

## Spotlight article on Adrienne Larkin, SAS '68

***Serviam* (“I will serve”) was the College of New Rochelle’s motto since its founding in 1904.**

**Exactly 120 years later, in 2024, the CNR Legacy Council established the *Serviam* Endowed Scholarship Fund to keep alive the college’s tradition of serving others. The funded scholarships will make it possible for Mercy students to transform their lives through higher education.**

**Throughout this year, the CNR Legacy e-newsletter will continue to spotlight CNR alumni who embody “*Serviam*.”**



Adrienne Larkin, SAS '68, credits her four-year experience as an undergraduate at the College of New Rochelle with teaching her the importance of service.

As Student Body President in the fall of 1967, she coordinated a service project in which CNR students baked, wrapped and mailed thousands of cookies to a U.S Marine rifle company in South Vietnam whose officer had asked for a bit of Christmas cheer for his soldiers.

Almost 60 years after what she calls that “simple act of kindness,” Adrienne reflected in several recent interviews on how service has been “the driving force in her life.”

She said her Catholic faith and her CNR education taught her the importance of having your life mean something. Commenting on how she remembers the Ursulines “effortlessly wearing their service,” she believes it is essential “to use your talents for the good of others.”

Adrienne credited the open mindedness and generosity of her CNR classmates, as shown in their response to the request for cookies for Marines, as well as lessons from outstanding CNR faculty members, including Professor Thomas Taaffe, who founded the School of New Resources, for broadening her world view.

She had grown up in Forest Hills, Queens, the daughter of a doctor and raised in a neighborhood of traditional, conservative families whose fathers were “cops, firefighters or in the military.” Like many of her childhood friends, she went to The Mary Louis Academy in Queens for high school.

Adrienne's mother and aunt (twin sisters Edith and Enes Bratti) attended CNR as day students on full scholarships and graduated in 1939. Her mother had dreamed of becoming a doctor but medical school was not possible for most women at that time. She instead married and had children.

Following her mother's dream, Adrienne started as a biology major at CNR, but in her junior year changed her major to philosophy with a minor in biology. "I loved the academic challenge of philosophy and the Classics," she explained, adding that she still reads the classical philosophers.

After graduating from CNR in 1968, Adrienne lived in New York City with four other young women and worked briefly for the NYC Welfare Department. Assigned to a community center in the Bronx, she got to know many of the clients receiving benefits as smart, resilient women who were far different from the stereotypical "welfare queens."

Adrienne went on to Northwestern University in Chicago, receiving a Master of Arts degree in 1970. She initially had planned to earn a PhD in philosophy, but she couldn't see herself being a professor. "I wanted to be more practical and do some good in the world," she explained.

That she did, giving generously of her time and talents to those needing help in several parts of California, which became her home. Receiving a law degree from UCLA in 1976, she worked for the San Fernando Valley Legal Aid Society for three years providing legal services for indigent clients. She then clerked for three years for a US Circuit Court (9th Circuit) of Appeals Judge. After that, she worked in private law firms in both LA and the Bay Area as a contract lawyer, which gave her the opportunity to provide pro bono legal services, particularly for the United Farm Workers, headed by Cesar Chavez. She also represented clients in class action lawsuits against slumlords.

A passion which Adrienne developed at CNR was basketball. Her CNR intramural team was undefeated in her four years as a student. She was the first female to play on a previously all-male intramural team at Northwestern and the only woman on several teams of attorneys in CA. She even tried out for the US Women's Olympic Basketball Team in 1976.

Her volunteer activities extended beyond the legal field to basketball. She coached CYO teams, as well as high school girls' and boys' teams and ran clinics for coaches and camps for beginning players.

After sustaining a traumatic brain injury in a car accident, Adrienne stopped practicing law. But she turned that injury into another opportunity for Serviam, advocating and speaking on behalf of cranial osteopathy.

Adrienne continues her lifelong motto "to do some good in the world." She remains involved in volunteer activities in the northern region of the San Francisco Bay Area, serves as office manager for her spouse's osteopathic medical practice and works with her grown son on his podcast "Talking Politics with Mom."

Adrienne is grateful to her CNR friends whom she said continue to have a lasting impact on her life. She saw many at their 50th CNR reunion in June 2018. She and sometimes up to 40 classmates meet every month on Zoom.

In an episode last December of the podcast she does with her son, Adrienne talked about the CNR student body's enthusiastic response in 1967 to the Marine's request for Christmas cookies and the lessons she had learned and has tried to practice throughout her life. "Hate and divisiveness and fear are very, very deep and powerful in the human heart," she said. "But I also believe there is a powerful, countervailing voice, the voice of kindness, the voice of compassion, the voice of giving help when it is asked for, regardless of who that person is."