

**James Conroy**

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

**James Conroy**

Transcript – Conroy, James

**Interviewee:** James Conroy

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**Summary:** James reflects on his time at Marist college in the late sixties; what it was like for him to come to Marist, the climate of the world at the time and being a part of the football club at the time. James speaks about the class of '69, his classmates and professors he had and gives his thoughts on what he would like preserved as the college moves forward.

**Gus Nolan (00:03):** Today is Wednesday the nineteenth of November 2008 and we're interviewing Jim Conroy in the Marist College library. Good afternoon Jim.

**James Conroy (00:13):** Good afternoon Gus.

**GN (00:15):** Jim I'd like to start by asking you a kind of background questions about your life. You don't have to give me dates but roughly speaking you know. Where were you born, where did you go to school, and the neighborhood that you grew up, so we get a kind of a childhood background before we move on to your college years.

**JC (00:40):** Sure, I was born in Troy, New York. When to Catholic schools, St. Paul the Apostle and Catholic Central High School in Troy till I graduated and applied to Marist along with three other high school senior friends of mine, Dan Fitzpatrick, Sean O'Neal, Don Jilisky

**GN (00:58):** Sean O'Neal, that's the early years.

**JC (01:00):** So, all three, all four of us attended Marist as freshman and we went on to all graduate.

**GN (01:11):** Let me come back to the early years in high school, what kind of a high school was it? Was it eight hundred, a thousand how big a school was it?

**JC (01:15):** No, we had two thousand boys and girls, it was a co-educational, five hundred per class and four years, four grades of high school. It was a very excellent school. We had good academics and very, very good athletics.

**GN (01:23):** I want to talk about athletics

**JC (01:24):** I played football, basketball, baseball.

**GN (01:26):** All three.

**JC (01:27):** All three.

**GN (01:29):** All through your high school years starting in your first year?

**JC (01:33):** Yes, that's right. I was probably the best at baseball. But next best would be

football, and then basketball. I came from a middle-class neighborhood, my father worked for The New York Telephone Company as a foreman, lineman, then a foreman. My mother didn't work until such time as I went to high school, because we had to pay a tuition. She went to work and it was quite, quite a change from the norm. But she felt that it was very important for me and my siblings to go to Catholic high school. And therefore, she took a job in order to pay the tuition.

**GN (02:32):** How about yourself, did you have opportunity to work in a high school or during the summers in those years?

**JC (02:40):** I always had a job doing something, whether it was shoveling snow or to delivering the newspaper, cutting lawns. One of the jobs I had was as a demolition crew for the city of Troy. Actually Dan Fitzpatrick, Don Jillisky and I worked as a single crew to demolish buildings the summer before we came to Marist, that was quite an experience.

**GN (03:12):** That's where you got your background for taking things apart.

**JC (03:16):** It was quite an experience we had a lot of good stories.

**GN (03:19):** How did the Marist name get into it, because we were not a big name in those years I am sure.

**JC (03:30):** No actually I was, I had taken my S.A.T.'s in junior then early in the senior year and frankly I bombed them the first time I took them. But Dan Fitzpatrick did very well and he applied to a number of schools including Providence and I think Holy Cross and couple of others. And had been accepted at those but then it was at the suggestion of a priest that we had as a guidance counselor at Catholic Central. Father... I Can't remember his name it will come to me, but he suggested that Dan look to Marist. Dan's father at the time was pretty sick and he didn't want to go too far away from home, so that was part of the reason for that. And he did, he came, here he applied, he got accepted. And then he brought the message of Marist back to us his

friends. We all applied and we got selected we got admitted. My mother says of that was the happiest she's ever seen me in my life, is the day I got the letter of acceptance from Marist. I went running through the house skipping and yelling and whooping and she said she's never seen me happier in my entire life.

**GN (04:31):** Do you think we can go and get that letter some place it will be archived of the family.

**JC (04:45):** I don't expect it's around anymore. It was probably the most important piece of paper up to that point I had ever seen.

**GN (04:50):** Yeah that made a difference for you, the next level.

**JC (05:07):** It sure did. That means a lot to me and my Marist experience means a great deal to me. In the fact that, I believe they gave, they took a chance on me. And I was the oldest, I was the first person in my family, both sides, to go to college. It had always been my parents' intention that I go to college. And it was a very, very important element in my life to go to school.

**GN (05:29):** Good, I want to get back to that little later. I want to focus on coming to Marist. What was the situation here, we were not yet coed were we?

**JC (05:39):** Oh no we were male only right. We had.

**GN (05:41):** one dormitory maybe.

**JC (05:43):** No, we Sheahan, Leo had just been completed and Champagnet was in the process of being finalized. I was brought in and we lived in the fifth floor of Leo. Arriving at Marist I had this big steamer trunk that my mother packed. I had to think I had everything.

**GN (06:01):** Somebody from Ireland had come from it perhaps years before whatever.

**JC (06:05):** Everybody else arrived at school with you know, a gym bag or a small valise and I came with a big steamer bag. And where were we.

**GN (06:15):** we were on the fifth floor of Leo.

**JC (06:19):** Brother LaPietra was the hall monitor and Eddy Pelkey was the student, the student in charge down at the end, he was a senior. And the school, our gymnasium was Adrian, the library was in the basement of the brother's residence I believe.

**GN (06:49):** And would still be in, what would it had been, I'm trying to think of the names of the place now, Fontaine move to Fontaine.

**JC (07:02):** We had mandatory study period, from seven until ten. Lights out at something like ten thirty. We had to wear a coat and tie to class. And we only had a maximum of three cuts from class. No booze on campus. No women. It was...

**GN (07:29):** like a seminary.

**JC (07:31):** like a seminary. We had the grotto. Then in my the beginning my, I think in the, right around Christmas time, Champagnet was opened up and that became our social place. That had a much bigger you know, we had, I think we used the cafeteria. But it had a hallway upstairs and some meeting rooms and the theater and other things like that.

**GN (08:08):** I want to talk about the academics, what were your courses? Were you involved in a major yet? What major did you have? Where did you go?

**JC (08:11):** I begin right out of the box as a history major.

**GN (08:14):** history.

**JC (08:15):** and stayed with it through the four years.

**GN (08:17):** Oh, you did. So looking back now, did you have Roscoe Balch as a teacher, instructor?

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**JC (08:25):** We all did.

**GN (08:26):** You all did, did you ever have Ed Cashin, Brother Cashin?

**JC (08:29):** yes I did, it was one of my favorite classes. I had Westward Expansion with Ed

Cashin and it was great and he gave me a mark on a paper that I did, it sounds like, “this sounds like a campaign speech.” But he still gave me a pretty good mark. But, and Jerry White, I had almost every one of Jerry White’s courses.

**GN (08:55):** They were told from the same vantage point. He would sit up and just tell what his story is. And it was all story I suspect because I've known him over the years as well.

**JC (09:09):** Little bit of fact thrown in, but he was always very entertaining and very thorough, very fair, matter of fact I noticed that Brother Cashin, they just dedicated a classroom to him, that’s wonderful.

**GN (09:25):** He was up recently, he has passed away but his wife was up and I had the good fortune to introduce them to each other. Because I was in college with his wife, in college Minnesota actually and then she came to NY, I said he should meet this fella. And she did and they married and lived thirty-five happy years. Staying with the school just a bit, do you have any remembrances of particular projects, or papers, or things that you did? Does that kind of ring a bell? In research in those areas.

**JC (10:03):** Yeah actually several, one had to do, I think it was a Cashin class. We went out into the community and did some research of various municipalities in the Hudson Valley and had to do a report on how the community got it’s start. What were the principal interests that settlement, who were involved, etc. do a little bit of historic research. And I did Lagrangeville here, just outside of Poughkeepsie and I went to the town hall did, interviewed some people and got a history of the town, prepared the report, submitted it. It was quite an interesting exercise.

**GN (10:48):** How, did you have a car, how did you manage transportation? The bus system here is not the greatest.

**JC (10:54):** No it isn't. This is before the N.C.A.A. Group Rules and Guidelines. I think I borrowed Ron Levine’s car. He had an old Valiant and I borrowed it and I drove out there. On

occasion other students had cars, so we begged, borrowed and stole cars to get around. By the way Lagrangeville is named after Lafayette's farm in France.

**GN (11:22):** Is that so? Some facts stay with you, All right.

**JC (11:27):** I also remember doing something for Bob Norman. We had a debate about the voting age. And at that time Vietnam of course was very much an influence in all our lives. And we talked about the voting age being lowered from twenty one to eighteen. And I took the pro position in the debate and someone else took the con and we had, that was a lot of fun. It really helped hone some instincts about debate and about issues and presentation and what not.

**GN (12:05):** Having what they call facts. You can have your opinion and do it you want your own opinion but there's only one set of facts. Any argument you know if you're young enough to be called to fight for your country can't you vote for it

**JC (12:18):** that's my point.

**GN (12:20):** Now all right that's a familiar road up in there. Ok moving on, and the major thrust of course Jim is to say something about your experience with the football and its development here. So let's maybe move to that area. What in your view now was the genesis, how did this come about, this football thing?

**JC (12:42):** My experience to it happened in a tour that Don Jillisky and I had done in the spring of sixty-five. We were getting ready to graduate had already been accepted at Marist. We were attending a tour here of the college to make our final decision. My decision frankly had already been made, but we came down and we were walking around the college with my mother and father. Don's father was a pilot in the Marine Corps and was in Vietnam at the time, so he came back to his hometown in Troy. And we brought him down to Marist with us to see the campus. So we're walking around and I saw these three enormous guys in football gear. It was John Eck, Jim Waters, and Pete Nestroke, whom I come to learn later on. They were going to the spring

practice. They were the three biggest football players I had ever seen, the three biggest guys. And I had always thought of coming to Marist and playing football, but when I saw these guys I actually, woah ho maybe they're out of my league. I was very impressed. And then we came back during the early summer, early fall and. I decided my dad didn't want me to go play football he wanted me to concentrate on my grades. So I went to practice once or twice, very hesitantly and Ronny Levine said well if you can't play that's OK, maybe you can punt so I became the team punter. And he said that way you can concentrate on your studies and you know you can do this for us. I said All right.

**GN (14:33):** The net is being thrown out, I see that.

**JC (14:35):** Actually, the hook was in the water and I was coming to take a good bite of it. And as it turned out, I was accepted and we made the trip. The first trip to see to Seton Hall, was our first game. We went down Seton Hall on a bus and pulling into the stadium and there was a big beer sign outside the stadium. People that are more familiar with that New Jersey sight.

**GN (15:01):** Now is this Marist first game?

**JC (15:03):** Marist very first football game.

**GN (15:05):** So the spring practice, that you saw, was those guys getting ready for what was going to happen in the fall.

**JC (15:13):** And then I came back as a student, freshman, I was very hesitant about playing. One thing led to another, and I became the punter. And just before we were to leave they didn't have a uniform for me, but one of the guys that had been on the team, the only African-American player was, decided he didn't want to play. So they took his uniform gave it to me, and I was Darnell... I can't remember the fellow's last name.

**GN (15:44):** That's the story about you had his number and you were going by his name, that's interesting.

**JC (15:49):** So, we made the trip to Seton Hall and in the first half we were getting clobbered around. And matter of fact, around our right end, they just seem to be able to run it, nobody was getting in the way. So, during half-time Ron Levine's dad, who also made a trip with the team and Johnson Ciccone who is an assistant coach at the time, came through the locker room and I think it was Mr. Levine said "can't anybody play defensive end?" So, I raise my hand sheepishly and said, well I played a little defensive end in high school. So he says OK, thirty-four, and he goes over and he tells Ronnie, "this kid over here says he's played, Darnell, over here said he's played some defensive end". So when the second half comes up and says OK, Conroy go in there Ronny knew my name, Conroy go in and play right defensive end. And the very first play I shivered the receiver knocked him on his keister and then went and tackled the quarterback causing a fumble, we recovered the ball on the one-yard line and scored a touchdown the next play. So, I was a hero. I played the rest of the game then I was part of the team. The first two years I played end, played largely a tight end position and a defensive end, I continued punting throughout the four years.

**GN (17:39):** This has bigger story then that, I mean your role in it at that time, who were the coaches and what was the staff like? I mean you're talking about a team that was in a very nebulous stage in their first season, you say and because there was very little, go back to what did we do last year there was no last year.

**JC (18:03):** There was no last year, everything was out of whole cloth.

**GN (18:07):** Who drove that, I mean was it Ron at the top of it or was it?

**JC (18:14):** No, there was a nucleus of players nucleus of, there were Bobby Finn and Dan Hickey, Mike

**GN (18:29):** Did Sean play football?

**JC (18:31):** No, Sean was the president of the Football League my senior year, football club.

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Bob Bailey was very, very instrumental in he became the president after Hickey and Bob Finn left. They passed it off to Bob Bailey. Bob Bailey, Mike Santimauro, Don Brown were all very much, the Kuffner brothers, were all very much involved in the organization.

**GN (19:09):** You mention a fellow Pete Nesteroke before, his brother, was he involved as well?

**JC (19:15):** No Greg was a rower. Pete played football. Listen Gus, we had a collection of players that first year that was just unbelievable. Tom Taylor who has been very good to the college as an alum. John Murphy, Jim Waters, as I mention Pete Nesteroke, John Eck.

**GN (19:40):** For the first season that was like three in three or something like that if I remember the history of it that. But also the, you had to fight upstream as it were, as much as there was no practice field yet, the schedule is not yet, what would be your home field, who would buy, who would make the rentals for this? How did this, the details of that, it seems to be so complex but it was simple because we just did it, it seems.

**JC (20:12):** That's exactly right. The just did. If you needed a bus, they called the bus company. If you needed uniforms, they got the uniforms through Father Driscoll who was the Chaplin here. He knew of a school I think in Ohio, that was doing away with football. So he made arrangements for Bailey and a couple of other fellas to drive a U-Haul van out to the school in Ohio, pick up the uniforms and bring them all back. We all painted the helmets, we did Bailey and Chris Kelly. Both decided they liked Alabama, they liked the University of Alabama, Crimson Tide. So we were red with the white stripes on the helmet and the numbers on the side. I don't know how we got the name Vikings. That probably just came out as somebody else associated with it, like the in professional football team the Vikings. So we were the Vikings. But the Vikings with no connection to the pro team, we had no purple or anything like that.

**GN (21:26):** Right. And the other issue here is that you are a club and not really a part of the NCAA college that's eventually going to get going.

**JC (21:35):** That's correct. And there was a network of club teams throughout the Northeast and a lot of schools that had at one time had football.

**GN (21:49):** Like Fordham used to have it then they dropped it and it became a club again, right? Did Manhattan do the same thing?

**JC (21:55):** Manhattan did the same thing.

**GN (21:56):** You have Seton Hall, how about Iona?

**JC (21:58):** Iona was another nemesis of ours as it were and was Sienna. You know there's a Catholic university, you know there's a whole network of those schools and then some other ones like the Adelphi, Albany State started out as a club program. Plattsburg begin a club program. So there were state universities also involved.

**GN (22:24):** Now how about the administration, did Linus Foy Put the brakes on this? Did he allow you to proceed with all due caution? Did you have to get insurances?

**JC (22:35):** Even before Foy there was Shea, Brother O'Shea, and we weren't among the best liked. And we also have always had a tussle with Howard Goldman, the athletic director who had a definite preference for soccer.

**GN (22:56):** That was his baby

**JC (22:58):** And if the football team threatened anything, facilities or we always had to compete with the soccer program for attention. As far as a practice field, we started out practicing in the space that was between the Donnelly parking lot and the soccer field. It was a distance of maybe sixty yards long, it's now the grassy area right to the north of the football field. That was our practice field. Do you remember the great Northeast blackout?

**GN (22:36):** I was going to ask you about this, wasn't that field well lighted?

**JC (22:40):** It was, I checked it before coming down here. I think it was that November ninth, in 1965, we were practicing and it started getting dark around five o'clock. So in preparation

Ronnie told Chris Kelly, Bob Bailey, Smokey McKiernan, who had some electricity experience as an electrician, I think that meant he plugged in lights, and Ed Hogan and a couple of others to rig up some lights so that we could continue practicing after dark. Well, they went about this elaborate thing, they got flood lights and spotlights and they put it up on poles and just as they were hanging last one up in a tree over the practice field, somebody said OK plug it in. And they plugged it in, it went on for a half second and then everything went black. And we were stunned, you know. We figured OK this is the lighting, is going to work. But then people began to notice that all the lights in Donnelly were out, all lights in the gas station across the street were out and the diner was out, and that was... but it didn't stop practice. What Ronnie then did, was have everybody get their cars ringing the practice area and turn on the headlights. So we continued the practice for about another hour.

**GN (25:14):** What was Ronnie's coaches, who came with him?

**JC (25:17):** There was Ira **Effron**.

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**GN (25:20):** He still alive I believe.

**JC (25:21):** Yes, he is, matter of fact, he was at the Iona game. He looks great too. He's from the Effron in family Poughkeepsie.

**GN (25:29):** Did he have football experience?

**JC (25:31):** Yeah, he played I think at the University of Vermont. And then John Ciccone who was more of a babysitter than a coach I think. I think John came along to help out and was a real

**GN (25:48):** Was a gopher guy who was able to get things there.

**JC (25:50):** A really good fella and we had a small backfield Coach. And I've been trying to remember his name, Skip. I know his first name was Skip, he was there for a couple of years.

**GN (26:07):** Not DeGilio?

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**JC (26:08):** No, I believe he's passed on, I think he died. And then our trainer was a boxer from

Poughkeepsie of not a great deal of success. He was only about five foot two. A black fella who had a cauliflower ear and a nose that look like it met every glove around

**GN (26:34):** He got dragged around a little bit.

**JC (26:35):** and his name was Julie, he was our trainer. He would do some taping and he always kept quarters in the ice bucket. And you know as typical for a boxer, if somebody starts getting a welt or something like that, they take the quarter out of the ice box and apply to the damage I and it's suppose to keep the swelling down. If we ever had a fight he was going to be the great trainer. I remember coming off one time and I had a bloody nose. And took my helmet off and blood is just gushing out the side of my nose and I didn't, I was going to go back in. But he shoved enough cotton into my nose I felt like I had stock in Johnson and Johnson. Oh man I can barely breathe.

**GN (27:27):** Now were these guys paid or was it all volunteer service?

**JC (27:30):** Most of it was volunteer, Ronnie I think took a stipend and a couple of others did.

**GN (27:36):** I heard his stipend, a thousand dollars a year.

**JC (27:39):** Yeah right, that winds up being about a dollar a day.

**GN (27:44):** But he just loved the game I understand. Now there's always this problem because as chair here I always had to deal with athletes and their schedules. Did you guys just work it out? I mean how do you get time to practice? I mean you no afternoon classes after three or some kind of deal was cut? Did that enter into your planning as it were?

**JC (28:07):** No Gus, it didn't I'm sorry to say.

**GN (28:12):** You weren't given very much help in that area.

**JC (28:15):** No it wasn't so much help, it was you know you're going to be playing football and you set up you course work accordingly. But there were no tutors, there were no special considerations with the exception of Bob Norman courses. Yes. Bob was very good to the

athletes.

**GN (28:34):** he's held in fond remembrances.

**JC (28:36):** He's my favorite.

**GN (28:39):** And now about travel, I think you made mention that when you needed a bus you called for it. Or you got cars or you got people you take you to wherever you were going. What's the furthest you ever went?

**JC (28:50):** We went to Catholic University.

**GN (28:52):** That's in Washington.

**JC (28:53):** In Washington, that was a heck of a trip, that was a great trip. We did that in sixty seven. And Chris Kelly's parents lived in Washington. So we went down the night before, we stayed in some hotel and then went to the game. We visited the church, the shrine and the cathedral prior to going to the game, which was very nice.

**GN (29:22):** Did it helped, did you win?

**JC (29:23):** Well we did win and I threw forty yard pass to Andy Herzing for a touchdown

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**GN (29:29):** Well there you go, that kind of moves into some of the singular things like great games that you would remember, you know and this is one of them. Was there any other time you threw a long pass?

**JC (29:45):** Oh yeah there's so many times, I'd bore you with it. There's the fog game against Manhattan.

**GN (29:52):** Talk about that.

**JC (29:53):** 1965 we were playing Manhattan.

**GN (29:55):** Where?

**JC (29:56):** Down at Riverview Field, which is our home field prior to moving to Leonidoff. And we went down to the field, many of the guys drove their cars down from campus. Down

there I think they had a couple of buses, but many of them got down to Riverview field. And when we got down there the fog, there started to be a fog coming in. Well by halftime the fog had completely engulfed the field. People in the stands couldn't see to the twenty yard line. And even on the field, people couldn't see much beyond ten yards, if that. Then the fog just kept coming in and getting denser and denser. By the end of the game, it was extremely difficult to see ten yards in front of you. We won the game, we beat Manhattan. And that was a great victory for a lot of the people that attended Marist because they had a natural rivalry with Manhattan. So all the guys from down in New York City area were really pleased about beating Manhattan.

**GN (31:00):** Well about that game, I was in Esopus and Bob Norman was calling it, as it were as best he could see it, which was not very good and we often wondered who won.

**JC (31:13):** We won, we won and it was it was a really good game and very fine game. We had a history of having bad situations with Manhattan. We went down against them the next year and played in what we call the "Dust Bowl." We played, no, I think was the year before or no, next year, yeah. We played at Gaelic park, right off the Manhattan College. And obviously they used the field, over and over and over again for Gaelic football. Because there was nothing there but dirt. And we played in that game and we beat them again. In fact we took back the Shaefer Trophy Cup, it's a big cup got to be about three feet tall and came back in the back of a car a little Triumph car. It took up the whole back seat of the Triumph. But we played a real good game there, very good game impressed lot of people.

**GN (32:14):** Was there much of a student following in that time? They would participate and back you? We weren't a big student body but there was.

**JC (32:25):** My wife to be drove down in the back of an Austin Healey. A very, Joe Kastrup's car, a very small convertible. And she wasn't sitting in the chair, she was in the back, both down and back. So, there was quite a bit. And there were people, also there's a subway line that runs

by there or overhead, an overhead line and people were even sitting up there watching the ballgame.

**GN (32:53):** So that's another major event on a positive side, things well. Moving to the present time, we've come a long way with football here

**JC (33:03):** There was one other football game I HAVE to tell you about.

**GN (33:06):** I want to hear about it.

**JC (33:07):** It was the only win we had in my senior year, 1968. By that time I had passed over the quarterback position to John Hurley he was taking over, and by that part of the year my arm was like a rubber band anyway. So, they put me at fullback and we had a real good game.

**GN (33:31):** Who was it against?

**JC (33:32):** It was against Niagara.

**GN (33:33):** Here?

**JC (33:35):** Here in Poughkeepsie at Leonidoff Field and I had a long run from scrimmage for a touchdown. And I also stopped an extra point play that sealed our victory and a couple of other things like that. It was a very good game, but the most important part of that was my daughter was born that night.

**GN (33:55):** Is that so.

**JC (33:56):** Yes, I left my wife Phyllis at home to go to the game, and my mother was there and two friends from high school. One is Chris Callahan who ran for state controller last year, he was there and they decided to stay with my wife.

**GN (34:17):** where were you living now?

**JC (34:18):** On Hooker Avenue

**GN (34:19):** Oh, you were here in town.

**JC (34:20):** In Poughkeepsie So we got married in our junior year. So, when I went to the game

and played the game and all and we won. I was being interviewed by Bob Norman and they're listening to the game of course, and my wife is having contractions. And she's yelling at the radio "Get home here, cause I've gotta go to hospital." Well, I went home, picked her up and brought her to the hospital. And as was the custom, everybody from the football game went down to the Brown Derby. And they had a pool going at the Brown Derby about whether or not my child would be a boy or girl, and what date, what time the child would be born. They had this pool going, I guess it amounted to quite bit of money. And when my daughter was born they said this is going to be, that the receptionist is going to be the happiest person the world because we were getting phone calls every two minutes asking if the baby has been born.

**GN (35:35):** born at St. Francis or Vassar?

**JC (35:37):** at St. Francis.

**GN (35:41):** All right moving fast as it were here because time is going to run out and there are a few things I really want to get to. I was saying that we seem to have come a long way since those days. And you must scratch your head when you go out to the stadium now and see what's there you know, vs. putting up lights in trees.

**JC (36:02):** We laid the sod for the first Leonidoff Field, the football players and the soccer players. The sod was delivered on you know, a flatbed truck and they unloaded them and then all of the players did it manually. So we actually laid that field, the original.

**GN (36:24):** I have another interesting story, we had a professor here, Dr Summer? His son Robert, when he was hired for a summer job, later on, we did the same thing for this field out here in front of Champagnet it was to guard the lawn, that people had just put down. For fears they would come and wrap it up and take it away. But no one would take your football field away, I know that you can be sure of that.

**JC (36:54):** There's a great story I'll tell you sometime about the Siena people who came down

and tried to trash our field before our last Siena game. And somehow they stopped someplace around here and what kind of talking about it and a Marist student overheard them. So the Marist student ran back to the campus, grabbed the whole mess of students. And they caught the Siena people as they were coming on campus and apparently they had a real good time with them.

**GN (37:27):** We're loving people by and large.

**JC (37:29):** Nobody was hurt.

**GN (37:31):** Very good, now a lot more practical thing, and I've heard some controversy, tell me what you think about the investment of multi-million dollar stadium for a college like Marist, is it a good investment?

**JC (37:48):** I think it's an absolute must, in order to be competitive with institutions of the caliber that Marist wants to compete for students, you have to provide a facility and a program that's going to attract top candidates. And providing a full schedule of extracurricular activities, like football and the full set of academic programs, is a necessity. When you're when you're competing you've got to have all the tools. And if you don't have them, you're competing at disadvantage. So I think it's an absolute must.

**GN (38:30):** All right it does get a certain flair for the place, I mean coming, I myself have a hard time believing it. Because I played here as a Brother, on kind of stony fields you know, and to see this kind of thing now.

**JC (38:48):** We wanted terribly to have some of the Brother students play with our football program and they were precluded from it.

**GN (38:54):** But they played soccer because Howie Goldman was able to work that one out. The related question though now, we went to San Diego I think in the beginning of the football season. Should we be doing this, is this a, I mean the investment of bringing a team across the country to play out there, what would you say would be the advantage of this kind of

competition?

**JC (39:26):** Well, that particular game I'm not sure is as productive as other games might be or other markets might be. If the school has an interest in developing a west coast connection or west coast presence or even familiarity on the west coast to recruit students, then maybe it serves a purpose. It doesn't help anybody to go out to a program and be there doormat. You know to constantly make a trip there or have them come here and lose a ballgame, doesn't particularly help. Might just as well find another school that you can be more competitive with in a market that you're trying to also influence.

**GN (40:14):** But that's an important point I guess, getting to a new market. People can't come to Marist if they don't know that it exists. High school kids who play football, who are not going to go to Notre Dame you know, might see an interest and come here. Cause we have good stadium and field that would be competitive.

**JC (40:35):** You see it in basketball now too, you know the schools will take on during the early part of the season, they'll take on competition that is above their, maybe is beyond them just to get exposure. And also, to have their players experience, better competition and a higher degree of involvement. You go to these stadiums and they have fifteen, twenty thousand people for a basketball game. It's good to have our kids exposed to that kind of stuff.

**GN (41:08):** Now on a larger plain, can you talk about the your college experience that you mentioned at the beginning, football and your life experience then. Do you see a correlation between, you have common friends I think that went through the whole of this thing? What else did you learn?

**JC (41:40):** It was so important to what I was, what I was at the time, you know, what I've become, it's really...

**GN (41:55):** Is there a discipline required in this too?

**JC (41:58):** Yeah, if anything among the regrets I wish I was more disciplined. If it weren't for the first semester first year where all those rules and regulations were gone in, were my **cume** actually had a decent result, I probably wouldn't have graduated. It was, the school went through changes, I went through changes, certainly I went from a single student to a married student by the end of my college career. So a great deal of personal changes and it was in the time of dramatic social and political change all around, so a lot of turmoil.

Commented [AP6]: 42:08

**GN (42:40):** You graduated in sixty eight?

**JC (42:42):** Sixty nine.

**GN (42:43):** Sixty nine. So that was the other conflict out there going on. Were you in service? Did you get...

**JC (42:49):** No, I didn't actually had an automobile accident here outside the campus, that gave me a 4F classification.

**GN (42:59):** I've talked to some people in this category, not only did they like college, but they didn't want to leave it because the options out there. Canada looked better and going drag and failing all the options, not to have to get involved in that kind of conflict you know as it was.

**JC (43:19):** We went we had a collection of, a full spectrum of people who would just as soon go to Canada. And people who are already, two my best friend's Don Jillisky and Tom Dowd who I played on the football team with, they graduated and went right into the Marine Corp. They had participated in the platoon leaders' class for two summers so they were commissioned officers upon graduation here. There had been I think five or six in the class before us that had done exactly the same thing, all graduated from Marist that the same time. And many of them wound up running trucks on Highway One in Vietnam for a couple of years. Jerry Smith who I had played football with, had a terrible incident in Vietnam, lost much if not all of the stomach being wounded. Murphy, John Murphy I think became a major in the Marine Corp. Several of

my classmates when in to the Navy, Paul Rinn became a Captain in the Navy. So, we really had, we had the full spectrum. I personally kind of, I feel this now, feel that I should have gone, the old thing my father, his father well it's my turn and my son wound up going to the Persian Gulf War.

**GN (44:56):** What about the other parts of your education, does history play a part in your career?

**JC (45:02):** Oh yeah.

**GN (45:03):** In what way?

**JC (45:04):** Absolutely, I really drew in part from Cashin and White, an appreciation that history isn't just something you read about it. It's taking place now, you know the things that are going on now are the history of tomorrow. And it's the history is being written by people who are living their lives, doing things, making decisions and it just permeates everything. So it's an appreciation that, sure we've got historical facts, we had people blood and sweat people making decisions, at the time whether they were right or wrong, or what they led to, can all be debated. But you know those same kinds of things are happening right now, right, will happen tomorrow and may have the same kind of impact that we had back then.

**GN (46:00):** That's an interesting focus. I mean you don't, you have to have studied a little bit to see the relationship between the past and the present and those.

**JC(46:09):** We're seeing it with Obama.

**GN (46:11):** I was going to say with the decisions that he's making.

**JC (46:13):** Thank God, somebody is finally taking a look at history and trying to learn from it.

**GN (46:18):** And I have read, The Rivals, the Team of Rivals, captivating story you know and you're seeing it now. Back to Marist, if you had to go to the Board of Trustees had that occasion for whatever reason, what would you like to tell them? Is there anything that you feel they should

know that perhaps they're not hearing, in terms of, well, the direction of the college? You know, should we increase it more, should there be other campuses, should there be? Of course finance has a lot to do with all of this.

**JC (47:05):** I was on

**GN (47:10):** Advisory board someplace?

**JC (47:11):** I was president of the Alumni. So as president of the Alumni you get to sit in on the Board of Directors and there are a couple of people that are my classmates or the year before me, who are on the Board of Directors.

**GN (47:27):** Do you know Dr. Doherty by the way?

**JC (47:29):** He lived with me after graduation for a year

**GN (47:32):** Enough said

**JC (47:36):** Yes we're very close, as a matter of fact I called him coming down I hope to have a cup of coffee with and afterwards. I am just awestruck in the progress of this school since my leaving and I put all of the success right at the feet of Dennis Murry. I think he's done, if somebody is going to be blamed if the things go wrong, and somebodies got to be praised when things are right. And what I see of Marist from a distance, no I don't see the nitty gritty of who gets what funds and who gets what promotion and how it worked out, but from the perception of an institution in today's market, in today's world, in the state of New York, Marist has done an exceptional job of growth and increase and prestige. And every time I tell people I'm from Marist oh it's a beautiful campus, or oh they have really come along, or oh that's a really good school. And I'm proud of my connection with the school and I'm very, very proud of the growth of the school, in both prestige and presence.

**GN (48:54):** Yeah, that was really possible because of the foundation I think, I mean you guys who was here in those years, gave it a certain spirit.

**JC (49:01):** We couldn't get in now. There was no way in God's green earth that I would be admitted to Marist now if I applied. If anything that's the thing that I fear maybe has gotten lost. I was a kid that as far as I could see, no one would take a chance on, and Marist did.

**GN (49:28):** And that made all the difference. Do you know, you must know Jack Eberth?

**JC (49:33):** Oh sure, he was a classmate of mine, he did the electricity workin my daughter's bedroom, the same daughter that was born at football game. By the time my wife got home from the hospital Jack had wired the new bedroom for the baby.

**GN (49:50):** All right, but that's before his senior year cause at the end of his senior year he got called into service. Even though he should have been exempt cause he was in college you know, and wait till graduation.

**JC (50:01):** By that time they were going by the birth dates.

**GN (50:04):** Yeah right and pulling them he was from Long Island and just pulled his number. There was a name for that, some kind of lottery system.

**JC (50:13):** Yeah it was a draft lottery.

**GN (50:15):** Upon which was gone.

**JC (50:16):** My number was right in the middle.

**GN (50:19):** What do you see for the future of Marist? Let me put some ideas that you might reflect on, like distance education, taking courses at home like, is that more for graduate school kind of things? Do you think your children or your grandchildren, you'd want them to have a campus experience.

**JC (50:44):** Absolutely to come here. Oh yeah I can't imagine anybody getting a degree at distance, distance learning. Those people in fifth floor Leo, you know, if Sean and I and Doc Doherty were sitting here we could name every one of those people who was on the floor. And everyone by room, who the roommate was, whether they graduated or whether they left early. It

was incredible and living with people like LaPietra who was closest to a saint as I can, I think I've ever met.

**GN (51:28):** More then you know because I am a good friend of his and his physical condition now has deteriorated now he can't get up, you know every moment his wife has to be there. But the head is sharp and he's attitude is so positive and I think he is a wonderful person to have known in his youth because he had such flare for language and actions and doing things you know.

**JC (51:54):** And that 5<sup>th</sup> floor Leo he was really something. He gave me my nickname.

**GN (51:59):** Which is?

**JC (52:00):** He came into, I was away and this is the first year of football, I was away and we didn't have a gymnasium to change, we didn't have a locker room we changed in our rooms. And put on our football gear , walked to the football field practiced, came back took our football gear off and showered in a dorm.

**GN (52:20):** Wait a minute now, I thought you had the honey house?

**JC (52:22):** No, that came later, I was still a freshman the first year I was in 5th floor Leo and the next year we had the bee house. And Brother LaPietra came through and my roommate was Don Jillisky, so he knocked on the door and just doing rounds or whatever and opened up the door and saw all my football gear just piled in a pile and said "Where is Pig-Pen?" My nickname was born, so for the next four years I was "Pig-Pen."

**GN (52:59):** Well, he wouldn't be happy that got out but I will quickly erase that from the script here and not allow that to go through.

**JC (53:10):** another LaPietraism, when he got upset with us on the 5th floor Leo and he said the air will turn blue with electricity, I'm so upset and we all looked at each other and said is that possible, a chemist would know that.

**GN (53:29):** What was most helpful in your experience here? This has been such an uplifting positive thing, but certainly you had trying times. And what helped you through that? Were people like LaPietra, counselors too or Father Driscoll? Was he

**JC (53:50):** No.

**GN (53:51):** We don't want to go there.

**JC (53:53):** He was a good man but he'd walk through the campus saying I didn't see you at mass this Sunday.

**GN (53:58):** Yes, he wanted the brothers to get you out, we said that's not our duty here. Eventually I come to Leo, I become the Proctor at Leo in seventy.

**JC (54:11):** Brother Rancourt was on the 4th floor and then the first floor had all the returning Vietnam vets and the transfer students, that was a place where we never went.

**GN (54:25):** Did Brother Rancourt ever play for you and your family or parties or anything? He's a terrific pianist, that's he's actually a classmate of mine. So that was back from 1946 I guess is Esopus high school boys. Well get down to the last four minutes or so and what I'd like if anything that we did not talk about that you think would be fitting to tag on to this I'd like to hear.

**JC (54:56):** Sure you know our class, Class 1969 had such a comradery. And it has continued though out our lives. If you take a look at the giving for the Alumni ours is routinely number one. I think with almost the forty years that we have been out we have been number one and that's not an accident, something happened at that time, in this place, that solidified a bunch of young men. And I think it was, it's very important to understand what that was and try to put it in the bottle and drink from every once in a while.

**GN (55:41):** But you can't, there's a certain spirit I suppose of it. Do you remember graduation?

**JC (55:46):** Yeah I do, we had the speaker, I didn't actually graduate, I'd failed my last semester

in Spanish from Mr. Lama. So, I had to go to summer school that was a big disappointment, but nonetheless I got my degree in September. After I took the summer school Spanish at Mount Saint Mary. Yeah but Howard Goodell, the person that was the Senator appointed after Bobby Kennedy was killed, he was our speaker that year. Made a very strong statement against the war and then Tom Douglas commissioned in his white uniform right after.

**GN (56:34):** Rinn too, goes to service. That spirit that has led to the giving has been widespread, I mean there's several givings, there's giving of time, there's giving of money, giving of advice. So these guys have kind of set a nice pace of things for this, to be a thing that we're enjoying now. So I don't want to just belabor this two minutes left my tape is running on here. I just want to say it's been such a joy for me to get the opportunity to meet you like this and to hear your story. And I know that it will be preserved it will be transcribed and eventually you can see the script when you want some of it we might delete.

**JC (57:27):** Maybe my kids will find it interesting.

**GN (57:31):** It will come in two form to get the verbal form and we get the actual.

**JC (57:35):** This is history.

**GN (57:36):** Yeah, this is back to where you were, this is history being made. So without further ado thanks so much Jim.

**JC (57:42):** Thank you Gus, it's been a real pleasure.