[08:01](#) **JC:** No I was in Champagnat all four years I can't remember who the proctor was. Goes back that far. But I mean the man was impressive to say the least there wasn't topic that he couldn't talk about and talk about it well. And when you wanted to challenge him, you quickly realized you were outmatched. I think I was impressed by the quality and the integrity of the people here period.

[08:33](#) **GN:** And how about in the major field now? Do you remember people I don't know [...] Was Jack Kelly involved?

[08:40](#) **JC:** Jack Kelly for economics. He was one class everyone I think everyone enjoyed going to. You didn't have that middle of the semester, a kind of slough off in attendance with him. Because you were afraid you'd miss too much number one. But number two, he was very entertaining. I remember a fellow Dick, Rich McCarthy. Well he is business. He was business teacher and later on again it's a small world. When I came off active duty with the Navy and was assigned to the reserves over in Oakley Street, he turned out to be lieutenant commander there so path had crossed. But that the one thing that he did is he added a lot of reality to the business environment. He had been [...] He worked for the Bacardi and he had been there eastern regional sales manager and east region basically at that time if I remember him saying was the entire East Coast and that included Puerto Rico. So our exercises, you know, lab sessions et cetera, they were quite different than the normal process, you know. You had a case study to do. You were a part of a team and you got up and presented your solution et cetera. But then there was the pushback that you normally didn't get in other courses right. He had [...] Everyone was always angling for extra credit activities just to kind of act as a buffer in case you screwed up somewhere along the line right. Well, he gave out extra credit but the only way you got extra credit is if you were in the audience being presented to. You and you were able to punch holes in the presentation being made, right. And I could remember right. And one of the courses I took with him was an evening course because that was the only time slot that was available and a lot of the evening students were like IBM. And they come fin pact analysis and they start challenging your assumptions just the way your breakeven point was such and you got to learn that you had to do your homework very, very well. And initially my thought was, isn't this kind of artificial? Everybody just trying to punch holes and then I got out into the business world and realized, “No, this is the way it's done.” And you can extend that to its extreme if you think of some of the recent political activity surrounding debt control and it was very clear that that you were going to get pushback you know if you will from the other party no matter what. So it was real preparation for the real world. And I can't tell you how many times just remembering that caused me to go a little deeper before I had to make my presentation to a customer or to a group of IBM-ers. Yeah make sure you had everything nail down tight because you know if there was a loose end, somebody was going to find it.

[11:32](#) **GN:** Just a little different focus, the athletic activities? You were on Ron Pietro team for four years?

[11:39](#) **JC:** Well no, Coach Foster was freshman coach. At that time, we had a freshmen team and a freshman had to play freshman team. And for guys, I mentioned Ray Manning he's a thousand-point player but if you would have counted the points that he scored in his freshman year, he would be way up there. So we had Coach Foster and that was a lot of fun. That was [...] You know, young kids

from high school learning a little bit about college in a fast and loose shoot-em environment you know. Ron was much more structured. But Ron, he and Sally his sidekick, they were like pseudo-parents to all of us. Including you know, it got down to the point towards our senior year. I mean we played many of the same schools that Marist played now but we never flied any place. We'd always drive and you know a five-hour drive back after a game and you got class the next morning. You really didn't want to stop for dinner and I remember Sally would make sandwiches for you. Take orders before, the day before. And she would have all sandwiches and stuff on the bus. It was a family environment. Ron was quite an individual. I think he's unheralded in things that he did for the school.

[12:49](#) **GN:** Yeah, well, it's interesting you should say that because coming over here. This morning, I met with Tim Murray who is the athletic director now. And I said "You know, do you know if Ron is going to be on campus, this fall" because I've never done him for these interviews. And everybody tells me, he would be a gold mine for insights into those early years. And I know him personally but sometimes the light does not go on to quickly in your head to say this will be the way to go. He and Bill Austin are the same way.

[13:22](#) **JC:** Bill and Doc Goldman, the three of them, I think made the perfect combination of common sense and leadership, integrity across the board really. When Doc Goldman passed away, I was really sad. He was a milestone of an individual.

[13:38](#) **GN:** I don't know if you came to the ceremony here. There was a ceremony in the boat house. I mean Bill breaks down and Ron almost does the same thing, you know as they talked about the father image you know that even he created for them. I mean it was kind of that both academic and athletic you know. So he had both irons in the fire.

[14:00](#) **JC:** Doc was a funny guy. He always talked about the hoop players. He thought soccer was going to take it over all but he was he was [...] As a teacher, he was excellent too. And Bill I mean even I wound up earlier this week taking a look through the yearbook just because I wanted to see if I can get a few memories there. Just looking at the things that they you know you're able to put in a one-line quote and the things they would put in. Bill said something to the effect of "You get to do great things easily by doing small things very well" you know. And Doc had something about leaving it all in the playing field and Ron had something about the achievements in life is not having never flown but number time you got up. I mean these...to tell you the truth, the teams we had then we did very well. I mean by junior year, we were twenty-one and seven. And in my senior year, we were nineteen and eight.

[15:04](#) **GN:** We thought we would get those numbers these years.

[15:05](#) **JC:** Well the girls' team get it. Although you do. You have a student, T.J. Curry coming from Christ the King. I've watched him for the last two years, spoken to his Coach frequently. And this guy is a man beyond his years. He has never made a mistake. He was MVP of the all-state tournament when Christ the King took it. And he's going to be here in September and I think maybe he [...]

[15:30](#) **GN:** Maybe put a hole plug in the dike and start putting them in the baskets.

[15:35](#) **JC:** Sure I think and he's got a friend coming with him too from St Mary's in Manhasset and both of them were all-state. I think Coach has done a good job recruiting this year. I expect to see some really good results of that.

[15:47](#) **GN:** Another aspect of your college years, your word for security?

[15:51](#) **JC:** Oh yeah. Stories about that [laughter] Well one thing I will say it shows that not even that not only were the professors teachers but so were the administrators and you could learn life lessons from them. Let's see, how do I put this? I was on the security force and I was working for Ron Nahvalhet he was a diehard ex-Marine and coming from the Navy now I can identify with some of the approaches that he took towards things. And we used to run around punching the clock at night and inspecting the doors and such. And then I did a very foolish thing one night. You know I was used to seeing my brother, my sister make calls from work to home and whatever I wanted to call my girlfriend now my wife who was at New Paltz. And of course you know I'm thinking of the same well. You know it's OK to make a casual call from your office. But it wasn't the office, it was there was the school switchboard. Right now, it's pretty easy to track that kind of thing right and although it wasn't a big thing and I did wind up reimbursing the school. Ron called me under the carpet and kind of read me the Integrity Riot Act. Here you are doing something which in essence by school policy is illegal and you're a security person. It really kind of drummed that home but he could have made a big deal about it. Instead he sent me to Tony Campili because this was a business thing. It had a financial impact you know whatever buck and a half it was or whatever. But he sent me to Anthony and I expect it really get tossed off the roof right. But Tony just said, "What have you learned from this?" We had a conversation about it and I have kept that lesson in mind like forever. In my last eight years with IBM was with a team that in essence customers in Poughkeepsie from all over the world to hear pre-disclosure announcements on products and such and trends. And we in turn also would go out to them so I spent a lot of time across the world. You would think little things like especially before cell phones like phone calls and that stuff wouldn't be a big deal but I managed to have a conversation with my manager at what was acceptable expenses that I was going to charge back to IBM like phone calls to home and they all agreed it was very reasonable but I always did that. I remembered that one time specifically right.

[18:31](#) **GN:** And IBM was one of those companies that would really want you to follow that guideline too. Wouldn't they?

[18:36](#) **JC:** Sure and they were much more flexible than I would have thought they would have been. But just the fact was I had the presence of mind to say, I need to get this level of understanding right and so I don't do something stupid again. So it was a life lesson learned. And it was Ron and it was Tony and they weren't professors but I learned a hell of a lot from them just from that exercise.

[18:59](#) **GN:** Wonderful. What are some of the hardest things in those four years at Marist? You did well academically. You managed to stay on the basketball team. Were there setbacks in terms of disappointments?

[19:17](#) **JC:** I think at that time, life was pretty confusing because it was in turmoil. You had the war years and Kent State and all that. It was kind of difficult to reconcile you know your kind of core principle with you know with the opposing opinions and having it on T.V. every night. And then my draft number was five. My lottery was five so it was time when there was a lot of pressure that I think that the years before us didn't experience because it had come to a peak yet. So those were some tough times. Although again I would say, the comparisons to Marist to other schools are significantly different. Like I can remember my wife was at New Paltz and they did a good job of managing situations but you know there was a lot of I'll call overzealous overexcitement. Here I think they closed down school for a day. It was initiated by the staff not by the students and they had convocations and we all talked about it and I think we got a view that was much more broader than what we saw on T.V. or what was being proposed by student leaders and such. And we had our share of rabble rousers too. Everybody got their say and everybody felt like they came away with something. So I think those were tough times period. But again I was kind of in a cocoon here because this was more of a family environment than a big state school as an example.

[20:54](#) **GN:** Were you anxious to stay or leave at the end of the four years?

[20:58](#) **JC:** I was anxious to leave but for different reasons my father died shortly before graduation and I just wanted to get out and start fresh. In fact I wound up actually working in Poughkeepsie for IBM. But I was commuting from New York City because I want to be with my mom. So I kind of become a little bit divorced from school for a few years but not many. You know once I had gotten through those couple years or whatever the school regained its focus.

[21:29](#) **GN:** When does the navy come into this? How much time is there between graduation and navy?

[21:35](#) **JC:** Well actually I was since my lottery number was five. I decided I needed to be more proactive and I wanted to choose where I was going to be. So I got in a navy program and again the flexibility of the school allowed me to do this site. I left in my senior year for boot camp around the end of April and took my finals early. I had some books. Not you couldn't bring anything in the boot camp but subsequent to that navy school that I went to had a lot of free time and I was able continue the courses and I came back in October right before they took the yearbook pictures. And it was in the middle of the first semester so I got a lot of my active duty out of the way before I even graduated. When I graduated, I was already an active reservist.

[22:19](#) **GN:** Do you know Jack Eberth?

[22:20](#) **JC:** Yes, I do.

[22:21](#) **GN:** Do you know his story about being called before graduation and then you know there's [...] He tells about LaPietra. It turns out his small little town in Long Island, regardless of the fact he was in school, some error was made and he was drafted.

[22:41](#) **JC:** So he inadvertently, administratively lost his deferment.

[22:46](#) **GN:** And so everyone acknowledged that he was right. The only thing is that you can't fight the system and so you had to go in and adjudicate it from within you know. And apparently, he tells a story that while he was at sea, he gets this notice from LaPietra that he's finished, he's graduated. You know he won't have to return. He was in a good standing. You know he was through [...] He's three quarters of the way through his senior year and all of that. He said that made all the difference when he got out of the Navy. He didn't have to come back, you know and was able to go into I.B.M. which is what he did. His wife is a doctor so.

[23:27](#) **JC:** I remember him saying. He had his training in some sort of [...] He was a language interpreter.

[23:33](#) **GN:** Coding and all of that. Yeah. Let's talk about the Navy. How long were you in?

[23:40](#) **JC:** Well including reserves I was in for ten years but again I was on a modified program so active duty-wise, it was only a total of a year so and I didn't see any action so to speak. I was stationed in Gulfport, Mississippi during a time *till marked* and it was a big CB base out there. I was with the Navy Seabees. I really got off scot-lucky. Now I have stayed with them for ten years and in many respects, I regret not having pulled the full twenty but you can only extend your enlistment twice for two-year extensions. I had done

that so now the next choice was re-enlist. And by that time well [...] because of the position that I was in, they were drilling us out of Davisville, Rhode Island which from you know at that time Wappinger Fall to New York was quite a commuting distance for a weekend drill and with IBM commitment starting to come on, I wound up at that point my career covering a territory so to speak between New York City and Albany and all the state accounts G.E and the the city accounts in the Marist and Vassar and New Paltz. [...] They were accounts that I helped provided tech support to.

[24:50](#) **GN:** Explain how did you get into I.B.M? But was that the genesis of that? Were you still at Marist here?

[24:57](#) **JC:** Yeah, I was. I was still at Marist and I think it was John Sherlock was the I think he was the placement officer, job placement officer [...] career counseling. I did a lot of interviews with him and I actually had selected Equitable Life an offer because they had a master's program that they would pay for so I in essence got a fellowship of sorts and then one day I was so I was a lot down loaded ready to go when I graduated I knew I was going to be working and one day John came over he says you know the local I.B.M. Places hiring local meaning a field offices and there used to be an office over in Fox street which service customers and they're hiring a hiring in sales I wasn't too keen about sales but it was technical sales and I was kind of interested in that later on in my career converted over to Systems engineer then IT architect. As time went on but I started off in sales because he came over he says, "You know now look at somebody and it sounds like your resume is a real good match. I gave it to them. They were really interested. Why just to talk to them?" And I did and was convinced that it actually was my brother in-law who kind of you know pushed a switch for me. He said, "Hey, the tough part is getting in I.B.M. The easy part is getting out if you don't want it." So I did and actually I did get out years later I had taken one of my customers, Ulster County government over from a very old system to a very small system which was an interim two a very big system you know in those years just couldn't order a system and it showed up. It took eighteen months to two years to build. Right and I really became that's what really became immersed in the technical side.

[26:55](#) **GN:** How did that happen? Were there courses that you took? Was there a program that you involved in?

[27:02](#) **JC:** No. Really it was [...] When we were here, you had your little 1401 System that ran on a quota and Fortran and I think they're one or two apl terminals connected to an outfit called cost which happen to be an unbundling of an I.B.M. Project as part of the consent decree by I.B.M. And it was physically housed at the I.B.M. Fox Street location in the back of the building but that's all you had.

[27:32](#) **GN:** Was Cecil Denney, was he here at the time?

[27:34](#) **JC:** Oh no. I'm trying to remember that was I took the computing that I did was via the math courses that I took. It was all done in Fortran which was a mathematical like language and so that's where I got the feel that you know it's kind of nifty. But even at that time, it was kind of primitive. Put it where it ought to be. Well you all were cost-conscious and so you were living with somewhat antiquated equipment right. That all changed when the seacoast operation went away and you had to go on your own. And that's when you all bought a system, 370 which was leading-edge at that time and we took the software from McGill University called music along with V.M. And we maintained your old system for a while we emulated it, emulated your 1400 under the system until it was converted to an online environment and that's how we converted but I got started simply by some math courses here. You all didn't have the curriculum that you have now and not even that wasn't even in the eye of the beholder, right. In fact, I'll make an analogy. I mentioned that I had been converting Ulster County government. Well in the end I want to stay on the trail so to speak and I left IBM

and went with them. Right and I wound up managing the operation and then I wound up going over to Dutchess County because they were jumping on to some leading-edge environments the first database the first issue of v, the virtual machines in the environment they were installing it. They were the first customer to do that so I wanted to get on board with that and there was a fellow there who was one of the deputy directors name was Jim Falanga. Now Jim graduated a year behind me at Marist. His field was chemistry. He was brilliant. He was one of the best, still is, one of the best coders and designers. And as it turns out your administrative system that was written in auto code on the old 1400. Jim as a student wrote that and managed it for a while And I remember talking to Jim one day you know we talk about how our career started off in one direction and wound up over in IS. And we talked about Marist and where it was and where it was going because not too long I had left Dutchess County and went back to I.B.M. And strange as it would be Dutchess county became one of my customers so I maintained my relationship with Jim and he eventually left and came here at Marist working for Cecil Denney. He was an assistant or associate IS operations manager and so we got to talking one day about where things were going and how really Marist had taken off like a rocket ship in a very short period of time. I mean, you went from you know beating your cloths on a stream with a rock to using a washing machine and dryer in one fell swoop right and he had mentioned [...]

[30:48](#) **GN:** The year would be about '73.

[30:51](#) **JC:** No At that time, it was about '78, '79 somewhere in that time period.

[30:55](#) **GN:** So Dennis Murray had come on board them.

[30:59](#) **JC:** Was Dennis on board? Well when we started the conversion, Linus was still the president. And when we finished the conversion, Dennis had just come on board. And I remember that because I was on the Alumni Association Executive Board and we were one of the groups that interviewed him and I know he was the winner the day he came in. But in any event, Jim was making an analogy for me with regards to what the students had versus what we had when we were students and he had said, "Well he had gotten a fellowship at of Marist with this large corporation." I can't remember the name. It was well known and the first day he was there they gave him a whole bunch of boxes with stuff in it and they said, "Here's your test equipment set it up." It took him a whole day to figure out how to do that and he says, "The problem wasn't that it was a complicated thing to put together. The problem was I had never seen it before." So he knew chemistry very, very well. But some of the hands-on testing capabilities in such a school was just not equipped to give him. So the first day they handed to him assuming a guy with his knowledge would flow through this easy. It took them a whole day to get acquainted with what it was piecemeal because he'd never seen one before. And we both surmised that there isn't a student coming out of Marist that's ever going to make a statement like that. They have everything available to them that's in the commercial marketplace.

[32:30](#) **GN:** Well that's the quantum leap that you know well in so many ways. You look at Marist now as compared to when you came here you know. It's a different universe with the contributions that have been made. It seems to me that you're more involved in technical aspects of the IBM career than the managerial.

[32:58](#) **JC:** I have my management experience at Ulster and then Dutchess. And I came to the conclusion doing things is a lot more fun than putting other people through it. Yeah you get to stay on top of the technology role by doing it. But if you're managing others, you're one of two steps removed.

[33:20](#) **GN:** Can you address some concepts that would be very interesting for this kind of thing? On the executive board, the alumni, what kind of decisions were you involved in? Were there financial decisions? Were there philosophical decisions? You mentioned the interview for the new president. So that would be [...]

[33:41](#) **JC:** I think they did that as a courtesy to us. But I think it was an effort that it brought up [...] Well with Dennis being there and discussing scenarios with us, I think we, both the team and Dennis were a little bit broadened in their approach as a result of that. But for the most part we were an adjunct arm so to speak we had a limited budget and we were more concerned about the fundraising. You know making sure that we participate and well represented there. One year I think it was in the '79, '80 timeframe, I was the alumni chair for that and I got it. We were almost making our quota so to speak and then at the tail-end IBM came without with an announcement that they were matching grants two for one instead of one for one and I immediately became a hero or the alumni did right because it was a small but significant number and dollar-wise contributing that the now had an IBM match, that was significantly greater than before but we were concerned about you know, the enrollment the image of the school the knitting together of the alumni because for the most part you know in our early years [...]

[34:58](#) **GN:** There was no alumni. It was Marist brothers. And then there's a very small group that begins to.

[35:04](#) **JC:** That's true but even with them the feedback that we had got you know we would only publish a newsletter was that the only time that they hear from us here was when we want money. And so you know we did things to kind of you know form chapters I think Bill Conin was president at the time. He's a lawyer up in Kingston and he started a drive to you know get more activities going for alumni and getting more recognition for alumni, just getting the alumni to start to knit together as a group and therefore rekindle or keep the feelings that they had about Marist alive as opposed to we occasionally send a newsletter and we [...] get on the phone-a-thon and call up all our old friends begging for money right and we wanted it to be something more than that. And I think certainly the group accomplish that. Yeah and today I think it's somewhat of a lot of a model.

[36:06](#) **GN:** The alumni association. I mean they're in different states. They're in Florida, California. You have chapters around the country.

[36:15](#) **JC:** And they're closer linked together. There are web pages and Facebooks and I get notices all the time. So there is that constant connection through the alumni association to the alumni that you know it's something that we wanted to happen over time and I think now as I say it's a model. A few years back Christ the King started fundraising maybe ten years back and I had gotten a call from Miriam Urichy at that time she was kinda exploring how should they run it and I told them you should talk to your counterparts up in Marist find out the kinds of things that they do whatever. And I think that happened and I think if you look at what Christ the King does strangely resembles the Marist newsletter. I mean the lesson was well learned.

[37:04](#) **GN:** Yeah kind of a philosophical question and this is something that would appear in like in Times Magazine and Newsweek. Today, is college worth it?

[37:20](#) **JC:** It depends on what your objective for college would be. I think today in the business world we've kind of lost sight of getting someone well-rounded, well-experienced, well-behaved, you know well-driven, motivated, et cetera. You know getting that

person and then making them part of the organization and training them. And I think Marist does that I think they produce people who are useful when they get out the door. When I went to IBM I had a lot to learn and they had an extensive training program but I don't think that's the same with a lot of organizations. So you do that well. Marist does that well. As far as the well-rounded approach, my personal observation and I'd say this is more in the U.S. than it is certainly in Europe is that we are now starting to focus on college with the objective of obtaining a job at the end, as opposed to with the objective of producing someone who's learned. And I think that's one thing that Marist continues to do well. I don't see that as a common trend with a lot of colleges and I think that's more on because they're pressured to do so. You know if I had an option if you look at the pace of change in technology and I'm a big believer in technology as an empowerment vehicle. I mean individuals can do things today that you couldn't dream of ten years ago and we're only scratching the surface right. So if you look at students coming through high school and into college today, the schools are becoming close to dangerously irrelevant in their ability to teach students or prepare them for the digital age. Again I cite Marist as an example of the opposite because early in they started imbedding technology and every portion of the student experience from lab assignment, reports, communication, extra and that there are a lot of places that you know the students basically do it on their own. And they do it with technology that isn't even available on campus. And they bring it with them. I guess so. So I think Marist is kind of a beacon in all those respects but philosophically, I would say the focus of a college education from my observation, I may be a 100 percent is somewhat changing from the broad-based on academic experience to one that focuses one on a specialist environment so they get a job when they get out.

[40:17](#) **GN:** That's one other thing is, do you go to college to learn how to make a living? Or do you go to college to learn how to live? You know. And so the concept of the well-rounded man, I mean you have to have some ideas you can have all the technology but what are you going to send? So the kids who are, you know tweeting and quick little messages, you know. I'm not sure what it's doing for the reading they're doing. Any thought development of the exposure to literature, philosophy.

[40:54](#) **JC:** Certainly again technology can be an enabler. Just think of your own digital library and the iPad now.

[40:58](#) **GN:** Carry books in your hand now.

[41:00](#) **JC:** It can be an enabler of that but yes there are a lot of students caught up in the gadgets today. At one time was at odds with an immediate manager who happen to be a worldwide V.P. So it's not good thing to be at odds with. I was odds with my manager about the number of things that I was on a lease for. You know the instant messages and the pagers and the cell phones and the user IDs on several networks and I would come into office and I would have seven things to do that I wanted to do at the end of the day. I had sixteen I wanted to do. I got one done for myself and I got everybody else's work done in and we got it and so I started on my own. Canceling some of those facilities that gave people access to me in the middle of the night and he didn't necessarily agree with that. Well I won my argument by pulling out a book that he had given to the department several months before. It was *The Seven Habits of Successful People*. And in there it had, "Check your e-mail and your phone mail only twice a day." That stopped him cold but I see that today my nephews. I mean he's ten years old. He's got more technology in his room than Marist had on the whole campus when I went here. Right and when you're talking to him, he's talking to you but he's playing a game or he's twittering somebody. I draw the use of technology is something that is beneficial causes increases in productivity. You know you get to that point and surpass it when you get into a lot of these devices which turn out to be basically fad. What does a ten-year-old kid need with a three hundred dollars intelligent works pad? A ten-year-old kid. You know but it's the way of the world like I am saying schools need to adapt to that and to bring that into its proper perspective. You know to bring students along in that environment as opposed to

being dragged along with the students who are doing it on their own.

[43:12](#) **GN:** But the other side of this and I wouldn't say the other side but how do you inculcate to these ten year olds and now the eighteen year old coming to Marist that ethical thing that you brought up before? You know that what you have to do is the right not necessarily the profitable thing and not necessarily the easy thing.

[43:34](#) **JC:** And that's tough today it's tough to do because it starts in grammar school and I'm going to get on a soapbox in a moment and saying that I see [...] I was fortunate in that we had our first child. My wife elected to stop working until I got far along and then she started substitute teaching. But there are a lot of kids who are in single-parent homes and such. The parents are stressed and they're working two jobs with a parent to stress working two or three jobs and the responsibility that parents used to bear to instill those values from day one in their children and to work with them and the education system to bring them to the point where they can push them out of the nest and into college and such. I think a lot of parents either have been forced to or as a knee-jerk reaction in today's environment have abdicated that responsibility for the schools and they're not doing it very well because they shouldn't be doing that in the first place. So I think it's very tough. How do you do that? I don't think you do that at college. You have to come with it as a base and then college builds on that, blossoms that.

[44:50](#) **GN:** A parallel thought now. You talked about your retirement activities taking on coaching basketball and that kind of thing with kids. Do you find some difficulties in managing these kids who now live with split parents this weekend here and that weekend there and.

[45:16](#) **JC:** I use to coach in the local town leagues when as a parent of young kids the first thing you did when you got when you signed them up was to get signed up as a coach and stuff so I did my share of that and there were times when I could tell you who but without knowing any background about the kids who came from a traditional dual parent family who was a single parent who was a dual parent but both parents working I can almost tell that just how the kids behaved. Again I think you know I don't want to sound nostalgic but some of the old times the things they did you couldn't do any better right.

[46:00](#) **GN:** There has to be people like you there to run these activities because if the kids were just by themselves you know if there were no leagues to go to if there were no you know afternoon activities or Saturday or weekends or you know club football or whatever you know.

[46:16](#) **JC:** You have to provide them with a petri dish if you wish. You have to grow them in that environment. Certainly a place like the Boys and Girls Club and such. You know those are places where you know kids can come to become kids and also grow a little bit at the same time and learn interpersonal relationships. And those are facilities that are stretched nowadays with the environment that we're in. The economic environment that we're in and everyone scrutinizing every dollar and where it should be spent. It's tough to have that you know.

[46:50](#) **GN:** Coming into the present day. There's been a lot of changes at Marist. What strikes you most?

[47:00](#) **JC:** Well I'll start with the students and I receive Dennis' reports in that such and I've come to the conclusion that if I had to come here today I probably wouldn't be qualified to get in. So the caliber of people you have here that the school is attracted certainly

is an order of measure higher than the typical student that I recently represented when I came here. So you're starting with the basest who are probably more experienced, certainly have many achievements to under their belt that maybe we would have gotten along the way but they have it coming into this place and so the school itself, its reputation certainly its facilities. My sister's brother in law's kids, their children are coming here this September and I saw them at a birthday party only a few weeks ago and she was talking about school her son was going to and how the original faculty built the place with their own hands and I said, that sounds like Marist. Yes, it's Marist, what a wonderful campus. And the place exudes an environment that you could feel comfortable bringing you child to and the children who are coming here probably are more adults then children and at least in my case I can say that probably was reversed.

[48:31](#) **GN:** But you see this is a problem and one of the problems of course is that there was a bonding when you people came and you kind of stuck together and you had friendships and they have been lasting many of them we have a problem now with kids who come here with their phones. They get out of class and the first thing they do is call home or old girlfriend or old boyfriend. And their walking next to people and they don't know who they are walking next to.

[49:04](#) **JC:** Yeah I could see where that certainly could become a problem simply because the environments that were in our news was worlds apart again. I came from an environment Christ the King were the kids were close to it because the school had just become a school and they pulled things together and I came here and it was a relatively young campus and the core kids were from the metropolitan New York, New Jersey, Connecticut areas so they kind of shared a northeast background.

[49:33](#) **GN:** Get a ride to the city.

[49:35](#) **JC:** Yeah you know and there were much less selection in terms of school activities and such that those were there you know people would gravitate towards because they were the only thing around the coffee club you know all rascality and such so the environment was different it was it was almost as if. You were thrown in to gather and building your own little world and you naturally form bonds today. It's an established environment you're coming with people that don't break the links to the up side when I came here you know that the two hour drive to the city was like forever you know it was it was a planned event. You know here it's the whim of the moment you hop on a train if you had to. So it is it is a whole different ball environment and I guess one would say that you're competing with all those outside interference you know the old home friends other schools etc. and I'm not so sure that that's bad. The student has a broad selection both here and away and that's a nice environment for a nice position for the students to be it just puts an onus on you to do more to keep them interested in the things that are here.

[50:56](#) **GN:** I have asked one of the administrators if indeed the students have an opportunity to use the gym to use stadium to use the facilities. And she said there are intermural games going on at two o'clock in the Morning on stadium, I mean I'm never there to see it I had no idea that this kind of activity you know so.

[51:22](#) **JC:** That's I wasn't aware of that but that statement doesn't surprise me I mean hell when the parking lot was half full we turned it into an intramural playing field in the middle of the night but that was our only option.

[51:34](#) **GN:** Some years ago there was a circular sent around with a number of priorities about what are interest should be and one of them was the building of the stadium. We had classroom building, this building, that building, I had down stadium and I put that may be the last. What do you think of the building of the stadium? I think differently now of it.

[52:01](#) **JC:** You mean the Leonidoff Field and its extensions? Well I think that and now the new face you're putting on the entrance. I mean those are things that one would almost expect from college. Those are things that I missed when I was here. I mean the facilities that they had increased the king far out class this year we could put four thousand people in the gymnasium there. You know you could put forty in the shoe box in Marian all were we practices. So and one tends to downplay I guess today the impact of competition. You know team competition in terms of its ability to build character for when you get out in that real world. Yeah right. To me, I have an observation that some of the best guys I've competed against in business and we're on my team in business right. You know we would be working at three four o'clock in the morning on a project you know the three days in a row like that and it wouldn't matter to them because they had to put out the effort to attain the goal. Right. And if you talk to them you'd find out that they'd all been a soccer player, or a basketball, or football, baseball where they will have been in that environment where they were used to competition they were used to putting the team ahead of themselves. They were used to striving for an end result they weren't going to give up until they got it right. Now someone without those traits would find it very hard to keep up. So you know I wouldn't downplay the need for athletic facilities here at all because the more you offer and the more people get the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom learning from each other and experiences of winning and losing and how you take loss the quote from Ron Pietro you know achievement isn't necessarily how many times you haven't fallen but you know how many times you've got up there afterwards. That's part of the learning process and the school's much more valuable when they provide that total package.

[54:02](#) **GN:** That's why you know October afternoon here when you see you know you have a virtually of ninety kids I think signed up with uniforms there and you know maybe thirty of them will play you know. But they went to the practices and that day will come.

[54:20](#) **JC:** I spent my share of time on the benches. I know exactly what you're talking about. And it still is fun. It still is a learning experience.

[54:27](#) **GN:** Be part of the team.

[54:32](#) **JC:** Learning process very few stars around and they all come up through the ranks and take their time you know and the learning effort they put in their dues and that's part of learning experience. And again there are a lot of I think kids today who don't participate in sports starting at the grammar and high school level that not only for you know health considerations aside. There's so much more of a disadvantage when you stack them up against someone who's had that life experience.

[54:59](#) **GN:** Yeah and you the contrast of saying when you were with Ron Pietro you rove where ever you went now of course we fly the kids to California to play football games. But guess what we have you know twenty kids coming from California to Marist next year. If you're not known you know you can't go there and so that that kind of a contrast about this development.

[55:22](#) **JC:** And you want to expand the population or the diversity of the population. In as many way as you can. Cause when they get out in the world again if nothing else technology is bringing the world closer together. They're going to have that diversity to contend with. They should be used to it. They should be part of their upbringing the part of their essence. So the more you can get out and put your tentacles out there and in turn draw people back in the better it is for everyone here.

[55:49](#) **GN:** We only have four or five minutes left. Is there anything that you would like to say to the president or the board of trustees

about maintaining Marist? What are some things that you would say it's important to keep on doing this? Or you should change this?

[56:10](#) **JC:** Well I would say keep on doing what you're doing because you do it well. It's produced a payback. Certainly the appearance of the college is a big selling point. I would certainly when times get tough as they may in the future, you know I would not immediately start cutting in that environment because appearance sells and then the use of technology. I'm a technology bigot but you are basically in the forefront. And for a small school with a small population, you've got much more leverage out of your program than a lot of larger institutions have. Right so you want to keep that going it's a niche that you should continue to exploit that. And I would say don't ever lose sight where you came from. Guys like you are the bedrock, you know the building blocks. And still as I say my sister's brother in law's wife came back and started talking about the school there the faculty built the place. They built it with their bare hands and that impressed me. I mean so remember where you came from. Don't lose your [...] Don't lose what it is that brought you to this point because it'll stand you in good stead in the future. It's a home. I'd love to come here because I feel like I'm at home.

[57:36](#) **GN:** Jim it's been wonderful talking to you.

[57:38](#) **JC:** It's been a pleasure thank you.

[57:40](#) **GN:** We hope to see a lot of you still.