

**MILTON D. TEICHMAN**

**Marist College  
Poughkeepsie, NY**

**Transcribed by Ann Sandri  
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections**

**Interviewee:** Milton D. Teichman

**Interviewer:** Gus Nolan

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**Summary:** The following interview occurs with Dr. Milton D. Teichman, former English professor at Marist College. The interview begins with Dr. Teichman's educational background, as well as his transition to Marist College from Indiana. At Marist, Teichman reflects on his experiences in teaching English romanticism among various other subjects including Literature of the Holocaust. Dr. Teichman's contributions to the College are outlined including his introduction of the annual Effron lecture to Marist College. The interview ends with a Dr. Teichman's comments concerning the direction he hopes Marist College will continue to pursue.

**“BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW”**

**Gus Nolan:** Hi, I have an introductory comment. Today is October 21<sup>st</sup>. The interview this afternoon for the Archives is taking place with Dr. Milton Teichman. He is a professor of many years here at Marist College. Care to Milton? Could you tell us your full name please?

**MT:** Milton Teichman.

**GN:** Were you named...

**MT:** My full name.

**GN:** Were you named after any member of the family?

**MT:** Yes, I was named after my deceased grandfather.

**GN:** Where and when were you born, Milton?

**MT:** I was born in Brooklyn, New York on July 21, 1930.

**GN:** Okay, and are there other member of your family or siblings that were in your past?

**MT:** Yes, I have one brother now. I had two brothers. One was killed in World War II and I have a brother who is seven years younger than I am.

**GN:** And will you tell us something about your early education? Grade school and high school?

**MT:** Yes, I went to public school in Brooklyn, New York, junior high as well in that division, you know, public school junior high. In eighth grade we went to the junior high. No, even earlier. I think in seventh grade.

**GN:** Seventh. Yea, seven to eleven. Seven, nine, and ten I guess.

**MT:** That's right, yes. And then I went to Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn. After that, four years at Brooklyn College where I was an English major. After Brooklyn College, I graduated in 1952. I went to Duke University to work on a Master's Degree, which I did, also in English.

**GN:** Okay, I'd like to pick up the graduate education later...

**MT:** Okay.

**GN:** And go back to your development years. What about your parents Milton? What were your father and mother's names and what did your father do?

**MT:** My father's name was Max. My mother's name was Yetta. My father worked, he did a number of things during my very early years. He owned a luncheonette in Brooklyn. He owned a number of luncheonettes, operated them. And then I think it was after the war, it was after the war, he moved into the ladies' garment industry and he worked as an embroidery operator. That was very skilled work because it required somebody with artistic ability to follow and create embroidery designs on women's clothing. That's what he did. My mother was a creative house wife and she prided herself in her fine cooking and her decorating ability to make our modest home very attractive.

**GN:** That says something about your art background I suppose?

**MT:** I would say my father and mother were very artistic people. Yes, they may not have acknowledged that or they may have chuckled if you had described it as artistic but my mother had a great sense of color and great flare for artistic interior decoration. And my father, yes he would say that sometimes when he had to follow designs that were on chalk on fabric and the chalk would disappear, he had to improvise. He had to create designs where he didn't see them on the fabric.

**GN:** Very clever.

**MT:** Yes, and he was very conscious of the [Laughter], I'd say the aesthetic side of life. Very well groomed and these are people with very modest incomes.

**GN:** Yes and the Depression, of course, is on in those years.

**MT:** Oh yes, but he always looked so well-groomed and also my mother. They gave the appearance of being prosperous even when they weren't. [Laughter]

**GN:** Well they were in their own way, I guess.

**MT:** They were rich spiritually I would say for a number of reasons, apart from their artistic bents.

**GN:** Now tell me something Milton, about your daughters. Is one in Japan, is that right? Or has she returned since?

**MT:** No, they both live here now. My younger daughter, Becka, she studied Chinese and Chinese culture as an undergraduate and she spent a number of years in Taiwan and one year on the mainland because she was very much immersed in Chinese culture. She taught when she was in Thailand, Taiwan and China. She taught English as a second language to the Chinese people. And, but she came back to this country and in recent years she's been working in Chinatown at a school for Chinese immigrants, helping them learn English and helping them find their first jobs.

**GN:** Oh, wonderful.

**MT:** And she just moved out of that but at least for quite a few years, she was doing that. My older daughter, her education, she attended Marist College and not the first two years, I think the first two years she was at Dutchess and then she came here and she majored in American Studies and then went on to RPI, Rensselaer Polytech for a Master's in Technical Writing. And she has been doing that work for various corporations, most recently, American Express.

**GN:** Doing the technical writing, the manuals and that kind of thing?

**MT:** Well, it's maybe some of that too but she's been doing writing which translates some of the technical material of her industry into a language that lay people would understand.

**GN:** I see. Okay, let's go back to your career, your education. Moving onto graduate school, where did you do your Doctoral studies?

**MT:** University of Chicago. I got my Doctorate in Illinois, Duke University for my Master's Degree. Between my Master's and my Doctorate, I taught for a year at Syracuse University to see whether indeed I wanted a career as a college teacher.

**GN:** And...

**MT:** And after a year of teaching, I decided I'd go on for Ph.D.

**GN:** And while you were doing Ph.D. work did you do any teaching there?

**MT:** Yes, I did. I taught at a branch in Indiana University very close to Chicago. It was located in East Chicago, Indiana.

**GN:** Oh.

**MT:** It was a branch in the state system. I taught there from 1957 until I came here in 1962.

**GN:** And how was that contact made Milton? How did you learn of Marist and who introduced you to or invited you to come? What was the connection?

**MT:** Well, if I remember correctly I saw an announcement by 19-, let's see 19-, I came here in '62. I was in process of working on my Ph.D. still. I was in the writing stage. I felt the need to leave Chicago after the years I had been there and I also felt that I wanted a more stimulating experience, geographically and maybe teaching as well. At the college in East Chicago, Indiana University, I was teaching College Writing and



elementary Literature courses but I wanted to teach in my specialization. I didn't want to postpone that.

**GN:** I see.

**MT:** As many people have to do until they get some university job. So I happened to see a notice from Marist College on the bulletin board at the Placement Office at the University of Chicago and I noticed Poughkeepsie, New York. I hadn't even heard of Marist College but Poughkeepsie, New York and I must tell you that that struck a very important cord because when I was about nineteen, twenty, a student at Brooklyn College, I became infatuated with Dutchess County. I had taken a number of trips with some friends by bus up to this area and I and my friends, we roamed around Hyde Park and we walked along the river and we explored Dutchess County. And I remember then, I mean growing up in Brooklyn which is a very big city even though it's a borough.

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** I remember being just fascinated by the beauty of Dutchess County and the Hudson area here and I had this fantasy as a college student in Brooklyn thinking wouldn't it be wonderful to live in the Hudson Valley and to be exposed to this exceptional beauty? It was, I must say, it was much less growth then. It was really, it was rural Dutchess County then.

**GN:** Yes, yea. But you step outside now and you see the similar kind of beauty out there.

**MT:** Still, there's great beauty left. Yes, there still is, it's here. It's not a fine but to hear. But in any case, that enticed me. I said, gee, maybe it would be wonderful to teach at a college in Poughkeepsie along the Hudson and to live in the Hudson Valley. That was my primary motivation. It was also feeling that this would be a temporary job.

[Laughter] A couple years and when I've finished my Ph.D., I would go on and look for a job at some really, some real university, some prestigious place. But as you know, that didn't happen. Although after a few years of being at Marist, after I got my Ph.D., which I got four years after I get to Marist, I had my Ph.D., 1966. It took me some years to write it while working full-time.

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** It was... By 1966, 1967, I was putting my feelers out for a job at some university, even interviewed at some but by then also I had set down my roots here. My kids were growing up.

**GN:** Yes, and...

**MT:** And unity during that four year period, five year period. And after I was interviewing various places, I realized that I was finding considerable satisfaction teaching here.

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** And I asked myself whether prestige or status was such an important factor in my life or whether essential satisfaction and the wellbeing of my family was more important. And whether I could also reconcile myself to the lower salaries that I'd be receiving here compared to what I might get elsewhere. And there was some conflict, I decided that I would stay on at Marist and maybe just feel it out, see how it would feel to stay here a little longer. And I stayed here indeed a lot longer.

**GN:** A lot longer, yes. Yea.

**MT:** And I must have decided as the old legend goes about the man who had a dream that the treasure was hidden under, somewhere under a bridge somewhere way faraway. [Laughter] He goes to this bridge, he looks for the treasure and you know the story and then he learns from some official at that bridge, some policeman, he goes "Oh, you wore out your shoe leather coming here? Oh, how fortunate of you, I had a dream also that there was a treasure under this stove of this guy, I forget his name, who lives in this little town." It turns out to be the town of the man who...

**GN:** Came.

**MT:** Came to the big city to look for a job and I dread there's a treasure under his stove. And the traveler get the idea, goes back home, he finds the treasure under his own stove. So it's a rough analogy to my experience at Marist. I've found that there was satisfaction for here...

**GN:** Right.

**MT:** In spite of low salaries and so...

**GN:** Right.

**MT:** All the...

**GN:** The difficulties of a young college, the first... Certainly the faculty that you worked with was very limited in number. You could probably name on one hand who was here.

**MT:** I think maybe there were thirty faculty members, thirty-five at most.

**GN:** But in English there were maybe four?

**MT:** Oh yea, maybe four in the department. What year did you come?

**GN:** About '68, yea.

**MT:** '68, '68 sounds right. So still, there were lots of Brothers then?

**GN:** Oh yes, yea. George Sommer was pretty much in charge when you first came?

**MT:** Oh yea, he hired me.

**GN:** He did hire you?

**MT:** Oh yea. He interviewed me. He was very gracious host I remember. He wined me and dined me appropriately, persuaded me that this was a good place to teach. And of course, one of the big attractions was that I would teach in my field, Romanticism, English romantic poetry. That's what I was writing my dissertation on and that's what I didn't want to postpone, you know, for many years into the future.

**GN:** Continue on with your experiences here. You had a chance pretty much to teach in your field and at the same time you could participate with other projects and I'm thinking of some of the activities that you were involved in, not so early on, maybe in the mosaic but certainly student writing, student projects that you were involved in.

**MT:** Well in the early days... In the early days, it was the excitement of teaching and not only the required courses I knew I was satisfying indeed but the excitement of teaching in my field of specialization, English romantic poetry, Victorian Literature, 18<sup>th</sup> century poetry, fields that I had focused on in the graduate work. There was that. Also, three years after I came, I came in '62... By '65, I had made the acquaintance of a person that had an enormous influence on me and that was Evelyn Fisher.

**GN:** I know.

**MT:** Who taught art. You knew her?

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** She taught art at the college. She taught the workshops in art. She was the only member of our art department. You couldn't even call it an that department. She was the person teaching. She herself was a working artist. I don't know precisely how I met her. I can't... Many of time I've tried to reconstruct my very first meeting with her especially since she had such an impact on my life. But in any case, she said to me, "Why don't you..." I was interested from the childhood in, visual art and she, in our first conversation, she must have gathered that from things I said and she said, "Why don't you come into my studio and you know, work, set up, put something on the easel and stop postponing the pleasure of doing some artwork and just work with us."

**GN:** Yea, yea.

**MT:** And she said, “All you need to know is two things and that’s going to free you to come and do it, to visit us and to do some work. Whatever you do, it doesn’t have to be good, that’s number one. It just has to be yours. And secondly, it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t have to be light. You, by anybody, you just have to enjoy the process of doing it.” And I tell you, those remarks have stayed with me and they have really liberated me. They liberated me then and afterwards. I did come into her studio, while those were the days I was teaching of course, before classes, Composition, Introductory Literature, The Romantic Movement, Victorians, all that and I became addicted to her art studio where students were working. And I had a conflict. In the free time when I was not teaching, I was working on my dissertation but I was also pulled away from that...

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** By the desire to do artwork. And I would go into her studio and I’d put something on the easel and I would do something and I would get a reaction and it was exhilarating.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** Exhilarating and after a while I stopped feeling guilty about my moving away from the writing of my dissertation because I was noticing that the artwork was making me very productive. I was moving ahead. It put a strong wind in my sail...

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** In terms of the writing of the dissertation. I was getting... In later time I tried to understand what it was that was giving me this ease of writing and this movement forward. I was exercising another part of my nature, the emotive side, the artistic side, not that that was absent in writing a dissertation but writing a dissertation involved... It was an intensely intellectual and analytical experience. And the painting, it was a different kind of experience. It was... It had a joy that I could experience that I could not experience in the writing of the dissertation. In the writing, I could only have the pleasure of having written but in the painting, I had the pleasure of doing it at the moment.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** It's a very important stage, you know?

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** Maybe it's because, you know, I was never trained as an artist. I never went to an art school and so I didn't have great expectations of myself. But if you've gone through a graduate program and if you've read great authors, you could be intimidated by them when you pick up your pen and write about...



**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** William Wordsworth, one of the three towering figures of English Literature.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** But the painting... So I had this marvelous balance during those early years at Marist. And when people wanted to look for me on campus, they knew the one place they could find me was in Evelyn Fisher's art studio.

**GN:** Right. There were a number of students who started that way with her and became in fact, I think there's one teacher here now I believe was one of her students in the Art Department. His name escapes me at the moment but I had him for a student as well.

**MT:** Yes.

**GN:** And my wife, Elizabeth, started that way and to this day, weekly she's with Cicely Perrotte and Rosemary Molloy.

**MT:** How nice.

**GN:** So...

**MT:** She had Miss Fisher.

**GN:** Yea, all from the beginning just as you described, come and do it and participate with us.

**MT:** But is if she was not only inspirational in terms of her personality and her encouragement, she had a profound sense of design that was later realized. And she imparted in a very informal way of course, simply by reacting to the things that I was making. She imparted such valuable knowledge to me in terms of the very fundamentals of art, the essential, pure elements of form and space and the interaction of the two and color and line and composition in general, designs, composition. So that I've never been free of that powerful influence which has been a very good influence and it helped me move into many areas beyond what... into the sculpture, into construction, design, of collage, many things beyond what I tried in her class because she imparted the fundamental, fundamentals of design.

**GN:** Interest in design?

**MT:** Yea, so you now as a consequence of her influence, I have been painting since those early days at Marist. I now, I don't know whether you know, that four years ago we bought a house and an art gallery. We decided that we'd set up an art gallery.

**GN:** Yea, Bob Lewis has told me about it.

**MT:** In Brewster and when we, it looks like this will be the last year of my teaching I think, and my wife and I will be devoting ourselves to the development of the gallery in which I show my own work and the work of other Cape artists and to further study, you know, the Cape... There are more excellent artists per cubic inch on Cape Cod than anywhere I know. [Laughter]

**GN:** Well you moved to the end. Let's fill in the middle a little bit here now.

**MT:** Okay.

**GN:** Tell me about the thing, thrust, for painting you would think that you were on the full-time Art Department and it was really in the English Department that you spent more than thirty years here.

**MT:** Of course. Most of my work, I shouldn't overstate because most of my work was in the English Department and I...

**GN:** And you plan to keep part of the development of that in the various courses that came on because there was a very...

**MT:** Yes, I had an opportunity at Marist that I would not have had, I don't think, at a large university and that is to initiate and create all kinds of courses beyond my special area of expertise. So fairly early, I introduced courses in the area of Jewish studies, Jewish literature and felt that Marist was very responsive to that. I introduced a course in the Bible from a literary perspective drawing at the same time upon my knowledge, my growing knowledge of ancient Jewish literature, Hebrew literature which I had studied really as far back as when I was a boy in Hebrew school reading the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew, learning to read it in Hebrew and appreciating those wonderful narratives in Genesis and Exodus.

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** So I began to teach courses in that area.

**GN:** Tell me something about the development of the Holocaust course. How did that come about?

**MT:** Okay. First, let me say that in addition to teaching the Bible as literature, I would teach courses in American-Jewish writers in Jewish writers from a comparative perspective, in translation, 1930, 20<sup>th</sup> century modern Jewish Literature. And then I also introduced, I think this was in 1973, I introduced a course in the literature of the Holocaust. Yes, and at that time, 1973, the Holocaust was still a course that was not so commonly found at colleges and universities and Marist was one of the first schools in

which a course in the literature of the Holocaust was offered. I think I offered that for the first time in 1973 and I've been offering it since here at the college and I've written on that subject and even used some of my own writings in the college classroom. How did it come about, Gus? Well, it so happened that in the late sixties and in the early seventies as well, I was a member of some local reading groups and study groups within the Jewish community here and I remember suggesting to a group, we were reading modern Jewish literature, American Jewish writers, fiction writers, poets... We were reading biblical narratives, biblical poetry, coming together once a month to discuss on the readings, very very instructive and exciting stuff. And I suggested that we, since I was conscious of the growing quantity of literature dealing with the Holocaust mostly by survivors, to some extent by victims of the Holocaust as well, who perished but who wrote during their time. I suggested to this group as we looked at... We read in this area and we did that for I think two years, reading memoirs, Primo Levi and Eliot Wiesel and others. And reading poetry and short fiction, even some novels based on the Holocaust, based on this historical material. We were reading historical literature based on a catastrophic event in our own time and it was as a consequence of that study with an adult group that I introduced a course, The Literature of the Holocaust to Marist students. And from the very, from the very beginning, shortly after I introduced it in about '73, large numbers of students wanted to get into that and very often we had to limit people and turn students away. And there's hardly been a year in which we haven't been able to fill up a class on that subject.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** I taught that perhaps on a yearly basis since 1973.

**GN:** Once a year?

**MT:** On the average.

**GN:** On the average. Yea, I know and I'm familiar with the popularity of the course and the number of students over the years who participated and anything else. That's...

**MT:** And as a consequence of the course, well let me say this, as a consequence of my introducing courses in Jewish literature, I then thought it would be very desirable for Marist to write some leading scholar each year to offer a lecture, not only to Marist students and staff but also to the general community on some aspect of Jewish history or culture, past or recent. And so I had a student in my class. Her name was Sadie Efron. She was returning at the age of seventy I believe, [Laughter] something like that.

**GN:** You're kidding.

**MT:** Late sixties, early seventies. She had gotten two years at the community college and now she was... She wanted to get her Bachelor's Degree and she came to Marist for a Bachelor's Degree. She was an English major. She took many of my courses including courses in Bible's Literature and Modern Jewish Writer's and Literature of the Holocaust

and others. And I suggested to her, I proposed to her the possibility that she her husband sponsor an annual lecture in the area of Jewish studies at the college here. And we would call it the Effron William and Sadie, the Marist College William and Sadie Effron lecture in Jewish studies and she thought about it. She was initially surprised, thought about it and then she and her husband enthusiastically agreed that this would be a good idea and so they have financed that now for twenty-six years.

**GN:** Yea, I was noticing that. This is the twenty-sixth annual?

**MT:** This is the twenty-sixth annual Marist College Effron lecture and we have an outstanding... You've heard of Abraham Heschel.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** We was a well-known Jewish thinker, activist, social activist, writer, highly esteemed. His daughter, who is also a scholar, Susanna Heschel is coming to Marist on the 29<sup>th</sup> [2002].

**GN:** Next Tuesday, a week from tomorrow?

**MT:** She's the twenty-sixth Effron lecturer. She's going to be talking on sub-topic of Jewish views of Jesus. We'll learn some interesting... Christians and Jews at Marist is an

interesting thing. This lecture series has been devoted specifically to topics that interest Christians and Jews, in an effort also to increase mutual understanding.

**GN:** In your minds, if you were going back could you maybe pinpoint maybe three of the outstanding, more outstanding lecturers who came of national significance?

**MT:** Yes, yes. Let's see if I can remember their names of course. Our first lecturer, I still remember him. He was a priest and he is the author of a book. His name has escaped from me now. He was an author of the book *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Anti-Semitism*. The book is in our library.

**GN:** Is it, yea?

**MT:** Yes. What is his name, it's escaping me. Well, I know why. It's because I'm in my senior years. [Laughter]

**GN:** Yes, yes. That's senior moments.

**MT:** I have a gift of time and this is one of the consequences, right? [Laughter] Yes, his name will come to me. Billy Potok, very noted American Jewish writer and who else have we had? Boy, I'm blocking on these aren't I? More recently, Arthur Hertzberg, two years ago... Very distinguished rabbi and scholar whose written numerous books on



different aspects of Judaism. Arthur Hertzburg, who gave his talk on Pope John Paul II from a Jewish perspective, fascinating.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** Many other scholars have come to us. Last year we had Rabbi Joseph Telushkin again. Also a noted author and he spoke on the uses and abuses of language, how language can hurt, language can heal. Fascinating. He's written many books. We've had some very fine lecturers.

**GN:** Good. Maybe we can change the focus a bit and talk about a kind of a transition in your mind's eye, it must be surprising to think that from your first days at Marist, you never thought that this kind of thing would happen. But twenty-six years later, this series would still be going on and having even more stability now perhaps than and enthusiasm that you had at the beginning.

**MT:** Yes, I never had anticipated that it would last for twenty-six years but the responses have been very, very strongly with all. We'd fill up the auditorium or the theater. Sometimes we would have standing on Broadway and I remember how much Dennis Murray would enjoy that. [Laughter]

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** Seeing the place just cram. [Laughter]

**GN:** Yea, yea.

**MT:** And of course...

**GN:** And the community very much involved as well... lots of students there on assignment as it were?

**MT:** Exactly, lots of community people coming. You know, we send invitations not only to... We send invitations to many of the local priests and ministers and invite them and their congregations to come. And we have lots of people in the Jewish community come and of course we hate to get students there as well, as you know, it's sometimes... It's not so easy.

**GN:** Right.

**MT:** But we have devised some strategies of trying to get them.

**GN:** I know them well.

**MT:** Yes. [Laughter]

**GN:** So tell me what you think what the driving forces that enable the small little institution, Marian College, I guess in those earlier days, something that I'm not even sure was Marist at that time to become the institution that it is now. What were the...? Was it the faculty's enthusiasm on working together? Was it its geographical position on the Hudson? Or one of the...?

**MT:** No doubt it involved multiple factors because I think the geographic condition didn't hurt but I can imagine colleges on the beautiful Hudson also failing.

**GN:** Yes, one did. [Laughter]

**MT:** Right. I would say a number of factors would have to be considered. I would say the faculty seemed to be a committed faculty, interested primarily in teaching with a very strong interest the education of the students on the whole. On the whole, yes. I would say that there was also the size of it, I think is conducive to its taking hold. There was a wonderful sense of camaraderie when I came here in the early sixties. You know, at the previous college I taught at, the branch of Indiana University in East Chicago, we were very conscious of tensions. Tensions between administration and faculty, tensions between faculty. There was a great deal of discontent in the air in fact. And I came to Marist and at Marist, I didn't experience that. There was a certain harmony, maybe I am idealizing now in retrospect but I think that I experienced very warm, very warm relations between faculty, very warm relations between faculty and students. I know that my relations to the young Marist Brothers was exceedingly friendly and warm and their

attitude toward me. So, I think the faculty at that early stage committed to teaching, deciding I think pretty much like I did that they were experiencing a good deal of satisfaction at Marist and did not feel an acute need to leave the institution. So you know that so many people stayed a very long time. That was one factor. Another factor I can speak for myself perhaps more personally but maybe this was true for other faculty. At Marist, you could take initiatives without being squelched. You could feel free to initiate. Initiate the new program, initiate a new course, try something new. There was a spirit of exploration that you could participate in because we were young and new and the red tape was not too extensive and too complex in the early days.

**GN:** Right.

**MT:** You know, that gets increasingly...

**GN:** Oh, it was a year before Rank and Tenure, that we didn't have such committees for years, you know.

**MT:** Right, a year of formality. The fact that you could circumvent all kinds of tape as you say and try new things, that was important. That was important, the ability to experiment, introduce new courses, introduce programs. I was able to introduce a minor in Jewish Studies very early in my career here.

**GN:** Astounding.

**MT:** You were here at the time the Effron lecture was introduced. And another thing, I don't know if other faculty has experience this, but I think that the two presidents that I have known here at Marist, Foy and President Murray had a somewhat similar talent and that is that they acknowledged faculty. They affirmed faculty.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** Not only did they give them freedom to experiment, I mean within limits of course, again, I don't want to overstate but these presidents acknowledged faculty who were making contributions and I think this... One of the very fine assets of President Murray is his ability to acknowledge people who are making contributions and I think Linus Foy had that ability too. And I think faculty were encouraged by that.

**GN:** Yes, I think Foy has less of material to be able to afford stipends or grounds or office space or secretarial help or anything. And I think now, things are... But he did acknowledge the importance of the person and their effort and encouraged them to stay on and to do those things. And of course Dennis now has followed that same way I think in acknowledging people and even the alumni, I have to say, in retrospect now that having been a graduate celebrating our fiftieth year of graduation from Marist, getting a gold watch [Laughter] just for being here is...

**MT:** So yes, I think the leadership of presidents, these two presidents, Dennis Murray even perhaps more dramatically than Linus Foy because he's had more resources as you've seen.

**GN:** Let me move on. We're getting close to that six o'clock time that we want to respect but there are two areas that I would like to touch on if you would. One has to do... In your experience here, what did not happen that you wish would have happened? Is there some area of development?

**MT:** Yes, yes. I wish that there could have been more intellectual exchange among faculty members that we had, more stimulation, more learning from each other in terms of the content of our respective disciplines or specializations but also in terms of the things we were trying in the classroom pedagogically. Not enough communication. Now maybe that's a consequence of our being, our teaching four courses or four sections and then the need to carve out some time for your own independent study, writing, and that leaves very little less... But I think that more could have been done in terms of... And I regret that I didn't take even more initiative in encouraging faculty to come together to share their knowledge, to share the projects that they were undertaking, to communicate, to move each other intellectually. There was not enough of that. There was not. Maybe I found that to be a lack at the college because I was able to some degree fortunately to satisfy that deficiency by meeting with other people outside the college who were not academic people but who were very interested in...

**GN:** The reading groups and...

**MT:** Reading groups, yes.

**GN:** Discussion...

**MT:** Intellectual exchange. Yes, it's based on reading. I was very happy to see just the other day, I took something out of my mailbox that I was pleased to read. Some new member of the faculty, I think from history, I think Nicholas, last name escapes me, is proposing that faculty members get together on a regular basis to share their preliminary writing.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** On research they had done.

**GN:** Yea, yea. I did see something like that happening over once a month is it? Friday afternoon I think there was a brownbag lunch type of thing.

**MT:** Yes.

**GN:** And they were encouraging this semester. Moving onto one other thing, don't be too modest about it, but what would you say was your most or some of your most

significant contributions? What are you happiest with in your life here at Marist?

You've been here a good number of years and you participated in so many areas with the lectures and the development of courses and didn't it emphasize much of the writing programs that you were involved in the creation of daily? What gives you the most satisfaction now looking back over the span of time?

**MT:** Well, I do have to say that I experienced a great deal of satisfaction and really enjoy in the teaching the simply the classroom experience, interacting with my students in the intellectual process of teaching and learning. As far as achievements, I would say probably the... My introduction of a Jewish component in the literature offerings at Marist and my perhaps in some modest degree, raising consciousness of Jewish culture on a campus with a Catholic history. I would say that that is probably what gives me a great deal of satisfaction. I might have mentioned also that one of the outgrowths of the program in Jewish Studies, the minor in Jewish Studies, is an annual Holocaust memorial program which is now entering its twelfth year, in which it's not my work alone. I may have initiated it but I work with Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues and staff members in planning that. Each year we've invited a survivor of the Holocaust, and you know these individuals are becoming fewer in number as they pass away, to speak to our students. And we get very large numbers of students attending this event every April.

**GN:** Yea.



**MT:** This is part of my satisfaction, knowing that students at Marist are gaining some small awareness of the significance of the Holocaust, for their lives or the event that took place sixty years ago.

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** And I would say a very great satisfaction comes from the fact that in the whole range of courses that I taught, not only literature, but as you know I've taught courses in Workshops in Poetry and Workshops in Fiction. I myself have been stimulated to write fiction as a consequence of some of those workshops that I did. Workshops in Non-fiction I believe I said... Essays as in I published them as a consequence of those very courses. I'm proud of that too but essentially with regard to my teaching, I'm proud of the fact that I can identify students who have been stirred and stimulated and they continue to communicate with me because their experience was meaningful in the classroom.

**GN:** Good. And looking into the future here at Marist, what would you say is Marist's greatest assets? What would keep it going if things continued to move as they're moving?

**MT:** Well, I would say a strong emphasis on teaching as something of very high priority, something that's valued by the institution. I realize the importance of scholarship and I have pursued it without any regrets and with much pleasure and satisfaction too but I

notice now that the pressures for publication are much greater than they were during the early stages of Marist. I think had those pressures existed then, we would not have seen the dedication and the high degree of moral that we saw in those days and it got harmony and common goals that we saw among faculty members. Again I don't want to minimize the importance of research, I don't think you can't be a good teacher without it.

**GN:** Doing it? Yea.

**MT:** Without self-development.

**GN:** Right, right.

**MT:** But still I think that it's a very delicate balance and I think when we... If excessive focus or emphases in requirements are made in this area of scholarship, teachers are going to cut corners in the teaching.

**GN:** Yes, yea. That would be unfortunate.

**MT:** That would be unfortunate.

**GN:** Yea, right.

**MT:** I think if Marist is to succeed, it has to find a way to give faculty opportunities for self-development and opportunities for study and for writing, research and writing but at the same time, keep the value on teaching as very high, very important...

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** Because if that slides I don't know that Marist will...

**GN:** Survive.

**MT:** Same effect.

**GN:** That's right.

**MT:** Because we don't have the status.

**GN:** Yea, right.

**MT:** We don't have the prestige.

**GN:** We've made great strides...

**MT:** The progress, yes.

**GN:** But we're not...

**MT:** Yes. But we're not...

**GN:** That well known...

**MT:** Exactly, exactly.

**GN:** And established at that time. Is there anything else that I didn't ask you that you'd like to say in closing now?

**MT:** No, I think we've covered some interesting ground. I would simply say this, that I still remember the exhilaration I experienced when I first came here in 1962, small faculty, there was not the dissention that I knew at the state school, there was not the tension, there was not the constant criticism of the administration. There was an uncanny amount of tranquility and harmony that I luxuriated in those early days.

**GN:** Yes.

**MT:** The repertoire with the young student Brothers, which was a great novelty, I enjoyed that tremendously. They were very... I was drawn to them because here was my very firsthand opportunity to learn more about the Catholic tradition. These young

Brothers were very interested in the fact that their instructor was self-conscious, a Jew who is conscious of his heritage and wanted to and was in the process of learning more about it. So they were interested in learning about my background, their religious culture. It was very stimulating. Same with faculty members. There were a number of Brothers. I had never related to Brothers before, people who had dedicated themselves to certain ideals and then they were translating their creeds into deeds on a daily basis. This kind of level of commitment I had not seen, even in the most devoted teachers.

**GN:** Yea.

**MT:** It was very exciting for me to observe that and many of these Marist Brothers were also interested in the fact that someone of the Jewish tradition had come to Marist and was putting down roots here. They were very curious about my religious background.

**GN:** Yea, yea.

**MT:** They wanted to learn more about it. It was very exhilarating in those years and the spirit of fellowship was remarkable. I don't think that I'm overstating too much, maybe a little, maybe nostalgia does cause a little idealization but not excessive in this case.

**GN:** Well then you've been a joy to have with us all these years. Thank you very much.

**MT:** You're welcome.

**“END OF INTERVIEW”**