

Moran, Donna, 15 July 2008

Donna Moran

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

Transcribed by Wai Yen Oo

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Transcript – **Donna Moran**

Interviewee: Donna Moran

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Summary: Donna Moran discusses her early years and her arrival to Marist College as a part-time (later, full-time) secretary/receptionist for the President's Office and later as an executive secretary. She discusses her experiences at Marist College working with President Dennis Murray, her encounters with people, the best and worst parts of her work, and how she thinks Marist will be moving forward as an institution.

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[00:07](#) **Gus Nolan:** Today is July 15th, 2008. We're in the Marist college library. We have a chance to interview Donna Moran. Good afternoon, Donna.

[00:17](#) **Donna Moran:** Good afternoon, Gus

[00:19](#) **GN:** Donna it's a delight to have you come and participate in this interview as a part of our archives. So let me begin. As I've indicated to you and a note I sent, something about your life before Marist, while here at Marist, what do you think about Marist in the future? So before Marist. Where were you born, Donna? And where did you grow up?

[00:44](#) **DM:** Here in Poughkeepsie, New York.

[00:46](#) **GN:** In Poughkeepsie, New York.

[00:47](#) **DM:** Born in Saint Francis' Hospital in Poughkeepsie, New York.

[00:50](#) **GN:** Okay, no dates are required. I'm not going to enforce that to see the detail of that and then what school did you go to?

[00:58](#) **DM:** I went to St Joseph's Grade school. It became St Joseph Nativity Grade school. And then from there, I went to Our Lady of Lourdes High School and in Dutchess Community College for a year.

[01:08](#) **GN:** Ok. Then you grew up in the Lourdes area, Lourdes high school. Was it in the old building that is in center of town?

01:20 **DM:** Yes.

01:21 **GN:** North Hamilton. Then growing up there, what kind of activities did you participate in in school?

[01:31](#) **DM:** Basically, I just had my group of friends and you know we had certain activities we did. I liked my grammar and English classes. I took secretarial classes at the end of my senior year. And I actually was a secretary which was very interesting for four months for a guidance counselor by the name of Father Michael Gallese there and that was very interesting I enjoyed doing that.

[01:54](#) **GN:** Did you participate in anything like school plays or choir or?

[01:57](#) **DM:** I didn't do choir school plays like I had said group of students that I hung around with. And we got involved of like prom committees and things like that stuff. School dance committees and things like that stuff. But

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I didn't do you know choir or sports or theatre or anything like that.

[02:18](#) **GN:** What about the summers? How did you spend your summer? Did you go to girls camp? Girl Scout camp. Did you work?

[02:22](#) **DM:** Basically...I just. My mom worked I kind of just help around the house the stuff while she worked and stuff. So I really didn't do that and I didn't actually go to work physically until I left DCC to go to work at IBM.

[02:37](#) **GN:** Ok that's kind of moves into where we're going. Now that is what was the work experience you had before coming to Marist. You were at IBM.

[02:45](#) **DM:** I was at IBM. For the five years until after my husband, I got married. Which is very interesting, my husband and I actually went to grade school together. And then he went to a separate high school then I did then in a senior high school, we got back together again.

[03:02](#) **GN:** Is that the St. Joseph's. That they are still in Poughkeepsie?

[03:05](#) **DM:** It's no longer... The Saint Joseph's Church is still there but the school has been gone for years So it's funny because I've known him basically all my life. You know. And so I only ended taking a year at Dutchess community college because I went to work at IBM. Because my husband and I were thinking of eventually getting married. So I wanted to start earning some money and I went to work there.

[03:28](#) **GN:** So you didn't go to a secretarial school or anything from Lourdes.

[03:34](#) **DM:** No I went to Dutchess and I was doing the Dutchess Secretarial Program. And then I was offered a job by IBM. At that time it was a good job with good money so I took it. And I worked there until after I was married a couple of years and I was getting ready to have a child. And then I was a stay-at-home mom for seven years while I had my two daughters. And then I went back to work doing Retail. Because I think do it in evenings and weekends when my husband could watch our children.

[04:01](#) **GN:** And where did you do this? For IBM or?

[04:04](#) **DM:** Nope, I did that... It was a place owned [...] called the Hello Shops and they owned four of them and I worked on it at... one of those down at the Hudson Plaza.

[04:16](#) **GN:** One of the sons was at Marist.

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[04:22](#) **DM:** They had a son, David and they had two daughters.

[04:28](#) **GN:** Then when did you apply to Marist?

[04:22](#) **DM:** There was ad. That was in the paper for the president's office for like a part-time secretary receptionist and it was a part-time position with small children that appealed to me. Because this way I could be with them a good portion of the day and I was tired of working nights and the weekends. So I applied for the job because it would get me back into the workforce in a field that I was comfortable in that I had done previously. And it would provide extra income for a family so I applied for it.

[05:00](#) **GN:** So when you applied, you actually did apply for the president's office?

[05:03](#) **DM:** I actually applied for that position. You know at that time there was a woman, Barbara Gansey who was Dennis' administrative aid. And so it was always at the president's office that I applied right from the start.

[05:15](#) **GN:** Did you know anybody working here at Marist at that time?

[05:20](#) **DM:** I actually knew no one. It was just was very appealing to me to be able to work part-time because the hours were like ten to two. Our youngest daughter was still not quite the school age. But our oldest one was. It worked out perfect. I could get her off to school and before she came home, I was back home again so. For me it was ideal hours and it worked good with small children.

[05:40](#) **GN:** What was the nature of what you were going to do in the President's Office?

[05:42](#) **DM:** When I was in the president's office basically when I first started, I was a slash secretary receptionist. I answered the phone and greeted all the people but I also did the final letters that Barbara would take a dictation from Dennis. And I would put the finalization on them. I would make appointments, answer the phones, open the mail. I did a lot of proofreading for her. And at that time Dennis was working on one of his first books that he wrote, "How to evaluate your fundraising program." He got me involved in that project. I stated working on that book project with him.

[06:18](#) **GN:** In the process of coming into Marist, who interviewed you? Was Tony Campilli really involved?

[06:23](#) **DM:** No one but Barbara Gansey. I only interviewed with Barbra G. She was the only one. As a matter of fact, Dennis was not in the office because they had just had Michael, their son. So I did not meet Dennis until I

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actually came to work there. And I interviewed and then it was a couple of weeks. I didn't hear anything. I didn't hear anything. So, I took the initiative and called the president's office and spoke to Barbra and told her how much I enjoyed interviewing with her that the job would be ideal for me and would hope that I would be a good fit for the Marist I would like to try it. And if she was interested, I would be happy to come in and give her a second interview. She called me back about a week later interviewed me again and offered me the job.

[07:02](#) **GN:** Right. You're one of the very rare person whom I've talk to who just went through one particular gate. Most have interviewed committees and a long process. You're talking about twenty-five years ago, I suppose.

[07:21](#) **DM:** I have actually been here for twenty-six. I celebrated my 26 year here back in June..

[07:25](#) **GN:** Well, belated congratulations. Okay then moving on life at Marist them. You did mention, just now, a question that I have about the segregation of work. Some organizations have as many as I think eight different classifications from receptionist to executive secretary and all the different categories. Does Marist work that way? Are there separate?

[07:56](#) **DM:** Yes, they did. When I came in, I think it was categorized as a level three which was a receptionist/secretary. And then after about a year or two, I was starting to increase my hours a little bit. My girls were getting a little bit older and I was able to, they were both in school fulltime. So I was able to give you more hours so I started to work five and six hours a week again helping Dennis with the book projects as well as doing other stuff in the office. And so I was raised from the three to a level five. And then Dennis hired a new, at that time. She was a special assistant, Susan Brown. And then started Dennis decided that he would move me to a full-time position I was agreeable to it to go to work with Susan on special projects for him. And so I did that and I went to work with her still staying about six hours for another year. And then after I was here for two years, I went into full time with Susan and I stayed as her secretary for about eighteen years. And probably after I was here for about five years, I was raise to executive secretary level.

[08:55](#) **GN:** When you were working for Susan Brown, were you across the building as it were, you were in the library extension?

[09:02](#) **DM:** We were. They called it the library annex. And as you came in the front of the library, we had a suite of

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offices to the left there. And that's where we were just about the entire time.

[09:11](#) **GN:** But yet that whole thing is a kind of presidential... Susan was working for the president and you working for Susan for the president so it's all intermingling.

[09:20](#) **DM:** Correct. I've only worked at Dennis' office for basically my entire career. And then when they moved us back into Greystone, Dennis decided that since Admissions was leaving, he wanted his entire operation in Greystone. And plus they were taking the library down to build a new library and we went back to Greystone. And we've been there ever since.

[09:39](#) **GN:** You put it so simply and I never realized. Those functions were so separated. And then when admissions left, it would be natural that you people would come back into the house again.

[09:50](#) **DM:** We basically... there is a little bit of a separation the girls upstairs. Handle more of like Dennis' day-to-day, his routine, his calendar, appointments, his travel plans and stuff. Our office does more of the special project all of the longer memos that are sent out to the Board of Trustees. Like the newsletter they get before each of the full board meetings. The communication that goes out to the members of the college community at the beginning of every semester. All the welcome-back memos at least. Sometimes even longer than that. So we basically do that all the speeches. All of the bigger projects are what usually our office entails.

[10:36](#) **GN:** Ok. Were you involved with Susan Brown and the whole Hudson thing, the Riverfront?

[10:40](#) **DM:** Oh my god yes. Longview Park was definitely her entire project so we did a lot of work dealing with the state and federal agencies. And all of the town and the local officials. And did a lot of work with that dealt with all the architects and engineers and stuff. They were using the Army Corps of Engineers.

[10:58](#) **GN:** You must go down there with a certain sense of satisfaction.

[11:02](#) **DM:** That's it actually has come to fruition. That was very big part of Susan, probably the last two years, she was here. That was a very big part of her of her life here.

[11:14](#) **GN:** Now in your time at Marist what were the changes you experienced in the workplace. Let me put that in terms of both the methodology of doing it. Were computers in place when you first arrived?

[11:28](#) **DM:** When I first came, Dennis and I were working on that very first manuscript of his. I was doing that on

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the electric typewriter. And what you did was that you'd use correction tape.

[11:36](#) **GN:** Yes. Backspaced and hopefully it was working. And the tape was working.

[11:40](#) **DM:** And sometimes it was just tape that you'd adhered to the page and just typed over it. So we did a lot of that. And then computers came into play and you know we started going through many different programs. You know with it...

[11:54](#) **DM:** Did you take dictation as well?

[11:56](#) **DM:** Yes, I do.

[11:58](#) **GN:** Do you use official system or you create your own?

[12:00](#) **DM:** It's a little bit of both. You know I was taught on the Gregg system but I do kind of use a little bit of a form of speedwriting mixed in with the Gregg shorthand.

[12:10](#) **GN:** Let me address this. I don't know exactly how I am going to word this. I don't think there are interns per say that come to Dennis's office from the student body. But there are visiting assistants or something ...?

[12:26](#) **DM:** We have what they call the presidential fellows and Dennis decided to do that a few years ago. Actually about five years ago. And the very first person who was his presidential fellow was Fred **Op**'s wife and my age is starting to act up. Now I'm trying remember what Fred's wife's name is. But she was Dennis' first presidential fellow. And then four years ago, Eddy Summers came as Dennis presidential fellow and he's still in that position in the office. And Eddy works on the main level of that building with Elisabeth and myself

[12:57](#) **GN:** I see okay. There's another fellow who became the President of Sacred Heart.

[13:04](#) **DM:** Oh you're talking about Dennis is actually like executive vice president and those, yes, he actually had. John Lahey. He had that position. Tony Cernera. You're absolutely right. Yes. Tony Cernera was in that. Not in the same position as my position he was more. Tony held like John Lahey's position which was the executive vice president position and you know, they went from like vice president of advancement to vice president of academic affairs. I think Tony Cernera was more on the academic side then the advancement side. John was on the advancement and they both went on to be executive vice presidents for Dennis before they both where offered presidency for other colleges.

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[13:45](#) **GN:** We have a unique situation here where I think there were two or three presidents named the same day, you know.

[13:50](#) **DM:** Exactly, exactly. And then it was the same with Mark Sullivan.

[13:00](#) **GN:** Sullivan

[13:00](#) **DM:** and Marc VanderHeyden

[13:59](#) **GN:** What would you say were some of the more challenging aspects of your work?

[14:03](#) **DM:** I think basically the. The most challenging aspects of our work are, you know... Everything we try extremely hard to make sure that everything that goes out of Dennis's office is error-free and perfect. And when we get all the information that comes in for these large memos which are like welcome-backs or whatever, I think some of the most difficult aspects are every bit of information has to be checked and vetted. And that's a tremendous amount of work. It takes us probably somewhere between three and three and a half weeks of work on a memo that big. For everything that comes into the office has to be put in a certain format of how we do the memos and then everything has to be checked so we spend a lot of time on the phone. Checking things on the internet. Making the phone calls, emails. Sending emails to people. To make sure everything that we have in the memo is accurate and correct.

[14:52](#) **GN:** There's quite a sweep that goes on because I play the part as the chair or Dean of communication for two or three years and I remember when you're being asked to gather up accomplishments, things, numbers. I mean on the lower level with each piece has to be gathered from one source and then you come back and check what we have just tried to get. Sometimes we created. I mean we don't really know. We take a shot at what we think is the true.

[15:22](#) **DM:** I think that's the most challenging part because we want to make sure that everything goes out correct and error-free. So it's very tedious and time-consuming and I think that's probably the most difficult part of my job. I still enjoy it. But I think it's just that it. It's you know a little stressful at the time you know. You're trying to make sure everything is done just perfectly. And so that I think it's probably the most difficult part of my job.

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[15:46](#) **GN:** Who... that's a strange question I suppose and And I am not sure exactly how you would... Who serves as the defense against Dennis? I'm sure there's some angry phone calls that came in. I'm sure there are some people who are irritated by the college whatever they might be doing and so on. Is that screened? Do you screen most...?

[16:09](#) **DM:** They screen again. We serve as backups. Dennis' phones... all of his different lines ring in my office as well as in the girls upstairs so when they are not available, I do actually act as, you know, I will answer phones and try to. If we get a difficult phone call that comes from a parent that is irate, we do try to see if that person is going through the normal channels and going to whatever dean would be or the director or whatever that area is...

[16:36](#) **GN:** the faculty member involved and the Dean...

[16:38](#) **DM:** Correct. And then it will go to the vice president in that area whatever before it reaches Dennis' desk to make sure that that person has tried every avenue that they can before it goes to Dennis' desk.

[16:48](#) **GN:** So he for the most part does not get the angry public. The angry public out there.

[16:57](#) **DM:** No but I must admit that Dennis is very, very good at it. He makes himself very available to students and parents and if they feel that there is something you know really crucial to their son's or daughter's education here, Dennis never refuses people. So I must say he does have an open-door policy. He meets with a lot more people than a lot of presidents I would know. You know he checks all the correspondence that comes in Dennis is very aware of everything that's going on in the office.

[17:26](#) **GN:** And how about the press. Do they bother you?

[17:27](#) **DM:** no because again that's what Tim Nancy's job as the public affairs officer. It's very rare. Dennis will conduct interviews. But usually Tim has gone through and spoken with them first and set it all up. And that type of thing. Our office doesn't really deal with the press. Everything goes through Tim as the spokesperson for the college.

[17:47](#) **GN:** see You said you wouldn't really have very many interesting things. This is really a first cut I'm getting at some of the barriers as it were or I know, I mean I've meet Dennis at some faculty meetings and things where they weren't always the most pleasant of situations. But he does deal with the public. Well we look at the

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negatives. What are some of the more rewarding things that you might say? We talked about the riverfront but have you had the happy phone calls?

[18:24](#) **DM:** Well I think what happens is if you see a parent come in and sometimes it can lead to the wrong building and they're thinking if the admissions office or whatever and you are able to direct them somewhere or you're walking across the campus and someone comes up to you and ask you about the college. And you kind of gave them a little history of what's happened and they will make comments about the grounds. And you can explain to them about it. And then you might happen to just see their parent like six months later as they're here for open house or whatever saying that their child ended up loving the school and had decided to come it's a rewarding experience to know that. You know, maybe just your few answers to them might have helped that child to decided that Marist was the place for them. You know, and these memos that I talk about are very long and cumbersome. I think it's a good feeling when it goes out. And you get critiques back saying that it's got information. It's been helpful to people. They've been able to used... You hear from some retirees or you hear from you know people off-campus because it's used as a vehicle for Dennis for... he uses it for a lot of extra people that he sends it to also. So it's very rewarding when you hear that. You know someone feels that it's a good memo and you did a good job putting the material together and get it prepared

[19:31](#) **GN:** They are. Those memos are quite complex and I often wondered to myself. How much Dennis is familiar with the details in like ... some of the computer technology and...?

[19:47](#) **DM:** No he's very involved. Dennis knows exactly what he wants in that memo and it's funny because Elizabeth who I work with now Elizabeth Tavarez who is now Dennis's special assistant. We're always astonished that. Dennis knows everything that's going on the campus and there are times when someone from one of the areas ... the schools will have forgotten to send something. And Dennis will say, "Well, I remember this technology program happening. Could you please check on it?" Sure enough when we go and check on it. He's right. So he very much knows what is going to be in those memos and. He really does. Have a very much a hands-on experience with each one of them.

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[20:29](#) **GN:** Right in your position, now that you've been there and you see this some of these things happen. How does one train to become another you?

[20:40](#) **DM:** I really don't know. I think if you kind of could keep good notes for people who whatever... I don't think anyone will ever be able to. Until they've been here for a while themselves have the working knowledge in their heads of who you can contact or who to go to for a certain problem or whatever. Because that only comes with years of experiences. I'm not sure you could help a person with that. But I'm sure anybody else could be you know. If you do just a good job as I can with the proofreading and writing and that kind of thing

[21:09](#) **GN:** That's the technical part they could be trained how to take messages or you know transcripts and to do e-mail and to do all the other things. To know the personnel involved in the various lines and as you say, you know make sure that the people are going through the right offices to get channels to get the answers to what they want. And in your years here, on the long range of things, could you talk about some of the people you met that are visitors to the campus, graduation speakers or lecturers? Dennis have a chance to meet much with those kinds of people who are coming on campus for a short time.

[21:59](#) **DM:** He does. He usually speaks. Again I have not worked a lot of the commencement so I'm not that familiar with commencement speakers and stuff. But I know that usually anybody who comes one of Business speakers for one of the lectures or whatever, Dennis meets them all and greets them and has a small meeting with them for somewhere anywhere from ten minutes to a half hour whatever so. He does try. I don't think that he meets with every speaker who comes on campus but on the whole. He is very open to meeting with people.

[22:30](#) **GN:** He really can't meet everyone because there are some nights there are two or three maybe.

[22:33](#) **DM:** Exactly. You know. And it's been interesting I remembered, you know, I can't even think it was very exciting when Dennis. Got the Val-Kill award and he got it with Queen Noor, Lea Rabin. There's been a lot of interesting people that have come and go. Diana Ross' son was here. She's been on campuses a couple of times. You know. Just a lot of different presidents. Some of the VPs from IBM that come in and stuff and interesting people.

[23:06](#) **GN:** See in my day. It was Lowell Thomas.

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[23:09](#) **DM:** I never got to meet him but I know Lowell Thomas Jr has been here quite a number of times. So it's exciting. It's just exciting because you know you get to see you know a wide variety of people from anywhere from like students all the way up to you know presidents of other colleges or you know organizations or whatever so.

[23:33](#) **GN:** Officials in government far up the line have you gone? Have you met the Governor yet, Pataki or?

[23:36](#) **DM:** Yes because when Pataki, I was so involved in the Longview Park. Dennis met Pataki on a number of occasions for that. And Susan also used to go and meet with him and stuff. A lot of your elected officials, all the way up to Sue Kelly and you know Chuck Schumer and stuff with US, local, state representative also.

[23:56](#) **GN:** How about our senators?

[23:58](#) **DM:** Steve Saland. Well, yeah, I don't actually... Hillary Clinton has been here a couple of times for different events. So I know Dennis has met her. And of course he knows Senator Steve Saland, our state senator, very well and stuff.

[24:09](#) **GN:** And on that very line, have you ever had to call somebody, making contacts? Again in a high... the echelon, the well-to-do, not so much, the important personnel in government and state and so on. I suppose most of that is originally done by mail.

[24:39](#) **DM:** Oh, it's done upstairs. But again because we're kind more of the different arm of Dennis's office where we don't get that involved in the day-to-day stuff. I don't think that Elizabeth and myself deal as much with the same things the girls upstairs deal with. They, I think, speak to much more of prominent people than we probably do because they're on the front line of the answering his phone. I'm only there as a backup for that portion of it. Mine is more behind the scenes kind of work then the front. You know. Even though now that you come into the Greystone building, we have set it up a little bit differently. And Dennis is having everything go through my office first so instead everyone just coming to going right into his office. We are now using my office as a holding tank.

[25:22](#) **GN:** Yes I saw that I thought I was going up to the office the other day.

[25:26](#) **DM:** Now that is Dennis' preference now because unfortunately sometimes if he's backed up a little bit in a

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meeting, it's very difficult to have two or three different sets of people waiting up there in his office waiting for a meeting so it's just easier to be doing it in my office now. So that's why they made the great big waiting room downstairs so we can use that as a little holding tank until the meeting starts.

[25:48](#) **GN:** How would you contrast your position and those working with other offices on campus? You don't deal very much with the academic I guess per se do you?

[25:59](#) **DM:** Not per se. Just as well as we don't deal with a lot of the students I mean we know the student leaders. And they come into the office for the things and stuff. But we don't deal. There is not one of the student, like members in the student government that we deal with that often so I think working in my office. It's a little bit different that is probably with other parts of the campus. Because we don't deal with all different aspects. You know we deal with all the vice president's office so you're aware of everyone is doing. But you don't deal on day to day basis.

[26:30](#) **GN:** How about the flow of mail? Does that come through upstairs first?

[26:35](#) **DM:** Correct again we do not have anything to do with that to do that. They have Eileen is Dennis's administrative aid. And then they have Jean who is an executive secretary like I am. And then you have someone who was like a receptionist, part-time secretary right. And she's the one who opens all the mail and goes through it. The mail comes down to our office. When Dennis is answering correspondence and that's when Elizabeth and myself get pulled in to help with the correspondence.

[27:02](#) **GN:** Well we've looked at two phases your before life and then at Marist and now and... a kind of. We are half hour already into this. The future. Let's talk about the changes that have taken place from when you came to where we are now and then moving on. As you look out, what are some of the more dramatic changes that you have experienced here? And they go into different categories like, you might say, even the physical aspects of the campus first you know. What do you recall when you first came here?

[27:41](#) **DM:** And when I first came, ...

[27:43](#) **GN:** There was no library?

[24:44](#) **DM:** Well, there was the old library with a little parking lot that was in-between Greystone and the library.

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Again I think the students center was old. It did not have the dome room or you know, obviously the town houses that were going down the hill have not been built. Lowell Thomas. and Dyson. Lowell Thomas might have been in the process of being built. Dyson was not there. Fontaine was not there. I don't even that the second set of townhouse.

28:15 **GN:** Foy Housing.

28:16 **DM:** nope none of those.

[28:15](#) **GN:** the Gartland Commons.

[28:17](#) **DM:** Nothing was across the street on the east campus. They hadn't purchase the bank building. They hadn't done the first renovation to the McCann center that came, you know, when they added on.

[28:33](#) **GN:** The Physical Training, kind of thing.

[28:36](#) **DM:** That wasn't here yet. Marian hall was still existing on that little slab that was in between...

[28:45](#) **GN:** Adrian building

[28:46](#) **DM:** Adrian building, I'm sorry. It was right there where advancement use to be housed. That was in between the Donnelly building and Marian Hall. So it was very different. You know when I first came...

[28:58](#) **GN:** Where was the library when you first came?

[29:00](#) **DM:** Exactly where it is now. It was just like a little annex was attached to it. You remember Fontaine was like you could go into the side of the library and Fontaine went up or down. You went to the side of the library. That's the way it was when I first came so...

[29:17](#) **GN:** One time. We had the books in the Donnelly building. The library was in there. There were stained glass windows along.

[29:25](#) **DM:** No when I was here it was always in the old library. And the old library was always still here. That's what was the library when I came.

[29:33](#) **GN:** Were you on the planning commission then? To get this things going?

[29:37](#) **DM:** No, I was just there to help out in any way that I could. But you know. I think what's exciting for me is to see. Because I really think our campus is very attractive and people do not. I think even local people have no

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idea what Marist is like today. And I've had friends of mine that had to come on campus for one reason or another. That will just come to me and say, They're just amazed how beautiful our campus is. And that it's such a showcase for people coming to look at school. It really truly is. The buildings all have a common characteristic now. A lot of that stone work is all same so that they all being like joined together so that it's a common...

[30:19](#) **GN:** Central theme to the campus...

[30:20](#) **DM:** Correct to campuses and stuff. I really think the caliber of our students has risen tremendously from what was like way back in the 60s, 70s. Marist became a regular school and then became co-ed.

[30:34](#) **GN:** More than likely, I would never have been able to teach here today. probably not even become a student. The truth. The academic scores might be high but there is something still simple about the Marist kids I guess. It's a magnet that draws its own, you know, similar kids see what they like here.

[31:00](#) **DM:** You know what I think part of it is... I notice even with our own children when I was looking at colleges with my daughter and stuff. There are some colleges that you go to that are very kind like cold and I think that Marist is like always one of the special things about Marist they have always been a good college community where you always felt like you were going someplace where you were welcome. And that everyone felt comfortable and welcome here and I think that might be what draws the students here is because they can feel. Staff will talk to them. Faculty will talk to them. Cafeteria workers will talk to them. Everyone talk to them everyone will talk to them. And I think it makes them feel part of a community. That's alive and giving and caring. My mother actually worked here when my father passed away. My mother wanted to change careers and she wanted to come work here and my mother was the checker in the cafeteria for many years till she died.

[31:57](#) **GN:** She would be someone who'd have an idea about students.

[32:00](#) **DM:** Unfortunately we lost her. 12 years ago. Yeah. she loved her job here. She just loved the students and loved the campus. She thought it was the greatest.

[32:12](#) **GN:** Let me. The overall students a physical thing, now. Coming down to some of the people do. The secretarial staff, the staff general whether the secretaries or executive assistants or whatever. What kind of bonding or meetings do you have or do you have any...?

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[32:33](#) **DM:** At one time, we used to all get together what they call the exempt executive secretaries. We used to get together and have lunch together and once a while. That hasn't happened in a while but I think most of them are very friendly because we all rely on one another. When we need some information, it's usually one of our other counterpart that we go to. Because we usually all work for the vice president and we can usually get our answers to whatever questions we're trying to resolve through one of them. So I think all of us are very friendly.

[33:01](#) **GN:** So there's no common meeting where you would come together.

[33:05](#) **DM:** Only thing they have started is human resources just within the last year has started to do a seminar series. And they started with us executive secretary so we have had like four or five seminars of maybe like four or five hours each on writing skills, how to deal with difficult people on you know how to manage your time, manage multiple deadlines and that kind of thing and stuff. So that has started and I think they hope to extend that out to other parts of the campus.

[33:33](#) **GN:** How about the new logo? Is that explained to you the new Marist logo?

[33:37](#) **DM:** I had nothing to do with that I think they did that through the athletics. I didn't have too much to do with that. We were not on the committee for that so...

[33:46](#) **GN:** About the students you say You certainly have the academics... I could tell you a personal story. There is like 9,000 applicants for less than a thousand seats. So it's like nine to one. Myself and a former president recommended a student to come here. We thought it would be a shoe-in as it were. But to give the Admissions due credit, they saw that this student really didn't have the background to make it at Marist that it would be a disaster they would fail out frustrated. So they made the deal that if they did one-year college someplace and took certain courses that would be a Math course and the English course and the you know things that would be equivalent to some of the things we do. They would certainly be accepted the following September which I thought was fair enough you know. Considering that, you know, we didn't... The place is loaded with applicants you know and then you have to be kind and gentle and saying, "No you really don't have the credentials to make it here at this time." What do you think has brought this success to Marist? what explanation would you give to someone to say it was a little college, virtually unknown forty years ago. And now ten thousand students are trying to get into it each

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year.

[35:24](#) **DM:** I think it was. I think giving Dennis credit I think he had a great vision for the place. And I think that he was always on always on top of, what would be like new technology that would help the institution. You know when online learning started and stuff and all the newest technology always sure that it would be attractive to people. It would help to make the college come in prominence with other colleges who might have had all that technology and stuff. Plus he realized how important was that the college itself looked good physically. So I know that he's always making sure that when we needed new buildings, buildings were built and things were renovated and additions and things that would end up making the college more attractive to the students who are our customers. Then basically I think he was moving ... I think he always had a very good vision for the aesthetics of the college and the grounds as well as for the vision of what needed to be with a new library and stuff to come into being on an equal level with some of the other colleges.

[36:27](#) **GN:** That seem to be such a dream, the new library. And then this building was built and it seemed... it still is you know kind of showplace for what libraries in colleges can do.

[36:41](#) **DM:** And the new Hancock center I understand they hope to build which will be another new academic administrative building is supposed to have some. new technologies stuff to that hopefully will also enhance the college's reputation.

[36:55](#) **GN:** Ok. And certainly would you say the location has something to do with its success?

[36:59](#) **DM:** Location of the college. Oh definitely I think anyone always have a draw of water. I think it's always been. I think that's the main reason for why they decided to do the Riverfront park, Longview park because I think they know that's a draw to a lot of people. It just makes your campus more attractive.

[37:19](#) **GN:** And ironically now, we get more students outside of New York State than from New York State.

[37:23](#) **DM:** Yes, I think less than fifty percent now come from New York state where it used to be more of like. 70% that were from in-state.

[37:31](#) **GN:** And we're getting more girls then we need.

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[37:35](#) **DM:** I don't know the reason for that Gus. I don't know that they've been trying to even out a little more but I don't know the answer to that one.

[37:42](#) **GN:** Well. What about the stadium and its function. Do you think...?

[37:46](#) **DM:** Well I think they were always talking about. You know trying to make a football stadium of some kind. And I don't think there was a way to make like an enclosed dome or anything like because we didn't have the space that we would have need on campus for that. So I think it was just they were trying to do the best they could to enhance.

[38:05](#) **GN:** The athletic facilities.

[38:07](#) **DM:** that we have.

[38:08](#) **GN:** right. it does certainly seem to be another gem. Like the library.

[38:11](#) **DM:** Definitely, I understand. You know we all obviously took the tour once they had the box offices and stuff like that it really is...

[38:24](#) **GN:** And it serves both women and men in terms the field hockey and...

[38:29](#) **DM:** Correct. It's not just for football. I know the soccer and lacrosse. You know softball and baseball have their own field but you know. It's not just used for football. It's used for quite a number of sports.

[38:42](#) **GN:** And I am moving this on about the position of the college and its image and more than likely. Your office has a lot to do with sending out of error-less statements and pictures and that's another area. The photography done for the college is a quality.

[39:05](#) **DM:** Again I think that's Victor Van Carpels. I think he's the one who reports Sean Kaylor and stuff. He's actually... I've found that since he's been years. He's been we definitely have come up in quality that we've got with you know photographs and stuff. He's got a good vision of it and he's done a very good job in promoting the college that way.

[39:28](#) **GN:** Right and the success of the college into the future will depend pretty much on...what two or three things do you think?

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[39:37](#) **DM:** I think that we're able to stay competitive technology-wise because I think unfortunately we may find that as people's lives become busier and busier, not everyone will be able to have on campus experiences. So we need to stay on top of the online learning so that the way of the future for a lot of people to be able to get a college education. It may have to be online. I still think you need to stay in somewhat of a mode where people think that you're still a caring and giving communities so that people feel at home to come here. And I think you still need to always advance your academics to keep yourself competitive with the other colleges in your league.

[40:13](#) **GN:** Yeah. But that becomes a second two-edged sword because one of the big things about the college is the interpersonal aspect of it. I think more students want to live on-campus than off-campus in terms of the...

[40:29](#) **DM:** That's for your traditional... I think what I was referring more to is that you have a lot of like adult learners who want to make sure that you're catering to them somewhat too with the online learning and that kind of thing. I think your traditional students the ages of eighteen to twenty-two, I think most of them will always want to be on a campus for the campus experience because obviously it's not just your education it's the other activities you get involved in. It's the friends you make here. The idea of living on your own for the first time away from your mom and dad and how it matures you and makes you grow up.

[41:05](#) **GN:** Along that line I suppose you're very correct and consider the new federal laws that have been passed and the advantage to the veterans now who are going to be able to get college credit and funding. And that they won't be coming to live on campus. More than likely they'll take their courses.

[41:27](#) **DM:** Online, right. So I think you need to cater to both populations. You need to keep your campus attractive and still feeling like you know that home-grown environment for the kids that are traditionally the age that will be coming here. But you need to keep up with your technology for not only to keep yourself in competitiveness with the other institutions in your league. I think also for your adult learners but they're also very important part of your revenue.

[41:51](#) **GN:** Right the revenue. Part. Since we are pretty tuition-based and run college our endowment is not as much as many other colleges.

[42:02](#) **DM:** But that's because we are fairly young though. We're not like a Vassar college or whatever that has

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you know a huge history plus a huge endowment.

[42:11](#) **GN:** With a little bit of risk but nevertheless honesty who are some of the people that have most influenced you here? You have stayed here for twenty-five years. Couldn't you do better? (laughter)

[42:25](#) **DM:** Well you know. Actually I only live five minutes up the road and it was always very convenient. And I enjoyed staying here and down because I was always able to find something new and different to do. And I enjoy working at Dennis's office and just I don't know where the twenty-five years have gone to be truthful with you, Gus. They have just gone. I think you know I've met a lot of interesting people here. Some of my favorites with John Lahey. I dealt with John. And I was good friends with his secretary Vicki I think. Mark Sullivan was also a very remarkable executive vice president. He was very enjoyable. I use to like Marc VanderHeyden. So I think you've seen a lot of people that have come that you were happy to see move on to something that was better for them like presidencies of other colleges and stuff. So some of them were a great loss I think here. You know some of your professors. Like Tom Casey you know, the people that.

[43:15](#) **GN:** You knew Tom Casey.

[43:17](#) **DM:** Yeah, I mean his wife, Irma. You know I knew your wife, Liz. I worked with her when she was in education so you remember a lot of people and I think. It's just human nature everybody grows old and wants to retire and stuff but some of the people you miss more than others when they, you know, go off to retirement or move on to some other career in life.

[43:39](#) **GN:** Looking down the road for yourself. What are you going to do? Are you going to retire or are you just going to drop dead?

[43:44](#) **DM:** Hopefully in the next couple years, my husband I like to do it in the age when we're still young enough to enjoy traveling to do some things and stuff so I hope to retire within the next couple of years.

[43:55](#) **GN:** Have you had an opportunity to use Marist for anything like... Take of course, to go to an art exhibit.

[44:02](#) **DM:** I always do that kind of stuff everything. I always try to manage to go to the art exhibits. If you know if there is different venues here on campus, I'm not into the sports as much so I don't usually go to the sports games but some of the plays and fashion shows and things like that. Yeah basically. No, I did not come back to school. I

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kicked myself that I never did but no it was just it never seem to happen. My kids were young when they were younger and needed me at home. It was one of those things which is never seemed to happen so. Maybe someday when I retire, I will come back and take some courses and you know. Do things like that to keep myself busy.

[44:44](#) **GN:** I think that you get a special education in the office that you're in.

[44:48](#) **DM:** Well, yes and no.

[44:49](#) **GN:** Many people don't get a clue about what's going on and I think you have an insight and stay alert for all of those things. Is there something. We didn't talk about that maybe you'd like mention in terms of people that were you ever tempted to move to Vassar or New Paltz?

[45:12](#) **DM:** No again like I said, I've been very happy here and I think that's one of the points I was trying to make is that Marist is a community. And you feel at home here. You know when you come to work here and even if you're not...It doesn't become your whole life where you live and breathe Marist. It's a very comfortable place to come to work you or your colleagues. You enjoy working here. You always feel like you know. You're trying to do something to help the community and the college. So you feel worthwhile, you know, in your job and stuff so I think that's what keeps the people here. I think that people enjoy working here. And I think that's why you got so many people who have twenty-five plus years here at the college.

[45:52](#) **GN:** What do you do when you're not here? Do you have a hobby?

[45:57](#) **DM:** Basically my husband and I ... we have a daughter who lives in Connecticut. So we try to see her as often as we can. My husband and I love to travel so whenever possible we'll take day trips or whatever we have friends. Very good friends of ours moved to Florida so we will go see them.

[46:11](#) **GN:** Where in Florida would you go?

[46:14](#) **DM:** Well they're actually in Palm Bay. My sister is also fairly close to that so in the northern part on the east coast. It's probably where we will be. At some point when we retire, we hope to spend three or four months down you just enjoying the warm weather instead of the snow up here. I have a brother and sister who live local and we spend time with them. I have a number of nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews. So I am very involved in their lives there's always an event that we seem to be going to for them and stuff. That's basically it.

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[46:44](#) **GN:** How about movies? Do you see movies?

[46:46](#) **DM:** Basically we don't seem to do a lot of that. Go out to dinner you know with friends and colleagues and things like that and stuff. We like to travel like I said we're going to Washington D.C. We enjoy going to museums and doing things like and stuff though. You know even locally here. We'll go to like the Mill's Mansion and Vanderbilt FDR and stuff.

[47:06](#) **GN:** go to **vas** has a good exhibit now on the Hudson river

[47:09](#) **DM:** Lots of times we would take our kids at Christmas. You know let them see the decorations and stuff different you know. Local place and stuff. But that's basically it.

[47:18](#) **GN:** And your work week here. You do get three weeks off or what's your...

[47:25](#) **DM:** Actually a month off. I've been here for a while now. again like I said I think that's another reason why you find people come to Marist and enjoys staying. We have very good benefits. We have good retirement plan. We have good health plan, a good education plan, you know for.

[47:40](#) **GN:** are you in TIIA?

[47:41](#) **DM:** And so it's a very good retirement plan and stuff. And I think that we also have good benefits with vacation and stuff?

[47:48](#) **GN:** So do you take it in weeks?

[47:50](#) **DM:** Usually in weeks. Usually in weeks I'll take a week in winter and go away to Florida and take another week in the summer. And then just break it up into days and stuff you do day trips and... things.

[48:00](#) **GN:** Well since you have nothing more to say on things that I didn't bring up. I am going to have to say thank you very much, Donna. It's been a delight talking to you. I hope you stay here is as happy and contented to the future as it has been up to now.

[48:16](#) **DM:** Thank you very much.