

WALTER HERBST

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Herbst, Walter

Transcript – Walter Herbst

Interviewee: Walter Herbst

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Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Marist College Alumni

Marist College Social Aspects

Summary: In this interview Walter Herbst discusses his years at Marist College, what the dormitories, food, and general atmosphere was like during the early 1960s. He talks about the Marist Brothers influence on the campus and what the social scene was like at the time. Walter also discusses playing sports and the comradery of the teams on campus, especially the crew team. He also talks about meeting his wife and getting engaged on campus.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:00:02](#)):

This is an interview conducted with Walter Herbst. We are in the Archives and Special Collections room in the Cannavino Library. The date is June 21st, 2018, and the interviewer is Ezekiel Sanger. Thank you, Walt.

Walter Herbst ([00:00:15](#)):

You're quite welcome.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:00:16](#)):

So just starting off, when and where were you born?

Walter Herbst ([00:00:20](#)):

Oh, gosh. I was born in Albany, New York. February 25th, 1942.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:00:27](#)):

Okay. And, I'm just curious when you first learned or heard about Marist?

Walter Herbst ([00:00:35](#)):

Well, in the background, you noted that I graduated from St. John's at Rensselaer in 1959. Well, from there, I was originally going to go to John Carroll University to play football. But I wound up at the Diocesan Seminary in Albany to become a diocesan priest. So I was there for a couple of years and then when I decided to leave, it was February and it turned out that in most colleges... major colleges had already begun their semesters in January. So I was probably three to four weeks behind schedule and they wouldn't accept me coming in and it was too late. I couldn't make that time up. So a priest at the seminary, Father Butz was going to, I believe it was Fordham, for his doctorate work and knew Dr. Sommer, George Sommer. So they got talking and Dr. Sommer of course was here so he mentioned to Father Butz, "Hey, you know, we just started so give it a crack." So, we did, I called the registrar's office at that time. I think it was a brother Malachi, Malachy. Yeah. And he said, "By all means, come on down." So I came down, did a tour, got accepted right away and moved into the famous dorms at Donnelly Hall.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:02:06](#)):

So I'm curious, did you ever, like plan... Did you ever think about maybe being a Brother because you just said, you know...?

Walter Herbst ([00:02:11](#)):

I did not, no. I had gone that route, you know, with the Diocesan seminary. I did admire the brothers. I thought they were, they were very dedicated, very studious and at the same time, and they're very well-rounded. I mean, they were some tremendous athletes. We, the students at one point played against the faculty in basketball, they were good. They were really good. Tough, intense. So that was part of the culture at the time. There was a sort of a very healthy interaction between faculty and students. It was, it was good. It was very good.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:02:55](#)):

Okay. Interesting. And there were, there was a good relationship, the Brothers, the students and the lay students as well?

Walter Herbst ([00:03:03](#)):

Yes. In fact, many of the resident students were from the City, the City area and Marist schools. So many of them knew a lot of the student Brothers. So there was, they had that relationship. The brothers, as I said, were really, excellent students. I mean they took it very seriously. They weren't partying and so on. So they did take it seriously. And it was... For many of us, it was a very polite exchange. But they lived off in their own dormitory, they had all their own activities and sort of very restricted in that sense. So. Yeah, it was a good, it was a good relationship. Many of the student brothers knew many of the city guys, so you know, that they had that relationship already.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:03:55](#)):

Okay. Yeah. I had no idea. So you were talking already about living in Donnelly. Can you tell me about what was your experience like while living on campus?

Walter Herbst ([00:04:07](#)):

It was interesting. Now, remember I came from the seminary with a private room, you know. And its own set of rules, of course. Coming here, there were 10 rooms with four guys to a room over in the corner of what would be, I guess, the south, southwest corner of Donnelly. So when I came in, I had the spare bed couch, whatever you want to call it. And I'll show you a picture, but there were three others in that room, a total of 40 dorm students. And it was very interesting. We had curfews. So that kind of limited our extracurricular activities if you will. During the week, we had to be in by 10 and on the weekends by midnight. So if you get the picture now, in addition to that, there was also one of the faculty brothers was what, today you'd call a resident assistant or RA.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:05:17](#)):

Yep.

Walter Herbst ([00:05:17](#)):

Okay. So they had no compunction about ensuring the curfews were met and they would actually do a little room checks. So it was different. You have to understand maybe with many of the things that we're going to talk about... culture then was very, very different. Some of the changes that that really began socially ... began after '65, the Civil Rights Movement, and then going into late sixties, the Vietnam War and the protests. But I know that you have a question about that, so we'll come back to that .

Ezekial Sanger ([00:05:56](#)):

Yeah, we will.

Walter Herbst ([00:05:58](#)):

So, back to Donnelly Hall. And now Donnelly was built by the Brothers, designed and built by the Brothers. Brother Nilus Donnelly was always around, you know. You'd see him outside where the football field now was just a plain field. And he was out there on his equipment leveling and doing different things and different construction projects around. But one of the things that I remember about

Donnelly is not only, you know, the number of people and the guys, and it got to be a very close-knit group. But when the brothers built the dorms and the showers and bathrooms, apparently one of the brothers that installed the toilets was rather tall. And we had one of our guys, we'll just say, Jimmy, and he was about 5'5" or whatever. Well, poor guy, every time he'd go to the bathroom, his feet wouldn't touch the floor. So you got all kinds of heat about that but that was one of the quirks of the Brothers' construction. So it was good. It was good. It was a lot of fun. It was very homey, I guess you would say. You know, we got tight relationships over those two years, actually, I guess. I was there a year and a half because I came in February. So, okay.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:07:17](#)):

Alright. So I'm curious about like, how is the food? I'm not in the understanding that there was a company that wasn't very, the food wasn't very good. I don't know if you...

Walter Herbst ([00:07:33](#)):

I never met a meal I didn't like.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:07:33](#)):

[laughter].

Walter Herbst ([00:07:33](#)):

Well, I kind of think that the meals were passable. They weren't anything to write home about but they weren't really anything to pass up either. And when we got into crew season, we had one of our guys just loved to cook. He was a self-styled chef and he worked across the street on Delafield, it used to be Delafield Avenue, I think it's Route 9 now, but the Delafield Diner. And he was a short-order cook there. Well, during crew season, he would come over. What was the breadth of ... the Student Brothers' residence had a cafeteria in the bottom of a kitchen in the bottom floor and the guys on crew would go over and Danny would cook bacon, eggs, pancakes, all that kind of stuff for us. So that was a little bit different than the regular affair at the other cafeteria. So but you know, I don't remember it as being so poor or by no means great either. So, you know, it was all included. I can't kick about that.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:08:48](#)):

Okay. And at the time was the campus.... Was the tuition very expensive? Or was it?

Walter Herbst ([00:08:53](#)):

My recollection is when I was a senior, I think it was \$2,000 and that was everything. That was all your fees, books, tuition, residence, the whole package and I think it might even been a little bit under 2000, 19 something, but 2000.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:09:14](#)):

And was that kind of manageable at the time? Or at the time was that, you know hard to...?

Walter Herbst ([00:09:22](#)):

Yeah, it's hard to translate into today's dollars, but by comparison in the summer months I was working in a factory and I was making a \$1.50 an hour. So, you know, if you kind of translate, it's probably as a

relative thing, less than tuition would be relative to income today. It's probably much... I don't know about much, but it's certainly more expensive today relative to your earning power.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:09:59](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. Okay.

Walter Herbst ([00:10:01](#)):

And they were NASD loans. I don't know if you still have those. National, the national defense... NDSL, National Defense Student Loans that you could take out for tuition or, you know, education, whatever and paid back over 10 years at ... Oh gosh, I don't even remember the interest rate. But it was lower than commercial interest for sure. And it was fixed for the 10 years. So I can remember being in my thirties and saying, "Oh, my last payment." You know, so. And it wasn't much either, I think maybe 60 some dollars a month. You know we're talking 50 years ago. So it was in that range anyway.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:10:46](#)):

Yeah. So it sounds like things really haven't changed too, too much in terms of the experience with the cost of education.

Walter Herbst ([00:10:54](#)):

Right. Yeah.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:10:57](#)):

So I'm curious you know, the school has changed a lot. I'm curious has Poughkeepsie changed a lot? What were the places around town that you would go to?

Walter Herbst ([00:11:08](#)):

Well, okay, first, Poughkeepsie has changed tremendously. I mean, it's unbelievable how much change. In terms of what we kind of did and hung around, hung out with, right across the street, I don't know what the name of the road is... But directly across from what was the Brothers' residence...

Ezekial Sanger ([00:11:32](#)):

Saint Peter's?

Walter Herbst ([00:11:32](#)):

St Peter's. On the other side of the road, Route 9, was a place called Max, and it was just a local gin mill and a great hangout. We go over, you know, the beers are cheap. The girls were plentiful. You know, it was just the place to hang out for us. As I got into my, you know, in the early years, and that was still true when I was a senior. But when I was a senior, there was a much greater influx of students because we were, we had the dorm at that point, Sheahan, so there was a greater influx of kids. And so they went, not only they went to Max, they would go over to Vassar, they'd go across the river to New Paltz that kind of thing. So, our vision expanded tremendously depending on where the girls were.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:12:24](#)):

Alright. And I'm just curious what did your average weekday as a student look like? You know, when did you get up? When did you have classes?

Walter Herbst (00:12:37):

Well, for me, it was kind of a profound difference coming from the seminary. Another story about that too, by Father Driscoll, but, in the seminary, the courses were three and four credit hours. When I came to Marist, they were two credit hours. And that was quite an adjustment in two ways. Number one, you had to take more courses to get your 128 credit hours. Okay. But also the same amount of work in my opinion was expected for the two-credit course as was expected for the four-hour courses that I had previously been taking. So there was certainly an adjustment there. I was, when I first came, very studious, so I spent more time studying. And then I learned better. But it was a tough grind, I can say throughout my lifetime that the education was very stringent. But served me well, I do want to tell you about Father Driscoll. Father Driscoll was a Dominican and the Dominicans own religion, okay? They think. In the seminary, I took a theology course and I got Bs. So when I came down here, they had the same required course, same textbook, same everything. Well, that wasn't good enough for the Dominicans. So I had to take the course over again, orally and written, and I got a D. It was like, "Oh my God, this is outrageous." Well, the Dominicans... And I just, when I saw, Father Driscoll's picture, I remembered that he was that fast. There was nothing like the Dominican theology. So that was my... well in the next semester though, I did wind up with a B, but, in that first conversion, that was tough. That was tough. And I think he wanted to establish a point. But what else? Did I want to tell you something else? Oh, the two credits and the three credits that I previously had was kind of a conundrum because I was only able to get, I think it was eight, nine, nine elective credit hours. So I came in, in the middle of my sophomore year, but I had less than one, one semester of a freshman year. So I doubled up so that I could graduate, you know, one, I thought I wouldn't in 63. So that, that kind of added to, to the problem as well. So you had two credit courses, you had to take more of them. And then I took extras so that I could make up the first year and a half. So it was, that's what I did during.

Ezekial Sanger (00:15:45):

Okay. And you told me, we were talking earlier, you were telling me about not only was there a written exam, but there was a verbal or an oral.

Walter Herbst (00:15:53):

Yes. In order to graduate now, your senior, your senior year, you had your final exams, of course. But in addition to that, you had a written comprehensive exam. And in addition, a verbal comprehensive exam with, as I remember, it was either four or five professors, I'm kind of thinking it was four of the professors. And when they said comprehensive, it meant they could ask, or the written tasks could be on any subject area in any course that you would take in while at Marist. And it was brutal. It was grueling. So, you know, like I said earlier a little bit earlier, the education that I got here has really carried me through life. I mean, it was, it was excellent. No question about it. And I mentioned too, when we were talking, the brothers are, in education, you know, that that's their calling, their vocation. So when, when the brothers were in classes with us, the faculty brothers expected them to know the material inside and out. So the competition was extremely tough. I mean, they demanded a lot. So, the education was really exceptionally strong, I think.

Ezekial Sanger (00:17:15):

Interesting. Wow. I'm curious, it said, in one of the papers that said in the fall of 1961, the school enrollment reached a new high with over 700 new students. I'm curious if the school was able to handle, you know, an influx of new students.

Walter Herbst ([00:17:33](#)):

I saw that number and honestly, I was, I was really surprised. And so I thought, well, that must be the brothers. Well, when I went back and looked at it again, it said new students. So I'm trying to think in 1961, I came here, my class was 24. I'm thinking, where did they come from? So the best I can, I can recall is that it may have been later than 61 or alternatively, it could have been a big enrollment of night students. So back then, the night school was very, very active. There were large numbers of folks from IBM, that IBM was sponsoring. IBM did a lot for Marist, at least in the beginning. I, you know, I'm sure that continued.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:18:22](#)):

Yeah. They're still involved.

Walter Herbst ([00:18:24](#)):

They, they did a lot, a lot for Marist. So many of those students that many, many of them back the preponderance of those nights, students were probably, the preponderance of that number was probably nine students. That would be my guess because the, the real influx of lay students, as I recall, was in 62, 63 when Sheahan Hall opened, because then there was a dormitory. And, you know, if you just contrast that with a couple of years before that, in 60, 61, the first students, the first resident students stayed in King's Court and the Gibson Motel, hotel, whatever it was, and you know, when I came here, they talked about that all the time. So that must have been quite a trip. They you know, that was entertaining at best. So, but that, that just in those couple years, I mean, that was the, that was the transition. And then it was while I was a senior in Sheehan, they were building Leo and that was almost complete by the time I graduated. And then as I've seen, it's been, you know, just explosive ever since. So anyway, that going back, that that's kind of the growth that, or the way that it could have grown to 700 as I recall it.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:19:48](#)):

Okay. Now something that's interesting is hazing is no longer a part of campuses, but in the yearbook, there's an entire page, maybe even two dedicated to hazing. And there was once a student, a sophomore class president, Larry Clover, who I think got the worst of it. Can you, do you remember hazing on campus as a student?

Walter Herbst ([00:20:10](#)):

Well, yeah, that, I think that connotes something very different today than it did then. Basically it was, you could, say teasing, and maybe a little embarrassment is synonymous with hazing, then it wasn't anything very serious. Larry was a character, Larry he was quite a guy. He later went on with a couple of other guys to form a band and I, the name just escapes. I just had it, I lost it, but they were great. They had a folk singing group, they went on to open a bar Sharmani and Clover and Nemser, and I think Mitchell, open Frivolous Sal's in Poughkeepsie. And, you know, that was after I graduated. Cause they were, they were younger, but that became quite a hangout for Marist. But they were terrific. They were really good. So anyway, I was pulled over and because he, because he was that kind of guy outgoing and so on, I'm sure he got teased or as you today, as you call it hazed. Yeah. Yeah. Embarrassed, you know, silly things, silly things.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:21:32](#)):

I'm also curious, if I'm correct it was during your stay at Marist that they had the first spring weekend. Can you tell me like how that started, what it ended up being?

Walter Herbst ([00:21:46](#)):

Yeah. That's kind of hazy, but the guy behind that was really Phil Bruno, and you know, he had this idea that we could get together and that we could, you know, have a nice big picnic and party and, you know, kegs of beer and the whole thing. And it was over at Plattekill, is it that is that the name of it? Across the river on property that the brothers owned and it was ideal for picnic and that kind of thing. So, so that was kind of it, it was when you say spring weekend, it was kind of a two day picnic as opposed to what you might think today as a spring weekend. Now there was another spring weekend in my senior year and that, again, Phil the entertainer, entrepreneur, I guess he had this all well-organized was going to be on campus. Pete Seeger, was going to perform, it was all lined up. And this was folk music time, if you remember. Well, you remember forget it well, but this was folk music time, you know, so he had this all lined up and one of the freshmen, riding through town mooned some of the residents downtown. And of course they call brother Paul, you got it. One of the important things to understand about this particular period of time was that it was very regimented, non-challenging. You didn't question an adult. You did, as you were told, no questions asked and so on. So it was very strict in, that's not like the changes that started taking place in the late sixties. Okay. We can talk about that later, but, but, so we had this very, maybe sophomore mentality, high school mentality, and brother Paul was a master at it, to be honest. And because of the uproar among probably two or three residents who knows, you know, over this mooning, it became quite a contentious issue on campus. And one of the principle things, you asked about student council, one of the principal things that we had to contend with on student council was can we cancel spring weekend? And so on, it turned out that we did, and we were pretty much forced to do so by brother Paul. And of course, so that in, I think in our yearbook there's blank pages for spring weekend 63, and that's why it got canceled, but, you know, the planning was great. I mean, after the first year of Bruno really came up with good stuff and it was going to be fantastic, but...

Ezekial Sanger ([00:24:56](#)):

That's such a shame. Yeah. I know Pete Seeger was a big name, then and is still a big name now. So I'm curious, did Phillip, is it Phil, did Phil Bruno also, is he also responsible for the Christmas party?

Walter Herbst ([00:25:12](#)):

No, actually we did that in Sheahan. And that was the first one kind of. You know, as you got more and more guys together, because it was a much, it wasn't like 40 in Donnelley hall. It was, I don't know how many people, but anyway, we maybe 120, is that sound right?

Ezekial Sanger ([00:25:30](#)):

Uh, yeah. I mean, that's a fair.

Walter Herbst ([00:25:31](#)):

Okay. So we had a whole different mix and somebody came up with the idea, well let's, why don't we do something. So we came up with the idea of a Christmas party and that's kind of how that got going. And we just had a bunch of guys get together and they planned it. And, you know, we don't know who we had as a Santa Claus, but we got a Santa Claus, you know, and that kind of, you know, it was just something to do and, you know, pass our time and have an excuse for another couple of beers.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:25:58](#)):

Awesome. I think I recall there being, I think the administration didn't want a Christmas party. Do you remember there being pushback from the school?

Walter Herbst ([00:26:08](#)):

Well, not that specifically, but it kind of goes back to that sophomore mentality, a high school mentality. Brother Paul was a great guy and he was a good Dean of students while that was his area discipline, right? So he was kind of stuck on the notion that we were still in high school and we still needed to be constrained to some degree. And so, yeah, there was probably was some pushback. And I think, I don't remember all of the brothers that were RAs, if you will but brother Michael Kelly was one of them and I think they kind of supported it and they, you know, let their lack of objection, be known. And so it kind of moved forward. But again, you know, the culture, the climate was, you know, the adults are right, you're wrong, keep your mouth shut, you know, so, and it was beginning to change. It really was. Um, so going from high school to college, in college.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:27:26](#)):

I'm also curious about where there's the livestock on campus when you were here?

Walter Herbst ([00:27:33](#)):

No. I saw that in some of the notes and I thought, gee, I don't remember that at all. Not at all. I know that they had a farm across the river in Esopus, so it may have had something to do with that. Maybe some of the animals were here, I don't know, but, you know, St. Peters was at the brother's residence that we, okay. There was a road there, I guess there still is across that road was basically wilderness, big swimming pool, but there could easily have been farms, farm, land, and farm animals over there that, you know, we never went over there, other than, in the winter, we could ice skate on that pool. It was that big, but beyond that, it may have been over there, but not, not that I recall or, or that was any big deal.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:28:26](#)):

Okay. And this is kind of another random question, but there was an article in the paper that the National Guard had a few tanks on campus in 1962, do you recall there being tanks or not at all?

Walter Herbst ([00:28:39](#)):

You know, when I saw that note, I thought, geez, that just doesn't comport with my memory at all and what I was thinking. And now I'm just guessing that may have been later with the Vietnam protests and that kind of thing, because I kind of associated that fact with the school in Ohio, where the National Guard actually shot some students that were protesting, [Kent State] Kent State, that's right. Yeah. So I think in my own mind that that incident may have been later in the sixties. I don't recall it at all in 62 or any at any time the National Guard or tanks being on campus. And I, that seems like something I would remember.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:29:28](#)):

Okay. Yeah. I was, I didn't, you know, there wasn't anything in the paper about it, you know, even in the Poughkeepsie Journal. So I'm kind of confused. I have to look back at it, but I don't know. I'll have to

show you. But okay so, my next question is, do you know why the graduate brothers and the lay students are not mingled together in the yearbook? Why there's no headshots of the student brothers?

Walter Herbst ([00:29:57](#)):

I don't know, but I can guess. Okay. And it has to do with humility. They're expected to be, you know, their life is dedicated to education and religious life. And you know the pictures and that kind of thing might contradict that philosophy. That's only my guess. I just, you know, having some seminarian background that might be at least maybe one of the reasons.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:30:27](#)):

No, that makes sense, but it was just kind of curious, it's odd, you know, considering the, the emphasis of the brotherhood on campus, and it's only until the very end, do you actually see all of them altogether? So I know we've already talked about, I've talked with your wife a little bit about females on campus and we were saying, you know, females were welcomed and they were invited, is that correct?

Walter Herbst ([00:30:52](#)):

Yes, they were, but she also pointed out that the residents down the hall, they couldn't come in the Donnelly Hall at all, even though there were classrooms there, but again, it was all male. So they, it was kind of prohibited. They could of course come to games and crew races and that kind of thing on campus. But, it wasn't wide open. In fact, when our son went to school and they had women in the dorms, she almost had heart failure, but, you know, Oh my God. So, and that was quite a few years ago too. I mean, he's 53, so. No, there weren't. It's certainly, there were a lot of girls around nursing schools right up to St. Francis nurses were right up the hill and they certainly enjoyed coming down to basketball games and whatever else, what other excuse they could find on campus. I think we probably had dances every once in a while or that kind of thing, so, yeah.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:31:58](#)):

Okay. Was there ever any interest from any of the girls that you knew to you know, attend Marist, Did they ever desire to, you know, for Marist to open its doors to female students?

Walter Herbst ([00:32:12](#)):

Well, we go back to the culture at the time and this was a male school. So if they held that desire, it was pretty much held to themselves because you know, that wasn't acceptable and that's not to say that women didn't go to colleges, they did, but you know, the larger, you know, schools and so on. I wasn't ready, Maurist wasn't ready for that. Conversely, you know, I grew up in East Greenbush, so conversely St. Rose at that time, St. Rose College was all female. So you had the converse, you know, so it's interesting times changed rapidly in the late sixties, Vietnam and Johnson's, what was his social, you're the history major? What was Johnson's philosophy? His mantra was, Oh God, he opened all the welfare programs and all that kind of thing. And, it'll come to me. We'll keep talking. We'll keep talking and go. I'll just pop out a word at some point. But anyway, that's when really, really radical change started taking place. Dr. Leary, Timothy, Leary, you know that name?

Ezekial Sanger ([00:33:34](#)):

The name rings a bell. Yeah. [LSD] Yes, yes. I know. Yeah. Yeah.

Walter Herbst ([00:33:39](#)):

Now he was from this general area. Millbrook, maybe Millbrook, but LSD started coming in. Okay. The flower generation, I mean, it was dramatic change. And, you know, for, even for me at that time where I was raised in a very strict upbringing, this was like, Oh my God anathema. So anyway, but that's when the changes really, really started taking place.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:34:03](#)):

Okay. Talking about..

Walter Herbst ([00:34:05](#)):

Great Society. Johnson's Great Society.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:34:08](#)):

Oh, yes, yes. Okay. So talking about, you know, we're talking about the culture of the students, as the student council president, what was your experience with the, you know, problems that students were coming to you with? Like what were some of the big, I know you already mentioned that, "the mooning"

Walter Herbst ([00:34:32](#)):

The two major things, okay. Now you get, again, perspective. The two major things that we dealt with were the mooning and canceling spring weekend. That was, that was big. That was real hand wringing. And the other was being able to take off our jackets and ties for classes that was big also. So to backfill that, you were required to this is when you were required to wear a jacket and tie to all classes. Okay. So ending, that was a big, big deal. Again, we go back to maybe that kind of high school mentality carrying over. Well, that was, like I said, those are the two major, major things that had happened. In the meantime, we did a lot of little things like, student handbook, creating called like varsity club and, and different, charters, I guess. Yeah, creating charters that the administration would accept and, you know, that everybody would agree to. And those kinds of things, because we were very much in an infantile stage, so to speak. And as we were growing, we were growing quickly and we sort of had to, well, geez, we don't have a varsity club. Well, let's, let's do that. Let's. I mean, how are we going to do it? And who's going to do it and what are the rules going to be? And, you know, all that. And then is Brother Paul going to buy it and the whole, you know, the whole magilla. So it was all those kinds of things that we basically spent our time with until spring weekend.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:36:15](#)):

Yeah.

Walter Herbst ([00:36:17](#)):

Probably the planning there was probably like March, April, cause we were out by May. So yeah. So it had to be fairly early March or, you know

Ezekial Sanger ([00:36:28](#)):

Yeah. It's, I've never heard of this, you know, it's mooning or any of this.

Walter Herbst ([00:36:32](#)):

I would tell you the kid, but

Ezekial Sanger ([00:36:35](#)):

So I'm curious to know as student council president, what was your relationship with President Foy at the time?

Walter Herbst ([00:36:44](#)):

Mostly I as student council, president, I dealt with Brother Paul. Okay. Almost daily. He was, he was strict on knowing exactly what was going on, why was it going on? And I had to defend everything, you know, that kind of thing, Brother Foy. Um, I know because I worked in the President's office in the student loan department doing whatever I was doing vouchers and that kind of thing under Tony Campilii. Now Tony retired a few years ago.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:37:19](#)):

Okay, great. I know a little bit about Tony. Yeah.

Walter Herbst ([00:37:23](#)):

Tony, Tony, great guy. He was a crew, a guy also, is it? He was [class of] 62. Okay. So he, when he graduated, he went up to the business office, became the business manager. So I worked for Tony and the business office and, Linus Foy's office were adjoining and he was very involved in all of that. He was a tremendous, tremendous man, what a visionary and brilliant man. He was, it was sad. Now, I don't know if this is true, but I do believe it is entirely credible. It was said he could read 2000 words a minute with almost perfect recollection. Yeah. He was, he was absolutely amazing. And down to earth, there was nothing either eccentric or hoity toity, if you will, about him, he was very down to earth and he understood, you know, the students and what they needed. And so on at the same time, as he was planning a tremendous development programs and, and capital development plans. Great guy, absolutely great guy. Now, you know, we had, when we were talking earlier, I kind of only remember this a little bit. Daniel Kirk. Well, first he was the RA and over in Donnelly for a bit, but he became interim president for a bit. And I don't know why it may well have been because Linus Foy was completing something either for the brothers or for his degree program. So there was a period of time where Daniel Kirk was the acting president. It might've been in 62 and then Foy came back in 63 and then, you know, he led, the beginnings of all of the development and so on. So he was, he was absolutely remarkable guy. He had a, one of the things that he developed, almost immediately was the association with IBM and the computer technology development. He brought all of that. And I mean, like I said, visionary, he was tremendous.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:39:42](#)):

So the students and President Foy had a good relationship with each other.

Walter Herbst ([00:39:46](#)):

Yes. He understood the students and could work with them on a student level with no problem. And he can deal with anybody else, you know? I mean, he was

Ezekial Sanger ([00:39:57](#)):

So, and I just, I recently just listened to Tony Campilii's, his oral history. And he, I'm curious if this is true, he said that President Foy, unless he was having like, unless he was talking to someone, and it was really supposed to be private, his door was always open.

Walter Herbst ([00:40:17](#)):

That's true. Yeah. I remember, the Cuban Missile Crisis. Okay. I was up there with Tony working, Foy was right next to door and, you know, you started hearing these tales of the disaster and what was going to happen, and we're going to be at war with Russia, and we're going to get obliterated. Well, Foy came out and he said, look, you know, first you have to realize that all of this is posturing, you know, and if it were to happen in the very worst case, it wouldn't be anything like the panic that's going on, it wouldn't be as destructive. Although, you know, I mean, it is atomic warfare, it would be bad, but, you know, the reality is that they're not going to strike New York City. They don't have that ability. And at that time they didn't have the ICBMs that would do that, you know, so he was very, very calming. And of course, that carried through the students that were on the brink of hysteria.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:41:18](#)):

That's an incredible little story, yeah. So I'm curious, you know, Tony Campilii I think he was probably the youngest staff or faculty at the time, doing, you know, amazing work. As a student who was probably close to his age, you know, what was that like working under him? Did he seem to have...

Walter Herbst ([00:41:43](#)):

We were first of all crewmates. Yes. So we had that in common. Tony was just a great guy, honest, hardworking, ethical, easy as could be very, very laid back, just a super, super guy. And, yeah, so it was easy. It was really easy. You make a mistake, you just said, well, you know what, let's take a look at that, you know? It was just great. And you're right. He was the youngest, but obviously through classes and so on, they saw the potential for, for being able to manage that. And you know, he was a big part of the growth in terms of keeping up and managing it and all the capital development and all that kind of thing. So, yeah. Yeah. He was a great guy. I keep saying that they're great guy, but honestly, whether it was the selection process for admission and so on, we had, I think, a tremendous student body, we really did. Smart, community oriented community minded, you know, wild at times, of course, boys will be boys that kind of thing, you know, but nothing destructive, you know, just all around good guys. And of course the brothers in classes kind of raise the level of expectation academically. So you had a good mix, a good mix.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:43:15](#)):

How would you just, how else would you describe the student body in terms of like where they come from? Like the kind of families like, locationally? I think you already mentioned that when we were talking earlier today.

Walter Herbst ([00:43:30](#)):

We called them day hops. Okay, meaning that they commuted, they don't, they weren't residents. So they came from, Kingston, Newburgh, New Paltz, Poughkeepsie of course, and surrounding areas, Beacon, not so much up north of Poughkeepsie, maybe it's few from Hyde Park. But that was basically the mix. And you talk about family. Well, again, going back the socio times, socioeconomic exactly, there weren't a lot of split families. If they were split, they were split under the same roof. So they were much more solid family units than there might be now, not a lot of single parents. There were a few of the

guys in the first and the second class, I was in the third that were married already themselves and started having families. And they would, you know, tough it out and they'd be working nights. And two of them were on the crew team. So they managed not only to be on crew cause they had been in Poughkeepsie High School, I think, routine and managing family and working and getting through.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:44:55](#)):

That's incredible. Yeah. Yeah. I'm curious, apparently you created a point system for grants. Can you tell me a little bit, you know, how that started?

Walter Herbst ([00:45:11](#)):

I can now we're going back 55 years, so this might not be, or more might not be exact, but basically the idea was we have all these, these different clubs and we wanted to find a way to get more interest in participation and so on. So what we thought was, well, we can't pay them to join a club, but maybe we can do a little grant to help with books or tuition or beer or whatever it might be. And when I say a grant, it might be 50 bucks and, you know, I don't even remember the amounts. So what we did is we, we came up with this kind of point system and Danny Baraka was part of that. I mentioned him earlier, but you get so many points for a participant participating, let's say in a sport basketball, crew, there was no baseball at the time. And there was no football at the time. It was sailing. So sports, so many points for participation, let's say in the booster club, which the purpose of that was of course, to support the athletic endeavors and so on. So, you know, you get so many points if you were, college work, student college work, study student, and working in the library or wherever it might be on the switchboard, we talked about the switchboard. Then you got certain number of points for that. And you just add up all the points and, you know, an award or maybe 50 bucks, whatever it would have been, 25 bucks, 50 bucks, whatever it was, you won an award to just get some recognition instead of a trophy. And the money came from a student fees. So we had a little bit of a budget for that. We put aside for that. Yeah.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:47:02](#)):

That's incredible because that point system is still around on campus today.

Walter Herbst ([00:47:06](#)):

No kidding.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:47:07](#)):

Yes, but not, there's no grant, it's a students have a chance to pick their housing sooner, which is, you know, it's still a neat little award for being involved and participating and doing well. So that's incredible.

Walter Herbst ([00:47:24](#)):

Amazing.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:47:25](#)):

You were talking about activities. Can you tell me about your experience? My understanding is you were a part of the first intercollegiate basketball team here at Marist. Yeah,

Walter Herbst ([00:47:37](#)):

Well, yeah, I played I didn't play in high school, I had to work. My sport honestly was football, but I played in the seminary. And then when I came to Marist, they said, hey, you know, you play basketball, we could really use him some help. So I, Gary Mendez, I think was the coach, from town and it was kind of three steps up from a pickup league.. We played IBM, you know, it's sort of an industrial league. So he said, sure, come on and play. So he quickly recognized my ability as a football player. So I was the sub, they called it the Marist five and sub in the Poughkeepsie Journal. Well, my role was to go in the game and, you know, I wasn't that bad, but still, I wasn't, I wasn't that good either. But my role was to taunt, rough up, I guess, the other players get them to foul. All right. And I was very good at it. That kind of was my basketball, football role, on the basketball team. The next year we had Brother William Murphy came in and he became the athletic director. And he immediately brought in George Derber, I think, as the basketball coach and George had a different philosophy than what we had. So he only kept maybe two or three of the original guys. Then, you know, we have more kids coming in too, so he was able to pick from a bigger university. And then I think at some point in time, Wade, I'm not sure if he became the Athletic Director or the basketball, I think he became the basketball coach. Cause I think Murphy was William Murphy was still done. Okay. Yeah. I forgotten exactly how that went because of course I was on the bench, but you know, a side story. I'm fond of, when I was playing the nurses from St. Francis used to come down so I can remember just thinking, wait, on that far end of the court, I ripped off a rebound and I came around the corner dribbling and I saw Betty and I thought to myself, oh man, I got to meet her. So after the game I timed myself so that I met her at half court as they were leaving. And I said, are you going to Max? Max was the bar across the street. Right. So she said, Oh, I don't know. I suppose so. So sure enough, I went over and I said, we're all having beers right, so I went over and asked her to dance. She said, no. I said, Oh my gosh. So then she said, well, all right, so long story short, we got married. Anyway, that was my basketball career. Probably the highlight of my basketball career for life. Right.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:50:53](#)):

I want to touch upon your marriage in a little bit, and the engagement at the college. But I also want to talk really quick again about crew. You told me at the time there was no boat house.

Walter Herbst ([00:51:09](#)):

Well, There was no practice boathouse, to be more exact. We somehow, they made arrangements to store our one shell at, I think you called it the Cornell Boathouse, it's the one with the balcony. [Yes] We were able to start, I may have something to do with Poughkeepsie High School because Joe Cantenzaro became the crew coach and he had been the Poughkeepsie High crew coach for many years. So however it worked out, we were able to store our shell at that boat house. So we didn't have you know, our own boat house or anything like it. We had a St. Anne's Hermitage, which was an old building over by the grotto. And we had these hand-me-down, hand-me-down, several generations of machines that we use to row. They were stubby little things and you could adjust the pressure and so on. So in probably January, maybe February, early February, we would work out inside on those machines that were again terrible. And then we'd get out on the river, probably mid-February, March, as soon as the ice cleared. And it was brutal, it was cold, cold, and the waves, you know, come up over the gunnel. But anyway, that was our association with crew. If I remember correctly, now I may be wrong about this, we even borrowed a shell until our new shell came, until the year, our only shell came in. It was a Pocock, I remember that. So I think we used a Poughkeepsie shell if I'm not mistaken. We used to row against for practice. We used to row against the high schools. The high schools around here were very, very good. Very good, so it was good, it was quite a challenge. Yeah. Toughest sport I ever participated in, in terms of total physical requirements as well as mental concentration, you know?

Ezekial Sanger ([00:53:18](#)):

Yeah. No, I did. I did crew for my in high school and I did it only for a semester because you know, it is intense. I'm curious about, is there anything, uh, you want to say about Coach Cantenzaro or, you know, what his coaching style was like?

Walter Herbst ([00:53:41](#)):

Again, it's a culture thing my way or no way. And he was tough, scream and yell and threaten, and he was something else, but he was also a fantastic coach. He really knew how to bring a team together, how to get us going. We were to be fair, a scraggly bunch of newcomers, basically only a couple of guys had any experience with crew, Gary Smith, the coxswain, did have experience in Poughkeepsie, but just I think one or two other guys had any experience at all and he whipped us into shape and we were, we were competitive. We didn't, I don't recall winning any, but we were in the races, you know, and it was great. We traveled all over. We did Quinsigamond, we did the Dad Vail, few other races. We had races on the Hudson, which kind of brought college collegiate racing back years, years ago. And I don't know how many, maybe forties and fifties, they had the NRAS, the national rowing here on the Hudson here. It was a big, big deal. So when Marist started it, it started the trend back to bring in collegiate racing

Ezekial Sanger ([00:55:04](#)):

On the Hudson. Oh, wow. That's neat. Yeah.

Walter Herbst ([00:55:06](#)):

Yeah. He was a great guy. He really was a great guy, but he'd be in the motorboat alongside of us. Oh my God, what he screamed. He didn't need a horn.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:55:17](#)):

Yeah, that's fantastic. So, I want to talk a little bit about the engagement. So you and your wife were engaged on campus. Is that correct?

Walter Herbst ([00:55:26](#)):

Correct. Yeah. And what's unique about that. I mean, you know, you said, Oh, that would never be in the paper today. It wasn't then, but what was unique about it was Father Driscoll again, the Dominican, had talked to us about a solemn engagement and the solemn engagement meant basically that you were almost taking prenuptial vows, and asking to have the engagement blessed. And so we did that, we went through the actual ceremony up in Seat of Wisdom Chapel, parents and relatives, and, you know, kind of a formal, get together and blessing of our engagement. So as I said, that took place up at the Seat of Wisdom, on campus. So even in those days, it was kind of rare to have a formal engagement like that. So, that was a newsworthy news worthy part of it. It must've worked, we're still together.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:56:30](#)):

I want to get into your future, but a little bit before I do that I wanted to ask about, I want to ask about the relationship between the, again, the brother of the faculty brothers and the students. Was there any, did they seem, you know, fully accepting of the lay students? Because it only had been a few years since lay students were admitted.

Walter Herbst ([00:57:03](#)):

Yes, I, and I say that because I noticed I didn't notice anything different. We were treated the same as the brothers. The expectations were the same. Again, the culture you were expected to do what the adult said you would do. You didn't challenge that. So, so that was very much the same as their discipline, they were intense. When we had a faculty basketball game with the faculty and they were very intense, very, very rough basketball players. I was kind of at home because my sport was football, but boy, I want to tell you, they, they played rough. They were very intense and good. Very good. Yes. Yes. I think they beat us. Yeah, they were good.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:57:55](#)):

So it's my understanding that between 65 and 68, you were president of the alumni association?

Walter Herbst ([00:58:02](#)):

Yes. Yeah.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:58:03](#)):

Wow. What made you stay at Marist? What made you stay involved or how'd you get that position?

Walter Herbst ([00:58:08](#)):

Well, I was very involved as an undergraduate, you know, and again, it was formative and we were doing a lot of new everything that we kind of did was sort of new, you know, it didn't exist before. So it was a kind of an energy involved in that. And I graduated in 63, we moved back to Poughkeepsie in 65, early 65, and talking to Brother Andrew Malloy, who at that time was the head of the alumni, he was the faculty representative for the alumni, he sort of suggested, hey, why don't you do this? And, you know, we'll get this going and so on. And so I did and very much enjoyed, you know, doing that. Our primary focus then was developing a fundraising capital campaign, getting alumni involved, staying kind to keep them involved in the college, through the fundraising. And, you know, it was very modest in those days, a database, well, a database today isn't what a database was then, that was paper and pencil. So, you know, and then, going from there. And so we were doing that as through the alumni and sending out, I think we sent out maybe one or two newsletters, once a year, because it was a real challenge to get a newsletter out because you weren't using computers, you were using typewriters and, you know, didn't have a staff and so on. So just that kind of thing.

Ezekial Sanger ([00:59:51](#)):

Okay. So I'm curious, now that you say that,

Walter Herbst ([00:59:55](#)):

Oh, and so to answer the other part of the question in 68, we moved again. So I was in Buffalo, but then I was Moved to Buffalo.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:00:05](#)):

Okay. So, you know, obviously, you know, students now are on their phones, this is kind of how we primarily get information, but we do still have a paper. Although, I don't know that I would say it's a medium of news that a lot of students use, I'm curious at the time was the student newspaper, you know, popular?

Walter Herbst ([01:00:29](#)):

Very, very popular. And the guy that started that was a Jim Callahan. Jim was another guy. He was a crew guy too. Brilliant, absolutely. Well, he went on to Harvard for Math. Yeah. Brilliant. And coming out of Marist College, you know, in the second graduating class and he's going to Harvard. Great guy again, a day hop, but he was the one that got the newspaper started and worked tirelessly at getting it going, but it was something that when it came out, everybody wanted to grab onto him because basically that was the method of communication at the time.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:01:12](#)):

Yeah. That's neat. And have you been involved in the school since being president of the alumni associations?

Walter Herbst ([01:01:20](#)):

Not really? Life happens I guess, four kids and I don't know how many moves all over and career kinds of things you get away. Tried to keep in touch with a couple of the guys that we know from college, in fact, I talked to the chef Danny Mariko just a few weeks ago and my other roommate, Joe Ianelli, and we'll be getting together pretty soon, you know, soon as we can. They're over in Massachusetts, I'm in Western New York, so it's, it's kind of tough, but, you know, haven't been that involved really other than reading about the college and the successes and that kind of thing, but haven't been personally involved too much.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:02:10](#)):

Probably, the last question I'm going to touch upon today is how has the school met your expectations in terms of growth and how has it, how has it expanded beyond your imagination?

Walter Herbst ([01:02:31](#)):

In terms of my expectations, when you, in those days, when you came into college, it was in the, in an era when, not that many people went to college and even fewer girls went to college. Okay. So basically when you got out of high school, it was the draft and military. Okay. And for some guys, if a select few guys, college women were married and family, children, or secretaries or nurses, and very, even fewer of them went to college. So it was a very, very different culture, but what, in terms of what Marist did for me, it really created an intellectual foundation that really has sustained me throughout a career, several careers actually, but in any event, through my lifetime. And when I, when I came back, Oh, well, Betty and I, you know, we have ties to the Poughkeepsie School and getting engaged here at Marist and so on. So we come back every couple of years, we come back and do the mansion tour and of course, ride through the campus and just look at all the different things. We tried to get back for a reunion, but we had something happen that we weren't able to make it, but in any event, when I come back, when I see the growth, it is absolutely astounding. In my wildest imaginings, I could never have dreamed that it would have grown the way it has and has the reputation that it has, although, you know, I mean, it shouldn't be a surprise to me and yet maintaining that very high standard of education has not been easy, I'm sure for the faculty, for the college to maintain that, but it has an outstanding reputation. And, and of course, I'm very proud of that. Having been a part of that now my school, you know, hey, this is great. So, you know but going back, even talking to Linus Foy, with the projections and, you know, just could not have imagined that it would be so, so good, so successful so quickly, frankly, you know, it's amazing, absolutely amazing in it. I guess it's a real tribute to people like Linus Foy and the brothers and Dennis Murray fantastic job. You know, so yeah, it's, it's been a tremendous collection from the outside,

looking at a tremendous collection of people that have done remarkable things with education and, and career growth for people for graduates. You, we have so many graduates that are eminently successful. It's just amazing. Absolutely amazing.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:05:42](#)):

So, I'm curious, you know, before I ask you to kind of say whatever's on your mind, whatever you think is important, can you tell me about what the graduation ceremony was like?

Walter Herbst ([01:05:55](#)):

Sure, what it was like? As I recall, there was a Cardinal, was it a Cardinal or a Bishop Archbishop of New York? I think it was the Archbishop of New York, getting the mayor's connection to city schools very, very well, highly regarded, but there were, there were 24 in my class there. So the graduating class of 24 crowd, I don't remember a whole lot about it, frankly. We did have a valedictorian, salutatorian, and they were the guys I would expect, you know, the brothers, also received their degrees. But it was, it was a nice ceremony, but very short wasn't protracted, I should say, very pleasant, very, very well done, very well done and to the point.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:07:04](#)):

So is there anything about the school about anything that you experienced that you want to add?

Walter Herbst ([01:07:15](#)):

Boy, that's a, that's a tough question. For me, I have had a great career, as a couple careers basically was retired from one, went into another and retired from that. So career-wise, I've had a great run. I have a great family, four kids that have indirectly been the benefit of what I've learned at Marist and the values that I learned here. And of course met my wife of 54 years. So, you know, life is good, life is real good and basically when you think about it, it all kind of comes back to, you know, the foundation that was there, but was strenuously reinforced in Marist. So that's, I guess my life lesson and like I said, life is good.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:08:22](#)):

All right, great. Thank you so much.

Walter Herbst ([01:08:24](#)):

Oh, sure. Pleasure. Actually, absolute pressure. In fact, it was really, I was really looking forward to coming back and seeing what's going on and that kind of thing, cause it had been a little while, other than just driving through, you know, as we do so. Great. Thanks for thinking of me.

Ezekial Sanger ([01:08:39](#)):

Of course. Thank you.