

BROTHER JOSEPH BÉLANGER
Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections
Index – Brother Joseph Bélanger

Project Name: Marist Heritage Project

Transcript: Yes

Summary: Yes

Photograph(s): Yes

CD#: 008

Name of Interviewee: Brother Joseph Bélanger

Main Topics: This interview touches on a wide range of topics concerning the history and development of Marist College. In particular Brother Joseph discusses the Marist Abroad Program the Theater Program and the Foreign Film Program.

Others present?: No

Interviewed by: Gus Nolan

Interview Date: 02 November 2001

Location of Interview: Marist Archives and Special Collections Reading Room

Recorder model and type: Marantz PMD 690

Length of interview: 1 hour, 2 minutes, 38 seconds

Number of disks: 1

Recording medium/format: Microdrive

Brand of disks: IBM 1GB Microdrive

Archival copy made: Burned to a gold alloy CD (MAM) and is held in the Marist College Archives and Special Collections. Saved as a .wav file at the highest resolution possible. CD copy is available for researchers.

Quality of original recording: Good

Restrictions on interview access or use: None

Transcribed or summarized by: Jaime Edwards

Brief summary of interview context and recording contents: The interview was held in the James Cannavino Library on the Marist College campus.

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Time (00:00.00 ~ in hrs./mins./seconds)	Summary
00:00.02 – 00:05.08	Brother Joseph Bélanger talks about his early childhood history, his family, and the town that he grew up in. He had eight brothers and sisters, and his father worked at a textile mill for the majority of his life until he was forced to get a new job in printing. Brother Joseph grew up in Lawrence Massachusetts, which used to be a booming textile town, but has fallen on hard times and is now a somewhat depressed area.
00:05.09 – 00:08.05	Brother Bélanger briefly recounts the history of his education, starting at Sacred Heart Elementary School, to the point where he went to Tyngsboro, Massachusetts to begin training as a Brother. He was able to begin his training in the eighth grade before the Marist Brothers stopped accepting eighth and ninth grade students. He traveled to Poughkeepsie as a postulant in '42 and completed his training and became a Marist Brother on July 26, 1943.
00:08.06 – 00:14.29	When Brother Bélanger completed his novitiate he worked for a year in the print shop and the laundry, and he spends a few minutes describing where the print shop and the laundry were located on campus. When he worked in the laundry they actually did the laundry for not only all of Marist College, but also for Esopus, however he thoroughly enjoyed his year of work. When the year was over he attended Marian College and majored in English as well as obtaining a certification in French, graduating in August 1948.
00:14.30 – 00:23.32	On August 25, 1948 he was assigned his first teaching assignment at Cardinal Hayes high school where he taught religion, French, and English for seven years. He then went to Wheeling, West Virginia for a year before he was transferred to Esopus where he again taught English, French, and religion. Halfway through the year he was transferred back to Wheeling and taught there for another year. He then traveled to Europe for his second novitiate and was given permission to stay there for an extra year so he could learn more French. When his extra year of study was over he went to Marist College to teach, which had recently started accepting lay students.
00:23.33 – 00:33.13	Brother Bélanger came to Marist College in September of '59 and he taught English and French. He names some of the other faculty members

that were on staff with him when he started, and he feels that they were like a family, which is why the college ran so well and why there was no need for committees at that time. He considers some of his early colleagues to be the pillars of the school. He also was given the responsibility of the school theater, which he ran until he left for his sabbatical in '65-'66. He spends some time describing one play that they put on, "Waiting for Godot," how it was chosen, when and where it was produced, who was involved, as well as briefly mentioning some other productions he was involved with.

00:33.14 – 00:39.39 Brother Bélanger discusses his year of study in New York City, which not only allowed him to finish up his doctorate but gave him a much needed rest from the mountains of work he was doing at Marist. He was also able to fit in a lot of movies during his year of study as well. When he was finished he returned to Marist and pushed to allow the Marist Brothers to study abroad because he believed you could not learn a new language without total immersion. So they sent Brothers to Canada and Mexico, and eventually they allowed lay students to study abroad as well, which was the beginning of the Marist Abroad Program. He spends some time talking about the Marist Abroad Program; he had very high standards for it. He only placed students who had the intelligence and the desire to study in another country, he was not sending students over to be tourists, he was very adamant about that. He even traveled to Europe during winter intermission checking up on the students to make sure they were studying hard.

00:39.40 – 00:48.51 Brother Bélanger reflects on when women entered the college. As he remembers there was no opposition to women entering the college from the faculty. He and some other faculty members even visited other colleges to see how they had integrated men and women and were able to learn from their past mistakes. He also reflects on the transfer of Marist College from the Brothers to the Educational Institution. At the time everyone seemed to feel that it was a good decision, so not to tie the Brothers down to always running the school, however in hindsight many feel that they wish they had been able to stay more involved, such as always having a Brother on the Board. He also briefly recounts how Marist College received its name and talks a little about the history and development of the Foreign Film Program.

00:48.52 – 00:55.01 Brother Bélanger compares the administration of the three presidents of Marist College, Paul Ambrose, Linus Foy, and Dennis Murray. He believes they were all perfect for the job that was needed at the time. Paul Ambrose was a wonderful administrator, turning Marist into a four year college. Linus Foy was a wonderful leader with a strong humanistic vision. He was all about the people and about making Marist a strong

educational institution. Dennis Murray is a developer, and he put Marist on strong financial footing and made it a well-known college.

00:55.02 – 01:02.38 Brother Bélanger would like to see Marist become a solid liberal arts college in the future. He believes Marist has focused too much on technology and vocation; he wants to teach the students how to think. He believes that his greatest contribution to the college is in the classroom and teaching the students how to think. He wants Marist to get back its sense of community and its focus on education which he feels it has lost over the years.