

John “Skip” DeGilio

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

John “Skip” DeGilio

Transcript – John “Skip” DeGilio

Interviewee: John “Skip” DeGilio

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

Interview Date: October 7, 2016

Location: Marist Archives and Special Collections

Topic: Marist College History

See Also: MHP – Oral History http://library.marist.edu/archives/oral_history.html

Subject Headings: DeGilio, John “Skip”

Marist College – History

Marist College (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)

Marist College – Social Aspects

Summary: John comments on his career at both Marist and Vassar. This includes his tenure as a professor in the Computer Science field and later in Environmental Science, his opinions on the Marist students, campus and The Center for Lifetime Study.

John DeGilio ([00:00:03](#)):

Today is Friday, October 7th. We have the honor of interviewing. John "Skip" DeGilio It's hard to say John because I always call him skip and the rest of the world does too.

John DeGilio ([00:00:22](#)):

Well, you know the "Skip" is because there are two John DeGilios on the staff here. And one way of distinguishing myself from the other John DeGilio was to use my nickname "Skip."

John DeGilio ([00:00:36](#)):

Yeah, What is relationship between you?

John DeGilio ([00:00:40](#)):

Cousins

Gus Nolan ([00:00:41](#)):

You're cousins, first cousins I noticed with the same name. Okay. That's a good introduction to this. Now I was going to say here, we're doing this essentially in three parts today, that is before Marist . Okay. Kind of Marist and then post-marriage future where you see it's going, et cetera, et cetera. So before Marist, can you give us a short thumbnail of your early years touching on place of birth, childhood?

John DeGilio ([00:01:11](#)):

My first introduction to Marist?

Gus Nolan ([00:01:13](#)):

No. Yeah. Yeah. Elementary school.

John DeGilio ([00:01:16](#)):

I was at Mount Carmel school. Yeah, I grew up on Mount Carmel place and I lived across the street from the church and one of the perks that I got for being an altar boy from the time I was in my fourth grade was to use the Marist pool. That was a come on to build the core of servers at Mount Carmel church. Was that if you were actively participating, you'd get to use the pool at Marist.

Gus Nolan ([00:01:56](#)):

Well, is it a one day event or a number of times in the course of the summer,

John DeGilio ([00:02:00](#)):

In the course of a summer, it was usually three or four times we came with a pastor or we came with one of the priests who brought a, Oh, maybe four or five of us to enjoy the pool.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:15](#)):

All right. Let's go back to the education aspect of things though. Mount Carmel was followed by where?

John DeGilio ([00:02:24](#)):

I went from there up to the eighth ward in Poughkeepsie and I went to Krieger school, moved my parish from Mount Carmel to Holy Trinity. And I basically lost contact until I went to high school at Cardinal Farley, which was an Irish Christian brothers school in Rhinecliff, New York. And at the time I was considering joining the Irish Christian brothers, but my recollections of Marist made that a competitive goal. However, I went to college from there at New Paltz and discovered that I really, my God given talent was in teaching. I met a girl from around the corner, got married and began teaching in after military service. Began teaching in the city of Poughkeepsie.

Gus Nolan ([00:03:39](#)):

Let's talk about the military a little bit. When we went in the military, or where

John DeGilio ([00:03:44](#)):

I was in the military in 1959 and 1960. And I taught in the service in a nuclear weapons school. I did that for two years and then left the service to come to Poughkeepsie to teach. I taught there for about 10 years and during that time I served on at least two committees that were Marist programs for summer programs for disadvantaged kids. And I did that once it was under the auspices of BOCES. So I had some contact with Marist as we put together those summer programs.

Gus Nolan ([00:04:44](#)):

Okay. You're jumping a little bit ahead. I wanted to fill in some of the years interest you might've had sports, hobbies, collections and music, in you know, high school, college, can speak about that. Is some more of a background to how you got to where you are?

John DeGilio ([00:05:06](#)):

Well, early on in my career when I was at Cardinal Farley, it was a military Academy, so it was an easy job to get a job at the boy scout camp as their range director. And there I got my first taste of teaching and I would say all through those high school years and into my college years, I really discovered my love for teaching.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:44](#)):

Yeah, I have it here. You know, you're really one of the, in my view, outstanding educators in the Hudson Valley because you have it on several levels. I mean you have it off campus, you have it, summer programs, you have it here at Marist. I was trying to get a background on how'd you could do all those things?

John DeGilio ([00:06:04](#)):

Yeah. I was involved in a lot of summer programs. Actually. I came to Marist with Cecil Denny when the first computer was installed. The first large scale computer was installed. I came with Harry Williams who's still here. Cecil Denny and the people that started that first computer. One of the things that happened to me while I was teaching in Poughkeepsie, I wanted to get an experience with computers and Poughkeepsie at the time being IBM center I could as a teacher go to their lab, the computer lab and learn computer programming. And so one of the courses I taught at the high school level was computer programming. But all this was very early. This was middle sixties. I also met at the time, the man who designed a computer language called APL. And it was decided when the computer came to

Marist that that would be a language that Marist would teach. The problem was there were very few people who had enough understanding to teach it. And I'm trying to remember who the principal and the math department at the time, his wife was superintendent of schools for religious schools.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:57](#)):

Kevin Carolyn

John DeGilio ([00:07:59](#)):

Kevin Carolyn, right. Yeah. Kevin. Carolyn was doing most of the day work and I got the chance to do most of the night work. So I came up here in the evenings and taught in all of those days when Marist had a facilities at what is now Odd Lots. What then it was Western printing. Yeah. When they opened at Western printing. Yeah. I taught every semester in that building I taught APL and I did that for a great number of years. I was very active in teaching APL here. And then when things changed and they broadened the computer program, I taught them, but I was always actually, I left teaching Poughkeepsie to teach in the education department at Vassar. And during that time, Vassar had a connection with Marist for students who were pursuing elementary education. They took many of their courses at Vassar. So I had that connection working. Yes. Even with Liz, your wife Liz Nolan, who was instrumental in the program here. So I made a lot of connections plus, excuse me. Plus I did a number of summer programs for students in learning computers. So we use the ground floor of Donnelley. I had a couple of classes in those days right off the computer room and taught I would say some four or five years. I taught programs there. But all this time the impetus was that I was doing publication for Vassar with computers in education. Right. So this is where I was getting that kind of experience. And then I published with ETS a number of things about how to use computers in the school environment. Right. So but I got more and more involved in the education end to that until, m retired and then came up here and taught for Andrew Malloy in the Science department.

Gus Nolan ([00:10:48](#)):

That's another area when they go into, that's science on the move. Were you involved in that program? Science on the move?

John DeGilio ([00:10:57](#)):

Yeah, that was the actually for both of us. That was our way to bow out. Both of us retired right after that.

Gus Nolan ([00:11:06](#)):

I see.

John DeGilio ([00:11:08](#)):

But that was a \$2 million program.

Gus Nolan ([00:11:10](#)):

Yeah. And what was the function of that? You were supposed to help other schools?

John DeGilio ([00:11:14](#)):

Well, the way that program was set up, teachers were given the opportunity to use equipment that most school districts could not afford, but they kept it in a central location and moved it from, from school to school. And it was basically run out of Marist with two trucks that carry the equipment from school to school. My part of the problem was to keep the teachers connected by email in those days email was a lot more primitive than it is today. And it was, for the most part, first, most of them was their first chance to do some kind of computer activities that gave him a, an understanding of what was involved in computer programming and email and all of those issues, which made their appearance in curricula in a secondary level.

Gus Nolan ([00:12:25](#)):

What was the time span for that program?

John DeGilio ([00:12:28](#)):

It was funded for two years, two years, two years, two years.

Gus Nolan ([00:12:32](#)):

How many people were involved?

John DeGilio ([00:12:34](#)):

Well, there were, there were six counties involved. There were Dutchess, on this side, Columbia, Dutchess on the other side were Putnam, oh Putnam, Dutchess, three on this side, and three on the other side. Three counties on the other end of them. All of the schools have representatives.

Gus Nolan ([00:13:05](#)):

Oh, I see. Okay.

John DeGilio ([00:13:07](#)):

And what this was, was basically it was an outreach where we trained teachers to use special equipment, the specialized equipment, which allowed them, for instance, to do a lab many times over where without the equipment, they would only do it once. They would only, for instance, determine the pH of a particular reaction with the equipment that they got from us here at Marist. They, in a given lab period, they could test many, many more cases than they could without the equipment.

Gus Nolan ([00:13:56](#)):

Yeah. How many such programs across the country do you think, were there? We weren't a solo operation there must have been...

John DeGilio ([00:14:03](#)):

No, there were about a dozen other that were basically set up the way ours was. Set up so that a college was the center and, and let it work with the surrounding counties .

Gus Nolan ([00:14:19](#)):

You'd explained that very nice, because I knew about it and I worked with, I didn't work with them, but I traveled with Molloy on a cruise or two and he had to keep contacting on what was going on and who was driving and so it was all right. Let's switch gears a little bit. But still an education program. Tell me

about LCS and how did that begin? What's the program about and where did it go from and how does it work?

John DeGilio ([00:14:52](#)):

One of the actually a couple got as an inheritance a sum of money and told to do something educational with it and they took it to Marist and talked to, I believe they talked to Dennis to set up a program for seniors, senior learners. And that program "Center for Lifetime Study" is now about 18- 20 years old that has the connections with the colleges, the industries of the area, which provides instruction for seniors. And it's based on the fall semester of eight weeks and a spring semester of eight weeks. And during those eight weeks on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, there is a full range of courses usually about eight to 10 courses each of the days on specific topics.

Gus Nolan ([00:16:07](#)):

How is that curriculum developed? How do you go about saying,

John DeGilio ([00:16:12](#)):

Well it was once the program was started, they developed four committees. One was the science, all of the people interested in putting out science courses. Another group did social sciences, another did community activities and things of that nature. And the fourth were things like bridged teaching you how to play bridge and things of that nature.

Gus Nolan ([00:16:45](#)):

Where does music come in? Where does the Opera come in with Jerry White if have memory?

John DeGilio ([00:16:49](#)):

Yeah, well during the art and there's an arts committee and the arts committee puts up things on museums that have current exhibits like the Cole and the Hudson River School painters and all of that. The art also does the music with, opera. They have a programmer and generally they, there is associated with this, a trip to an opera, let's say to New York or even for plays during the But it has, it has taken the cream of the retired faculties from Marist, Vassar, even New Paltz to do, to put the program together. And I was fortunate enough to be involved, especially with my in increased interest in curriculum development to put one together about generally the Hudson River and the Hudson River communities. And so I've been doing that for the last eight years and has been relatively successful.

Gus Nolan ([00:18:11](#)):

Yes. I talk about his success. Apparently it is a very difficult program to get into because,

John DeGilio ([00:18:18](#)):

Well, there's a 600, about 600 membership and the waiting list is about 600. And it's.

Gus Nolan ([00:18:27](#)):

Can anyone apply for it, to get in?

John DeGilio ([00:18:31](#)):

Yeah, you can apply online on the Marist site has a page for the center for lifetime study which you can submit your name and your interest in joining the center for lifetime. And then you're on the list.

Gus Nolan ([00:18:52](#)):

Do you have to have a particular background? Do you have to have a high school diploma?

John DeGilio ([00:18:56](#)):

No. No. There are no, I mean, there were many foreign nationals who are part of the program. It, there's very few restrictions for membership and that and it has taken the opportunity, Marist has been very generous. It offers a, an office where they could do all of the administration. It has a very small budget, but they have access to the Marist mainframe for putting up all kinds of information. It's in general Marist has been the way it's

Gus Nolan ([00:19:53](#)):

Is it really funded by Marist or?

John DeGilio ([00:19:55](#)):

Yeah, largely, but it's because, because our offices are here on campus and for instance, there's paper, there's manning the office with respect to getting out emails to various people and all of the office things that office do to make a program like this work. But, it's been a very rewarding for the community and it has offered, lots of opportunities for people to discover interest areas in their retirement that they couldn't pursue when they were in a work world.

Gus Nolan ([00:20:46](#)):

Yeah. There was some time, at least difficulty while, let me put it this way. Because of its success, it needed more and more space and eventually they had both for parking and for classroom and they wound up now at the Morse estate.

John DeGilio ([00:21:02](#)):

Yeah. They're in Locust Grove

Gus Nolan ([00:21:04](#)):

Locust Grove, right. Do you anticipate further development or do you think that.

John DeGilio ([00:21:11](#)):

There is quite a bit of discussion about where do we go from here with that program? There are some members who feel we should spin off another addition and use two other days of the week, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. There's a another faction that said, let's just hold onto what we got and see what the future brings. But it is a dynamic organization in that that it's only, it's only been, I mean each president serves for two years. So they really haven't had a long history of administrative action. So it's probably gonna take a couple of more years to define what direction would be best to go.

Gus Nolan ([00:22:11](#)):

There's a certain vitality to the program. It's probably because of the interest of the teachers who bring that into the classroom and the students who want to learn.

John DeGilio ([00:22:22](#)):

Yeah. Well basically it works like this. There is a, each standing committee that tries during some portion of the year to collect the ideas from the membership of what it is they want to develop. And then it's parceled out to various interests and then to build a program with that. Many of them have many of the programs involved in understanding geopolitical conditions, et cetera. There are a number of Marist faculty who are involved. There were a number of Vassar faculty involved to make this program work. And there are, there are some people, Marist people who have been doing courses there for years and have outstanding results. We lost Jerry White who was Marist faculty who retired to CLS and did an outstanding job with his program. And there were, there are still on Peter O'Keefe. Many people would go to CLS if Peter O'Keefe decided to do a course on the bloody telephone directory. Oh yes, they would take Peter O'Keefe

Gus Nolan ([00:23:59](#)):

And Lou Zucerello, there would be a competition for that.

John DeGilio ([00:24:02](#)):

Right. They are known quality, high quality, very successful presenters and people flock to their courses.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:14](#)):

Okay, let's change the pace a little bit and talk about, well, your views about the development of things. And one of the is students, the student life and how they learn. And I heard discussion some saying here in this kind of conference that yes, many of the students coming to Marist, they have higher grades but not as bright or as well educated as some of our former students and others say, oh, not quite. I mean, the students are coming, it's just that students learn differently. Now, do you comment on that? Do students learn differently?

John DeGilio ([00:24:59](#)):

My experience with teaching at Marist was that there was an entire range of student interests and abilities. One of the things that I was always impressed was the programs here at Marist that got students involved in, whether it was community work or here at the college work or places where they were capable and encouraged to use many of the ideas that were being developed in course. I mean, I can speak as a parent, my son who graduated from Marist, I think his chief advantage was that he got every opportunity as he was learning every opportunity to apply that in the work that he did on campus. So it was true then. I think there's, one of the things I can see in Marist as even as I was leaving was the diversity of the faculty and less interest in solid core courses. My recollection was that that the core of courses that made for an education of a Marist graduate was excellent and had excellent diversity and comprehensive. I'm not sure that I could state that about what looks like the current level of students at Marist but I do know that they still keep that, that commitment.

Gus Nolan ([00:27:00](#)):

Yes. Yeah. I think you've touched something very important and that is that the fundamental core has changed. We used to require two classes in philosophy, two in history, two in English and I think there's a, a more diversity now a selection.

John DeGilio ([00:27:16](#)):

I think so.

Gus Nolan ([00:27:17](#)):

And as you say, some then leave without a better understanding and history or ability to read different kinds of literature or whatever. But on the subject now also the method of teaching, you could not teach today. I don't believe with the way you taught 30 years ago. Go in with a piece of chalk and just stay at the Blackboard. I mean there's not to be more involvement.

John DeGilio ([00:27:46](#)):

Well, yeah, I think a lot more teacher in one on one involvement with students has altered the way in which teachers expect students to learn. Plus I think the computer is made of profound impact on the way in which teachers engage their students in learning. One of the things that I've always appreciated at Marist was the fact that if you couldn't reach a student one way you could use another way to get to them. And whether it was a matter of getting to learn on a computer or getting to learn out of books. You know, there were all different Mecca methods options that were open to you at Vassar and you were encouraged to use all of the range of methods. There were such an, there was such a good collection, like a videotapes here at Marist that you could suggest a person take a look at if he was having some particular difficulties or there were a number of those options that you could email you suggest places websites that they could visit. And worked very well, I taught my final years, I taught in the environmental science department and in my final years, I, it was the course that was replacing the chemistry that was failing a lot of the non-majors, but of course in environmental science was a perfect course to answer their needs. So instead of them making them write up a term paper, I offered them an assignment to write to their Congressman about an environmental issue. Now, what they had to do, I gave them a sheet, which told them to earn an A, you need to have this in it to get a B, it only needs this in it to get the C grade, all you have to do is... And I laid it out for them. Yeah. Needless to say, most of them opted for the A, but it forced them to make contact with somebody at a government level about something they could support or refute. It got them in a condition where they were easy with doing a program like this or doing something like this. So they thought that they, it was not a brand new idea when they left college.

Gus Nolan ([00:30:46](#)):

Did they have an opportunity to share that with their students? In other words, that we stay with class report?

John DeGilio ([00:30:51](#)):

Well, I did three things. One thing I did was put most of them online so they could see each other's. I see the content of each other's especially the ones that were outstanding. I did get them to share, it took some time in class for them to discuss how to do this. And I also had one other thing rather than have them turn in some static paper. I asked them all to complete a website. They didn't have to learn the computer part. They only had they just had to put the text in. The arguments in the content in, and then I got from the computer department, a list of, of accounts that would be used only in that one semester. I think we up for a semester, then taken down. And during that semester they all had the opportunity of examining each other's work. So it was like giving them a term paper, but they all shared. Yeah. So that

was an attempt to use Marist computer power to influence their learning capabilities. Right. And I worked very well.

Gus Nolan ([00:32:27](#)):

I'd also, I think touched on a certain amount of creativity of doing this rather than just copying something from one text and give it another paragraph.

John DeGilio ([00:32:37](#)):

Yes. And that was imminently easy to see from what most students did. So, I mean, it really showed it was primitive, but it showed their own work. I mean, there was not, it was not flashy professional, but it was the work of a concerted hand at trying to make a case for something and making it clearly. And it was, I figured it was a good activity. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:33:12](#)):

That reminds me, I just to go along with you and we have to be on the same wavelength and that, and my organization communication, they had to write to a fortune 500 company and get a case and bring it back and analyze it and say what was the problem and how was it solved? And

John DeGilio ([00:33:31](#)):

Yeah. That's what Marist was good at.

Gus Nolan ([00:33:35](#)):

Yeah. Okay. All right. Now again, looking into the crystal ball tell me what you see Marist to be in 10 or 20 years. Is it going to be here or do you think, is it in a growth curve, has it matured? What would you guess?

John DeGilio ([00:33:55](#)):

Well, I have to, I have to confess to a concern. Although Maris disconnected itself from the Marist brothers in those years, it never disconnected itself from the ethic of Maris brothers. And I see that little by little being pecked at, that hope is of work and pray. Yeah. That was so imminently connected. I mean I felt that there was a very moral value in the education a student got from Marist that you wouldn't get. I was teaching at Vassar at the same time, so I had a chance to contrast and I always was impressed by here at Marist, did one of the things that determined whether something went ahead or whether it didn't go ahead was did it have redeeming value at the community moral level? And I thought that if we could preserve that at Marist, if that was so intimately connected to Marist college, the future would be very, very beautiful for Marist if we lose that by becoming too big or too decentralized or too interested in that,

Gus Nolan ([00:35:40](#)):

In progress. Yeah. Well, it's, I tell you one of the problems is that the spirit of the Marist brothers is to live hidden and unknown in the world and do good quietly. Marist College cannot do that now. It has to be public. We used to have a wall around here keeping ourselves in. Now we have the wall down. We want more people to come in, you know, and we want, we're expanding. We have a, we have a full

office of recruiting in California. We have more than 90 full time students here from California where we're reaching out for more and more in diversity. But at the same time, what you speak of is how do we maintain that ethic of do good quietly, you don't brag about it. You know,

John DeGilio ([00:36:36](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. That's, that's it.

Gus Nolan ([00:36:38](#)):

That's, that's the conundrum. Is it worth saying? I know, cause I've been there. Yeah.

John DeGilio ([00:36:49](#)):

Well, so far, of course, under Dennis Murray so far, all of that was protected. I mean he understood that, where this college was coming from and he, most of the, no all of the things that he did, I thought, reinforced those goals. And I think that's what made him so successful and so much a part of why so many of us supported him. Because he was truly of the Marist stock.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:36](#)):

Yeah. Okay. That raises the question again, a historical one. What would you say was some of the principle factors that led to the success of Marist? There's a couple of questions here. One of them is its physical location, it's on the Hudson here, it's 70 miles from New York city, that's a mass population, you know, that we can draw from, even though we're getting it from California, we are getting much more from Long Island. Right. And again, more the other side of the Hudson, Massachusetts and Connecticut and so on. So that's one part. The other, the Marist brothers had high schools and they had senior classes in all of them, you know, and it was a kind of a pipeline for many too. We survived those bad years when we weren't known to have that. So that's another one. And the other is, as you talk about it, the certain character or spirit to this place, that seems to me that is rather unique when they still open the door, they get out of your way. We saw it coming in here just now. You know, that young man holding the door. Right. You know, for us older guys coming through, you know, I don't know that that's so typical. You speak.

John DeGilio ([00:38:56](#)):

No, I think you're, I think in that context it's, it's true. I, I have, you know, the other part of this is the amazing transformation that has taken place on the property itself. First of all, it now looks like one campus before it had such different styles.

Gus Nolan ([00:39:25](#)):

It was a farm, you know, I mean farms have fields and barns and well,

John DeGilio ([00:39:29](#)):

Things were put up because they were needed and they weren't put up.

Gus Nolan ([00:39:33](#)):

For utility.

John DeGilio ([00:39:35](#)):

At the time with what was available. But now it has a consistency. It looks like a complete place that's, yeah. Good. Yeah. And from the view down to the river, I think is transformational too. That's the,

Gus Nolan ([00:39:51](#)):

That was a you know, probably from attending a number of,

John DeGilio ([00:39:55](#)):

I was always impressed at how do you get work done looking out those windows at the beautiful color across the river from the library. I mean, I'd be tempted in the library to lose my resolve to come in here and work because it was so much. Right.

Gus Nolan ([00:40:11](#)):

You should say that because at one time I did have an office in the building that was here, Fontaine and I had a Hudson view from my office and that was as a faculty member. When I got promoted later on to be the chair, we actually moved it over to Lowell Thomas and now I had a view of Route 9 and I could see trucks and ambulances galore. You see, there was a kind of a mismatch. The higher up you went,

John DeGilio ([00:40:37](#)):

Yeah, they should've gotten that from the other way.

Gus Nolan ([00:40:39](#)):

Yeah. Again, pertaining to the question here and what you might see, students have changed their own lifestyle in their attempt to be so concerned with that instrument they carry around with themselves, whether it's an iPhone or a tablet or whatever, and they talk to it and they you know, communicate with it. And so.

John DeGilio ([00:41:04](#)):

I'm guilty of that.

Gus Nolan ([00:41:06](#)):

But you have old habits and still converse readily with anyone. I'm just wondering about what might be done to make up for that, to compensate for this no need for communicating and getting on and knowing one another. I don't know. It's in the age and I said always sooner or later they'll develop something to help that.

John DeGilio ([00:41:31](#)):

Yeah. I think though Gus, I think the stories that out on I mean we have to wait a little longer to see this impact. But I mean there are, there are obvious abuses and then there are obvious ways of using this to enhance, your life's experience. You know, I think what I was most interested in doing while I was teaching at Marist was converting people, converting students to vet better versions of themselves. That the task of the teacher is not to make the student over in his image or any other image, but give them a chance to fully actualize their own self image and self esteem. I know for a fact that for instance, at one

time Marist had a program called the Science of Man and I thought that program was probably the most undersold program because it did exactly that. What it did was take the people who were involved and made them better versions of themselves and it was truly uplifting to see what they were able to accomplish with, with college kids in getting them to become more self-actualized, become more aware of their own abilities and skills and focus on the things which would improve them as they proceeded through life, to give them the kind of ammunition to continue beyond your graduate graduation from Marist continue to grow. And that's what made Marist different from most other institutions I ever saw. And that was done everywhere. I enjoyed mostly I was lucky when I, well my last years here I was teaching two classes in the morning and two classes in the afternoon, but it gave me a chance to get the mass and the number of people, faculty people who made it to that mass was impressive and the visions that were presented by many of those people the vision that they had were pretty consistent with my vision of making kids better images of themselves, better selfactualizing. And I found that very uplifting and for the most part, those were the men who were the people who constructed physically this place. I mean, I was totally amazed at how Richard LaPietra, for instance, worked with kids. He was, he, I'm sure he did not understand all of the little skillful things he was using and working with kids that gave him an advantage. But he was a, he was a joy to watch. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:45:27](#)):

You're not telling me something, I don't know.

John DeGilio ([00:45:28](#)):

Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure.

Gus Nolan ([00:45:31](#)):

Alright. This is all been very positive, but speak a few minutes if you can or make it up if necessary. But what would be one of your disappointments at Marist, what is something that didn't happen or that should have happened?

John DeGilio ([00:45:47](#)):

I don't I try not to focus on that, you know,

Gus Nolan ([00:45:50](#)):

I know, but it's reality.

John DeGilio ([00:45:51](#)):

I think Marist on one even to today takes advantage of their part time staff. And I think they don't recognize the contribution that many of the part time staff makes to the institution. I mean, I'm even surprised by the fact that most of them, despite the compensation, give everything they have to doing the work of Marist college. So, but that's one, one small area and, and that's no indictment of Marist because Vassar does it, Bard does it everybody does it.

Gus Nolan ([00:46:39](#)):

Well of course the Genesis of that is part of it. It was not, it grew out of the need to get some professional people after their regular work. So getting an IBMer after his work to come and share some of his experience to getting a Jim Fahey to come on and talk about public relations from the real world,

but then that I think you are absolutely had to become abused. The number of part time people we depend on to run the institution are not fully rewarded for their efforts

John DeGilio ([00:47:18](#)):

No, that was always that was the sting that you got. That, but it wouldn't have, I don't any more than it does now. It would never prevent anybody from doing the work that they were contracted to do as Marist.

Gus Nolan ([00:47:41](#)):

Okay. What do you think the other side of that coin, what is one of your happiest or biggest achievements that you feel? You know, "I was able to do this here" like..

John DeGilio ([00:47:58](#)):

Well, I think one of my fondest achievements was the impact that many of the things that I got started in that environmental science program were continued after I left. And as far as I can still see, still contains same same kind of efforts that were a part of that, you know, it was always my dream that Marist would be the school that would be turning out youngsters who would end up helping the rest of us understand our responsibilities with respect to our environment. The program was there, the kids were there and I thought they were well on their way doing that when I left. And I would count that as, I mean if, I have to justify anything I will to St. Peter of my time at Marist, I would point to that as my fondest moment, my highest level of satisfaction of getting kids in that program to see the potential that they could have and impacting other lives. And I can see it now in many of those kids that graduated and are around here in our community.

Gus Nolan ([00:49:33](#)):

Very good. Yeah. I think you probably know a good number of the teachers in the Hudson Valley are graduates of Marist, good, the medical profession has taken some know. So a question though comes in the board now and that is, I've got to put it this way, is Marist worth the education, worth the expense? In terms of the expense attached to the involvement of money, time, effort. Many people are saying you don't have to go to college anymore. And the others are saying, Oh, you better go to college. You know,

John DeGilio ([00:50:10](#)):

I don't know if I can speak to this for today, but I watched my son and I saw him get one of the best well-rounded educations. My son minored in computer, partly because I talked him out of it. I said, learn to write and Marist can teach you to write. Matter of fact, it was your communications program. He can write well and if you could write well, that shows your thinking. Right. And that has given him, I think a good leg up on doing the kind of work he does now for IBM. And a lot of that is due to the quality of the general education Marist provided. And I don't think for the price it's overpriced.

Gus Nolan ([00:51:15](#)):

Okay. However, it's really become more upper middle class now. It's \$50,000 to come here as a freshmen.

John DeGilio ([00:51:26](#)):

Yeah, that's a problem.

Gus Nolan ([00:51:27](#)):

And that's a problem because what we're losing then or those who can't afford it which a more middle class.

John DeGilio ([00:51:36](#)):

That's a problem.

Gus Nolan ([00:51:37](#)):

And I think that yeah

John DeGilio ([00:51:43](#)):

I tell you what, my answer, our answer was. When I stopped teaching and my nest was empty, even before they were old enough to know better, we formed a 529 account for each of our grandchildren. And that meant that they didn't get any presents from us that weren't money in their 529. They had more than enough physical stuff from their parents, but we gave them, our intention was to give them one year on us. And so far it's we've got two more to go. But so far we've done that one year of college at least on the grandparents.

Gus Nolan ([00:52:35](#)):

What part will the campus play in the future? Will computer take away the joy of coming to campus?

John DeGilio ([00:52:46](#)):

Nothing will take the joy away from that, I think the Marist campus and indirect, first of all, I think there were many things in the design of the changes that occurred over the last number of years that have conspired to get Marist kids to work together. I mean, just in the band alone in the music program alone, how much that has expanded over the years and got kids to do pretty talented, they're pretty talented work and that's a very energetic program. They got lots of things going. If you see what they're doing in the radio or online with a Facebook and other venues, Marist kids work well together, and I think they've, they've got the right attitudes with respect to running the dorms and keeping the keeping the place healthy. And, you know, college colleges these days are facing lots of problems, which we never ever thought about when we had a class full of students, it was relatively rare that there would be somebody in there that was high on drugs or had serious hangover or something that detracted from their education.

Gus Nolan ([00:54:36](#)):

Okay. But that didn't mean they didn't have Friday nights not to get the,

John DeGilio ([00:54:40](#)):

Well, it might have, it might have. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:54:43](#)):

What you're saying is verified. If you'll go out the Northern entrance, there's three new dormitory buildings going up, you know one of them is being occupied for the first time. And the question, why did we do this? You see? And I interviewed the secretary of the president and she pointed out that there was a time and we were here as young teachers when students wanted to live off campus. You see. But now just a major thrust, they all want to be on campus. You see. And actually with all these dormitories, there's no new increase in the number of students were taken. We just housing them better and they want to be on campus, they want to be in community, you know, and I think it verifies what you were saying that.

John DeGilio ([00:55:33](#)):

Well, I think plus the community is less tolerant of aberrant behavior by students. And that it really encourages them being on campus. We have much better able to make a situation with less.

Gus Nolan ([00:55:57](#)):

It's protective, you know, there are more girls here then guys. And I think it's, it's perceived as being a safe place. Right. You know, for a young girls account. Last question. We have a new president if you had it.

John DeGilio ([00:56:11](#)):

Yes, my deepest sympathy.

Gus Nolan ([00:56:14](#)):

Ah, well maybe that's the message. I was gonna say, have you had a chance to have lunch with him? Were a conference with him? What would be a central message you'd want to say to to David Yellin?

John DeGilio ([00:56:28](#)):

Well, one of the things that have really impressed me about Dennis was a number of times he would show up places and most people didn't know he was the president of the college, whether it was getting kids into their rooms at freshman year, but he was personally engaged at the student level. If he, if this new president misses that, I think he's gonna miss one of the important things that that made Dennis Murray such a success. He had his, he was everywhere. He had his finger on the pulse of this college from the day he started. I remember when I started doing computers, summer programs, he would show up and he would walk around the room. Nobody knew he was the president of the college. He'd be talking to kids and he would be seeing what they were doing, wanting to know what was going on. But that was the kind of a guy he was. He never considered himself to be above anybody. And he was very congenial to kids and they were congenial back and he knew if anything, this college president can't lose that connection. I think that it makes them good.

Gus Nolan ([00:58:08](#)):

All right. I really have finished everything I wanted to ask you. And I was just wondering if there's something I didn't ask you or you want to bring up or you that you like to say in conclusion.

John DeGilio ([00:58:22](#)):

Well, the one thing I really want to say is how open Marist was to an oddball like me. All my life, I had been finding the cracks and slipping in the cracks. I went one, John McDonald was chairman of the computer department. John came from industry and he understood what he needed was somebody who was going to do a particular job and do it well. I didn't have the college credentials. I only had my experience as the, and he hired me to teach APL and he gave me lots of latitude to do the program the way I wanted to do the program. Then when he left and I got more involved in Vassar things and left for a while. When I came back I was given opportunities to teach in the computer science department for non-majors. So I did that for a number of years and when I left from that, Andy Malloy, when he found out I was leaving Vassar, retiring from Vassar, he twisted my arm to come back to work in the environmental science and all of the time we were doing projects that involved outreaches from Marist for kids, for schools, for school districts. And I had nobody looked down on me because I didn't fit into the pecking order of, I didn't have my PhD, I didn't have my credentials or the articles I published were in minor magazines rather than major journals. That is such a problem in other places, but here at Marist, if you had the skills, you were given the opportunity. For me that meant I had a wonderful opportunity to teach here, to make good friends here and to be a part of what I consider one of the most important parts of my life. Watch this college grow from a small institution to something that commands world attention now.

Gus Nolan ([01:01:18](#)):

Okay. Just let me end with this, I really didn't know you too well for a number of years. But, when Richard LaPietra and myself put out a letter creating the retired faculty, you were one of the first persons you came to my church actually and said you got the letter and you thought it was a great idea. And I want to thank you for your participation from day one to this day and all that you have done to keep this group together along with the other groups that you keep together. And, and we're so grateful for that.

John DeGilio ([01:01:57](#)):

Well, I really am impressed because that retired faculty group is family. They're family, to each other and their concern for each other is as strong as any family member would have. And it's very heartening to know that all of those people care for each other. And it's a wonderful experience. Now I got Barbara to do all of the names, write the names under the pictures, it'll be even better. And I look forward to many more years. As long as you stay healthy and.

Gus Nolan ([01:02:44](#)):

As long as we both stay healthy and continue to do it. We're getting on in years but we won't count those now. Okay. Thank you very much.