

PETER O'KEEFE

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

Transcribed by Mary Ellen Lent

For Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Interview Peter O'Keefe

Interviewee: Dr. Peter O'Keefe

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Subject Heading:

Peter O'Keefe

Marist Brothers –United States-History

Marist College—History

Marist College—(Poughkeepsie, New York)

Marist College—Social Aspects

Summary: In the following interview, Peter O'Keefe speaks of his years at Marist College as a History professor. The interview begins with Peter O'Keefe's introduction to Marist College and continues on to touch upon his involvement with the college, for example with the Bridge Program. Peter O'Keefe speaks of the development of the core program from the 60-60 program and the changes among the college, in terms of the student body, faculty, and physical development of the college.

G.N. Good morning. This is an interview with Dr. Peter O'Keefe. It's taking place in the Marist College library in the Archive room. It's part of an ongoing project to develop the Archives. This is an oral interview aspect of it. The date is May 16th and it's about ten o'clock in the morning. Good morning Peter.

P.O.'K. Good morning Gus.

G.N. Peter, I'd like to start with an overview of your past, your biological and your personal life in the development of the person that we know as Dr. O'Keefe. What is your full name?

P. O'K. Peter O'Keefe.

G.N. Where you named after any member of the family?

P. O'K. An uncle who spent a year in MountJoy for his participation in the rebellion of 1916.

G.N. And how long did he live after the rebellion?

P.O'K. Not too long. He came over here and died in 1932 of some pneumonia complication that could have been cured with penicillin today. He didn't live very long. He didn't have any children.

G.N. Yes, where and when were you born?

P.O'K. South Bronx on 140th Street.

G.N. When?

P.O'K. 1930, February 2nd.

G.N. And about your early education, where did you go to grade school?

P.O'K. St. Luke's grammar school and then St. Pius grammar school, graduated elementary school in January 1944 and spend six months in Rice High School...124th and Lenox Ave. I spent the next twelve years in the seminary with an organization called The Divine Word Fathers. This was the first German Missionary Order.

I spent my four high school years(1944-48) at Miramar which was the minor seminary in Duxbury, Massachusetts. After high school I did my two year novitiate In Techny Il which is north of Chicago. From 1950-52, I spent two college years at Epworth, Iowa. For the remaining four years were spent at Techny where I completed two years of philosophy and two years of theology.

G.N. Okay and in your own family at home did you have siblings, brothers or sisters?

P.O.'K. Yes, there where seven of us, five boys and two girls in the family and I'm the second oldest.

G.N. And your parents, what where their names and what did your father do?

P.O.'K. My father was Michael and he was a mechanic and came from county Kerry in Ireland in the 1920's. Originally he was a mechanic. He owned two cab medallions but during the depression he become a bus driver. My mother came from county Leitram also in the 1920's. She was a nurse's aid at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City and married my father in Jean de Baptist Church in 1926.

G.N. Was your father on the run from the IRA?

P.O.'K. No, no. [Laughter]

G.N. Alright, moving along a little fast forwarding now. What about your own personal life, your marriage to Alice and your children, could you say something about that? When where you married and how did you meet Alice?

P.O.'K. In June 1961 and I met Alice through my sister; she actually had been a classmate of my younger sister in grammar school. I didn't meet her through Bridget, I met her through my other sister, who happened to be on a subway train one day coming home from work. We went together for a while and got married in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Queens, say in '61 by my father's first cousin, who was an Auxiliary - Bishop in Boston. He played football for

Georgetown way back in 1924, '25 and '26 and was secretary to Cardinal O'Connell and later Chancellor of Boston when the Cardinal died. In 1973, my uncle died of heart attack in Ireland on his way back from Rome.

G.N. What about the children, you have three girls and a boy now.

P.O'K. Three girls and a boy. Mary is a nurse and is now the Director of Infectious Diseases in Maimonides Hospital in Brooklyn, NY. Alice is Program Director at AT&T and Theresa is married and has my two grandchildren and lives in Wappingers Falls. Recently, she got her real estate license.

G.N. Yes, say something about Peter.

P.O'K. Well, Pete is a Marist Grad, a Political Science major and took advantage of the internship in Washington during his junior year, which was a turning point for him and his commitment to politics. After volunteering in two local campaigns, he took a job with Geraldine Ferraro who was running for the U.S. Senate. In December of 1991, he left Geraldine Ferraro to sign up with the William Jefferson Clinton, a young politician from Arkansas who was running for President. He worked on the Clinton campaign in New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Kentucky. After the election of 1992, Pete became a Fund Raiser for the Democratic Party.

[Inaudible recording]

G.N. Now did he actually work at the White House over the years?

P.O'K. Oh, yes, after the 96 campaign, Harold Ickes offered him a job in the White House, where he spent the next year and half. Then he decided to take the opportunity to attend the London School of Economics, where he received his Master's degree. When he returned to the US, he became a fund raiser for the Clinton Library Foundation.

G.N. Did he travel much?

P.O'K. Yes, he has been to South America Africa, India, Japan and so on.

G.N. Have you had an occasion to get to the White House?

P.O'K. Yes, on several occasions and I also attended St. Patrick's Day celebration three years in a row.

G.N. Okay, let's come back and put more focus on your own development. Where did you do your graduate work and then what were some of your first teaching jobs?

P.O'K. After I left the seminary, I had no formal degrees despite all the education. I was able to get a degree from Iona after taking 38 credits in one year. I subsequently went to Hunter College where I received a Master Degree in History. I went on to Fordham University for a Ph.D. in 1971. In the meantime I taught Latin and English at Bergin Catholic High School in New Jersey, two years teaching history at Copiague High School, Long Island, NY, about four years in Saunders High School in Yonkers, where I taught German and History and finally I spent two years at John Adams High School in NYC. John Adams turned out to be a turning point in my life because there I met a young lady named Elizabeth Slevin and the conversation you know one day what are you going to punch the clock? I told her I was working on my doctorate at the time and I was interested in college. She said would you ever be interested in Marist College? I said I was interested in anything at that point, you know [Laughter] and so she had contacts. I said I'd love to meet Augustine Nolan and I happened to have had Augustine Nolan's brother at Manhattan College when I was teaching back in the city part-time. Luck happened there was an opening and I was brought up for an interview in March of '67 and I was told I had the job.

G.N. Do you recall coming up here and seeing, who did you see when you first came here?

P.O'K. Cashin, Dr. Cashin.

G.N. Dr. Cashin, Ed Cashin was here.

P.O'K. I also met with Lou Zuccarello, Jerry White and Brother Murphy.

[Inaudible recording]

G.N. [Laughter] It's a small world. And when you did come here, what were your first teaching assignments, do you remember? Was it just History?

P.O.'K. Yes, it was all history. It wasn't much medieval. I had some medieval you know but yet history in those days we had the two sequences you know that kids had to take all the questions into two parts, one part up to the middle ages and then the second part, the 1500 to the present.

G.N. That's quite a sweep you know.

P.O.'K. Oh yes, now they don't make it in one course. [Laughter] There's twelve credits required in History, twelve required in Philosophy, twelve required in Language. You know this is going to be a corporate thing.

G.N. How many years were you just teaching before you got involved in other activities here?

P.O.'K. As a full time teacher probably down to 1974 and then LaPietra put me in charge of the Bridge Program which I started here and found working with LaPietra interesting.

G.N. LaPietra is Richard LaPietra for the shake of our historical record here.

P.O.'K. [Laughter] Our historical record, I had a great year on APC working with LaPietra. That year was a good year and one of the things that we did that year.

G.N. Just a foot note what is APC?

P.O.'K. That was the old Academic Policy Committee that took care of all the academic components with respect to faculty, leadership and academics and as on.

G.N. As against the FPC which was the Faculty Policy Committee.

P.O.'K. Yes, today [] we really have to remain straight I think [] and system have to change the names I felt that the combination we had was so much []. Then we had the [] which is really [] the faculty and then we had the [] which was a

[] representing the president in fact when he was, elected recognized faculty and then the chairperson of the [] and then the []. It was really a neat system I thought and then we did this other crazy stuff and got all complicated. [Laughter] Anyway I had very good working relationship with LaPietra, I think it was one of my high points, that was the year that I put the Bridge together.

G.N. Did the Bridge come before taking the evening division or was that part of the same?

P.O'K. No, the Bridge came first, it came in '74, we started the Bridge.

G.N. Okay let's stop for a second, what is the Bridge?

P.O'K. The Bridge is, I got the idea from a Pace High School guy who started the first one he was teaching down in Chaminard High School, is sending faculty into Chaminard doing full a full college year and the students seem to be []. So select students were taking a full college program at [] okay, and I came back we where all excited about the possibility for this so we came up with the idea here in doing a [] Bridge, mainly three courses on the high school taught by Marist faculty and then the high school students would come over to Marist for the rest of the program, that was a new angle so we called it the Bridge Program. The first one was Lourdes, the second one was Spackenkill and then subsequently let's see who else came in... Roosevelt came but they never really followed through, these were the two []. Then we added on to another program I know called the School College Course Program and then called School College Program came in and that is why we came up with the idea of getting credit for certain advanced courses on the high school taught by high school faculty that would be supervised by Marist. So that was kind of a new wrinkle to the group and that became very popular. You know that's [] in Kingston and then we had let's see Walt [] and Denny []. I think the Wappingers boys eventually came in for a while. You see politics keep the Kingston and the Wappingers boys out, the president of the [] got very uptight about this and was putting a lot of

pressure on so they said backed off and Wappingers backed off. You know the programs have done very well.

G.N. Do you see those as a kind of an enticement for these students to pick Marist?

P.O'K. Well, it was strange enough we knew from the beginning that we could probably be very little trade off on that regard especially with [] we had pretty advanced students here with these students and stuff you know. That was not a major thing but we felt that it was great a exposure for Marist and that other students and the fact they got to know Marist that they could become students. Now subsequently more students began to stay and [], you know but in the beginning in was a small percentage of students would actually stay on you know. I think that's a much better percentage today, but the other thing that we got into [] was we took the lead in articulation and that was a big thing going on in the state. We pushed to try to accelerate the sequence from elementary school to finishing college and the idea of pulling together the last year of high school to the first year of college. There's a lot of stuff going on taking about it and we went out in the fore front with this program so Nequest, who the Commissioner chose Marist to launch the statewide campaign for articulation, so he came here in '75 to recruit for us and he gave the speech you know announcing that the state was going to be putting articulation and stuff. And subsequently I ran two articulation conferences here, I didn't follow up a few years after. And that's only one of the regrets that I have not following through and we were state leaders in '77 and '78 with this whole thing. Marist was much more versatile working that. And the biggest mistake I ever made I took the continuing Ed job in '78 and it turned out to be a distraction, you know and I took it accidentally. I didn't plan to but first let me tell you about continuing Ed. I started continuing Ed. What we had was an evening school, you know and I had start dreaming about this continuing Ed stuff so I went to pay a couple of visits that Brian made down the way to IBM.

G.N. Dr. Desilets.

P.O’K. Dr. Desilets yes, and we had to find out, you know we were working on the [] and we were looking for new ways to market this continuing Ed, which was really weird taking an English course and turning it into more marketing and getting independent from the other graduate program. You could do more initiative kind of stuff you know and so on and so forth. We started going around to get more ideas because these places were visiting us you know, LaPi went ahead and actually applied for the first time he hired but it was worth the time the committee was looking elsewhere and one of the candidates by the way was Andy Molloy. I knew LaPi went to bat for Andy and I could tell from the rest of the committee that it was probably going in a different direction so I called Andy in at first and it turned out that Andy didn’t get it because this guy [], you know sold himself and it was good and he had a lot of professional stuff. He was a marketer and had all the kind of skills you needed for that and you would hear that two later he had no intension of doing that but I was struggling.

[Inaudible recording]

G.N. Let’s move on, talk about the development of the college and as a focus what are some of the things you played a part in like the core program, the development of the whole core, and then the move to divisions and then the move to schools.

P.O’K. I consider one of my more important contributions I think is in the core program. I don’t think people realize the role I played. If you remember we had the push for the “Four Modes of Consciousness Core.” This was a core back in 1980- 81. It was a unique idea to build a core around the idea of the modes of consciousness but no content. It was going to be a 12 credit core. You took a course in the mythopoetic mode, the scientific mode and course I felt this was going in the wrong direction because we were now having trouble in the late 1970’s and

80's because our kids had no content and no background so here was a core that was a great idea but it had no content. The student would be taking general courses in the poetic mode and so there was a battle going on and it caused a lot of wounds. So I proposed a core that would contain 36 credits, core that would stress the content but also suggested some integrated work with History and English. It was a 36 credit core.

G.N. That core involved the liberal arts, the Math, the Science, the 6 credits in

Literature, etcetera, etcetera.

P.O'K. And in the end, the Academic Policy Committee wrote the present core which

they put 12 more credits on top. They put in 6 credits in writing, a capping course, and they added an arts course. But the whole push in that core was the content. It was a pretty good core.

I think our present core right now, potentially, is one of the best cores in the whole country. It has a lot of room to grow. We took it so far but we did not take it as far as we could have. But I tell you I have been around the country as Core Director, and we have a potential inside our core that is great. When I had Gerry Gaff come in who is the national authority on cores as a speaker when I was Core Director, he said, "You guys are so far ahead!" He was awed, he was awed.

We had so much stuff going for us...

G.N. We had come from a 60-60 though hadn't we?

P.O'K. We had come from a 60-60. We had thrown out our core. We had 60- 60 which meant we gave the students "carte blanche" to do what they want.

G.N. The students decided what they want with the first 60 and the department decided the other 60.

P.O'K. Most of the departments didn't even use the 60 so the students had more than 60 credits to use. It was a disaster. So then Lou began to work to his credit to develop a value focus. So that began the idea of coming back to a core concept and so on, and it was the nucleus of the 21 credit core. Then we moved back to the thematic. Then what I was pushing for was the content. And by the way, I should mention I developed the Origins course (Origins of History) which was the required course.

G.N. O.K. That is the academic part of it. How about the faculty part of it; the idea of divisions?

P.O'K. O.K. One of the worst mistakes I made after Murray (President Murray) came was I voted for divisions and pushed it and that is one of the dumbest things I did was change my stance on divisions and it cost me dearly and other reasons too. My argument was before I changed my position and supporting it was leave it alone, it is evolving . Already there was a natural collision developing the art, and literature and communication were already making and it should have been left that way, just kind of evolve. Once you start going to these mechanical systems, you start crossing over and it becomes too artificial. It was the worst step we ever made. And now we got back to a little more sanity at the end, we have departments back. Our division suffered most from this thing because we were going outside. Other divisions didn't suffer because they had the same chair they had before, it did not make much difference. You guys, Communication and History [departments] got hurt on this because we kept going outside and it just wasn't happening.

G.N. O.K. Let's go to the physical plant. Do you recall your first days here and what Marist College looked like when you came here in 1968? Was it a farm?

P.O'K. I came a little bit beyond the farm stage. I always consider our group in 1967 as the new era. You guys and Casey and those guys came in 1963, you were pre-dorm and stuff. By the time I came, Champagnat and the dorms were up already. But we were no where near where we are today. We were all still in Donnelly Hall and my office was a table with me, and Lou, and Vinny and Gerry White all on one table. We were just at one table, half the size of this that we are sitting at now. And we were in Donnelly, and that was the beauty in a way, we were just one family.

G.N. You must have had great interaction.

P.O'K. Oh, it was great. You look at the new building now and it is different. There is not much you can do about it. How can you re-create what we had? And the beauty of Marist is that it was a real blue collar college, and everybody, they had parents that came from blue collar backgrounds.

G.N. The kids were in their first college experience.

P O'K The kids came from that background. There was a closeness between secretaries and maintenance and faculty. We were rated and one. We all came from the same roots. Those years were great years. There was a dynamism there; I look back now and I said this to Artin (Academic Vice President). Looking back now we had a collection of talent in the 60' and 70's I think that would have matched any small college in the country. We were blessed really with a real good collection of talent in different areas and then we had this tremendous dedication. I always regret we did not appreciate the talent we had. As years went on, Lou would say you don't find it outside. And this was across

the board, different aspects of talent and the people coming out of the novitiates (student Marist Brothers). We were an unusual collection of people in the 1970's.

G.N. And looking back it is hard to figure how you ever made it, if you just take the library and walk through your experience you would wonder seriously is this a library?

P.O'K. Oh, I would dread it. I remember with visitors we would try to avoid it. It was so small.

G.N. What was your first [library location], was it Donnelly or Adrian?

P.O'K. First library was Donnelly oh yes, Donnelly.

G.N. The computer area?

P.O'K. Right!

G.N. Then it was moved over to Fontaine.

P.O'K. I remember Fontaine well. That was where Tony Campilli (CFO) was and I had to check out the business stuff with him when I first came.

G.N. Any other building? What do you think of the library now? Isn't this kind of a myth you would never have thought would happen?

P.O'K. Oh, when I saw this thing going up I said, "Oh man, the Admission guys will

have a breeze now. If they could bring students in with the old library, what 's going happen now?" But you know we always had a solid academic image. I meet guidance counselors in the city, particularly a guy at Hayes [Clark] and they always saw Marist as a serious place. It was a young place coming on, and when you looked at Marist with respect to Manhattan [College] and others, there was always a respect for Marist. We had a solid academic program. We always did.

G.N. What do you think are the worthy assets or are the assets of Marist today? What do we have going for us?

P.O'K. Today? Location number one... you cannot beat that. And the beautiful campus. You have to give Murray credit for that. He has a good taste and keeps this campus immaculate. He has good taste for buildings. You look at the outside design of Fontaine. It is beautiful. Murray has a good taste for buildings and when you look at the buildings he has put up in the last years, he has a good taste for the use of space. He has an aesthetic sense, not the depression kind of culture where we'd squeeze every inch of space we had for practical use. He is keen on keeping the campus clean. That is a tremendous aspect. And he has a good marketing sense. I was talking vander Heyden and asked him what do you think Murray's best talent is? Without hesitation he said "Marketing!" He is better than Harry Woods.

G.N. Harry Woods was the Admissions Director?

P.O'K. Yes, and vander Heyden said Woods was good but Murray is better. He knows what parents will look at when they come. Without question, Murray is an excellent marketer. But now, to get back to your question, (What are the assets of Marist?) the campus, the cleanliness, the buildings are new. There is a class to this place. People come on campus and they are impressed: the campus is beautiful, the cleanliness, the buildings are new...

G.N. Well, what about the tradition? Has that survived?

P.O'K. Yes, the tradition...where is it going? Well, it is fading alright. But there is a potential for continuation and I am just hoping the young ones grab it. I think the values centered core, which is something that I have tried to push the last couple of years when I was Core Director. We tried to get that grant for the core, using Human Rights as the central theme. But then human rights theme becomes an almost natural secular continuation of the whole values core and so it is an opportunity to continue the tradition you had without the religious context which is an

obstacle for some, but those not concerned about the religious aspect it is the same basic principles and the idea of Marist is making a statement, is doing something particular with values. That is the potential that is there. I don't know if it is going to be followed because the emphasis on scholarship now is getting so high that what I am seeing now is the traditional pattern that we will probably move more along the scholarship line and seek recognition in terms of scholarship and maybe miss the chance of doing something unique, something particularly us. You know I was down at Princeton a couple of months ago and I was reading something about their background and that is just where we are going...

[Inaudible recording]

G.N. What about the student body? How do you see the maturity, the scholarship, the teams, the balance

between the males and the females? That has changed dramatically, hasn't it?

P.O'K. Bringing the females was a great addition. I wonder why they opposed it in the late 1950's but you know what made me oppose it, at the time of course there was no vote in those days, but I had them (females) in high school and I've seen these girls wrap these guys around their finger and they were able to get these guys carry their books around and they could push them all over the place and that kind of stuck with me a little bit. But no, it was a great move. Early on I had a lot to do with the development of the first courses in "Female Studies" but in terms today, of the students themselves. I feel so sorry for them and the way they are living and their experiences. First of all, their skills have been undermined tremendously. We were giving the kids term papers to do in the late 60's and early 70's that these kids couldn't do them. In fact we were moving away from textbooks in the late 60's and coming up with monographs... you know you could read four different books and then instead a of a textbook, you take your lecture notes. Well by the late 1970's kids are having a hard time reading textbooks and that process has

gotten worse. I don't blame the kids, it is the culture that they come from. And of course, the other thing about these kids is really hurtful, I feel so sorry for them, is they come out of culture that has taught them to identify themselves from the outside. They are object oriented. They don't really appreciate their own experience. They don't get in touch with their own resources as much because they are bound by the culture. They are perpetually grading it with the outside. They are so inundated with nightmare-ish stuff down to 9/11, which is the beginning of the culmination of the nightmare. Well, these kids have had a whole history of the stuff beginning with nuclear and environmental and AIDS and you name it. A kid grows up in a world today where I think that the only way they will survive is having little cells inside, and just close down. They don't hope. Oh, they have little hopes, like they will get a good job, get married but it is always small packages. They don't have an opportunity to dream big and to think of great possibilities out there. They are crushed ...I feel so sorry for them, I really do. I don't get angry when I see the trouble they are dealing with. To me it is a challenge and I say to myself these poor kids. Now what they really should do is have an education which gets away from all the information, kind gets them to meditate and get inside of themselves and get them to believe in themselves. A little quiet time. One thing about being in the Seminary is you know what quiet time is. We had a lot of time to be inside of ourselves and that is the thing that is lacking with kids today.

G.N. They need to learn to be alone.

P.O'K. They need to learn to be alone and appreciate themselves and a lot of potential there is out there.

G.N. O.K. Let's move it up a little bit and talk about the administration and the administrative development. When you came here Dr. Foy was in position and would you say something about your experience as Foy as Head of the College and then as Murray as Head of the College.

P.O’K. First of all, Foy’s great contribution and I come to appreciate it more as the years go on was “Hands off,” let us do our best. And that’s important. I almost get scared when I think of somebody as a “management type,” in those years could have killed a lot of stuff. Foy gave us freedom. Foy empowered us. We could do whatever we want. I was amazed in the mid 70’s at where I was going and the contacts I was making. I had such freedom as long as it did not cost too much money. I think Foy’s great, great contribution is really that I think and Foy probably would have been happier if a little earlier he had said “I have done my thing..” I think there was a point around ‘74 or ‘75 where Foy had done his best work. But you see, if Cashin (Dr. Edward Cashin, VP) had stayed on, if Foy had worked out something with Cashin and Cashin has stayed on. I am going to take three or four more years and then you take it. You know what I mean, what a nice transition that would have been. But I think the mistake Foy had made, which is a mistake people make... I think he stayed on too long and I got the impression at the end that he wasn’t really into it. I could see that he could get bored after a while. You can spend so many years on the job...

G.N. Well he was here for twenty years!

P.O’K. Twenty years, you can’t be fired up for twenty years. We never thought we would ever again have a President for twenty years, for as long as Foy, and Dennis (President Murray) is in his 22nd year. That is why, what I say is that I think, at that time in our history we were lucky to have someone like Foy at the top. We had talent, we had people, and Foy liked new ideas. Foy was not hung up on background, we had not dogma here. Everything was even handed... there wasn’t a freer college in the country than Marist. You could do just about anything. It was just wide open in terms of ideas, opportunities and so on. And that was a big thing and the older you get and you look back. In the present minute you do appreciate it because you see other things and you say we should do this, and we should do that, but that thing was so important when I

look back, it was worth whatever limitations that we had. And Foy was an easy guy to like, nobody disliked Foy. He would sit down with anybody. He was a common man. There was never any heavy handedness.

G.N. And what is Murray's (Pres. Dennis Murray) major contribution?

P.O'K. Murray has done...I remember when we were talking about the transition and we were talking about who we wanted and one time we sat down and said "What do we really want in the next president?" Do we want someone who is very active politically? And I remember Gerry White saying "He has got to have some savoir- faire. And of course, that was the only thing that Foy lacked. Foy was a Bronx kid, like most of us with blue collar parents. Savoir-faire was not exactly what we grew up. And I always remembered that. And Tom (Prof. Casey) talked a lot about that and he was onto something. And I think Foy lacked that, and I think Murray has a sense of savoir faire even in a sense of all of the rituals for inauguration like bringing in the "mace" into the ceremony and so on and then of course, in terms of the campus, and how the campus looks...

G.N. Image.

P.O'K. And the grounds. And talking to Lou one time we talked about accidents and substance. And it seems the accidents are more important than the substance. [Laughter] And Murray knows that, the significance of that whole area [buildings, cleanliness, grounds.] And I think that has been his great contribution.

G.N. O.K. We have talked a lot about the college and the changes in the college, and what the college has changed to, what it has gained and lost maybe. From your perspective where is it going, what about the technology, what about the future, distance learning, - do you see this as part of where we will be, or is important to us?

P.O’K. Oh yes, we have to keep exploring and we have to take these things but make sure they will not take us in directions that are counter-productive in terms of our development, then know enough to back off but given the changes you have to be into distance learning. I see and have concerns about this too... and the danger, the danger of watering stuff down. But you have to explore it, you have to see where the possibilities are. So far as the technology, the same thing. I just do not want to see happen and that is what gives me concern, if do not have the faculty that is concerned and fighting as tenaciously as we did in respect to the liberal arts if they are preoccupied with other things and can’t put the time in. I just hope that in the whole expansion they don’t forget the tremendous potential of the core and of our liberal arts tradition and that they do not let that become secondary. I think then, we really would hurt ourselves.

G.N. What about our graduate education? Should we do more of it in history and communication?

P.O’K. Again this is a decision Marist is going to have to make. And how far do you want to take that. It is the whole graduate thing. Now Vassar stays away from that because its undergraduate is really where it is at. So it really doesn’t really take that route. But if we follow the traditional pattern we will probably be generalists and stay in that pattern. Here again, it is a typical thing to say “No, I want Marist to really retain a primary commitment to undergraduate and do something creative in that area” but it is really difficult to do that because you have to have some really creative ideas about what you want to do with the undergraduate degree. We will probably have some guys who will want to go graduate degree.

G.N. I have on the paper that I gave you anything that I didn't ask that you would like to mention but before I get to that I have something. What about the people that you have met here? Could you, without getting tearful... [Laughter]

P.O'K. Oh God, there are a whole array and some I have been in battles with and maybe hurt a lot people, put it that way. But you know, that is one thing about Marist of all the people I have battled with, it never ended up being bitter. And I have noticed in the last six or seven years, more and more we want to get away from that and more and more getting back to the way it used to be. We can't go through a whole transition and that battles about division without conflicts. One of the regrets I have is I wish my style was not so explosive, not so aggressive. I have no doubt about the issues I was fighting for but I think I could have done it.

G.N. Sometimes the vocabulary.

P.O'K. I wish I was more like Lou (Zuccarello). I mean every issue I fought Lou agreed with, but Lou had a much nicer style. I tend to do that, and I regret that part of it.

There was a tremendous alienation at one time.

G.N. But without the support of other people though like Tom Casey and so on.

P.O'K. Oh, I had friendships that have come out of here that are unbelievable. I mean,

Tom Casey, Lou Zucarrello in particular, but others, you know, but those two in particular, friendships that are cemented together. And John Griffin who died, you would not trade them in for anything. Yes, it has been such a tremendous place in terms of friendships. And even that tension, when you think about it how many people were really fired up there. We had these arguments, we had these fights but that showed what a lively place we had. There was so people who had some opinions. They felt strong about them so even the people you were fighting, you admire... again the energy and the commitment. That was the kind of place it was. As I said before, we had an unusual collection of people. And in terms of this, the friendships and growth personally that went on as a result of the friendships. It really was unique, there is no question about it.

G.N. For a guy who is retired, you are pretty busy. What are you doing?

P.O'K. Well, I am not fully retired. I have four courses coming up next Fall.

G.N. Well, what are you talking about? We had a dinner for your retirement? We gave you an award.

P.O'K. Well, I will tell you what I did this spring. This spring was my first dead time.

So I got into to teaching a course in the "Life Time Learning" And that was really great because it was an opportunity to re-think old material in a different way with a different audience, and I found myself stepping back and not worry about making sure the student has got this and this covered, and therefore being able to be more creative and more personal on how you handle

material. And it has forced me to study different things. I did a course on the Christianity as a basis of Europe, the formation of Europe. The idea is that Christianity is the central ingredient for creating Europe. Of course that forced me back into an earlier period because I knew I was going to have a segment that was going to be Jewish. So what I did was to do a lot more homework in terms of the early Christian/ Jewish relationships. And that was fascinating. And there too, there was a lot of stuff I hadn't touched before. And now I am reading Augustine, Brown's life on Augustine, because I got so into a lot of things. So really, it has turned out to be a tremendous stimulus because I insist I am going to continue the intellectual challenge. I have a textbook I used and revised and I keep promising to revise for the Origins [of History] course, and I would really like to get my tail down to do that. Even if it is only something for my kids, putting together my summary about what I feel about the evolution of history from the Greeks on up. Yes, I am busy right now.

G.N. Yes, 8:30 AM in the morning you are in here, or 8:00 AM.

P.O'K. Well, I am always been a morning person. By 6:00 AM in the morning.

G.N. Anything else? We are 58 minutes into this. We have two minutes to go. [Laughter]

P.O'K. Oh, well yes, the Science of Man, that was the result of a program at APC (Academic Policy Committee). I was looking for a program for a 3 year degree and Xavier Ryan had the whole concept... the Science of Man concept and that is how that came together. Now I do not want to take any credit for the content of the Science of Man, after all that is all Xavier Ryan. But there never would have been a Science of Man if I wasn't pursuing the three year degree and some rationale for having the three year degree. That is how that came about.

G.N. That is an interesting point. Well, thank you very much.

