

Interview with:

BRIAN DESILETS

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Jamie Edwards

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Brian Desilets

Interviewee: Brian Henry Desilets

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Summary: This interview covers the life of Brian Henry Desilets, who first became a Marist Brother in 1946, and has been associated with the Marist community for most of his life. The interview starts with his birth, and then progresses to his beginnings as a brother. The early years of the college are discussed, including buildings that have thus been torn down or have become memorable sites. It also gives his opinion of the many changes that took place at Marist over the years: the opening of the school to laymen and women, the change over of responsibility from the brothers to a board, and the three different presidents. In addition, Dr. Desilets' career is documented, finishing with the future for him in the Heritage Project and beyond.

Gus Nolan (00:01): This is an interview conducted with former Marist Brother and Marist College professor Brian Desilets. We are in the Archives and Special Collections reading room, at the Marist College campus. The date is October 11, 2001 in the afternoon. The interviewer is Gus Nolan. Brian, could you give us your full name, please?

Brian Henry Desilets (00:26): Brian Henry Desilets.

GN (00:30): Were you named after another member of the family?

BHD (00:33): No, the Henry is my father's name also, not the Brian.

GN (00:38): And Brian, do you know where Brian comes from?

BHD (00:40): No, I have no idea.

GN (00:44): Where were you born and when?

BHD (00:46): I was born in Lemonston, Massachusetts in 1927, October the seventh.

GN (00:52): And just about where was this place?

BHD (00:54): Lemonston, Massachusetts is about twenty-two miles north of Worcester, Massachusetts which is on the Mass turnpike.

GN (01:03): Do you have any siblings?

BHD (01:05): Yes I have a sister one year older than I. Her name was Cecile. And I have a brother whose two years younger than I and his name is Alfred.

GN (01:18): Are they still with us, or have they passed away?

BHD (01:20): Yea, my sister died several years ago, but my brother is alive and lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

GN (01:29): Where did you grow up?

BHD (01:30): I grew up in Lemonston, Massachusetts up to the age of fourteen. It was a small town with about 25,000 people. The main industry there is plastics and other things that normally would be found in a town, but the main industry is plastics.

GN (01:52): Now, was it plastics when you were growing up?

BHD (01:56): Oh yea, they made things like buttons and combs and sets, plastic handles and things of that type. They're very involved with molding plastics.

GN (02:09): Very interesting. What were your parents' names?

BHD (02:11): My father's name was Henry and my mother's name was Louise, and her last name was Goguen. She was born was in Gardner, Mass. My father was born in Canada, immigrated here in 1913 with his parents and his other family.

GN (02:35): What did your father do?

BHD (02:37): He was a grocer. He owned a grocery store, had four clerks working for him and he was mainly a butcher, a meat man, but there was a regular grocery store in those days.

GN (02:50): Did you ever participate in...

BHD (02:52): Oh, yes yes. We used to package the eggs and package the potatoes into bags and pack the baskets which had to be delivered to the people...

GN (03:05): And the butchering? Did you get any hand in the butchering?

BHD (03:08): No, no, no, he wouldn't let me near that stuff.

GN (03:12): And your mother was she the homemaker?

BHD (03:14): Yes, she was a homemaker.

GN (03:17): And what about your early education?

BHD (03:19): Well I went to a Catholic grammar school in a French section of the town. The town was divided in four pieces geographically. The French section only spoke French. Most of the people there did not speak English, they were imported from Canada. There was an Italian section the same thing, most of the older people only spoke Italian. Then there was another section which was all the Irish and anybody else was in the fourth section. These were actually divided geographically. So, the school was taught by nuns that were imported from Marseilles in

France. Half of the day was taught in French, the other half was taught in English so we were bilingual. In the church, the sermons were always given in French.

GN (04:15): Okay, what drew you to the Marist community, and when was that?

BHD (04:19): There was a recruiter that used to through our schools in the seventh and eighth grades and he made the life look very good because there was good sports and things of that type and so I said I might like to become a Marist Brother. The actual community I didn't get to know until beyond high school and I was very attracted to the teaching aspects of the Marist community.

GN (04:48): Did you enter in Tyngsboro or did you...

BHD (04:50): I entered in Tyngsboro, and again in Tyngsboro the main language is French. When you were inside the house you had to speak French, when you were outside you spoke English. So, the recruiting took place mostly from French Canadian families living in New England: New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

GN (05:13): Now Tyngsboro was a high school in those days?

BHD (05:15): Yes, it was a high school for three years. Our fourth year was completed here in Poughkeepsie, but the first three years were done in...

GN (05:25): Did you enter your first year of high school there?

BHD (05:26): I did, yes.

GN (05:28): And that was about in 19...

BHD (05:29): That was in 1941.

GN (05:33): And then let's move on. You then came to Poughkeepsie to conclude your fourth year of high school and your first year of novitiate?

BHD (05:41): That's right. So, we had two years in the novitiate. The first year was a postulency, which means asking. Postulo postalare in Latin means to ask. So, in that first year

we completed our fourth year took Regents exams and got Regents diplomas. The second year was dedicated to studying the order, its rules, regulations, and the spiritual life.

GN (06:07): And after the novitiate you came on to begin your college work?

BHD (06:10): No, after the novitiate I was assigned to be a cook.

GN (06:15): Tell us about your first assignment then.

BHD (06:20): Well, my first assignment was being a cook. I had volunteered to go to the Philippine missions, and the provincial at the time told me that he had thought it would be good if I knew how to cook. So, they assigned me to do the cooking, which I did in the provincial house, which was the old MacPherson estate.

GN (06:42): So, what, you've been cooking for about sixty years then I guess?

GHD (06:45): Just about. [Laughter] My wife likes that.

GN (06:50): I bet she does. What would be the state of the campus here at that time?

GHD (07:00): The campus had three operations. In the MacPherson House, which was called St. Anne's Hermitage, you had the provincial administration. The provincial and his staff were housed there, they didn't always stay there, but they were housed there. Then you had the scholastics which were the student brothers, lived in that house also. And also, in that house was an infirmary, where we housed about, at that time, thirteen indolent brothers who were very elderly and had to be taken care of. The other part of campus...oh, we also in that house housed a farmer, and the printer, and other staff that made the property tick. The other building, which was the old Bech estate, was in the novitiate. There we had the postulants and the novices. So therefore there were three organizations in the provincial house: the provincials, the staff that maintained the property, and the scholasticate. And then in the MacPhearson, or the Bech property, we had the novitiate.

GN (08:11): What would you think the distance between the provincial house and the...

BHD (08:16): About a half a mile.

GN (08:18): Just for the record here, what was the year that you actually became a brother, when you took your first vows?

BHD (08:27): I took my first my first vows in 1946.

GN (08:34): And then you did your first year assignment?

BHD (08:38): That's 46, 47 at the provincial house.

GN (08:41): After that did you start college?

BHD (08:43): Then I became a scholastic and an official college student, right.

GN (08:48): During your college years, you had a number of different activities. Do you want to say something about those?

BHD (08:54): Yes, yes, yes I was very very active. Richard Foy and myself, we started up the school paper. I was very involved with the printing press. At that time, we were still doing linotype letter printing and I had a friend of mine that worked at Western Printing and I introduced the offset printing and we'd go to Tarcissus. And I also established a photography lab in the Scholasticate. Other than that, I was involved with the construction of the gym. It was in those years that the student brothers built the gym. So, Brother Paul Ambrose, who was our superior, would frequently call us out of class to unload a truck of bricks.

GN (09:47): The question on the paper here has to do with members of the outside community. Was there much interaction or any with the local people in the area, and if so, what kind of activity was there?

BHD (10:02): There was, but as students we were not involved with that. But as a chef, I was quite involved with the local baker. He used to make our bread. Lagusa was his name in Mount Caramel. And I was also involved with the Effron Pastry Company because I used to buy all my flour and so forth and they also taught me how to decorate cakes. And I was very involved with

Western Printing. I had friends of mine over there and I learned the techniques of what they were doing. Other than that, there may have been interactions, but not by me directly. And as a student, my only interaction really was with Western printing.

GN (10:44): Finally, when did you get your degree in, and what was it in?

BHD (10:49): The degree from Marist College was a mathematics degree in 1950.

GN (10:57): What was first teaching assignment then?

BHD (11:00): First teaching assignment was teaching at DuBois, Bishop DuBois High School in Harlem, 152nd Street on Amsterdam Avenue where I taught math and French, because I speak fluent French. During that time, I was also studying of course. I also taught art with the students as an art club: painting, and silk screening, and statue making.

GN (11:27): And when did you start graduate study?

BHD (11:30): That year. In 1950, I went to St. John's University and picked up masters in Mathematics.

GN (11:39): Were you assigned your first year out?

BHD (11:41): The first year out, right, I immediately went to St. John's, completed the master's degree in 1954.

GN (11:50): How about the summer activities? Were you taking courses?

BHD (11:53): Yes, during those three years I was taking courses to accelerate the getting of the degree.

GN (12:05): How many students were in your graduating class?

BHD (12:08): Only twelve. Twelve graduated from here.

GN (12:13): And in the college as a whole?

BHD (12:16): There were about between fifty and seventy, depending on which year. The average group was about sixty I would say.

GN (12:30): One interesting piece of history here has to do with the cemetery. Do you recall being involved in any activities?

BHD (12:38): Oh yes, I actually dug a grave.

GN (12:41): What was that like?

BHD (12:42): Difficult, we had to use a jackhammer because it's mostly blue stone. This property is on a ledge of blue stone, so no matter where you dig, you're gonna hit it rather soon. So, we used to have to dig right with a jackhammer. So that was my involvement. Other than that, we took care of the flowers around the graves and things of that type, kept it tidy.

GN (13:08): Alright, let's come back and focus on your teaching now. After your initial assignment to DuBois, what was the next assignment you got?

BHD (13:18): Well I taught in the last summer of 1954, I taught here, at Marist College, I taught mathematics calculus, actually. And Brother Paul Ambrose brought me here in September of 1954 to teach physics and mathematics and French.

GN (13:30): We want to keep this quiet, now; about what you were you doing because there are many subjects I believe that you were asked to involve yourself with.

BHD (13:47): Oh yes sure sure. I also taught religion.

GN (13:49): You taught religion?

BHD (13:54): Yes, yes and that year I also taught at the seminary in Hyde Park. The Eymard Seminary the Marist, rather the Blessed Sacrament Fathers had bought the Roger's Estate and they made me the math teacher so I went there and taught math.

GN (14:11): There's a little story about you being missing for some period of time. That you went home, under the direction of the provincial, and they couldn't find you.

BHD (14:20): Yes that year, 1954 in fact, I happened to be leaving the faculty house which was St. Peter's at that time, and I met the provincial and he said, "You look exhausted. Why?"

[Laughter] Which I was. He said, “Go home, and don’t come back until I call you.” So, I was there for about ten weeks, until finally Brother Paul Ambrose called me and says, “What are you doing home? We start classes next Monday.” And I didn’t even know I was going to be teaching at Marist at the time.

GN (14:53): So it was sudden immergence into college teaching coming from vacation and getting this variety of things to teach.

BHD (15:02): That’s right.

GN (15:03): Okay, let’s change the pace a little bit. What can you say about the beginning of the construction projects on campus? Where did that begin?

BHD (15:12): I replaced Brother Nilus, he was teaching physics here, and it became evident that he was going to get involved with the construction. So, I replaced him and the first thing he did was went out and bought a bulldozer.

GN (15:30): Was it a new bulldozer?

BHD (15:31): No, it was a well used one. There was a big mound of dirt between St. Peter’s and the novitiate. Which is now the parking lot for McCann and he bulldozed that. He spent ten hours a day on his bulldozer moving that land, leveling it, getting it ready to build Donnelly. And in the meanwhile, he had built Adrian Hall, which was kind of an experiment. It was originally built to accommodate the lay student’s parents, and the lay students themselves as a place for them to relax and visit. But it was also an experiment that he could actually do what he said he could do. And so, then he got the land ready for Donnelly.

GN (16:20): You really started in the middle, though. Wouldn’t you have to go back and talk about the chapel?

BHD (16:24): Yeah, the chapel was built and completed in 1954. There again, it was very novel. He came up with a novel design, and some people said the guy’s crazy. But it turns out

to be a very popular design where the chapel is designed with the altar in the middle. He built that with the brothers, and the student brothers, he put permastone. I was actually not on the property when they started that building, I was here when they finished it.

GN (16:55): Following the chapel, there was the... what came to be then an extension of Fontaine, that is the...

BHD (17:03): And that came much later.

GN (17:04): The cafeteria.

BHD (17:05): That came after the Adrian building, and then we built Fontaine, which is a huge building. It's hard to understand how they could have knocked it down. Physically, it was just a big concrete slab really. But they built that. They also built the addition to Fontaine because the MacPherson building was becoming unsafe. So, they needed a dormitory, so, like an erector set, he built this addition to Fontaine which was a dormitory initially for the student brothers. Once they had put the student brothers in that building they decided to knock down the MacPhearson building which burned down and so forth.

GN (17:49): You're talking with great clarity about these buildings; I suppose because of the project that you're involved in, the Heritage project. What comes clearest to you about those early buildings? Do you have some particular visions of the MacPherson or the Bech and the eventual destruction of those?

BHD (18:14): Well the MacPherson building was a huge building. First of all, when the brothers bought it in 1905, it was considered a mansion in those days. And the first thing they did was make an enormous addition to it, the whole back, which contained dormitories and study halls and so forth. Those are well seen on the website that we put together.

GN (18:41): Is this the building with the wrap around porch?

BHD (18:44): Yes, it had a very large porch which was popular in those days. There was no air conditioning, so people spent the hot days out on the porch in the shade. So that was very typical of those buildings and also was a very elaborate building with towers and so forth. Not a very practical building. So, when the time came, it was obvious that it should be destroyed. We decided to destroy it. There's a little bit of, a little anecdote that can go at that point. In 1958 we decided that we could either expand on this site or move away. And so a group of us, Brother Francis Xavier, Brother Ambrose and myself, a couple others went to the Roger's estate in Hyde Park, as a possibility of moving the entire college there. You go there now and you can see a lot of hundreds of buildings but the property was available from Route Nine all the way down to the river, which would have given us a lot more space and more usable land. We decided not to build there because it was too far from the railroad station. So that's the reason why we decided to build Fontaine and get away from this whole building which was becoming unsafe.

GN (20:11): I believe on your slide you have a rather dramatic picture of the torching as it were.

BHD (20:17): Yes the fire, I was leaving my residence, St. Peter's, around eight o'clock in the morning to go teaching one day and when I look to the north this building was on fire. So I called on my students over to look at it. But the building burned down. We had hired Bill Duncan, from Pleasant Valley, to knock the building down. He's a contractor and supposedly a demolition person. He decided the best way to knock it down would be to take the furnace and tie it to the end of the crane, and swing it like a construction ball and hit the building, but didn't realize that you can't do that with a wooden building, all you do is put holes in it. So, he did that, and the building became totally unsafe to go into. And one day, it just went on fire. He was not in town on the day that it happened, but no one was notified at the fire department or Western Printing across the street, they put people on their roof with hoses to prevent the embers, because

the flames went up about a hundred feet. And nothing was ever done about that, it was listed as an accidental burning.

GN (21:32): Coming back to the construction now of new buildings, you mentioned Brother Nilus Donnelly, and the construction of the chapel, and then the Adrian building and the Donnelly building. Were you involved in any of those with him? Did you take part in the...

BHD (21:52): Only as an occasional consultant. As a physicist, they would occasionally ask me questions, but I was not involved, I was teaching completely. And the building of these things was done mostly by brothers who came in for the summer, and I was also teaching or studying during those summers. So therefore, I did not handle a pick axe.

GN (22:16): We have a whole list of buildings on campus that have particular names on them. I was wondering if you could give me some report of these. Such as, who was Leo Hall named after?

BHD (22:30): Leo Hall was named after Brother Legontianus who was, we called him Leo. He was the provincial at the time that it was decided to make a two-year college, at Marist, at this site. He's really the man who launched the whole educational effort on this site.

GN (22:55): More than a secondary, moving on to making it a college?

BHD (22:58): Right.

GN (23:00): And Sheahan Hall?

BHD (23:01): Sheahan Hall is named after one of the priests in Poughkeepsie, who was our first residence here. I don't why they picked him but that who it was. Champagnat Hall, of course, is named after Father Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers. The Leonidoff Field, the only Dr. Leonidoff, was a local doctor, an MD, and he donated a rather substantial amount of money with which we built that field. He also established a scholarship fund, Leonidoff Scholarship, so that's where he comes from. Donnelly of course is named after Brother Nilus

Donnelly. The McCann Center is named after the McCann Foundation, which was headed up by Jack Gartland. Dyson Center was named after the Dyson family that donated the money to construction, as well as the Lowell Thomas building was built with money from the Lowell Thomas foundation. Fontaine Hall, which had two existences the one which was destroyed and the brand new one which was built recently is named after Brother Paul Ambrose, his family name was Fontaine. Greystone is the name of the building where the president has his office and it has quite a history. You can find the history of that on our Bech web page. But it was named Greystone in 1929 by the brothers because of the stone out of which is made of blue stone.

GN (24:30): Is it made from stone on campus, or is it imported?

BHD (24:33): I have not been able to track that down. Blue stone is a very typical stone. When I moved to this property in 1943, there was a stone crusher and it may be left over from a quarry, but I have not been able to identify where the quarry actually was. There are several deep pits in the property, in the back of what used to be the novitiate, you may remember that. That may have been a quarry, but I have no evidence of that. So, I'm gonna track that down with Trap Rock. St. Peter's is one of the original buildings that was designed by the architect hired by Ed Bech to design his estate and it still exists today, it has quite a history to it. Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel is the chapel built by Brother Nilus. Adrian Hall also was built by him.

GN (25:34): Adrian Hall is named after?

BHD (25:36): Brother Adrian who was the chemistry teacher at the time that it was built and he died very shortly after that. Marian Hall was probably is the renovation of the old gym into a dormitory and it probably was named Marian because the original name of Marist College was Marian College. Where it has two portions of it, the first name is Mary and [pause] actually, that should be Marian, because the second portion is named after Ann, St. Ann which was the patron of mothers

GN (26:20): We'll know the correction of the spelling of Marian Hall, thank you.

BHD (26:22): Okay, thank you. Cannavino Library of course we know that it's named after Jim Cannavino who donated the money. St. Ann's Hermitage was the old, the name of the old MacPhearson building and that name has now been translated over to the Estate that was purchased from Doctor Way just to maintain the name. But that was the original name of the properties, St. Ann's Hermitage, when you wrote a letter, that's how you addressed it. The Gartland Commons was after Jack Gartland, and the Beck parking lot at the intersection of the road that leads from Donnelly to the South exit of the property was the entrance to a parking lot. At the corner of that entrance, was the location of the Bech mansion. And that where the novitiate was. And the parking lot in back of that is called Beck parking lot because of the position. And the Gate House is one of the original buildings built at the same time as St. Peter's by Detlef Lienau who was the architect of this estate, still exists today.

GN (27:33): Do you recall which of these buildings were torn down?

BHD (27:36): Yes, the first building to be torn down was the Bech Estate which was the wooden structure. We have very detailed images of that on our website. The second was the Adrian building, which was too small a building to be used. It had been used for a number of applications, but it was taken down recently. The Fontaine Hall, which was a huge building, was knocked down to make room for the Cannavino Library. And of course, St. Ann's Heritage was burned to the ground, was therefore destroyed.

GN (28:18): Do you have a favorite building on campus?

BHD (28:21): I like the chapel. It has a lot of innovations in it. It's conducive to thinking and religious so I like it. It's not a business place; it's a place of faith. I like that chapel.

GN (28:40): What recollections do you have of the old swimming pool?

BHD (28:43): Oh boy. The old swimming pool was at the location that probably would be now slightly west of the Dyson building.

GN (28:55): I think it's the bottom of Lowell Thomas.

BHD (29:00): That would be a bit too close to the Waterworks Road, I think. But it could be. There used to be a very steep incline at that place, and originally the building, the pool, had an island in the middle of it. A cement island which was taken out. I once calculated the number of gallons of water in there it's a mathematical problem.

GN (22:23): How was it fed?

BHD (22:25): It was fed by streams that came in from below. So, every year or two, we would empty it and paint it and one story that I have never really verified but I think it's correct, it was not really a stream. The Waterworks Road has a pipe that feeds water through the entire city of Poughkeepsie. They pump it from the Hudson up to College Hill. About ten years ago, twenty to fifteen years ago maybe they renovated the Waterworks plant at the bottom of the hill and they began to check on their pipes. And the pipe going up along the underneath the Waterworks Road, about four feet in diameter, had a huge hole in it at the top of the hill. I think most of the water that filled that pool came from that hole. [Laughter] So the water was for the pool was filled, I think, but when they repaired that, the pool was destroyed.

GN (30:32): When in such the McCann Center was constructed and then there was that exchange, there was no need now for the pool.

BHD (30:38): That's right, that's right.

GN (30:42): Let's talk about some of the changes on campus. The dramatic changes, such as the coming of lay students to the classes, and then the coming of women. Do you have any recollections of this?

BHD (30:53): Yes, a lot of them. I was residence director here for a number of years. Leo Hall was just being built when I took over. I was living in Sheahan at the time. I don't think the introduction of women made a big difference, to the students it probably did. But to the administration and faculty, if we had them in class it didn't make any difference.

GN (31:23): Let's go back a step. Were you not involved in the adult program?

BHD (31:26): Yes, I was the second director of the Adult Education Program, but that was intended for people who were married or outside, not fulltime students. It was adult education, it was a rather large program.

GN (31:40): That came pretty much through the big corporation in town?

BHD (31:43): Yes, IBM mostly.

GN (31:49): What reactions did you have in some other changes? For instance, the transfer of the college from the Marist Brothers to the Marist Corporation?

BHD (31:59): Well I think that was a good business decision. The college to be successful, had to be operated as a business. We're talking about millions of dollars in their budget, and that is not the type of thing the Marist Brothers were really involved in. To require a Marist Brother to make all those decisions I think would not be good. So, we already noticed that when the Board of Trustees was assigned these were good, successful business people, that things began to expand quite a bit. So consequently, under Dennis Murray, having these really skilled business people, decisions had to be made in terms of expensive buildings and huge loans. That would not be the type of thing I think the Marist Brothers should be involved in. I think it's just their decision.

GN (32:56): You really had two teaching careers at Marist: one in your early years, and then the separation when you worked for IBM, and then you returned.

BHD (33:06): Yes, I taught for twenty years, 1954 to 1974, at Marist as Chairman of the Physics department. Then I left to go to IBM, and I worked there for seventeen years as a research manager. When I retired from IBM, one of the chemistry teachers here had just had a severe heart attack, so there had to be some restructuring. So, I volunteered to teach physics for six months so they could organize their faculty.

GN (33:42): Do you recall what year that was?

BHD (33:45): That was in 1974. No, no, no, 1991.

GN (33:50): This is your second career

BHD (33:51): Yes, and I was going to stay here for six months, and I ended up being here for seven years.

GN (33:57): Virtually full time.

BHD (33:58): It was full time.

GN (34:01): And now in your second retirement, you're only here every other day? Or there about, and sometimes everyday?

BHD (34:08): That's right.

GN (34:10): And what's your principle concern now, at Marist?

BHD (34:16): Concern or involvement?

GN (34:17): Involvement

BHD (34:18): Well involvement is the...it occurred to me, that we have an enormous amount of material in our archives that people know nothing about, that the contribution of the Marist Brothers to the development of Marist College is essentially being forgotten. And having been involved for such a long time, I decided to document the involvement of the Marist Brothers with Marist College as a web page. And when we exposed that idea to President Murray, he strongly encouraged us to expand that, to do a digital history of the college. And he would pay

the bills of hiring the students, we are volunteers ourselves. So that's what we're doing now. We're digitizing images. I have about five hundred or six hundred slides that have been digitized and we're making web pages to document the history of the college in terms of its building and other things.

GN (35:35): Would you want to address anything about your leaving the Marist Brothers? Or, you in a sense haven't left because you are very much still...

BHD (35:45): Yes, I don't mind that. I was a Marist Brother for twenty-four years. And I taught thirty-one years because I continued teaching after I left. My involvement with the college from almost its very inception, when I started teaching here there were only six on the faculty, and I stayed here to be able to see over a hundred and fifty. When the time came that the college was going out on its own, I had a choice of either staying here or going into teaching of high school physics. That was not my thing I'm a professional physicist and I felt that I would be better to just leave the brothers and dedicate my time to the college fully, which I did.

GN (36:45): Who are some of the personalities that you remember with great fondness for those years that you were here, like for instance where the Kirk house on campus with students.

BHD (36:57): Well Dan Kirk was a co-student, he was in my class. He was a PHD psychologist. When I look back at the history of the college and I think of the early days, people like Brother Francis Xavier, who did the construction of the gym and also taught me philosophy and psychology and a lot of good common sense, he was a great man. There were some very humble people here at the time. Brother Arbulous was a gardener. I remember I saw many times walking back to his room because he forgot something. And he said, "Brian, when you don't have a head, you'll have to have legs." [Laughter} But he was really a very humble and made tremendous contributions to the spirit of the place. Brother Paul Ambrose of course had a lot to do with the development. I wouldn't have been here had he not...so when I look back

GN (38:05): How about the Brother Tarcisius

BHD (38:06): Tarsi I worked with very intimately because I was the one who convinced him he had to go to offset printing instead of letter printing. And he lived with us and he was very, very cheerful and a good man. Uneducated, but very very good.

GN (38:25): Outside the brothers there were some others like John Schroeder, and George Summer, do you remember these?

BHD (38:31): Very well. I knew George before we hired him. He was teaching part-time English here. I knew him very well. And Dr. Schroeder I replaced, he was my English teacher in first year college in fact and he became founder of the adult education program here. When he retired, I took his place. So, I worked very closely with Dr. Schroeder.

GN (38:56): Tough question really now, but I'm interested to here your take on it. We've had three outstanding presidents: Brother Paul Ambrose, Dr. Linus Foy, and Dr. Dennis Murray. Could you comment a bit about each of these as presidents and their administrations?

BHD (39:16): Well I think I can. I was teaching on the faculty before Linus Foy was named president. Paul Ambrose, I think if you look at the three of these men, they were put into these positions almost providentially. I could not see Dennis Murray doing what Brother Paul Ambrose did, and I couldn't see Paul Ambrose doing what Brother Linus did Linus Foy. Consequently, I think if we analyzed the thing carefully you'll find out that each of them did something which was important at the time that they did it, and did it probably better than the other two could have done. So Brother Paul Ambrose set up the contacts, Jack Gartland for example and Mair who was the vice president of Poughkeepsie IBM. They're the ones who did a lot of the business decisions and finances of the early college and encouraged for Brother Paul to expand it. But he was the type of guy that could go out and raise the money and make the contacts that were needed. When the college expanded, it was Linus Foy that brought in a lot of

the business people in Poughkeepsie to create a Board of Trustees. Though there was a Board of Trustees under Paul Ambrose, but I think Linus is the one who...and he was the one who drove the construction of the property. It took a lot of imagination and guts to say, "We will build a three million dollar building, we don't have any money, but we will build it with our own energy." The brothers built it. That took a lot of...he also hired some very good faculty. A lot of the faculty that's still here were hired by Linus (Richard Foy) I think he was just there at the appropriate time. Then when Dennis took over, it was a time for rapid and serious expansion, and you can see that he did that. So, my opinion is that each one of them had a task to do that probably neither of the other two could have done it.

GN (41:41): Pretty good, thank you. Has change and growth on campus affected what we might call the "Marist ideals"? How would you see that?

BHD (41:52): Well thanks to Dennis, there's still a Marist spirit. He insists on that, right or wrong. We have not gone entirely secular. There is still a religious element on the campus, and I think he's the one who keeps it alive. What's going to happen when he goes I don't know. But the Marist ideals, of course, were...the spirit of the Marist Brothers is simplicity, and I think we've moved away from that. We're not simple anymore; we're a big, successful institution.

GN (42:32): So once hidden and unknown to the world was that it's the...

BHD (42:34): No, it's not; it's not at what we want. We want a lot of PR, and it's necessary for the business. So, I think the remembrance ten years from now or fifteen, twenty years from now of the Marist Brothers, people will say, "Oh those were the guys that founded this place," but they won't know anything about us. It's just as though I would talk to the students and say, "Do you remember the Beck building?" Well, they don't. And they don't know anything about the brother's early involvement which is one of the reasons. So, I don't think the college, again, has anything to do with the ideals with the Marist Brothers, my personal feeling on that.

GN (43:15): But maybe there would be one sliver light and tie in the concept of education, that the Marist Brothers are educators, and the college, really, it's not really a football institution it is really...

BHD (43:33): Oh definitely, definitely. The president again, Dennis Murray, has managed to keep education as the forefront and the reason for the college. It's nice to have a Rik Smits here and get public acknowledgment throughout the country, but I think we're going to be known and we are known as a good solid educational institution, and I think that's good.

GN (43:58): Do you think technology will remain at the forefront of our interests here?

BHD (44:04): Yes, without any doubt, we're now listed among the top eighty colleges in the country as being technologically advanced and I think that will continue probably mostly because of our connection with IBM. As the technology develops, IBM will want to follow it, and they will use us as a data site or testing point. So as long as we're willing to go along with that, I think we so far have indicated a willingness to do that, but we have to do even more. The use technology in the classroom, the use possibly, and we're doing the teacher courses on the web. As an adult education program, I think there's a lot of potential. We're doing it, now we should do it more, faster, I don't know.

GN (44:58): And you yourself, you see yourself still playing the part this time next year and this time two years from now in being involved if your health is with you, or do you want to retire?

BHD (45:10): Yes it's fun. I don't mind. The work I'm doing right now has an end to it. I'll pass it on to the archivist, John. And after that who knows? I spent time – I spent three summers in fact with a group of physicists in the country and we went to the Air Force Academy and the University of New Hampshire and another one in Pennsylvania, teaching physics on the web. And I'm convinced it can be done. Whether I personally will be involved with it I don't know. It might be a nice, interesting experiment.

GN (45:50): Well thank you very much Brian. Thanks for having you with us.

BHD (45:52): Of course.

“END OF INTERVIEW”