

Roy Merolli

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Aubrey Giesler

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Roy Merolli

Interviewee: Roy Merolli

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Subject Headings: Roy Merolli

Summary:

Life before Marist College

00:04 **Gus Nolan:** Today is August 13, 2014. We have the good fortune of interviewing the Roy Merolli he's former executive vice president, retired now, but Professor in.

00:17 **Roy Merolli:** Public administration.

00:18 **GN:** Public administration. Good morning Roy.

00:21 **RM:** Morning Gus nice to be here.

00:24 **GN:** Roy I consider you one of the treasures here to have in this project because you have such a different view and a deeper view and a more authentic view than many people I was speaking to before. But basically what I'd like to do is get your view of before Marist before you came, some of the basic things of you're growing up, early studies, and how did you learn of Marist, why did you come and what happened while you were here. And moving on to what do you see down the road? So begin with where were you born and brought up.

01:02 **RM:** I was born in Connecticut and brought up in Naugatuck Connecticut which was a factory town. Probably remember a lot of people remember Uniroyal that's where it works is completely closed and shut down but it was hard Scrabble factory town. That's what it was. Lot of different ethnic groups lived it were attracted there the work in the factories

01:30 **GN:** and you know who live there with the family for how many years.

1:36 **RM:** Two through high school and when I left high school I went to the University of Connecticut for four years. Quite frankly I can afford anything else.

01:51 **GN:** In the high school days besides going to class and did you have any other interests where you involved in sports, the choir, theatrical, have hobby's, stamp collection, birds, microscopes.

02:06 **RM:** I actually, I played football for four years. Those they can play both ways I was end offences end and defenses end.

02:21 **GN:** Were you consider fast on your feet? Required ordinarily for that.

02:24 **RM:** I had good hands in terms of I think they could rely on me and I did not have blinding speed but I was able to figure out a way to get myself open even though the defensive backs were usually quicker and faster than I was. So I was not I big pretty much what I am now. I was six feet, 155 pounds and most of the people I faced across the line were much bigger than I was so I had to really kind of rely more on guile

03:04 **GN:** Its looks like you avoid getting really hurt I guess you got hurt on some games.

03:09 **RM:** I was lucky I never got, I never missed a game. I never missed a practice because of an injury. So I consider myself very fortunate and in one thing I could do is take hit.

03:26 **GN:** Fine let's change the focus a little bit did you have any work experience as in high school during the summer? How did you keep busy?

03:34 **RM:** I did, I worked every summer. I had some jobs that showed me I'd better go to college. I did work in a factory on the second shift once, very difficult job very difficult from a manual labor standpoint. I had a good job for working for the town park department where I used to get athletic fields ready and learn how to drive a truck and I was a good experience. Then after I graduated I worked for a major construction company.

04:18 **GN:** What a line of work? Hard work.

04:22 **RM:** Hard work. Dinging ditches and pouring concrete and that's when I knew you better go to college.

04:31 **GN:** Us around here we went to college, but we were building the college.

04:33 **RM:** So yeah that's right.

04:35 **GN:** And a physical part of pouring concrete, working a barn grater, and throwing up steel and it was on the job learning for us. Move on what about your graduate school so what was the focus that you had and where did you P.H.D. come into this?

04:53 **RM:** After I graduated from college I took ROTC in college quite frankly because in need the money it was forty dollars a month at that time. When I graduated as a distinguished military graduates and which meant you got to pick your branch and I always wanted to be a spook so I picked intelligence. Then I got a call from the colonel at the University of Connecticut who oversaw the ROTC unit and he said to me you got your orders today you're going to Fort Benning infantry school. And I said Colonel why am I going to infantry school and he said every good intelligence officer has to understand the infantry. So I want to infantry school when I finish that I did go to officers intelligence, I went to prison a war interrogation. When was at Benning they had a formation of I guess they were about 230 ROTC graduates in our company they're going through basic infantry school there.

06:07 **GN:** Where is this in history now, what's going on in the world what year is it?

06:10 **RM:** Vietnam. Just started, Vietnam just started. Very few people, very few Americans were there and I only bring this up because I guess I consider it a formative experience in my life. That day they called out all the assignments and they didn't call my name and then at the end and he said I want to congratulate four individuals who be shipping out to Vietnam when they finish their next school and I was one of the four of like 230 people. So I guess that that happened about I don't know week four of twelve weeks infantry school program and I said I guess I've better take this thing seriously. I went to intelligence school and then I had a group to train in Fort Bragg Carolina to get ready to go to Vietnam and at that time they were doing different things to get people over there they weren't they were only advisors there weren't very many troops and what I did was. We took a ship over and I got to know this black army captain whose name was Aristotle Debussy. And I say that for this reason his dad taught philosophy at a university in Manhattan, and his mom was a pianist so they named him appropriately I guess. But he was in intelligence and he asked me about you know he said all you officers are going to end up in a while working in an office in Saigon and he said I don't know how you feel about that and I said. I really don't think I would enjoy that. He said well we are just picking five officers and we're sending them out to the province level to work with advisory teams and you're going to get to do a lot of different things if you do this but it's going to be a heck of a lot different and working in an office you'll be out on operations with the Vietnamese. You'll have command responsibilities. I'm not one who likes to be bored maybe that's why I was executive vice president here and I said to him I'll give it a shot I'll try it. So he said All right fair enough. What I want you to do is work in Saigon for a week and then we're going to meet after that and if you're OK with working in an office in Saigon we're going to leave you alone and I did it for a week and I could I knew I didn't want to be there so he contacted me and he said well what do you think and I said let's go. So I ended up spending 13 months with this advisory team mostly West Pointers were the officers and they were great mentors to me. They really were and it was interesting because it was a time that the buildup was just beginning. And in Vietnam American troops and I worked with CIA officers I worked with all kinds of people there. It was a good experience for me it really was. That's right it was formative.

09:31 **GN:** When did you come back when was for you? When was Vietnam over?

09:35 **RM:** It was over in late summer of 67. It was a very difficult time to come back to this country because of what was going on the turmoil in the country and it was something I had a problem difficulty understanding it really did.

09:54 **GN:** Move on when do you get out of Military?

10:00 **RM:** I get out in 1967, I did which I probably should've stayed in they wanted me to stay in and they wanted me to teach in officer Intelligence School and I wasn't ready to leave because of the intensity of the assignments we had there. It was not a good move for me.

10:23 **GN:** What did you get into then when you came out?

10:27 **RM:** I was really kind of floundering and I actually got involved in substitute teaching. I actually started law school. Be honest with you for two months and just could not quite frankly take the abuse of my colleagues as far as why were you in Vietnam and babies are being killed in all of this kind of thing. I just saw the dean there and he just said to me why don't you take a break from it all and so I ended up I was in Hartford Connecticut and I ended up teaching in inner city school there and that was quite an experience to. But I knew I didn't want to do that. So I took a test, the state of Connecticut to enter the administration system there and I did OK on it I got some veterans' points and I think they helped my score. I ended up working in the central office for a community college system that was just starting in Connecticut it was right from the ground right then and I really learned about what budgeting was all about. I went to budget hearings with the chief fiscal officer for the system and learned how to build a budget. And I only did that for six months so I got to know President and one of the schools that was just learning and he asked me if I would come down and work as executive assistant and I did it and I was there for two years. Then I was asked to go and start a college with the president. I was the dean of administration there and then the other part of the state. I guess I did that for about six years. And then school used to work and asked me to come back and be their dean of ministration. And I did that for a couple years and then my wife was a student at a State University in Connecticut and she picked up an announcement that they were looking for a vice president for finance and administration she said why don't you apply for that? I did and I got the job and I.

12:58 **GN:** And that place was?

13:00 **RM:** Eastern Connecticut State University and there was a growing University and it was a good experience for me. I work for an African-American president for quite a while and we really build that school up. And I really learned about politics and.

13:18 **GN:** This is a fabulous story I had no idea what you're saying and it really opens the whole book about you coming here then and what you'd be able to do here. Because I didn't know what an executive vice president did or would you know if you apply for you certainly did.

13:35 **RM:** I did because I did a lot of it there I was considered to be the number two executive vice president for finance and administration. This job with a much broader one when I read the advertisement. I said well I've worked at public sector in my whole life and it just doesn't I'd like to try something different in work in the private sector. So I applied like for the job here.

14:03 **GN:** And what year was that?

14:04 **RM:** That was in 1990, spring of 96.

14:12 **GN:** That again opens up a number of doors for me to understand what's happening. I guess you have a lot to do with the building of this building.

14:22 **RM:** I did. Yeah.

14:23 **GN:** Therefore you know about this door get in down here that I don't know anything about because you know it was there.

Well who interview you when you came here, who you're first contacted at Marist?

14:39 **RM:** My first contacts were Brother Paul Ambrose came down to see me. We sent chatted for a while and he told me how happy he was to see the position filled. That most people didn't know what an executive vice president did but he understood and he said that position is really needed. I can remember the first board meeting I went to, I ended up sitting on the front table at the end seat and Brother Paul was to my right. I'll always remember that because whenever I gave a report you know he would say to me afterwards I think you should cover this. But boy that was good, said I never heard it presented that way. You really simplify it for the trustees.

15:39 **GN:** Well let's get into your position here now, what was the condition of Marist when you came we had no library and therefore we had no. Well the other two buildings where up that is Lowell Thomas was up, and Dyson up, Hancock is not up yet.

15:56 **RM:** Nope, Fontaine not up.

15:59 **GN:** And Fontaine not up.

16:00 **RM:** Nothing is happening on the east side of campus. The first year I came here in September of 1960 I got hit when doing a strategic plan because the strategic plan then was about six years old and previous.

16:22 **GN:** This prior to the visitation of middle state?

16:25 **RM:** Yes as prior to right. So Dennis had me co-chair the strategic planning committee and that was my really my introduction to Marist as far as we had a pretty broad based committee of about 30 people administrator, faculty.

16:49 **GN:** Who is the Academic dean, Zuccarello?

16:52 **RM:** No Artin Arslanian and he was on the committee. So that was an interesting experience because we had to go through a really comprehensive of swats, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. And it took us like two years to get almost two years to get through that and we had so much involvement and subcommittees that kind of thing. And when it came time when we finished it, Dennis said to me so what do you think the title of it should be and I said I think it should be. We're making some big decisions or directions we're going like one of them to develop the east side of route nine and to build a library and I think we should call it strategic choices. So that was the title of the plan and it went from 1997 to I think it was 2002 or 3. But the three plans I've done that were three I think the titles say something about where we were in our development as an institution.

18:16 **GN:** Well the first step seems to be then dormitory putting up residents to students.

18:22 **RM:** We know we needed residence halls but we knew we needed we were going to get better we knew we had to have a much better library and that was the other emphasis. The site of the library that was selected was where Fontaine Hall was with ginkgo a tree in front.

18:45 **GN:** yeah with Joe Bell fighting to save the ginkgo tree.

18:50 **RM:** I had to go through this whole process in terms of explaining the different sites that we looked at and why we thought this was going to be the choice site. It was an interesting experience. The other thing that was going on at that time I should mention was in the negotiation of a new faculty compensation plan that happened in my first year that April and I were a lot of issues to get over then because the last plan the last E.V.P. all he did was extend it for one year. I came in and I had

the strategic plan to do, and I had a faculty compensation to do, start library design process, and start working on developing the east campus. So it was a busy first two to three years here incredibly busy.

19:46 **GN:** Are you a principle involved in the funding I got to get state funds to build the dormitories?

20:55 **RM:** Yeah, I use to work with a dormitory of Authority of New York.

20:00 **GN:** And then library well we had a grant but it was going to be anything like what was going to be needed.

20:06 **RM:** Now and I worked on that grant with Shaileen Kopec. But it wasn't anything what we needed, so we had to put together a financing package how much we were going to pay for my operations in what we were going to borrow for it. So it was busy time there's no doubt about it was brought in at that time probably was Perry Dean Rogers out of Boston which had a lot of experience designing libraries. And we you know I organized a bunch of interviews with the buildings and grounds different firms presented and I think it was our first experience with a really high end architectural firm and they did a nice job on this library. Especially how they oriented the entrances to connect with the east and the west. Yeah I thought that was very unique how they do that. Yeah.

20:09 **GN:** Rob Dyson used to have an expression I talked to him once about the Dyson building and his big joy was that it came in on time and came in on budget. I say the beauty of the building had nothing to do with his view of it. Did the library come on timing and come in on budget?

21:25 **RM:** Yes it did, and one of the challenges in doing the library was we had to come up with a temporary space.

21:33 **GN:** Oh yes what are we going to with the books in the meantime?

21:36 **RM:** And where would we operate from where would students go and we had recently purchased a steel plant across the street. Yes it was 14 thousand square feet and we converted that into a library the person then was John McGinty was the librarian and he was very cooperative. It's amazing it was quite an operation move are books over there getting set up for time and we knew we wanted to get this building done but I think Dennis always had good advice and that was yes we have a timeline. But make sure we get the quality we want and so we postponed the opening and we did in phases and January start of the spring semester. We did one floor, I believe it was the main floor we did, and then we did the second level, and then this level. We phased it over the spring semester at the same time we knew we had to get more academic space to replace Fontaine. Because I think you folks were over and student center the basement.

22:53 **GN:** Well we're all around I was at the gate house for a while, I was also in the dormitory, I had various offices.

23:01 **RM:** And we started a design process we use Perry Dean Rogers for that one also. I think we had some issues with that one of the architect from Perry Dean Rogers had a much different vision and you can see that from the looks of the building. He was a more eclectic kind of person and did not see. He wasn't into having a connection among buildings in terms of how they looked. He didn't think it was unusual for a building to be entirely different which there are some architects that think that way. There's no doubt about it.

23:48 **GN:** But we do have that one out there that's a little odd.

23:51 **RM:** Yeah the redeeming feature if you look at that early morning it's got the Canadian marble. On the front and if you drive north campus and look at them with the sun on it, it's got a nice a nice feeling to it there's no doubt about it. I think the inside of it it's very functional for 33,000 square foot building I think we got a lot in there and it's I think it serves the college well.

24:25 **GN:** Well how would you describe the function of the executive vice president? Is it same in most colleges? Or it depends on the needs of the college where it is in its development the job you came to here seems to have be wider and more comprehensive than before.

24:45 **RM:** I think it was no doubt about it. I think and it's how you mesh with the president. Dennis is a very strategic thinker he's a visionary. And I think he relied on me to make the things happen and I enjoy doing it. I enjoy coming up with a parallel vision from the administrative side as far as how is something going to how are we going to pull something off. You know if he said well you know I've talked with the board and other folks I've talked with this is the way we're going to go. What do you think? Can we put a plan together to get this done? I enjoy doing it and then following through on it. What I always try to do is to try understand and where Dennis was coming from where the board of trustees was coming from and to reflect that in the strategic plan and to share that with the campus community. I always felt that you're not going to get anywhere and yes unless you get the buy in of the people with whom you work and I spent a lot. A time doing it. I did.

26:05 **GN:** You can from Connecticut but then you coming did you have to start who do I have to see it Albany for the state and those kinds of approvals and then who do I have to see local, so government you know kind of the liaison to those?

26:22 **RM:** I was Tom gone relations and our biggest challenge was the town when I first came here. There just seemed to be a friction there. And when we started the development on the east campus that friction even got hotter we got approval to do it but they would find ways to throw roadblocks coming over on inspections and that kind of thing. Because they were up there feeling was well you know you're developing the east side what you going to do about route nine in our opposition was you know look at the statistics population statistics here in Northern Duchesse has grown incredibly. And it's not our students or driving on that road. Their concern was and rightly so, crossing. I can remember when we got to get our approval for a grant to develop the waterfront it was a pass through to the county. One day I got a call in my office from Paul Sullivan who was one of the college's attorneys and he said to me are you aware that your grant and he said I know it's a lot of money but it's coming up at the county legislature and they're holding it hostage because they want to negotiate with the college with respect to support for the Fairview fire department. Your building residence halls and they expect you to provide more support to the fire department and also what are you going to do about the route I'm crossing. So I had to drop what I was doing and go down to county legislature meeting and I knew no one there and you know they asked me to speak. And fortunately one of the people on that who were who was there was a policeman who lived on West Cedar and he kind of brief me when I came in this is what you got to watch out for and they said that they wanted an insurance that we would do this or that and I said I the only insurance I can give you that we will sit down and talk about it with whatever group you want to designate said we're not going to make any commitments to anything here at a public hearing. Fortunately he said to the chairman of the legislature he's not being unrealistic he's willing to sit down and talk with us let's leave it there and passed the grant so, they did. Then we had to sit down with the town supervisor, county legislative representative, and our local councilman and knock out an agreement and they wanted what in Connecticut and another state know as payments in lieu taxes we want to do that because they were trustees who felt that you know it's not our responsibility to support the fire department. It's not our responsibility to develop route nine because there'll be no stopping to this. So what we did we negotiated a gift. We said we will give you a gift and the way I structured the language was if assuming that the college remains fiscally stable. We would continue to give an annual gift and they said OK as long as you're OK with us using it to buy a fire truck down the road when we get enough money use it the way you want. That's a good idea I thought and then we also said we would agree to work with the town and the Depart State Department Transportation for a solution to the rout nine crossing.

31:00 **GN:** When did the tunnel come in?

31:04 **RM:** That that really there we're different solutions that were tried. The first one was.

31:12 **GN:** A bridge over?

31:13 **RM:** Yeah they looked at overpasses but in the meantime they did some different things. One of them was that they put beepers and cross singles on the light of the main entrance and down here at the south entrance which they never had before. Terms in when to walk and when not to walk and they expected the compliance of the students. The other thing was they said that if a student violated it they were going to issue summons and that they how I recall they would put police officers on duty and we had to pay for it I think it was like. I don't know how many hours a week John Gildard works with them on it and it was part of the agreement and I have to say this for the Marist students they stepped up we told them that we need your cooperation. They pushed the button they waited for the light to change and they crossed very few of them got summons because I think it ended up in a fifty dollar ticket to them if they did it.

32:26 **GN:** That wasn't yellow light across the street?

32:28 **RM:** That was the second one they tried that one. I got to know the commissioner the regional director of the Transportation Department for region 8 down here he said you know we've seen this work upstate I've seen it work in other states we're going to try it. Well it turned out to be a failure. It really did because we had a very bad winter a lot of ice and snow. Lodged under the lights so they were they were erratic. People didn't know whether to stop what to do. So finally he just said on we're going to have to stop it. What do you think we can do? I talked to the president and to the board about look at how about if we bring in a consultant from who's into development of urban areas and understands transportation and get their recommendation. So Justin Butwell one and I found a firm in New York City and they came up and we paid for it the study and it made they are they crystallize all the options and they said go to Franklin and Marshall University in Pennsylvania. Nobody uses that darn overpass even though when you get over it connects to the bookstore. They just don't want to walk the stairs up and it's not going to work here and if you. Do one you're probably going to need another one. And as we were sitting there. This woman from she was from Poland an architect and one of the engineers at the department Transportation said you know look at the part of that land there. What do you think would work best? And she said an underpass. And he said exactly. And he said that to us. Are you OK with it. And we said yeah we're fine with it. So I negotiated an agreement with them and they stepped up they really did it. They did all the work the construction they set the schedule. Our responsibility was the approaches on both ends of.

34:49 **GN:** How did you get the state to pay for it?

34:51 **RM:** That was that was I got to know the person who was in charge of the finances. I learned this from back when I worked in his state budget office get to know the agency's financial officer and I got to know him and I said OK you're in charge of the capital budget which is different from an operating budget. And I said you have different funding you have state bond money and not tax you know what it comes from taxes the bonds are paid from taxes but you don't have to go to the legislature every year he said you're right. I said well how do we get on your list and he said you're on it. I think it's a good idea. Now can I make any guarantees I can't? But he said you're on our list and let's just see what happens in the state of New York. Dennis had obviously some contacts in Albany. But each year I would say to him where are we and he said. You're higher on the list. You're higher on a list and one day he called me and he said look at your number one on the list if this budget capital budget goes through as proposed. You guys were going to give funding for it you got to honor your end of the bargain in terms of paying for it approaches the approaches and doing the architecture any of those touches that

you guys are known for you make buildings look good we know that and you've got to get the town approval. Well the town they were very happy with it and by that time we had mended are the fences with them because we would just keep them informed of everything we did. We'd go over to we would ask for planning board workshops which were just with the planning board and we would give them briefings on our development plans here and they just said that OK you know we understand what you're doing and we're going to support it and live as long as you just keep us informed and follow our guidelines and that's what we mend the fences. They became allies had to go to town board and do the same thing but we got D.O.T. on our side and we got the town on our side. I have to say that that that underpass all the things I was involved in here that when there is an example of a real public private partnership that's worked. It's worked for the community it worked for the college it really has.

37:40 **GN:** An you considered the catastrophe that a bridge would be with wheelchairs and the elevator and ever thing that you have to have involved and this worked so well. Its natural part of the campus thing. Larger focus Marist has changed dramatically in my lifetime and even you're coming here in the early 90's. How do you explain this people come out how could this happen. I'm perplexed as to say certainly Dennis and the leadership and the board was certainly have a key part to play with it but not the only part I mean I would say for instance the location of Marist from New York city it's on the Hudson that certainly. There's a tradition. We had you know hundreds of students Sean Carlos say we could fill this place just with Marist people of the ten thousand that applies more than three thousand are just Marist people who want to come here but we can't let them. We don't want the place to come only Marist we want the West Coast, and we want the south, we want Hawaii, want China and Australia and everywhere else you know. So that part of it amazes me. The popularity well I mean the popularity even the known factors NBC Marist Paris poll, I mean a peering on you television set the number of people who know about it know it, the girls basketball. How do you explain this thing?

39:27 **RM:** I think one of the things we always have going for it in for us. And I don't think we ever realized it until when we did a campus master plan and we had a firm from New York City's Skidmore Owings and Merrill. The architect who led their planning said you have a gift that very few campuses have and that is you're on the river you need to take advantage of your river views. If you look at you go across the east campus and walk up that walkway you get to the top of it and look down in all. What that does is you walk down that walkway it takes you to the river and he said what you've got to do is make that your spine and build around it. And when parents come here with their sons or daughters they're amazed at the campus being right down the river. So I think we played that one up. And then there was an emphasis in the early 2000 on ratcheting up academic quality in terms of the faculty we hired in terms of the administrative staff we hired as far as qualifications being much more selective and getting people to I think understand the Marist mission and our values and getting them to buy into it. I think that makes a difference to people I really do that when you look at our mission statement and then say we fulfill our mission statement by excellence in education, a commitment to the community, principle of service. People buying into that they really do especially in today's world you know the linkage between parents and young people has its and families no is nowhere near strong as used to be in the forty's in the fifty's but I think people see that here that it's a community. That we build a sense of. Community creating a sense of community is one of those the values that we have and I think people feel that and they want to be part of it. I had the advantage of working with Marist brothers. I was one of the, probably the last senior administrator other than Dennis who had an opportunity to understand what the Marist brothers were all about. It made a difference to me and getting to know Paul Amber. Made a difference to me in terms of I kind of understood what the place was about and there was and this is something that I would call Marist luck that every time we get stumped by something. I don't know something Dennis would have an idea

or I would be starting I'd be I used to be used to run when I could and physically then and I'd be out running something would pop in the back of my head there's a way to get around this thing. I talked to Dennis and the board about it and they said yeah let's give it a shot. You know in terms of that's some ways how we got bring D. O.T. and the town together on a route nine crossing. Let's try it what we got to lose. And I call it Marist luck that things fall our way because I think somebody wants it to.

43:31 **GN:** Yes well I gave a little talk the history and develop of Marist with a slide show and you know that one of this key point is how did this happen. Paul Ambrose came here in 46 with a degree in library science from Cathy University and we had a two year college he got the mission you got we would a four year college. He had no endowment, he had no faculty had no campus he had no secretarial staff, he had no legal advice. And he typed with two fingers and he had the goal as it were to start to make it a four year college. As you say look what to heck was he this was a farm you know we had cow, we had pigs, we had apple trees, we had strawberry field. We didn't have. The gym it was the key building we thought that was great you know cause we had the nerve to go on to do it.

43:35 **RM:** He had a vision and I and I think it that's what it comes down to. Then what I what I've found what I learn is in Connecticut to working in the public sector that we used to do quite well in getting capital funding for building the campus we were way ahead of the other schools. One of the reasons was I was teaching a course in government finance after I got my Ph. D. at the University of Connecticut and I said you know this state is crazy. They are so cheap with the operating budget but they give the money away in the capital side in terms of and why they were like the fourth highest per capita debt service cost in the United States for fifty states little states like Connecticut. You could get money for capital projects and the way you got it what you did what you said you were going to do and if they people want to be a part of a successful organization and they saw that we would produce. So we came here I think the town so I you know they're going to do what they say they're going to do. They're going to make it better for the community. This state felt that way that you know here's a college that does what it says it's going to do and the people are very proud to be there and I think that that makes a difference as far as getting the support you need to become a better institution. That's why I think you know we track good people here.

46:22 **GN:** Tell me what you think we need now and I know various people I talk to come up with their own particular interests like John Gildard interviewed him earlier this summer. There is no place for security to meet.

46:38 **RM:** I think that's important.

46:39 **GN:** If they could have some kind of a unit building like the old bank that could have been theirs. But you know or then he talks about the parking lot. Like if we can put a parking deck in there down in the gully you know he says. But a seventy thousand dollars a car. To build he fighter out the prices to be go ahead with that you know the science building it's one quarter of the student are science majors now you know and we don't have a science though you know is this a dream you know or you know do we need somebody to come on and say all right I'll give it to you.

47:20 **RM:** They are going to do a building across the street for the physician's assistant program and they're going to move some of the science programs over there. I think that's slated for 2016. I think the other areas we need the School of Management needs a bigger facility. We have so many majors there and I just think the faculty there need better space. I also the School of Communication in the arts they are upgrade the lower level and the main level low Thomas there in the process I think next year will be doing up a level. If they haven't started it this year I don't think they have doing the facade but I think that what needs to be done is everything got to be coordinated. We need more housing that's going to happen. We need

more academic space. We need more faculty offices. We need more student meeting space was really a deficiency here. Now with this last renovation in addition to the student center and what we got for that music programs is outstanding. Yeah and I think you know we we've addressed that. But I think Marist has always had more of a comprehensive plan that has looked at three or four areas at one time and has moved in trying to address those areas on a phase basis and I think we've got to continue that way. I think John's dream is going to come true sometime terms of a parking garage somewhere you know if it's not here it's going to be across the street. I do think that's going to happen and I think that this school of management is going to see an addition there in the not too distant future. And the school science things are going to improve there because when they do they're building across the street for the physician's assistant program. I think biology will be moving over there I could be wrong but that will free up space for chemistry. More space for them you know. Now you know Donnelly has been around a long time and it gets. I've always considered my office was in there 15 years ago.

49:56 **GN:** It the anchor for the whole place, the whole campus.

50:03 **RM:** But it's unique, it's got its own history but in some ways and in terms of functionality it it's having a hard time staying with everything.

50:13 **GN:** You're not strong or are you online education so you wouldn't need a building.

50:22 **RM:** I learned to teach online to teach online. I teach in the master Public Administration program.

50:30 **GN:** Are you happy with it. Not as much as have them in class.

50:35 **RM:** Well, having spent my life interacting with people face to face. It's been a difficult transition for me. Now I taught a capping course last spring totally on line where they wrote a fifty page paper. I have to say with the help of the library here in terms of the little tricks you can use in terms of developing a course sit and communicating with students I get more comfortable with it and I can honestly say I got to know some of the students in terms of e-mail exchanges. And they were a long, I am not a great typist. That's there frustrating thing.

51:21 **GN:** And soon you won't have to type your gonna be able to talk.

51:25 **RM:** Dictate, that's what I'd like to do in fact I open this capping course with a workshop and online workshop to explain to them. I had 20 students and 17 of them signed up for it and I did it to two consecutive nights so they knew what they were getting into. I prefer the hybrid approach to graduate education where you meet with them periodically face to face and then they can do their assignments on line and submit it, but at least you get to know them when you start the course. And that's how I do a capping one of the capping courses is where they come here for a weekend Saturday and Sunday and you meet with them and talk about what they're going to do and then they come back at the end of it and present. But you get to know them a little bit better. They get to know you and what your expectations are and you can put a name to a face. And as I said to the new dean at the school management Larry Singleton and other faculty you know to me the model is even if we have students taking courses in Chicago I don't see why a faculty member can't get on a plane and go there and say OK I'm going to be here. Conference Center on Saturday morning or all day Saturday drop in to see me and get to know them that kind of thing. I just think that's the better learning model if you have to do it totally on line. You've got to be a good on line teacher. It's a lot different than teaching face to face because you can't you really can't get into the nuances like you do face to face and you can see their expressions and see they're not getting it. OK here's some more examples. But when you do it online is different. Well some of them will e-mail you and say I just don't get it, help me with this and it needs a lot more work for you to communicate that way.

53:42 **GN:** OK that's a good insight into it. I've on a more fundamental question you know is Marist going to survive? Do we need colleges? You know the big expense now that? All the colleges, the things that we're going through you know raise the question could you do it another way, a cheaper way? What do you think? As far as you can see down the line this is the best thing that we have to offer?

54:17 **RM:** I think we're going to have to compromise you know our business model here is dependent on the undergraduates mainly coming here and spending for years. I think a lot of them see it as not only a good an excellent education looks experience, but an excellent personal development experience. Now I think young people are having more opportunities for those personal development experiences whether it be participating in a program overseas, doing things in the summer that we never had the opportunity to do. So we're going to have to change I think in terms of the experiences we provide them we may end up having to allow them to take more online courses and that's a different approach when they graduate but it may let them get through the program in three and a half years. So they cut it by a semester tuition off. Reducing the costs for the families. So I think it's going to be it's a stiff competition and I think one thing with the issue we don't explain well enough the faculty and staff is the competition is intense. It really is and in some ways it's gotten out of hand as far as an arms war who's got the best athletics facility, the sports program and that kind of thing the big schools they can handle that. I think Marist has done an admirable job with balancing all of that. And to me that's the challenge here is how you sustain it. And at the same time enhance it.

56:23 **GN:** How much further should Marist go and the student population. We're going to put up more dormitories not for more people what just people bring on campus that are out there.

56:33 **RM:** I think we need more residence halls because we have over one hundred students in the residence in and that's not financially a favorable outcome for us. We don't really make any money on that. And I know the students though some of them like having room service rooms cleaned once a week and they have a cocktail hour down there that kind of thing they enjoy that but it's not a real college. The other thing is if they don't have a car they have difficult time getting back and forth. So we certainly need to accommodate them we started every fall there is some overcrowding. I think we still have it that'll be addressed but the growth here has always been modest. How do you probably five percent a year forty to fifty students a year. I mean if you do that you're going to be close to 5,000 full time undergrads. The other thing that has to grow is the graduate program. And if we did do something in terms of more space for the school management you'd probably get it. To be able to offer more M.B.A. and P.A. courses actually on campus. I mean if you adds John's parking garage you'd have a place for these people when they come in at night to park. All of this cost money and you know you got to figure out are we going to generate enough revenue to pay off the debt associated with that. I don't think it's in our interest. You know like Bucknell has been able to stay like probably at I don't know 4500 and be very comfortable with it. Boston College is stuck on the 88,000, 85,000 number and done well with it. But in doing at they raise tuitions and I think BC to go there one years is about 56 thousand dollars tuition room and board. We have one of our niche is we have been competitive. You still can come here for forty thousand dollars a year as a freshman tuition, room and board. That's pretty competitive it really is different given there are institutions with which we compete. But there's got to be other ways to generate revenue and I think that's how we're looking at the on line thing in some ways it's been successful in other ways. It hasn't been a success successful as we anticipated. I think we have come up with different models that are at that's why I think kind of the hybrid model is that one if we're going to go that way for our graduate education is probably the one we need to look more closely at.

59:52 **GN:** OK you been here almost 20 years now it wasn't very well known when you came it was known but not very well. Since you have a number of positions prior of the same sort executive vice president why did you stay at Marist?

1:00:15 **RM:** I guess I have a tendency the last institution I was at before I came here was I was there 16 years too and I did different things there. I have to say that I was asked to go into Hartford to be a C.F.O. for the state university system for a year and I declined to stay there. I missed being on a campus but I found a lot of challenges I'd have to say that. I felt comfortable being here. And one thing at Dennis is good it is giving hitch hell I got to say that and I enjoyed that very much. Then I knew that when I'm not one to do the same kind of thing restively I'm just not that way it's just is not in my makeup and when I think back that's why I probably accepted that assignment when I went to Vietnam. I just like to do different things and you know after being E.V.P. for about 16 years I just said I wanted to do something different and I always wanted to teach I had taught in the master Public Administration program at the University of Connecticut part time so I felt that you know if I could do it here I would do it. And if I didn't have that opportunity I guess I would have left and look for something else. And my wife's says to me you knew you got to give it up someday to some. Well it's keeping me young you know so I just in joy change. I really do.

01:02:02 **GN:** And have been part of this thing I mean you certainly feel that you put time and effort and energy and thought into the whole operation so that you can be proud of what it is here now. Any advice for the future?

01:02:21 **RM:** Don't lose our heritage I guess that's to me with seeing younger faculty coming in and working a little bit more with them. I just don't think they have that feeling and how it's in our new strategic planning leadership in innovation and how we can make those connections with people so they could understand our heritage and how it influences the organization that they come to work at every day. And I just think you can't lose it because it makes it I think that's probably something that why a lot of people go to Notre Dame University. Because they haven't lost it that tradition is so important and how you preserve that in build on it and I think that's. You know people used to say to me why do you take the time to sign four hundred administrative reappointment letters every year? You know there's a machine that will do it I said you know I write little notes on them after I sign it if I know if I work with somebody and something here and thanking them for their help. But then I see their name and then when I see them I recognize the face. People would say to me how do you know so many people? It's just I made an effort to do it and I think that people appreciate it because that was what Marist was all about in terms you were very small you all knew one another and I know it can't be the same but there's pieces of it yeah that need to be preserved and carried forward because they're all good in makes us a better place.

01:04:17 **GN:** Dennis is very good Friday night we had a retired faculty picnic he had the same thought there are about 25 people right. You were the rocks that built this place he comes. I was going to toy with the idea that I when to took a course at Fordham once we had a vice president give it course and he talked about a case where they brought over a famous lecture from France to give a lecture at Fordham two students came he said it with a cheaper to take the two students to France. I was going to say Dennis it would have been cheaper to take us to Florence then to build this parapet here for us to come out to have are picnic it was a good night you know it was whole past historical intermingling with people you know very well you know and they've been around for a while.

01:05:20 **RM:** I learned so much. I took the time when I first came here to talk with folks former Marist brothers like you Richard J. LaPietra he was in Donnelly and I use to stop to talk to him and you know he'd would never give you an answer but he'd say you find it you find the right answer. Yeah he said you know we talked about different options and I think you've identified them. Now you'll find the right one. You know what they are what all of them are. You'll find a right one and I

just think that Marist brothers there's something about it. You know there's certainly nowhere as known as Jesuits. But there's a certain character that there that it's just I don't know how you capture bottle to me it leads to success.

01:06:18 **GN:** My brother is a Marist brother and he says cause we're humble be a right to be so. Thank you very much.

01:06:28 **RM:** Well, thank you for asking.