

Interviewee: John Scileppi
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

June 25, 2002
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John Scileppi

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Erin Kelly

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Summary: In the following interview, Dr. John A. Scileppi reflects on his years at Marist College teaching in the psychology department. The interview begins with a brief background of Dr. John Scileppi's educational years and his transition to teaching at Marist College. Dr. Scileppi speaks of his early teaching assignments given to him by Dan Kirk, including courses on The Theories of Personality and The Psychology of Interpersonal Communication and he continues to several of the same courses he previously taught twenty-nine years earlier. Dr. John Scileppi also speaks of the transition to the core program as well as several influential colleagues at Marist College. The interview end with Dr. John Scileppi's hopes for the future of Marist College.

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“BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW”

Gus Nolan: This interview is with Dr. John Scileppi of the Psychology Department. He’s the director of the graduate aspect of that. The interview is taking place in the James Cannavino Library at Marist College. It is about 1:15 in the afternoon. Good afternoon John.

Dr. John A. Scileppi: Good afternoon Gus.

GN: John, will you please tell us your full name?

JAS: Yes, John A. Scileppi and well, I guess my middle initial A. is for my father whose first name is Adolf.

GN: Okay, were you named after any member of your family?

JAS: Not formally. There was another John Scileppi who was a judge who was the cousin of my father and it’s possible that I was named after him but I was never really told that so I think that just my folks just picked the name. It’s a common one at the time.

GN: Where and when were you born?

JAS: I was born on August 30, 1946 in Bethany Deconesse Hospital in Queens, on the border of Brooklyn and Queens, New York.

GN: Okay. Do you have any siblings, any brothers or sisters?

JAS: Yes, I’ve got two sisters. My older one is JoAnn Lang. She lives in Washington and is a special education teacher and my other sister, Jane, lives in New York City and in Swanage, England and she just retired from the New York City Public School System.

GN: When you say Washington is that Washington D.C.?

JAS: Washington D.C. Sorry about that.

GN: Okay, and your parents’ names and their occupations?

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JAS: My father is Adolf G. Scileppi. He has been a physician having received his MD in 1934. He's now ninety-six years old [Laughter] and is living in Florida. My mother Marie Theresa Scileppi, her maiden name was Sacarro and she was a school teacher in the New York System, New York City Public School System and she died last September.

GN: What about your early education? Do you recall where you went to grammar school?

JAS: Sure.

GN: And then high school?

JAS: Yes. I guess interestingly I am the product of almost completely of Catholic education from first grade through my Doctorate. As a matter of fact, the only places that I did not get religious education was kindergarten at PS91 in Queens, in Glendale, Queens and driver education in Carmel High School. And I don't know my wife says that I'm not a lot of fun and I can't drive very well [Laughter] so I suppose the Catholic part of the education was better. My elementary school was St. Pancras, St. Pancras Elementary School in Glendale and then I went to high school at Archbishop Molloy High School, a Marist Brothers high school that we were discussing before Gus. You taught there the year before I got there and then I was here at Marist and I take my four years undergraduate then I did... Then I went to Loyola University for my... Loyola University of Chicago for my Master's and Doctorate.

GN: Okay. We'll come back to the college in a few minutes but let's just stay a little bit more on the personal. You were with the Marist Brothers for a number of years and then you decided to leave them and take on another way of life. In the course of time you

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came across Lynn. Can you say something about that marriage, where it took place, when and the happy product of it? [Laughter]

JAS: Yes. I'm married to Lynn Ruggiero and we got married on November 27, 1982 at St. Peter and Paul Church in Waterbury, Connecticut.

GN: Remember the date?

JAS: Yes, November 27th.

GN: Oh.

JAS: Yea, right. You were there [Laughter] along with Liz and we lived in Poughkeepsie and Hyde Park since then and in 1990, our son Luke was born and on June 23, 1990 and so he's currently twelve years old as of two days ago.

GN: Not yet a teenager.

JAS: Nope, no.

GN: Those joys await you. [Laughter]

JAS: Oh yea, very much so. [Laughter]

GN: Okay. Now you're one of the unique people that we have to talk to in terms of their college education and the college education being here at Marist. Could you say something about your days at Marist when you came as a student? What year was that and who was here?

JAS: I started out at Marist in September of 1963. I guess the first time I set foot on campus would have been in 1962. I talked with Brother John Malachy who was the Director of Admissions at the time and he went through many other roles here at the college and elsewhere later on. I was also recruited from Molloy by Tom Wade and I think I talked with John Malachy first but Tom Wade was the person who came to

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Molloy. I got interested in Marist for two reasons. One, they had this beautiful schematic picture of this new unusually shaped building, Donnelly Hall which looked like a flying saucer. [Laughter] And I said to myself, any one that would design a building like that for a college must be a very innovative and creative kind of a place” and that had that in a display I guess at Molloy and I passed it frequently. And then I was looking also at the quality of the teachers that I had at Molloy. I knew it then as I know now that they were a very fine group of educators. Terry Jones and Ronald Marcellin and Neil Richard and all sorts of others, Kevin Dominic and the list goes on and on of people that I can still remember, many of whom are deceased. But they were fine, fine teachers. Scared the living daylights out of me frequently but [Laughter] they did take a personal interest in that they were hard and demanding and challenging and it was a very worthwhile education. So I said to myself, if that group of people learned at Marist College and you know, all of them did, then I felt that that would be a good reason to come to Poughkeepsie. My folks had a summer place country home maybe twenty-five, thirty miles away and so Poughkeepsie was a place that I had known some things about so I thought that that would be a good place to go to. And I found that I had a number of classmates who also came to Marist although they came through the Brothers. And then we were just talking about this earlier, a number of people in my homeroom in high school joined the Marist Brothers and then came.

GN: Is that where those S’s appear?

JAS: Yea, that’s right. [Laughter] We’re all alphabetically oriented so Henry Sawicki, Joseph Scanlon and myself were all in the same homeroom. Ed Molloy and the other two became Marist Brothers. I was at the time called a retarded vocation [Laughter] because

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I was coming in after college and you know, that my coming to Marist was only to some degree affected by my then lukewarm interest in thinking in terms of joining the Marist Brothers.

GN: But when you came here, you really had a leaning towards the medical profession? You thought you...

JAS: Yes.

GN: Might be studying medicine as your father had before you.

JAS: Yes, yes. I think that as a young boy, my father always told me that whenever anyone asked what I wanted to do [Laughter] to indicate that it would be medicine and so I always kind of thought of that and I think going to college, going through high school and for the first years, the first three years of college, I never really questioned that as a goal. I just said I guess that's what I'm supposed to do in life is to become a medical doctor and so I was a pre-med/ biology major and I can... Just before this interview I was talking to you that I had applied for early admission into medical school for admission after my junior year and I went for interviews at three places, Syracuse, Downstate, which I think was in Brooklyn and I want to say something like Columbia but I'm not positive. I can't remember it anymore. But I recall the interview I did was at Syracuse. One of the, I don't know, third year students decided that he was the person who was going to take me around in Syracuse and at Upstate Medical Center and he wanted to show me this cadaver and then he wanted to show me that the human intestine is twenty-six feet long. And at that point I decided this was not a career for me. [Laughter] I could just see myself interacting with a patient, blood, guts, I'm not really interested. [Laughing] And so that was one of those life defining moments I guess. You know, I

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decided to instead major in Psychology. I had taken a lot of Psychology courses already anyway and I had some very fine Psychology teachers.

GN: Could you mention some of those now and tell us those who were the Marist staff then and some who are still here?

JAS: Yea, which really amazes me, the large number of people who are still here after all these years. In my first year I was privileged to have Richard LaPietra in Chemistry and Jerry White in History and Ed O'Keefe in Psychology and just to go back to think in terms of my first semester, fall of 1963, three of my professors [Laughter] as a freshman are still here. I had some wonderful other people. Frank Swetz who then went onto Pennsylvania, University of Penn I think it was in Math and I had numerous others, some of whom are not still here. I had as my dorm proctor Bob Lewis who just retired and later on I had Andrew Molloy for Organic Chemistry. I had Brian Desilets for Physics. I had Richard again for...

GN: Not Chemistry, you passed it the first time?

JAS: Oh yea, yea, yea. [Laughter] But for another course, I'm trying to remember what the other course was. It was probably one of the other sciences. It may have been Physics. And then I had Tom Casey in Philosophy and then I had Dan Kirk in Psychology. As a sophomore, he had an extremely challenging course using... based on the theory of David Ausubel in ego development and he later on became fairly close friends with David Ausubel and co-authored a book revising the book that we had used in our course. And then Bill Eidle was also one of my teachers for a few of my courses in both Experimental Psychology as well as in what we called The Mind, Body and Problem, which is basically a course in Physiological Psychology and drugs and

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behavior. But yea, these individuals are still very much part of my life and I was certainly impressed by the level of rigor in their classes. None of them were easy. That I remember, John Malachy came to see me right around the time my first midterms in the fall semester of 1963. I was a freshman and he said that he was going to Molloy for a school visit and he wanted to get a sense of how those students who had gone the year before were doing. And I said to him, “Gosh Brother John, I think... I think I’m going to pass but I’m not really sure.” You know but it was really, I had no idea and I did very well on all the rest of it but the challenge was there in that there was nothing in the bag as it were, as far as grades were going and that... That was all the way through college too that the idea was that there was always another challenge and you could never rest on your morals and it was a very good experience for really getting as far as you could.

GN: You’re in a unique position to be able to comment now if you would something of the level of the ability of the students or the work produced by them, what you can command of students now and what was commanded of you. Will you draw any parallels about that, papers done for instance?

JAS: Yea, I think one of the first experiences that we had during freshman orientation which was not a socializing time but much more concerned about academics. Brother Paul Stokes is the... He died about twelve, fourteen years ago I guess now, was the Dean of Students and he brought all the freshman, it must’ve been perhaps 250 or 300 together in the old gym that’s now the Marian Hall and I think he gave us a rather stern talk on what to expect. One of the aspects of his talk and perhaps this is used in many places, I don’t know if it’s used anymore, was used then but it was the only time I had ever heard it so I thought it was important and he said to each of us to look to your left, then look to

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your right and that one of the three of you will not be here next year. And it was... You know, I looked at the others and they looked pretty smart. [Laughter] And so I was kind of wondering who it was going to be but that kind of started me on the idea that I better do well academically. Interestingly and looking back at it, oh I think my classmates were very nice people and all the rest of it. I don't think that they were geniuses by any means and we're told now as faculty that the incoming class is the best class coming in and that they have much higher SAT scores and indeed they might but there, as a teacher, there is no way that I could be demanding what was demanded of me as a student. The culture of the United States as well as the culture of the college has changed and I don't think Marist is unique in that but the students that were my classmates were by and large, first generation college students and still there are lots of students now who are first generation college students but I would expect that there are fewer now than there were then. That those students... Well, I don't think that we talked about graduate school, then and now, certainly we are but that again becomes the culture. Still though, I think that we never expected that you could go to a teacher and get a grade changed and whatever was stated, that was it. Even if it was a mistake, that was it. [Laughter] And now it becomes a question of negotiation at times and I know this issue in my email for example. I got a far larger, greater number of people who are asking "How come I got this grade?" So I go to respond and I didn't change any grades. But I mean, I don't remember ever asking. [Laughter] Yea, right. It was just two days ago.

GN: Let's move onto your graduate school. Where did you go to graduate school and what did you study there?

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JAS: I went to Loyola University of Chicago to study Psychology. After deciding not to become a medical doctor and then deciding to go into Psychology, around that same time I became interested perhaps more in the fall of my senior year, I became interested in the Brothers, in joining the Brothers. And the reason why this is pertinent is that at the time the training houses of the Brothers were in flux. In the late 1960's there was a lot of transition going on and I was told to prepare to go to New York City, Boston or Chicago and so I applied to graduate schools in each of those areas. I applied to Fordham and NYU and Columbia in the city, New York City. I think Boston College and Boston University and then in Chicago I applied to Loyola and Northwestern. I got accepted to go all those except Northwestern and somehow I got accepted at DePaul. I never really quite understood. [Laughter] I didn't apply. [Laughter] And so I think that someone in the Brothers must have said "Oh gosh, we're going to set up a house in Chicago. I don't know if Scileppi has done anything. I'll call someone at DePaul," you know or whatever. So I felt nice about that but [Laughter] one of the interesting things too is that I didn't know what field of Psychology that I wanted and so some places says I applied for Social Psych. Another place is Clinical Psych and different fields. Xerox machines were not very common then and I was kind of young. I graduated college at twenties so I must have been you know, just turning twenty or at nineteen at the time I was applying. I failed to keep a record of where I had applied and what I had said and so I was the last person to arrive at a meeting at Loyola and the then chair, a guy named Ron Walker realized. You know, he had his roster and he said, are you... I was the last one there. He said, "Oh, you must be John Scileppi. You're in Clinical." And I thought he had made the mistake so I said "No, I'm in Social" and it turned out that he had set me up for to be

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an assistant with the head of the Clinical Psych program but then I was too embarrassed to admit that I had made the mistake. [Laughter] So I became a Social Psychologist.

[Laughter]

GN: Another important day in your life.

JAS: Yea, right, one of those life defining moments. That was an “Oh, shucks!” moment. [Laughter] No, I’m happy with the choice that I had made.

GN: After you finished your studies, where did you start your first work, your first assignments?

JAS: Let’s see, first I had to split up my graduate work and to doing Novitiate and so I had left early from Loyola having not taken all the courses but then was able to still get my Master’s degree for I was a Novice in Cold Spring and then I went back and I finished the Doctorate. And my first job was at St. Xavier College. I was interested in teaching and as a matter of fact, I guess the very first thing I did was to be a guidance counselor at Marist High School in Chicago. I was a bit more liberal than the people in the staff at Marist High School and the principal was really worried about what I was doing with the students. As a guidance counselor, I took a very Rogerian perspective and a rather conservative directive approach to education. And so my first job was partly the result of Brother Patrick [Cisteril], the principal of Marist High School playing golf with the president at St. Xavier College, a guy named Harry Marmion and I guess Pat gave a good word for me to the president and there was a real problem because they told me they asked the Chair of Psychology, a woman named Carroll LaPedra to call and I wasn’t listed in the phonebook because I was in the Marist Brother’s house and so I was listed under Marist Brothers but she didn’t know that so... Apparently two or three weeks went

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by and I didn't know any of this and then I actually applied not knowing any of the things that were happening and then she was able to contact me. But that worked out nicely and I started working at St. Xavier College. The place nearly closed. I remember that first, it must have been November, there was an eager enthusiastic and worried and you know, the usual scared sense that you have in your first assignment to do anything to want to do it well. And the president brought all the faculty into their auditorium and said "If the utility company decides to ask for their bill, we'll have to close" and so [Laughter] I was a little bit concerned. They did better but after going through that, this would be a great chance then to be innovative and there's no sense in being conservative and traditional and so I started a program. We had a complication in December and I said, "What we really got to do here at St. Xavier is to change the whole educational system." And I figured that they were going to laugh at me, being a rather young twenty-four year old teacher and all that sort of thing. Anyway, the faculty accepted the idea and I started a new freshman program there called the XL program, Xavier Learning. It's very innovative and very student-centered and project oriented and had just about every new idea that was mentioned. It was a very popular program and in my second year I was directing that and I was contracted for my third year. However, right after I got my job at St. Xavier College, Dan Kirk called, wrote and told me the interesting things that he was doing there. I was really interested because he was starting a Master's program in Community Psych but I felt that I should really stay in Chicago. I was doing some things that I liked to do out there and then he wrote again in '73 and at that time the Brother's house was closing and so I figured that there was less reason to stay in Chicago. I had started the freestyle school in a broader district on the south side of Chicago dealing with

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diverse population of inner city and University of Chicago faculty's children so it was a nice kind of way to kind of bridge the gap between the two. And that was going very well but then when they closed the house on me, then I was no longer in that neighborhood and so I figured this might be a good time for a move and since Dan Kirk had written and asked me to apply, I did and I then applied and was accepted to teach here. I was already contracted for my third year at St. Xavier but the dean allowed me to break the contract on the idea that I was a Marist Brother and that was a Marist School.

GN: So then you returned here? What year was that now?

JAS: 1973.

GN: So you arrived at Marist to teach in '73?

JAS: Yes, yes.

GN: And what were your first teaching assignments here?

JAS: Dan Kirk had an ironic sense of humor which I always appreciated. He gave me courses that I never had as a student [Laughter] and so I had to learn them from scratch and some of them I'm still teaching and I feel very good in terms of that. Over the course of the years, I've taught about thirty different courses but that first year I was teaching Theories of Personality. I was teaching a graduate course in Research Methods and I was teaching another graduate course in the Social Psychology of Learning, what are the different factors that affect how a student learns and it was fun because in each of those I could investigate the areas new without having a lot of excess baggage. I knew the general field but I never taught those kinds of courses and then in the spring I was teaching a course in the Social Psychology of Groups and it's interesting how almost thirty years or twenty-nine years later, I'm still teaching The Personality, I'm still very

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eager and active in research although I'm not teaching a Research course and I still teach a course in this and It's a group-oriented course, The Psychology of Interpersonal Communication. And they all go back twenty-nine years. Those are some of the things that I was teaching.

GN: Very interesting.

JAS: Yea, yea.

GN: What about some of the committee work that you've been involved in?

JAS: I was elected to committees I guess right from the first time I could stand for election starting out in the Grievance Committee and then I got on the Academic Affairs Committee and I was Chair of that a couple of times, three times and then I was elected to the FEC, the Faculty Executive Committee and then I probably had a role in committee services that I did. The longest tenure was on the Rank and Tenure Committee, which was I think the committee from hell. [Laughter] No, it was a very needed committee but it's the kind of committee that no matter what you do...

GN: Tough decisions.

JAS: In that you make tough decisions and people's lives are in the balance, you know, certainly. And then more recently, I've been on Sabbaticals and Research Committee and over the years many Search committees and ad hoc committees and...

GN: Let's direct attention to one area, the Core program, the capping program. Can you say something about that please?

JAS: The Core program was something I was very much interested in. First, the core that Ed O'Keefe was spearheading maybe back in 1977 or thereabouts and what I liked...

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I thought that there were some really interesting areas. First I thought that the sixty-sixty program was without educational justification. It's...

GN: Come out of a disaster. [Laughter] We've had that expression before.

JAS: Yea, right. And so I was very happy that Ed was coming up with it. At the time Xavier Ryan was also very much involved. I was happy that one of the foundation courses, the Introduction to Philosophy, dealt with the four modes of consciousness. Ironically just tonight I'm going to be teaching Carl Jung and Jung talked about the four functions of the psyche and for a person to be whole, the person needs to be able to function in each of those areas and it turns out the four functions of the psyche and the four modes of consciousness...

GN: Are parallel.

JAS: Yea, they are. You know, they're very strongly parallel and so I thought it was a great idea. I remember a group of students in Psychology and myself were advocating strongly for that core and I think that we gave at a party with a cake which had an apple core, you know, [Laughter] on it was a picture of an apple core. And that the... As the core then developed it seemed to be inadequate, in the right direction but inadequate and so by 1982, 1983, the core needed to be revised. And in '83, '84, it was revised. I was the Chair of AAC at the time and Andrew Molloy was the academic vice-president of the dean and I recall having many meetings with faculty in small groups and doing all sorts of things to advocate for the new core, the new... What we now call the Core Liberal Studies had certain advantages taking first the same idea of the seventy-seven core and I presented it as an evolution and as an organic program that would continue to evolve.

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The biggest change was, actually two changes. The first was to have more courses, two courses in each area instead of one course in each area.

GN: Right. So the idea was that there'd be a widespread, that students have two courses in Literature, two in Math, two in Social Sciences, two in History so they wouldn't graduate from Marist without ever having had a History course or without ever having a Math course?

JAS: That's right.

GN: That was the rationale behind it.

JAS: That was and also I saw it as connecting to the four modes of consciousness so that as the students would learn, learn each of the modes, they would have an opportunity to explore those modes more fully by taking courses in literature or courses in philosophy or courses in...

GN: Science.

JAS: Science, etcetera. And the other innovation in the '83 core was the, the capping course and that the idea was education tends... Coming actually from Andrew Carnegie in the 1890's, 1900's that the reason why we have 120 credits, they used to be called Carnegie credits because the Carnegie Foundation would only fund those colleges that had 120 credits. It caused a great disintegration of learning in that people were just looking for forty three-credit units, didn't always have three credits but to have 120 credits and there was no integrating peace and the idea of the capping course would be that students would be, would be the integrators themselves with some assistance and guidance from a faculty member who would take the foundation, take all the distributive courses and tie in those same themes to the major. It was, I don't want to say grandiose.

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[Laughter] It was challenging and I think that it's now been close to twenty years later I guess that the core was if I recall, the core was voted in, Core Liberal Studies in December of '83 and then the first time it was actually implemented would have probably been the fall of '84 and even there, that would have been with freshman and so it was a gradual limitation. But then I see the, the same topics being discussed each year and I think that that's part of the organic part of it, that there was no way that we could have come up with a complete system that would have said this course should improve with X, Y and Z and this course should improve with A, B and C etcetera and that that it's still evolving but the basic framework hasn't changed. And my belief is, I think I may have even mentioned in trying to support the Core Liberal Studies at the time, that the college was moving away from the liberal arts and was developing into many professional programs and the computorary and business area and the technological area and that if we didn't come up with a core then, there's no way that we would have been able to do it after that because we wouldn't have been able to get a fifty percent of the faculty to move in any one direction.

GN: Okay. Let's change the focus a little bit now and talk about the student body. How would you contrast the student body today with your day in terms of maturity, scholarship, the balance of male and female students on campus? [Laughter] In your day, there was none.

JAS: The last question, that's really easy. [Laughter] There were only males at the college although I remember some times that the fire alarms would go off in the dormitories and somehow the first people out would always be women. I just could never figure out. [Laughter] But I mean, there were no women when I was a student. I

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assumed that they were, that women probably came first through the evening division but they may have had women in the evening division but I wasn't knowledgeable about that. You know, having most of my classes in the daytime. I think that the students were in one sense, entering students were not very different as far as, as their standards, academic standards. Well, if anything maybe they're higher now. I don't know although it seemed that everyone then read well, wrote well, knew basic mathematical skills well but we never, we never thought much of that. We just assumed well of course, you went through twelve years of elementary and secondary school and you would've learned that. Now, I know when I talk to the faculty who teach Statistics and Psychological Research Methods that they'll ask some question like "What's the average of these three numbers, 3, 4 and 5?" and the students haven't a clue as to how to be able to figure that out and somehow we would've all known that, [Laughter] you know, before. But we're told that the SAT scores are higher now than they were then and I have no reason to [dispute] them.

GN: Which is larger, a quarter or a third? [Laughter]

JAS: Well, gee I mean, four is bigger isn't it? [Laughter] Gus, those kinds of things make me really scared and so it seems that students are less prepared with the basics now but seem to have higher SAT scores now than they did before.

GN: Okay, let me ask about another area because time is running on. Let's talk about the administration and the changes that you have experienced. You were here for a number of years under Dr. Foy and then he was followed by Dr. Murray. Let's talk about Dr. Foy. How would you describe your experiences with him and what were his characteristics of administration?

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JAS: Certainly a very friendly and very accessible and academically-oriented. He did not rely on the authority of his office but rather he was a teacher in the classroom first as a Mathematics teacher and the math majors were just always dying to have him. Again, he was challenging, all the rest of it but he was known as an educator. He was a teacher. He was also a person who was not ashamed to get dirty, to roll up his sleeves and pitch in and do a lot of the work, even some of the physical work. I have an uncle who worked in Poughkeepsie in the internal revenue office and apparently his office caught up to say that they old furniture and so they asked if the college would want it and so a truck came the next day and Linus was one of the people changing things. My uncle was talking with the people and said “Oh, my name is Victor Scileppi. What’s your name?” “Oh, my name is Dr. Linus Foy” and he was just seeming... You know, he was really taken aback by that. And I recall that story very much because it kind of said to me that this was not a person who was up on some pedestal who had to... You know, a real... We all treat him with respect. There’s no question. We all knew that he was a very fine person but it wasn’t because he was president. He was just a nice person, a very intelligent person, very... Had wonderful vision. Both as a student and as a faculty, I trusted Linus. The college had a lot of substance, that decisions were made for good academic reasons. I did some... As a first year or second year teacher, I was asked to do a survey for to see whether or not there was an interest in the Nursing program and I was very interested in... Linus came to the meeting where I was presenting it to Richard LaPietra and not only to faculty, to the...

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JAS: Administration. And he was there and he asked, he was very knowledgeable about my study. He had read it and he was asking some very fun questions in that there was just a... I saw him as a straight-shooter academic and trustworthy. And talking prior, you know, certainly I know that the college financially was not in the best of shapes in those days. That wasn't a big thing. Revenue came second. The academic, educational quality of the program came first and under Linus's tenure, we started the graduate programs and we offered a lot of the programs that are still being offered today and a lot of the innovations were already there like the internship and the undergraduate psych program and the communications programs were started by Linus. And I think unfortunately Boards of Trustees have fiduciary responsibility to the college and that the board decided to then choose someone who would help us financially and it's hard to throw stones. I'm sitting in this very nice room here in Cannavino Library and it's nice that we had \$25 million to spend for, you know, for a library that I don't think that we would have been able to do and that the grounds looked very nice and that the... Now I understand we use professionals for contractors and construction.

GN: Right. Times have changed. [Laughter]

JAS: Yea, right.

GN: One has to have a license now [Laughter] and has to be qualified to do this. So Dr. Murray has brought these qualities to the college, a much more professional fundraising I suppose we'd say...

JAS: Yes, certainly.

GN: And then the actual construction, going to not the Brothers but rather for us to do this for their livelihood. [Laughter]

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JAS: Not that I minded. As I mentioned, I came because of the unique building of Donnelly Hall.

GN: And finally into these last areas, what about your role in the development of this college department and the Master's program, are you happy with the way that has gone or were there some changes that you had wished that would have been implemented and somehow didn't happen, didn't have to happen?

JAS: On the whole, yea, I'm very happy with the way that things have turned out in that we, not only in Psychology, but I think throughout the college that we have some very fine programs. And yes, I'm very involved in the graduate program and I recall that there were times when the college looked upon the graduate programs as a real drain on resources and now I see that it's a revenue enhancing area that it was never before. And I felt good that we've been able to, you know, make the program larger. In terms of things that I would have liked to have happen that didn't happen, just as Dan Kirk was getting sick, we were developing a Doctoral program and indeed we had gone through developing a Doctoral program and we had developed the program on paper and the faculty as I recall had voted in favor of it and the trustees had accepted it but it never got accepted by the state. We got it up to that point by the state. It turned out to be not accepted for political reasons. There was an engineering program that we wanted and that New Paltz wanted and it turned out that we had developed a satellite program using New York Institute of Technology and apparently the word that we got was that the then governor was very unhappy that a private institution received this program where a public institution did not and so he basically told the regions not to give Marist anything and we were the next program that came. We had a five year program, a very innovative

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program that had been accepted but somehow the state lost the paperwork on that so as soon as we applied to the Doctoral program they said “You know, you’ve got this five year program. We’ve never heard about that.” And then when we withdrew our Doctoral proposal, all of a sudden they found the paperwork for the five year program and everything is fine with it. Now we’re actually developing another proposal for a Doctoral program and who knows whether or not this will carry. One of the problems in Psychology is that to become a licensed practitioner, a person needs a Doctorate in Psychology. We offer a Master’s degree. That means that our students are at a disadvantage. They can work in agencies but they can’t practice independently and this conversation is happening at an interesting time because in the state there is a bill to license Master’s level practitioners. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate last Thursday and is scheduled to be taken up by the Assembly today. If that bill passes then our students will no longer be second class citizens.

GN: Has the governor agreed to sign it? Do you know?

JAS: Well, if... No, but the governor doesn’t have to agree to sign it until it’s passed by both houses.

GN: I see.

JAS: And if it passes the Assembly today, it certainly would be very likely given that it passed unanimously in the Senate. It would be unwise for a governor to try to veto a bill that passed so successfully. It might take a year to... I feel a little bit like Moses in the promised land. Friday is my last day as director of the Master’s program in Psychology. I would certainly love to have that bill passed. [Laughter]

GN: As a parting gift?

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JAS: Right, exactly. And it would then make my successor's job a lot easier for recruiting students but the program is growing. It's about maybe four or five times the size that it was in 1990 when I took it on and I think we'll grow very fast, again, once that bill passes. And School of Psych and Ed Psych are also programs that we offer now.

GN: Okay. Marist has certainly grown and has become a rather story of success in the twenty-five years since you first came to this area. What would you say are the key points and is it likely to continue?

JAS: I think... It certainly... When I talk to anyone in the community, everyone who's lived here for a long time does talk about how Marist's reputation, how its size, how quality of its programs, the quality of its sports activities has improved. And certainly I think that there are enough outcomes that we could use for that. It's also going... It's also improved on the national level. When I meet people elsewhere in the United States, that they've certainly, they've heard of Marist whether it's through the polling, the MIPO, whether it's because of our sports teams or indeed whether it's because of the graduates that we're producing. Our connections with IBM certainly and I think we have Brian Desilets to thank for that as well as Paul Ambrose actually. And then 1940's when IBM first came to Poughkeepsie and Paul's got some great stories which I'm sure that he's talked to you about. But now, to realize that our graduates are throughout the world and that I've heard that we are as a college, when IBMers consider where they are alumni of, I'm trying to think of the right way of saying that in terms of English, [Laughter] that Marist is the second largest college for their alums, meaning... And which I thought was a pretty interesting place if they're all scattered through many but because so many people...

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GN: Come to Poughkeepsie.

JAS: Come to Poughkeepsie and then they got their undergraduate degree here so whenever they think of helping their alma mater with interesting programs, [Laughter] Marist gets help by that and I think that that certainly has helped our reputation.

GN: And physically being located on the Hudson, seventy-five miles from New York City?

JAS: Admissions always tells us that that's important. [Laughter]

GN: Yes.

JAS: Location, location, location. [Laughter]

GN: Fine, and in conclusion John, is there anything I didn't ask you that you think you'd like to add to this conversation?

JAS: The only thing that I would want to encourage is that when I came to Marist, there was certain, as a student, there was certainly an interest in educating the total person. Even the rules and regulations and everything were involved in making sure that we were responsible, well-disciplined individuals who would become fine citizens and I remember many, many people, faculty, administration that would emphasize that and I still see that going on in terms of the core, both the '77 core as well as the current core. I still see that with the Templeton award that we received. I see that admission statement and I would hope that we continue to be concerned about educating the total person. I am unhappy that we've lost the close sense of community that we once had but that I hope we continue to look at the total person and not just, you know, the people who are going to be academically successful.

GN: Good. Thank you very much John.

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JAS: Thank you.

“END OF INTERVIEW”