

**Gerard Cox**

**Marist College**

**Poughkeepsie, New York**

**Transcribed by Ann Sandri**

**For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections**

## Transcript—Gerard Cox

**Interviewee:** Dr. Gerard Cox  
**Interviewer:** Richard Foy  
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**Summary:** Gerry speaks about his early childhood, his years in school and joining the Marist Brothers in Esopus. He goes on to discuss his early teaching career both outside of in with Marist, eventually becoming part of the Administration. He gives insight into the early Theater program at Marist and talk about some of the challenges of being a Dean. Gerry also shares his thoughts on what makes Marist special and what they need to do to in the future to retain this.

**R.F. (00:31)** O.K. Jerry to start we'd like to get some background on you so, where were you born and when?

**G.C. (00:40)** [Laughter] I was born in a trunk in the Princess Theater is that how that song goes? [Laughter] No, I was born in the great metropolis of New York City specifically in the Bronx. The Palm Bay section of the Bronx.

**R.F. (01:00)** O.K. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

**G.C. (01:03)** A brother and a sister my brother James has passed he's deceased us. And my sister Margaret Mary is younger than myself.

**R.F. (01:19)** I understand your brother James did a little bit of acting.

**G.C. (01:22)** [Laughter] Yes, yes he did that was one of his vocations throughout his life.

**R.F. (01:28)** It did show up on television.

**G.C. (01:30)** It was on television and in the motion pictures. One of those character actors that you just take for granted. [Laughter]

**R.F. (01:40)** Right, like you say I've seen him before. I can't recall his name.

**G.C. (01:45)** Right, yes [Laughter]

**R.F. (01:47)** What did you father and mother do for a living?

**G.C. (01:52)** My father was an accountant worked on Wall Street he went to work for a company, Brown Crosby and Company at Ninety-Six Wall Street when he was still in high school and worked his entire life until he died at the age of sixty-five for that one company. My mother was a secretary and she worked as a secretary prior to getting married than she became the mother, wife, housewife and raised children. And then eventually went back to working as a secretary for the Archdiocese of New York and as it

turned out she was secretary to the principal at one of the Marist Brothers High School's. St. Helena's on the Parkway in the Bronx.

**R.F. (02:51)** O.K. How did you get to know the Marist Brothers?

**G.C. (02:54)** I got to know the Marist Brothers probably the way a lot of other people did. You may recall when Brother Aidan Francis was the recruiter alright and he would tour high schools and the elementary schools in the diocese and recruit young people. And he came to our elementary school and spoke to the eighth grade and in that particular eighth grade were Gus Nolan and my brother both of whom wanted to go away to be Marist Brothers. My parents, Jimmy was the oldest in the family so this was a new experience to them, they went to our pastor and said that we have our son in the eighth grade and he's telling us he wants to go away to become a Marist Brother. Absolutely not the pastor said much too young to make that decision, tell him to get a good education and then decide what he wants to be. So as a result, Gus Nolan went to Esopus and James stayed home and became an actor. [Laughter] A decision which I think when I said I wanted to go away my parents were somewhat relieved that I was not saying I wanted to be the actor. [Laughter]

**R.F. (04:16)** Did you go directly to Esopus or did you go to Saint...

**G.C. (04:19)** I went to Cardinal Hayes and then to Marist Prep. In fact, I just found going through some old material, I found a postcard I sent to my parents and it was postmarked September eighteen, we went to Esopus on my first day of Marist Prep was September first 1948, and this was postmarked September eighteen 1948. And I read it to my wife the other night and she was amazed how articulate I was as a sophomore in high school. [Laughter] I said something has changed with the years.

**R.F. (05:14)** So you stayed in Esopus from forty-eight to forty-nine to forty-nine to fifty?

**G.C. (05:18)** Yes, fifty went to Tingsborough, St. Joseph's in the Novitiate.

**R.F. (05:25)** So when did you first come to the Poughkeepsie property?

**G.C. (05:30)** Two years later in fifty-two, August of fifty-two I came here.

**R.F. (05:38)** And you were a Student Brother for how many years?

**G.C. (05:41)** For two years, fifty-two through fifty-four once we had done two years and two summers then so it really kind of pushed us, and we had done college courses some of them in the Novitiate also. So, it was pretty close to having three years finished, three of the four years.

**R.F. (06:00)** But you didn't graduate?

**G.C. (06:02)** No, I didn't at the end of that summer Brother Paul Ambrose who'd been in charge of the Student Brothers kept saying to us you have Provincial, Provincial counts for only so many of our teachers, you know, if you didn't have that many graduating classes we send out people who aren't finished. But we would hear this morning noon and night and finally I went to see him and I said "Look Brother Paul if you have to send some people out I said I wouldn't mind going" I said, "I don't want to go but if you need someone I'm willing to go." Not listening to the sage advice, "never volunteer for anything." [Laughter] Well he snapped me up so fast that before I knew it I was on my way to St. Helena's to begin my teaching career in September of 1954 at the ripe old age of twenty years. Because that particular school is literally within walking distance of where I grow up, I had to experience that first day class, after teaching a class a student came up to me and he said to me aren't you Jerry Cox? I just introduced myself as

Brother Stephen Luke. But aren't you really Jerry Cox's I said," Yes I am" he said don't you remember we were together in elementary school you where our bus monitor.

[Laughter] So I said right I find myself teaching the very kids I was in the elementary school with.

**R.F. (07:36)** You were in Assumption Parish right?

**G.C. (07:38)** Yes, Our Lady of the Assumption

**R.F. (07:40)** I went to that school. That's pretty interesting, it probably illustrates the fact that not everybody who graduated from Marist completed their courses here, you got your degree from Marist.

**G.C. (07:55)** Yes

**R.F. (07:56)** But you had to take your follow up courses probably the few courses that were left.

**G.C. (08:02)** I took at what we called the college extension at Mount St. Michael often in the summer during the year in the fall and summer and finished so instead of finishing up the degree in fifty-five I literally got it in August of fifty-six. In talking about the early days and how the very first degrees were given out to the students, I received mine in the kitchen of Esopus in August. We went on a retreat and at one point I went out to the kitchen to get some warm milk or food of some kind of food for the table and who was in the kitchen but Brother Paul Ambrose. He was all the way on the other side of the kitchen and he said to me "Jerry I have something for you" and he threw something I didn't know what it was and it was my diploma. [Laughter] So I thought it was rather a unique experience to receive your diploma in the kitchen.[ Laughter] *Short Order Degree* I don't know what you would call it.[More Laughter]

**R.F. (09:12)** Well you're not unique Brother Richard Rancourt did things unique like, so did Ed Donohue, and a couple of others who became teachers here. One never figured out the criteria about those who were allowed to stay and those who were shipped out early. [Laughter]

**G.C. (09:34)** It varied from one individual to another.

**R.F. (09:38)** It was rumored that if you smoked up here you went out early. [Laughter]  
The way you described it you just volunteered.

**G.C. (09:47)** I just volunteered. I'm sure there are others who must have volunteered too. But you're right the label that most, it was assumed that if you went out early you must have done something wrong. Well what we did get into a number of years later was that there were real shortages and they just had to send out people.

**R.F. (10:13)** Well, that just goes with the tip of forties which was my class because the class in front me; Jerry Weiss's class graduated only four from here. The rest were all sent out early. There was just a need for teachers.

**G.C. (10:31)** Well while our class was large, in reality just about everyone either went to cooking, tailoring, laundry for a year or when out early. So almost the price you paid for staying and finishing your degree was, if you hadn't already cooked or done laundry or tailor shop, all those things you were going to wind up getting them after your degree.

**R.F. (11:00)** So when you were here in fifty-four, the chapel was being built

**G.C. (11:05)** We build it, oh yes. I was one of three painters who worked with Brother Nilus. No one else was allowed to touch the woodwork he was very particular about how the wood would be stained. We did every bit of the woodwork in that chapel, the benches, the walls, the ceiling, the columns and I could tell you how each was done.

There were some interesting stories because it required several layers of paint and some of the paint, like the color white, you wipe it off before it dried and then you would pick the white and green, right and then a coat of green and we would wipe it off. Then several coats of clear lacquer. Well one night Brother Nilus came into the chapel and we where up on the scaffold we where doing the ceiling and he came in and he said he found us, the three of us hysterical, we where high from the fumes! The chapel was completely closed and the fumes where building up and we where really high. He got us to down off the scaffold so quickly , got us into the car and took us to the diner that was right across from where the south entrance is. He poured coffee into us and he said he was really apprehensive but Brother Paul I think never found out that was our secret with Nilus.

[Laughter]

**R.F. (12:57)** Did you have to do any of the concrete work or the other cement work?

**G.C. (13:01)** Oh yes, I don't think anyone escaped some of the preliminary work, pouring the concrete, pouring the concrete was my most notorious job was the corridor outside the kitchen in Esopus. That was under the direction of Francis Xavier who just shook his head and said you don't know how to do anything.

**R.F. (13:29)** Where you a Student brother at the time?

**G.C. (13:34)** A Student Brother at the time - if you weren't working here you were sent over to Espous on Saturday to do some work over there. We were pouring the concrete outside the kitchen when they did the renovations in the villa section. The city boys just didn't know how to do anything right. [Laughter]

**R.F. (13:58)** That's very interesting how did your academic semester go, were there times when you where out of class?



**G.C. (14:10)** Yes, sometimes you would be sent out to work for a week and while you were out you were responsible for all your class work. And you got someone to take notes and you got together with them to go over the material. I didn't think that they'd let up because we were working it never seemed to be an excuse for anything it was just part of the routine.

**R.F. (14:39)** Was the semester longer than fifteen weeks did they add a week or two?

**G.C. (14:46)** I don't remember particularly whether or not we did. I mean you just followed the routine every day, whether it was fourteen weeks or sixteen weeks wouldn't have made any difference, we weren't going anywhere. [Laughter]

**R.F. (15:04)** O.K. Let's move forward, after you went to St. Helena's how long did you teach outside? When did you come back here as a teacher?

**G.C. (15:16)** I went to St. Helena's in fifty-four and then I came back here in sixty-seven, but from sixty-two to sixty-seven I was at Christopher Columbus in Miami. So from fifty-four to sixty-two was St. Helena's, sixty-two to sixty-seven was Miami.

**R.F. (15:40)** Where did you do your graduate work?

**G.C. (15:42)** I did my graduate work through the University of New York, Hunter College. I also did graduate work at Fordham and at the University of Miami. I was in the doctoral program in Educational Administration when I was summoned to come up here in August of sixty-seven.

**R.F. (16:03)** But you came?

**G.C. (16:04)** That's another one of those characteristic Marist stories, I come up for my brother's wedding in sixty-seven and the week-end of the wedding, the wedding was on Saturday, Sunday I get a phone call from Brother Athanasius Norbert. And Norbert says

to me you have your return airline ticket to Miami and I said, “Yes I’m about to fly back on Monday to Miami.” [He said] “Cancel”, “cancel the flight?”, “Yes cancel the flight you’re not going back yet.” O.K. “What would you like me to do?” “I want you to meet me at St. Helena’s on Tuesday at two o’clock, now you, don’t get there too soon because I don’t want you to go into any buildings just walk around the grounds and I will see you and we will walk and we will talk.” It was like clothe and digger, what is this all about? [Laughter] I don’t know when I’m going back I cancelled the reservation I go down and we walk and then Norbert explains to me they’re going to have no longer one person in charge of the Student Brothers. Times they are a changing. There are going to be five of us who will work with the Student Brothers, so I’ll be leaving Miami and going to Poughkeepsie. So, I mean the graduate courses that I was taking are out the window now at this point. And that’s how I came to come to Poughkeepsie with the invention of the Dutch Masters.

**R.F. (17:55)** Who coined that term?

**G.C. (17:58)** I think we come up with it when the five of us finally got together we said the first thing we have to do we have to plan. So we went to Cape Cod (planning must be done with decent parties) and we rented a house on Siasconsett Road and in fact you may recall back, we wound up calling the meeting room where just the five of us would meet we called it the Siasconsett Room. But when we got together, the planning process I’m not sure which one of us, someone came across the picture of the Dutch Masters and we said “doesn’t that look like us?” and that kind of started the Dutch Masters.

**R.F. (18:49)** What do you think the underlining rationale was to go from one Master of Scholastics to five of them?

**G.C. (18:57)** I think that the changes that were occurring, cause remember we're now into post Vatican II. It became clear that the training program was going to require much more individual attention. You couldn't work with large groups, the mass production model was over, it wasn't working. So, I think reducing the ratio of Student Brothers to a more mature older person (think of how young we really were) really gave the individual Student Brother more attention in his development hopefully became more productive.

**R.F. (19:45)** Some of the Dutch Masters were already faculty at this point?

**G.C. (19:48)** Yes, Jeff Lanning, La Pietra, Bibeau, who was really on the administrative staff but he seems to be Spanish, I think Larry Sullivan and myself maybe the only outsiders.

**R.F. (20:09)** Bibeau, was the assistant Master of Scholastics.

**G.C. (20:12)** Right, so he was going through the path.

**R.F. (20:15)** But each of the five of you taught at the college.

**G.C. (20:19)** Yes

**R.F. (20:20)** So you wound up teaching.

**G.C. (20:22)** We taught a full schedule and sometimes more than a full schedule.

[Laughter]

**R.F. (20:31)** And how long did it last this, you walk up into the Student Brothers in the Scholasticate, you came here in sixty-seven and how long did you remain a Dutch Master?

**G.C. (20:44)** It only lasted for three years, I think that the grand experiment was like three years.

**R.F. (21:00)** Had the Student Brothers, were they still living in the Fontaine Building or had they...

**G.C. (21:05)** We were in the Marian Building and the Fontaine Building. No one wanted to admit that some of them are kind of porch dwellers in Marian Building.

[Laughter] Spending twenty-four hours in the

**R.F. (21:20)** What do you mean the Marian building?

**G.C. (21:22)** The old wooden building. What really happens, there is a classroom as a recreation room really had been over the years converted to kind of Student Brothers hang out. And some of them would pull all nighters and stay up all night there. We had the Fontaine Building, yes then part of the plan in bringing up our board the five of us was to build a new configuration. And that's when Gregory and Benoit were built, they were built for the Student Brothers.

**R.F. (22:03)** That's right so interesting enough the Marian Building was a Scholasticate and then when I first came it got converted, it was used as classrooms for the evening division. Then once Donnelly was complete, we turned in back to the use of the Student Brothers and got different forms until it was torn down. Where did you physically live at that time? Did you live in the Marian Building?

**G.C. (22:34)** No initially Jep and I shared office space and bedroom space in what had been the priest suite in Fontaine.

**R.F. (22:54)** Oh yes that is in the front of the building.

**G.C. (22:57)** Yes, if you think of the priest suite it had primarily three rooms. And the first one when you walked into became my office and any traffic at night was constantly

going thru my office. The middle room was a bedroom that Jep and I shared and then the back room which you get in from the outside was Jep's office.

**R.F. (23:24)** O.K. When the Student Brothers moved into Gregory and Benoit did you move with them?

**G.C. (23:30)** Yes, we moved with them, we were the first resident directors in those buildings.

**R.F. (23:35)** And the five of you, was there room for the five of you?

**G.C. (23:40)** Four of us, I'm trying to think I believe the first one, I think Mo may have stayed back where he had been as the assistant Master of Scholastics

**R.F. (23:55)** And by that time the number of Student Brothers was down to sixty-four?

**G.C. (24:00)** Yes

**R.F. (24:02)** There were still thirty-two in each house. They actually had single rooms or double rooms?

**G.C. (24:07)** Double rooms.

**R.F. (24:08)** Double rooms. Yes, do you recall the experiment where the Student Brothers living off campus, some like John Bosco had a house?

**G.C. (24:18)** I think John had a house off Lafayette Street in Poughkeepsie.

**R.F. (24:22)** Oh, O.K. that was one, but there was one before that on, down on Academy Street.

**G.C. (24:32)** On Academy Street, yes you're right but weren't they the core of the group that moved to St. Joseph's?

**R.F. (24:42)** To St. Joseph's, I think Dave Ottmar was the supervisor down there whatever you call them.

**G.C. (24:51)** St. Josephs I think very briefly was it one year and then eventually Jim Britt moved in with them at St. Joseph's.

**R.F. (25:06)** O.K. now so you come up here in sixty-seven and you wind up teaching, teaching English, Communications, when did you start getting into Administration?

**G.C. (25:25)** In 1969 I got involved with the Administration on a part time basis. Continued to be with all primarily a faculty member, I went up for tenure in seventy-two. In fact, Brian was head of the review committee; I was having great difficulty with his concept of combining administration with teaching. How could someone be both? It was really a novel concept and Brian wasn't the only one who struck by it, we fought the battle and got tenure.

**R.F. (26:11)** O.K. Now what was your Administrative role?

**G.C. (26:16)** I worked directly with the Academic Dean, we had no Vice President's then, we're not taking corporate image to heart. So, I was the Associate Academic Dean. I worked primarily with all of the student programs and I had a number of specific people who reported to me. For awhile I was the head of the Learning Center which is what we called the library then, I know it's Vincent Toscano. Joe Bell was with the Core Program. For a very brief time, you probably remember it, I had to run an admissions report, it's not like that. We took that and went to... and he took a step backward because he had been reporting to a lot of other places.

**R.F. (27:21)** And you reported to LaPietra.

**G.C. (27:23)** LaPietra

**R.F. (27:25)** LaPietra then was Academic Dean, now Kevin Carolan?

**G.C. (27:27)** Was the other associate.

**R.F. (27:28)** And what was he in charge of?

**G.C. (27:30)** The computer, it's really more like the support services. He didn't have much to do with the students.

**R.F. (27:46)** Anything technical so far as the services?

**G.C. (27:49)** Yes

**R.F. (27:50)** You really have other things to do with, directly with the students. And you still continued to teach.

**G.C. (27:57)** Yes

**R.F. (27:58)** What subjects were you teaching?

**G.C. (28:00)** I was, well I remember at one point in time, counting I had by the mid-seventies, I had gotten up to I think twenty or twenty-two different courses I had taught. We were expanding the curriculum and a number of those courses were new courses that were offered for the first time.

**R.F. (28:28)** When did you get into dramatics?

**G.C. (28:33)** Well you see, my graduate degree is really in theater, although no one paid much attention to that. My other graduate degree was in English. So, actually the first play I directed here as a faculty member was in 1970, *It Was Dark at the Top of the Stairs* a very interesting play. I got into it because although I was on the fringe of the Theater Guild with Jep and Jim Britt, and kind of helping them and supporting them, it was in seventy that Jim had his heart attack and they had just gotten the cast for *It Was Dark at the Top of the Stairs* and he had the heart attack right in the lounge out here. And then I started directing and that was really the start of it.

**R.F. (29:30)** Jep Lanning had done some plays before that?

**G.C. (29:34)** Yes, we had a number of plays.

**R.F. (29:37)** Well before that I guess Joe Belanger had done some plays.

**G.C. (29:40)** And Joe Bell had yea. I mean I told you trying to get a copy of history about the theater at Marist.

**R.F. (29:49)** Did the Student Brothers put on any plays while you where here?

**G.C. (29:55)** By the time we began its work in sixty-seven they had become absorbed in the Theater Guild. In the late fifties, early sixties there were really two drama groups. One was the Student Brothers who did their own shows and the other was the emerging Theater Guild that had lay students in it.

**R.F. (30:21)** Who handled Joe Bell's; Joe Belanger probably handled the Student Brothers?

**G.C. (30:28)** Yes, yes they really didn't do that many, if you look at the history the number of productions done each year were very memorable productions. They where good productions we did, but some of the years there where only two plays. Other years there were maybe three, four at the most. For us now it's not uncommon for us to do eight a year.

**R.F. (30:57)** So your tenure as a assistant an Assistant Academic Dean lasted until...

**G.C. (31:06)** Seventy-nine

**R.F. (31:09)** Seventy-nine, O.K. and you started in seventy-two?

**G.C. (31:15)** I started in seventy, seventy-two I got tenure I was Administrator and at what point did I...

**R.F. (31:26)** Oh, I meant as assistant to La Pietra.

**G.C. (31:30)** That began in seventy.



**R.F. (31:32)** Oh, O.K. That one probably just when you entered the...

**G.C. (31:39)** Going through La Pietra and Zuccarello, I stayed with both, both of them great Administrators, I learned a great deal from the two of them.

**R.F. (31:53)** So you were out quite a bit then, so you have quite a history. So, you directed the first play, *It Was Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. What about Children's Theater?

**G.C. (32:09)** Children's Theater isn't formed until .... Is it sixty... I'm trying to think now what the date for the start of Children's Theater, that was Joe Tortora

**R.F. (32:30)** That was about seventy-one.

**G.C. (32:32)** I think the actual the first (I have it here) the very first Children's Theater production I think was sixty, April of sixty-eight. Now in the beginning it was interesting because when Children's Theater was first done, it was more going out on the road taking the production to elementary schools or to the prisons. And very often some of the Children's Theater shows and the prisoners in Green Haven loved it. All those young women that they saw in their presence. [Laughter] There was much more going out to a production and it was only as it grew and grew in popularity, and we increased in the number of performances. I mean we now do fourteen to sixteen performances of the Children's Theater. To such an extent that we have to have two separate casts so kids aren't missing classes. Now whoever is free plays the roles this day and then we have the elementary and pre-school kids bused in.

**R.F. (33:52)** Was that basically the student generated thing?

**G.C. (33:57)** Yes, it really was, see Theater Guild was very highly structured and it was controlled very much by the faculty and the administration, students didn't have much

say. So, by the late sixties it really was the times, students wanted more self-freedom to express themselves, so they wanted their own opportunity to direct, Children's Theater was an attempt to direct their own. Two years later we founded the Experimental Theater, which was to do new works by students or faculty. To give back to the students to share directing. By 1980 we started an annual festival of short plays. In eighty-seven we started the John Anderson competition, a playwriting contest, in memory of John who died. It's been, when you look over the sweep of events, it's been interesting in the sense that they are always moving toward greater expression on the part of the students. The students having a greater say in what would be done. And what has been tremendous about it is, that interest in theater and has been persistent throughout all the decades. It has something to do with the caliber of the students they have. They have this likeness, that's what makes you feel good. They have this likeness for theater. So, in the theatre organization we have a wide spectrum of disciplines represented in the major fields of these students. I think a very important part of the liberal arts experience that students have at Marist College, is one of the reasons why we're trying to be very careful about separating, now that we have some theater courses and we have a concentration in English that's Theater and we have a minor in the Theater .We're having trouble dispelling the misconception in the part of the students, who sometimes think that you have to be in these theater classes to be in theater. So right now we find ourselves having to communicate to students more effectively that, "No" the theater club is open to all students.

**R.F. (36:43)** Very interesting, so it's all for the first lay students play was "*Waiting for Godot*"

**G.C. (36:53)** That's right.

**R.F. (36:55)** And of the people who are really the for people in the cast : Jerry McKenna wound up as a doctor teaching at Harvard. Dick Carney is head of drama at Queens College, James Coombs is a lawyer in town, and Tom McAndrews became an editor of a paper. A guy who hung around doing nothing but handle the lighting was Jim Callahan who's now a Prof. of Mathematics up at Smith. [Laughter] And that was in 1961-62. We were told by people who saw the production that it was better than the one that was showing on T.V. approximately the same time. That's a hard version, I'm surprised someone said they shouldn't do it but these kids where going to do it and that was it.

**G.C. (37:49)** Yes

**R.F. (37:50)** It must have a long tradition of a... it also reflects to a certain extent the cultural changes in higher education and basically if you wanted the church as far as moving from authoritarianism to something special. Very interesting. O.K. now at some stage you wind up as a...

**G.C. (38:16)** In seventy-nine, seventy-nine Antonio Perret your friend [Laughter] suddenly announces he's going with Sommer and I wind up being put in on an acting basis as the Dean of Students for a year. In that student search I wound up getting the job, twenty- two years later. [Laughter]

**R.F. (38:50)** Right, that's sort of an endurance record that's close to the Olympics.

**G.C. (38:54)** It really does when you look at the longevity of Deans of Students the only administrator in college who tends to have a shorter stay is really a president. Now

we're unusual in terms of the years our presidents last. So you know I always felt I was in good company. [Laughter] Always, staying my welcome if that's what it was.

**R.F. (39:28)** What did you find was the hardest thing of the Dean's job or Vice President? I don't know what to call you?

**G.C. (39:39)** The most difficult aspect without a doubt was anything that would be a negative with regard to a student. Within the first two weeks that I was in the job, I got a call that one of our students had been hit by a car on Route 9. I tried to get up to the hospital as quickly as possible so I jumped in the car, headed up to St. Francis's Emergency Room. And the first thing I said to them was "has anyone called his parents?" because the kid seemed to be in critical condition. They said, "Yes but they weren't sure if the hospital had told the parents anything other than he had lost a lot of blood and they were working on him." By the time I got to the hospital the boy had died. And "baptism by fire", I'm in this job for two weeks and suddenly everyone at the hospital disappears, I was left to meet the parents when they came and to tell them that their son was dead, and then they couldn't believe it and they wanted to see the body. And I had to get to the morgue, where they laid him out, I wound up taking the parents to view the body. And then I thought I don't know if I really want this job. But I mean, that was kind of set the tone of whether it would be physical injury, whether academic disaster, misbehavior or bad conduct, the negative aspect of having to try to prepare the parents to understand that if you were disappointed in your students, it was not that he or she was going to be branded for life, a criminal have this record for example. What we were trying to do was for them to take responsibility, being held accountable and to learn from this situation and what the parents had to do to help us mature that their son or daughter

learned. That probably would be the most difficult aspect of the job. Second to that would be the number of meetings one has to sit through. It's unbelievable you know its how can we spend in meetings. [Laughter] Not that they're useless but it's a great deal of repetition and of course the longer you stay in the job the more times you find yourself trying to re-invent the wheel. And then you really do get to a point and I think it's one of the things that leads you to retire. But you get to the point and you're saying I really don't want to re-invent the wheel. It's wonderful to work with some people who have never tried to do it before and you say to yourself I don't need to have the freedom to go about and do it and I know [Laughter] it's going to be short of a miracle, it's not going to change. To the point of becoming the crotchety old "I told you so" it's better to turn over the reins.

**R.F. (43:26)** I could be giving that speech [Laughter] at the end of my reign, I kept biting my lips because I was tempted to say, "we tried that in sixty-two and it didn't work." and we did this and it's very hard to prescind from stepping over people and letting them explore their own way. So, it is hard. What's your attitude or how do you feel about the kind of student who's coming to Marist, has that changed?

**G.C. (44:02)** You know to me it's one of the amazing things about the college. I've found that the students have not changed greatly. There have been some subtle changes but the amazing thing is that deep down its still pretty much the same kids. They've grades, their college board scores may be higher, their grade reports may be higher, they may be involved in more activities, they may have more money, but take those things away and say to yourself I don't know, I don't know about any one particular kid but what do I see evidence of in this young person and it's still pretty much the same thing,

that there are young people who tend to be in many ways more idealistic than practical. They have a great sense of commitment to one another to their peer group. I find them extremely loyal to one other, they're basically good solid citizens who can do the most incredibly stupid things once they drink. But if we could keep our students away from drinking we would have very, very little trouble with them. Most of our trouble is somehow related to either they were drinking or the person that got in trouble with was drinking and sometimes they're trying to cover for and trying to protect, and they just got themselves in trouble.

**R.F. (45:50)** So basically the Marist student is a well intentioned young man or women?

**G.C. (45:59)** Yes, and what we have to package and capitalize on is, "what is it about us that they find attractive?" Because they choose us much more so than we choose them, alright there are a lot of places they're looking at and we tend to rest with oh the campus is so clean, the lawns look so great, the buildings are... That's first expression stuff, which is important I'm not going to knock it, that's very important to begin with but, when you talk to parents and talk to the students about what is it that really made us different from other places with nice lawns and with nice buildings, it's really the people and the quality of the interaction that they found when they spoke to this professor or spoke with this administrator or met with this particular coach. There are qualities in what we say and do that people find very reassuring and very comforting and they want to entrust their son or daughter to us. And it is you know an act of faith that they make, "that these are people that we think we can really turn over our son or daughter to." I think we have a wonderful thing going but again I think where judging is very important

because we have to somehow identify what it is we what to carry into the future from our past.

**R.F. (47:45)** Have you done any research which would compare the students or the atmosphere here, with similar colleges that you might say are our competitors?

**G.C. (48:02)** No, I would say that we haven't done any scholarly research that we have made inquiries that we're tried to say in touch with what's happening at our competitor's campuses. Yes, I mean I was always amazed that nine times out of ten we're doing a much better job, in this area or that area or another area than are competitors are. Now part of that has been, and I don't what this misunderstood when I say this, part of it has come from a certain stability in terms of your faculty and your staff. That's why I think the moment that we are at, there are a number of changes taking place of transition taking place and we're losing a lot of people. I don't think we can just assume that everything is going to continue as it has in the past. I think we had, we had a kind of spine that get a great deal of strength to what we represented. Whether that spine is there in reality or it's going to be an allusion, is part of what, your interviewing people probably will help us to understand.

**R.F. (41:42)** Let's run the newsreel back a little and I'm interested in the notion of it's being a Catholic College or the impression of brothers, now when did you leave the brothers?

**G.C. (49:58)** I left the brothers in seventy- sixty-nine, sixty-nine.

**R.F. (50:06)** And would you, when you left what where your expectations as far as how you had been treated or how you would be received?

**G.C. (50:19)** Well, how you'd be treated, how I would be received, I don't think I really worried about it that much because there were turbulent times that we were in and we were going through strange reactions from people even while being a Marist Brother. I mean I was on the Provincial Council, there were rumors that the Superior Providence that I was going to be the next Provincial. I used to get hate mail from some of the older men who really didn't like the changes that were made and really very terrible things were said and I mean this was coming from within. So, that I don't think in leaving that was really a concern that I had, what would people think, how would they react, because we were just going through very turbulent years. And I don't think it matters if you were in or you were out, it was what you represented, what were the values that people saw you espousing and whether or not they liked you, and you know if what they see was that you represent the change, there were people who really resented it.

**R.F. (51:42)** Well, you're talking now, you're referring now mostly to brothers.

**G.C. (51:45)** Yes

**R.F. (51:47)** Now, in terms of your acceptance by the college, which by this time was a mix of brothers and lay people, you had no trouble changing status?

**G.C. (52:00)** No, no I really didn't, I remember in signing the papers and saying to Ken Voegtle, who was Provincial then, I think it's very strange I said because I feel the same, nothing has changed other than I've signed this piece of paper. Now it's not, it did not have all the drama of I really...it's one of the movies that I do, I do like them of course its part of this hobby because I like Audrey Hepburn so much, but The Nun's Story and I will watch whatever, however, day or night time especially the ending when she signs and leaves and the drama that she goes through, the closing of the door, and she opens the



door and alone she steps out into the world. I mean we can appreciate the symbolism from the scene and from that point of view. But I always say to myself in reality those moments were far less dramatic, you were kind of more startled by in reality nothing had changed.

**R.F. (53:22)** O.K. about that time quite a few of the faculty were leaving, including myself.

**G.C. (53:27)** Yes

**R.F. (53:28)** And historically as far as I know, there were only two college presidents who left the religious order and remained as presidents, Jacqueline Wexler, Jackie Grennan and myself. So that there's certain openness about the campus here and we can have ex-priests or former Episcopal priests and they seem to be accepted into the community. So there seems to be again part of an accepting culture, which probably you helped construct or got involved with. What about the notion that the college being Catholic, it's not Catholic in a legalistic sense.

**G.C. (54:26)** No, legally it's not, but in a fashion it is. It's a tough, tough thing to deal with for some people. But I would have to say in terms of dealing with parents and students you would have a hard time convincing them that we're not. You know it's like the old story of so you're a Brother, Father. You know no matter how many times you tell them, I'm not a Father, "yes Father we understand." [Laughter] You walk like a duck, you sound like a duck, you know chances are you are. In reality the values that you espouse and that people expect to see reflected in your actions and in your thinking and in your communications, it's all part of that tradition. Granted legally, we are not, I mean no one is trying to say that legally we are. And even parents come to understand that but

they are still to them the legal question is not important, what is important is what you say and what you do. And I think that tradition defines what we say and what we do.

**R.F. (55:54)** That means that the preponderance of the student body is Catholic?

**G.C. (56:00)** Yes, but the number, the percentage has been dropping. Now among the percentages and I have even the current year, in the distribution of figures, as the number of those that say they're Roman Catholic is dropping. There is also a percentage of people who do not give any faith. I think some of those formally were over here, because the other percentages have not changed drastically, so where did that section come from, I think that the non-practicing Catholics...

**R.F. (56:43)** They may also be not wanting to be classified as Catholic in case somebody comes after you.

**G.C. (56:50)** Or someone knocks on your door and say aren't you going to Mass?

**R.F. (56:56)** Yes, that's it so. O.K. well I think we're coming close to the end of the hour and there's still a whole in your years that we haven't touched. One which is athletics.

**G.C. (57:04)** Ah, let's get to athletics [Laughter]

**R.F. (57:08)** I think we'll have to have a chapter two in this but I would like to thank you for your impressions and perhaps another thing we haven't spoken about is one of the questions on here is, "how you see differences between the presidencies of the three presidents?" I think we'd like to hear from you on that because you've been sort of on the inner workings.

**G.C. (57:37)** Well I'd be glad to reflect on the differences in the three principal administrators. I mean certainly you may be aware of the fact that I've tried to say over

and over that we really as an institution, need to address more properly the fact that we've had six presidents. Granted the first three were very different, right, but legally it is, Dennis was inaugurated as the sixth

**R.F. (58:10)** That's something they don't talk about that.

**G.C. (58:12)** Yes, and I think its part of our history the reality of our history that our first three were Provincials and it's a different type of administrator for the college, which helps to explain how certain things happened and other things didn't. And how once we broke from that relationship, began to break from it, it became possible to do more clinically, Paul's presidency was really just one year.

**R.F. (58:38)** Yes, he was a dominating figure, but he was really was the dean and the titular presidents were the Provincials, until the State Education Department began asking why there where so many presidents and so few deans. [Laughter] And that went uncorrected until fifty-seven.

**G.C. (59:04)** Well, the mistake was I didn't mean mistakes, but what really what participated that was becoming two provinces then which provincial would be president of the college? Let's call the whole thing off! [Laughter]

**R.F. (59:24)** That's an interesting point because you have huge number of schools and they had to divide them up so that the personnel will value them, but also so that the finances were. And Marist was considered a huge money maker which it will never be because it just sucks up any available money. [Laughter] Which the Provincial Treasurer knew and which the treasurer of the Marist Brothers in Rome knew, telling me very technically how glad he was that Marist College was independent, because he told me at one time if you collected all the money in the Marist Brothers throughout the whole

world he could not make one payment to the Champagnat Building. And one of my arguments was you don't want to have the thing locked in, so if Marist fails all of a sudden you lose the high schools you own. You want to get them separately organized which was just impossible to get. I mean a religious order can't fund a college properly, it has to go elsewhere. It worked out pretty well, we found that most of the non-Catholic people supported us, were not interested in changing the culture of the college, they were interested in supporting it. Whether they were [inaudible] we were probably a model, which seems to be working but the big test will come in the next ten years when the old guard transitions are out and whether this culture can be carried on with a new person with different parts of the culture. It will be interesting problem.

**G.C. (1:01:33)** Yes, it's important to identify and that's why this project is really so important. Identify what it is that the college is going to continue to be as an institution it is. These are things that have to be addressed and to find the right people to do them.

**R.F. (1:01:56)** Right. Actually, my predecessor Brother Paul doesn't think it will work and he wants some memento of the brothers, which is why he raised the money for that statuary of Champagnat out by the chapel of the two students. He felt there has to be some permanent marker with the Marist Brothers way. I'm not as pessimistic as he is, I think it can be worked. As you read some of the stuff from Sean Sammon, the Superior General writes and it's very interesting, the Brotherhood is open towards a new era too. So, it should be an exciting time.

**G.C. (1:02:50)** I think the subtle change I see even what Sean Sammon is writing, is that although there will be mention of Marcellin... it's much more what the organization represents than the individual. I find that and the misunderstanding of it and

there's a lot of sense to it, what as a force, do you represent? There's a nice history in the tradition that comes from a man and the first brothers, what's much more important is whether the dynamism of today? And what you carry from the past into the future?

**R.F. (1:03:40)** Yes, it's not going back to the past, it's carrying from the past. And part of the problem is the poor representations of the Founder and his early biographies which were not written, they weren't written so you get to know him, they were written to get him canonized. So, everything, surprisingly everything that Jean Baptist who wrote it, there's a short chronological life and then there's about fifteen chapters on the virtues. When he was finished writing it, he destroyed all the documents, because it was rumored if the "Defender of the Faith" in Rome found anything you wrote, which was not proper Church, that would be enough to veto you. So, the best way to cure that was to destroy it all. And there was another fellow, Beaudin, Bernard that I met in sixty-five. In fact, was a researcher and he figured out what documents were referred to, he sort of did a reverse thing. What documents that we have, one thing he knew is that whenever these people wrote letters they usually hand wrote another copy. He said to himself O.K. the letters were destroyed, even for example, the letters to the French Education Department, they had a fire in 1870. He said they're probably in parish someplace or in the villages and he spent ten years finding them.[Laughter]

[Interview ends abruptly]

