

Donald Calista

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Michael Orsini

For the Marist Archives and Special Collections

Donald Calista

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Summary: In this interview, Associate Professor of Public Administration, Donald Calista discusses his educational history, early career in academia and the work he has done at Marist College. He particularly discusses the Master's in Public Administration program, distance learning, and the changes which have occurred at Marist since his arrival at the College in the 1980s.

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[00:04](#) **Gus Nolan:** Today is Friday July 10th and we're having an interview with Dr. Don Calista, Associate Professor of Public Administration and we're having this interview in the library of Marist College. Good morning, Donald.

[00:21](#) **Donald Calista:** Good morning, how are you Gus?

[00:22](#) **GN:** I'm fine.

[00:23](#) **DC:** How's Liz?

[00:25](#) **GN:** She's fine. As you know Don, we're trying to have a collection of immortal interviews from people who have been at the college a good number of years. You certainly fit in that category. [Laughter] I would like to start from the beginning and get a little from you about your own personal life, the early years, where you grew up, and so on. Would you address those points? Where did you grow up and--. Now dates are needed here! [Laughter]

[00:54](#) **DC:** Right! In fact, on my resume, I only have publications since 1985. I put no dates for anything else.

[01:05](#) **GN:** Where did you grow up?

[01:06](#) **DC:** I grew up in Brooklyn, in a multiethnic--it was all white--but ethnic. There was

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Russian, Jewish, Italian, Irish, German--every other house was a different ethnic group. And then there were a couple of WASP, old line teachers who wore dresses down to their ankles. So it was a melting pot kind of a neighborhood and it was always fun. We used to play stickball and around five o'clock the men would drive home and then, believe it or not, compared to today I am sure, *then* the cars would stop until one of the boys hit the ball and ran to the base and made his out or hit. And then they would go through. Today I'm sure they'd run the kids over. [Laughter] You know, I'm sure that that would happen--with people it was a different era. And it was an expectation--.

[02:00](#) **GN:** More relaxed and enjoyable.

[02:01](#) **DC:** Yeah! And I went to a public school--. One of the unfortunate experiences I had--. I got skipped twice and it was socially a little bit chaotic for me because for one of the skips I had to jump right into the three place division. I think it was only in the second grade that we did two place division and I went to the fourth and they were doing--. They assumed you knew three place division, and that you knew all the multiplication tables up to thirteen and I didn't. So in one week I had to rapidly learn, otherwise I would be behind. So, I enjoyed elementary school.

[02:48](#) **GN:** And where did you go to high school?

[02:49](#) **DC:** I went to Bushwick High School. It's a public high school in the city and did very well there and I got into Brooklyn College with a full scholarship. But at Brooklyn

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College I was so enamored with the fact that I was in the company of intelligent people that I spent the first two years just talking to fellow students. And, in that period, I just managed to get through with all Cs in my first two years. But I met, in my lower junior year, I met two professors. One I did a course in Soviet Russia with and the other was sociology of education. By today's standards, they would have gotten zeros or whatever the lowest score you can get for a teacher evaluation. They were terrible teachers but I loved them. They made me want to learn and they also put the fear of God into me. That's also another thing that happened. My last two years, and since then, I have had nothing but As so I'm happy that I finally met my-- I guess you could say my mountain, you know?

[04:02](#) **GN:** They turned you on to education?

[04:04](#) **DC:** Yeah, they really did and I befriended them. One of them, I became a lifelong friend with. In fact a classmate, a Brooklyn College graduate, then joined him at SUNY Buffalo and finished his doctorate with him. He was really a terrific sociology education teacher but he had very few students because he had a way of turning people off. He was engaging. But he turned people off, because he was so smart that he would always overwhelm you with what he knew and was not always interested in hearing what you knew. [Laughs]

[04:37](#) **GN:** Outside of the academic now, what other activities, in those college years, were you involved in? Anything like sports or debate or theater?

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[04:44](#) **DC:** I did all of the student organization stuff in high school. I was president of the class, president of the general organization. I was the president of--we used to call it Arista--which was the honor society. And I did track. Both in college and in high school. I loved track. My fondest memory of track is: the guys on the baseball team, they were muscular, more muscular than we were, and one day one of these louts sort of challenged me to a hundred meter run and I beat the pants off him. They never bothered us again, you know, because the track was around the baseball team.

[05:23](#) **GN:** Was it long distance or just the sprints that you--?

[05:25](#) **DC:** I did short. I did hundred and four-forty meters. I didn't really do very long stuff. But I participated in student government activities a lot. We traveled to other high schools to have different discussions on all sorts of earth shaking questions about which I'm sure high school juniors really enjoy. But the thing I like best in high school was reading. And also in college. Not reading what was on the syllabus. I found my own way. I loved Sinclair Lewis in high school. I read all his stuff in high school. In fact, the only time I ever played hooky, in high school, was when I spent all day and all night reading *Aerosmith*. I don't know if you remember, it's about a medical doctor. And it's the whole business, you're growing up and--. He became a kind of a model for myself and one other man, young man, Raymond. Who went to medical school, eventually. I lost touch with him after medical school.

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[06:31](#) **GN:** Now moving on to graduate education. Where did you--?

[06:35](#) **DC:** I started at Brooklyn College. Again for a degree in, a social science degree, an integrated degree. And I never really finished. I took all the course work but I never finished the paper for the M.A. they have there. Then I went to Washington University and I took urban studies. And I took a job--. No, from there, I took a job at Bennett College and I went to University of Sarasota in Florida. I took--. The degree was in higher education--.

[07:16](#) **GN:** Now all of this in sociology, mostly?

[07:18](#) **DC:** Right. And then, when I was at Marist, one of my first years at Marist, I took an MPA degree at SUNY Albany. Actually, when you think about it, or I think about it in retrospect--. By the way, my mentor died last year unfortunately, and we became lifelong friends, name was Walter Balk. Anyway, we wrote a couple of articles together and we did all sorts of fun things. I went for the M.P.A., believe it or not this may sound naive, naive beyond belief, because I wanted to associate myself with practitioners. Because all my life, people were saying, "You only know theory. You know nothing about practice." So here I went. Taking a degree, thinking that I was going to be among and learn practice. Well, that never happened. And I began to minor, in a sense--. Public administration then became my real world. So that's where I learned public administration. At that very time, Lee Merigough and Dennis, they were the spirits. And I was the body because I was the only one--. Because I was taking this degree up by a

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fluke, for reasons that now are different from my own pursuits, which have remained theoretical, we organize the M.P.A. program. It was everybody's good fortune: Dennis wanted it because that's his field; Lee, I guess, was asked to do it because he was in political science; and then I provided what might be called the body because I knew the content of the course work.

[08:55](#) **GN:** You did course development, curriculum, and all of that kind of thing.

[08:57](#) **DC:** Yeah, and that's where I've been ever since. I think that was 19--? I came here in 1978 and that was in 1980. I had just finished the degree at that time, maybe '81.

[09:12](#) **GN:** Let's back up a little bit, though. We want to get into your professional --. Where did the interest in teaching come?

[09:17](#) **DC:** I think it was just a natural inclination. I had no other ambitions. People told me I should go to law school. Maybe that would have been an alternative. But I never did. I would say I didn't grasp at teaching or wanting to be instructive. I think I just lapsed into it as almost a natural outcome of being a scholar.

[09:46](#) **GN:** Did you start it in college or were you ever teaching high school?

[09:48](#) **DC:** No, no I didn't. Only college. So I never really--. I wouldn't say I liked

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teaching in and of itself. I enjoy it, of course and I even now enjoy the online, we teach online now. And I love it. I have come to love it more than face to face. I actually get to know the people better than face to face because we spend an enormous amount of time communicating. You know me. I give lengthy answers. I expect lengthy answers from graduate students. And they give lengthy, thoughtful answers *and to one another*. A negative side impact of my doing online was [that] I participated, I didn't organize, but I participated in the first rollout of the M.P.A. online and foolishly, I read every conversation, every paper, *online*. Since then, I have eye strain. I have never gotten rid of eye strain. I know every [eye] drop known to mankind. Presently, I'm on Blink [laughs]. I've had Visine. These are all the little quirks of life..

[11:05](#) **GN:** Well, back to the coming to Marist. What were the circumstances? How is it you wound up here?

[11:11](#) **DC:** I wound up here because I orchestrated my own entrance. You probably know that I had previous contacts with Dan Kirk, Joe Belanger, particularly, and Midge Schratz. They were interested in non-Western studies and there wasn't hardly anybody around at that time who knew much about non-Western studies. I had spent a year in Japan under a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and I had a Japan Science Foundation Award. So I spent a year in Japan and they knew of my experiences-- I'd written a little about Japan. And so I came to campus a number of times, talking with people about their desire to introduce non-Western studies at Marist. So, Bennett College was about to close and I said to myself, "I think I'm going to talk to my

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colleagues at Marist." I'm going to give you something negative about Marist. That year there was no raise, that I came, and the College was about to go into the red for the first time. And as part of my condition of coming to Marist; I was accompanied by two hundred and fifty students, mostly fashion majors, whom I had very little contact with. But I importuned the two fashion teachers who lived in Dutchess County to come with me to Marist College and they brought their students here. That year--Marist has never been in the red--that year not only did they come out in the black but by September, after the books were redone, counting on these two hundred and fifty students. The--.

[13:02](#) **GN:** You brought a contingent with you, as it were.

[13:03](#) **DC:** Yeah! Yeah! I brought a contingent. Everybody got a raise, including me! On my first tally I got a raise! [Laughs]

[13:15](#) **GN:** Now, were these students formerly at Bennett?

[13:17](#) **DC:** Yeah, they were all at Bennett. They () all fashion majors.

[13:19](#) **GN:** Who was the director of that program? He was a well known fella here for a number of years.

[13:27](#) **DC:** Egad! You know, I wish--. You know, I should have recalled it.

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[13:29](#) **GN:** Ok, we won't waste time. It's on the tip of my tongue, too.

[13:33](#) **DC:** Yeah, yeah, I know what he looks like. David! David is his first name and I do not remember his last name. Leigh. Dave Leigh, perhaps, yes. I think it's maybe spelled: L-E-I-G-H; not L-E-E. Yeah, I think it was David Leigh. And he stayed here for a number of years but he became ill. Then the college importuned me because they were beginning, not a non-Western program, but they were beginning a sociology and a social work program. And that's how I got involved in that area. They saw it as an opportunity. I think people saw it as an opportunity. They were, let's say, not the strongest people, academically, in that area that was being developed.

[14:24](#) **GN:** Right, well their intention was to do fashion design and not so much the academic and liberal program.

[14:29](#) **DC:** No, I'm talking about my Marist colleagues importuned me to organize the sociology and social work program because some of the colleagues were not as academically strong. My colleagues knew me for years and they had a sense they could depend on me to do the right thing. So we developed this program, and it's thrived ever since.

[14:55](#) **GN:** Well let's sound here now, what was the position that you were seeking when you came here? It was to start this new program?

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[15:00](#) **DC:** As soon as I came here, that became my bailiwick. I mean I just jumped right into it. Florence Michaels was here. Jerry [John] Breen was here. And the anthropologist, Jean, Eugene Best. But he stayed at arms distance because he said he didn't know anything about sociology and he only knew about anthropology. You know, typical academic. So I worked with Jerry and with Florence and we put together a program. It was kind of a jerry-built program because we were borrowing a little bit from here and a little bit from there. But eventually we got approved, it took us two years but we got approved in Albany. Major papers in school. We are at Marist now right? So we have passed all that. Ok, in the beginning at the College, I was very involved with governance. In fact, I can't remember the third person but the present governance system: I was on that committee with Joe Bettencourt. I made mention of this at a faculty meeting a year or two ago. I don't remember who the third party was but it is a great system.

[16:30](#) **GN:** We had two. We had an academic and we had a faculty executive committee. The F.A.C. and the F.E.C.

[16:37](#) **GN:** And the rank and tenure. The beauty of that, believe it or not, that system was that--. Well let me say, the reason that we wanted a new governance system is that we had myriad numbers of committees. Everything had a committee. So the idea was to eliminate committees and just focus on major committees. We thought we had a deal. I guess this is part of the history, I thought we had to deal with the administration that the members of these three committees would do all of the work at the college that all the

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previous committees did. The trade off being, they would get time off. We passed the governance and the administration backed down. In the very next year, all the committees that we replaced were returned. And that's what we have now. And so we keep having all of these commissions that investigate redoing the governance. But I think the key, if we're going to have a government system, a faculty senate or something like that, is that those people need to have time off and they do all the work. And all of these other committees disappear.

[17:48](#) **GN:** Do we still have a plenary session?

[17:52](#) **DC:** We actually have them maybe about four or five times. The interesting thing is, you go to a plenary--. Remember when we used to have them in Donnelly? Everybody knew everybody. We would argue like hell. Oh god, the debates we would have! Science of man discussions and all sorts of things and you go to a meeting now and it's as if half the people do not know the other half and it's very formal. People make, kind of--.

[18:20](#) **GN:** Pro forma statements? They come up, 'We want to thank the committee for their research and--.'

[18:25](#) **DC:** Right! Paper. A lot of paper generation. [ruffles papers in hand]. And so it's lost its human touch by having one hundred and fifty faculty present as opposed to fifty only. We really got to know one another in the early days. Socialized, I think, a lot more.

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I have to say that I got a little annoyed at the administration for a long time. After they reneged on that agreement, I said, 'I'm not going to be involved.' I brought my contingent with me, that was a contribution to Marist financially. My other contingent, whatever you want to call it--. I said to myself, 'if Marist is going to make a real name for itself, its faculty must do research and must publish.' So I spent a good deal of my time researching and publishing and I think that is, if any lasting contribution, it is my identification with research and publishing.

[19:38](#) **GN:** Okay, I have a development here I would like to see if we could follow and you are really touching on it now with that long historical perspective. And I was saying, describe the times, like in the academic scene or the outside world. Were the protests over yet from the Vietnam War and all of that stuff?

[19:53](#) **DC:** Oh, yeah. That was all gone.

[19:58](#) **GN:** Was there tranquility on the campus? Was the Core in place?

[20:06](#) **DC:** We developed the Core. The Core became the substitute or--. I don't remember exactly, but the Core came in, maybe, as an outgrowth of the Science of Man [program].

[20:21](#) **GN:** Well that was the backdrop of it. We had a sixty-sixty program: sixty credits the students decided by themselves and sixty by the department. It went nowhere, there

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was no concrete development within it. Then the Science a Man people came in with the idea of having a basic courses philosophy: how do we learn, how do we know that we know, the methods of learning and knowing and so on. And then we went from there and languages had to have a piece, math had to have a piece, history had to have a piece. So that was the development of the Core.

[20:57](#) **DC:** Right. Now let me add one thing, Gus. From about 1982 on, part of my interest in doing research and publishing was stimulated, or abetted, by the fact that I only teach graduate students. So I am kind of odd man out at the college. For a long time, I was the only one teaching only graduate [courses]. Now, my four or five colleagues in the M.P.A., they only teach graduate because we now have enough students. We have about four hundred students and we have them in different locations: New York City and Westchester and Albany. So the younger members travel to these other places and my principal contribution is online.

[21:48](#) **GN:** Okay. Now let me just develop that a little bit. The online feature, so you don't actually meet the students anymore, at any time?

[21:57](#) **DC:** No. Not at all.

[21:59](#) **GN:** Alright, so they register online and you see what their accreditations are, what their past degrees were, et cetera. Do you find that to be a way of learning more about them, as you say, than--?

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[22:16](#) **DC:** Actually, you do get to know them because they're communicating every day. We have them for eight weeks and we do two lectures a week. So there are two assignments, two lectures, and a paper every week. I find that it is a very self-selection process.

[22:38](#) **GN:** Now you lecture by computer?

[22:40](#) **DC:** The lectures are canned but the discussions are increasingly face to face. We are now developing, using the technology, where we can see one another. Because of the broadband, as you speak, no one--. In the old days, on telephone lines, when somebody spoke, it cut somebody else off. But now with the fiber and the broadband, all the messages get queued so an entire class of twenty people could be speaking simultaneously and the messages will wait as if they're trucks on a highway. The messages line up in the wire, so to speak. But usually, I'm just being hypothetical now--.

[23:22](#) **GN:** Well do you press a key or something--?

[23:23](#) **DC:** No, no. It just happens. But usually you're not going to have twenty people. Somebody is going to say something and then somebody, as that person is talking, maybe saying I agree or disagree with you so it's going to follow on immediately. So there's almost no drop in the conversation.

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[23:41](#) **GN:** How typical is the size of the class?

[23:44](#) **DC:** About twenty students.

[23:46](#) **GN:** About twenty in a class. Okay. Do you all meet at the same time?

[23:51](#) **DC:** We can, yes. In a synchronous chat, we can meet. So usually once a week, we meet all at once. Now that's not required though. I would say that's the most I have ever had. Usually, before a big assignment where they have some questions, it would be ten. That would be a lot. Most of the time it's four or five. Because there's so much communication going on during the week, there is a place in my weekly announcements--. There's a place called either 'What's happening?' or 'What's going on?' and you can ask any question, say anything you want. So there's so much out there, that during these chats, they are mostly social. 'How are you?' 'What's the weather out there?' 'I'm going with my son bowling tomorrow?' You know, it's a couple of questions and then it's all pretty much social.

[24:48](#) **GN:** What is your favorite course for online?

[24:53](#) **DC:** I like teaching the seminar and I teach it every semester. It's their last course and they're preparing their big paper and you really can see the byproduct of everything that they've done. In fact, only yesterday, I got a communication from a student I had three years ago, extolling and telling me how much he learned in the seminar and the

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rest of the program and saying how beneficial it was and this is what he's now doing.

[25:18](#) **GN:** And this is the master's program in administration?

[25:20](#) **DC:** Yeah. So, in a certain sense, I have really been on the sidelines, since a very early involvement, a very intense involvement. In fact, my first semester here, I was on the Internship Committee. Again, Joe Bettancourt and Bob Norman were on that committee with me. My first semester here was sort of--. What I'm getting at, early on, I was very involved because people knew me from past experience. But I became a little disenchanted with the administration when they reneged and said 'No. We're not giving people time off.' Our governance has been problematic ever since. Everybody knows it's problematic. You know? The committees are working hard. Those three committees are working hard and then everybody else is scattered. Maybe we do need a senate of some kind so that those people can get to know one another in a small group. The way things were earlier, where everybody knew everybody else. But we also, in the early days, had some negative experiences. Faculty relations with the administration for a number of years, I can't remember exactly, they became rather harsh. You may or may not remember.

[26:36](#) **GN:** Yes. Oh, I do remember and we used to meet off campus.

[26:39](#) **DC:** Right! We met at the V.F.W, downtown Poughkeepsie.

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[26:42](#) **GN:** Right, and we met at the Hudson River Boathouse a number of times.

[26:46](#) **DC:** Yeah! So all wasn't gloriful. As part of it--. And again, Joe Bettencourt was on the damn committee with me. I don't know why that keeps happening. But he and I, and I forget who the third negotiator was, but we organized, as part of the sort of welcoming back after these few years of disenchantment--and I can't give you the exact years, Gus--but it had to be in the eighty's--.

[27:12](#) **GN:** It might be Bill Olson

[27:15](#) **DC:** Yeah. Well, he was a very cantankerous person, a very decent person, but cantankerous. So I was on the committee that organized the first three year contract that we got from the Administration. And it was a large raise over the three years.

[27:36](#) **GN:** Over the three years, it was six, seven, seven. Something like that.

[27:38](#) **DC:** It was really large! And we couldn't believe--I think the Administration wanted to welcome us back in some kind of a more favorable climate.

[27:48](#) **GN:** A gracious moment as it were.

[27:50](#) **DC:** One thing I do wish for the college, that we can approach, and this may sound selfish, but it really isn't because I think the quality of the faculty is incredible in

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my opinion. The faculty here are better, on paper, than our competitors. They really are. They publish more, they're more well known and most of them love teaching.

[28:18](#) **GN:** Do you have an opportunity to come on campus often to see these--.

[28:20](#) **DC:** I'm on campus all the time.

[28:22](#) **GN:** I see. So, you do these courses from your office?

[28:26](#) **DC:** Yeah. Plus, I like the interaction with my colleagues. For years, I was practically the only one. We finally got Ron Gauch and now we have five members. Because of certain unusual circumstances, two people had to be absent this year. So we only hired one. But we're going to hire another one next year to go back up to five. Interesting, what goes around comes around. We had for a long time concentrations in the M.P.A. and we dropped them because of disinterest. People just wanted a generic management degree. We're now going back to the concentrations. In fact, one area that I have developed--. Health is going to be a big one and we have the requisite people for that. An area in my own research that I've developed, believe it or not, is homeland security. In fact, I don't do the nuts and bolts homeland security, I do the intelligence part. And I've developed certain methodologies that--. I've participated with agencies in teaching them how to approach intelligence using my methodologies.

[29:41](#) **GN:** Gathering of intelligence?

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[29:43](#) **DC:** Yeah. Believe it or not, it's based on a simple principle. It is based on the principle that you choose the kind of error you want to make. In other words, intelligence is by definition imperfect. And it can never be made perfect. So my approach, my methodology is to put on the table, up front so that everybody knows where you're coming from and where you want to go, the choice of error you want to make in terms of how you can gather and organize intelligence. And you choose the kind of error based on the particular terrorist organization. What its capabilities are and things of that sort. What I mean by 'the error you choose:' one error over another so you choose to make an error less but you know even as you're choosing to make an error less, it is never perfect.

[30:41](#) **GN:** Do you see this as a widespread operation? In other words this could be used for banks, for the government, for colleges, for libraries?

[30:48](#) **DC:** No, not exactly because terror is, by its very nature, secretive and not hierarchical. It is triangulated. So that information gets--. One of the things we know about an organization, the basic issue we have about an organization, is that it must overcome uncertainty and that's why it organizes as hierarchies. Terror has different kinds of uncertainty. Marist College has uncertainties about whether it's going to get a class, whether it's going to get a well qualified class, I.B.M. worries about whether it's going to sell computers or services. But terror, terror's main interest, is not getting caught. It's a very different kettle of fish. So they cannot organize hierarchically because

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too much information would get lost along the way. They would be easy pickings if they organized hierarchically. You wouldn't need a method of intelligence that I propose and others have proposed. It would be very simple to go after hierarchy. But terror triangulates itself so that basically only three people know one another. At the top, all the way to the very bottom. And the bottom doesn't know the top at all. So the contact is only through one other person in each triangle. It's very difficult to infiltrate the triangle because the three people know each other and every one of those persons has contact with the outside world. So the intimacy of connection is very close. Whereas in a hierarchy, you could be the guy at the bottom or the guy at the top and a lot could be in between and you can be attacked very easily.

[32:41](#) **GN:** This is so close it protects itself then.

[32:43](#) **DC:** Yes. So the answer is, the kind of people who do intelligence for intelligence can't have their--. Their work is not translatable into use for ordinary, or as you want, for banks, or even for other agencies because the world of terror, the basic point of terror, is not to get caught.

[33:05](#) **GN:** Okay. Let's come back to ground zero. [Laughter] Growth on campus, you've been here--.

[33:07](#) **DC:** Oh, God, isn't that marvelous!

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[33:10](#) **GN:** Where do you start? Let's talk about the building structures. What strikes you as the most impressive in terms of the college development. The campus is certainly rather unique. When you came here we were rather humble.

[33:28](#) **DC:** Humble, indeed! I had a closet for an office. [Laughs] For a number of years, a closet.

[33:33](#) **GN:** In Donnelly Hall

[33:34](#) **DC:** In Fontaine.

[33:36](#) **GN:** Oh, in Fontaine. Oh, you've moved up! Were you ever in Donnelly?

[33:41](#) **DC:** I went back to Donnelly and at Donnelly we didn't have windows.

[33:45](#) **GN:** Yeah, when you first came to Donnelly were--?

[33:46](#) **DC:** When I first came, I'm pretty sure I came to Fontaine. But it was a closet, just about.

[33:51](#) **GN:** Oh, Fontaine was over here. That was the old library.

[33:54](#) **DC:** Yeah, that Fontaine.

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[33:57](#) **GN:** See, the Fontaine Building and the Fontaine Library--. I have to clarify the historical perspective from which we're speaking.

[34:04](#) **DC:** I remember putting up, well, I wasn't here when the field house went up but I remember when the old gym was taken down and we all signed a petition to keep the building and convert it into something. But they wanted to take it down to make room for dormitories.

[34:25](#) **GN:** They didn't take it down. They just built around it.

[34:27](#) **DC:** The old gym?

[34:28](#) **GN:** The old gym is still there. I'll have to take you in there sometime. They just put a shell around it.

[34:35](#) **DC:** That's where those dormitories are?

[34:37](#) **GN:** Yeah, that's where the dormitories are.

[34:38](#) **DC:** Oh, then it still lives. [Laughs]

[34:40](#) **GN:** Yeah, it does. I mean I've been here longer than you! But you've been here a

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long time. But what does strike you?

[34:46](#) DC: Well, to me the most impressive thing is the library and its capabilities. When we had Spellman people couldn't go there because it was jam packed with books, hardly any sitting space and it wasn't really conducive to student study or even faculty interaction with students. But our present library is really, to me, the hallmark of where we've come from and gone to. And of course the use of the technology in the library is also very high so that is a complement to it. But the library is very impressive to me.

[35:31](#) GN: Do your students use the library much?

[35:33](#) DC: Our graduate students? Well, they use the online library. So they have access to almost any journal and the library is very cooperative. Any time we want a new journal added, they pretty much do so. They join a service that has within it A.B.I., Inform, ProQuest and they ask them to expand their journals based on our recommendation

[35:55](#) GN: You threw ProQuest in there so simply. It used to be we () the periodical journals. We used to have to go and pull the books off the library shelf and find the articles and find the pages ripped out that we were looking for. [Laughter]

[36:10](#) DC: You know another sign of our growth and where we've come from and gone to is--and some of my colleagues are not as enthusiastic for what I'm about to say but in

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the School of Management, not only have we placed a premium on researching and publishing but we also use monitors. We use them, and when you mention the reader's guide, that is what simulated me. We use outside journals that essentially rate other journals. None of us publish in a journal that's not in these rated journals. So we are very very much in a class of our own. In fact there's now a movement, partly stimulated by some faculty and also administration, to even upgrade the guide that we use to another level. In other words, we were never at that level, then we got to that level and we say "Well that level is now an easy mark for us."

[37:16](#) **GN:** Ratchet it up another level then and see how far we can go.

[37:20](#) **DC:** The collegueship in the School of Management is very high. There are just two people who are really in the active world of researching and publishing. But amongst the others, and there are thirty of us, at least thirty of us maybe more. There's not a person who hasn't written an article with somebody else. And there is an unbelievable amount of sharing. And once a month we have a brown bag---. In fact, before the College itself had this Teaching Excellence Center, out of a circumstance where we were hiring a bit of people and some of them were not as experienced in teaching, or certainly didn't meet our expectations, and they appeared to be in danger of being scuttled. So as a result, we organized the Center for Teaching Excellence and the College then took it on a couple years afterward. And we shepherded these people so that there's a real concern for one another and I think that stands in our stead very highly. We worked unbelievably hard to get accredited. We took the accreditation out of

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the fire. I will tell you this, this is tough to say, but we were in competition with Manhattan and Manhattan didn't get accredited when we did. They took five years later to get accredited after we got accredited. So of course it helped that we hired a Dean from there who knew where some of the pitfalls were. [Laughs] But getting accredited also has been another benchmark of success and also of collegueship because we had untenured people chairing committees and one of the committees, probably the most important committee, is the Assessment Committee because the accreditation body, these days, are on outcomes. As you know.

[39:40](#) **GN:** They want you to specify how you are going to do this.

[39:42](#) **DC:** Yes, and it has to be based on alumni surveys, on people reading each other's papers and grading them on the blind so that everyone sees the same paper and no one knows the grade that the original instructor gave--.

[39:52](#) **GN:** Or who the author was.

[39:54](#) **DC:** Yes, right. It so happened that two people who were on the Assessment Committee, while we were getting accredited, were not tenured. I found it amazing how easy it was for them, when we were at meetings, for them to say, "You, and you and you. I need the assessment yesterday." All these tenured people, "I need the assessment yesterday and you better get it for us!" And these people shrunk and they had it the next day because the rest of us looked at them, "How dare you?" You know?

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In support of these people. So there's a real conviviality amongst the people. But one negative thing of it, I don't know of one in any other school. I know something, I know you. I know Bob. I know people from the past but all the new people--. I'll get on rank and tenure. I'll know myself and the five other people, I will have to go, "I'm Donald. I'm Jane. You're Jim" and I don't know them either.

[41:06](#) **GN:** Right. Well you're kind of a unique person to be talking to here. See, my general view about the past and how Marist came from where it was to where it is--and we're talking about the growth and development--and used to maybe less in contact with like the typical student at Marist now. You're more in touch with the graduate students than you are with them. One of my bigger questions and a more important one, has to do with the actual curriculum here. What would be your view of an ideal Core program? I know there's been several discussions over the last couple of years about reforming this and trying to get more of a--maybe instead of a vertical one--more of a horizontal one, where it's not just chemistry but the history of chemistry and literature. And we're concerned with them so that there's more across the line kinds of things going on and I don't know exactly where you are with these subjects. You know? Do you have thoughts about them? About the Core?

[42:10](#) **DC:** I do. I have lots of thoughts. My main thought about the Core: when I look at it I'm concerned about its lack of depth. I mean the students pass out of English. They don't have to take literature. They're given a choice between language and something else. The science they take seems to be very easy. The math, the topics in biology. I

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mean, what? They have to have real subject matter. I don't think--. Obviously, yeah somebody that is old is going to talk about something he or she's familiar with, but I just think, maybe you use a sixty-sixty or something like it, but I think we need depth. I don't see the students getting depth. In management, we would have a problem with the sixty-sixty because of the accreditation requirements. As we speak now, the accounting people are eventually going to go to a fifth year because of the state requirements and the national requirements.

[43:25](#) **GN:** Would that still be for the bachelor's degree?

[43:27](#) **DC:** Bachelor's and not even for the master's. The problem with my suggestion is that maybe we need more of less. In other words, maybe they don't need to touch base with everything but make them touch base with fewer things more deeply. Maybe the integration of disciplines can be made. The idea that people are still going to be teaching their basic 101 course, maybe rethink all the 101. Maybe there is a relationship between science and music and that kind of integration is what I'm thinking of here. Of course there is a definite relationship between mathematics and music. So why not explore them? Or go back to the fifty great books in two years. Something. And one of them they would have to read is Einstein. And they would have to read something before to read the Einstein. So that's what I meant by depth. I just don't like a little of this and a little of that. So I stay away from the debates.

[44:40](#) **GN:** Alright, so now you are touching something that I think you can address, too.

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Will you feel the students coming--. The question [is], when you meet him in graduate school, they have already been through college, but the typical Marist student, are they smarter than when--?

[45:00](#) **DC:** I talk to them. Now I may talk to a selective group of student aides and things of that sort. But I talk to enough of them. I think they're more qualified. I think they're smarter and more qualified. I don't know if they know more. That, to me, makes a difference. In other words, I think the demands we can make on our students should be greater. And this is only to make their lives richer. A little topic of this and a little topic of that. [Grumbles]

[45:29](#) **GN:** How do you create the excitement to go ahead and do that?

[45:32](#) **DC:** Well, you know I was thinking, I mean this may sound silly, but in science for example why not try to have the course more integrative of all the Nobel Prize winners in all the different disciplines? What have contributed, cumulatively? That to me would be topics in biology and topics in chemistry. That would be alive! I mean in order to know what they've done, you have to know something beforehand! And that's where you get the excitement of saying, "Okay, I want to know how this guy did D.N.A. and in order for me to know D.N.A. I have to know something about chromosomes and I have to know something about nucleic acid. 'Oh, really?' And here is the other book you have to read before you can read that book." So I would like the Core to create an excitement about learning. You know, I told you I spent the first two years in college just talking?

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Well I go to these lectures and I would be having discussions about the lectures. Maybe reading the books a little bit but there was an excitement about what I was hearing. And I don't see our students, in the conversations that I have had with them, really reflecting on the excitement that they get from the Core. And I think we sell the students short by not giving them depth. I really do. Somehow we need to figure out a way, it will take work on the part of the faculty, to integrate. I would like to see a much more integrative Core instead of pick and choose and the old style because what they are choosing is not very demanding.

[47:08](#) **GN:** Yeah, they don't take that more demanding--. Although, Margaret was pointing out yesterday, that they do really want to have their grades. They are insistent on making sure--. They do want to be able to, not necessarily have the internships and work experience, they want to go to graduate school. They want to move on to the next level because you have to have good grades to get into graduate school and graduate school would move them into a better lifestyle

[47:35](#) **DC:** Right, right. I will tell you, Gus, that it may just be generational, but the students I have in their twenties and thirties and forties, they are very concerned about their grades. Very concerned. When I finally got the message, and that's why I became an academic. It was just natural. When I finally got the message, I had these two instructors, they really turned me on. I never worried about a grade after that because I knew that I was going to know all the material. I was just going to study everything I could possibly study in that course as I was taking it. And the grade? The grade was

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irrelevant to me only because I was enthralled by the subject. So I feel, maybe similarly to many of my undergraduate colleagues--. I asked the students to introduce themselves. You know, online. "I'm James Jones. I'm the director of, the CFO of--." This is somebody who wrote to me yesterday, the person I told you I had three years ago in a seminar. "I'm Kevin and I have three courses to go. Thank you very much." The students in graduate, just measure their time in as if they're in a prison. [Laughs] Time in! Time out! Like there are hash marks on the prison wall! [Laughs] And I rail at them, I say "You're crazy! This is not what I am here for." They measure themselves by the courses. How many they have and what their grade is going to be. They want to be very precise and [say], "This says in the syllabus that this is twenty percent. And how exactly are you going to measure this twenty percent?" I will usually try to kid them. I'll say, "Randomly!" [Laughter] You know, something like this just to goad them. But they really want a straight answer.

[49:29](#) **GN:** Okay, moving on to something else now. You've been here, we said at the beginning, for a good twenty, twenty-nine, thirty-three years, something like that. What are some of your personal sentiments? Why did you stay?

[49:42](#) **DC:** I enjoyed the collegueship. I enjoyed the commitment of my colleagues to what they were doing, what they are doing.

[49:59](#) **GN:** Did you see Marist as an opportunity to play a part in its development?

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[50:53](#) **DC:** Oh, let me also mention something to you. I was offered a position at Harvard. Lyman Abbott offered me a position at Harvard. It was particularly during my really heavy--. I was giving, at the political science meetings, the major political science meetings, when I had the public administration and public policy subsections, I was giving papers in each of them. And, just as an aside, people began to see that some of us were giving multiple papers, squeezing out others and then the Executive Council said, "Only one paper per conference." But anyway, I was doing a lot of work on what's called implementation and I have a little bit of an identity with that, still. And I got approached by Lyman Abbott who, his field was ethics, a wonderful, wonderful man. Their view at Harvard is: come here for five years; teach one course a semester; salary is no object; we'll give you all the assistance you want but we expect multiple publications every year and your ticket out of here is the fact that Harvard's on your resume. There was a certain security in getting tenure and maybe that also kind of lulled me into staying. But every year has been a challenge. Every year I participate in some new ventures. For the past two years, I have been barking at creating the Distance Learning Committee. And I petitioned and finally we now have a Distance Learning Committee. Let me just mention, so you have the word about the future here, I see distance learning as part of our future, very much so. I see graduate distance learning as part of our future.

[51:45](#) **GN:** Do you see distance learning, undergraduate, as a part of it?

[51:48](#) **DC:** D.C. No, graduate, principally graduate. I think the undergraduate will falter.

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Students come to a place like Marist to become socialized face to face and to grow personally and also to get an education. And, if they can, to get an education! [Laughter]

[51:50](#) **GN:** Yeah, that's on the side!

[51:53](#) **DC:** Yeah. But the other parts are very important to the students who come to a private school, an away from home private school, and I think we supply the students amply. But in the future, and people know my sentiments on this, I think we need to create what is called a shadow organization at the college that focuses principally on graduate and distance learning. Now people have said, "well you want to turn this into the University of Phoenix." I said, "why not? They have three hundred thousand students. Nearly all are graduates. And they are hardly accredited. So you're going to tell me that three hundred thousand students can be easily fooled and that their employers are not giving them recognition after getting these degrees? Of course they are! Some of the employers are probably even paying for these degrees. A hesitancy on part of my colleagues--I know you may want to talk a little more about undergraduate, but I am not in that area so I have to focus on what I'm engaged in--my colleagues don't want to give up the face to face. And that is, for me, problematic. Because, believe it or not Gus, what I see myself doing, and how Marist can make money off of me, a lot of money off of me: I teach two courses a semester but I teach maybe two hundred students each semester and I supervise four or five adjuncts. So the students are taking the adjuncts and I don't have chats with students, they have chats with students. I have chats with them and I monitor what they do every day.

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[53:53](#) **GN:** Yet two hundred students are paying the tuition anyway. Now where do these students come from for the most part?

[53:58](#) **DC:** Believe it or not, half of them come from within one hundred miles. For them, saving on the gas, saving on the wear and tear of running back and forth, finding parking is even a pain at night. So half of them come from within one hundred miles and the other half are scattered all over. This person yesterday wrote me, comes from the middle of Massachusetts.

[54:21](#) **GN:** And the advantage for the most part of online is that you can take it at your own leisure.

[54:27](#) **DC:** Yeah! We have majors and captains taking the course from NATO headquarters, taking it from Afghanistan. And they work hard, they work hard as anybody else. In fact, we had a graduation in Afghanistan, you may recall, by video conference a few years ago. It was on C.N.N. believe it or not. [Laughs] Dennis conferred the degree on two people. It was really very nice. And both were taking my seminar, and I've remained friendly with them ever since. One reason for one of them, his family is from across the river. So now I see the future as being distance learning and graduate education.

[55:15](#) **GN:** Okay. Again, a switch. I want you to say something about your own

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noteworthy accomplishments in terms of awards and Fulbrights or whatever. And if you could just take one example from a talk, what would be that concept that stands out to you, one of the more successful ones. They're all successes, yes, but if there's one particular one that could be symbolic. What would you speak of if you went to Tokyo on-
-?

[55:54](#) **DC:** Well. I can tell you. I'm going to go back. I've had two Fulbright fellowships both to Japan. I'm also on their Graduate Review Committee and I have been ever since 1990. Going to Japan is quite a feat, partly because it's English speaking at the universities and, this is no false modesty on my part, you have to go through numerous committees to get a Fulbright fellowship to Japan. Margaret and I have had lots of memorable moments in Japan but in terms of the academic part, the talk part--. I wasn't trying to be contentious but in 1990, when Japan's economy was just about falling apart, I gave a lecture on why it was necessary for the Japanese government to go into deep hawk to borrow whatever money it could to stimulate the economy. And I spoke about it, I gave the reasons for it, what I thought the outcomes would be, particularly in getting out of the morass that they were in. My academic colleagues were really affronted by this. This was all in English now, so I didn't miss anything in the conversation. They were taking me to task because they said things like "Well, you're not going to turn us into a debtor nation. It's going to make us ruinous and so on." Well, what has happened, almost prophetically, is two things. One: they are now among the world's largest debtor nations but for the wrong reasons because they went into debt slowly instead of massively to get them out of their morass, their financial morass. And second, not only

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are they heavily in debt but they still are suffering from the same financial crisis because Japanese culture has a very difficult time dealing with matters preemptively. You may say that Pearl Harbor was that kind of--. They felt they were in a box and that's why they did what they did at Pearl Harbor. They felt that they had no choice. When they feel they have no choice, Japanese culture may act preemptively but most cultures like to believe they do have choices and so they act incrementally. They don't take any bold steps. The Japanese have a very famous statement. They say, "The nail that sticks up highest gets hit hardest." So everybody, the group mentality, still prevails even among my academic colleagues and even my younger academic colleagues. So that was a memorable moment because to the best of my knowledge I was somewhat predictive of the situation that they were going to face. But for them I was proposing an American solution. The kind of get out of jail quickly card which they don't buy. I actually was surprised, I thought I was going to win over my academic colleagues but I didn't. That was a memorable talk that I gave. Most of the other talks that I've given are on whatever my research of the day happens to be. Whether it's implementation or more recently it's been on electronic government which is one of my interests.

[59:42](#) **GN:** We have pretty much come to. You talked about the future and how is Marist going to survive. You see it from an academic point of view and a technology point of view and how we will be able to develop. How about this, what are the assets of Marist? What do we have going for us?

[01:00:07](#) **DC:** Well, I hate to be silly saying this, I'll sound as if I'm some politician. It's

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people. The students who come here are really wet behind the ears. They really are. But they graduate with a purpose and I think the institution provides them with the wherewithal. They grow here. They grow because the faculty really are committed to them. They work with them. I tell my colleagues in management, publicly, I say, "Don't love the students too much." I tell them that publicly. I say, "You're going to get in trouble if you love them too much. Concentrate on your research and your publications. That will make more and better students come here." I say that tongue in cheek of course but basically I don't think Marist has lost anything in the movement from the Brotherhood. Period. I think the same kind of person exists here. Highly involved with the students. Greatly committed to the community, the Marist community and the larger community and they are basically easy to work with. There are some difficult people here and there and I've run across them because I see the communications when I've been a member of rank and tenure. But other than that few, it's a handful, our greatest asset is the willingness to put the shoulder to the grindstone and I remember that from my first days here. I remember how gratified John Scileppi was and he hugged me. He knew that bringing in two hundred and fifty students, we would be going into the black. And we all got raises, in that September-October they came in. Of course, Linus [Richard Foy] was a very straight guy, an up front guy and he knew the money was there so he distributed it. He could have pocketed it, I'm sure, put it to some building or something like that but he wasn't built that way and I don't think anybody at the College is built that way. Dennis's involvement with the baseball, and the basketball, and the football. I mean he's here every day, you know?

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[01:02:39](#) **GN:** I was going to touch on another point there. What's your view on the stadium? Do you think it was a good investment?

[01:02:46](#) **DC:** Actually, yes. Even for symbolic reasons. It took so many years to get the stadium and then all of our competitors bailed out, right. That's the question you're really asking me. So now we have to play people all over the U.S. and it costs a bundle of money to fly to California to play these people. But I think--.

[01:03:11](#) **GN:** People know you when you play them, so California now knows about Marist.

[01:03:15](#) **DC:** Yeah, okay, so that's good publicity. I have no problem with that. And even if it's now principally used for lacrosse and for soccer, that's not a problem. But I think, again like the field house, it's a symbol. Of course, the field house is more than symbol, it's practical, it's real. I think just having some kind of physical presence that's a halfway decent looking stadium that people see from the road, that potential parents see, I think that's valuable. I don't think it was a waste of money.

[01:03:48](#) **GN:** Good. All right, final point, if you had a chance to talk to the Board of Trustees about Marist College, what would you like to tell them?

[01:04:00](#) **DC:** Want me to tell you the God's honest truth, as a mother would say? I would say, "Replace yourselves with people who are willing to give no less than one

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million dollars a year, each and every year.” That's what I would say to them. “Stay on if you're willing to give at least a million dollars a year, every year from now on.” Dennis has been great in getting people to put their name on a building and they give a certain amount of money but we wind up paying the bill. Not only for the upkeep but for the creation of that building. I think we need to have a national board who have national credentials, who have national money and are willing to up our endowment substantially over the next few years. I don't know how we will get it but I can tell you this. Whoever Dennis' replacement is that, will be the kind of person that the Board should ask to have. This is probably shocking to you.

[01:05:05](#) **GN:** It is because it's a kind of a very practical, pragmatic point. I thought that you would talk about the idealism of a three-three teaching load.

[01:05:15](#) **DC:** I teach three-three. I mean, I want two-two. Let me tell you something, two people refused to interview us because--We wanted them, one was a woman so in terms of diversity and so on, but she also had excellent credentials. She said, “I've been offered a two-two by two places, one city college and the other at Pace. Why the hell would I even talk with you?” Three-three we give the graduate teachers here. So I want two-two. But I believe we need a national board, national credentials. We have an international faculty now. I'm giving a talk in Rio de Janeiro, somebody is giving a talk in Australia and we're all over the place. Okay? Internationally peer reviewed places, ok. And the administration has expected that of us and we rose to the occasion. Now we expect something of the administration and of the trustees and they need to rise to the

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monetary occasion, I believe.

[01:06:13](#) **GN:** And finally Donald, how long do you think you are going to stay here?

[01:06:16](#) **DC:** For the rest of my life.

[01:06:17](#) **GN:** Will you retire?

[01:06:18](#) **DC:** No.

[01:06:19](#) **GN:** With your boots on.

[01:06:20](#) **DC:** With my boots on. They'll find me in my office, eating my vegetables.

Margaret and I give a good deal of money to the college, by our own standards and in commensurate with our income. We give at least ten percent of our income, more than ten percent of our income to Marist every year. We give at least fifteen percent of our income to Marist every year. How about that?

[1:06:49](#) **GN:** Uh-huh. Well, I hope you stay on for a good number of years.

[1:06:53](#) **DC:** What I'm trying to say to you is, I'm kind of an asset. So in other words, I've always contributed financially from the very beginning. [Laughs] You could say--. I never even heard that term 'contingent' with me. But that's how much I love the institution and

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Margaret and I love it so we give money to it without blinking an eye. Without blinking an eye. And we intend to give more. And maybe we will do something for our parents. You know, in their name. So that I should make more money, so that I should give more money. How about that? And that's what I'm going to do. That's what we are doing. I love the place. I love the people in it. I have not always gotten along, in terms of the prevailing point of view. I didn't like going away from that core and going into this thing that we now have. I wanted something substantial.

[01:07:51](#) **GN:** Okay, Donald. Thank you very much. It's been a very interesting run.

[01:07:54](#) **DC:** Thank you, very good.

End of Interview