

CNR Spotlight – Mary Beth Martin SAS '74



Mary Beth Martin, SAS '74, is a Professor in the Departments of Oncology and Biochemistry and Molecular & Cellular Biology at Georgetown University School of Medicine, having started at Georgetown in 1988 as a Research Instructor. In addition, Mary Beth heads her own research laboratory and is currently studying the effects of environmental metals on the development of breast cancer. She has had a challenging and impressive career in a field lacking women and attributes much of her success to the education as well as the support she received while attending CNR.

What led Mary Beth to CNR? Of course, there is a CNR “connection.” Mary Beth grew up in New Milford, N.J. the oldest of six children. She attended Immaculate Heart Academy where she was an outstanding student. Her father worked for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey with a colleague whose two daughters were attending CNR – Chris Meaney, class of 1971, and her sister Denise, class of 1972. Their father told Mary Beth’s father that CNR was the place for her, providing a strong academic environment and encouragement to pursue her interests.

In reflecting on her time at CNR, Mary Beth emphasized how important the all-women environment was, encouraging her to pursue her passion for science and become independent. She also explained that CNR challenged students academically but, at the same time, provided a supportive and nurturing atmosphere. She believes that CNR gave her discipline, and it is where she learned how to study. When she graduated from CNR, Mary Beth knew who she was and what she was capable of. And when she entered the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to pursue her advanced studies, she felt academically prepared. In 1982, Mary Beth received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry.

Mary Beth fondly remembers the outstanding CNR faculty members who helped her become a critical thinker – a key quality for the sciences. Sister Estelle Ghidoni, a biology professor, was a particularly supportive teacher. Mary Beth recalled how Sister Estelle took on Con Edison on the establishment of a nuclear reactor plant on an island in Long Island Sound. Yet, Sister Estelle would ask Con Ed to allow her students to study on the island - an endeavor at Con Ed’s cost. As Mary Beth pointed out – only a nun would get away with that!

During her four years at CNR, Mary Beth worked in the cafeteria as part of the work/study program. By her senior year, she felt as though she was an important part of the cafeteria system and learned from the staff. What made CNR the special place it was? For Mary Beth, it was the students, faculty and staff – the people of the college.

While she has not kept in touch on a more frequent basis with friends from CNR, Mary Beth stressed how important it is for her to attend reunions to reconnect to the people who were an integral part of her experience at CNR. Her most recent experiences at her 50th reunion this past June were especially rewarding. Mary Beth pointed out how welcoming Mercy University was to CNR alums and how easy it was to reconnect with classmates and friends. As she said, it isn't about the buildings or the place, it is about the people – that is what makes CNR so important to her.

- Chris Morrison SAS '72
CNR Alumni Communications Committee