

Lynne Doty

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Wai Yen Oo

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Lynne Doty**Interviewee:** Lynne Doty**Interviewer:** Gus Nolan**Interview Date:** June 18th 2014**Location:** Marist College Archives and Special Collections**Topic:** Marist College History**See Also:****Subject Headings:** Doty, Lynne

Marist College Faculty

Marist College History

Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Summary: Lynne Doty reflects on her early education experiences, her education at New Paltz, landing a job at Marist College as a professor in the Mathematics Department. She discusses her experiences as part of committees at the college. She discusses the students and the level of education at the college, how it has developed and changed over the forty years she has been part of the faculty. She discusses her post-retirement plans as well with Gus Nolan.

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00:25 **Gus Nolan:** Good morning. This is Wednesday, June 18th and today we have the privilege of interviewing Professor Lynne Doty. She's been with a college a good number of years not forty, but almost thirty-nine I think is what the number is. Good morning, Lynne.

00:42 **Lynne Doty:** Morning Gus.

00:43 **GN:** Lynne, I like to start with a little picture, snapshot of the early years, where were you born, growing up, grade school. Just talk freely about that for a few minutes.

00:56 **LD:** I don't know. I was born the same place where both my parents were born, over in Otisville. Now known as the home of one of the big federal correctional facilities. Grew up there, went to school there, went to a very small school, but got smaller as I progressed through grade. One building K through 12, seventeen people in my graduating class.

01:20 **GN:** Very small community.

01:22 **LD:** We kept our school even while school districts were centralizing. We were one of the last ones to get absorbed. It's now part of the Minisink Central School District.

01:32 **GN:** Through that period, did you have a particular interests? Did you develop music talent? Did you develop hobbies stamp collection, baking, home?

01:47 **LD:** I actually did collect stamps for a while. But probably the two activities I spent the most time on would be sports of any kind in the world. Luckily, my mother had been very good at sports so she thought it was fine that I wanted to play sports. And I helped my father in his auto mechanics garage. So I learned a whole lot about auto mechanics. And I used to pump gas all the time.

02:13 **GN:** Are you an only child?

02:14 **LD:** Yes.

02:17 **GN:** High school in the same area?

02:19 **LD:** That was it. K through twelve, Otisville High School.

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[02:24](#) GN: Same people all the way through?

[02:26](#) LD: Yeah.

[02:27](#) GN: Pretty much.

[02:28](#) LD: Sometimes my mother would substitute because she was certified as a gym teacher. She taught kindergarten for a while cause they need somebody to do it and she could teach high school science so she would frequently substitute. And I would go from my third or fourth grade classroom up to sit in the corner of the classroom she was using as a substitute. All one building, no one can conceive of anything on that small scale anymore.

[03:00](#) GN: Moving on graduate school must be out of town though. Did you go to college?

[03:05](#) LD: Yeah I went to Stroudsburg in Pennsylvania as an undergrad. And then it was a terrible time to get jobs. I finished undergrad in '72. So I well ... I kind of decided I would be a Community College teacher because having done student teaching, I decided I didn't really want to do high school anymore. So I went to New Paltz, got a teaching assistantship at New Paltz that would remit my tuition and pay me a little money. So I did the beginning the Master's level graduate school stuff at New Paltz. And it's a good thing I did because that's how I got hired. They called me up one day said. Actually Marist called me. I believe it was Kevin Carolan that called and said that they had just lost somebody in the Math department. They called New Paltz, "You got anybody. You just graduated that we could use." And they said me. So I basically got my job after I'd sort of given up trying to get a job because it was a terrible time to get jobs in the mid-seventies.

[04:10](#) GN: OK, how did you hear about Marist? New Paltz?

[04:13](#) LD: That's how I heard about it.

[04:16](#) GN: You didn't know about it before then?

[04:17](#) LD: No.

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[04:18](#) GN: We weren't very well-known in the mid-70s.

[04:20](#) LD: No. I am on the other side of the river to, and that was like the great divide for a long, long time.

[04:26](#) GN: Was there such as an interview for you?

[04:28](#) LD: Oh yes. Yes. As a matter of fact, John Ritschdorff told me this long, long after the fact, it was after Janet Schillinger even left. They interviewed me and another woman. And I can't remember distinctly whether they interviewed a third person or not. But anyway John's report to me was I got the job because Janet didn't like the other woman.

[04:53](#) GN: That's fair enough.

[04:55](#) LD: So I did have an interview, I had lunch over at Mariner's Harbor.

[05:01](#) GN: Okay, we gave lunch in those days.

[05:03](#) LD: Yes, and this is like the last week in August.

[05:08](#) GN: So, obviously you really didn't know anybody at Marist then coming this way. OK. Let's start. How were the first class? Did you have introduction to algebra or?

[05:20](#) LD: Oh yeah, I was hired on a two-year replacement contract for two people who were on sabbatical. This was the years when Marist hired people to replace people going on sabbatical. Richard LaPietra and George McCannally. And they were retooling to do computer science. Because science was down and computer science looked like a comer. Yeah so they were off retooling. One year, the other one's another year and they gave me a two-year term contract. And that's basically how I got started. So of course, I got low-level courses; two College Algebras and I think Statistics and Operational Models. And I looked at my old gradebooks. The two I've kept ... I threw out everything else in-between. But the oldest grade books I had, I had forty students in every section.

[06:14](#) GN: Forty students.

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[06:16](#) **LD:** Yes. I think there was one that was thirty-four so I didn't quite make one hundred sixty. But I was between one hundred-fifteen and one hundred-sixteen students.

[06:22](#) **GN:** And in those days was it two sessions a week or three?

[06:25](#) **LD:** I believe three to start with. It very quickly went two.

[06:33](#) **GN:** The other professors. Do you recall who else was teaching at the time?

[06:38](#) **LD:** John Ritschdorff, Janet Schillinger, Kevin Carolan, and Dave Angles. I think Dave was here for one year and then he, he might have been here for two years. The year he left that's when I got switched to a tenure track. And Janet left the same year. She was married and her husband's job was in I believe in Hartford. So Dave Angles who was tenured and Janet Schillinger who was tenured left. Kind of left. John Ritschdorff,, Kevin Carolan, and me the new hire so I got shifted to a tenured line.

[07:15](#) **GN:** Had Kevin move into the space commander things? He worked for LaPietra didn't he in the office as an assistant dean or something?

[07:24](#) **LD:** I think he had just stopped being assistant dean. I am not sure but he was definitely teaching in our department.

[07:32](#) **GN:** Had LaPietra come back yet from his...? Well, he went to Japan somewhere along there to didn't he?

[07:40](#) **LD:** I don't know. Louis Zuccarello was academic vice president when I got hired.

[07:44](#) **GN:** OK that's five years. Richard was in for five years I think and then Lou came. Okay I lost contact.

[07:52](#) **LD:** Yeah, I remember Kevin being some sort of the administrator in Greystone, but not for very long. So it might have been one of the one year transition.

[08:00](#) **GN:** Larry Sullivan use to call him the space commander. He was in charge of all the classrooms. Who was going to go to what classroom et cetera. So that was it. Let's talk about the

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students those early students, how would you define them? Were they... you know?

[08:15](#) **LD:** I think they were much more first-generation college students, and they were. I believe very aware of the fact that their parents were making major league sacrifices to get them here and they were for the most part very motivated. I mean some of them were in over their heads. But that was usually people who had a math requirement who weren't math majors. The math majors for the most part were just as serious then as they are now.

[08:42](#) **GN:** Just a comment on that now, are they in your time here... How have the students changed?

[08:49](#) **LD:** Oh, I think they're much more sophisticated socially than they were when I was first here.

[09:56](#) **GN:** Academically. Do they come better prepared, better motivated?

[09:01](#) **LD:** I don't think there are any better motivated. It might be a little less motivated. I think it's more like "Well everybody else goes to college now so I just have to do it." I just don't think they write it as well. Although you don't see quite as much writing in mathematics. I don't think they integrate knowledge as well and I think they're much more, "What do I need to do?" This is a different thing. "What do I need to do to get a good grade in this course?" There are more students like that there were always some student like that there are fewer, I could think of a few, but there are fewer this like "Oh this is interesting I want to think about this." I'm not just talking about in the majors' course. I had a basketball player, a men's basketball player one time in excursions and he got really interested in this. This is kind of interesting. I think about this stuff. And that was very unusual.

[10:04](#) **GN:** So actually the present students ... they're the financially better off because everything is upgraded with all votes going up with everything else being higher here. But are they career-oriented? Are they looking for the job at the end of the line?

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[10:23](#) **LD:** Yes, I think so. A big percentage of them ... either the job or graduate school. A bigger percentage. And maybe I shouldn't say a bigger percentage but they are very definitely career oriented. Maybe not quite as much as their parents would like, but they're career oriented.

[10:43](#) **GN:** Let's just change the focus a little bit. You used an expression when I wrote to you about coming that sometimes it seems that you've taught in three different colleges. OK. Just give me a thumbnail view of the change from the college that you first came ... which was a kind of primitive ... I mean building-wise, campus-wise. I guess it was ... We were all in one building. I guess in Donnelly for offices and for the classrooms of the most part.

[11:10](#) **LD:** Well, my office was in Fontaine. So I'm not back quite that far but the classrooms were all essentially in Donnelly. There were one or two really small seminar rooms in Fontaine. The classes were in Donnelly. I came when the college was on the brink of going under. And you were very aware of that. It was like "Okay, we've got to get fifty more. It's August 20th and we need fifty more students to balance the budget." "Okay, we'll get fifty more students." And so, it was good for me because it wasn't the pressure of this is a really high-powered academic institution and you're going to look like a stupid backwater hick-town person. It was much more of "Oh, gee it's nice you're working here, we're glad to see you, what can we do to help?" It was much more of a sort of this is now a community that you're going to live in. We're going to exist because we stick together. And I remember Louis Zuccarello apologizing when he said, "I'd hate to tell you what the salary for this job is going to be." But I didn't care because I hadn't been able to get a job on my own anyways. I told you it was really bad times for getting jobs in the mid-70s in anything. It was one of these low growth times but inflation was going crazy. It was just bad time so I was happy to have even a two-year gig because I thought at that point, "Okay, I have to go out and look again. I have two years' experience that'll make a big difference." So that was, you know, you always were aware of *oh my god we're on the brink of going under*. Something's

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gonna happen and something did. Linus stepped down. We get Dennis. Dennis comes in. And so that's the first college in six years or so. Yeah. Which turned out to be my probationary period. And as soon as I got moved to a tenured line, Ritschdorff said to me, "You gotta go and enroll in a PhD program. If you're going to get tenured, you at least got to be enrolled." And that was fairly typical for mathematics in the late seventies. It wasn't just the Marist phenomenon. That was a little more in mathematics anyway widespread. You had to have something past a Master's Degree, but you really didn't need to have the PhD to work in a four-year college. Well that's changed dramatically since then, but at that time so alright enrolled in a program. And I'm very happy that he did that, I mean I'm very happy that the college sort of kept the pressure on after Dennis came. You've got to finish your degree now and we're not just happy that you ABD. You got tenured. You want to get promoted? You need a degree, fine. This provided an impetus but I think having had the sort of six years of there's really not any other expectations other than you serve on a bunch of committees and you teach your brains out. That's all we're really looking for. I think that gave me a chance to kind of get settled down. When I went off to the real PhD level graduate work, I was kind of ready for it. So I think it worked out very well for me. But so the second phase is like the first half of Dennis, maybe Dennis from when he came until I say mid-90s.

[14:47](#) GN: To mid-90s, ok.

[14:49](#) LD: Okay. I think so because I think he's mellowed since the mid-90s. That was my ...

And I'm guessing mid-90s cause I know it was the time of Bill Olson and the payback for you guys rejected this contract so I am not going to invite you to my house anymore for the luncheon or for the Welcome Back in September. It's a real war then. I kind of liked it better then because it was us against, we were kind of a group ... we were united, you know. Bill Olson, ten-friend thing and still a faculty felt more like a group right. I didn't feel like every man for himself.

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Which is now what I would say the third phase is ... I guess we've progressed to what a modern college is. I mean it's basically ... And I think largely is a result of the way people perceive things happening in that first phase of this ... you know Dennis one. And I don't want this to sound like I'm mad at Dennis because I think without Dennis we probably wouldn't have jobs right now. If he probably hadn't come in and be as what, hard about what he wanted to do and really kind of say no, we can't do it like this anymore. It was such a shock. You probably seemed worse than it was at the time but you know it was that phase of he really came in and said, "You've got to pick up. You can't have ... We got to have an academic institution here. You can't be giving associate professors to people without PhDs. It was that phase where he went through in the late eighties of ratcheting up the requirements and we backed off a little. And then we went ahead again then it was. I think it was perceived as Dennis has convinced the board of trustees that the professors were a bunch of jerks. And OK, they're employees and we're going to treat them like that. And you know maybe it had to be that way but it was certainly I think perceived that way by a lot of faculty. And I think once he kind of got to a certain point, I mean he instituted the Welcome Back reception.

[17:08](#) GN: Oh yeah, back in September.

[17:11](#) LD: We had ten years of "You guys didn't accept that contract and we're not having a welcome back thing." Then he kind of decided to go back and have that. And I think maybe he got the place where he wanted to get it and now it's time to back off. And how do I want to be remembered? And hey, most of the faculty don't know that first phase of Dennis. They'd have been hired in the second phase of Dennis so he can easily do it and as I said, I don't want this to seem anti-Dennis Murray. I think he probably had to do what he did and I didn't like it. I don't think most of the faculty liked it, but I'm not prepared to say we'd be sitting here if he hadn't done it either right. So I accept it. And at this point it's got way "too much every man for

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himself' and I think this pressure to prepare students for careers. It's not just the students doing it now it's everybody telling us that's what we have to do. That was my sort of my parting comment was I have run out of adaptability. You know I can't adapt any more.

[18:17](#) GN: And you made some changes along the way.

[18:19](#) LD: And I can't make any more.

[18:22](#) GN: But you have a lot to do also with the development of the faculty, the committees that you were on. I mean I think about your rank and tenure or you know the old summer incentive programs whatever they are.

[18:40](#) LD: I all so did negotiations a couple times. Once with Sue Lawrence and Howard Goldman.

[18:46](#) GN: That's an idea you'd think about some of the past figurers who we've had; George. Well even the names begging to escape me now. I don't mean George Hooper, he's on a different category, but Balch.

[19:02](#) LD: Oh I remember Roscoe, I liked Roscoe. I don't have anybody in the mold of a Roscoe Balch anymore – insight of the sort of all eccentric college professor. Jerry White is knowledgeable as Roscoe was but Roscoe just had a way of pontificating at faculty meeting.

[19:22](#) GN: I want to thank the members of the committee for their efforts but I am not going to vote for it.

[19:28](#) LD: And he had good reason you know. He was never snide. He was always expressing his opinion. Yeah, I miss Roscoe a lot.

[19:40](#) GN: Well fact that maybe the last point that you made is that you know the college now is pretty much everyone that comes here is more interested in ... I suppose in their own interest about how can they develop and how can they make the next move on rather being committed to a long term. I am not in the faculty now but I have a sense of people even the chairpeople that

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come in, you know, don't stay too long. They're like touching down here and making a little name for themselves and then moving on. Okay, another change. How about ... What strikes you at the campus now? When you came on here in the 70s, we were pretty much a small-town operation. You come on Marist now and you're impressed. How did this happen, how did this change take place? What strikes you most in that? Are there buildings, Hancock, or the new library. Not the new library, now it's the number of years old. The new music building, we call it musical arts center, but only because we don't have a music department, I guess.

[20:57](#) **LD:** Yeah, but we have a very active and big music program and we might not have a department but then they are very active in promoting Marist off-campus too which I think that's very important. I think that's why they have the new facilities. I mean the buildings have to strike you. There's no question about that but it's just that from an internal point of view that you certainly can't fail to be struck by the physical changes. You know, the parking lot is now the campus green. The first parking lot. But this is just a much more professionally-run operation. Which I think it has to be but it's also just much less. You don't feel any sense of ... At least I don't feel any sense anymore. I don't feel as strongly as I felt before of "Gee, this place really appreciates me. And I'm an integral part of this place and if I don't show up for work, somebody is going to notice." I don't have that sense anymore. Like "Oh well. You didn't show up for work alright well. We'll just get somebody in to teach your class." It's much more of a-

[22:24](#) **GN:** A business operation?

[22:26](#) **LD:** Well I was going to say a corporate operation as opposed to a community-centered operation. And I'd be the first one to line up and say, "I'm not at all sure it could have survived as a community operation." But having said that I still miss it. I would like to feel more appreciated than I do. I felt more appreciated in the first ten years I was here than I felt in the last thirty.

[22:50](#) **GN:** Is that so?

[22:51](#) LD: Yeah. You're just a cog right now.

[22:53](#) GN: You weren't very well-remunerated in the first ten years. Do you feel that you're getting a fair shake now?

[23:01](#) LD: Oh yeah. One year when they first did the equity adjustment stuff there ... We had some big faculty meeting over in the Donnelly, the place where they used to have ... I don't know what the number of it is now ... but the room we use have faculty meetings in the center of Donnelly the big sort of lecture center.

[23:19](#) GN: Amphitheater kind of thing.

[23:21](#) LD: So we have some big meeting over there discussing equity adjustments or whatnot. And Marilyn Porres is there because she's the one that's done all the stats. The meeting gets over and I want to ask her about something else to do with statistics or data collection or something. It might have something to do with the doing assessment back then even on a very small scale, might have been something to do with the placement exams. It had nothing to do with equity adjustments. But she was there so it was my time to buttonhole and ask her this question. So I walked out and I get like within fifteen feet of her and she says, "You're flagged. You're flagged. You're going to get a big equity." She didn't say you're going to get a big equity adjustment, but flag was the term that was being used or had been used in the meeting. That certain people were flagged because their salaries were so out of whack with other salaries. So I got a giant raise back the first year they did the equity adjustment to make up for how low my salaries had been. And there was no other thing that compounded it. I got most of mine ... I got all my promotions before or I got all my promotions at the time when according to the handbook you got five hundred dollars for a promotion and then they started ... In the last twenty years, it's been a thousand and now I think it's five thousand. So I was falling behind because I wasn't getting much of an increment for promotions and my last promotion to full. There was ... They

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had instituted floors for the other salaries, but they didn't put a floor in for full professors so I'm still, you know, I'm barely over the associate floor even though I've been promoted to full now. So I kept falling behind. And then that one year, it was kind like this giant raise to make up for the first sixteen years.

[25:22](#) GN: Then the income tax takes half of it back anyway.

[25:25](#) LD: Well no, I was able to make contributions to the supplemental retirement at that point. Up until then, I couldn't. I missed a whole lot of big growth in the 80s, but what are you going to do.

[25:36](#) GN: Yeah I must admit as much as the college was in hard times in the 70s and early 80s. You know that period of time. One thing Foy did was to establish the TIAA-CREF.

[25:49](#) LD: Oh, I am so thankful for having been kind of enrolled in a retirement program without having to think about it. It just happened.

[25:57](#) GN: That college is free. I mean that's ready. TIAA is paying you. The college is paying its share of it. So now they're paying me to stay home but I am getting more now than I get when I was coming here so that was a part of it. Let's talk a little bit about the image of Marist. Now there's negatives and positives I suppose in terms of it that. Dennis is pretty much a PR person. You know he would like to have an article on the front page of The New York Times with your next-year salary again.

[26:39](#) LD: Well I think that's why Lee Miringoff has gotten the support from MIPO that he's gotten. That was a really smart move on Lee's part. I don't know if he planned it that way or it just happened. Lee was hired the same year I was hired. So we kind of have that in common and now we're both across the hall from each other cause my office is right across from MIPO now. And that was really shrewd of Lee.

[27:06](#) GN: It was purely accidental. And as much as ... I remember the very first times there

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were exit polls being done from you know the local area. He had kids out, asking people coming out. That's the beginning of the osmosis of the development.

[27:22](#) **LD:** Well the first two years, he started to get serious about this. One summer, he hired John Ritschdorff as the statistics consultant and in next summer, he hired me. So I wish I'd saved the stubs from those paychecks and had Lee's autograph on but I didn't and I might have been fifty or hundred dollars for some was nominal. But yeah. He was starting to get into statistical end of it and I mean it's great. I'd much rather be known for MIPO than for sports programs. So... more power to Lee I think it's great. He stumbled into it, fine but that's really.

[28:02](#) **GN:** He happens to be very accurate.

[28:03](#) **LD:** He's very accurate.

[28:04](#) **GN:** He know his math. He had a PhD out of MIT so he's well. The other activity that you did mention one earlier I like to go back to it: the music department. I have gone to a number of their off-campus right performances mainly Christmas. They do this ... Messiah and one of the local churches and you know it's really an aesthetic experience, I mean. What they were able to pull out of the closets here of those kids who had all of these you know grade school, high school lessons. And we never knew we had them. So they really do perform and are you know...

[28:52](#) **LD:** It's a real community asset. It really is.

[28:56](#) **GN:** Let me ask you. Back to the faculty not so much the salary but the workload and the evaluation business that goes on now. Where are we in terms of the four-three, two-two, two-three in terms of does everybody get the same teaching assignment?

[29:22](#) **LD:** No. I mean I think the standard one now for anyone whose professorial rank is four-three. The teaching associates ... some of them but not all of them are doing five-five.

[29:42](#) **GN:** OK those are the people without ... That's just second tier who are on faculty.

[29:50](#) **LD:** Pretty much. They don't need a terminal degree and they teach the introductory level

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courses. Basically, I think what Marist and its faculty was trying to do ... Was to have fewer people who were at least ... This was the stated argument I don't think it worked out that way. Who were adjunct-ing at different places trying to piece something together. Let's put together a package that we can afford to give them benefits. And they don't have a terminal degree and are not going to be able to serve on evaluations and what not, but so we'll make them do five-five, but we will give them benefits. And that seem like a reasonable I think the faculty perceived it as reasonable and sort of humane thing to do but it hasn't worked out that way. Yeah. In a sense that I don't believe that most of the people who were hired were teaching associate had been adjunct who had been piecing together jobs from different places. It just worked out differently for whatever reason. And then there are people who get course releases for doing administrative work. There's tons of those like core director of what not or Assistant Dean. And then there are people who get scholarship course releases so you teach three-three instead of four-three.

[31:20](#) GN: Are you requested to attend professional development? Are you encouraged write a paper, present a paper in the course of a year, either one semester or the other? Is that part of evaluation that a chair would go through?

[31:37](#) LD: Oh yeah, if you haven't done something professionally, you're going to get an unsatisfactory and you're going to get slightly less than the agreed upon merit raise and I know instances of people to whom it has happened. And they've said, "You know I didn't do anything this year so I got docked." Yeah, so you at least better show up at a conference and deliver some sort of a paper. The problem with this is ... it's hard for me to generalize because expectations are different in a liberal arts than in math and the one thing Roger is pretty good at, our dean is coming from a mathematics point of view he realizes we're not going to be pumping out a paper a year. I don't care who you are.

[32:19](#) GN: Yeah.

[32:21](#) **LD:** And so there's not an expectation that you are going to crank out a paper every year. But there's an expectation if you want to get a satisfactory evaluation that you're doing something every year. And that if you want to get the course release for scholarship, you better have a paper every couple of years. Which is still a fair amount of mathematics. It's not easy to do. I mean when I mean Joe Kirkland was kind of taking that sort of golden boy of mathematics in terms of publishing because he publishes a lot. When he was chair of FAC, he lost his course release because he couldn't keep up with the publishing and being the chair of FAC. When I was the Chair of FAC, I lost the course release the following year because I couldn't keep up with it then. And it also happens with the departing chair who always got course releases, Joanne Gavin. She publishes her brains out but when she was on FAC, she lost her course release. She said I haven't taught four courses in a semester in years. So yeah there so much more of an expectation for publishing which is why there's less of an expectation for involvement in setting up any sort of a feeling of community. I can't do that. I don't get rewarded for that. Rewards are for doing this stuff. So I'll do the stuff they give me the rewards for.

[33:43](#) **GN:** How about advisement? You're asked to do thirty?

[33:46](#) **LD:** Oh no, I've never had that many. Worst case I had maybe fourteen or fifteen. We just don't have that many majors. And yeah, I get non-majors. I used to get a lot more non-majors when I taught excursions but now it's kind of died with the new core and got farmed out or gotten replaced by the introductory courses, these freshman seminars. The other sections I believe are taught all by adjuncts now. We used to get undecided majors taking excursions and undecided they'd give to any of the full-time people who have low numbers and I would have low numbers because we didn't have that many Math majors.

[34:24](#) **GN:** What's your feeling about the union thing, now?

[34:28](#) **LD:** The adjuncts have to do what they want to do. I really think it's their decision to

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make.

[34:35](#) **GN:** Adjunct salaries though are pretty much at a base level.

[34:39](#) **LD:** Oh yeah.

[34:40](#) **GN:** And it seems to be some inequity as in so much of the College is taught by adjuncts that not much, not more is not given to them in terms of that. As bad as Marist ... Well not as bad as Marist is ... They want to do it. They applied to come and this is the name of the game. I know a one case where someone who works here and works at New Paltz and we pay better than New Paltz in terms of you know so. But to belong to the union, it would mean to pay two different union fees.

[35:13](#) **LD:** Yes I think I'm not sure but I think New Paltz adjuncts might get benefits. I'm not sure.

[35:22](#) **GN:** If you had a chance to go to the faculty board, the board of the trustees rather What do you think is a need that Marist has that is not being articulated, faculty, or buildings, or?

[35:36](#) **LD:** I try not to think about it anymore. After I spent two of my last or actually three of my last five years at Marist on FAC, I'm really seriously trying not to think about it anymore.

[35:52](#) **GN:** What particular kind of ... the equity thing, or what's the thorn?

[36:04](#) **LD:** I don't know. If I thought about it for a while, I'm never very quick at thinking of things. I thought about for a while I might be able to come up with something but I mean I sat at the Board of Trustees meeting and did my best potted plant imitation for two years because it really wasn't anything they were talking about that they needed to talk to me about.

[36:22](#) **GN:** Ok. Let's move on. More happy things. What are some of the more happy experiences you've had here? In terms of students' performances and moving on or establishing courses, getting courses in place or recommendations for people to come on board or leave.

[36:49](#) **LD:** Well I guess. You know I've sort of always joked with Joe Kirkland and Jim

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Helmreich that probably one of the best things I did when I was ... We didn't have any department chairs. We had coordinators then. You didn't get any releases and you didn't get any money and you just had to do a lot of clerk stuff. I was the coordinator when the math department hired them and I think that was a very successful search. Joe and Jim.

[37:18](#) **GN:** He also got the Faculty of the Year award somewhere along the line.

[37:23](#) **LD:** As I said, Joe's kind of the golden boy. He's the gold standard everybody looks at. I have to say in the early years, it was taking my dog to class. That was really cool and it was fun. It was a great way to socialize dogs. But that got stopped by Marc VanderHeyden so. Couldn't bring the dog to work anymore. So I sneaked her in once in a while. I snuck my the latest one ... I sneaked in during finals this semester I had a day where I just had office hours and I didn't have to give a final. I sneaked her in the backdoor I walked down the – She's obedience trained, she's got her CD. We walked down to the copy room and I happened to go by where the math lab is. The kids say, "Look. There's a dog and they all come running out to pet the dog. Oh, this is so great. This is much ... this is so relaxing." And the funny thing is that you know there are campuses where they do encourage well-behaved dogs to be on campus because the people over at student services recognize the fact that they are really good stress relievers. But that's a whole other story.

[38:41](#) **GN:** I just paralleled. Every Tuesday morning I work at Vassar Hospital.

[38:45](#) **LD:** They have the therapy dogs.

[38:46](#) **GN:** A guy comes in with his therapy dog. Got the same kind of reaction. People just want to touch it.

[38:53](#) **LD:** Oh and every kid that came into my office that day was like "Oh yeah. Let's pet the dog." She's just sitting there being great. The first one I had he used to come to faculty meeting. I remember slammer a faculty meeting. And Slammer falls all over, it's time to stop the faculty

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meeting it's gone on too long. He's getting bored.

[39:15](#) **GN:** You're here forty years. There must have been something. Why did you stay?

[39:19](#) **LD:** Well I thought seriously about trying to leave in my mid-fifties but it was just not really going to ever work out. Because I was a full professor. It's very hard to move as a full professor because they wonder, "What kind of salary are you going to want here?" And so I thought about it. By the time I thought about it, it was basically too late in my career. So okay... I need health insurance. So it's got to stay in some kind of job where you have health insurance. I kind of, the department I am in is very ... we've had some ups and downs, but they've never been really is dramatically awful in some other departments I've heard about. And for the last ten years, we've really functioned quite well as a department. We might have disagreements about things, but everybody's always been very civil about it and you know, "Hey, you can have your other opinion and that's fine." The next day we're going to walk down the hall and talk about mathematics with you. The department I've been in has been very nice. We've made some really good hires. We've got really good students now. The qualities of students is astonishingly better, in terms of the math majors at least. The high end of the math majors. We're still getting some "do we really want this person teaching high school?" Yeah ok, she'll be ok. But I think that the most recent thing I remember. It doesn't happen very often. I think the kids just don't think about it but I was doing the open house for already-admitted students in April and a couple of more math majors are there. They at least have some students there. So this one parent said I think Joan, no Rich McGovern was doing a presentation and I was there. And I think Tracey might have been there just to have a few more people around. And this one parent says "What's this course combinatorics?" But he turns and looks at me because it's the course I teach. Luckily those two students had just finished taking it, graph theory and combinatorics. So I describe a little bit about what it was and then these two kids jump in. And both of them I really don't think

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either one of them were trying to be nice to me because I know them. And the one kid we had this running thing about “Have I done proof-right yet for you because I taught you how to do proofs and reasoning.” They both said that it was one of the best classes they’d had as their major. One girl actually said it's the class I enjoyed the most. And she was an Applied Math major. She's taken a ton of classes with Matt, Matthew Glomski, the most popular math teacher we have at the moment and Scott Frank. And she said, “No. Combinatorics was really a great course, so totally.” She is kind of a very upbeat person, but you know every once in a while, a student will stop by and say, “You know that was a really good course.” And it’s just the kind of thing you forget to do when you're a student. And I think the first time it happened to me back in the 80s... I thought, “You know. I really should call this high school teacher up. I know where she lives, I bet I can find her phone number and say how much I appreciated the things that she had told me in high school.” So it prompted me to sort of...

[42:49](#) **GN:** Reflect on your own past?

[42:51](#) **LD:** Yeah and go thank a couple of people who I had not really said anything to before. So that's sort of the best part when a student actually says, “God. That was a really good course.” Like this basketball player, he wasn't a starter. He was a second stringer, but he played men’s basketball and you know and he was taking excursions... like this was probably twelve years ago. Taking excursions and for his second math course year of course... And he said, “I want to figure this out. This is getting really interesting.” Whoa. Okay, we can do this.

[43:34](#) **GN:** Very nice. I hate to bring this up. But are there disappointments along the way that has bothered you? A student that you were hoping and turned out ... maybe not doing their own work? Or was there some problem or other that you know ... Just as this happy thing does ... Is there a negative thing?

[44:01](#) **LD:** There probably are but I try not to dwell on them so I'm hoping it kind of left.

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[44:06](#) **GN:** Alright now. Let's stop there. Here's a final question will take a while for you. I wanted to explore this little a bit. Simply this: With the price of things today of going to college and the economy the way it is, with the opportunities that students have, is college worth the investment?

[44:33](#) **LD:** I think college is worth the investment for about two-thirds of the kids that come here. And I think that it's worth the investment for a lot of people. I really truly believe that there are a lot of people who come to college because well that's what you do after high school and I really seriously wish that we had something more of acceptable alternative with emphasis on acceptable. If being in the trades, we're like a guild system that they had in Europe for years and you know I think actually still exist to some extent. It's not considered a failure to be a plumber. You got to be a smart person to be a plumber. You can't be any idiot and be a plumber its physical labor you're going to have to move up to some point a supervisory role. But I wish we had more alternatives like that ... That were considered acceptable to some kids who just come here because well that's what you do after high school. And I think partly this is just ... I don't come from a background where people in my family all went to college. My mother went to college so she can be a high school teacher. My father was a mechanic. I know you cannot be stupid and do those jobs. He had gone to a tech school because he was one of the first guys to work on automatic transmissions back in the fifties, slip and slide with power glide. He had a whole separate side business where other garages would send him the transmission already out of the car. Because he had these books he had through, the stuff he had to do to fix theses transmission. The other garages would put them back in. So in his own area, he was highly respected but I suppose people in the town who were maybe ... Actually I don't think that happened as much in the 50s and 60s. I think there was more of a recognition that these other kinds of jobs who maybe don't require a strong academic background required intelligence. And

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it's nothing to do with Marist. It's a commentary on the entire social structure in the US. Why does everybody have to go to college? I don't get that. I mean I have often said I think a good third of the students that are here probably would be better off someplace else but you know that they are here and I got a job so I don't say too loudly.

[47:23](#) **GN:** Okay. Well that's the academic view. Now spread it out a little bit, what else do they get out of coming? I mean they meet a whole new ...

[47:32](#) **LD:** I think they come for...

[47:35](#) **GN:** partying.

[47:36](#) **LD:** I think, well this probably answers the question in sort of around the block way.

Several years ago, we were doing one of these think it might have been the Middle States thing. And I'm on one of those subcommittees like I'm always on. Well you know residential college is not going to be in existence in another twenty years because it's all going to be online and I am like "No it isn't." Because the residential college has become and this is going to sound derogatory ... I don't mean it to, but it's the best analogy ... finishing school. This is the place where students come and a guild could provide the same experience. This is the place where students finally come to not be sort of – what's the word I want – protected by their parents from any possible thing that could go wrong. And it's the place where Peter Krog and I have had this conversation repeatedly and he's a generation younger than I am. We are now the adults. We say, "No. You made a bad choice. You decided you weren't going to do any homework this semester." And you know what the consequence of that bad choice is? You fail the course. So we have become the people who I think adults and parents used to do this and I think they do it less. They sort of engaged or allow their offspring to get away with things that they shouldn't get away with because they're trying to be their friends or whatever it is. God knows I'm not a parent so I shouldn't be talking. But this is the place where you sort of make the transition to the hard

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reality of you've messed up on a job, you're going to get fired. And I don't think they've had that many experiences in high school because the high school teachers are under great pressure to adapt to the students because the parents are going to come in and jump all over you if you don't let Johnny retake the test 'cause he had a headache. Whereas here, "Hey you didn't do the homework. Sorry, there's a price to be paid for that. You've made this decision." And here is the consequence. So I think we're the bridge between the very protective and overly supportive cocoon they've been in with their parents who are trying to be still providing that as helicopter parents while they're at school but we're kind of in a position to resist that. And give them, the sort of realization that they can stand on their own two feet. And they do have to be able to figure out how to negotiate bad things happening to them. And I think they haven't had that as much as I think my generation had in high school. What do you mean? No, this isn't going to pass and the parents would say, "Well I don't want to hear that you gave the teacher a hard time." And you didn't go home and tell your parents, you were having a hard time ... You shut up because you were going to get in trouble. And now I think there's the tables have sort of change so I think the residential college is going to survive for a long time no matter how many online courses there are. Because we're the bridge. It's a safe environment to mess up. If you mess up, you're not going to get in big trouble, but if you mess up there're going be some consequences. Yes, it's the maturity of the responsibility gene. It's ... They're very socially adept and I've said that before so it's not that kind of maturing. It's the idea that for decisions that you make you will be held accountable. And you are responsible for doing the assigned work.

[51:44](#) **GN:** Back to that social thing again. Besides the maturing and the responsibility what they do, there is an interaction I would take it because most live on campus away from home.

[51:57](#) **LD:** I think the reason they take Marist not for our academic programs necessarily it's because we had really good, safe campus. The student services ... If you want to talk about

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something that's changed dramatically at Marist in forty years, the student services are so much better. And now I think that choice of Marist for students who are looking at variety of colleges I think that the academic programs are down the list. I don't think that's first on anybody's list.

[52:32](#) GN: It's a nice place to live. Nice place to come.

[52:36](#) LD: It's a safe environment. It's not a radical environment. Don't even know if there are any radical environments anymore. It's a safe place to make that transition.

[52:52](#) GN: So you don't see any problem then with this so-called computer learning, online learning, staying home and taking courses. The campus is still a place to go and get all this other stuff.

[53:06](#) LD: And you talk to the kids. The ones I've talked to, the guy who was the student government rep two years ago when I was ... The first year I was chair of FAC, they flat-out asked him one day, "What do you think about online courses?" And he said well. They were talking about online for undergraduates. He said, "Well, I took one and I didn't like it. I'd much rather be in a classroom and have the interaction with the other students that you get in the classroom." So you know online is good for adults who can't come to a classroom, who already have a job, maybe trying to pick up some skills. There has to be a reason for the adult to want to get a grip on the material is being present in the course because otherwise you'd pay somebody to take coursework for you. Nobody checks on that. And that's really why you don't want to have too much online stuff as undergraduate. Because somebody else sits and takes your test. There's no way to guard against that. That's why I've never taught an online course and I just ... I don't think it works for the population that the Math department is trying to serve.

[54:20](#) GN: How you gonna spend next twenty years now? You won't have Marist to come to every day.

[54:26](#) LD: Oh God, it will be such a relief. Well, I get take some vacations in offseason which

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you could never actually.

[54:32](#) **GN:** Where are actually you living now? Where is home?

[54:35](#) **LD:** Between Clintondale and Modena over in Ulster County. That's where I've lived since I got tenured, lived in the same place, the same crummy commute.

[54:44](#) **GN:** One dog or two dogs?

[54:46](#) **LD:** Two. You know who one of whom I just barely got started to training again last year because I just said I gotta do it now you get too old. So I'm going to be able to obedience train the next little puppy I get from day one which I really wasn't able to do that well with working. Maybe to do all the deferred maintenance in my house that has not gotten done. If it's not broke I haven't fixed it. Take care of that stuff. Maybe finally seriously instead of dabbling learn German, I've been dabbling trying to learn German. Now I'm going to be able to.

[55:27](#) **GN:** At your age, you want to pick up a foreign language?

[55:30](#) **LD:** Oh, I started doing that fifteen years ago. Other side of your brain. Trying to hold dementia at bay, you use other side of your brain. And I know somebody who speaks German fluently so I could not necessarily speak with that person because you can ruin somebody's accent in a big hurry. But if I had questions about the books I was trying to read or the cartoons I was looking at, what is going on here and then I could get an answer.

[55:59](#) **GN:** Is there a paper you gonna write in mathematics now? A teacher adds a word to something like this?

[56:06](#) **LD:** Oh I'm working on a paper right now. And I know what I'm going to do for the next year, it's an extension of this, using something that I haven't, I don't really know too well. But I went to a lecture by Professor (?) when I was at New Paltz he came over here to give an A.C.M. lecture, David Clark using something called evolutionary or genetic algorithms. And a problem he described well he was describing a totally different problem, but he said and this is a new

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approach in mathematics and in order to use it in a problem you have to have these conditions met. And he's going through and there is a problem I am working on that is like that. So you know I've got a book that he recommended. So when I finished the paper I'm working on now which is in the final stages of I got a proofread it and draw some pictures and get it inserted. It's the same topic but expanded to a larger class of graphs so I know that's what I'm going to be working on. I will have more time that I'm... I won't be trying to be doing it in the between grading piles of paper. I can kind of concentrate on it now as opposed to bits and starts. So I know exactly what I am going to do.

[57:14](#) **GN:** Very good. Well we're almost an hour through. Is there something I didn't ask you about that you would like to add to this? We went around the loop about changes on the campus, on the faculty, on the students?

[57:28](#) **LD:** Well you know you start to think about, especially I was thinking about fifteen years ago could I, is this a reasonable times. Actually more like twenty years ago. You know should I think about trying to move to another place? Then I think back on that now it's just the way it's worked out for me was totally serendipitous. I didn't apply for a job at Marist. It was Marist calling New Paltz and New Paltz saying, "Well, you know she just finished. She's right here. She might be available you should at least interview." Totally serendipitous. And the two years converting to a tenured line. Totally serendipitous. Janet Schillinger gets married, moves. Dave Angles decides it is time for him to get real academic job someplace that he can do better than Marist, he leaves. The whole department decamps so I get switched to a tenured line and totally unplanned. The planning part sort a came with John saying "You got to go and enroll in a PhD program if you want to get tenured." Ok so I did that I enrolled in PhD. Program. I wind up taking a course, the second course I took at Stevens taught by somebody who wasn't supposed to teach. It was a stat course. Here well in teaching here I should take statistics down here because I

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haven't taken statistics since undergraduate. Maybe you should actually learn the stuff I'm trying to teach. So I take this course and the guy who's supposed to teach got a sabbatical a semester before so another guy comes into to teach it. And statistics isn't his specialty but you know enough that he can teach graduate statistics. He's a functional analyst, they can teach anything. Partway through the semester and meeting at night you know I teach my four courses I drive down in the afternoon driver.

[59:28](#) **GN:** Stevens Institute

[59:30](#) **LD:** Yeah, drive down there. Counter-rush hour, thank God. I take the class from I think 6:30 to 8:30, drive back now not a whole lot of traffic then unless you make the mistake of this being on a Monday night and there's Monday Night Football at Giants Stadium. Got caught in that once ... eight lanes of traffic sitting still on one of those humpback bridges ... only happened to me once/ And the guy walks over to me. I think at the break or maybe at the end of class. He says, "Who are you doing your dissertation with?" And I said, "I don't know." He says, "You're doing it with me." So I am not even thinking about a dissertation. He said, "Okay. You're doing it with me. I am a graph theorist. This is the course you sign up for next year." So I signed up for the course I get down there and everybody else's had at least an undergraduate course in graph theory. He says, "Don't worry about it. Read this book." So I read through the book. I get caught up and it's fine. This is interesting. And so you know he winds up being my dissertation adviser and I didn't seek him out. He found me. The whole thing has been serendipitous. I think given my sort of psychology and my mathematical preparation that this was kind of the best place I could have landed. Because I wasn't ready to go into a PhD. program when I finished a master's program right. This wasn't sort of psychologically ready for it because I didn't realize I could do this stuff. It was kinda interesting. I was doing fine at New Paltz, but it's New Paltz. It's not a real math program. You know I didn't go to Columbia or NYU or any

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of those really big fancy places. So I'm thinking well. Okay, well go teach. And the lucky thing is see when I first came here yeah I had to teach four section of forty students each, but that's basically all I had to do. Now I had to be on committees a lot because it's like Midge Schratz, Flo Michaels, Lynne Doty, Janet Block and that's it and Janet Schillinger. That's your women. Carry Landau and you got a committee. You've got to have one of those on it. So yeah, you got stuck on a ton of committees, but I could concentrate on the teaching part for the first few years which is the luxury that people coming out of grad school don't have now. Plus I actually taught my own classes at New Paltz when I had a teaching assistantship. We had a supervisor professor who taught one section of the same course we were all teaching but we basically taught our own classes and he would come in and watch us a couple times a semester. And so I got to concentrate on the teaching part of before I got thrown into oh god I got to teach full time and try to finish a degree. And just the way the college changed, every time I might have thought, Geez, I don't really have to keep up with this because I've got so much other stuff to do because we never got down to less than a four-four load till I was way done with my last promotion. The college would kind of ratchet up things a little bit and I said well you know maybe I can do this. So it kind of like I was in the perfect situation for my own psychological development. It just fit in right in with how Marist was moving up.

[01:02:58](#) GN: You grew with Marist and the whole thing.

[01:03:02](#) LD: And it kind of worked to my advantage in the sense that things happen at exactly the right time to sort of prod me on to do something else. That I might not have chosen to do on my own. But once I actually finished a degree and seen that I could get papers published, it's like gee I am really interested in this, I got to find time to do it. I will find time. You know. Alright I am teaching one-hundred-and-twenty students. I'll find a way. So that sort of. As much as I think there are sort of downsides to how Marist has changed, I mean that particular part of it worked

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just perfectly for me ... couldn't have worked any better.

[01:03:44](#) **GN:** Well, I have only one thing to say. We're certainly happy that you were here with me forty years. You certainly filled a lot of slots along the way and to what a good number of students.

[01:03:57](#) **LD:** Jack of all trades, master of none.

[01:03:59](#) **GN:** I wouldn't say that. No, no, no. I know the college is grateful even though they don't specifically say it other than say well we're going to keep you on the list. And by the way you entitled to join the retired faculty.

[01:04:17](#) **LD:** John Scilleppi has already informed me when I wrote him an e-mail.

[01:04:21](#) **GN:** Alright thank you very much.

[01:04:25](#) **LD:** Thank you Gus, it was fun.