

BRIAN DESILETS
Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections
Index – Brian Desilets

Project Name: Marist Heritage Project

Transcript: Yes

Summary: Yes

Photograph(s): No

CD#: 004

Name of Interviewee: Brian Desilets

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

Others present?: No

Interviewed by: Gus Nolan

Interview Date: 10 October 2001

Location of Interview: Marist Archives and Special Collection Reading Room

Recorder model and type: Marantz PMD 690

Length of interview: 45 minutes, 55 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.

TAPE INDEX:

<u>Time (00:00.00 ~ in hrs./mins./seconds)</u>	<u>Summary</u>
00:00.01 – 00:04.13	Brian Desilets talks about his early childhood and family including his siblings, parents, heritage, and where he grew up. He also discusses his father's occupation as a store owner and butcher, and his early education in a Catholic grammar school where half of the day was spoke in French and the other half in English.
00:04.14 – 00:08.40	Brian reflects on his interest in joining the Marist community, and on entering the Tyngsboro high school to begin the process of becoming a Marist Brother. After three years there he moved to Poughkeepsie to complete his fourth year of high school and his first year of novitiate. After his novitiate he was assigned to be a cook, rather than go to college right away. Brian also very briefly describes what the campus used to look like when he first arrived as a student.
00:08.41 – 00:10.55	Brian details the many different activities he was involved in as a college student, among them starting the school paper and a photography lab. He also talks about the interaction that the Marist Brothers had with the outside community, which was minimal, however he had more interaction than normal because of his assignment as a cook.
00:10.55 – 00:15.02	Brian briefly recounts his first teaching assignment at Bishop DuBois high school, and obtaining his Master's degree in mathematics at St. John's University. He also mentions that he used to help maintain the Marist Brother's cemetery and even helped to dig a grave. After teaching at the high school he went on to teach many different subjects at Marist College.
00:15.03 – 00:30.42	Brian discusses the construction of various buildings on the Marist campus, including the chapel, the Adrian building, the Fontaine building, the MacPherson building, and more. He goes into detail about the construction and destruction of some of these buildings. Brian served as a consultant for some of the construction projects, but did not do actual building because he was teaching. Brain also provides a list of who

various buildings were named after on campus and goes into quite a bit of detail for some of them. His favorite building on campus was the chapel. He also discusses the outdoor swimming pool and where he believes its water supply came from.

- 00:30.43 – 00:32.56 Brian talks about some of the significant changes that the college went through and its impact on the school and faculty such as lay students entering the college, women students entering the college, the Marist Corporation taking over control of the college from the Marist Brothers, etc. He feels that all of these changes have been positive ones, including the Marist Corporation taking over, because he does not feel a Marist Brother would have the proper experience and mindset to deal with the millions of dollars that are in the Marist budget.
- 00:32.57 – 00:35.34 Brian goes on to describe his two teaching careers, first as a professor at Marist, then as a research manager for IBM, and finally he returned to Marist for what was supposed to be six months and ended up being seven years. Today he is retired but he is still on campus every other day working on a website to digitize the history of the Marist Brothers on this campus.
- 00:35.35 – 00:38.54 Brian reflects on why he left the Marist Brothers. One reason was because he considered himself a professional physicist and wanted to stay on at the college rather than change to teaching high school physics which he would have had to do once the Marist Brothers gave up control of the college to the Marist corporation. He also spends a little time reflecting on some of the people he met and worked with at Marist who made an impact on his life.
- 00:38.54 – 00:45.55 Brian reflects on the job that each of the college presidents have done, and he feels that they all did a good job, and accomplished things that needed to be done, and were able to do things that the others would not have been able to. Therefore they were all the right man for the job at the time that they each served. He does feel, however, that although the college has kept the Marist ideals of education alive, most of the Marist Brothers ideals of simplicity and a remembrance for the Marist Brother's history has been lost. To conclude the interview he expresses his belief that Marist will continue their tradition of technology, as well as hypothesizing what he might do in the future when his website project is concluded.