

Lee Miringoff

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

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For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Dr. Lee Miringoff (Part 1)

Interviewee: Dr. Lee Miringoff

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: In Part 1 of the interview with Gus Nolan, Dr. Lee Miringoff discusses his early life, early education, and his arrival at Marist College. He discusses the establishment and expansion of the Marist Institute for Public Opinion (MIPO) or Marist Poll. He discusses the transformation of the physical facilities on campus and changes in students and their social life from his beginning years to 2009.

[00:04](#) **GN:** Today is Monday, July 20th. We're having an interview with Dr. Lee Miringoff. He's the director of the Marist Institute of Public Opinion. Good afternoon, Lee.

[00:14](#) **LM:** My pleasure, Gus. This sounds like a great project you got your hands on.

[00:18](#) **GN:** Well thank you. Lee, I would like to start with a kind of a general, personal overview of where you grew up, the school you went to, fields of interest. Can you remember? No dates are necessary. (laughter)

[00:33](#) **LM:** But you know. ... There's a short answer and a long answer so let me give you the short answer and then if you want more I'll be happy to give you a longer answer. I was born in Poughkeepsie, New York so I'm a native of Poughkeepsie. I went to Vassar Nursery School. I went to Poughkeepsie day school through eighth grade. I then went to Arlington high school. Then I went to... did my B.A. at Clark University. And I did my doctorate at MIT. Although I was already here, while I was working on my doctorate so I was hired to teach at Marist prior to the completion of the doctorate.

[01:08](#) **GN:** Ok as you were growing up, what kind of interests did you have? You have shown an interest in sports like baseball and softball and so on. Does that go back to the beginning?

[01:20](#) **LM:** Oh sure. I have an older brother so that will, you know, that might get you moving in that direction earlier but I guess that you know not to be boring but I think that the two things I'm interested in today probably were already well-formed when I was four or five years old so I was interested in society in government and i was interested in sports. And I think most people who know me know those are sort of the same two things that you can get me into. Those are the same two things that you would find me interested in today.

[01:51](#) **GN:** Okay. Do you have any other hobbies like stamp collection or music or...?

[01:58](#) **LM:** A little on the folk music side but nothing. Nothing that drives me the passion as much as politics, media, sports. I mean those are the top passions.

[02:13](#) **GN:** Ok. The interest that you have in statistics was that at MIT that developed or does that go back even before that?

[02:21](#) **LM:** Well oddly no. And I must say if the truth be told, you know, a lot of what I do in the polling realm is more on the normative side of things and less on the statistical side. I mean you have to have a handle on statistics. You have to understand statistics. But there's a lot less of grueling statistical analysis in polling than people normally think. It's really involved with the questions, the topic, the interpretation, the analysis I mean. In a sense, when you're working with polls, you're probably more working in the realm of a political analyst rather than a statistician. Although you have to have an understanding of those elements that go into it so that guides the research. But it's just a piece of it.

[03:11](#) **GN:** Right. And that we'll get it into some more details later. Carefully wording the questions that you don't lead questions into the answers you want to get. The objective ...

[03:22](#) **LM:** Understanding how you pick the people you pick, the questions you asked. The quality of the interviewing. The interpretation of the results. Those are the things that and as I developed and the institute developed, you know, obviously the communication of those results. But I guess that's a long way of saying. So sure at MIT, there was statistical work but I didn't take that with me. And when I left MIT to come to Marist, I didn't have any idea that what I would end up doing at Marist was what I ended up doing at Marist. So it wasn't that I came... I came here to teach political science. And the institute really sort of started. You know three or four years into my time here at Marist and in the classroom rather than the other way around.

[04:07](#) **GN:** Did you have occasion to write in your college and doctoral studies? A thesis, a paper something that would be. It's a foundation for some of this. In other words, was there some kind of a research project that took the cover over it?

[04:26](#) **LM:** No, not really. I mean it really evolved very differently. I mean my PHD dissertation has nothing to do... I mean it has to do with American politics but it was really a public policy paper rather than anything. And there's nothing... There are very, very few I know of, other than the page numbers, I don't think you would necessarily find a lot of numbers in that. What I've done in terms of

my life's work really with the poll has really been what grew out of the classroom. And as a way of better teaching Political science in voting behavior and elections. It was a way of bringing that classroom experience that real-world experience into the classroom and basically. You know knocking the walls down. And I remember very vividly where I was when, you know, a hand went up in the back of a classroom in the fall of 1978. And it was suggested that maybe we should do a poll because I was teaching a course on voting behavior and it was from that point of... that springboard that what became the Marist Institute or the Marist Poll ... was launched.

[05:44](#) **GN:** I remember those years when you're going up to the polling booths up here, getting people coming out of the exit polls.

[05:50](#) **LM:** That's right. That was in 1978 and 1979. In those ... we use the class itself as a core group of students and then organized about one hundred students on campus to conduct those very, very rudimentary exit polls. They're more like census in that point. We probably interviewed everybody. I mean we covered every voting booth in Dutchess County with maps on how students could get there. It was, it was quite an orchestrated ...

[06:10](#) **GN:** It was a "by seat of your pants" kind of operation.

[06:11](#) **LM:** That's right but what we didn't understand at the time was that a lot of what was occurring in the public polling realm was also very by seat of the pants at that point. CBS was doing polling. The New York Times was doing polling. You know ABC polling union hadn't really begun yet. N.B.C really hadn't been doing much. There was very little, I mean. There were no college-based polls certainly using undergraduates the way ... We didn't. We didn't know at the time that we were the first. But that became known later on in fact that's what we were doing. There was really very much else. Very little else in the way of polling going on.

[07:10](#) **GN:** Before we go more into that, did you have to have a job before you came here? Worked for anybody. Delivering papers or ...?

[07:14](#) **LM:** I did a lot of fun things as most people first of all most people got into polling founded it as kind of niche that wasn't planned. I mean my story's not unique that way most of my colleagues in the polling community sort of all fell into it.

[07:28](#) **GN:** But even before ... that coming to teach?

[07:32](#) **LM:** The jobs I held... My father owned a soda and beer distributor store in Main Street, Poughkeepsie. And so I'm probably the only poster who can fix a seltzer bottle. You remember those old siphons... I can ... I actually have a couple in my office and you know they're now sort of antique items but at one point our family owned ten thousand of those bottles. And so, I'm probably the only pollster who can... I'm a hell of a bottle sorter or all so if you can... I can put bottles in cases and you know, do all those kind of things in my youth. I guess I was still like I was a counter even at that early age. But in my youth, I'd grab ten bottles and sort of flip them into the ten slots they had to go on with quite an ease. I was in a college. I was a part-time mail man for the summer so I got to do all kinds of fun things like that chasing dogs away, nipping at my heels.

[08:28](#) **GN:** Okay, alright. And then coming to Marist, did you just walk along the street you see a sign out, "Help wanted"? Or did you know somebody here?

[08:35](#) **LM:** Oddly enough my contact with Marist growing up was not a whole lot. But what I did do. My first time that I remember, well there were two times I remember being on campus. One, I was in my junior in high school. And I was involved in a summer program that Marist was running that my mother knew about it, was very involved in the community ... must have known some people here or whatever. And I ended up working in the summer in a program for kids from Poughkeepsie. I think they were junior high school kids at the time. And they were on campus and we did a little instruction. We did recreational stuff and then there were a lot of Marist brothers who were involved in that and I did that for a summer. I was very pleased. In retrospect, given what happened and I ended up working here it was nice to know the campus in nineteen that was probably around 1967. So that's my earliest, you know.

[09:38](#) **GN:** Was there still a wall up out there?

[09:40](#) **LM:** I don't know that but I remember we drove into the campus to Champagnat. The parking was out in front of the building

and used to drive straight through up the campus. And obviously there was a little bit of what there is today what was there then. And there was one there and then let me see if I can scratch the memory cores again, the other time i remember being on campus was there is a rally about Vietnam which I think may have been 1967 with Senator Wayne Morse spoke in what was the old gym. Which is now a dorm. And I remember he was one of the first incredible political orators I'd ever heard. And I remember to this day. And I forget the figure he was referring to but he was basically trying to wake up the country.

[10:31](#) **GN:** There was teach-ins and sit-ins.

[10:33](#) **LM:** I remember him saying, you know while such and such happens in the war goes on, on, on. You know whatever the figure was thirty-five thousand Americans have been dying in Vietnam. And i remember him bristling the number which I don't remember what it was at that time, it obviously became more later. Yeah and I remember just like getting goosebumps on my arms as he was... He was probably gosh, he must have probably been in his seventies and was one of the two people who had voted against the war initially, I believe with Senator Gruening from Alaska. Although I could be wrong on Morse. He either voted against it or voted for it and then regretted it. But in any case, so I remember very vividly and I guess that both of those examples are Marist examples because they both spoke to Marist's role in the community right.

[11:27](#) **GN:** There was a march later on to armory and. I don't know if you know the story. Dr. Doherty was now a policeman. He graduated. He's there with his shield on. A Marist student... You know. While he was here he was president of the council, of the student bod and then public opinion of... How you call somebody affects how you perceive them. So the police were pigs. So they thought nothing of spitting at the pigs. But last year he was the president of student body and he's just... you know a typical example of that personification of the change, put a different hat on.

[12:09](#) **LM:** But you know, So I'm very pleased that I had those two experiences. Little did I know. When I came to it, it's a long answer when I came to Marist, I responded to an ad in the paper that there was a vacancy in a political science department. I applied.

[12:24](#) **GN:** Ok. Exactly the question. What were the job? The job you were seeking was in Mathematics?

[12:29](#) **LM:** No in the political sciences. It was Instructor in Political Science. I was to teach several sections and run an internship program and I remember, of course as everybody does... You know the job interviews, trying to eat a hamburger and sound articulate at the same time.

[12:46](#) **GN:** They were rather miniscule or short in number. Who attended the interview? It's not like today where resumes have to be sent in.

[12:58](#) **LM:** The search committee was comprised of Lou Zuccarello. Oh no, I'm sorry on that. He was a political scientist and he was the Dean. And he was leaving or coming in...? He was coming in to be Dean and Richard LaPietra was leaving. The committee was comprised of Peter O'Keefe and Carolyn Landau. And I guess there was one other person. But I remember there was the, you know, lunch where you have to be as I said, "Articulate while you're trying to swallow a hamburger." Yes. And then I went down to meet the two Deans. Because they... That was the summer of the transition from LaPietra to Zuccarello. And what was great about that was, of course, Richard LaPietra was a chemist and Zuccarello, a political scientist. But if you looked at him at the time, you would have thought that it was the other way around because LaPietra kind of had a modern haircut. Zuccarello look much more like a chemist than a political scientist. So there I am in this interview knowing one is one...

[14:05](#) **GN:** Two very...bright Italian fellows so let's face it.

[14:08](#) **LM:** And here I'm in this interview... And I know one is the chemist and one is the political scientist. What do I do? I'm pitching the political science lines to the chemist and I'm pitching the general teaching lines to the political scientist. But I guess it worked out. I think Bill Olson was the other member of that committee.

[14:28](#) **GN:** Ok I was going to say Calista was not on staff yet.

[14:32](#) **LM:** No. Nope. So that was them and then you know, I was a couple years out of college working on my doctorate. And I was thrown into ... I think that first semester, four sections and an internship. A couple courses of American politics.

[14:48](#) **GN:** Did you supervise the internships?

[14:50](#) **LM:** Supervised internships, a couple sections of American politics and probably a course in public administration or maybe a course in voting behavior at the time. I don't know which. I was taking courses. I was teaching courses I never had as a student.

15:03 **GN:** Ok. Is that all? (laughter)

15:04 **LM:** I was teaching students who were only about two years younger than me. So the mustache at the time came in very handy. Gave me a little age.

[15:12](#) **GN:** [...] What are the other responsibilities? We have to be an advisor.

[15:17](#) **LM:** Oh yes, sure I was an advisor. Not too long after that, I was elected on the economic affairs committee. Although I can't, I don't remember the year. It was somewhere in the first four or five years. And you know I organized the faculty softball team to play the seniors and, in our youth, we did a pretty decent job. We've let that go by now.

[15:39](#) **GN:** Yes right. Well, we have to have a field to play on. If we had a field that they have now, we'd have... a great game team.

[15:42](#) **LM:** We would be in better shape.

[15:47](#) **GN:** But the rocks and the boulders and a lot of other things around here. That's kind of the basics. Let's move it to where you are now. You are in a unique position about ten years ago. You just got a certificate, honoring your twenty years.

[16:07](#) **LM:** No, it's more than that. It's actually...

[16:08](#) **GN:** I mean you're more than thirty years here now.

[16:10](#) **LM:** I know we're putting it into, I think thirty-five years. So I have ... What would that mean? I am working on my. I have eight BAs from Marist and I'm in my junior year working on my ninth. How's that?

[16:22](#) **GN:** Well you know, we charted it all.

[16:25](#) **LM:** I'm trying. I'm trying. (laughter)

[16:28](#) **GN:** So you are in a unique position to give us a kind of a historical overview of what the campus was then and what it is now. We see what the campus was then, the physical dimensions of it, the student body dimension of it, the faculty. What was going on in the classrooms and the courses? But let's start with the physical? What do you remember of the Donnelly building? At the parking...was that not the center?

[16:56](#) **LM:** Mud, I remember mud. Not the building but the parking lot. And then, oh sure, the center of the campus was the campus center and Donnelly. And we were in Fontaine, the original Fontaine. Yeah. We used to jokingly say that every time we left a location to move to another location, they would knock down the location we were just in. So we finally made it to the point to the statue where we're now. We're going to move into the new Hancock technology building. And they are not knocking down our current office so I think we've reached a certain plateau. But get back to your original question, I think what we're ... Certainly the campus was tiny by today's standards. I mean you know if it was ten percent of what it is now, that's probably saying something. The student body was of course small. The faculty was a lot smaller. So you knew lots and lots of students and you knew lots and lots of faculty. And it was all, you know, much more intimate.

[17:54](#) **GN:** Everything happened in the Donnelly building. That was the focus of the whole operation.

[18:00](#) **LM:** Totally, totally that. And. And so you really had this a much more sense of a small community here. I wouldn't say that we've lost our sense of community but certainly was... It was a much smaller community.

[18:17](#) **GN:** It's nuclei all around the place. Yeah

[18:19](#) **LM:** That's right. I think the feeling stays very similar despite, in some ways because the technology connects people like you didn't then. But certainly in terms of the physical location and I mean it literally has been night and day. And obviously people who

predate my tenure here can speak to that even more eloquently but it was, you know, I mean it was a small place.

[18:46](#) GN: The opening line of the first report for Middle States is the best time to approach Marist is at night. Because it's not only lit up, it could be nice but you wouldn't want to see it in the daytime.

[18:59](#) LM: So this is a college over these thirty-five years that I've been here or whenever it is. It has certainly physically matured beyond, beyond almost reason, beyond imagination. I mean you have a... You have here now a physical presence... That is you know, the envy of others in part because we're relatively new. So there could be planning. There could be design. I mean there was a lot of things that... I mean if you start with a campus that has any percent completion in 1960, well now you're just modifying everything. So in terms of the ability to make a technological statement to you know just shape the campus in ways that matched the way the college had grown, even with the townhouses and what have you, you were building from ground-up. You had a foundation. But you then literally were building from ground-up. So that was an opportunity that Marist was uniquely positioned to fulfill.

[20:04](#) GN: Did you see the McCann Center go up?

[20:06](#) LM: Yeah. Yeah.

[20:06](#) GN: Ok so that... I mean we moved from the small gym to the McCann Center. That's one kind of thing. Obviously, I think you see the library in two or three different places.

[20:15](#) LM: I can't remember. I guess the library was in Donnelly. It was across the street. It was...

[20:21](#) GN: It was in Fontaine.

[20:23](#) LM: Yeah of course in Fontaine.

[20:25](#) GN: Underneath you.

[20:25](#) LM: Yup, yup. It was underneath us in Fontaine.

[20:29](#) GN: So. And now look at it.

[20:31](#) LM: So, so everything has evolved. I mean everything has four or five pages to every story. And that ...certainly the libraries. I think that's true for the faculty, the student body...just in the changing.

[20:46](#) GN: Comment on the stadium. What do you think of the stadium? Was that a good idea?

[20:49](#) LM: Well I think it was a great idea. I mean I...

[20:51](#) GN: Nine million bucks?

[20:52](#) LM: I don't know that end of it. (laughter) I think the... You know I mean I think in many ways, it was the one thing that was sort of missing, you know, from the campus. Students are attracted to sports. Yeah, I mean that's your selling point and the other thing is that... I outlived, you know. I don't know what the price tag was.

[21:12](#) GN: Well. I don't know either. I've heard different things. but I've had people who say it's one of the best investments we've ever made. You know that. It brings people to actually...there's one hundred kids play football every year. And that winning them get scholarships.

[21:32](#) LM: And here's what you have if you if you ride past Marist campus you get on to. Well here, I bring up a lot of journalists and media and political people from New York who never had much contact with Marist necessarily and certainly hadn't seen physically. They'd heard of it. So they come up. You know. And they ride by campus. And they're startled and say. I mean they literally startled to see what this beautiful campus overlooking the Hudson now exists. And the other part of it is if you take a wrapper and you drop it on the ground somewhere in the middle of the campus. I don't think that wrapper lasts for an hour. It's gone. This place is very well-kept so that says something about the. The people's investment in it. And also says. Just you know how it's maintained in-kept.

[22:23](#) GN: Along with the development. The Hancock Building is going up. You know, will you have a place in that?

[22:29](#) LM: Yeah, we are moving to the Hancock Building. It's very exciting. I've been told that there will not be... The parking lot will not be as proximate to what we have now but I think as we get older, the legs from the extra hiking probably doesn't hurt. So

we're going to be moving in there and you know... as we've grown. As we're talking about before, you know, we do shed our technological skin regularly both in terms of our interviewing software and our modes of communicating. So everything is changing and as we moved into a new building, we will be advancing in new ways, also not only in we do the polling but also in how we communicate the results. I mean this whole world of the web has changed. Again as journalism has changed in the mainstream media have changed, so have we had to adapt and change with that. So in a sense, you know we have staff who are, you know, connected better to that certainly than I am. But I guess I'm smart enough to know it's changed.

[23:34](#) GN: And let other people do their thing.

[23:35](#) LM: And be open to what that is all about because it has evolved. I mean, the anchors who we grew up with are not going to be replaced and then print and TV news really changed so dramatically and with all the downsizing that's gone through... So the whole world that we rely on has changed, but that presents so many opportunities for us to become that source of information because now we can communicate directly to the public through our web and through the internet and through our poll results and our analysis. We can only go directly to the public. And that's something that we're really again... really on the ground floor of that. In the old days, if I could just harken back one sec, in the old days, we used to do our polls, manually input the data, bring them over to the copy center and mail the results to the reporters. So it probably took about four or five days from the time we collected the data till it actually showed up somewhere. Now we can do a poll at five o'clock, finish at nine thirty, and have the results on the eleven o'clock news. So that's the world we now live in. It has to be quick. And it has to be concise and more accurate and it has to be accurate. Never sacrifice the accuracy.

[25:02](#) GN: What about the students? What's your perception of the students? And the change there. Can you comment on that?

[25:08](#) LM: Sure I mean, I think in some ways, the student body has changed. You know. When I was initially teaching, there were a lot of students who commuted. They were not in the dorms. They were... You know there was a lot of Hudson Valley kids.

[25:27](#) GN: And Long Island.

[25:28](#) LM: And Long Island. Long Island must be a very big place because every school you go to, there's a lot of people from what I hear. And those students. You know a lot of them in our classes in political science went on and got master's and graduate degrees. And law degrees. It's still the case. The political science majors that we deal with do very, very well. And always have.

[25:51](#) GN: Some come back to teach here. Some even come back. And become Deans.

[25:55](#) LM: True and right you are. Some come back and work for the Polling Institute. But so we have that whole thing with now, students are much more geographically diverse. Their interests are very different. But we've also grown and when maybe you know now in the course of a semester, we might have two hundred fifty students who are involved with what we're doing in one way or another. So you know there's a large group, a much bigger group that were in contact with. And so the smaller percentage of those are going to go on in careers in public opinion because there's lot more of them. But they still... You know there's still that core group who work in the office and attend the seminars.

[26:41](#) GN: Do you find something more inquisitive? Or about the same? Or more motivated or about the same?

[26:48](#) LM I think. I think they're very similar because I've always felt because we don't just deal with Political Science students. We deal with majors with students from all major. So who is attracted to us has always been a highly motivated student. I've always felt that the best students that Marist find us at some point and once they do they don't leave us because they really love the experience of having, you know, met a President and do a poll media governor. I mean you know they attend seminars with noted leaders in the media community. So the words spreads in that informal network of students have always had to have, you know, that there's something going on special there at the Marist Poll. And it's open to you. So sometimes it takes a little time for that word to permeate. I guess the students are very similar in that way. I mean obviously the students are more computer savvy and all that they've changed in terms of their technological skills but in terms of inquisitiveness. I've always found, the Marist students to be friendly, open,

flexible, and motivated. I mean it does. I mean those are the ones that we've always had when they stay in touch, they unlock the doors for other students to do internships and jobs. It's wonderful. The ones who have already gotten into the feeling ...

[28:14](#) **GN:** If they start in the sophomore year, will they stay with you for three years?

[28:19](#) **LM:** A lot of them but. I mean obviously they do internships and they do their abroad program and stuff like that. There's a group of students who typically will stay with us. Some do it a semester. Some do it for a year. There's always that core group who sort of, think this is what they want to do. And they stay on and we hate to see them leave. We do graduate but we hate it. It's always bittersweet. We have an end of year party and it's always, always rough to send. You know a send-off. I think that's true with so many other programs. I think when we started doing the poll in the late 1970s. In some ways it was more unique to Marist than it is today because there are so many incredible programs at Marist today that students can avail themselves of. I mean it really is a candy store for them. And they... When we did it, not only were we very unique in the polling community in many ways we were much more unique to Marist College. Because we were... we were making. You know. What were we saying? We were saying Marist students make news. And all of a sudden, so there you are and it's Good Morning America or NBC or the New York Times and all of a sudden Marist is there. And what it was a great way to, you know, in quotes, advertise for the school to say what's going on here and to say these are... this is quality stuff going on here. And that was the Marist students. They've always you know through all the glitz and public relations and you know I've gotten to go on TV over the years and all that. I mean it's always been two things. It's always been an educational program for the students. It's always four of us. And we've always put the premium of the accuracy of the results. Because without either of those, there's no need for it. There's no purpose. The public attention has been a wonderful side benefit. And obviously something Marist has loved to have had over the years. But the motivation has always been the students. And the accuracy of the results.

[30:21](#) **GN:** How far is your reach? Do you reach to California?

[30:23](#) **LM:** We are international. We've got a clipping service and. You know the Marist Poll has picked up, you know, around the world literally in the languages that I can't begin to understand that recognize the name, Marist. But obviously we're on network feeds and NBC and CBS have just used some of our polls very recently. As we branched out, I mean, we were originally politics but now we do. Economics we do. Lifestyle issues. Health care education. There's a whole bunch. I mean the polling world has expanded its scope. And fortunately we've been able to sort of stay. Well, really be a leader in that.

[31:02](#) **GN:** Now. And this is an academic institution. And we talked about the faculty. We've talked about the campus itself. We talked about the student. What about the core program? What about teaching? What is it that we teach? Has that changed? And should more of that change?

[31:17](#) **LM:** Well I must say in the recent years I've been less in touch with that part of it as I become more specialized in the public opinion realm. I see the benefits of that in students. But I mean I think others could probably speak more eloquently to the scope of their liberal arts background and understanding. I mean I think I see the technological changes in the kids and their comfort level. Although I must say there are limits to that, you know students today, are very comfortable with all the social networking, you know the Facebooks and the Twitters and all that. But to use that for research, it's still something that doesn't come as naturally to them. And to use the internet and to know what is a refereed article versus somebody just you know spouting something. Yeah. And to make those differentiations. I mean the teachers still has to provide that direction. Yeah. And how you go about researching and understanding and that's why I say the educational program... And the polling is a wonderful example. There's good polls and junk polls and you have to know how to distinguish between the one in the other or else. Or you're losing.

[32:32](#) **GN:** On what you're saying though I've heard people come in here and talk about one of the changes they would recommend which is really already happened in your area is that in the core program, we develop something where there's a bonding of doing projects together. So students would work in not just listening a teacher but working together to do the research and to do bounce ideas

off each other as they develop a theme or whatever the subject is. It could be in political science. It could be in chemistry. It could be any... biology has it already. You know. They work a lot in the labs. You know. Chemistry has it. You guys really have it.

[33:12](#) **LM:** It's so active. I mean, yeah, it's an active learning process. Here I'll give an example. We did a poll last year, last semester I should say on President Obama's first hundred days in office. Well, how did that poll go? We used the class as a vehicle to research what others have done and how they approached it. We used the students to develop their questionnaire. We brought in the staff of the Marist Poll to meet with them, the people who do different parts of the process as experts now to inform the process. Then we did the Poll. And then we talked about how we were going to release the information well. Those students are going to remember having done that. And I guess that's the key role. I mean I think back to my undergraduate years and you know, you remember faculty members, you remember some of the grueling elements of being a student. You don't necessarily remember a lot of content. You remember approaches. So I want to offer students an approach. Here's how we do things. You don't have to do it this way. This is how we do it compare it with ten others and at the end you're going to have lots of different perspectives. And then you'll remember something from your undergraduate and we've had so many ideas and over the years to do this and do that. I guess the rule we've always used is to... If this is something we would have liked to have had as an undergraduate, if I found this valuable and if the answer is yes then we try to find a way to do it now here at Marist. And then in many ways I think that's been successful so I take the students to Washington. We meet with the leaders down there. I bring people to campus. Why should I tell you what a political consultant does, when I can bring in three of them? And they can have a seminar with the students and you see again the perspective how people think. And sometimes it leads to jobs for students and it becomes very practical but odd times it's just opening up the classroom to make it more of an active laboratory for learning. So you write other disciplines that might be a more natural fit. And we've developed that accommodation, that way of doing it here. Yeah.

[35:13](#) **GN:** You've touched on this point that I want to develop. And most people who hear about you give me this little talk to me. We really want to narrow in on it. We've touched on it but how did all of this start? And was there a model? Now. Did you think it was good? Did you know where it was going to go?

[35:31](#) **LM:** No, I don't know what I'm going to be doing tomorrow. That's a great question. It started in the class as I mentioned in 1978. We developed that. Next year, we did it again. In 1982, we said you know we can be doing telephone polls statewide. Went to Dennis Murray and said, "We should be doing this." Yeah. He saw the results ... liked the idea you know he's had an interest in public policy. We did a statewide poll Mario Cuomo was the first running for governor. This is first time. Mario Cuomo became national news after he was elected. Polls about Mario Cuomo were also the national news. So I mean we used to joke and say he was our best public relations agent. That's why Mario Cuomo had M.C. on his cufflinks. Of course it stood for Mario Cuomo not Marist College. Or Miringoff-Carvalho. But nonetheless, and it grew. In 1984, we did polls on the presidential primary. There was a full page article in Newsweek called The Student Pollsters. It led to Good Morning America and N.B.C coming to campus to do, you know, "how is this otherwise small school making such big news?" 1989, we started doing New York City polls and learned that there's nothing more interesting to New York City Press than a mayoral election in New York City. And so we were really developing things, coursework, seminars, banging on doors at the National Press Club introducing ourselves walking around for three days. Just banging on doors before the security is what it is today. You could literally walk in say, "Hi. We're from the Marist Poll, we'd like tell you a little bit about what we do." And so there were lots of ways of developing all different facets of it. And we really did that for that period from the mid-80s to I don't know...

(INTERVIEW CUTS OFF)

