

Richard LaPietra

**Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
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Transcript - Richard LaPietra

Interviewee: Richard LaPietra

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Summary: Richard LaPietra reflects on his time at Marist. As a student, he helped build the Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel. As a professor, served as an inspirational mentor and advisor to thousands of students of all ages. As academic dean, he provided leadership for faculty and set a high standard for all to meet.

00:15 **Gus Nolan:** Good morning Richard.

00:16 **Richard LaPietra:** Good morning.

00:18 **GN:** Richard, what is your full name?

00:19 **RL:** I was baptized, Joseph Richard, LaPietra of course. At confirmation I took the name John and from that point on I used Joseph John. When I entered the order, I became Brother Richard Andrew. When I left the order, so many people knew me as Richard, that I took my original name again, Joseph Richard, except I took it as J. Richard LaPietra, as I am now known.

00:53 **GN:** Were you named after another member of the family?

00:55 **RL:** My father. Joseph, after my father's, father. It was traditional in Italian families; first male child after father's, father, second male child after mother's father. First female child, after father's mother, and second female child after mother's mother. Then after that, they were free with the fifth child to choose a name.

01:21 **GN:** Of their own liking. Where were you born and when?

01:25 **RL:** In Manhattan, in nineteen thirty-two, east side, around the thirties; where Kip's Bay is now.

01:37 **GN:** Do you have any siblings, what are their names?

01:39 **RL:** Brother and sister; Frank, after my mother's father, and Cecilia Marie; they must have known she was going to be the last one, because her names are a combination of father's mother and mother's mother.

01:56 **GN:** Could you give us a short summary of your brother and sister now; what are they doing and how is life been to them?

02:04 **RL:** Well, my brother went to Iona College and then to St. John's University. He graduated from Iona and started working for Charles Pfizer, a pharmaceuticals. He took his Master's Degree at St. John's part time, while working for Charles Pfizer. He worked for Charles Pfizer all his life and retired about a year or two ago. At that time, he was the director of their manufacturing plant in Kansas City, Missouri. The specialty there is animal pharmaceuticals. So he retired now. My sister is a Dominican Nun as you know, and she, her professional training is as a biologist and a chemist but also is trained as a chemist. She's had various careers with the Dominican Sisters; she taught in elementary school, in high school. She was Campus Minister at Mount Saint Michael's for a number of years, and right now she's Parish Minister, but she also has a special Apostolate toward; in Rockland County, toward migrant workers and she runs a program which she founded, called One to One Learning; which is designed to teach them to speak English and also to learn the American Culture and ultimately to achieve citizenship.

03:42 **GN:** Would you say a few words about your mother and father; their names and what did your father do and your mother?

03:48 **RL:** My father, Richard LaPietra, was born in Bari, Italy, in nineteen hundred and one. He came to the United States when he was eight years old, so he was trained, I mean he went to school in America and he spoke English with no accent

at all; as compared to his older brothers and sisters, he was the youngest in his family. As was the custom in those days, he graduated from elementary school and went to work. He was in the dress making industry; he died in nineteen fifty-one, of Hodgkin's disease, when I was seventeen. My mother was born in a little town called Torre del Greco, which is a little suburb of Naples, Italy in nineteen hundred and six. She was the next youngest in her family. She came with her family to this country when she was four; they settled in Italian Harlem, east side Manhattan around One Hundred and Sixteenth Street where the church of, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, where they have the annual feast on July sixteenth. She was a home maker all her life. She only died recently at the age of ninety-five.

05:20 **GN:** Will you tell us something about the neighborhood that you grew up in and you're remembrances of it now and your elementary school?

05:28 **RL:** It was on the White Plains Road line, the stop was One Hundred Sixty Third Street and Intervale Avenue. I lived on 1060 Kelly Street, which is famous for having also been the place where Colin Powell was raised, except we were on one side of the subway tracks and he was on the other side of the subway tracks. Our block was a continuous façade of buildings that were either three or four stories tall. Most of them housed maybe thirty families. You can imagine how many children there were in that block of buildings. There was never a problem of finding people to play with, and as a result, one was very stratified in terms of who one would play with; in other words you played with people your own age and maybe a year older or younger, but you wouldn't play around with the younger kids, and the older kids wouldn't

let you play around with them, but that specialization was possible because there must have been hundreds of children. I walked to St. John's Chrystom School for my elementary education with the Dominican Sisters and when I graduated from there, I went to Mount Saint Michael Academy in the North Bronx, which was run by the Marist Brothers.

06:59 **GN:** How did you get to Mount Saint Michael's?

07:00 **RL:** On the subway.

07:03 **GN:** Were you a scholarship student?

07:05 **RL:** I was. I had a full scholarship to Mount Saint Michael. I would never have gone there, I, we couldn't afford to go there, other than that, and the tuition then was only fifth-teen dollars a month but that was a princely sum.

07:26 **GN:** Okay, move on from Mount Saint Michael; when did the thought of joining the Marist Brothers hit you and how did you react to that?

07:34 **RL:** Probably at the end of my freshman year, and it probably was provoked by the visit of the Holy Rober, Brother Aidan Francis. But, the fact of the matter is, that it wasn't too long, when I was in school, in high school with the Marist Brothers that I really came to admire them. As a little kid, I used to play school; I had a chalkboard, and I would drag home younger kids to be the students and I was the teacher and I was at the blackboard. When I was in elementary school, when I was in the fourth grade, in Four A, the nun in Three D, became ill and I ran that class for weeks. I still remember, I taught them about the Lincoln Highway; that was one of the things I taught and of course a lot of it was just minding them, but anyway, a schoolteacher gene was in my blood. I had wanted

to go to Esopus in my sophomore year, but my mother said, "No, you have to wait until you graduate from high school and you will know your mind better." So, that's what I did; I waited. When I graduated from the Mount, I went to the Brothers Novitiate in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts; in nineteen forty-nine.

09:10 **GN:** Okay, let's move on, when did you come to Marist College or was it Marian College in those days?

09:16 **RL:** Yes, well the novitiate lasted two years and I arrived in Poughkeepsie in late August of nineteen fifty-one. Not to begin my college career, because my college career had begun in Tyngsboro. Since I had graduated from high school, I was different from a small group, different from most of the postulants because they had been in their junior year in Esopus and had one more year of high school to do in their first year of the novitiate. Those of us who had already graduated from high school did our first year of college, and I came here to begin my second year of college and hopefully to complete it.

10:06 **GN:** Could you briefly describe the life of a young brother here at Marian College in those years?

10:12 **RL:** Busy. Your time was always spoken for, from five thirty a.m. when the bell rang, allowed you twenty minutes to get to the chapel at five fifty for the beginning of morning prayers, meditation, Mass and recitation of the office. Then we had breakfast and then we had employments. Employments were like thirty minutes of work, mostly housework. Some people washed the breakfast dishes, some cleaned the toilets, some did dusting, all the things that a housewife normally has to do. By eight o'clock we were ready for classes and then for lunch

and prayers and in the afternoon, more classes until maybe about three thirty when we had about an hour and a half of recreation. On Wednesday's we had work, Sunday's we had longer recreation. We had more prayers and then dinner, and then a short recreation after dinner, and study and to bed by about nine o'clock.

11:32 **GN:** Can you expand on that word recreation? How was recreation seen and used in those days?

11:40 **RL:** Well, there was outdoor recreation where there are all manor sports, indoor recreation; I tried to describe it before, talking to one another, playing cards, games. There were a number of pianos in Tyngsboro, in the learning rooms; and if you wished, Brother Aloyisus Mary would teach you the rudiments of piano playing, which I did. It never went beyond that. We had league games as well, in other words we were organized into softball teams, or touch football teams.

12:25 **GN:** Basketball teams?

12:26 **RL:** Basketball teams. Because of Tyngsboro, we had a great ice-skating pond and there was also a quarry which had filled with water, it's a beautiful setting; steep stone sides and then this big pool of beautiful water. It was very refreshing in the summertime.

12:50 **GN:** There's another word that's used occasionally talking about the Marist Brothers; key, what was your key, and what is a key?

12:59 **RL:** A key was a job that you had on a permanent basis and it was like your specialty. For instance your key was to be the barber, and my guess is that over several years you were always the barber. My key was to be the librarian;

because when we were at Tyngsboro, Kenny Vogtel and I were put in charge of the library, which was a room about eight by ten. (Laughter) Books along the walls and our reputation apparently spread far and wide, so when we came here, to a college library we were both assigned to Brother Cyril Robert as the assistant librarians; that was our key. My bones are in this building in a way. (Laughter)

14:06 **GN:** Yes, you can come here as an employee at any time and use your skills of the past. Move on to your graduating class from college; how many were in that, what did the brothers become; do you know of any of their careers, subsequently? You can just summarize that briefly; how many were there?

14:27 **RL:** Well, there were about fifty, give or take a few. It was a polyglot class, because in addition to Americans, there were Chinese Brothers, Brazilian Brothers, Spaniards, Canadians, that's about it. Well, most of them went on to become teachers, which was the mission really of the Marist Brothers. Subsequently, some left the order and many of them who left; stayed in education. Even those who didn't stay in education; a lot of them went into the helping professions as well. I guess there was that gene, (Laughter) and it's somewhat determined by that.

15:27 **GN:** Ok, let's move on to the teaching profession. Where did you teach first and what was that like?

15:31 **RL:** I taught in Saint Helena High School for two years.

15:35 **GN:** Which is where?

15:37 **RL:** It's in the Bronx, on the way to the White Stone Bridge. My first assignment; the way classes were assigned, older brothers had some priority and

then the younger brothers picked up all the pieces.

16:00 **GN:** What was your major in college?

16:04 **RL:** My major in college was Spanish, because in those days, the full panoply

Of majors was not offered because there were only fifty students in a class. The majors that were offered, were fields where it was anticipated there would be need for teachers in our various schools. Since I enjoyed Latin in high school, I chose to major in Spanish. I graduated with my baccalaureate degree in Spanish and my first teaching assignment included one Spanish class, two general science classes a religion class, a plain geometry class and a typing class. Now I had never taken typing formally, I had taught myself in one of those little rooms that had pianos, there were also little rooms that had typewriters. (Laughter) So, I didn't know how to teach typing, but I knew that it was very important that the students have confidence in me. So I practiced very hard, "now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country" and before the students arrived in the class, I sat at the front desk and as they filed into the room I typed with perfect rhythm, and I threw the carriage across, with great aplomb, and I waited until they were all seated and I continued doing that for a full two minutes. You can imagine what a long time that was, and then finally, I looked up at them and said, "Gentlemen, you will be typing this way at the end of the year." That was it. (Laughter)

Actually, there was a brother there, Brother Paul Michael, who was trained to teach typing, so I used to take a page from his notebook every day.

17:50 **GN:** Ok, when did the interest to study chemistry come to you?

17:56 **RL:** Oh, that happened in high school. That was what I really wanted to study, and in fact Brother Adrian August, when I was in the first year of college here, he would let me leave the class because it was so routine and let me go down to the chemistry laboratory and do things. Then, when I graduated, I went to St. Helena's, I guess this was, this was now nineteen fifty-four, I think they were already aware that they were going to expand the college and that would require a science department among other things, so while I was at St. Helena's, I was allowed to go to Fordham in the afternoons and also in the summers; to do all the undergraduate courses that would normally be had in an undergraduate major in chemistry. By the time I finished my second year at St. Helena's, I had the equivalent of a Bachelor's Degree in chemistry courses. I was ready for their next plan, which was to send me to the university to do a PHD in Chemistry. So, after two years at St. Helena's, by nineteen fifty-six, Andy Molloy, Joe Greg and I, went down to Catholic University to begin our doctoral studies. Two of us in chemistry and Joe Greg in business. (Actually physics)

19:41 **GN:** Could you describe the life at Catholic University; both the academic and the non academic, what were you asked to do?

19:49 **RL:** Well, I mean academic side of the house we were neophytes. We had colleagues in our classes, Jesuits, who had a full blown house of studies, there must have been thirty men in that house, maybe forty, who were studying for their degrees, and there was a tradition in that house, of excellence certainly, and the older men helped the younger men and they had files and files of old exams. We arrived on the scene with none of that and we really didn't know which courses to

take, I mean some how or other, we were guided by somebody. We started off very naively, none the less we caught on as fast as we could. By the second year, the Brother Superiors had decided that we should earn our keep, and so we became proctors in the dorms there. That was interesting, because the dorms were in some sort of chaos and we were like the Marines arriving on the beach to restore order. The natives were not happy with the Marines and they were very straight with their displeasure by all sorts of pranks at night, including the explosion of fire crackers in different settings. (Laughter) In fact, one night, on my floor, one kid managed what was almost impossible; he flushed a cherry bomb down the toilet in just the right coordination of time, it blew the whole toilet apart. I mean if the timing is not right, the fuse gets wet and off it goes. As much as I was after this kid, to penalize him, I had to admire his timing. (Laughter) So, where is this question going?

21:54 **GN:** Well, we're talking about the non academic responsibilities at the university. You were in charge of the dormitories?

22:02 **RL:** Yes, we were. After the first year, it was clear what we wanted.

22:09 **GN:** The Marines had landed, and the natives had settled.

22:13 **RL:** And then they also found that we were fair.

22:19 **GN:** What's the general characteristic of those students, are they all Americans are they from foreign countries and what might be said about them?

22:25 **RL:** Well, mostly Americans from all over the country, because the Catholic University has a national reputation. A lot of South Americans, a large proportion of South Americans and very wealthy South Americans.

22:39 **GN:** Did you have to use your Spanish in any way?

22:47 **RL:** No, no, they could speak English quite well.

22:50 **GN:** How long were you at Catholic University?

22:56 **RL:** It took me four years to complete the doctorate, and then they were not ready for me here so I stayed another year on the faculty as an instructor in Chemistry and then after that year, they were ready for me here. That was in nineteen sixty-one.

23:14 **GN:** Ok, let's talk about coming here.

23:16 **RL:** I came here in nineteen sixty-one and was appointed to the Chemistry Department. There was a rumor that these new neophytes from Catholic University who had experience as proctors in the dorms, would be appointed to the dorms; and I remember when Brother Richard McCarthy, who was the Director and who assigned jobs came up to me and said, "Joe," because he knew me at Mount Saint Michael, he had been a teacher of mine, he said, "You're going to be in the dorms." My heart sank. In addition to being a full time teacher, I was also a proctor on the fifth floor, well first, I was a proctor in Donnelly Hall, on the lower level, second year in Donnelly Hall on the upper level, and then the third year, Leo Hall was built and I was assigned to be a proctor on the fifth floor. So, I served as a proctor in the dorms, from nineteen sixty-one when I arrived to nineteen sixty-seven, at which time I and four other colleagues were assigned to be the Directors of the Student Brother Community. That would be from nineteen sixty-seven to nineteen sixty-nine, all the while serving as full time members of the faculty.

24:51 **GN:** Ok, what were the courses you taught and what other faculty responsibilities you might have had in those days?

24:59 **RL:** Well, I taught general chemistry with a laboratory and since my training was as a physical chemist, I taught physical chemistry in the laboratory; Andy taught organic and we had an IBMer who taught analytical chemistry. The curriculum was kind of sparse at the beginning, but we had, we taught all the basic courses. It was also a college to be built. The college had gone public if you will in fifty-seven or fifty-eight, when Linus Foy came as President. The first non Marist Brothers students were brought on board. By nineteen sixty-one, when I arrived, I would say the student population was about two hundred and fifty. The number of faculty members was a dozen, dozen and a half; mostly Marist Brothers. The tradition of the Marist Brothers has been in high schools, so they knew how to run high schools, but they didn't know very much about running a college. At the beginning, the model was kind of a monastic model, in other words there were two centers of power if you will; there was Brother Linus Foy who was the President, but there was also the Director of the Community, who was Brother Richard McCarthy, and how your services were disposed, had to be negotiated between the two of them. Then, once you were appointed, you did what your job was, there was no governance in the college. There was no faculty senate or faculty policy committee or anything of that sort, but Linus, to his credit knew that we needed to do all that. So we needed to grow into the college scene. It was he who was instrumental in requiring the faculty to develop its own governance even though it would be easier if you didn't have to worry about that.

So, a lot of my early years were spent on; I was on the first committee that was called upon to design the governance of the college. That committee included; Roscoe Baluch, Don Dennen, Dan Kirk, I forget who the other person was, and myself. I was the youngest.

27:44 **GN:** Was George Sommer in that group?

27:47 **RL:** Yes, George was in it. We spent a whole year, maybe two and then brought the plan to the faculty and it was approved. That was the origin of the two committees, what is now the Faculty Affairs Committee, started off as the Faculty Policy Committee and what is now the Academic Affairs Committee, started off as the Academic Policy, so that's where these two responsibilities of faculty were defined and in a sense solidified. So, there was a lot of work to be done in organizing the college, including the departments. Natural Sciences was the first grouping of departments that decided to form a division, voluntarily. After that, there was some pressure to do it on the others, but we had done it voluntarily before that. These divisions eventually became the current schools. In other words, I had like a three fold life, teaching, serving to organize the college and the governance of the college, and also serving in the dorms.

28:21 **GN:** When did life change for you in this that you thought about going into administration? What was the genesis for the application for the Dean position?

29:36 **RL:** Well, I didn't apply for it; my name was put in and there was a committee, a search committee. When all the dust had settled, I was the choice of the search committee. So, the president came and asked me if I would serve.

30:12 **GN:** What year was that?

30:14 **RL:** That was, in nineteen sixty-nine.

30:17 **GN:** Sixty-nine and you were to be Dean for the next six years?

30:20 **RL:** Well as you know, in the Marist Brothers, there is a custom, it is even codified, that many of these positions of responsibilities in the Brotherhood, were for periods of three years. Directors serve for three years and so on, and so I said to the president, "Well, I would like to serve in terms of three years, renewable if desired," so I served for two terms. At the end of two, I knew that I wasn't as happy in administration as I was when I taught. That's when I, at the beginning of that sixth year, I told Linus that I was not going to serve the next term.

31:07 **GN:** You had two associates working with you; Professor Carolyn and Professor Cox, what was the genesis of their roles? Did you create those or?

31:17 **RL:** Yes.

31:19 **IGN:** For what reason?

31:23 **RL:** I had to take all my responsibilities and figure how to manage them and Kevin had the job of dealing with academic services. All the offices that provide service to the faculty, like the registrar's office and the library, all these functions that help the academic process to go, were his responsibility. Gerry Cox was the assistant of the Associate Dean for Student Academic Affairs. Quite obviously there was some concern for how things were going for the students. My role was to deal essentially with the faculty and the departments; all those policy committees that I had helped to develop; and to coordinate their work with mine; that's how we organized ourselves.

32:29 **GN:** Let's just change the pace a little bit and talk about some other things.

32:33 **RL:** I want to say one other thing though. Once I had accepted the position, Linus, who must have known me very well said; oh and by the way, I have to tell you that he is so far from micro managing because he gave me my head and he said, "You can always talk to me about what's going on, but you are going to have to make the decisions." I appreciated that. He said to me, "Any job, whatever time it takes to complete the job, ninety percent, it will take an equal amount of time to complete the next nine percent, and an equal amount of time to complete the next nine tenths a percent. If you are going to try to do a job one hundred percent, you are never going to get anything done." Which I felt was very, good advice, especially for me.

33:35 **GN:** That's an interesting question that emerges now, and that is the relationship between the office of the president and the office of the Dean. Did you meet on any kind of a regular basis, was there an understanding about how budget would go, or faculty lines, or, how, what was the spirit of interaction?

34:03 **RL:** It was not fully formalized; it was kind of on the basis of communication on demand or when necessary; in other words, when something had to be done, or talked about, I had full access to him, plus he had access to me. There were a number of cyclical things that needed to be done so the planning of the budget was one of them. A lot of that was already in place when I became dean; I guess in the very beginning, Linus had made a clear objective to have good financial administration and he had a head for it. Sometimes I would be getting myself into a pickle and I would have to get myself out of it. (Laughter) There were two big things; one was the academic schedule, he who goes into tampering with the

academic schedule, buys himself hell. You know what's interesting? There are some conversations going on now about changing the academic schedule. The very things that people at that time were saying, lead to dire consequences are now in fact, part of the schedule, and the changes would bring us back to what it was like. And people are really funny.

36:00 **GN:** What really are you talking about? Are you talking about the time table of schedules?

36:03 **RL:** The classes are we going to have seventy-five minute classes, or fifty minute classes, have they separated by fifth teen minutes or ten minutes? You know, all those little details.

36:12 **GN:** All right, we're not talking about core?

36:15 **RL:** No, no, core is another story.

36:18 **GN:** Ok, what do you think...

36:20 **RL:** Oh, and the other thing is space. Space allocations; anybody who accepts that job is also buying trouble, and that was Kevin, Kevin Carolan

36:32 **GN:** He was a space commander if I remember correctly.

36:36 **RL:** We used to call him a space cadet, that's right. (Laughter)

36:42 **GN:** What would you say in retrospect were two or three of your happiest accomplishments as the dean?

36:51 **RL:** I don't know, I've never really thought about it that way. We began the

graduate program during that time, but that wasn't really my accomplishment, it came out of the faculty. I did what I needed to do to help it happen.

37:25 **GN:** Were there not some other decisions on maybe policies, promotions or tenure and requirements that became a little better defined?

37:34 **RL:** Yes, as time went along we found areas where there were lacunae that needed to be filled in, we did those kinds of things. I guess the college ran, reasonably well and that seems to have been what I was supposed to do.

37:55 **GN:** Ok, some things now about your personal life. When did you marry Barbara, and where?

38:01 **RL:** August 7, of seventy-six in the chapel.

38:10 **GN:** At Marist College?

38:11 **RL:** At Marist College.

38:14 **GN:** What are some of your particular interests outside of the academic area?

38:21 **RL:** I love to read, and I enjoy films, I'm fascinated with trains.

38:33 **GN:** Let me ask you the question another way. How much time do you spend in cooking?

38:36 **RL:** Well, I was getting to that. (Laughter) I love to cook. In fact, when I was the Dean, I lived, you may recall, at Eden Terrace with nine brothers, well some were faculty; light other brothers, and during the school year we had a regular cook; but during the summer time, the cooks had the summer off and I used to do the cooking for the family of nine people. It was very relaxing because I would come home from work with all these problems in my mind, and as soon as I started working; just planning a meal and executing it, it just takes your mind off

everything else. It was superb therapy I would recommend it to anybody who brings their job home with them.

39:47 **GN:** You had a sabbatical after your tenure as Dean, did you not?

39:51 **RL:** That is correct.

39:53 **GN:** During that time or after, did you ever consider teaching at another institution?

39:58 **RL:** No, never. Not then or any other time really.

40:04 **GN:** Ok.

40:06 **RL:** Which is kind of understandable in terms of the way it all grew. I felt like I was part of the furniture here; I would feel uprooted if I left here. Why would I want to go anyplace else but here? I was happy here.

40:28 **GN:** Entirely different subject. You were responsible for creating or bringing to pass, the Marist song the Marist hymn. What was the genesis of that?

40:41 **RL:** The genesis of that was Dorothy Ann Davis; who said, "We should have a song." She said, "How would you like to write the words for it?" She had thought that, well, she had run several different tunes by me, and that particular one, which I think seemed to have the right kind of feel and then I wrote the words.

41:14 **GN:** You've seen a good number of changes at Marist. One of them had to do with the coming of co-eds on campus. What impact do you think that's had?

41:26 **RL:** Well it's made the college a more natural place; because you have the interaction of the two sexes which is what the world is like. To have an institution that is segregated by sex is, I suppose, it has its advocates, but seems

to me, it created a more normal environment. Certainly the classroom became a more natural setting because you had different view points. You had another whole set of view points coming in from women students. As time developed, it turned out that some of our best students in chemistry were women. I think when women came, academics improved as well. I'm sure from the view point of the boys, the social scene improved tremendously.

42:38 **GN:** Now Marist has grown a hundred fold, since the beginning of your coming here. There are plus' and minus' with that, what would you say are some of each?

42:52 **RL:** The most fundamental one, I think; is that kind of closeness that we had when we were small. You lose that, it's inevitable. No matter what you try. We were all in Donnelly Hall, the whole school. You saw everybody as you walked down the hallway. It was a mix of faculty and administrators; so you saw the registrar and the business officer, but you also saw the art teachers and the English Department. You knew what was going on, and you knew everybody. Now, we're spread so far apart physically, and the opportunities that we have to see each other are reduced; and at the same time, who can manage to know everybody when the faculty is as large as it is. Faculty of forty is one thing; faculty of one hundred eighty is another thing. Actually, that price was paid for strength. Academic strength and diversity. Even though I don't know everything that's going on, when I catch a flavor of it; I know there's great stuff happening all over the place. The materials, even in the library; that would suggest what faculty

members are doing. It gives you the sense of the accomplishments and with that comes reputation, and with that comes academic excellence. You pay that price.

44:37 **GN:** In the structures that went up on campus, no doubt the library is the major one in your life-time here. Would you point to some others that have had significant impact, would it be the McCann Center, or Lowell Thomas, or the change in the dormitories, the north end? How do you see the growth physically?

45:05 **RL:** Well, I would say that there is a sense of proportion between the Library and the McCann Center; and you might say, what do you mean by that? The McCann Center, like the Library, was like a dream that was always out there. Class after class would talk about it and they would graduate without it; and then suddenly it happened. I think the Library was the same thing. In other words, talk about the new Library was always out there, we knew that when we had it that it would be such a great accomplishment. Class after class graduated without it, and then suddenly it came to pass. I don't think any of the other buildings had that kind of impact. Lowell Thomas Building was just adding more classrooms and faculty office space. That was all well and good; we needed it, but it didn't have the dramatic impact of these other two buildings.

46:18 **GN:** You've known three presidents; Brother Paul, Linus Foy, and Dennis Murray. Can you briefly comment on the characteristics of each in terms of their leadership and their impression, and growth of the college?

46:35 **RL:** Well, I'd say Paul Ambrose, was a dreamer who could not be stopped. He put his mind to creating this college. I mean he was just about the single force. If you think of those days, in the beginnings of college, there was nobody else that

you can hold up in any way near him. So he's a founder in the true sense. It owed to his, well, he's like an irresistible force; and sooner or later he gets what he wants done. By hook or by crook, I'd say that, but not in the little sense.

(Laughter) Linus, I think Linus' contribution; I would see as two fold. He had the right sense of proportion. He knew that the most important thing was the academic reputation of the college. It was very important to him, even at a time when we didn't have a lot of money to hire the best faculty he could find; and then those policies of the college would be such as to place a great emphasis on academics. At the same time he was the kind of leader who leads from the background in a way. What he did, was to create an environment in which lots of talented people had the sense that they could make something happen. If you look at all the things that were started in his time; if all the results of individuals, or little groups of individuals, for example graduate programs. He let people have their say; help them, with whatever experience he had or had learned in his interactions with other presidents. It was that kind of leadership style that I think was perfect for the growth of a college. People's imagination and talents could be used to the fullest. Dennis' contribution, I think; is to have taken a diamond in the rough and let the world know what a great place it was. If the college has regional impact today, it's because he recognized the quality that was there, and the strategies that were necessary to capture the attention of the country or region.

50:36 **GN:** Gerry McNulty, who's on my, in my group, in the communications, former journalist, made this point; he said, "If you go out on home coming weekend and

you talk to some of the graduates, they will tell you even though they have been to other colleges, Marist College is a unique college." Would you say that's the case, or have we just got tunnel vision? This is all we see, what would explain the uniqueness of this place?

51:16 **RL:** Family spirit, which comes from the Marist Brothers. As you know, Marcellan Champagnat had always said to the Brothers, every school should be characterized by the family spirit. Although we use different language to describe the same reality today; for instance, we would use the language, a sense of community, or whatever the case might be. I think that is, I can't call it absolutely unique, unique is one of a kind; it's very hard to be one of a kind, but it is certainly like an overriding characteristic. When people come here and they encounter the students, they say, "What nice people they are." Why are students nice people? My theory is, that nice people attract nice people, or likes attract likes. In other words, way back in the beginning, there was a kinder environment, created by the Brothers and the early faculty, that welcomed; not necessarily the best and brightest students, but hard working students who had a good heart. After that, when other students came to see us; they found, some of them found kindred spirits, and so we got more nice students. I think that's how we grew like topsy.

53:04 **GN:** What do you envision the future of Marist?

53:07 **RL:** In fact it's so familiar now, if you wanted to change it, you wouldn't be able to change it. Even if you set up a deliberate policy, we're going to get...

53:18 **GN:** "Nasties"

53:19 **RL:** No, not nasty, but we are going to get competitive students who are going to gauche out one another's eyeballs to get ahead of one another. People will speak about some institutions like that. We couldn't do that if we tried; because we're going to be attractive to all these nice kids.

53:40 **GN:** What do you think for the future of Marist? Do you think that this family spirit will pertain deep into the future or is it going to be driven out by other voices?

53:51 **RL:** I've already answered that question, haven't I?

53:55 **GN:** You have, but I have it here to ask. (Laughter)

54:03 **RL:** I don't think you could change it if you wanted to. I see no reason to change it.

54:10 **GN:** Isn't there something I didn't ask that you would like to say?

54:13 **RL:** No, I'm exhausted. (Laughter) No, I don't know what to say, other than from a personal point of view, this has been a very satisfying career and I happen to be very lucky because my job was always to do something that I enjoy doing. I've said many times that they pay me to play.

54:41 **GN:** Ever since you were four years old.

54:45 **RL:** When I'm in the classroom and with my students, I'm having fun. I don't know about them, but I am. It is said that if you enjoy what your are doing, it helps others in the process. I don't enjoy some of the dog work that goes with it, like grading papers and stuff like that, but no job is perfect.

55:03 **GN:** Good. Thank you Rich.

