

SHAILEEN KOPEC

**Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
Transcribed by Jamie Edwards
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections**

Transcript – Shaileen Kopec

Interviewee: Shaileen Kopec

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Summary: Shaileen's comments on her various positions at Marist. This includes: her unique experiences, comments on the Marist Brothers, her opinions of the three presidents at Marist, and how Marist has changed over the past twenty-five years.

Gus Nolan: This is an interview with the Vice-President of College Advancement, Shaileen Kopec. We are in the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room on the Marist College campus. The date is November 8th, 2001. The interviewer is Gus Nolan.

Shaileen, could you say something about your own personal life? First, what is your full name?

Shaileen Kopec: My full name is Shaileen Catherine Kopec and my maiden name is Sullivan.

GN: Were you named after another member of the family?

SK: No, my middle name Catherine is my mother's first name, but she goes by Jean and it was also her mother's name, and yes, the Catherine's were the sake go back in the Clancy family.

GN: Where does Shaileen come from?

SK: Oh, I knew you'd ask that question. Now it's going to be recorded for all posterity. My mother always liked that name, and she heard it when she was a little girl. The garbage man had a granddaughter named Shaileen that was in their neighborhood, and that's where she heard the name, so I'm named after the garbage man's granddaughter.

[Laughter.]

GN: Interesting. Where were you born and when if you care to reveal that?

SK: Oh yeah. I was born September 22, 1946 in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

GN: Do you have any siblings?

SK: Yes, I have two brothers. Jim is a year and a half older than I am, and Bob is ten years younger.

GN: Can you say something now about your hometown please?

SK: I grew up in Milford, Connecticut. Until I was ten years old, we lived in a section of Milford called, “Devon.” And then, when I was ten, we moved to a section called “Morning Side” which was right on Long Island sound, so it was just great growing up with the beach near by. When I was younger, on the weekends we would go to the beach because we would go further inland. But then when we moved to Morning Side, we lived right on the water and it really was a great place to grow up. Milford was considered a small town then but it’s a Connecticut town, which means it’s a much more bustling kind of an area than this area. I went to Devon grammar school, and then Point Beach grammar school, and then I went to Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Luralton Hall, which was in downtown Milford so I’d take the public bus to school.

GN: And what were your parents’ names and what was your father’s occupation?

SK: Well, both my parents were journalists. My father was James C. Sullivan, he worked at a number of New York City newspapers before he – and New Jersey papers – before he bought a weekly newspaper in Devon, Connecticut and then he bought another one in West Haven, Connecticut. And my mother worked with him on the development of the newspapers. He died when I was fifteen years old, and my mother took over as publisher of the West Haven paper, which is the remaining paper that they had. And she was also the editor, and responsible for all the business activities and so forth. When she sold that paper, she went to work for the New Haven Register, where she was a consumer writer and she was also an editor there. Journalism was always there, it was kind of interesting. When I was growing up, newspapers were letterpress and they made that transition to off set and of course, now they’ve gone into an entirely different direction.

But I remember as I little girl, going up to the print shop and seeing the presses and it was kind of a grungy place with all the ink and everything, but the people loved it there. They had all kinds of people working there and they were metal slugs produced from molten lead, you know, trying to make the linotype and all those sort of things.

GN: Do you have an idea of the circulation and how big, and was it a daily paper, or?

SK: No, it was a weekly newspaper. Circulation was probably about ten thousand. The thing that was very interesting about it was at that period of time weekly newspapers really had roles in communities. They helped build community, but they also were kind of the watch dogs of what went on in regard to politics and you know, other issues that had to do with...well, the nitty gritty of cities, that bigger papers don't get into, it was only in them - school boards and things like that. So it was a very interesting education, which I didn't appreciate until I was much older. But there were a lot great conversations at the dinner table about politics and you know, what made communities work. I think those were very formative things that I can look back on.

GN: Very interesting. What about you're continuing with education? After high school, where did you go to college and what degrees did you get?

SK: I went to Emmanuel College in Boston, which is right on the Finway, which has been a women's college up until last year – it went co-ed this year after eighty years. I have a B.A. in English, I minored in sociology. While I was working in my first job, which was at the University of New Haven, I went to school part-time at Fairfield University. I have an M.A. in education with a concentration in American studies.

GN: Okay, again, in your personal life, when were you married and now would you tell me about your children as well?

SK: Tony and I were married...well, we've been married thirty years just a couple of weeks ago, October 16, 1971 in Woodmont Connecticut at St. Annes Church. We met while we were in college, on a blind date, and we have two great girls. Christina, or Tina as we call her, is twenty-five. She went to Holy Cross and she works for Fidelity Investments in Boston in the legal department. And Elizabeth, or Liz as we call her, is twenty-one and she's a senior at Bay Path College in Longmeadow, Mass. where she's majoring in liberal studies and is a pretty good writer. So I was kind of happy she went into liberal studies. Tina was an English major too. Tony was a math major, but they got all the English major genes from me. [Laughter.]

GN: Okay, changing the focus a little bit now. What drew you to Marist and how is it that you found yourself working for Marist?

SK: Well, Tony and I were getting married in October, and I started a job search in the summer. I was very proactive. I contacted colleges and universities in the area, hospitals – I think that was it, colleges and universities and hospitals. I just called up and said, “I’m relocating to the area, and I have had three years experience at University of New Haven where I was the assistant director of public relations. I had done a lot of publications work: advertising, college spokesperson, very diverse work, I had worked with alumni and homecoming events and things of that nature.” So I felt that I had a pretty broad based background and that I could slot into a college or university, or even a hospital in that sense. And I did get quite a few interviews, which were open ended. One that was kind of interesting was at Dutchess, so I almost ended up at Dutchess instead of Marist. There were no openings at Marist. I did interview with Jack Dougherty, who was the director of development then, he was the first director of development and a

legend at Marist. Who incidentally, many years later, Jack worked for me. And Jack worked until he was like eighty-five years old so there's another interesting story with regard to Jack. But when I went to Dutchess, they had an opening for the assistant director of student affairs or the campus center or whatever. And actually, I went through a whole series of interviews, but I decided that wasn't really what I wanted to do. I really wanted to stick with the writing and the PR. So I did work for a non-profit organization, it was during the seventies where the jobs were very sparse in the area. There was a recession on, and a lot of things going on in the seventies. And I was kind of getting ready to move out from this non-profit because it was not very challenging at that point, and I got a call from Jack Dougherty, when I was just ready to start my job search. And he said, "You know, we still have your resume and file and would you like to apply for the alumni director position?" So I said, "Yeah, I would really be interested." So I'll never forget coming here and there was another person who was being interviewed at the time and he was getting ready to go in and I was waiting. And that person was Paul Brown, who many years later, hired me as the director of development who became the Vice President for college advancement at Marist. He's an interesting guy, you should interview him. So he did not get the job. I beat Paul out for the job, which was good for Paul, because he ended up going to, I think, Guam with the Marist Brothers and then he decided to become a journalist and he got his degree from Columbia school of Journalism, and he's just had a fabulous career – worked in government and all kinds of interesting things as you know. The other person, who was sort of a player in this but opted out, was Bill O'Reilly, who Jack asked, "would you like to be the alumni director?" Now, back then, there was really no affirmative action. It was a very informal process,

plus Marist was somewhat of an informal place in many ways. So Jack could, you know, could recruit people and say, “would you like the job?” But Bill, who is really a stand up guy, said that he had a commitment to the Marist Brothers. He was down in Florida where he was teaching, so he stuck with that. So Bill was not the competition, and I just had more experience than Paul. But one of the interesting things a couple of years later – and you have to remember that this is 1972 – there were alumni that were on the search committee. And, of course, they were all men because that’s basically the graduates of the college. And I remember one of them - who I still know his name and I’m still friendly with – said to me about two years later, he said, “you know, we really didn’t want to hire you because first of all you weren’t an alum, and second you were a woman.” And I go, “oh, that’s interesting.” But he did compliment me and say I had great experience. And so that was kind of interesting little...you know, it said a lot about Marist, I thought. Because about two years later when I was working for Marist, I ran into somebody who had interviewed me for this Dutchess job. And I saw him at the conference, and I thought oh I met that fella I’m gonna go over, you know, I started walking over and he looked at me and his eyes got big and he looked at me and he said, “Uh! I would’ve hired you, but the other women in the office, the secretaries; they didn’t want a woman working for them. Or, they didn’t want to work for woman.” I was like, “boy!” So that was very telling because at Marist, that was not an issue, even though it was still a very male environment. I thought that was kind of interesting, to contrast the two. The other being a public institution where that was probably against the law. But anyways, I ended up in the right place and I’m very grateful for it.

GN: Do you want to say a little bit more about being in the right place as kind of the principle woman there and not too many women around? What kind of environment was it, and how did you feel, and were you at home, and the support that you got or didn't get?

SK: Well, first of all, I'm trying to remember the women that were here. Nancy O'Brien was the recorder, or the registrar, Helen O'Connor or Connor was the nurse, Evelyn Rimai Fisher was in charge of design and she was also head of the art department. I know there were a few women that were here teaching. You know, the thing that was interesting is that I was so young and you don't think you're young when you're twenty-five. I was so young that I kind of didn't notice a lot of the things that might have been issues relative to like just going ahead and getting my job done and I think that was an advantage in the sense that I didn't feel isolated, you know. The one thing I did feel more than female, I felt young, but the funny thing was that, now that I'm much older, I look back at some of those, they were all men on the faculty that used to sit down at the Rathskeller and have a sandwich, they weren't that much older than I was, they were five or six years older, but they had families and they were established and everything. So, everything's relative, you know it's like when you're in high school and you're fifteen and someone is seventeen, it's like they're twenty-five years older than you are. So all compress, I see these people retire and I go, "They're not that much older than I am." So that was another The thing that was great about Marist was that, and I think it's to this day, is that you are given responsibilities and you can carry through. You know what you have to get done and there is the freedom to figure out how to do it. There's confidence, I mean you have to obviously be confident I think to do it. So there was

always that confidence that things could be accomplished. The other thing that had an enormous impact on me was, first of all I was working in Greystone, and so I was on the first floor of Greystone. The admissions office was there. We always said it looked like a dentist's office; remember the frosted glass and the little chairs. It was not a very welcoming place. I was in the back. Dave Flynn was on one side; he was director of admissions and I was in this other little space. Then Jack had the director of development. So we were kind of all, can you imagine how small that was at that time? We were all kind of in this little space. Linus Foy, who was President at the time, was very committed to developing the Alumni organization even though it was small, only a couple of thousand graduates. It took us twenty years to graduate a thousand graduates, which is very unusual for a school, a college. If we look at peer institutions that are similar ages, they have many more alumni and they have a critical mass and a mature constituency and we're, we don't have that. We have to kind of look at people as an aggregate from 1947-1966 and include it like that. I would meet with Linus once a week for one hour, and, you know Linus, he is to this day a consummate teacher. He really, no matter what the subject, he wants to be supportive and helpful. So I learned a lot about the culture of Marist, which at that time was going through an enormous sea change, literally. And, one of the things that kind of helped me adapt to Marist was, I had been at a Catholic women's college and I was sensitive to the changes that were going on because of the... what was going on with the religious order at that institution and also what was going on as a result of the changes in the Church. And also, very political environment, which was not very evident at Marist, but it, was more evident when I was going to school in Boston. So I came out of that, I went to the University of New Haven.

I was in another college environment, very different type of institution and then I came to Marist. I always felt that that was good because I had other experiences and I could contrast it and I always looked at the things that were so much more positive and better rather than the things that were different and maybe not as up to par because these other schools were older institutions. And the thing that struck me when I was here was, unlike other institutions that were Catholic institutions at the time, when people left their religious order, whether they were nuns or brothers or priests, they were gone. They did not stay on the college campuses and I was amazed because people were saying, “yeah, well he was a former brother.” It was like everyone was a former brother [laughter] and I thought this is a pretty amazing place because where I went to school, and it’s not a criticism, it’s just the way it was at the time, but there were few women who left the order, one of whom was the advisor of the school newspaper when I was the editor and it was like they just vaporized. There was no discussion where they went; you couldn’t get in touch with them. Somebody else walked into the classroom. It was really weird and here, it struck me and Linus had explained. He said, “These men are great teachers and one day they’re brothers and great teachers, the next day they’re not Brothers, but still great teachers and that’s why we need to have them here at this college.” I thought that was pretty amazing. At my young age, I recognized that that was very extraordinary. So there was something about the Marist Brothers, that had, I knew that that had to be something about the order. Even the people that were in the order and the men that were drawn to it. I also had great respect for the former Brothers because it was clear that they were very well educated, and they were educated at Marist College and plus they were educated elsewhere and they had masters and doctorate degrees as well. But it was clear

there was a core of men who were at Marist College, shaping Marist College in the early, earliest, early years of it being a four institution that were really gifted and talented. Now some of them did, as you know and you know better than I, went off to other colleges and universities and did other things and some of them have become very distinguished as authors and educators and so forth. But there was something about this place that was definitely very different. The other thing too, was I didn't realize how young Marist College was. I was born in 1946 and that's when Marist College became a four-year school. So, Marist was as young as I was. But I didn't realize until many years later, and this is also a good thing because I think it would've gotten in the way if I thought it was a liability, and that was that a school that is that young does not have the credibility. It has to build the credibility. Sometimes it's just a matter of aging, but other times it's, and Marist has proven this because in thirty years, or the twenty-nine years that I've been here, the changes in the institution are enormous, but those things that usually take a lot of time and that you can't force through resources or public relations, or whatever, you have to have that substance. It is really amazing how that has been so accelerated to bring Marist to where it is today in terms of its academic standing. It's notoriety on a lot of fronts because those, there are other schools that are about the same year we are and they're just not in the same league. There are, conversely, schools that are much older than we are that we compete for peer institutions and that we're compared with. And I think it has a lot to say about where people just work together all the time to move the agendas forward and we've had great leadership. I mean, the three presidents, we've had six presidents but there's three--.

GN: Okay, we will get to those questions subsequently, but on the subject of the early years and some of the sea changes that were made there, there are two that I would like you, the move and the college's decision to go co-ed. Did you play a part in that in any way or how did you see it, or was it worked through by---?

SK: No, that all happened before I came because I came in '72 and I was not really aware of how difficult that transition was for the women that were here, as it was at any institution that went co-ed and there were loads of them that were going co-ed. I was kind of the end of an era, graduating in 1968 in fact one of the reasons my alma mater began to crash was because they all started, the women all started going to Boston College and Holy Cross. They were terrific academically; the women that had gone to my school and basically these two institutions and others kind of drained the women away because they went co-ed. So, the things that were going on at Marist were probably typical that were happening elsewhere, but I was not really that aware of it until years later when I began to get to know women that were here in the seventies as graduates of the college. But, it's still was, there were a lot of growing pains, I think, that had to be made in terms of transition. When you're... there weren't many women on the faculty. You do need to have women role models if you're a woman. You have to. Not just for the women but for the men because I think the most difficult thing that has to be jumped over in terms where women kind of get this equality professionally is that men don't see women in leadership roles. And so they never have to confront whether they think women are capable of those leadership roles and that's why you need a critical mass I think of women to be in those roles because then it becomes like, "oh yeah, they can do it."

GN: In these thirty years now, there's been significant changes. The college has tipped has it not, to more females than male? And the dominance I would think of women, almost in my department, in communications, the chair of the department, I think some of the advertising professors, Dr. Lawrence and Dr. Karen Crawley, and the advertising field is in the hands of women. So, is there, from an administrator's point of view, much of a different college out there, or is it, has it been pretty much melded into the same thing that it was. Is that same fundamental spirit there?

SK: Yes, I do see the same spirit and the same themes that are at Marist. But Marist is a very different place, in other respects. Its two things. I think that people who do come to Marist, and I know when I hire people for my department, it's absolutely critical that people understand what the mission of the institution is and that they feel comfortable with it and strong about it because we are huge advocates for it. We're asking people to invest in the institution, so you have to really believe in the mission. And I think people, the things that were here when I came that I think were here when the Brothers were here, is a sense of community. There is, one of the things that I saw, I've seen dozens and dozens of times to be validated, and that is that the Brothers didn't say something couldn't get done, they'd say how can we do it. They'd find a way to do it and I think that the best example is how they built the campus. In order to be this four-year school, they had to have certain facilities and they didn't have any money to do it. And I think also that fact, that throughout its years, even to this day, Marist is not a wealthy institution. I can tell you right now that we don't have fifty alumni that are waiting to give us a million dollars each or ten million dollars or whatever. We are always, there is going to be a long, long period, I will be long gone, we'll all be long gone before there

ever is this kind of golden age of philanthropy at Marist from the point of view of abundant philanthropic resources. Which is very typical, by the way, of the evolving of the institution. But the fact that Marist has always had to be resourceful and I think the Brothers gave us good examples of how to be resourceful. I think also that people do work together they work in teams. People come together and get things done. It's, I think that's part of the Marist quality. I think also there's a spirit of, we always want to make it better. And a lot of places don't accept that because when you say you want to make it better, it almost sounds like things aren't good enough. And when you say things aren't good enough, it means like things are bad, or they're inferior. But that is not the case when find a young institution like Marist was. When you only have one place to go and that's forward and I think that are, have always been standards of excellence. I know as, in every job I've had, it's been very clear to me what had to get accomplished and what was acceptable. You never talked about what was unacceptable because it was like, this is what has to be done type thing. So I think those things are true. But Marist is a very different place than it was thirty years ago. There are obvious things in terms of the campus and so forth, but the students are different. They're more diverse—

GN: More widespread, coming from a greater area--.

SK: Geographically. Of course, there are more women because there are more women graduating from high school that are college-bound than men. That's a big issue in all schools, trying to maintain that balance between men and women. But I think there, Marist has been able to kind of keep enriching dimensions to the campus in ways it wasn't able to do it prior. For example, in the mid-seventies when we built the McCann Center. Well, prior to that, you know there was just this little gym and if you missed the

door, you went flying out the door with a basketball, or something crazy like that, I don't know. There was no place for people to sit it was just this tiny little gym that the Brothers built. But Marist then made a commitment saying it's important that we have athletics. It builds spirit; it offers opportunity for visibility for the institution, etc. So Marist has kind of started to bring in these dimensions to this institution and make commitments to it and develop quality in those areas. Unless you've seen that evolving, you kind of can't appreciate how great the accomplishment is in all of those areas.

GN: I think you play a good part in bringing these about and I'll go through some of the specifics if you to comment on them. Let's go back to one of your first positions as alumni director. You worked with a very small group, two thousand at most I think in the first years and then developed such things as the alumni news and the gradual development for bringing homecoming week back to campus and bringing graduates back. Do you recall any of those and some of the problems that were involved in it and the success story's there?

SK: Right, I was the first full-time alumni director. They had, Marist had had a part-timer that, one of them was Don Murphy, who taught at Poughkeepsie Middle School, and so forth. The fact that Marist was hiring a full time director meant that they really wanted to focus on what is the mission of alumni, what mission can alumni fulfill, but at the same time, there was always an awareness that there wasn't a huge number of them. Also, they, I always describe the Marist alumni and especially since I ended up back in development in the last twelve to fifteen years, as kinda like a salami. I mean it has all these different slices to it. They're different eras, they're very distinct eras. Obviously, the forties and the fifties were very much the Brother era and then the transition in the

sixties where male students came in. Those particular classes in there they have very strong identities and have great reunions. And then when women came in and the adult students who came in and a lot of IBMers that came in. And then the seventies were really rough times at Marist because of the economy the oil embargos and all those things had a huge impact at Marist. It was a real challenge to keep it together in terms of resources. And in the eighties, things began to stabilize and there were some new directions that we went into. The nineties, now the nineties students are completely different from everybody and half of our alumni graduated from 1990 to the present. So, they're very young and all of these groups are products of their own generations and their own decades and what was going on at Marist. Now to me, the absolute extraordinary thing about, and I can say this because, believe me, I know these alumni, I've been to, I figured out I went to my fourteenth homecoming reunion. Well, it was always reunion, but homecoming weekend, this passed couple of weeks ago. And that is that, almost to a person, the graduates of Marist appreciate and value what Marist is today. You don't hear people having major issues with, "Well that's not the way it was when I was there, so I don't relate to it." And I think that says a lot about the quality of the relationships, it's all about the relationships. I think it's with their faculty, with their fellow students. It's the people that kind of have bonded that across the era and you won't get that in a lot of schools. A lot of schools would be like, "what's that place like now. I'm on that campus and I feel like a stranger." Where as our alumnus come on the campus and they're so proud. The library, I mean. So many students went to this college and did not have a great library. If you were at the front end of the relocation of the library, you had a great library. [Laughter] But then that kind of quickly dissipated and then it would be

the next wave or the next new library. You don't hear people say, "ugh...I wish we had this, boy and on my education..." or whatever. It isn't that way and I think that's because everybody really feels very strongly about Marist. I think they're very strong, positive feelings.

GN: On the subject of feelings toward about Marist and other involvements, would you comment about such things as the tour of the Soviet Union, the College Friendship Group, and then Marist College President's Club, and the Marist College Red Fox Club?

SK: Oh ok.

GN: Any of those in particular?

SK: Well, I was asked to be a chaperone on the friendship tour to the Soviet Union. Of course the person you need to talk to is Casimir Norkeliunas because he took many students to the Soviet Union. That was absolutely extraordinary experience and I can say that all these other students that have gone over the years on these tours, I'm sure they had equally extraordinary experiences. We were there one month before Reagan came over and Glasnosts and Perestroika were kind of bursting on the scene. Now I remember listening to Dan Rather and I thought, "Heck, I could've said all that." It was like, what's new, because we had an extraordinary experience and Caz, he is the person you want to go with because he knows everything about the Soviet Union and the politics and the culture and everything. And so it was an extraordinary, extraordinarily rich experience and I'm sure, I don't know how many students have gone on all those trips, it really would be good to talk with Caz about it. But you could not go on that trip and not be changed in some way because we were in a repressive society. We went to Moscow, we went to Leningrad it was called at the time, and then we went to Moscow and it was just

amazing. If you haven't been in a society like that, you just don't... you came back feeling, I remember walking into the Stop and Shop and thinking, wow. This is one store and believe me all the places we went, there wasn't...if you put everything that was in all the stores that were probably in a two hundred mile radius, they wouldn't have filled up the Stop and Shop. I mean, that's probably superficial because of the consumer thing, but it was an example of how you really appreciated the freedom that we had. But, at the same time, the thing that was extraordinary about Russia was how cultured people were and how much they loved art and music and ballet and how they preserved it. There was a reverence for it. So, I think that was a great example of the students that studied abroad from Marist or had opportunities to go on these tours, had a tremendous exposure that had to change your outlook on things.

GN: Ok, how about the Red Fox Club. That has done a lot, it seems to me, internally in bonding the followers of the basketball team, which is expanding now, or has expanded considerably.

SK: Yeah, Tony and I joined the Red Fox Club, I think when, in the early years. So, we join and rejoin every year. One of the things that have been great, one of the things that are unusual about the Red Fox Club, compared to other booster organizations is that the majority of people in it are not graduates of Marist College. Most of those booster clubs are, have a lot of alumni that are in it and they carry it in it. It's a real testament to Marist that the people in the community, particularly ones that graduated from other institutions, that want, are kind of drawn in by this Marist mystique or whatever, the spirit. And they're the ones that really carry the leadership. We've had, it's been a great source of

fun for us in the sense that, as our kids were growing up, they were always coming to games, and we just love Marist basketball.

GN: Let's come to some of your own personal roles here in terms of your present position now as Vice President for Advancement. Would you single out some of the unique experiences you've had there. We've been blessed with a number of fortuitous things that have come our way and I'm sure it doesn't come by accident. What could you say about some of these events?

SK: Well, it would be very interesting to have a separate module on Development at Marist where a lot of these things could be filled in. I would know from institutional memory, having worked twenty-nine years here and Linus would know, having been at the very front end of it. When I first took over as vice president and I had been acting vice president for eighteen months, one of the first things I had to do was construct a report for Middle States on fundraising at Marist. There wasn't a lot of understanding about the role of Development at Marist and there was not a lot of appreciation for, and I say this having been not the one carrying the ball at that time, talking about the people preceding me, so I think I can say this in somewhat of an objective way, even though I was involved in other roles. Appreciation in a sense of understanding how challenging it was to develop this Development program without having a critical mass of alumni and being a school that was still young and where foundations wouldn't give you the time of day. So Marist was always, in the very best sense of the word, scrapping to get these opportunities, to take advantage of these opportunities and to work hard and smart. Those breakthroughs that came were really, really significant. There were Title III grants of which I was not participating in, but those Title III grants were benchmarks for Marist.

GN: Could you spell out just a little detail for historical record? We're talking about a million dollars one year...

SK: Right and then there was a renewal. Again, I would say that I think it would be great to do something just on Development because the annual fund is less than twenty-five years old and we're basically only talking about maybe thirty-five years of Marist history, which would be very interesting for people that follow on in this position of Development. So maybe we could get a little group together to do that. There's a lot of documentation too, that was done during the Middle States. One of the things that Marist did and Linus Foy is in a much better position to speak about this than I and unfortunately Ed Waters is passed on and he would know even more so. Although John Lahey was very involved with Title III. Marist did realize that it could compete for federal funds. In other words, there was a confidence that, because of our mission and because of the fact that we could commit ourselves and work hard and smart, that we could qualify for some of these programs. So when I came here in the seventies, they were just a raft if you recall because a raft of federal programs because there's a lot of federal money that was available. Marist has always been opportunistic, in the best sense of the word, when it came to finding resources. Title III was significant because it was huge; it was a seven-figure gift. We were considered a developing institution, a lot of schools were like, "how did you get that, how did you get that?" And I again, I was not involved in that, but I know that there was a lot of very good strategic activity that was going on. But with Title III, if I recall its original focus, it gave a lot of seed money to various areas within the college, like career placement and, gosh, I don't know, there were a host of other areas. It allowed Marist to make a transition it desperately needed to

make in terms of strengthening its services, adding staff, and making a commitment to integrate that staff into the regular staff. And then, at the same time, there was overhead that was coming through, so there was revenue stream. Those were, someone really should record all that that knows all that because without one, there are a variety of things that would not have allowed the school to continue, but that was one of them. I wouldn't say that it was life or death, but well it might have been life or death, but there was a lot of life and death going on in the seventies, believe me. In terms of, in just in terms of fundraising overall how things have moved along?

GN: Even IBM grants and the cooperative study with IBM and technology we've been blessed with in terms of making a mark that we would do well.

SK: Yeah, I think the IBM partnership and the IBM relationship is an extraordinary thing for Marist. I can't tell you how many conferences I've been to where people run into me and go, "Marist, oh, how did you get all the support from IBM?" They were just; this was when the first Joint Study, we're now in Joint Study III. We're doing much more sophisticated things because it's evolved that way. I think that is a classic example of Marist ingenuity and Marist doing the things that it does best, developing these partnerships and also not saying "we can't do this," or "oh my gosh, this is going to overwhelm us. We don't have the staff, we don't have this..." That was like, okay, we have this opportunity and this is how we're going to proceed with it. And if we had not been in that partnership, which the whole way that it was brokered, it's something that there were years that preceded it. I mean the cultivation that Dennis [Murray] did was extraordinary. The people that he has involved on our board. Prior to that, Linus also had some relationships at IBM, but you should really talk to somebody about the origin

of the Joint Study because it started, as I understand, from the fact that our system needed to be migrated, or changed over and it was going to be at an enormous cost because we had our own homegrown system. You really should talk to... because it's a remarkable story. That also is an example where people all over the campus were working on it, one phase or another. Task forces and study groups and things like that. The thing that was amazing about that, the Joint Study in the eighties was, half, three-quarters, ninety percent of us didn't even know what we were talking about because there was no vocabulary for it. If you talk to other schools and you know how other schools manage their technology resources. If they don't have the resources, if they're like us and they don't have loads and loads of money that they can use in discretion, for discretionary purposes, then they're not where we are. And then you'll look at schools that are where we are and that's because they do have lots of resources that come... probably from their own alumni.

GN: I understand you took a course at Marist, at least one, in math.

SK: Yes I did, I got an A.

GN: I'm not surprised in math. [Laughter]

SK: I was!

GN: What moved you to do this? Was it just to see what it was like to be a student or was there a need that you wanted to increase your fire?

SK: Well, that's another kind of funny story in the sense. I was working part time at Marist and I also had my own advertising agency because people I knew who were asking me, "would you do this for me," so I kind of had my own advertising business. I just decided you know what; this is getting to be too much. I just want to stick with

doing some part time stuff for Marist, I'm going to close up my business, but I would like to work on an MBA. So I go and see my good friend, Ted Brenning. He tells me, well, I'm an English major and I'm gonna have to take umpteen credits and not only that, I'm going to have to take a math course to get in because he doubted my ability. Ted and I are good friends, so. So anyway, I took a course, an algebra course, after, thirty years or something, over at Dutchess, and I was never great at math. I was kind of like a B student in math, but I have to really work at math. So I got an A in the course, and I go "okay, I'm ready Ted to get in this MBA." Well no, not quite, those courses, you don't have quite all the topics. So, I was like, ok...well what am I supposed to do now? And he goes, "well you're gonna have to take calculus with business applications." And I'm going, good grief, I just got through algebra and now I'm going to jump into calculus with business applications. So, I actually was taking a course with a friend, here at Marist. We took both courses together and that was good. So I got through the course, I got an A which I thought was somewhat miraculous, in the sense of me being a little math phobic. It gave me a lot of confidence to realize that there's no such thing as math phobia, it just a matter of practice, some people have to practice more than others. But after I got that I had some opportunities to expand my work at Marist and I decided now if I get this MBA, am I going to be making, is it going to help me make anymore money? I already have a masters, I decided I could do better without it so that was the end of it. I didn't pursue it, which was a clever use of time, but I conquered my math phobia.

GN: Two or three ending questions, one, we had three modern day presidents at Marist, Brother Paul Ambrose, Dr. Foy, and Dr. Murray. What is your view of the leadership of each of these? Could you comment briefly on those?

SK: Well I have said this many times too many people, that I've felt that Marist has been blessed with extraordinary leadership. And each of those men was the man for the hour so to speak. Each of them, by virtue their leadership style, their priorities, their own personal talents, which all three of them are extraordinarily gifted men, they really are. They were what Marist needed at times when Marist was very, very vulnerable. When you consider 1946, trying to establish a four-year institution, you just can't create a four-year college. I mean, there are a lot of things you have to do, that are required, and there are resources that have to be gathered, you have to get the right people to teach their standards. It's just not something you can put together. And that was an amazing thing. What was done because Marist Brothers were not, they weren't the Jesuits. They weren't... they didn't have a history of developing universities and colleges. They didn't have any place to pull... and this was the college and this is where people were trained. And so, he knew how to do that. He knew how to make that all happen with regard to the state and was involved with hiring people. I know there were other people involved too. I know a lot of those names and I know you're getting all those names into the archives because it wasn't just one person, but he had a leadership role to play and he did an extraordinary job. Linus Foy, an extraordinary leader. Marist needed somebody that could make that transition. I bet you would look, I bet you wouldn't find anybody like this anywhere in higher education who was a Brother for many years as President and, of course we all know he was the youngest college President. I mean, I can't imagine being twenty-eight years old and taking over a college, and stayed on after being a layperson. I don't think that was happening in that period of time. So, he had to weather many, many changes that were taking place that were related to the culture of the institution and also

had to be right on the front line there making decisions about lay students and lay people and he involved people in Marist who are not just Catholic. I think he took the best elements of the Marist Brothers as men who reached out into the community to serve and it didn't have a Catholic face on it. I mean, it had Catholic with a little "c", but it didn't have this Catholic, and there were people brought on to this campus in the sixties that would've been unheard of at so-called Catholic institutions in terms of the fact that they weren't Catholic. They just were drawn to the Brothers. They knew the Brothers were in the community, they admired them and there was something exciting that was going on in this campus. So he was able to communicate that and be a leader at that time. And then of course all the other things you know co-education, developing adult and evening classes. Again, I think it would very good to do this Development aspect in terms of how resources were brought in because we all know Linus is a genius. I mean, he's an incredible strategic thinker. He just carried; he was the man that was needed at that particular time. And then we go to more recent history and I don't think anybody could dispute that Dennis Murray was definitely the person, I keep saying man now, I mean then. But, he was definitely the leader for the time that was needed because Marist had a lot of fiscal management issues and growth and quality. It needed somebody that was going to have the vision for what would be key elements that would make Marist College what it needed to be in order to be a great educational institution. One of them of course was the technology theme, which we were way ahead of. Dennis brought... he was a different kind of person from the other two. So, I think that there's just no doubt. And the other thing, too, that I think people don't appreciate, is you don't get college presidents staying for twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-five years or, Linus I guess was

twenty, twenty-one years and Dennis is in his twenty-third year. That's unheard of. They just don't do that. They have that stick-to-itiveness. And I think part of it, and I can't speak for either one of them, but from being on the outside looking in is, and as I say I was fortunate having in those, as a youngen, working close with Linus and then more recently working with Dennis as an executive here. They're both very; they were always enthusiastic about what they were doing and very focused. And I think those are things that are very important in leaders because they lead by example but they're also always keeping that big picture in play. So, as I say, I think, and they're all three respected. One of the things that is great for me as a fundraiser for Marist is when people start telling how great the Presidents at Marist have been, because when you're talking about people investing in your institution, particularly those who are not alumni, and that's where we have gotten a great deal of success. It's because they admire the leadership and they relate to the mission of the institution.

GN: That might lead us into this next question I want to ask you. In a personal way, what do you think have been your most significant contributions, or where have you found your greatest satisfaction and sense of accomplishment in the role that you have?

SK: I haven't really thought about that...Marist is a place where you don't have a lot of time to reflect because you're kind of always in a mode of changing your modus operandi and so forth. You know, I guess, it's satisfying to know that I was there for some firsts, that I'm kind of a bridge between Marist today and Marist when it was going through a lot of changes. It's nice to look and see that little departments are prospering. I think everything's... I've always felt that the best compliment is after you go things get better because that's what you're always looking to. You don't want things to deteriorate and

you don't want things to stay the same. To me, if you do, you're not really it's an ego thing. You want it to get better and so, to me, whatever role I was playing in whatever slot, that it was something that people could build upon. I did work in admissions for three years, which was a great experience, seeing transitions that were taking place in that process. And that really helped me be a better fundraiser and a better representative to interact with all Marist constituencies because you have a very different perspective when you're working with perspective students and their parents. One of things that Harry Wood was always good about I think was that the most important people in that process are the students. We're not out there just to get people in the door and get people signed up and get certain numbers but it is important. I talked to so many people that have wanted to get their kids into Marist and, especially if they're not capable or can't qualify, I just say to them, "you want your son or daughter to be able to succeed where they are." That is one of the things that has changed dramatically, obviously, is the selectivity at Marist now. So, I think if I was looking at the fundraising end, just very quickly, I would say that something I would always look back on would be the library campaign. It was a lot of fun. I have to tell you, it was a lot of work, yeah, [laughter] I'm saying fun, and people are saying oh yea easy, but to me it was a lot of fun because it was a culmination of years and years of work. Not just my work or me as a one person working. It's just amazing how things converge at Marist, how things are at the right time. That library was built right at the right time because if it were a coupled of years earlier, we would not have been able to raise that much money. And if we didn't raise that money, we would be having a little more debt, it would be... That was what I think was so exciting was that Marist was at a point where it was capable of raising that kind of money to make that

project come to fruition. Again, if you did something on Development, there are a lot of benchmarks there we broke into new foundation areas. We had, for years we were struggling, earlier, in those earlier years, ten thousand dollars was a major gift. Oh, my gosh if you gave five, or two, or one that changed with the library campaign. We had probably sixty gifts over ten thousand dollars and above and I think there were a good twenty that were over a hundred thousand. And of course we had three that were in the million-dollar category plus the state support. By the way, I don't take credit for all this either believe me.

GN: Well, you take the blame.

SK: I'll take the blame, yeah; I'll take the blame. There are a lot of people that worked on it. I also, if you're in fundraising, you know that where you are now is because of the hard work that other people were doing. I have the opportunity to be able to look at that and scope it out and know some of those people. It's all cumulative so if you don't have good people doing that and you start to lose ground, that's not a good thing. So I think we've had very good momentum. To me if someone had said to me, in twenty-five years, there will be a library up on that hill, overlooking that Hudson River, and when you walk through that library, you will see the names of all these people that cared so much about that school that they helped do their part in making it come to fruition. If someone had said to me, and there'll be alumni in there that will have their names on dozens of rooms, I would've found it hard to believe because we were pretty much at base level is the word. So, to me, it's just really exciting to go through this library and look and see the names of people that have... because those are all relationships. Nobody just did it because it was a great project. They were relationships and those relationships were built

by many, many people. It just, I don't know to me, it's just kind of and the building itself. I mean, just the building itself is a symbol of where Marist is today, in terms of what it looks like, and where it's located, how students respond to it, how it just is changing the perception of Marist and the ability of students and faculty to do work. It's just extraordinary.

GN: I have one last question. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you would like to say or is there something that would be pertinent maybe as you look down the line to the future. Are we on the right path, are there new paths that you see can be developed? What strikes you, or what's something you might want to say as a concluding comment?

SK: I guess I'd like to say two things. One thing I did touch on a little bit. One would be the Marist Brothers. I feel that there was a very successful transition eventually made at Marist...

[INTERVIEW STOPPED FOR SHORT BREAK]

[INTERVIEW RESUMES]

I have been able to meet so many Brothers and obviously former Brothers who work here at Marist. They really are an amazing group of men and I've gotten to know a number of them beyond the Marist campus because of the involvement in the Development Board. I just think that their mark is always going to be on this campus and if it's not, I think it will become less of an institution. I think that those themes of excellence and education, because so many of them are involved with teaching, the primary mission of the Marist Brothers. This commitment to service really is so important to the Marist experience because service is what builds community and this is a Marist community. This community here, it really is a community where people care about each other. Then in

the sense committed to higher human values, where there are ethical dimensions. There are other things that enter into your life in terms of decisions that you make or paths that you take, whether they are professional or personal. If you have a good undergraduate education, hopefully there's a component to that, because young people that are here are here in highly formative part of their life. One of the things that is really very satisfying in the work that I've been doing in the Advancement area is that you do talk to people and there will be more of them as time goes on because people are getting older, our alumni I should say are getting older, and that is people do reach a certain age where they have a perspective on the role of institutions or individuals in their lives and how they shape them and what impact they have. It really is great when you here someone talk about Marist in that sense. Interestingly, from a fundraising point of view, the largest gifts that we've gotten so far from alumni have been adult students. Now, that's understandable because they were at an age where they could give. But, the three that I'm thinking about that have given the highest, the most, the largest alumni gifts to Marist, all of them were of the mind, Marist was here when I needed it and people were here to help me and guide me and give me encouragement and inspire me and challenge me and all those things. For the three people that I'm thinking of, it made a big difference in their professional life and I had an opportunity to meet people in their personal life and they just seem... they recognize that Marist played a role there. I think that's what education is all about, higher education. I mean I think that's the thing that's very satisfying about being in the field of higher education. I just think that's the Brothers. I think if Marist ever, if it ever changes it's name from Marist College, then it would be something else and I think, that's another thing and I'm sure you've heard this

over and over. But, it is very significant that this is still called Marist, whether it is a college or University College or another connotation, but it's still Marist. There were people in the seventies who wanted to change it to other things because we weren't a Catholic, or perceived as a Catholic. To me, the greatest thing is that there is an element of the heritage that it is in the name and there is that history and those things are extremely important.

The other thing that I would just say, kind of on a personal note is, having lived more than half my life in Poughkeepsie here now and having worked at Marist more than half my life. Many of the major life experiences that I've had, my children being born and a variety of other things that have happened, that have occurred, there's always been people here at Marist that celebrate with you, support you in times of trial. As you know, I'm a cancer survivor and I have to tell you that the Marist community responded the way I think they would respond, not that I was thinking that they, it was just overwhelming to me. And it wasn't because it was me, because I know that people are very supportive and I've since talked to a couple other people that I know that are at schools of higher education that had illnesses, not what I had, but other things that were equally serious. I remember one of them saying to me, "nobody ever called me and nobody ever sent me anything." I didn't know what to say, I was so stunned. I don't think I've ever taken that part of Marist for granted. It is truly amazing when, and that's probably the most dramatic experience I've had because that's probably the most serious situation I've had, but other things when you lose a relative or whatever, people are there for you and they're genuine. It's not superficial. Sometimes I tend to think oh, well that must be the

way it is everywhere, but it's not. It's not that way and there is, so there is some kind of ethos that exists here at the college...

GN: Well, I think the best thing about all of this Shaileen is you're part of Marist and you're one of those doing this.

SK: One of many, many, right.

GN: Happy that you took the time to come and see us and give us your story as it were.

Thank you very much.

SK: Thanks for asking me.

“END OF INTERVIEW”