

Victoria Ingalls

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Aubrey Giesler

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Dr. Victoria Ingalls

Interviewee: Dr. Victoria Ingalls

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

Interview Date: 7/24/14

Location: Marist Archives and Special Collections Reading Room

Topic: Marist College History

See Also:

Subject Headings: Dr. Ingalls, Victoria

Marist College Faculty

Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Marist College History

Summary: Dr. Victoria Ingalls talks about her early years and her coming to Marist College to teach biology courses on the campus. She also discusses her interest in music and joining the orchestra at the College.

[00:12](#) **Gus Nolan:** Today is Thursday, the 24th of July and we are meeting with Dr. Ingalls from the Biology Department for our oral interview to be put in the Marist College archives.

[00:28](#) **Ingalls:** OK, 2014.

[00:29](#) **GN:** 2014. OK. Well good afternoon, nice to have you with us.

[00:35](#) **VI:** It's great to be here.

[00:36](#) **GN:** This is part of an ongoing series of interviews that I have the good fortune to have. I'll show you the list and the...

[00:47](#) **VI:** You're going to intimidate me.

[00:48](#) **GN:** great people that you've interviewed over the years, I've interviewed over the years and you're joining that assembly which is a very impressive one it will be more impressive after today. (Laughter) Let me start with little thumbnail background. Where were you born, brought up early education that kind of thing?

[01:09](#) **VI:** OK, I was born in Brooklyn, in 1955 from a child of the 50s and 60s. And my father was a college professor. He taught at the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy. He taught pharmacology amongst other topics. (mic problem) So Dad was a college professor. My mother was a librarian, I have two older sisters who are very accomplished in their own right. And we moved into the suburbs of New Jersey when I was eight, and I went to public high school. I mean I went to public school, public high school. I started at the University of Maine in Orono as a double major in Zoology and Psychology, because I was always interested in animals. And after being there for two and a half years I was unhappy at being so far away from home, because it was about a twelve-hour drive from Maine to where I lived in New Jersey. So at that point I transferred to Vassar College. I did two years at Vassar College because they just had a rule that all my credits were fine and everything but you have to take half your graduation credits from

their institutions which made sense. So, I went to Vassar I was a biopsychology major. I graduated from Vassar. I worked for two and a half years in a research lab at Princeton University doing neuro-physiology in the visual area of primates. And then I went to graduate school at UMass and Amherst in the Zoology because I was really interested in the natural behavior of animals in their environments.

(Mic problem)

[03:11](#) **GN:** We can do this again some time if this doesn't work.

[03:14](#) **VI:** Sure. Anyway yeah so, I worked at Princeton and then yes... Then I went to UMass and I was a full-time grad student for five years. I studied predator-prey relationships between birds and insects and then I got hired at Marist.

[03:32](#) **GN:** Well, do you go to school continuously for twenty-two years now?

[03:40](#) **VI:** No, no, no, remember I worked for two and a half years between my undergraduate degree and starting my graduate degree. So the two and a half years that I worked I graduate from Vassar and I go work for two and half years. I happened to work at Princeton University. So I am a lab tech. I am a neuro-histologist at Princeton University in a research lab there. But then I go from Princeton back to being a student at UMass Amherst.

[04:09](#) **GN:** OK, OK. Through your years was there any particular hobby that you develop you play the piano, do you sing, do you collect stamps?

[04:20](#) **VI:** I play the French horn.

[04:21](#) **GN:** You do?

[04:22](#) **VI:** Yeah, I started when I was ten and I had lessons. Actually they got me a French horn teacher who happened to be the first chair French horn player of the New Jersey Symphony. And he was my teacher from the end of sixth grade all the way through the time I graduated high

school. And then I was in the band, the marching band at U Maine and other musical groups that I could get into because I wasn't a music major and was never a music major. But I played and I played all the way through college. In fact when I got to Vassar I got to be in the orchestra. I remember getting to play Dvořák's *New World Symphony* which is incredible. But then once you graduate from college, it's really hard to find musical group to be able to play with. So but I still actually what happened last semester was I got an e-mail from Art Himmelberger, I know as Art, and saying that they desperately needed a French horn player for the orchestra and so I joined the Marist College Orchestra last semester.

[05:26](#) GN: Is that so?

[05:27](#) VI: Oh yeah, it was so much fun and I am planning to continue to play next year.

[05:32](#) GN: I am glad we're having this. I didn't know these things about you. I didn't realize you were a Vassar girl.

[05:38](#) VI: Oh, yeah. Hey, I'm like Phi Beta Kappa.

[05:40](#) GN: You know that. Yeah, I just didn't realize that had happened. So I have a silly question here. When did you learn about Marist, but by God if you're over by Vassar?

[05:50](#) VI: I knew nothing about Marist when I was at Vassar. I had never heard of Marist until my brother-in-law got a job here. Remember Richard who's in the Art department. Richard Lewis is married to my older sister and he and my sister had come to live in the Hudson Valley after he finishes MFA. He got a job and you're going to be interviewing him so you'll get all this but he actually was an adjunct one semester came in full time as a replacement person the next year and has been here ever since. So that year he's a replacement person is the year is my fifth year of graduate school, I knew I wasn't going to be funded again and I was looking around for a job. So cute, you remember Marist in the old days you really went to all the gatherings.

This is very important. I remember George Hooper one of the most wonderful people on the face of the earth. For those if you've never met George, Jimmy Stewart with a bow tie, was the head of science and Richard would be in these gatherings with the faculty and he'd say you know George, I am gonna see my in-laws this week and they're just gonna ask. So I'm sorry I have to ask you, but they're going to ask I am just going to have to ask is there any chance you have a job for my sister-in-law. And it just turned out that they were hiring. So, that's the only way, the reason I knew anything about Marist. And that's not why I got the job. I don't think but I actually know it's not. But no, but I had but I knew all things that were going on before I arrived which is very helpful.

[07:27](#) **GN:** Do you remember who interviewed, George be one?

[07:30](#) **VI:** George, Joe, and Bill Perrotte.

[07:32](#) **GN:** Perrotte was there?

[07:34](#) **VI:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh they were so funny. Yeah, I remember very early on they were looking at and of course biology the enrollments were very, very small when I arrived. I arrived in 1985, '85. And George would be looking at the enrollment for one of Bill Perrotte's class and it had like three people in it. "Really pulling them in, aren't you Bill?" teasing him away.

[08:01](#) **GN:** Well, I on just ... I have about the spirit of the Bio Department and how it's an outgrowth of those luncheons that used to take place here.

[08:11](#) **VI:** I missed those lunches so much. They were great.

[08:15](#) **GN:** They were educational things I mean, you had you know the computer science guy Roger Norton.

[08:24](#) **VI:** Roger Norton, Rich McGovern.

[08:27](#) **GN:** Be up on the blackboard explaining things. You know how to buy a car or anything.

How to cook soup. It was such a...

[08:34](#) **VI:** Well the great thing about them for me, not only did I learn a lot because I was starting out as a teacher. It really was my first full-time teaching. I'd never taught a full course before I came. I've been only a teaching assistant, teaching lab. Not only did I learn a lot but the faculty because different faculty from different areas would be sitting down together in a very relaxed way talking. You actually could find out what was going on across campus, what people's problems were, what work really needed to be done and you could actually make decisions in a very non-confrontational manner. And I found it very productive. And we don't have that anymore.

[09:09](#) **GN:** And fortunately that's one of those happy experiences that we all profited by. Well let's go to your first years here. Conditions of that... of the lab itself, let start with that.

[09:24](#) **VI:** Well yeah, the conditions of the lab aren't... I will talk about that in a minute, but what I really remember about my first year and again, I'm talking about coming straight at a grad school, I was actually still writing my dissertation. And of course we technically at that point, the scientists would teach three lecture courses and two labs. And usually labs were different every semester. So you're talking about five preps because the prep for a lab is completely separate from the prep for lecture. Labs are harder. They're completely harder than doing a lecture. Much more time consuming because at least once you have your course down then you're just tweaking it and going and presenting it. But lab always have to be set up, always has to be cleaned up. You're there watching them every minute to make sure they don't hurt each other or stuff like that and you're in now and making sure they're doing what they're supposed to be doing. Has its own set of assignments, everything. So it was very, very time consuming and I remember I was basically getting four hours sleep a night every single night. I was lucky that I could make it

through the week. And I would described it as you were hanging off a cliff by your fingernails. And sometimes you would be sort of sliding down. And then other times you might actually get the tips of your fingers over the edge and that's...

[10:42](#) **GN:** Forget the drama, come on.

[10:44](#) **VI:** We had these. Marist was like two buildings. I mean I couldn't believe it. Having come from you know—

[10:53](#) **GN:** Across the street from Vassar.

[10:54](#) **VI:** --Vassar, UMass, University of Maine. I had taken course at Rutgers. I had had a job at Princeton and I'm looking at this map of Marist when I am coming down for the interview and I'm like where are the buildings. Like the classes were in Donnelly and then as those rooms we rented across the street, Marist East which had been old publishing company.

[11:16](#) **GN:** Western Publishing.

[11:17](#) **VI:** Yeah right, and so that's where all the classes were. And so that was another thing you always meeting all the faculty. but we had labs but the labs also had to be used as classrooms. So when you were done, you had to completely clean everything up even though of another lab like that was going to come in later. So that Spanish could come in and teach a class in there.

[11:35](#) **GN:** I mean you could always send the students to library if they could find it.

[11:40](#) **VI:** We could talk about the library too. I remember that well. but the med techs were very clever because when they wanted to use their labs for classrooms they would say ok that's all right but make sure you never put your pen down on the table. You never put anything in your mouth because we're working with pathogens here and nobody would schedule classes in their rooms. but it was just very--

[12:05](#) **GN:** Talk about the students who took those courses. In the early years how dedicated

were they? How prepared were they? How interested were they? how smart were they?

[12:17](#) VI: Well we're dealing with a very, very small group. Okay. So I had everything I mean we always had some truly outstanding students. They were usually the commuters. You know the kids who for one reason or another financially couldn't afford to go away and they would come to Marist. They were usually quite amazing students. Then we had students... Well we still do who probably shouldn't be in that major. I did have a few students not usually in the science majors, but I had some students who I felt like didn't belong at college, couldn't write their way out of a paper bag, but we still have those students unfortunately. But it was such a small group. I mean I think then it was more like they were the first members of their family to go to college. Now we're getting it's the second or third generation going to college but they were characters. I had an Animal Behavior class. It had seven students in it, which was not unusual back then we didn't have these big classes. And each one of them was a character and they would make me laugh so hard. I would have to put my head down on the podium. They were just so funny. They would be... "I watched a show last night about whales having sex" something like that. And then there is another kid in the class who had made a bet with his friends that he could get a B or higher in any class on campus and in those days, it was before the computers, they would have you know all the courses listed out ... Well, the computer would list out the course. But you weren't on computers... [the computer] would list out all the courses in front of the registrar's office and he went there with a dart with his friends, blindfolded himself and threw it and it hit Animal Behavior. So I had this kid with no prerequisites in my Animal Behavior class. He was not a stupid kid. He would have done well if he hadn't got sick. And you know but just they were... It was very small classes so you had you really, really knew the students. You know I still actually... I visited one of them last week in New York City is a high school teacher here.

[14:20](#) GN: Yeah. And some of them have gone on. I mean consider those early years. Some have proceeded on to become professors or doctors, whatever.

[14:29](#) VI: Well I mean, I always think about the one I visited couple weeks ago was a graduate in 1988 that would be my thirty years here. I have another student who was sort of like the generation after that student. I almost see them as generations who's now a full professor of Economics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. So yeah and these are students I stay in touch with, but.

[14:53](#) GN: Are the students today better prepared? Mixed bag?

[14:59](#) VI: I think it's always been a mixed bag. I think it's always a mixed bag that there are some students there are a few students who are really, really good. And there are a few students who probably are... I actually think our country should be offering them something other than a classical liberal arts degree. But there's a status symbol to having liberal arts degree so it might not really be suiting their needs and their skill sets.

[15:28](#) GN: You should talk to Lynne Doty because she was here the other day saying the same thing. Not everybody belongs in college.

[15:34](#) VI: Or liberal arts college.

[15:35](#) GN: Two years would be enough and then they could take more practical things.

[15:39](#) VI: Or you integrate in... actually practical with the basic academics. Which actually tends to draw students that weren't academically-oriented into the courses a little bit better. But I think you know to me I think the students have on average got much better. I will say that but I also think that as you go on, students and I'm talking about all students in all colleges now read less. And so when you read less, your writing skills aren't as good. Your vocabulary isn't as good. So they actually are not in some ways... They're intellectually just as stronger you know.

But I think academically there, they're not as strong as they should be based on their intellect.

[16:30](#) **GN:** Are the biology majors more driven then?

[16:34](#) **VI:** Yes, yes, I think if you talk to, I will say the science majors. If you talk to people in the humanities who have to teach everybody, they love having the science students because the science students have to work really hard and they understand that you have to work really hard. So they don't complain about working really hard. To them usually humanities courses are a little bit easier. Sometimes they're not. It depends if it's really good humanities course... It shouldn't be easier because it's different. But generally the science students, one of our goals is I always say with GenBio I say, "Please, please make sure it's a challenging course." And we all agree the course should be. "Please make sure it's challenging. Please make sure it's representative of the difficulty that's going to continue on." Because you don't want to lie to them. You know if this is not going to be the right major for them they need to know fast so that they can switch to a different major that's going to serve them better. We still get delusional students, totally delusional students coming in and saying, "I'm going to be a doctor." And their skills are just not there.

[17:44](#) **GN:** But the science students seem to learn together more than other students.

[17:47](#) **VI:** Well there in lab so they're already put. They have Chem lab when they have bio lab. They're already usually working in teams of two three or four and then they meet each other and then they tend to study together. We do have the advantage that they can come into the labs when a class isn't in session and they can work together there. So they have that good collaborative work ability.

[18:12](#) **GN:** Strange statement I am going to make Marist has changed.

[18:17](#) **VI:** Yes, a little.

[18:18](#) GN: In what way?

[18:19](#) VI: Marist has changed. Well when in 1985 it was really the College of the Brothers and many of us really did appreciate that. You know that it was people who were devoting themselves not only to education but to the school. I've always said this is the problem when you weren't part of the religious order is that it was my employment and I cared greatly about it as you know, but it was not my ... I wasn't exactly my vocation. In other words, I also had to buy a house and take care of myself and you know I wasn't part of the Brotherhood. They were not taking care of me in that regard. I had to take care of myself financially. But yeah, I was like really. Marist was important and now it's much more like more of a typical school where people you know come in they're trying to do their research because they have to their told that. And there are a lot of people who I think are a little too clueless about the personality of the school how the school runs the school really runs an interesting way and I think we have faculty members who get tenured who have been here long enough to have a better idea of how things run and don't know how things run right.

[19:38](#) GN: OK. It's changed a number of ways. I don't know how to explain the change? I might say that Dennis Murray had a lot to do it, yes.

[19:49](#) VI: Well it got bigger, it bigger. And that change is a lot right there.

[19:55](#) GN: Right and there's more money into the pot right now.

[19:58](#) VI: Well of course we use to all know each other, we were smaller faculty. As I said we were all in two buildings. Now each area has its own building. You may not need anybody from another. I mean mostly I stay in Donnelly, so unless somebody is coming into Donnelly I hardly ever see them.

[20:16](#) GN: We use to all lived there.

[20:17](#) VI: We use to all live there absolute. so I used to be housed next to the math people and the social sciences people. I mean my first office, I loved my first office. I mean in a bad way. You know Donnelly's around building and those exterior rooms are sort of odd.

[20:35](#) GN: Windows open and step right out.

[20:37](#) VI: That happened in my first class I ever taught. The student came up and they were chatting with me and they said I have to go catch the bus they open up the window jumped out the window. Sort an astonishing. Can quite do that anymore because the windows are these lower window. But I had an office were they had taken one of the rooms that's now classroom and they had these sort of half glass frosted glass partition things with medal. And ten or twelve of us were in this area where my office could fit a filing cabinet, my desk, and a chair. That's how wide it was there and if I pushed my chair back I hit the bookcase that was against the wall and that how big it was that rectangle. And the walls didn't go all the way down to the floor, or up to the ceiling, they were just frosted. So when the phone rang everybody picked up because you couldn't tell whose phone it was. And of course you can hear everybody else's conversation. So I remember and then when anybody was writing on the chalkboard on the on the joint I could hear that. I was in there I think a couple years and then I got moved to the office with no heat, but it was bigger. And then I got moved to the office with no windows and people come in and say there's no windows in here, its ok it's warm in the winter and its cool summer.

[21:58](#) GN: In the changes, number of changes the faculty has changes as well.

[22:02](#) VI: I think the faculty is more and I think this is good, I do think this is good that the faculty is a more traditional liberal arts college faculty, they have doctorates, they do research, they know what's expected in a in a setting where your faculty should be engaged in the research of their field.

[22:28](#) GN: The classroom has changed. Do you have a small classroom?

[22:32](#) VI: No I don't.

[22:33](#) GN: Do you have a computer?

[22:35](#) VI: I use the computer. What I would really, my problem is I still think writing is really important. Which probably smart class would help me with. So I have to have a classroom where I can pull the screen down and show something and then pull the screen up and write and pull the screen down and show something because I think the writing on the board is really important and I think it does a couple of things. It's slows me down if you can't tell I am a pretty fast talker so if I want them to be following along with my thought process it helps to write and draw on the board. So they're going with you in that thought process. However science you have all these figures and things. So now I pop this up it will be this is figure thirteen point one in your textbook and they could just write in there book figures thirteen point one, we can talk about the figure. You know they're not an expecting them to write it down and what does this mean, look over here you know that sort of thing. But and then I used, they complain about this because I use the power point to sort of organize the lecture but it doesn't have all the information because they are going to be listening taking notes. They are incredibly bad at, and they've always been bad at, it and they're still bad at it. They don't know how to take notes and its weird, no one ever taught me how to take notes, I just took notes and I got better at it. But it's sort of like these students really need lessons on taking notes. Because they have this thing where they don't write down unless, they always been like this they don't write down unless you write it on the board but you're talking and they should be listening to you and thinking about what point you're making in and making themselves little notations, but it's either nothing or transcription and yeah that's not they're not processing when there doing that.

[24:20](#) **GN:** So obviously your teaching has changed from the first days I mean to have more instruments in terms of well the primitive labs we have, a primitive classrooms.

[24:31](#) **VI:** The labs have not changed that much. Well I mean you have to understand that we are very careful and have been very good at hiring new people. So we do have people who know how to do molecular genetics and they're doing molecular genetics lab. So we bring in a new developmental biologist and we say to her in Gen-Bio one we need a new hot lab that will do this this and this. So we do that but the labs that I teach have not really changed that much I mean I change from using the physio graphs to computers that did what the physio graphs did but they're still doing the same thing because we're studying how the heart works. How the heart works has not change.

[25:13](#) **GN:** You're leaving me here because I am not familiar with the terminology.

[25:15](#) **VI:** Yeah, I just saying had a great big piece of equipment. You ever see somebody who did like an E.K.G. Right well these are great machines that did E.K.G. and stuff like that. And then that got replaced with a computer that did the E.K.G. But it's still an E.K.G. And what the E.K.G tells you is still the same thing.

[25:36](#) **GN:** What's the typical size of your class now?

[25:40](#) **VI:** Twenty-four. Although certainly we this is a big battle we have but you know like in upper level labs will have the lab be smaller than twenty-four because you need to be able to work with them and there's a lot of equipment things some labs are maxed that sixteen, some labs are maxed twenty-four.

[26:00](#) **GN:** Have there been changes in the biology major, in terms of the requirements that you would expect of a major and is that due to the advance in science or advance in. Too what?

[26:12](#) **VI:** Well we I think the biggest change was. We go back and forth with what should we

should require but the core requirements actually fairly quite similar, but we added a major and the major we added was biomedical sciences. Because most of the kids who come into Marist they're very pragmatically oriented, they understand who doctors are and they want to be a doctor. So the biomedical science major was just a repackaging of stuff we already had. But if you want to be go to medical school you must have this you must have this you must have year of physics you must have a year of organic and so we packaged it so it had as a requirement. Everything you need to qualify to go to medical school. But you could still do a bio major and do all those things you know but bio majors don't have to. They could opt for a one semester organic chemistry class instead of the two-semester organic chemistry class. They could opt to not take physics where is biomedical sciences you must take physics that sort of thing.

[27:15](#) **GN:** Distinguish med Tec from biology.

[27:18](#) **VI:** Well med tech is really a very pragmatic program it's almost it's the combination of the practical with the liberal arts. So they get a liberal arts degree but they are trained to be a certified medical technology which means they have to take specific courses they have to take boards you know national boards to qualify be certified and they have these hospital rotations they must have and are integrated into their program. So but it's a great program I mean you can still go to medical school and stuff like that.

[27:55](#) **GN:** Do science majors intermingled you know them one from another whether you in biology med Tec or?

[28:00](#) **VI:** I can't tell who's who really unless they tell me I mean I'll get all different kinds of first of all Gen-Bio you have everybody Gen-Bio expect chemist because the chemist don't have to take it and then as soon as you get into work but you go into organic there taking organic except I'm not sure I don't think the med Tec have to take it and some of the environmental

sciences students don't have to take it. But yeah If I teach animal behavior I could have I can tell bio from Biomedical Science from bio ed excepted I happen to know all the bio ed because I'm there I have to be their advisor I am the advisor for all the bio ed majors which is a separate major we actually have. Three bio majors now where we only had one so we have the bio education major constructed specifically for them they have a biology major in the biomedical science

[28:43](#) GN: Where would teacher Ed go?

[28:44](#) VI: Well teacher Ed Is that's Ed.

[28:49](#) GN: But I mean for a biologist to be a teacher Ed.

[28:52](#) VI: No they would be a biology education major there a biology major with all the education classes integrated into their major so we took the bio we just packaged it again. We just took the entire bio major we stuck and all the education requirements. The only thing we change from the bio major was a bio major needed six or eight credits related field and we took that out and replaced it with student teaching so they could get it into one hundred twenty credits otherwise it was possible. So I'm not sure I answered your question. Well I actually biology is pretty consistent I think what gets taught like for example probably the courses that have changed the most of things like genetics.

[29:38](#) GN: Yeah were all in the same corridor down you know like.

[29:41](#) VI: well were kind of split some people are downstairs and some people are upstairs. Yeah but when I'm around with each other

[29:48](#) GN: I think of Cathy Newkirk and you know just physically present and Joe Bettencourt not that far apart

[29:55](#) VI: Oh yeah, they're all together.

[29:56](#) GN: So that kind of do you need statistics in your business.

[30:02](#) VI: Yes that's, that's required. It's required of all the biology majors they all have to take a semester of calculus and they have to take a semester of statistics.

[30:14](#) GN: Talk about the teachers now you what's required of you have Committee work you have teaching you have evaluation you have student advisement.

[30:28](#) VI: Research put research on top of that we all have to do that.

[30:30](#) GN: You have to do research.

[30:33](#) VI: Yeah if you're tenure or tenure track.

[30:36](#) GN: If you have tenure what's still required all for a positive evaluation I suppose.

[30:41](#) VI: Yeah or hypothetically you don't get your raise. Well the only exception is if you been work here a certain amount of time. I forget what the rule is you can right now they changed us we used to be on what was called four-four load. And they changed us whole campus to the four three load but if you said listen just keep me on the four-four load then your professional development expectations were pretty minimal right so if you weren't do like when they first converted us over I stayed on the four-four load for a little while because I was switching from one area research to a different area of research and then once I switched and I started publishing papers and I went on four three load.

[31:32](#) GN: Of the committee work what is the most awesome?

[31:41](#) VI: Awesome in wonderful or horrible?

[31:44](#) GN: Well horrible.

[31:46](#) VI: Be cheering the faculty. I didn't want to be chair of the faculty I mean it was you know how it is it's like it's if nominee you must run if elected you must serve. And so it was a time when I mean I was constantly because first of all the faculty wasn't that big and I have a big

mouth. You know nominated for things and elected things so we ended up we had restructured faculty governance and we had a whole bunch of people who actually never been on a major committee before and then some people who should have actually been running for chair or would have been good teachers the faculty refused for one reason or another. So it ended up just me and one other person and, and I won. So I didn't want to I really didn't want to but it was like OK it's your turn but I remember running the faculty meetings and I would spend a day or two prepping to make sure they were gonna run the way they should and I would be running this meeting and I felt like I was burning up from the inside I felt like I must have been absolutely fiery red and I said something to Joe Bettencourt and he said no you look fine I said you know I feel like I'm on fire and he said you having a histamine reaction like internal allergy. So that's not fun being on grievances certainly not fun I mean and then there are some other communities could be doing good work but I feel like people are not really great at focusing on what can we do as opposed to what do I want you know like people have I have had these people ideas of these grandiose ideas that we're going to make these huge changes when and we just that I just know that not going to happen.

[33:42](#) GN: Overall picture compensation is fair some people get treated better than others.

[33:54](#) GN: I think that's a big social question I mean, why should someone in computer science be earning three times as much as someone in English I guess is a question it's never been fair will it ever be fair I don't know? I just think it's really funny that I was I had worked at Marist for ten years I was tenured I was an associate professor and I qualified for a low-income mortgage. But I'm doing better now. I'm doing better now and I will say the thing that has saved me throughout this has been something called salary adjustment. Salary adjustment is what's make the difference for me.

[34:35](#) GN: Yeah OK well that brings up another question why did you stay here.

[34:40](#) VI: I love it here, I love it here.

[30:46](#) GN: How can you love here when they treat you with all of these bombs you know you have to?

[34:50](#) VI: Well I'll tell you I think it's really important and I was very fortunate like you have a micro group and there's the macro group and the micro group was science like that was my Dean you know George Hooper and he was always supportive of me and I think that was incredibly valuable to me so I remember early in my career I was getting the student evaluations and I guess I shouldn't say that but I will honestly Marist students are kind of whiners. You know they don't really, I don't think they're very consumerist about their education. I think it might actually be less so than they used to be. So they want to be as easy as possible. They don't realize that you know they're investing all this time and money they need to learn something.

[35:33](#) GN: But I work so hard for my A.

[35:35](#) VI: I work so hard in your class I were three times harder in your class and got a B- then I worked in that other class where I got the A, but even my Mike Tannenbaum who was are dean for years and years he would just he would just giggle when he would look at my course evaluation say you know it's like they're complaining about the workload and yet at the end they said they say I learned far more in this class I learned in other classes I you not make the connection a I actually think there are a whole bunch of classes at Marist that are hard enough that need to be harder and need to be more demanding but why do I stay here well I went into George very early on and I said well they're complaining that I'm too hard and I believe that other deans might have said students are unhappy you need to make them happy and I was never told that I was told and he looked at me and said you know if change doesn't come from the

junior faculty we're is it going to come from. It's like you know you're supporting me and I think I was always in my micro group very supported and I really liked teaching, I wanted to be a teacher. And after about three or four years I ended up teaching exactly the classes that I would want to teach which is unbelievable. So I teach animal behavior and people don't hire animal behaviorist. I got hired as a physiologist right. I get to teach animal behavior. I get to teach evolution right. These are my babies I teach the vertebrate physiology.

[37:13](#) **GN:** You believe in evolution?

[37:15](#) **VI:** Do I believe? Yes absolutely I feel it is do you believe in atoms. Because evolution is more concrete than atoms. You know it's like yeah, I mean evolution is just the notion that there have been large changes in life forms over a long period of time. So the only way you can deny evolution is to deny the entire fossil record.

[37:43](#) **GN:** I am being facetious am with a group that Bill Edle.

[37:48](#) **VI:** That was the great thing about the lunches actually if you want to go back to the lunches and when I picked up teaching evolution from George because George had been evolution teacher and I didn't want to take it away from him. And they hadn't offered it and then one day sit in a department meeting going well let's get rid of course I am like no I want so and actually we require it of the biology education majors it is a requirement if you're going to biology education major because it is unifying for all biology just like and I would go to my students I say what would chemistry be like if there was no theory of the atom. And it something were and half of them think that this would be great and I like no cause you'd have to learn every single reaction completely separately and just memorize it and knowing one reaction would never tell you what another reaction could do.

[38:39](#) **GN:** Role of the dice.

[38:41](#) **VI:** Right, right but evolution explain so much and you can use it to project useful hypotheses in medicine and epidemiology. I mean it's you know in agriculture it's incredibly important. So we would be sitting around chatting you know Richard J. LaPietra.

[39:00](#) **GN:** We use to have this group meeting.

[39:03](#) **VI:** You know people from outside would say they let you teach evolution and sure why not. Never heard never occurred to me. Anybody would have a problem with it. Honestly, I was so naive and of course the official position of the Catholic Church is no problem. You know if it and I actually make my students read this now because they don't know they think the Catholic Church is fundamentalist and it's not. Not officially anyway rate. And Richard like it was like he would be just scaving like how can people not believe this they were always totally supportive of that animal behavior evolution verbal phycology and GenBio.

[39:45](#) **GN:** Yeah. Different question. Marist again changed. You must be happy to be part of this growth thing you know that from where we were to where we to where we are now go and surely have played a part just of what it would say now by keeping certain course in being doctoring or monitoring others.

[40:06](#) **VI:** Well I think the most important role because I am a senior faculty now is to make sure you get high quality junior faculty and you let them develop, and be good faculty, and engage student in research, and protect them so they can do their job well.

[40:29](#) **GN:** Has Marist I get confused images about what the outside world would say of us were a bigger college now but are we better know because of Lee Meringue and public opinion, or because of the girls basketball team, or because of the summer programs here.

[40:56](#) **VI:** I have on insight. None at all. I mean I didn't know anything about Marist until Richer started working here now I am inside. I mean the thing the really disturbs me the most is students

you say to them why you pick Marist they say oh, the campus is so beautiful and I am like the programs, the teacher, the education, the library but no it was pretty. As an academic, I do see myself as an academic that so disappointing to me. I want them to pick it because they think there gonna get a good education here.

[41:33](#) GN: But they do, the Smart kids come.

[41:36](#) VI: Well, my biggest disappointment is actually I think this is a problem with the way some classes are taught is that many of us wish the students were more rebellious intellectually. You know that they would question you more, why doesn't it work this way? I think there are a lot of classes where soon as the student becomes rebellious the teacher just slams them down or just gives them a bad grade that should not be happening.

[42:11](#) GN: What are the happiest moments?

[42:13](#) VI: Happiest moments when I got the teaching. Well, ya one of the happiest and proudest moments of my life was when I got the Board of Trustees distinguished teaching.

[42:21](#) GN: Say it again.

[42:22](#) VI: The Board of Trustees distinguished teaching award. Right, I got that in nineteen ninety-five and I was the first woman to get it and I was the first young person to get it. Yeah, and of course teaching is what cared about. Yeah that was a primary thing is why I came here because I was gonna be a teacher here and I really cared about the teaching. So to be recognized in that way it was it was an incredibly proud moment for me. Yeah, and then getting tenure I really loved getting tenure. So thought it was better than getting a Ph. D. Tenure was wonderful. Cause I felt like well you know I would just say what I thought and I was say thing I thought and I think Oh God I can't really get in trouble for this. And then I thought well now I got tenure I can keep saying stupid things and not be so scared a I like getting tenured and I liked getting the

distinguished teacher award that that was great.

[43:14](#) **GN:** OK a big philosophical question like this now is college worth the investment?

[43:20](#) **VI:** Yes

[43:20](#) **GN:** In terms of you know the money that goes into it that time that goes into it the relationships giving up with a parochial staying home and coming to the colleges. Why would you say yes to the financial you don't get your money back?

[43:37](#) **VI:** I think I think the data shows that you do in terms of your what happens in your later career I think that's what the data shows is that people with a college education get better jobs and do better finally. yeah, down the road. Yeah but we're looking at is a lifetime investment. OK this is not a car.

[43:57](#) **GN:** Well I thought after four years and getting out I could get a good job. And paid a lot more than my friends who never went to college is a mechanic.

[44:07](#) **VI:** Well I think here's the problem we were talking before about how probably everybody should not be going to a liberal arts college and we need different kinds of schools to service different kinds of people with different kinds of intellectual skills and personality needs. So but I think that you know what I believe in a liberal arts education. I think that and I feel about this strongly that with a liberal arts education to be doing is helping this person become a self-learner, a critical thinker, and an effective communicator so that they can write. So somebody understands what they have to say. They can speak and somebody will respect what they have to say and pay attention to them. Right and it's all about what I call the academic skills reading, thinking, writing but writing community but the sort a go hand in hand. So I think that people who can sit down in an interview and really present themselves well are much more likely to get the job you do have to have certain skill sets in order to get certain jobs. Marist, I think one of

things Marist does well is trying to say what kind of skills are you going to pick up at college while you're getting this liberal arts education. But you can't become a lawyer without becoming a liberal art large education you can become a doctor you can you know become a college professor you can even become a schoolteacher without a liberal arts education. So there's a lot of careers out there that require this liberal arts education. So, yeah, I do think it's worth wild.

[45:38](#) **GN:** So that out. Well what about the social development the individual. You have to give up your hometown parochial you have to go meet up new friends is what a little scary and especially this day and age when they bring their phones with them and they're not giving up the little parochial.

[45:56](#) **VI:** Well that's a whole different conversation I would get rid of all their media. I really, I really hate this whole I guess it's just shows how old I am, I mean do have a smartphone what do I do with a smart phone I check my e-mail because in case a student like a student says all I need my syllabus I'm here in Australia. I'm trying to get into this course you know ok I can deal with that right yeah.

[46:19](#) **GN:** That world has changed the way you put that. I mean oh yeah twenty years ago.

[46:23](#) **VI:** E-mail the best thing about the electronic age honestly e-mail, e-mail has a lot going for it I mean I have ilearn to so you talking about the difference in teaching. It's great that I have ilearn is the digital on the computers you have an area for your course all the kids can go there I can post the syllabus there I can post study questions there. I can post handouts there people do all kinds of stuff that I don't do like chat rooms and things and I find chat was this chat about things they share wrong knowledge with each other.

[47:57](#) **GN:** Well hold if you can do that why are the bother coming here? Why don't we have online education wasn't just stay home?

[47:06](#) **VI:** Right. So how come we always had before on-line communication we had correspondence courses right why didn't people do that?

[47:15](#) **GN:** Well I don't know but this this situation.

[47:19](#) **VI:** I have an answer I am interested in your answer.

[47:21](#) **GN:** I'm being facetious here.

[47:24](#) **VI:** Yeah, I'm going to come back with my answer in a minute.

[47:26](#) **GN:** Yeah well, I was wondering you know what. Because I mean I heard the president of the college talk about the importance of online education for the graduate student.

[47:36](#) **VI:** I think that's I think that's what makes sense. Yeah I think online is great for highly motivated people who have full time employment and or families and need to work around a family but I think the four year undergraduate degree where the student goes from home on campus and is here from eighteen to twenty one is the typical age range you get I mean my mother believed in this I believe in this it's like you're it helps you to grow up that you start becoming more independent but you still get somebody kind of watching you a little bit. So it's a transition. The friends you make college I actually think are really important and can be quite different from the friends you make high school and again and then even that progresses in graduate school where you're more and more meeting people in your own field who are going to go on and you're making connections that becomes quite important to study groups of people. You're getting more people of common goals together more so than in high school. But I we always thought even if you had a child I want them to go away to school. You know to help them become, get out of the house become an adult you know.

[49:00](#) **GN:** But there is a lot of wasted time going to courses all way going to the library writing papers.

[49:06](#) **VI:** Going to a course is not a waste of time if the teacher's good writing papers is not a waste of time in any way shape or form because they're not good writers the more they write the more they're going to get better at their writing and they need to I think all the assignment work is valuable I think what we do. I mean this is what science kids learn right off the bat now let's face it you could open up that books that four, five inches thick and you couldn't read it and you could learn all that stuff and get an A but they can't and the teacher explains it to them edits for them. Puts it in a bigger this is the teacher right. Puts it in a bigger context engages them makes a connection helps them make the connection right. And really what we're trying to do and we need to try this harder is that the freshman level courses are more like high school where you're holding your hand and bring them along. And by the time you get senior level courses it should be like I'm your guide you're going to teach yourself now and I'm here to help you still have a crutch. But once you leave that door you don't have the crutches anymore. I mean look at my I often look at my classes and say about eighty to ninety percent of what I teach in GenBio one sorry GenBio two which is what I teach which in my classes had teach myself it's not stuff I knew but I was able by that point to open it up read it understand reorganize it put it in a context and make it hopefully accessible to the class. So the teacher of course is an artist. And you're hoping to get really good artists right. And kids who are consumerist about their education go after great teachers and kids who just want to buy a degree which is what that's not worth buying a degree right. That's stuff is not worth anything and they're just trying to find the easiest teachers possible where and they don't admit this they're not really hardly learning anything.

[51:05](#) **GN:** OK down the road where is Marist going to be in ten or twenty years?

[51:08](#) **VI:** Marist? It's going to be bigger.

[51:15](#) **GN:** It's going to have schools in other countries then just Florence Italy will have them

Australia, China, and.

[51:20](#) VI: It don't know about that that I have on inside on that will have more programs on campus the campuses will be bigger.

[51:32](#) GN: More student.

[51:33](#) VI: I think we will I think we just keep growing.

[51:37](#) GN: Yeah there putting up a new dormitory apparently just to take the room of these people down.

[51:43](#) VI: Here's the story we heard from point zero. We don't have enough dorm rooms for these kids or housing them in a hotel. We're going to build these dorms room today. We build a dorm we move the kids we accept more kids oh we have kids living on campus they want to live on campus we're going to build more housing we build more housing put the kids there. We take in more kids. We're always taking in more.

[52:06](#) GN: Well if they want to come build it they'll come.

[52:10](#) VI: I mean I love the changes on the campus. I have to say I think the campus is so beautiful now. I think the decisions that were made were good decisions. I think they were made over the complaints of a few strange people and you know you cannot knock that tree down it's the library.

[52:28](#) GN: Joe Bell wanted that tree left up there.

[52:35](#) VI: But you know I mean we have beautiful laws we look out on the river it is a great location.

[52:41](#) GN: What is it they need to?

[52:44](#) VI: It needs a science building. What respectable four-year liberal arts College or better in our classification or less does not have a science building? Besides the fact that I think biology is

maybe the fourth biggest major on campus it's grown dramatically.

[53:08](#) GN: So we need a science building we need a parking lot too.

[53:12](#) VI: Well you know yes sure but I think you know if I have to choose between a building and a parking lot I am going choose a building we need more classrooms absolutely. We need more classrooms we always need more classrooms, absolutely. It's ridiculous.

[53:26](#) GN: OK. I thought the Hancock Building I remember when the Hancock was going up I was told that not no one student will be admitted because of that. So it's not really.

[53:39](#) VI: But how many class rooms does it have?

[53:41](#) GN: Few generate computer science and advanced Tec.

[53:47](#) VI: Which is helpful you know they build a building I don't want to talk about that because I know I'm not that familiar with the Hancock.

[53:56](#) GN: Well you have a view. While you've a wild you've seen things happen.

[54:02](#) VI: I've always felt we needed more you know multiple the multi-purpose classrooms it would be nice if all the classrooms were you know temperature regulated so the kids are freezing or baking because that doesn't help educations it would be great I think I think smart classrooms you can write and project at same time that would be nice you know. But you know it's at the bottom it's what's going on in the head of the teacher. What's going on in the head of the students and what's the connection between those two things you know I mean so you can have a teacher who never uses multimedia and it's great.

[54:42](#) GN: Well we've gone almost an hour with this and I guess we've only just began to see the top of the iceberg and there is more the nine tenths below it.

[54:48](#) VI: You can tell I am a really chatty person.

[54:54](#) GN: Is there something I didn't ask you wanted to say for all this time it hard to think

[54:59](#) VI: I like you had all these questions because I like what I am going to talk about.

[55:05](#) GN: So, well had no difficulty that you would be able to answer them and I wouldn't know that because early statements it took away a lot of my previous questions about growing up and going to school and how to find Marist so was that one sentence and it happens Richard is on my list.

[55:24](#) VI: Yes, you're going to get a whole wive from him.

[55:28](#) GN: Yeah, I'm probably different he won't deny it but would be different you know terms of what he will say

[55:34](#) VI: no and his experiences have been very different his you know of course he's an art so needs and viewpoints are different but mostly. If I could have my way. We have a lot more full-time faculty and tenure track cause that's how you get good people.

[55:53](#) GN: OK but you got to pay the money.

[55:54](#) VI: I know I don't I'm realistic I realize that I'm not there are people out there who are crazy. OK. I am like you can't do that but you know but you know really you start looking at where money goes and you're like is that where I want the money to go and the other thing I would change in this would be for all colleges everywhere are student athletes have a very limited amount of hours per week that they have that they are allowed to be forced to work on their on their sport because that's way too many hours that way. They're basically professionals and they're supposed to be students who do athletics. They're not athletes who try to squeeze their classes.

[56:38](#) GN: And build their schedules around there athletic program.

[56:40](#) VI: Well it's not so much even that it's like if you have a science major when they missed the lecture. This gets back to what it is lecturing important. The science majors know that their

life will be much easier if they can go to a lecture because it makes much more sense than having read it out of the book. Ok, so the kid can't come to lecture because they have to go to the meat and then they have to make that up and it's herodus or they underclass exhausted they get about five o'clock in the morning they crew for three hours they go they take a shower they have their breakfast they come in the class of eleven o'clock and drop dead asleep. And that's not to be unexpected you know so.

[57:23](#) **GN:** Well thank you.

[57:26](#) **VI:** It's a pleasure.