

Interview with:

Gus Nolan

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

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For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Gus Nolan

Interviewee: Gus Nolan

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Summary: Augustine (Gus) Nolan describes his early education and family life. He discusses what led him to join the Marist Brotherhood and what was required of him to join. Gus talks about how his long relationship with the college as a brother and professor began and how it has allowed him to see and be involved in the growth and advancement of the College. He also shares what caused him to leave the Marist brothers and what that change has meant for him and his relationship with the college.

John Ansley: To start out, I'd like to get your full name?

Gus Nolan: My name is Augustine Michael Nolan. And then in later years Michael was changed to Joseph when I re-entered the real world from the Religious world because in the Religious world I was Augustine Joseph, so I kept the Augustine Joseph Nolan.

JA: And as a brother your name was?

GN: Brother Augustine Joseph

JA: Okay.

JA: Were you named after a family member?

GN: I was, but I never knew who it was. I never met the man. Apparently, he lived in Newport, and that was a very far distance away from New York City in 1930. If he came to my baptism, I don't recall seeing him. [Laughter]

JA: Were you born in New York?

GN: I was born in New York City, on September 6, 1930. It was a Saturday morning, I remember it well. [Laughter]

JA: Do you have any siblings?

GN: I do. I have ah...I'm one of eight children. The oldest, my oldest brother Patrick, is deceased, and has been deceased for more than thirty years. But, thank God, all of us are still active.

JA: And how do you fall into the eight?

GN: I'm the fourth.

JA: So you're the middle child?

GN: Well, I'm the big four, and then there's the second four that came after me. We're

six boys and two girls. So, I have an older sister and I have a younger sister, the youngest in the family.

JA: Are they all living in the area or are they spread around the country?

GN: Well, not really I could just quickly go through the list of them. The oldest now is my brother John, he lives in North Carolina; he's retired from the military. He was an Air Force Colonel who worked most of his life in the Pentagon after doing a tour in Vietnam. He knows the Pentagon very well, and could describe where the plane hit the other day, in terms of his former experience there. I have a sister, who's next, named Mary, and she's a nun. She's at Holy Trinity. She's very active, though she's already older than I am, so she's more than 72. She is the director of finance at this Holy Trinity High School in Long Island. Then, I would be the next. Following me, I have a brother who is a Marist Brother, who is the director of the community in Miami for the retirement Brothers. And then, following him, is my brother Kieran. He's actually Father Kieran, he's a priest. He's a Collegeville Benedictine Monk, he's located in Tokyo.

JA: You're spread all around the world?

GN: We are spread around the world. Then, I have my youngest brother, who is Matthew. Matthew is married to my wife's sister. So, we have two brothers marrying two sisters. And then my sister Rita... Matthew lives in Haverstraw, which is down below West Point, and then my sister Rita, lives a little bit below that in a place called New City. We are on email every week so, even though we are spread out, we are still a very close-knit family. We know pretty much what's happening in each person's life each week.

JA: Would you tell me a little bit about your hometown?

GN: Yes, the Bronx. [Laughter] It's a part of New York City. I only spent 13 years there from my birth until I graduated from the Eighth Grade Grammar School. And that's up in the northeast corner of the Bronx called Throgs Neck. Next to Throgs Neck there's a place called Pelham Bay. Even to this day, a rather regional country-like atmosphere, and so I grew up on city streets with plenty of room to play stickball and watch the winner. Now there are houses on many of them, but there's still plenty of open space in the Bronx area.

JA: Can you tell me a little about your parents, their names and maybe their occupations?

GN: Yes, my father is Michael. He is deceased about 30 years now. He was born in 1896 and died in 1971 or 1972. He was a taxi cab driver during the Depression years, and then he got a job. He was an auto mechanic, and he worked for the City of New York and the Police Department, so he did the monitoring and mechanical work to keep the New York City police cars on the road, he and his group. My mother, Ann a little bit younger. They both came from the same town in Ireland, a place called Ballygar, and they knew each other as children growing up, and they married here in the early '20s. She was a nurse by profession, but a home-raiser for the eight kids growing up, and then was the local nurse for accidents, stitches, and taking care of cuts and bruises, and temperatures, and medicines in the neighborhood.

JA: That's great. You started talking about your education as a child. Can you talk a little bit more about that, as young man maybe?

GN: Yes, I did what we would call the traditional youth of that day growing up in a Parish school. A place was called Our Lady of the Assumption. It was a little grammar school in a country-like area. We had one class on each level, first grade, second grade,

third grade, there was no “A” or “B,” it was just one class. And when I started there were 70 in my first year, and by the time I graduated, I guess we were down to about 55 or so in the eighth grade. Following those eight years, I happened to run into a young man, at that time, Brother Aidan Francis, who was a recruiter for the Marist Brothers, and they had opened a school on the banks of the Hudson in Esopus, New York called Marist Preparatory. I entered Marist Preparatory in September, September 1, 1944, and I had three delightful years in Esopus, in high school. Following that, I crossed over the river and came to the Poughkeepsie property in 1947 to start my Novitiate and my last year of high school, and then my college.

JA: Were any other students from your elementary school recruited?

GN: No, no. I took a liking to this order, to the Marist Brothers, because my older brother John, who I mentioned earlier, who was an Air Force Colonel, had gotten a scholarship to high school, to a place called St. Ann’s Academy, which was in midtown, New York. That school has recently, well, has been replaced and is now Archbishop Molloy High School in Queens.

JA: Now you mentioned that recruiters, a recruiter came to your school and that’s what brought you into the Marist community, but what drew you into it? Why did you decide that was the course you wanted to take?

GN: It was...I used to look at the pictures of the high school where my brother went, and I saw these teachers, who were the brothers, they were not priests, they were religious men who were very active with high school in the yards playing ball, playing handball on their little courts, basketball courts, and I was just attracted. “What a life that would be.” I

said to myself, if that could ever be. And then somebody came along and said, “Would you like to be one of these guys?” and I said, “Sure.”

JA: [Laughing] And after you finished your high school education, where did you go from there?

GN: I just crossed the road here, and came to Marist College, which was Marian College then. This would be in September of '49, and I became a college freshman, as a young Brother. The word “Scholastic” was used in those days, so I was a Scholastic, and I majored in English. The other option was Biology, we had two choices. [Laughter] It was like a bakery, we have vanilla or chocolate, you don't like chocolate, take vanilla. I didn't like Biology, so I took English. So, I became an English teacher, and I studied here for three years and then I graduated in 1952 from the college and we did the four years college in three years, it was three years and three summers so that we were able to do our college work in that time. And then I was assigned to that school that I made mention of, where my brother went, St Ann's Academy, and that was my first teaching assignment. So, now, I had gone full circle. I was one of those in the yard playing with the kids.

JA: Did you live on campus that whole time you were at the college?

GN: Yes I did, yes.

JA: What was the life like, as a Scholastic?

GN: Very humble [Laughter] Things were so regulated and they were so officially done. Showering was a privilege we had once a week, whether we needed it or not, we had time slots. Sometimes, the water was hot and sometimes it wasn't. Sometimes, we got dry-cleaned; the water was hardly dripping out at all, but we managed. Sickness was a rarity

among us, we were well-fed, we were well-exercised, we had opportunities to play sports, we had work assignments. We were up at the break of dawn and before 5:30 in the morning, and we were in bed by 9:00 at night. So, we had a wholesome life for those two and 3/5 years on this campus. We were well-fed, but again, meagerly. We had some things we didn't like; we had cows, of course, who grazed in the field. You probably never had this experience, but in the springtime, when the grass first begins to break through, scallions and onions break through along with the grass. The cows don't seem to mind eating onions and scallions, but the taste of the milk, when it has an onion flavor, is not very attractive. [Laughter] But you grin and bare it, so that was one little side piece of this thing. The other thing I should say is that because we were so independent, we had a wonderful system here of making the schedule fit our needs and purposes. For instance, through the high school years, we would be off every Wednesday afternoon for sports, but we would go to school Saturday morning. And then we would work Saturday afternoon in manual things: raking, cutting wood, washing and waxing floors, the whole range of things that you'd need do to keep the house up, or an estate, because now this is an estate that we were living on. But if it rained on Wednesday, that was all right, we just cancelled it and went to school Wednesday afternoon and we took off Thursday afternoon. So, you know, it was a marvelous kind of fluid way in which we could operate our lives. And if it snowed very heavily, we wouldn't get up in the morning, we would have what they called a sleep-in. We couldn't go anywhere, we had no religious exercises, the priests couldn't come so we had what they called a *button*. I don't know where the word, expression *button* comes from, but it was the expression that we were

staying in, we weren't going to get up in the morning. It must come from the French, I have no idea where it came from.

JA: It's certainly different than today's schedule.

GN: Oh indeed, indeed.

JA: Now, how many brothers were here at the time? That must have made a difference in being able to arrange your schedules like that?

GN: Well, there were about 100 in the college. There would be three classes of about 30 each, and it would roughly be 100. And then there were some workers, Brothers who were assigned, they didn't go to school that year, they were assigned to do the laundry, do the cooking, or do the driving, or do the farming, or do the whatever.

JA: When did you officially become a brother in the Marist Order?

GN: Okay, the period of training goes through an introductory as high school and you're just learning about the Brotherhood, but you have no obligations. Then, in the period called the Novitiate, it's divided into two parts. The first year is called the postulant in which you are in a much more astringent religious observation. You're being looked at, and you're looking at where you're going. You study the rules and the constitutions and the obligations that would be involved. And then, one year after the postulanship, so for me in July 1948, I became a Novice. And that's, I became a member of the Marist Brothers. I was just beginning, but I had to have it and I had a new name. I had no vows yet, so I could still have use of money. I could leave at any time. A year after taking the habit and becoming a Novice, then you took your first vows. And now, you're a full-fledged member of the community. You had no money, you got no money, any money you got was part of the, well, you could have a private will, but you had no use of the

money. That's the money, you're under obedience, so you could be reassigned to study or to teach or to work, and you take it, gladly, this is what you wanted. And the third one, chastity, is just that you are not to marry while in this state. Not that you don't see pretty women, but you decide that you're not going to live with them. [Laughter]

JA: I'm going to jump back to life on Marist campus. It sounded like you were self-sufficient, were you completely self-sufficient?

GN: Oh no way, no. Spiritually, we weren't. Priests had to come for our spiritual exercises in the morning, we call that mass and Eucharist, and then there's counseling and confession. Not that we were big sinners, but we sometimes thought we were and so we had to... we didn't have the opportunity for receiving what we call the sacrament of Penance was once a week, also. So that's the spiritual. On the other lines, meat trucks came in delivering. We had a butchery, and once a week they did slaughter something, but no way did it really cover what the needs were. The vegetables as well, we did get food by delivery, we needed breads, we didn't make our own bread, we didn't have ovens to do any of the bakery kinds of things. We had chefs who could make cakes and apple goodies, and different kinds of treats as it were. Ice cream was delivered, we had that maybe once a week if we were good [Laughter].

JA: Now, you had all these people coming to make deliveries on campus, but was there a lot of interaction?

GN: No, not much with them, and not much interaction with anyone. We would talk to them, but they didn't come and stay for dinner or stay for lunch. They were just making these deliveries as it were. The family visited once a month, so we did have, on Sundays, and it was pretty restricted to once a month, that your family would be here. They weren't

even invited to dinner, though. They were allowed to come visit you, and you could have had lunch with them, a picnic kind of thing. But we were kind of on a strict budget, and we didn't have money to be able to entertain families on a regular basis. On extraordinary situations, there were, but no. So far as other interaction, limited. The other seminaries that are around would occasionally visit and would participate in sports. In Esopus, for instance, Mount Saint Alphonsus is that big castle that's about two miles above the Esopus property. Well, they had a big contention of young men, and we had a fine gym, so they came to play in our gym. We had hockey games on the ice and there would be competition, and the winter sports, we had some skiing on the premises. Not as advanced as we'd take it today if we said it, but there were hills and we had skis, and we had snow.

JA: That's all you need.

GN: Yes

JA: Now, you received your undergraduate degree from Marian College.

GN: Correct

J.A. What other degrees have you received?

GN: Okay, while I was at St. Ann's Academy, the first teaching assignments, after the second year, maybe the first two years, you're supposed to focus on getting your lesson plans together and being equipped to teach whenever they think you can teach, or more pointedly, whatever they need you to teach. And then you would learn how to teach as the case would develop. I taught General Science with very meager background in science. English, I did a lot of English, but I had a good background in English. History, I became a historian just by pure seat of the pants operation. Of course they needed a History teacher. That's for the teaching experience, and me becoming, and then getting

the advice of others and having these sessions where methodologies of teaching were shared by different members of the community. They were always very insightful, very helpful. For graduate study, I went from Saint Anne's Academy to Saint John's, Saint John's University, to continue a Master's Degree in English. And I did that, and I completed that, in the next four years I guess, because with one or two courses a semester, and I forget the number of courses, and writing the dissertation, a Master's thesis, was I guess another year on that, so I did a thesis on Eugene O'Neill in 1954-55. At the end of that first five years, I got the call to come and become a member of the teaching staff back in Esopus, where I had gone to high school. And that was kind of a feather in my cap, I didn't think I deserved that kind of recognition, but I was a good teacher. I decided since that I must have been a good teacher because they made me become a teacher of teachers, so I did come back to teach here. But that is leading into the second degree, then. The second degree was, since I was going to be involved in the teaching of Brothers, I should know more religion than I had. So, I had the basic religious understanding, but it was still fitting that [I] should get a Master's Degree in Theology. So, I went over to a place called Collegeville, Minnesota, and that's the Benedictine Monastery my brother had been at. My brother wasn't there; he had gone to Munich for a doctoral degree, and then, I don't know where he went after that, but he was around doing different things. But I knew of the Benedictine Monastery and I knew of the quality of their education, and I thought it would be good to do that. So, I became a theologian, semi-theologian as much as I had a Master's Degree now in Theology. That was to help me in working with the novices and the training of the Marist Brothers for the next five or six years. Then, I came to Marist College. I was transferred from the

Novitiate, from the Esopus training school to become a member of the Marist faculty here. In about 1964 or 1965, I came on campus.

JA: And you remained a professor or instructor on campus?

GN: I became an instructor on campus and did so for the next thirty some odd years. One little note there, while I was in the Esopus, assigned there, one small change had developed in as much as they were not admitting students anymore for the high school experience, and they were coming only for the Novitiate. To come to the Novitiate, you had to be a high school graduate, so it changed, it notched up a little bit. The first year, now, were for college students, so the portion of the first year that I talked about in '48 when I was here, now this becomes a strictly college year. So, I, in point of fact, was the college representative teaching these young Marist Brothers-to-be in Esopus. We would come over here for use of the library. So, I came to Marist College really on the yellow school bus, and I was the driver [Laughter], giving those students good use of the library. A second function that I had was that, St. Francis Hospital had the School of Nursing, and the nurses needed some academic courses besides their medical ones, and so, I was assigned to teach the nurses literature and writing. I would have to make my way up to the hospital to the nurses to teach them, that was my assignment. Marist had no women on campus yet. So, when the nurses would come down here for assignments in the library or something, we got a lot of attention. [Laughter]

JA: There's always been a strong relationship with St. Francis, hasn't there?

GN: There has always been a strong relationship with St. Francis, right. From the earliest years, because of the wide variety of people that we had here in terms of where they had come from across the country, and really across the world, because eventually

we started to have, there were Chinese Brothers in my class who had come from China to get their education and degree in the States, and some from South America, and some from Europe. So, all of these gave us a wide spread of individuals who had very interesting blood. We became the instant blood bank for St. Francis. So, anytime there was a crisis, they would come and pick up four or five people. And they had us typed and they knew where we were and who they were after, what kind of blood they wanted, so they would come and bring us to the hospital.

JA: I'll jump back just for a moment. I was interested in knowing how many students were in your graduating class from Marian College.

GN: About 25. We were roughly 100, so about 30 a group, but some would drop out in the course for one reason or another. They needed a teacher in St. Ann's Academy or Mt. St. Michael's or St. Agnes' or something, so somebody who had not quite finished their course of studies might be asked to go out for a semester and teach. And then while out, they might complete their courses at Fordham or St. John's, some other place like that.

JA: Was the graduation ceremony a formal event?

GN: No, very, very humble. We got letters from the President of the United States congratulating us because every college student does. We were an official college, had an official kind of graduating class, so we got these notices. We got invitations for interviews to do different things because, again, our names were somewhat in the public arena because we had signed on to vote or whatever. So, they knew we were here and we were people. One interesting thing, few would know it, but it would be good at this time to bring it up. As I was in Esopus, and the delegate for Marist College there, as the teacher in place, one of the teachers in place, I would come to faculty meetings here in

the English Department or general meetings that would be had. The time came, then, that we had our first Middle State Evaluation. Now, Middle State is a rather significant experience. The accreditation by this association gives you the wherewithal to make a number of claims. You are a legitimate four-year college, with this accreditation you can apply for federal grants, and you can apply for any of a number other kind of institutional things. So, to get that stamp is rather important. The first time we went for it, it was rather difficult because we had a meeker library, we had a small teaching staff, but we had great possibilities and great growth dimensions. When they came, the individual who decided he'd like to see Esopus and what was going on over there came over, and I gave him the tour there. He was amazed the Marist College elected to develop a campus in Poughkeepsie rather in Esopus. He thought that the Esopus campus would have been a more *college* place to put the college rather than on the outskirts of a small town like Poughkeepsie, where it is more industrial. The only thing is, there's no train station in Esopus that works. There's one there, but it's not operative. There's very limited transportation, so the college really had to stay in Poughkeepsie.

JA: I'd like to have you elaborate on that a little bit. I know the campus has gone through a tremendous growth in the past few decades. If you could talk about the facilities a little bit more, how many buildings were on campus, and the fact that you were dealing with a small library and a small staff, and how you were able to cope?

GN: Ok. Well, let's focus on the library. The library, when I was a student at Marist College, was the first floor of Greystone and the second floor of Greystone. The first floor was the reference area, and the second floor was where the books were. So, if you have been up to Dennis Murray's office, you know the size of the library. That's where it

was. Now, you're across the way to what we have in the Cannavino Library, and I think any of the rooms are probably bigger than the room that we had for our library in those days. But, interesting enough, we had some rather interesting collections. They started early to get various kinds of revues. So, the library, was a very functional library. Something like PMLA, the Periodical for Modern Language Association. We had the whole, from the beginning, we had all of the volumes many libraries don't. Fordham didn't, Manhattan didn't, and yet we were able, no one stole them from here. [Laughter] Other places are subject, or they were, in those days, and they're very hard to replace. So, that would be one feature of it. The chemistry lab was on the bottom of the Greystone building, so that's where I learned chemistry. A small little lab, but we were only 12 students, maybe, taking chemistry so that was it was quite suitable. We got almost individual attention, so we were able to manage that nicely. The classroom building was a meager building that has been taken down since, and we would have pictures of that in the archives if you sometime want to go back and look at it. The other south end of the campus is where the Novitiate was, that was one humble, I forget now, I think it was the Beck Mansion. It contained a kitchen, a dining room area, a study hall, and then the dormitories were upstairs. The safety was always an issue. So, we had, what were, actually called fire drills periodically, and the fire drills involved coming down a pipe such as firemen have in the firehouse. We had to step outside onto a metal landing and then grab this pipe and slide down the pipe. We had these drills, and some who didn't want to do it, for nervousness or whatever, eventually had to just bite the bullet and go to it. The other side of the campus, where the MacPherson estate is, according to the pictures now, would be past the swimming pool and up on that edge

there. The northern end of Lowell Thomas is actually where the building would have been. That was a bigger wooden structure. It contained principally the dormitory and the dining room, and the small chapel was in that building. In later years, that was such a threat to the safety that the diocese insisted we have a night watchman. So every week, or every other day, there would be a new person on to supervise and just walk the building through the night for fear of fire. And then, eventually, we abandoned that with the other structures that went up, and we gave it to a contractor to take down, and he burnt it down.

JA: Really?

GN: One amazing blaze. Yeah. We have pictures of that, again, in the archives.

JA: That would be interesting to add to this interview. How many of the buildings did the Brothers construct?

GN: Well, they really didn't start building until after I left here. We were living in these humble abodes for those five years that I was on campus. But the second year that I was out, the first building to go up would've been the chapel. Then, after the chapel was built, there was a refectory with the study hall attached to it. And the new dormitories went up, that was Fontaine. So, that's all Marist Brother construction through that area. Just last year, they tried to take it down to put up the library, or two years ago, and they had an awesome job taking it down because they were built with reinforced rods, and it was done with great care and attention, and taking it down was a difficult project. The other major building that the Brothers constructed would be the Donnelly building. That's that round building, the fashion building. It's almost right, it just missed here and there. If you look through, sometimes you will see there's little blocks that catch the

beams and we, someone doing the transcript, was a hair off and a hair off over a hundred feet is about four inches. So, we had to kind of fill in blocks here and there to balance it so the roof could go on without having dips in it. But, if we didn't do it, it wouldn't be there. If we weren't there, we wouldn't be here, so I mean it's all part of the process by which the growth process, I think, took place. So those four or five, 'cause the other small building in here called Adrian, which has since been demolished, only last year was it taken down, which served as a kind of, it was used for advancement and for Lee Miringoff's Public Opinion in later years. It was used as kind of a cafeteria for the Sunday visitors, for the parents coming up. It was used as the Advancement Office, where people met who wanted to give donations, or we thought they should give donations, we invited them in there to talk with them. And so that's what went on in that building.

JA: You mentioned a couple of dormitories on campus. Were the Brothers housed in one large room or were there any separate rooms?

GN: Separate rooms, and maybe 20 beds in a large room, and then there'd be five or six large rooms spaced around, where those beds were, through this big mansion that we had, the MacPherson mansion, that became our dormitories. We made them large rooms. We took down, I mean, people before I came did that. So, Adrian Perou for instance, he would've mocked the original work to do the renovations. "The renovations" means ripping down the walls and making the one big room so that it would be used as a large dormitory.

JA: Did the Brothers, any of the Brothers, have a background in construction or did you learn as you went along?

GN: No, nobody had a degree or actually studied it, but we did learn it through various kinds of, various experiences that we had. Brother Nilus, who had been working with, well, let me go back a little bit. One of the buildings we did put up here was the gym, which has since become the Marian Building as a freshman dormitory now, I believe. It has been done over, but the essential inside part of it was the gym. The brothers built that under the direction of Brother Francis Xavier. He just learned it as he went.

JA: You also mentioned there was a pool on campus. Was that an outdoor pool?

GN: Yes, it was. It was an outdoor pool that was, what is now, in the basement of Lowell Thomas, and it happened that this area was noted for the fact it was always muddy. So, they decided that the reason it was muddy is because there was an underground spring there. So, what they did was, physically, by hand, dug out a huge hole and then put reinforced concrete around it, and left an area in the middle of it to allow the water to come up. It would be, actually, filled by this natural spring that was making its way from the upper areas down towards the Hudson. Annually, we emptied it and whitewashed it and prepared it for the next season. Then, through the summer, it just naturally cleaned itself because of its own natural flow.

JA: Did members of the outside community use the pool?

GN: In later years, yes, the faculty and parents, and we would probably have pictures in the archives gain of some of the young people at the time. Tony Campilli, who is our CFO and his wife with little children, came and used it, and he, as a student, would have used it. And it was used by some of the outside people, not with our consent, in off hours when we had gone to bed or whatever. We'd hear some splashing in the pool, and it wasn't us that were there. That same pool would freeze over in the winter,

and it was a wonderful ice skating rink because it had a natural, like foot curve around it, so the puck could bounce off the sides of it. Some of the Brothers that came from Canada and New England were excellent skaters. So, we had a semi-pro operation going here for a number of years.

JA: When did they destroy the pool?

GN: They destroyed the pool the year after McCann was up. We were allowed to continue it only because we could show that there was light at the end of the tunnel. That there were no bathhouses here, there were no sanitary connections of testing the water to see that all the levels of acid etc. were right levels. There was just natural water coming through, and sometimes it should've been cleaner than it was, but that's the way it was.

JA: Now, I'm gonna change subjects.

GN: Before you, one last thing. We had experiences, because this was a natural flow, and there were farms up there, and there were occasional butcherings, we used to have miraculous waters turning red here, which was the blood of the animals. When that happened, it meant that we really had to drain the pool again and start all over. We were never happy to see that, but I can't help but make reference to the play by "Enemy of the People." Their similar story takes place in the natural springs, and they're contaminated. This pool would've been contaminated. We had to empty it and start over when the waters weren't clean.

JA: I'm going to pause it for a little bit.

-BREAK-

JA: O.K. I 'm going to pick up our conversation. I wanted to ask you about the introduction of lay students to campus.

G.N. I'm not sure exactly the year that they began to come. It was a small group at the beginning eight or twelve, I believe, in the first year. And then we were provided with small rooms that were set up in the Donnelly building, and that served as dormitories for them, maybe four in a room. They had something like, I think they're called Murphy beds, that were put up into the wall through the day and then at night they could be taken down, and they provided them with a sleep area. They were limited to running water, they did have some common bathrooms provided for them, but they didn't have showers in their rooms yet or anything of that sort.

J.A. What was the general reaction of lay students coming on campus?

G.N. Good - It was clear that if we wanted to grow we had to expand and open the doors for all lay students and that was at the advice of the New York State Authorities who said that there was too much going on here for it to be kept for such a small circle, that it should be, you know, we should try to include the larger circle of the community to participate in the education that was being provided. So, with that, and with, then, the coming of more students, and then more teachers, and then more variety in terms of courses that could be offered and majors that could be offered, and so on and so on, so the expansion began, but began humbly, with those maybe eight young men, no women for a good time yet.

J.A. That was toward the end of the '60s?

G.N. Yes, I really don't know how or when the decision was made. At one time, the nursing school wanted to become associated with the college so that they can get a four

year liberal arts degree with their nursing, but we didn't have the facilities here to allow that, so that was not approved by the faculty, and so, and in time, that nursing school just went out of business because of most nursing schools were offering college degrees. And not having one here, they got few students to come.

J.A. What was the reaction of the transfer of control from the Marist Brothers to the Marist College Education Cooperation?

G.N. It was a quiet, and it didn't visually impact anybody on anything significant. The reaction, at first, was that we were giving away the college, the property to this organization and the Brothers no longer had control of it. But, it was also pointed out that we were also giving away a \$3 million debt, or whatever the debt was, so the Brothers didn't have to worry about paying that off, the corporation would take care of it. So, it was seen as a financially wise move to make.

J.A. That's interesting, and I was interested in what courses you taught at Marist College and how long you've been teaching and what you are currently teaching?

G.N. O.K. I started, as I mentioned earlier, with an English degree, and I taught the basic English courses, and English Literature I and II, and then Composition, and then we eventually moved on and I taught some theology courses, but that was a very limited area, I was never on the theology department. I just did that for the Brothers as wanting to have knowledge, and while they were doing some religious stuff for the Marist Brothers, we wanted some informed thought about it. But then, for English itself, I began to do the whole sequence of plays. So there's drama, there's English drama, and American drama, and there's Early English drama, and later, so you can do it by centuries or periods, and same thing for American and Early American drama. And then I did a

course on the novels, so we have American novels of the eighteenth century, nineteenth century, and twentieth century, and a series of short stories, twentieth century short stories, and then we have short stories by masters of the short stories. Hemingway, you know, has 48 short stories by himself, and a whole series of other people; Mark Twain has a series of short stories, and we can come to literature picking out some of the great story-writers. Literature aside, we went into persuasion speech and public address, so I gave a course on Great American Speeches for a number of years, very interesting assignments. I used to have the students write to someone in America who gave a speech, and it's very impressive when you get a letter from the White House with a letter with a speech that the Vice President gave for some occasion, and one of the students got one. We got one from the formal head of Chrysler when he went to the Congress to give his speech to bail out Chrysler asking for \$8 billion, I guess, or \$3 billion, and how he got it, so, Lee Iacocca was the man I'm thinking of, so his students did that kind of thing. Speech Analysis, Great American Speeches, and then I did things on persuasion; how do you get people to change their mind? And then, so, we moved from English gradually over to Communications, speech first, then we started talking about the media. The first years, there were courses just to the print media that deals with newspaper, magazines, and books, and then we went to electronic media, as we called it. This had to do with the radio and television and movies, and seeing what was the power and influence of those things. And then, we moved into more specific kinds, we moved into various tracks. I had nothing to do with film or film writing or anything, or T.V. and T.V. production, a guy by the name of Doug Cole came here and did those things. I went down the track of public relations, and in public relations, first, there was organization of communication and then

public relations organization, and how does organization communicate within itself? And then, who represents that organization to the public? And what do they tell the public? And why does public relations have such a bad image? Is it just whitewashing and making things look good, or are you really trying to do something? Public opinion followed on that: What does the public think of you, and what is public opinion? How can you measure it? How can you change it? What are the key factors that are involved in the study of public opinion? What are some of the great historical cases of the change, George Bush being elected President, running the Gulf War, getting 90% approval and then loses the next election? Is his son going to run into that again this year? [Laughter] three years from now. Very interesting questions on the whole world of public opinion and organization communication. So, that's what I'm doing.

J.A. It's an interesting trip going from teaching English classes to Communications.

G.N. It is, it was a very natural one, and was good for my students. We would have single-digit numbers of students who wanted to major in English, and then we'd have 100 that wanted to do Communications, all thinking that they would become sports communicators [Laughter] and, you know, announcing the Giants game. They would have a better chance of playing for the Giants than doing that. [Laughter]

J.A. That's true, one commentator for one player

G.N. That's true, one commentator with each 36 players, and you would have a better chance of getting on the team than you would... however, the image was there, that's what they wanted to do. And, I have to tell you, we have some great stories of success to this day, a guy by the name of Brian O' Reilly, Brian writes for Fortune Magazine. Bill O'Reilly is the announcer for Fox News.

J.A. That's right.

G.N. They were both students here with me, and Brian O'Reilly, who writes for Fortune Magazine, maintains that I gave him the clue that he could write, simply by making a big to-do out of one of his papers. Bill C. Davis is the play writer, so we've had a number of students from the communication courses that would go on.

J.A. How was Bill O'Reilly as a student?

G.N. Pain in the ass [Laughter] Excuse me! [Laughter]

J.A. [More laughter] He hasn't changed much.

G.N. No, he hasn't changed much at all, he's very obnoxious... well, no, not really. He'd smiled, and he was never mean. He was just rambunctious, and he was smart, and he could see through things, and he still is, he's a smart guy.

J.A. I'm going to change gears again. I was interested if you would tell us a little bit about your decision to leave the Brotherhood.

G.N. Yes, it was by a process of what we might call osmosis. I came in as a very young boy at 13 or 14, and, you know, I was impressed and infatuated with Brothers, the religious life, and this kind of way of existence and holiness as it was seen in those days before we understood it, and then through a process of maturing and experiencing different things. The church itself, going through Vacation II and changing its view on the world at large, and then the Brothers themselves. We moved eventually, from, when I came on campus here, I lived in the dormitories, I was a dormitory proctor, I was in Leo, on the fourth floor of Leo, and next to my room, was the community room. It was just boys at the time, young men, and they had that for entertainment, and I was the one who pushed, and we ran an auction, not an auction, but a raffle, to get a color T.V. to put in

that room so they could have color T.V. Much to the detriment of my health because, as they watched T.V. through the night, and we did the wars of World War II and Korea and the Netherlands and talking about their fathers and grandfathers till two or three or four in the morning watching films and seeing these things, I was trying to sleep because I had to get up at six to go to my religious exercises and to go to class and so on. They didn't have class the next day, they would take afternoon classes and have a leisurely life, as it were. So after a year or two of this, I said, "This is strange, I'm living here to provide for these people, so then I take this job so they won't have to pay more to pay a proctor, and it's killing me, so" I said, "There has to be a better way." So, a group of us, nine of us actually, decided that we would live off campus, we would buy a house, use our college salaries, as it were. They weren't really ours, but they were the community's, but we would use that community money to buy a house, and we'd live off campus, and we did. At 9 Eden Terrace, a beautiful place it's there to this day, the Marist Brothers have it again, it's right next to Dennis Murray's house.

J.A. Really, I didn't realize that.

G.N. He's on Academy Street, but the area, so their backyards actually combined, and it was a beautiful life. It was wonderful living with Richard LaPietra as our chef at night, when we went home, after he was the dean here during the day, but at night he got his joy out of cooking, and all of us had various talents, and we had nice vehicles for transportation back and forth, and it was a very nice life. And we said prayer, sometimes, you know, but people had different assignments in doing things. So, the very kind of thing that I originally had which was a religious family with morning prayers and evening prayers and with a very structured life and not much of this world. We had kind of the

best of this world. Now, we had the best of food, we had good transportation, we lived in a lovely house, so I scratched my head and I said, "There's something missing here," you know. So, I reconsidered all of these things, and I said, "Well, I've given 20 years or 25 years to the Marist Brothers, it was a kind of a vista, a contribution to religious church, and so on. Then, I thought, maybe I would to out and see if I could live by myself or find someone to live with me and we would have our own life and so that's what... I wasn't the first to go but the men who were talking about, who were following me like Linus Foy who was a Marist Brother, he had left and married and I was the second or third to do it, and then eventually we all did it, all nine eventually left and become, still on accounts still work for Marist and that's still how we feel. Some have families some don't.

J.A. When did you get married?

G.N. In 1971, so I left in, we lived in Eden Terrace 1968-1969 then I lived by myself for one year in Dutch Gardens somewhere where those things are found a street up from Main Street going toward Salt Point Turnpike they're several apartment in there. When I left, I actually sold my apartment to Adrian Perreault, who was a librarian, who left at 70 years old and married at 72. So, there was a whole sequence of events that was in process in those years of people changing mid-career.

J.A. How did you meet your spouse?

G.N. She lived downstairs in my father's house, and was the sister of my brother's wife. So, I knew her for a good number of years. I never had a particular affection for her. I mean, she was just lived downstairs, and she was a teacher also. Just, I guess, by the process of osmosis, we got to know people and then I found that... she was very pretty,

she reminded me of Jackie Kennedy all the time, you know, and that I guess was one of the big things that struck me was the fact... Here's Linus Foy now. That this was a way of, I could get exempted from the Brothers and be able to marry and live the life of the holy layman in the world. And with the gracious offerings of the President at the time, whose name was Dr. Foy.

J.A. Now that we have Dr. Foy joining us, I'll ask you this question, Since Marist College has had three different presidents, Brother Paul Ambrose Fontaine, Dr. Linus Richard Foy, and our current president Dr. Dennis J. Murray, I was wondering if you would tell me a little bit how you feel that their styles of leadership are different?

G.N. Well, I might blush with shame doing this [Laughter] in the presence of my former boss here, I wrote a few little notes about this. I would say Brother Paul Ambrose was a solid person, and I put him in the category of a Harry Truman: kind of a hard worker. One of the image but wasn't very concerned about it was concerned about the individual the great spirit of faith almost simplistic to the extent of covering St. Joseph with a blanket until he got a donation from some rich person to apply to something or other. He had brothers working on puzzles sometimes they were working on puzzles for weekends and days at a time and they didn't have to go to class or anything. We were going to win hundreds of thousands of dollars because, by the grace of some miracle, this would come to pass. But he made a few dollars go a long way, and had very basic kind of economy to his whole thinking, "We could raise chickens, so we would get paid and bring the eggs to New York and sell them and that would be some more income coming in, and then the superiors would like the fact that we were still running a kind of agriculture, and they would be kind to us to make the changes we wanted to make in the buildings, in some

buildings we wanted to put up. I think after he [Brother Paul Ambrose] left, Dr. Foy comes on scene, and I think there's a change now. There's the same integrity had, but we're more concerned with a strong base, we're concerned with the future looking... we have to make changes here, academically, and have to get more experts in, we have to have people go on for there doctorates, we have to have people doing things that will be part of the academic leadership. At the same time, we're being very careful in the spending of money, we don't want to run through it. If we can do it ourselves, we will. We don't have much money, but we're going to make the dollars we have last. There's ventures in terms of making some bold moves in terms of the change of management of the college from Marist Brothers to the corporation that we spoke of earlier. There were some tough decisions about property changes that had to be made to enhance the building, the McCann Center for instance and the burying of the cemetery. But they were bold moves they were right was in retrospect that we would have lost tremendous opportunities if he didn't do those things and they where decisions not much mulled over. We used to... we didn't talk about the wall before, but there was a big wall around the property. I think he and Linus decided one day to take it down. I didn't think there was a committee meeting about that it's in the way you'd be better if it weren't there, take it down. And so that kind of hands on if it's good we'll do it we'll somehow manage to get it done. Then the movement toward the approval academic Middle States that approval was stamped that all came through that administration. Quickly moving on, I think Dennis Murray is much more in terms of PR. I have ten page, twenty page reports here he has the staff does a lot of writing for him, helps him get things done. Advancement in terms of money making contacts he is more image conscious, what do people thing of us

and rather than necessarily is it always the best thing for the college to do this. I think where Linus was much more interested in making sure that the staff and the faculty would have retirement options and he got us into TIAA-CREF which has been really a wonderful thing for us. Those were both rules, now we're profiting by it I don't think Dennis Murray has the same intimate concern for each of the staff persons, it's the image of the college as it moves toward the twenty-first century into technology whether it's bad or good it doesn't matter cause it's the thing to do and I think that's where his thrust is. He's managed to be popular I think in the neighborhood and I think he still has good PR around I think he's managed thru PR itself through Public Opinion to enter or not to have a much wide spread... people know about us from all corners of the states pretty much because of that. Briefly that's a quick overview.

JA: I was wondering how you felt the change and growth on campus has effected Marist ideals, if at all?

GN: I couldn't put a focus on change I meant to bring with me some of the things that we still do in terms of the programs that we run for helping the needy the Marist Brothers were always concerned, we opened schools to teach at the beginning you know, farm boys then we opened them in the city to teach city boys and then we opened colleges so that children of fireman could go to college now we're moving on. The college itself I think has a lot of programs, not that visibly in terms of some of the concerns that the Marist Brothers would have, the thrust that I just gave in terms of Dennis Murray and PR would be contradictory to Marist Brothers. Marist Brothers lived lives of modesty, simplicity, and live unknown to the world you can't live that way and run a college. So in that sense there's a contrast but the integrity of it I think we don't allow kids to come here

and just sit in their dorms. If they don't come to school they will take a walk, they really have to make the grade and that's part of the operation that we're running. That kind of integrity I think has very much stayed in place, which would be a Marist Brothers teaching. Teaching fundamentals and the students would learn what has to be.

JA: What do you envision for the future of the college?

GN: Well, I think the thrust now is going to be to kind of maintain the status quo and try to upgrade a little bit if it's possible. The stature where we are in reference to Bucknell know that's an expression I've heard around, you know. I think we have a way to go for our students, George Mitchell was here on Tuesday night and about four hundred students in the arena they were hoping for twelve hundred I think if were Bucknell it would be found. So a good number of our students I don't think have that persuasion yet or they're not of the ilk that they would be after little good academically but it's coming. I think it's going that way I think it will be in ten years from now or twenty years from now I think you'll see a different cut it terms of that coming to pass. I think Nelson lost his first three games this year and I think, I don't think we can stay any longer in the Title Division I, big one. I think we are not and we are going to lose a lot of games we can't draw the competition we're not built to do that, we have to stay with it but I don't know how long we're going to that.

JA: In all your years at Marist College what's your fondest memory?

GN: Coming here. The fact that I was invited to be part of it, going to Espous by first years was a dream.

JA: I have one last question for you I'd like to know what you're been doing in retirement if you can call it that since you're quite busy?

GN: Sure, I have one course and that takes some part of Tuesday and Thursday based on the caseload. I work with another fellow putting out that publication called *Marists All* and that comes out maybe five or six times a year and I play a part of getting it reproduced and in the envelopes and actually mailed and so on and so on. But prior to there's a lot of back and forth about what's going to go into it, although he does the writing and editing of it and we...what's going into it. Some of the work in the Archives in terms of coming to Marist and doing things here. I own a house in Poughkeepsie and I'm the principle maintainer of the house, so I do the lawns and I do some of the painting and I do those kinds of household things. I was late coming because I had to change the laundry [Laughter] I do inside things too. My wife has now become a painter so she's off painting with a friend of hers, a wife of one of our former professors Dr. Malloy and his wife Rosemary and my wife are good friends along with another friend and today they're painting someplace up in the Hudson Valley someplace. So she's off and running doing her things and I try to do my things. I manager my finances which is very easy these days because I have not that much to manage. [Laughter] I'm just trying to try to maintain that things remain balanced. That's I guess about what I do, I do Tuesday morning I'm what they call a Eucharistic Minister at Vassar Hospital I visit Catholic patients who are there and give them communion if they like or just talk to them. Tuesday morning is kind of a dead time that I can't do anything else because I like to do that. Then Tuesday afternoon I have to come here, so Tuesday is not a good day. And then Thursday I come here also to teach, then I'm seeing students in groups encouraging them on with there projects and getting them hooked to the status of Bucknell's.

JA: So really continuing that mission of the Marist Brothers in a way?

GN: You see it that way right I didn't figure it that way but yea

JA: Well thank you very much

GN: You're very welcome