

Dan Kuffner

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

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Summary: Dan Kuffner discusses his early years before Marist College. He talks about his experiences studying the Marist, difficulties and accomplishments that he made while participating in the social life of the school. He talks about the faculty involved within Marist during the time and how he thinks Marist will go forward in the future.

[00:05](#) **GN:** Good afternoon, Dan. I am going to have a few comments here. Today is July 19th 2011. We're meeting with one of the early graduates of Marist College, Dan Kuffner. And so, hello, Dan.

[00:22](#) **DK:** Hi Gus, thanks for having me.

[00:24](#) **GN:** Nice to have you come. Dan, this will be in three or four parts. The first, before Marist. Could you just give us kind of a thumbnail sketch of your early background, born, and brought up, grade school? And I'll ask you some questions pertinent to that.

[00:39](#) **DK:** Good. My twin brother, Bill and I were born on March 17th 1947. The fifth and sixth children of Charlie and Jesse Kuffner from Staten Island, New York. We...

[00:50](#) **GN:** March 17th, did you say?

[00:52](#) **DK:** March 17th. Yes.

[00:53](#) **GN:** And there's no Patrick in this?

[00:54](#) **DK:** He's William Patrick. We were named after my dad's two oldest brothers. One of whom had no children and the other had one daughter. And we grew up on Staten Island with our family. I have three other brothers, one deceased and a sister. We went to Sacred Heart School on Staten Island, St Peter's High School on Staten Island and came here to Marist in 1964. Actually with seventeen other St Peters' high school classmates to the class of '64.

[01:29](#) **GN:** Alright. Let's go back to high school a little bit. During the high school years, what kind of activities were you involved in? Were you in sports?

[01:38](#) **DK:** Yes I was. I was in sports. I participated for the freshman and J.V. basketball teams. I ran cross-country track in my senior year. I participated in the Glee Club and Chorus at St Peter's which was extremely well-known and well-established for all four years. I was on the Student Council being vice president in my senior year.

[02:06](#) **GN:** Outside of the school time now, how about summers? Did you have jobs, did you

work? Did you participate in activities?

[02:12](#) **DK:** Yes. At age sixteen, both Bill and I were hired by The New York City Department of Parks as seasonal park helpers. We worked for four years during the summers so we started in-between our junior and senior year in high school and continued to do that for four consecutive years. So we were S.P.H. guys. One of our greatest memories was learning how to drive both tractors and garbage trucks on the beach at age sixteen and because we had a uniform on, nobody asked us for a license. (laughter)

[02:49](#) **GN:** Very Interesting, very interesting. Let's move it along. How about coming to Marist? How did you find Marist, way out there on Staten Island?

[02:56](#) **DK:** Well a number of our classmates had already applied and had been as accepted and one of our closest friends who continues to be so today, Brendan Burke had already been accepted and Brendan was talking it up the a tad. A very another good friend Charlie DiSogra and I came up to Marist in April of our senior year in high school. We were interviewed by Tom Wade. Charlie was a far more superior student than I. And maybe Tom was impressed with the fact that I came with him but we came to Marist and was accepted. Bill had originally planned to go to Barrytown. And one of our vice principal at St Peters who was uniquely known as Brother Peter had a great connection here with Marist and made a phone call and asked if Bill could also attend as late as August of '64. And the community said, yes so we came together.

[03:58](#) **GN:** You mentioned Tom Wade. Are you still in touch with him? In Hyde Park.

[04:00](#) **DK:** Very much so I live on Roosevelt Road in Hyde Park, Tom lives right down the street around the corner on Gilbert Drive. And I see Tom and Anne regularly. He's actually one of my constituents as a legislator.

[04:14](#) **GN:** Yeah I sent him a little note yesterday with some pictures of a tour we have of the Esopus mansion.

[04:20](#) **DK:** Oh terrific. Yea. No, we've stay in good touch with Tom.

[04:23](#) **GN:** Good. I still have to get convinced though. Why would you come to Marist which was such a small unknown unsophisticated college in 1964?

[04:34](#) **DK:** Well, I'll tell you the truth Gus. I had this dream of being a dentist. And my oldest brother, Charlie who is ten years my senior and I sent resumes and applications to seven different colleges prior to applying to Marist. I applied for Dentistry and I was rejected from all seven of them. My grades in high school weren't that great, neither were my SATs. So knowing that I wanted to have a college experience and knowing that so many of my other classmates were coming to Marist. I already mentioned Brendan and Charlie. That was kind of the impetus. It wasn't so far away. Poughkeepsie was by train, available. And Charlie and I actually took a bus from New York City up. So a lot of things just happen to fall into place kind of by accident, some of them on purpose.

[05:32](#) **GN:** Okay. Then you would have of course would have been a resident here. You stayed in a dormitory. At that time was Sheahan up or any of the dormitories?

[05:44](#) **DK:** Oh yeah both Leo and Sheahan were the only two dorms and Champagnat was under construction at the time. I was on the fifth floor in Leo and Bill was on the sixth.

[05:55](#) **GN:** OK and while in the college here now, what was your major concentration? What were you calling in those days?

[06:05](#) **DK:** I was a History major. I had no idea what I was actually going to do with it but I enjoyed history in high school. I want to back up a little bit. Bill and I were young for our class. We only turned seventeen in March of our senior in high school so I was the youngest kid in class all my entire life. So when we came to Marist most of the guys were already eighteen, well into their eighteenth year. So we had a whole chunk of time to go. I don't regret that whatsoever, but I was very naïve considerably naïve when I entered college. And luckily, we meet some

outstanding guys who are still friends today and ...

[06:58](#) **GN:** Yes, I want to get Brendan Burke in here some time. He has had a reputation, has helped the college in many ways. What I want to ask you now about how you talk about history? Do you remember some of the history professors? Do you remember Roscoe Balch? Was he here?

[07:21](#) **DK:** We had the history of art and architecture with Roscoe. I was overwhelmed. I had never traveled the furthest we ever went was to Long Island Center Moriches to meet one of my aunts. I had rarely been off Staten Island and all of a sudden, you get this incredible stuff being shown to you. And Roscoe used to like to show a lot of slides and things of the trips that he had taken. So yes we had Roscoe. I had George Skau, I love George Skau. He was the one who I think really got me to another level as far as history is concerned. Going up to the Roosevelt estate and doing research in the library. I loved his history of the presidency. He had a course on Eleanor Roosevelt. He was great. Ed Cashin was fabulous but Jerry White would be the one who has to stand out on top of that whole list. He still refers to me as Mr. Kuffner A or B. He never could tell the little Bill and I apart. And to see Jerry to this date and they continue to have a reminiscence with him. Jerry was terrific. So there were some great folks. Vincent Toscano later on was wonderful. Lou Zuccarello for politics.

[08:34](#) **GN:** Yeah I was going to say I want to get into the details of some of that simply because I think you've got injected with a certain curiosity and you know understanding of the nature of political science and what was involved and the importance of it. We do need good government and through the politics that we get there. So maybe back up a little bit, did you take Lou Zuccarello for a course?

[09:05](#) **DK:** I had Lou for one poli-sci course. He was getting involved in the administrative levels and so on.

[09:13](#) **GN:** He wished to become dean shortly after.

[09:15](#) **DK:** Eventually yes but I had him for one course. Interesting, I'll jump forward real quick. Bill's daughter Margaret came to Marist graduated in 06' as a political science major. And she took every conceivable course Lou taught, so that was a great tie in. But yeah as I said George Skau really helped me to see some of the importance of history beyond dates. He started to get me so very much involved in Roosevelt and the things that were going on in the Roosevelt era. I went down to Washington D.C and had an interview with a man who was intern clerk during the "Sick Chicken Case" in 1937. And I had the opportunity to interview him, he was my first-person reference and I was just ... it was wonderful it was. I stayed up here between my junior and senior year I took a six-credit course with George on the Roosevelt presidency, it was marvelous, absolutely marvelous. But they were, Bill and I had this conversation. Gus, I will include you in the loop. There were so many fine incredible men who were on staff here. I never had a female teacher while I was here at Marist, I know there was some on staff. But I didn't have that honor, but the men you know Richard LaPietra or Michael Kelly and Marty Lang.

[10:46](#) **GN:** Did you have Richard J. LaPietra? You took him in history class?

[10:49](#) **DK:** Oh I sure did. He was my floor Proctor in freshman year and he would have weekly meetings. You know, he'd bring a few of us down to the room on the side of his room, and was so genuine and so real. And we'd talk a lot about religion. We'd talk politics. We talked general life. And he permitted us to get into his mind a tad so that he would have the comfort of getting into ours was somewhat. And you know we always called him Lappy behind his back but we knew that he affectionately loved it. Yeah, you know and I remained close with him throughout his entire life. Any opportunity on campus if he was here, he was the first person I would go over and talk to and mourned his death greatly. Have met his wife, she's a lovely lady, Barbara. You know so the men who wore the garb and those who didn't. Tom Casey, I mean just a remarkable

man. Bob Norman, Bobby Norman, he gave me the greatest compliment in the entire world. I eventually got into teaching when we graduated. I was working at the Violet Avenue School right up the street here on Fulton Avenue. Bobby's oldest son, Bob, was a child with some learning disabilities. He had some the emotional issues. And he was being schooled considerably at BOCE's and then they brought him back to St Peter's, but he was ready to come to Violet Avenue School and when Bob saw, Bob Norman Sr. saw them my name was on the sixth-grade class list. He said to the principal I need my son to have this man. Well, Bob Norman Jr. and I, he was just the most incredible kid in the world and again to this date, he still calls me Mr. K. And he was a walking encyclopedia of anything sports-related, data-wise and. It was just wonderful.

[12:54](#) **GN:** Did you have Norman for speech, did you take?

[12:56](#) **DK:** I sure did, public speaking. Yeah absolutely.

[13:00](#) **GN:** In fact I can go back a little bit I ... You might have even had a speed-reading course with him.

[13:06](#) **DK:** Yeah I might have.

[13:09](#) **GN:** There was a project at the time. It was pretty much in the summer school where you could, you know, learn how to read fast by fixations and moving your eyes, not look at every word, but by groups of words and various tests. And I remembered he was almost a guarantee A if you took the course.

[13:28](#) **DK:** Absolutely. Well Bullet Bob as we affectionately called him with his love of St. Bonaventure and Syracuse. What I didn't know was that he was also an announcer on WELK radio and then you know he tuned that into us every once in a while, so we began catching him on the local radio. Now coming from quote "the city," we had many different radio stations available to us, but way back in the 60s. all we had here was WELK and WKIP then you had the

rig some gigantic wire out your window just to get reception anyhow so... But yeah.

[14:05](#) **GN:** In time he went to New York, he went to CBS and did what he called it the grave night shift that he would have. But he had public exposure during that time and he had a very good voice.

[14:18](#) **DK:** Oh yes, he had fabulous voice. Well he also helped develop the communications internship. What he did for this college was remarkable. I'm still very close to his son, Jimmy Today. My wife taught both of Jimmy son's and ...

[14:34](#) **GN:** Is Jimmy at the CIA yet? Or where is he now?

[14:36](#) **DK:** Oh that's a real good question. I believe he is but he bought Mike Kelly's, John Kelly's house in Hyde Park over on Albie Dr. And added on to it and his dad lived with him in the later years of his life. Great stuff.

[14:57](#) **GN:** Moving on in College here now. How about your activities outside of learning from these professors whom I revere to? I was going to give you a list of those I have interviewed and you would see on there... many of those names. One name didn't come up. He might not have been here yet, Peter O'Keefe.

[15:16](#) **DK:** He was here, psychology

[15:18](#) **GN:** No that's Ed O'Keefe. Peter came maybe in the late 60s, early 70s.

[15:24](#) **DK:** Then I didn't have the privilege. But my activities at Marist. Freshman year, I ran cross country. I was elected to the corresponding secretary position of class officers. Bill and I remembered that Marist was a social hub. Where I recall writing letters to every conceivable women's college in the neighborhood inviting them to mixers on Saturday nights in the cafeteria. And we had beer mixers. It was quite unusual. And we had women come up from good counsel college and what used to be Lady cliff, and Bennett College, and Mount St Mary's and so on. So that was part of it. I also got involved in student government later on. I became one of the class

reps to the student government.

[16:18](#) **GN:** Let's talk about that a little bit because surely it was a formative stage. I don't know that they had a constitution or whether they had, you know.

[16:26](#) **DK:** We actually did. Yeah, I remember Bob Johnson. He was the year ahead of us. Bob was very aggressive and he eventually became the president of the student body in his senior year. Jim Morrison was one of my classmates who got very much involved. Mike Tobin was involved in what was that then the resident's board. Charlie DiSogra was also on that. Yeah we tried to keep the rules and regulations but one of the things I remember so much about our freshman year was that we had to wear ties to school and usually jackets. We had a mandatory seven pm to ten pm study hour, where your door was open and you had to be at your desk.

[17:11](#) **GN:** You were in the LaPietra dorm which was probably the most stringently run.

[17:15](#) **DK:** It most certainly was. Fifth floor Leo, those doors were open. There's a very funny anecdote to one of those stories too but I won't embarrass that guy. But we had, you know... There was a lot of like I was saying always emphasis on religion, but theology, a way of life not necessarily catechism. You know it was discussion, what helps you to feel this way?

[17:40](#) **GN:** What's right and wrong thing to do...

[17:41](#) **DK:** Exactly. How to become a man? How are you going to put a project yourself into the adult world once you are beyond the doors of Marist? And you know having those kinds of discussions, I never had that opportunity. Even though I had my twin and three older brothers, we didn't get into those kinds of discussions. It was always sports in this, that, and other thing.

[18:03](#) **GN:** And I think. This is in my view, a take on it. Because it was a small college there, were many more opportune for that kind of interaction with professors. And you didn't get their associates or their underlings you know.

[18:18](#) **DK:** You got the real McCoy. Yeah that was wonderful stuff.

[18:23](#) **GN:** The activities in student government. Were you a court also, did students have to?

[18:27](#) **DK:** Well they did for the residence halls. If there were infractions, the residence hall group would deal with those, and if there had to be some enforcement usually the college administration would support it.

[18:42](#) **GN:** Was there a Brother Paul here at the time?

[18:43](#) **DK:** Paul Stokes.

[18:44](#) **GN:** Oh you remember, Paul Stokes.

[18:45](#) **DK:** Do I ever. I remember Paul Stoke saying to us as we were lined up in what is now Marian Hall, the gym. He said, "Alright look to your left, look to your right. One of you guys aren't going to be here by the time freshman year ends." His marine mentality but again beneath the surface. What a marvelous man. Yeah what an absolutely marvelous man. He was in the right place at the right time for this place. He brought the discipline but he also brought a sense of 'I need these guys to mature.' And he led very much by example.

[19:22](#) **GN:** He did and I think in that what happened is he went to Europe later in his career for studies, advanced spirituality. Than he returned and time had already changed. You know that the discipline that he was used to enforcing, I remember him coming to me one time saying, you know we had to do away with you know three cuts and you would fail the course.

[19:50](#) **DK:** Right, Bill mentioned that.

[19:55](#) **GN:** You know, four pages of yellow page, legal things with names of students. Half the college would have ... Just the wave coming in. You could not hold against it. Times were changing.

[20:11](#) **DK:** Well we literally I tease my buddy Bob D'Errico who was also a class member graduated in '68. He was born in June of 1946. He's literally first-wave baby boomer. All of us were. And our lives were being dramatically impacted by what was going on around us. The

Vietnam War was huge. And there was social movements that were going on that were so less explicit during the previous decade. And the 60s just opened the doors to so many different things. It's insane. So again in the conversation I had with my twin. We remember the seven to ten, the three cuts and ties. And by the time, we were seniors none of that existed. Yeah there was such a change in the attitude ... a liberalism took over. There was no question about it, but if it weren't for the success in my opinion of the '67, '68, '69 classes, those three classes. I think of those classes hadn't survived, Marist might not have.

[21:23](#) **GN:** And they have been very faithful to us since.

[21:26](#) **DK:** Incredibly, absolutely incredibly.

[21:29](#) **GN:** That's well-documented. I'm sure you have something more to verify that. But to stay on course here, let me talk about or ask you: what were there were there any setbacks in your experience here? You felt disappointed. You didn't get a fair shake in one thing or another. Or in the course selection, you were cut out of it... or something that would have been? Because I'm going to turn the coin over too.

[22:02](#) **DK:** That's a really terrific question. I don't recall one true academic negative experience. Our dad died when we were sophomores. He had leukemia. Bill and I roomed together as sophomores in Champagnat. We got room 608. And school ended and he died in the end of May. That was a major setback but here's what happened as a result. I applied for and received a student proctorship for my junior year: third floor Leo hall, fourth floor Champagnet hall in my senior year. The tuition obviously back then wasn't exorbitant, but two, paying for two was difficult. Tony Campilli called Bill and I into his office the first day of school, our senior year and advised us that because of the death of our dad at the end of our sophomore year. We were actually eligible for student aid in our junior year which we never received. Tony did that research and as a result, Tony was able to take what we would have gotten third year, apply it to

our fourth year. And both Bill and I made it through senior year without having to come up with gigantic dollars. That's Marist College. That's what they did back then. You know you were given guidance, you were given and again it's the group of people with whom we would dealing they looked out for us. They protected us so why wouldn't I as now an adult and a graduate and want to do the same for the place that helped me get to where I am today. I couldn't get in Marist College today, not a chance.

[24:07](#) **GN:** Many of us couldn't.

[24:08](#) **DK:** Exactly but it would have been and this might sound egotistical, it's not intended to be, it would be their loss. Because my loyalty and my dedication to this place has been one hundred percent since 1968, well '64 really. I know I didn't ... I don't have any negative experiences to bring to your attention, I really don't.

[24:30](#) **GN:** Now, I'm glad you told that story because it verifies your mentor Tony Campilii you probably know Jack Eberth and this story about being pulled into service in his senior year and then getting a diploma at sea. And Richard LaPietra, they looked and saw that he was in good standing. He was half way through. Why make him come back to do what he has already completed? You know.

[24:56](#) **DK:** Jack had shared that story with me I have a very good relationship with Jack. And yeah, we commiserated on that.

[25:03](#) **GN:** I think that's those are kinds of things that are in Marist and its foundation. I mean besides the building which were done by a good number of the Brothers and staff at the time. Now you know benefit from the generosity of the Campilii's, the LaPietra's, and Zuccarello's, those people who pour out so much in those early years. What would you say were one of your biggest successes though?

[25:33](#) **DK:** At Marist?

[25:34](#) **GN:** Yeah.

[25:35](#) **DK:** The fact that I graduated. You know what my biggest success was? I think the fact that. And it's kind of both for Bill and I. The fact that I began to understand who I was as a person, but even more than that the depth of the relationships that were established with some of my classmates. Some of whom I have remained in touch all forty-three years since we've graduated. And not just a cursory in touch ... in depth. I think the fact that I was able to participate in as many activities as I did. A segue, I was standing in Doc Goldman's office in September of '67 and the principal of Our Lady of Lourdes High School called over and asked, "Doc did you have anybody who you could recommend, we need a cross country coach?" Doc looked up at me and I didn't know where this was going. He said, "Yeah, I have somebody standing right next to me, right now that I'm going to send over to you." So here again was another example, I started coaching as a twenty-year old senior at Marist, sixteen, seventeen-year old high school seniors over at Our Lady of Lourdes High School as a cross country coach. And it opened a door for me to education which became my career for thirty-seven years and I stayed associated with Lourdes for four years. I'm still in touch with some of those kids that I coached for those four years. That was a marvelous experience. The successes as I said, I was student government vice president, proctor in a dorm for two years, I graduated with almost a 2.7 acumem. Tom Wade would tease me. He said, "You were one of the guys we never thought would make it," based on my credentials coming in. The fact that I developed relationships with the leadership of the college. The fact that I was treated with respect. The fact that I had a successful career based on what I learned here. I think those all add into the successes.

[28:11](#) **GN:** Did you know a Dan Kirk?

[28:13](#) **DK:** Oh yeah Danny Kirk, he was terrific.

[28:15](#) **GN:** OK. How might you explain this blossoming of your own character, personality?

Was that the courses, was it the atmosphere you lived with, you could be honest with the other people, or is there any area there have that comes to mind? ‘Cause I am gonna ask you, how can we do it again?

[28:37](#) **DK:** Well yeah that's that also. As I referenced earlier, I was a mere seventeen and a half years old when we started here at Marist. And my dad and mom drove Bill and I up here and I didn't know it at the time but my dad was dying. I didn't know it. I had a very wonderful childhood. I don't remember having major issues growing up as a kid. We were allowed to roam. My mother knew everybody, everywhere so if we were ever in trouble, all she had to do was make a phone call. Life was good so I came up here ... I think with an incredibly positive attitude. And I wasn't going to let my father down because I knew the sweat that he put up with to send the two of us here. So I've always been somebody who if you ask me to do something and I say yes to it, well, I'm going to commit to it one hundred percent and I was determined to do well here at Marist. All right that being said I've already mentioned the support we got from the staff and you've chimed in that way. It was a small place so we were able to have immediate contact. I've mentioned that I have friends for forty-three years. The muckers, we had a group of guys. We still hang out I had a fortieth anniversary party at my house and I had twenty-five of them at my house you know for a fortieth anniversary.

[30:11](#) **GN:** But you are not without fun ether.

[30:13](#) **DK:** Oh, it was wonderful. Yeah no I mean the time here was ... they were four fantastic years, they absolutely were. But I came with a package that was ready to bloom. And what I was given was the nourishment to bloom. And again the people who I worked with the support that I got. Dave Flynn, I work for Dave Flynn in the admissions office. I toured more kids around the Marist campus. And he told me one day he says, “You're probably responsible for getting more students here than I ever would be.” Because I have an open personality, you know I pay

attention to people and I try to read them and work with that. And it's paid me well all of this time. But you know, I brought certain things that were in a package and then that package was very nicely wrapped and developed and it permitted me to grow.

[31:16](#) **GN:** Very good. Do you know where the Derby is?

[31:20](#) **DK:** Tony Balassone, Bill had the pleasure of bartending for Tony Balassone while we were here at Marist. It didn't do his waistline well but here's a funny story again. Bill and I was sharing some of our memories. He, Bill started working for Tony one day a week but while he was there he did cleanup duty. And he was in one this one time cleaning out the urinals in the men's room and Tony comes in and he goes, "What are you doing?" He says, "Well they need to be cleaned. You know it..." "Don't you want me to do this." Eventually, Tony had Bill working four days a week and gave him leadership roles. You know counting the money, holding the money doing all of those kinds of things. That's the attitude we brought Gus. That really is. You did it because it was the right thing to do and you know, you weren't looking for the kudos. You know but if you've got them oh well, all well and good and Tony did that. And I tended bar at the Derby. My wife was pregnant for our second child during the summer of 1972 and.

[32:32](#) **GN:** Is you wife a local girl?

[32:35](#) **DK:** Yes, she is. She's an '89 graduate of Marist. She was pregnant with our son Jeff and I was tending bars three days a week and the Frivolous Sal, Larry Plover' group was just doing phenomenally well. Well they closed at one. We were open till three and they would come down there en masse and you know to be able to commiserate with Chiriati and Plover and all of those guys, it was great. So I worked for Tony for a year. It was hot stuff.

[33:10](#) **GN:** Well move on a little bit now. I don't know where to begin in this part, but I am gonna talk about change and the changes that are taking place and now there's a whole encyclopedia here. You can talk about the changes that Marist, in terms of the buildings. You

can talk about the changing times; the Vietnam War, the post-Vietnam, the depression area, kinds of things. What strikes you about Marist now? As one who is here in the beginning, and what it is today. Kind of a general feeling about the growth of the college in and respect to a perception that you have.

[33:56](#) **DK:** Well since I've stayed involved with the college. I've seen I guess all of those changes which you've referenced. What sticks out the most I think is the reputation that Marist has earned in the academic world, the ability for Marist to put itself in a position to continually advance. You and I both know that the seventies were brutal time for this place and it nearly didn't survive. But what it has done is make the adjustments to the changing times. It ... the course development that it has done. The arrangements that it has done with the business world particularly I.B.M. The growth that it has made in its status among other colleges and universities of similar sizes. My three oldest children, Syracuse, Wake Forest, Syracuse. I couldn't get them to come to Marist because we live too close. That was a major regret on my part, but the fact that Marist has adapted to all of those different kinds of changes that have taken place the fact that they have recruited some of the best professors in their fields to be here. The fact that they've made commitment to grow their athletic program to get several programs that have national prominence. They had guts and that permitted I believe the college to get to a position of prominence within its own academic area and then continued to succeed beyond it. Because they were willing to take some risks and to do some things that maybe other for persons would have done or other colleges wouldn't have done. They survived the financial difficulties to have the Hancock building with no debt, you know. I mean give me a break.

[36:24](#) **GN:** You talk about the risks. What would be a risk in your view, allowing women to come here?

[36:30](#) **DK:** Well that was unique. Obviously women were attending the evening division at the time. I believe the first women were actually admitted to the day classes in my senior year, '67, '68 and then eventually they opened up the dormitories. Yeah but Vassar has men. You know, I mean that was one of the Seven Sisters school. Yes, the service academies began admitting women. Our culture did not permit women to be in the status that they are today for many years and there's lots of ups and downs, goods and bads about it. But the admitting women in from my perspective now ... you know it was not a risk. It was the right thing to do.

[37:26](#) **GN:** Oh absolutely.

[37:28](#) **DK:** Back then, because they started coming after I graduated, it didn't have that major impact on me.

[37:37](#) **GN:** Where one time, we were there was an opportunity for us to take on the St. Francis' nursing school and we turned it down because we were not available to service women. But that changed not long after. And of course if you look at it now, I mean women are more than half of the student body. And they've brought prominence and their athletic activities.

[38:04](#) **DK:** Well, you know the other risks, we mentioned the buildings. There were just a small number of buildings on campus when I arrive. Sheahan, and Leo, the gym which is now Marian hall, there use to be a little building Adrian Hall, Donnelly Hall, Fontaine, and the chapel. That was it. So if you're going to attract, you need to supply. So the growth of the college with Champagnat Hall was significant. The class I graduated with was smaller than the first group who started living in Champagnat Halls. Each year the college has grown. Now I know that with the buildings that are here now the dormitories that are being provided the socioeconomic grouping of the students at Marist college has significantly raised. My dad was a fireman. Joey Napoli's dad was a garbageman. Rich Guglielmo's father was a plumber. You know, we have blue collar people primarily who were busting their chops to get their kids to go to school. Today

you have a significant number of upper middle- and upper-class people who are sending their kids to Marist College with a lot of bucks.

[39:24](#) **GN:** You were the first generation of your family's for the most part to come.

[39:28](#) **DK:** For the most part. Now two of my older brothers did go to college. One of them went into the army. You know so our dad, mom worked for the dickens to do that. Today I mean I when I stop to think what it cost to go to a college today. My wife, when she was working, we were putting her entire paycheck to Syracuse practically to pay for us. Our daughter there and our son at Wake Forest. I mean holy cow. That is amazing. But the fact that Marist can still attract three thousand. You know what they get ten, eleven thousand applicants. They accepted three. And then they have a class of thousand, holy cow. You know that's unheard of. When we came, Gus, that's why I'm sure they let my twin brother come as late as April as August. They needed ... they needed bodies.

[40:24](#) **GN:** Another risk I thought because when I was asked about it had to do with options about future development, building a stadium was not my priority, but yet in retrospect, it was one of the best things I think we've done.

[40:41](#) **DK:** I agree. Well, I'll give you a little sidebar there. My mother-in-law, Dorothy Taylor was a personal friend and an employee of Alexei Leonidoff. Now Dr. Leonidoff was a White Russian and fled to France and then eventually came to America. He was a cardiac surgeon, and when he first came to America he would did tile work in New York City and eventually learn the language to call the boards, came up here and established an incredible practice. Jack Doherty was the director of development. Doherty got Dr. Leonidoff to donate twenty-five thousand dollars to Marist College for the field. We went out there in Doc Goldman's gym classes and were laying sod before the first football game was ever played. So when I heard now I've been a board of director of the Red Fox Club for the last five years. When I heard that Tenney Stadium

was going to be built. I had a little conversation with Tim Murray. I said, “Tim, what are you going to do with the Leonidoff name?” I mean that's how that piece of property got started. So I was thrilled to know that its Leonidoff Field at Tenney stadium. You're right that it's a beautiful structure ... they have to attract men to come. Having a facility like that. And the baseball field is beautiful.

[42:15](#) **GN:** Have you been to a football game?

[42:17](#) **DK:** Oh absolutely yeah.

[42:19](#) **GN:** Yeah, it's incredible. You have almost a hundred players lined up there with the Marist uniforms, they want to play. And they pay thirty, thousand dollars a year. That's one of the reason the come they want to be ... They're not going to play Notre Dame, but they have a chance. This is our little world, you know.

[42:36](#) **DK:** Oh absolutely you know it's I mean Bob Finn and Danny Hickey, but particularly Bob Finn, the class of '66 was the first president of the Marist football club. We were known as the Vikings. Well I learned the truth as to why we were called the Vikings. Ron Levine, one of the first coaches was able to get high school uniforms. Vikings. We were Marist Vikings.

[43:07](#) **GN:** That school was going out of business, they were giving up their uniform. And we sent a hired van as it were, two of them out to get all of them. And the guys who were on the first teams didn't know how to put on the uniform. No, they lied. They said they should know. They had never played football before.

[43:26](#) **DK:** Well you know what the hell is a Jasper down at what is now is Riverview field used to be Stitzel Field, where we used to play our game. See that was another thing that Bill and I talked about no athletic facility was available on campus. We played football down there. We played our basketball at Our Lady of Lourdes or Dutchess. We didn't have a baseball team. The only team was soccer until we did Leonidoff field and then we finally did get a couple of football

games you know on the field. So that too, why did guys come to Marist when they didn't have the athletic facilities and today?

[44:07](#) **GN:** The esprit de corps that was there.

[44:08](#) **DK:** Absolutely yeah. Billy brought up another point which I want to reference. When we graduated in 1968, seven of our classmates went on to become second lieutenants in the Marine Corps. And so many others were lieutenants and Ensigns in the Navy and the army and so on. We sent a lot of people into the military. And to my knowledge only one of our classmates, Frank Egan was a casualty of that war.

[44:45](#) **GN:** While we're on this observations and growth and change in Marist, what's your take on the students now?

[44:55](#) **DK:** The ones that I have had contact with, I'm impressed beyond words being on the Red Fox Board, we have the opportunity to meet the athlete. And I have met incredible young men and women as a result of that. Being an educator, I had the opportunity to have at least a dozen if not more student teachers from the Marist program come through my classroom. Some of whom I encouraged to get jobs in the Hyde Park School District and who are still teaching for High Park. There's just some quality people here. Again with the status of this campus you are attracting a higher-level student. You have Fulbright scholars. You have people going to Oxford to study you have awards being given to some of your students that are the most prestigious. That are out there. That was unheard of in our day. We had some great students. Jimmy Croteau, he must have been one of the most intelligent people on the face of the earth. He's a superintendent of schools down in Florida.

[46:15](#) **GN:** Or Richard J. LaPietra, and Ed Cashin are graduates of here. I mean that's the embryonic stage. That's the beginning of it all. That's the blossoming of it.

[46:25](#) **DK:** But yeah, the student today I wouldn't want to have to be paying for their education

today. Gus. It's just remarkable, you know it's just absolutely remarkable.

[46:37](#) **GN:** All the boats went up. We require more everything. As you said earlier I wouldn't be able to get in here as a student you know and I taught here for much less but I teach here. But that's because times have changed, you know, but a certain part of it, it remains the same. There's a certain humility if you want or a certain kind of Marist spirit that has pervaded the campus.

[47:04](#) **DK:** I've had the opportunity to work with Roberta Staples. And Roberta has introduced to me to some of her remarkable young men and women through some of the domestic violence issues. Again, yes, the quality of the individual still is here. Marist has this sense of accepting persons who have a caliber about them. And they expect that caliber will be sharpened while they're here as students. My niece is a classic example, Margaret when she graduated 06'. Just a phenomenal human being, a great, great student at Marist, and she's continuing to do so in her professional career. You know so it's great stuff.

[47:52](#) **GN:** What's your take about the community and its regard to Marist? Like there were complaints earlier on about the traffic being held up on Route 9. Before the tunnel went in there was a gradual kind of negative beat drum that you know it's slowing the progress of the community or a hindrance. Not realizing that we're at the fifth biggest employer maybe of the area.

[48:16](#) **DK:** Well I've had a decided advantage of being on the legislature to learn more about the impact of the Marist community on the overall economic standing of the community, Dutchess County. I know about how Dutchess, and Marist, and Vassar, and Bard, and the Culinary, how they are collectively the largest employers now. If you put them all together in Dutchess County, they exceed what I.B.M. used to do. I know that there were issues with the taking over of all of the land on Fulton and West Cedar for the dormitories and you know that that was land that was

on the tax rolls and now that Marist owns them, they're off the tax rolls, but they're bringing in students who are bringing in money who are spending money. I know that there's issues within the Fairview community itself because of the firehouse and so on. My in-laws built a house in 1942 on East Cedar Street lived there, died there, for sixty plus years. And so I have a sensitivity of what the Fairview Fire Department is going through. But I believe the overall perception of Marist College within the community of Dutchess County is a positive one. I believe that the success of the women's basketball team has played a major role in even uplifting it. I believe the development of these buildings and the beauty of the campus. It is unbelievably, beautiful that people cannot help, but be proud of how good the colleges within the community. So yeah is Route 9 a pain in the neck sure it is but go down to Wappinger Falls how long you're going to be stuck in traffic down there. You know so they're doing something to alleviate the problem, rightly so.

[50:21](#) **GN:** And the community is invited on campus here for a number of things as well. There are lectures, there's theater, there's libraries available, there's the woman's basketball, the man's we won't make a big point of it, but it's going to get better. We've had our day, we had our Rik Smits. And the day perhaps will come again. We're moving on down to the end of our hour here but this is something you'd like to say that you know I'm maybe overlooked or I might end this way what you brought a series of books with you there and maybe just comment on a couple of things.

[51:03](#) **DK:** I have the yearbooks from '65, '66, and '68. I don't know what I did with sixty-seven. But here's a quote and it's so ... I think indicative of what's going on today. It's actually is on the inside cover of Reynard 1965 it reads "Our cover painting by Artist Paul Gruel illustrates the symbolic character of growth and development of Marist campus. Greystone and the surrounding natural beauty have been the focal point of the college's activity and expansion." Now how does

that fit today Gus? Yeah, I mean you could write that in 2011 yearbook and it would be so perfectly clear.

[51:46](#) **GN:** It's almost the center of the whole wheel and the spokes that go out.

[51:49](#) **DK:** Absolutely and you know when we came here, there was a swimming pool. Well, the Lowell Thomas building is right now. And people were overwhelmed to learn of that. Yeah there was a full-size swim and boy, did we use it.

[52:07](#) **GN:** And it's fed by an underground stream.

[52:08](#) **DK:** Underground stream. Yeah and they had to take that into effect when they built Lowell Thomas.

[52:15](#) **GN:** They were a little slow to realizing it the building was up. When they ...oh, you know what?

[52:19](#) **DK:** We better do something about this. Yea, I remember that. But you know what I think, I wear this proudly, I have my college ring on. I always reflect upon the fact that I had the opportunity to go to college. I reflect upon the fact that I graduated and then I got into a career. Marist to me today symbolizes what's really good about America. It was a small business that took the time to have growing pains, to go through some real difficult times, to make some gutsy decisions about its own future and then follow through with it with not only vigor, but integrity. It has established itself within this community and within the national academic community. I mean my freshman year you were either from Connecticut, Staten Island, Long Island, or northern New Jersey and we had two kids from Florida, Nate Painty and Jimmy Croteau. Today I understand where attracting students from forty states, different countries. And in order to do that you have to put yourself into a position to warrant that attraction. And they did it. They absolutely have done it. They've done it with great people, with great leadership, with risky moves and a vision and I think that they've committed it to grow and to continue to grow I'm sure

that there's going to come a time again in Marist future where there's going to be turning point and I think based on the history of what they've done thus far their record for success in the future is fairly secure in my opinion. So I think, Marist I hope it stays college and doesn't become university because it just has a great ring to it, Marist College. Has afforded me an opportunity as a young man, a very naïve city kid to become an adult who continues to care, continues to reflect, continues to believe in service to the general public and hopefully will continue to do that for its future students. That's really my hope.

[55:14](#) **GN:** Well said, thank you very much.

[55:16](#) **DK:** It's absolutely my pleasure.

[55:18](#) **GN:** Dan, it was wonderful to have you.