

Cathy Newkirk

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Jillian Egan

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Cathy Newkirk

Transcript – Cathy Newkirk

Interviewee: Cathy Newkirk

Interviewer: Gus Nolan

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Marist College Faculty

Summary: Cathy's thoughts on Marist College and the Medical Technology program. This includes: her upbringing, education, and path to employment at Marist College, the growth of the Med Tech program, how Marist has evolved since the early 1980s, and her thoughts on the future of Marist.

Gus Nolan (00:02):

Today is July 25th. It's a Thursday. We have a chance to interview. Cathy Newkirk who, for a good number of years, worked with other faculty here, is still on the faculty here, at Medical Technology. Good afternoon, Cathy.

Cathy Newkirk (00:21):

Good afternoon.

Gus Nolan (00:24):

We're doing this interview to be part of the Marist College oral interviews. What I thought this afternoon, I'm going to go into five parts: before Marist, Marist, your major part here at Marist, the crystal ball looking ahead to Marist, and then observations from your experience. So, we begin before Marist with your early life. Where you were born, brought up, grade school, high school.

Cathy Newkirk (01:00):

Okay. I'm born in Connecticut and grew up in Milford, Connecticut. High school was Jonathan Law High School.

Gus Nolan (01:10):

Did you go to grade school there?

Cathy Newkirk (01:11):

Grade school was Kay Avenue School right next door to my house. Pretty easy to get up and get out. And then Jonathan Law High School, Marietta College in Ohio.

Gus Nolan (01:27):

How was it that you went to someplace like Ohio from Connecticut?

Cathy Newkirk (01:32):

One of my friend's sisters had graduated from Marietta, and I was looking for a small, liberal arts college, and coed. So, we drove out there never having seen it before because back in those days you didn't interview around, you didn't drive around and see the colleges.

Gus Nolan (01:51):

Put a date on that. About what year was that?

Cathy Newkirk (01:52):

That was 1970.

Gus Nolan (01:53):

Back to high school. What was high school like? Did you just go to school and go home or do you recall any activities, drama, music, hobbies?

Cathy Newkirk (02:11):

I don't remember what I did back then! [Laughter]

Gus Nolan (02:16):

It was a long time ago.

Cathy Newkirk (02:16):

Yeah. [Laughter] I was involved in a lot, but it wasn't sports back then. Women weren't in sports. You could do maybe intramural sports.

Gus Nolan (02:25):

How about theater? Choir?

Cathy Newkirk (02:25):

No, I wasn't in choir or theater. I was on some of the service groups, service clubs. One, I'm trying to remember the name of it, but it was a service club where we would serve food at all the games, and that sort of thing, and raise money for the high school.

Gus Nolan (02:48):

Are you an only child?

Cathy Newkirk (02:49):

I am not. I am one of three. I'm in the middle. An older sister and a younger brother, but we're all very close in age.

Gus Nolan (03:00):

Then the whole move on to college. So, you picked this college because a friend had gone there?

Cathy Newkirk (03:08):

A friend's sister, yes, older sister had gone there.

Gus Nolan (03:11):

In college, what was that like? Major field?

Cathy Newkirk (03:13):

Biology. That was 1970 to '74. We had to dress for dinner back then. There was a dress code in high school too. You had to dress for high school.

Gus Nolan ([03:32](#)):

Was this coed?

Cathy Newkirk ([03:34](#)):

College was coed, yes.

Cathy Newkirk ([03:36](#)):

The boys had to wear suits and jackets?

Cathy Newkirk ([03:39](#)):

They wore jackets, yeah. It was right on the Ohio river and the Muskingum River, so crew was really big. So, it was familiar when Marist had crew also.

Gus Nolan ([03:52](#)):

How about the activities through the summer? Did you have a job?

Cathy Newkirk ([04:00](#)):

Yes, I did. I had lots of jobs. I started working when I was fourteen. My father died when I was four years old, so we were not-well-to-do. I had jobs every summer, and some summers I had three jobs.

Gus Nolan ([04:16](#)):

Like what kind of jobs?

Cathy Newkirk ([04:16](#)):

I worked at stores. I worked at the Grand Union as a cashier. I worked at a Hallmark store. I waited tables in restaurants. When I was at college, I worked breakfast in the dish room, scraping off old scrambled eggs with cigarettes put out in them, 'cause back then everybody was smoking. [Laughter] And then I worked at the library, and then in the evening I was an RA. We had duties, taking turns of who had to stay up and lock the doors because doors were locked.

Gus Nolan ([04:59](#)):

Was this part of tuition-based? In other words, were you under program, like student aid or something like that?

Cathy Newkirk ([05:08](#)):

No, they were just paid jobs where you got salaries, and I used it towards college.

Gus Nolan ([05:12](#)):

When you finished there, did you move right into graduate school?

Cathy Newkirk ([05:21](#)):

I started working right away. I worked at a hospital in Connecticut: Saint Vincent's medical center in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Gus Nolan (05:30):

You just had a biology degree, now.

Cathy Newkirk (05:32):

And I went for an extra year after college for medical technology at a hospital-based program. Then when I was working, I was going to school at night for my master's degree. I got that at the University of Bridgeport, the biology degree.

Gus Nolan (05:53):

How far is Bridgeport from your home?

Cathy Newkirk (05:53):

It's about twenty minutes, but they had tolls on the roads back then, so you could be at the toll for half an hour. [Laughter] So, it should've been twenty minutes, but it was a little longer, usually, at rush hour. I would go to work and then I would bring a sandwich in the car and eat it on my way to school.

Gus Nolan (06:13):

Kind of a busy, active life. What about your social life? Sometime along the way you got married. When did that happen?

Cathy Newkirk (06:26):

Yeah, that's funny. Jimmy and I met when we were fifteen. We had our first date when we were fifteen. We dated in high school. He went to a different school. We met through CYO and we dated through high school, and then we both went away to college. He went to Annapolis, Maryland and I went to Ohio. So we were apart, but we still got together summers and holidays and things. We dated other people through college, but we still kept together.

Gus Nolan (06:55):

And so when was that finalized?

Cathy Newkirk (07:02):

We don't ever rush into anything. [Laughter] We dated for thirteen years before we got married.

Gus Nolan (07:15):

How long after graduate school did you think of going into teaching?

Cathy Newkirk (07:25):

I taught in the hospital, so right off the bat I liked doing that. I like taking students, teaching them at the bench, teaching them what to do. And then I volunteered to give lectures in the formal program. So I was teaching at the hospital. Probably like a year in.

Gus Nolan (07:41):

Who would you be teaching?

New Speaker (07:43):

Student medical technologists. Because back then programs were based at the hospitals, mostly, not at the colleges. So the lectures would be given at the hospital. The clinical rotations were through the hospital. So I did that

Gus Nolan (08:02):

That's before coming to Marist. How did that happen? Where did you learn of Marist?

Cathy Newkirk (08:10):

Well, we got married and moved to Texas, and I worked in Texas for a couple of years.

Gus Nolan (08:16):

A couple of years is two or four?

New Speaker (08:20):

No, two. Maybe one, I don't know. I don't know the exact dates of when we were in Texas. But I worked at a couple of hospitals down there in hematology, clinical chemistry, and I supervised down there.

Gus Nolan (08:35):

Where was Jim at this time?

Cathy Newkirk (08:35):

He was in Texas also. Corpus Christi, Texas. He was in the Navy, so they had a Navy station in Corpus Christi, Texas. And then he got out of the Navy and we moved back north. He got a job with IBM and then we moved here. I saw an ad in the paper from Marist. It was in the New York Times, saying that they had just gotten a \$5 million grant to start a nursing program, a medical technology program, and a physical therapy program. That was back in '82, and we moved from Texas to Poughkeepsie, New York.

Gus Nolan (09:16):

When did Jim start flying, or did that come later?

Cathy Newkirk (09:20):

He went to the Naval Academy. As soon as he graduated from the Naval Academy in '74, he went into the Navy and he did pilot training right from school.

Gus Nolan (09:31):

Coming back, you saw this ad in the paper. This must have been after we turned down the nursing program with Saint Francis Hospital.

Cathy Newkirk (09:41):

Oh, I don't know about that. Because they did start the nursing program. Do you remember Barbara Hines? She got hired to head up the nursing program. We never got the physical therapy program off the ground. They never hired anybody for that program. I think back then they thought it was way too expensive once they started looking at it.

Gus Nolan (09:59):

Okay, this is a new one. This isn't the Saint Mary's in Newburgh, then, that this nursing thing came in.

Cathy Newkirk (10:06):

I'm not sure. I don't think we were affiliated with another college at the time. I think maybe they did have a nursing program down there, but I don't know.

Gus Nolan (10:16):

Well, we had elementary education with Saint Mary's, I think, somewhere along the way.

Cathy Newkirk (10:25):

That was all before my time, I think, because when the nursing program started, I think it was based here.

Gus Nolan (10:31):

Let's come to Marist. Who did you see first?

Cathy Newkirk (10:36):

It was Andrew Molloy. He was the Academic Vice President. He interviewed me. In his style, Andy was late for the interview, and he had some other meeting going on in his office, so he kept poking his head out every fifteen minutes apologizing for being late. I liked him right off the bat because he was so down to earth and apologized. [Laughter]

Gus Nolan (11:01):

He left his mark here, for sure. When did you meet people like Joe Bettencourt?

Cathy Newkirk (11:08):

Right away. Once I got hired, of course. George Hooper was the Dean at the time--or chair, they called it back then. But George was my boss, per se. George and Joe Bettencourt were there, and Bill Parrott was, back then. The chemist of course, Richard LaPietra, Larry [Inaudible], and George [Inaudible].

Gus Nolan (11:33):

He had a particular interest in some machine he wanted to get. It escapes me now, but it was an odd thing, it seemed to me--why would we want one of those? But he had come from [Inaudible], I think. No, Tom Cahey came from [Inaudible]. I'm getting it confused. George is another story. So, those first years would be from?..

Cathy Newkirk (12:01):

Eighty-two I started and I've been here ever since. [Laughter]

Gus Nolan (12:10):

You came for biology, essentially?

Cathy Newkirk (12:13):

I came for Medical Technology 'cause we had the program. They had just gotten the grant. I guess it was George and Joe that had put together the grant to get the grant. When I came I started the program from scratch.

Gus Nolan (12:31):

How many students did you have?

Cathy Newkirk (12:31):

First year we weren't supposed to have any students and we had one. [Laughter] So we tutored her in our office. Those were the days right? [Laughter].

Gus Nolan (12:45):

You made do with what you had, right. Was it in the Donnelly building?

Cathy Newkirk (12:45):

Yep.

Gus Nolan (12:45):

Where else could you be? [Laughter].

Cathy Newkirk (12:45):

Yeah, 'cause when I started it was just Donnelly and--was it Adriance that was attached to the library?

Gus Nolan (12:57):

Yeah, across the way. I don't know if there was classrooms in there. Nilus Donnelly had an office in there, Registrar's office was in there. It was supposed to be a lounge for students. [Inaudible] students had no place to go, so they gave them two chairs and a table.

Cathy Newkirk (13:19):

By the way, Nilus Donnelly came when we bought a house. We bought a really old house that needed a lot of work and he came out to advise us. He told us what we should do first and we've been working on it ever since.

Gus Nolan (13:36):

Where was that? Was that in Poughkeepsie?

Cathy Newkirk (13:36):

Yes. It's the same house we're in. We bought it one room at a time, we say.

Gus Nolan (13:47):

So you came to Marist. Talking about the development of the science, or under the head of science, did you have biology and environmental science on the board yet?

Cathy Newkirk (13:58):

Yes. That was on the board. I'm trying to remember who that was though, 'cause he wasn't here for very long. There was bio chemistry, med tech just started, and there was definitely environmental science but it was a small program. I think they maybe only had one faculty member. And I was the only woman. [Laughter] I think I was one of, like, five on campus because I got invited to join the faculty wives club, which was very nice of them to do because they didn't know what else to do with me. [Laughter].

Gus Nolan (14:37):

Did we have a ladies room?

New Speaker (14:38):

Just about. [Laughter] You have to walk across campus--no. [Laughter] When we moved in, our offices were in the basement of Donnelley. It had been a kitchen at one time. We had those little tiles on the wall and there was about a half an inch of grease on the walls. And so we had to do it ourselves.

Gus Nolan (15:00):

The dormitory was the other side of the room. I think there was a kitchen. That was before Sheahan was finished I guess.

Cathy Newkirk (15:12):

We had to go in on the weekends with scrub buckets and scrub the walls to get the grease off the walls from the kitchen. [Laughter]

Gus Nolan (15:21):

Well, you science tech people, you know the importance of cleanliness. Were there women on campus yet?

Cathy Newkirk (15:28):

Oh, women in classes, yes. I don't know when that started, but it was definitely coed when I started.

Gus Nolan (15:36):

When Linus returned from his stay in Europe, the second [Inaudible] while over there visited he the schools. And we had been under the impression that Marist Brothers did not teach women. They were doing it for boys, really, in France. And for the longest time in Saint Anne's Academy in New York, which was only guys--in fact it took until they moved out to Long Island until [Inaudible] women eventually were admitted into the school. But when he saw what happened in France, he came back and said he would take women now. So that must have been '72, '73, someplace in there.

Cathy Newkirk (16:18):

Yeah. 'Cause there were very few women faculty. I think Midge Schratz was here. I'm trying to remember. She was a French teacher. Margaret Calista was here. I'm trying to think if there were any other women. Very few.

Gus Nolan (16:35):

There was a math teacher, I don't know how long she was here. And then we had a nun. Sister...

Cathy Newkirk (16:44):

Francois Greg, who was a French teacher.

New Speaker (16:44):

What was the level of the students in terms of their ability at that time? Did you find them equal to the job? Were they the first of their family to come to college?

Cathy Newkirk (17:14):

Most of them were first generation kids, but they were certainly capable. I think our program had a little trouble in the beginning because they didn't know what it was. They didn't realize how heavy and science it was. So it was just a matter of getting the right students into the program. But the students were capable.

Gus Nolan (17:33):

Has there been a rise and fall in the registration of such students? Is your enrollment more now than it ever was?

Cathy Newkirk (17:45):

It's probably more now than it ever was. We started off slow because it was a new program and nobody knew what we did.

Gus Nolan (17:56):

And there was advisement. We wouldn't probably let students in if they were destined to fail.

Cathy Newkirk (18:01):

I used to go out on the road with Admissions. Sometimes we'd be out until 2:00 AM and then come back and teach your eight o'clock class in the morning. [Laughter] We went all over the place with the Admissions department.

Gus Nolan (18:18):

Sometimes they were only students themselves, right?

Cathy Newkirk (18:20):

Yeah, some of them were back then. I think when I started it was Jim Daly. He might've been the first one as Admissions Director when I started.

Gus Nolan (18:32):

David Flynn was in Admissions too. Well, he's before Jim Daly because Jim Daly was a student of his. Dave Flynn was the one who started bringing his students, sending them out on the road. We got a front page article in the New York Times. He has it on his wall in Florida. I met him five years ago, I think when

he was in the villages in Florida. Let's talk to you about your Marist teaching career. Did you have the same courses every semester?

Cathy Newkirk ([19:12](#)):

No. No, no, no. When I first started, labs didn't count as much towards your teaching load, so we taught quite a few courses. I taught clinical chemistry, and hematology, and the lab levels one and two. And the intro course, the capping course, and a few core classes and general bio lab, too. So we had quite a workload back then.

Gus Nolan ([19:41](#)):

And the number of students would be about 20 in a class?

Cathy Newkirk ([19:45](#)):

When we first started, we started with one and then we went to probably eight to ten. So now we're up in the twenties.

Gus Nolan ([19:56](#)):

I'm going to be asking different things about this teaching career, the courses you taught. By and large, how successful were the students?

Cathy Newkirk ([20:22](#)):

They were very good. I mean, we've had almost a hundred percent. I'd say I can count on one hand, kids who did not pass the registry exam. They have to take a national registry exam before they can work. So after they finished the program. They've done really well and they've had a hundred percent employment. The hospitals all over the East coast--and now we've of course spread farther than that--but they would love these students because, I'm convinced--and I tell my students all the time--because they have the liberal arts base to their education. Not only are they scientifically educated, but they can think critically and put things into a larger perspective of where we stand historically and where we are going from here. The hospitals come seeking our students out. Every spring they come and they keep trying to come earlier and earlier to get them before they get grabbed up by another.

Gus Nolan ([21:22](#)):

Interesting observation. I'll tell you a story about that later. A young man I had in English, who eventually left and went on. The story gets complex. I'll tell you later. [Laughter] New professors coming in. Did you have much of a growth in faculty?

Cathy Newkirk ([21:51](#)):

The grant actually had four faculty in the grant, and I think that went on for maybe three years. But we only brought on two because the college didn't want to bring on four until the program got larger. So we had total of three faculty in the beginning.

Gus Nolan ([22:12](#)):

Was the grant ever renewed?

Cathy Newkirk ([22:14](#)):

No. It was five million dollars, federal grant.

Gus Nolan (22:23):

The interaction with faculty. In those days we were all in the bottom of Donnelly and we had lunch in the lab. I understand that has been outlawed now. [Laughter]

Cathy Newkirk (22:36):

I know. It's so sad because we had such a great time in there and we learned things about everything on campus. You could get an answer to anything.

Gus Nolan (22:44):

I remember Roger Norton going up on the blackboard and giving us a whole diagram about how something was to be done. And that, with the growth of the college, and going to different buildings has really broken the spirit of that kind of life.

Cathy Newkirk (23:17):

Right. We don't know each other. Back then we knew each other. I found it very welcoming when I first came. Everybody was very welcoming and we were all part of one big happy family.

Gus Nolan (23:30):

That's why you never left. Why would I leave a situation like this?

Cathy Newkirk (23:35):

Right! Now you have to walk across campus to come across your friends across campus. But it's still good.

Gus Nolan (23:40):

You said already that most students, ninety-nine percent of them, pass their exams, and you'd have been happy with it. Were there any disappointments? Anything negative about the college?

Cathy Newkirk (24:00):

No, no, no. I would say one of the strongest things that's kept me here, is the students. Besides being bright and capable, they're some of the nicest kids you can come across. They're thoughtful. For an example, I had class in the morning and somewhere between class and lab in the afternoon, they found out it was my birthday. And so they went home to the dorm, baked cupcakes, decorated the cupcakes like blood cells and came back and surprised me. So, I mean, that's the kind of kids they are. I've always been pleased with the kids. I can literally say I could count on one hand students that have given me any kind of trouble.

Gus Nolan (24:54):

That's a good thing about it. I think there's something about a magnet that they draw each other. When kids come here for interviews or to see the campus, there's a certain--they still hold the door open for you, little things like that.

Cathy Newkirk (25:08):

Yes. They're just nice, nice people, besides being good students.

Gus Nolan (25:12):

Another part of your obligation here is committee work. How did you find that? Which one was the most troubling? [Laughter]

Cathy Newkirk (25:25):

I think I've served on just about all of them over the years, but the ones that take up the most time are rank and tenure and "faculty executive committee" or "faculty affairs committee," depending on what time it was called which name. They're very, very time consuming. But you also get to know your fellow faculty very well and work together well.

Gus Nolan (25:53):

Do you still visit classes to evaluate? Well, do we still have tenure?

Cathy Newkirk (26:00):

Less and less of it. [Laughter] Right now we're trying to get committed to replace me with a tenure track faculty. We started with three tenure track faculty and we're down to two term faculty and myself, and then hopefully we'll have a tenure track replacement

Gus Nolan (26:24):

College-wise, is that true? Are English professors being given tenure--and math and computers?

Cathy Newkirk (26:32):

Yeah, there still is tenure. Yes.

Gus Nolan (26:37):

What about evaluations? Has there been trouble with that? In other words, there is some talk occasionally about students being difficult to write an evaluation, or they don't give you a good grade, or easy grading to make sure the evaluations would be in keeping with expectations.

Cathy Newkirk (27:04):

I don't find that. And I find the students are very, they're kind almost in their their evaluations. Even if they want to say something to you know, help you correct something, they're so kind about it. I haven't found them writing bad things and I don't think people are changing their teaching to get better evaluations. At least not in science, they're not. I can't speak outside of science.

Gus Nolan (27:27):

You have a pretty objective thing to take care of, there, don't you? And you have a test at the end of it all that they have to pass.

Cathy Newkirk (27:36):

Right, they have to do a national certification. I think, at least in our area, medical technology, we have to keep the standards up there because I always think they're going to be the ones who are taking care

of us when we're in the hospital. You don't want to let them sneak by just knowing some of the stuff, but not all of the stuff.

Gus Nolan (28:04):

This part has to do with the crystal ball. Looking into the future. When you came here, Marist was a rather small college, probably one building. The dormitories were maybe just completed.

Cathy Newkirk (28:26):

The high-rises were there.

Gus Nolan (28:26):

So Leo was up and Sheahan was up. I'm not sure they were all full because for awhile we used to rent out to IBMers.

Cathy Newkirk (28:40):

Huh. That was before my time.

Gus Nolan (28:40):

It was very early years. But that quickly ended. We fully became a nice place for kids to come. It's the old story--what you see here, you're pretty much attracted to. And it's only seventy-two miles from New York City. Those days it was just "the Island." Anybody going to the Island? Like there was only one, you know, Long Island.

Cathy Newkirk (29:10):

Have you been to the new dorms?

Gus Nolan (29:13):

Yes.

Cathy Newkirk (29:13):

Yeah, I could live in there. They're gorgeous.

New Speaker (29:16):

Yeah. Even before that, what did they take down--the Gartland townhouses? I had a Goddaughter living in there, and I said, "Enjoy it. You'll never be able to afford this view of the Hudson." Seriously--looking at Marist ten to twenty years down the road, is it going to be here?

Cathy Newkirk (29:46):

I think it will definitely be here. I think we're definitely becoming much more diverse than we were. I suppose and more things online.

Gus Nolan (30:00):

I've heard that some other colleges that are failing, or at least ceasing, their students are being welcomed to come here. But this is much more diverse in terms of what factors?

Cathy Newkirk (30:38):

Faculty, students, where we're drawing our students from. When I first started it was New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. And now they're from all over the world.

Gus Nolan (30:49):

I think it's something like forty-four states or something like that represented here.

Cathy Newkirk (30:54):

And now we have students from Hawaii and California.

Gus Nolan (30:59):

We sent students to Australia, Study Abroad, where a couple have gone down. I don't know if we have any Japanese. Do we have any contact with Japan?

Cathy Newkirk (31:17):

I haven't seen any Japanese students, but that doesn't mean that they're not here. I ran into Corinne Schell and she recruits for California and Hawaii and she said the big challenge is trying to get them away from paradise to come to Poughkeepsie. [Laughter] So they come and they don't know what snow is and then find out real quick.

Gus Nolan (31:40):

It's a full education.

Cathy Newkirk (31:47):

When you recruit, you have to let them know everything, including the climate.

Gus Nolan (31:56):

Looking into the future, how about the development of the various fields? Physical therapy, medical tech?

Cathy Newkirk (32:04):

It looks like we're definitely taking a medical turn here towards a lot of health science careers. When we first started we were supposed to go that path, but then the med tech program really was the only one who survived. It's kind of nice to have friends in the profession now. The other day I was walking to class and I had this really bad pain in my leg and I thought, "Huh! That felt like something broke in there!" But I immediately went back to the physical therapy department. They diagnosed it in a minute and a half, told me I was okay, that it'd go away in two or three days. It was just nice to have that kind of expertise in there. Yeah, it's helpful. You can always be as an example in the classroom too, if you're willing to do that.

Gus Nolan (32:56):

Yeah, I heard good things about that. Also, you kind of made mention to it--the number of students have become more diverse. We seem to be having a greater number of international students for one, and then across the country more and more students. And also a diversity in the nature of their physical

background. However you derive diversity, or define it in tech terms. Are we having the same diversity in the financial ability to afford Marist, or are we going to block ourselves out of the running for middle-class students?

Cathy Newkirk (33:50):

I think we still have middle-class students. I'm not sure we have poor ones, but we definitely have middle-class students, still,

Gus Nolan (33:57):

And we even have rich ones.

Cathy Newkirk (33:57):

Yeah, we have wealthy ones. If you look at the faculty parking lot and the student parking lot, there's a big difference. [Laughter]

Gus Nolan (34:07):

Somebody said seven percent of the freshman class were in the one percent.

Cathy Newkirk (34:11):

Wow.

Gus Nolan (34:11):

That was a eye-opener to me because we were only the first generation to come to college, and most of them were firemen at best, or policemen, and very few Wall Street people. That's kind of changed as you have just indicated.

Cathy Newkirk (34:34):

One thing I do think we should do more of is educate everybody, when we're taking students from all over the world, that we should all be educated in their cultures. Even sometimes when you speak to people, how close you can come for comfort, comfortable speaking distance and things like that. Religions, all kinds of things that we all--faculty, students, staff, everyone--should be educated more to know how these cultures differ.

Gus Nolan (35:09):

A seminar for faculty to be aware of those kinds of students. I know in some places they like to be close to study, whereas the American kid wants his own table.

Cathy Newkirk (35:22):

Right. And I know back in the day, I think it was Richard Rancourt who took care of the Vietnamese students. He helped them to indoctrinate into our culture. But I think we need more. I mean, we do have little parties that show the cultures, but I think it's gotta be deeper than just seeing their costumes and that kind of thing. We have to understand more of where they're coming from and where they should know better where we're coming from too. Otherwise it's going to be difficult to working together.

Gus Nolan (35:58):

I want to return to something you may have mentioned before, the fact that so many of your students can read and write a language, the liberal arts. We used to have a core program that required such things as philosophy and English and so on. Has that been depleted in its rigor, or do we still have a core program?

Cathy Newkirk (36:28):

We have a core program, but it's very different where the students can pick classes that are related. I'm trying to think of what it's called now, but they pick four courses that are related in some way. I guess that's okay. I still think they need religion, world religions, philosophy and that. There should be some more basic required courses in order to live in the world these days. To have a basic understanding of world religions, I think is very important. And certainly philosophy and logic.

Gus Nolan (37:07):

Logic, oh! [Laughter] And how much history should they know? Constitutional law?

Cathy Newkirk (37:17):

There's not enough time for all the history they should know. [Laughter] I try to incorporate history into my classes in the medical field, see where we came from, where this came from. But the students think they're wasting their time learning about history.

Gus Nolan (37:34):

How would you do that?

Cathy Newkirk (37:37):

Well, just whatever we're doing. If we're doing a particular kind of disease, the history of the disease or the treatment for the disease and the instrumentation, what we used to do way back when.

Gus Nolan (37:49):

Do you have a text book for that?

Cathy Newkirk (37:53):

You can find it, yes.

Gus Nolan (37:56):

That's an interesting observation. They could do a paper on it, or to complete the course you must be able to do something in that area. Bring some attention to online learning, distance learning. That wouldn't be too easy in your area, I imagine.

Cathy Newkirk (38:20):

No, no, I don't think so. Lectures, maybe, but I don't think that's the best way to teach people 'cause there's not as much interaction. But certainly you couldn't do the laboratory portion online. You have to have hands-on, and you have to have experience in an actual laboratory.

Gus Nolan (38:40):

Again, I think there was a time when Dennis would say that kind of learning is for graduate students. It's best for students to have in-classroom on-campus kind of interaction, so that they would learn a number of things. To get along with people, to share. Basic kindergarten stuff, you know, don't spit, don't forget to flush, all the basic rules. [Laughter]

Cathy Newkirk (39:12):

I know my daughter got an MBA here and when she signed up for it, there was an on-the-ground program and an online program, and she was very disappointed to find out when she got into the classes there were no more on-the-ground classes. It was all online. So she did all of that at our home in a room and had expected an experience with other people. I think you lose a lot in that. I think there's a place for it, maybe working parents who can't get to classes, but I think young people need to interact.

Gus Nolan (39:48):

The last part that I want to direct to, maybe the most important, the kind of general observations that you would make. For instance, in your experience, have Marist students changed much between the time you first came here and now. I heard people respond to the lack of interactions. Sometimes it's students with their own cellphones and their own private world, and they talk about lack of getting along with people. When they come out of class, the first thing they do is get on the phone. Does that happen much in your classes?

Cathy Newkirk (40:34):

No, they don't use the phones in our classes very much because if they don't listen for one minute they lose a lot. But they're certainly walking around campus like that. I don't think that's a Marist problem. I think it's an American culture problem where instead of talking to the person they're walking with, they're talking to someone else.

Gus Nolan (40:57):

Do you find them more reliable on parents? Getting permission to, I have to ask my parents if I can go to the movie?

Cathy Newkirk (41:08):

If you stop the students in the hall and they're talking on the cell phone, they're usually talking to the parents, which I think is a lot more than when we went to college. Of course, we didn't have phones and if you called home it was expensive. So they're relying--a lot of the connection to home is a lot stronger than it was in the past. I worry a little about that because how are they going to live their lives by themselves without that connection? My daughters were a little different, though. I used to have to make them call me once a week--have to call me at least once a week. They were, obviously, in the same culture, but they weren't that dependent on cell phones. So I don't think they have to be.

Gus Nolan (41:59):

You have to have heard the expression "helicopter parents," watching over every day to see what they're doing.

Cathy Newkirk (42:08):

I actually had over the last three years, two or three parents come in with the students to do registration, advising, which I had never seen that before. To help them pick out their classes. And of course then you have to say, "Do you give me permission to speak to your parents about things?"

Gus Nolan (42:29):

Some of the other people I've done on those earlier years talked about there was a phone at the end of the hallway in the dormitory and they'd line up to call their girlfriends or call home. We've come a long way from that kind of opportunity. Also the sense of their concern for themselves rather than the concern for others. I think one of the biggest activities on Marist campus is this service business--that is, Campus Ministry, I think they're referring to. Maybe it's because you get appointed to a room selection dormitory rewards, whatever. But, again, have you found that to be the case?

Cathy Newkirk (43:25):

I think the biggest club on campus is Campus Ministry, which I think is wonderful. I think that's wonderful. I think we might be unique in Marist, and I'm sure with other other colleges--but how nice the students are with good people there. I think we're very fortunate in that regard. I think they sincerely want to do it. They could join anything. They don't have to join Campus Ministry. And they're very involved in it too.

Gus Nolan (43:57):

There's a great generosity, too, in terms of their Christmas tree giving or the Thanksgiving. I guess it was Mo Bibeau, at his funeral at the chapel, there was a service but you could hardly get on the altar because it was Thanksgiving week. The kids don't go to church very much but when they come, they come with one hand longer than the other carrying gifts.

Cathy Newkirk (44:22):

Right, right. Which I think is a good thing. That's what we're supposed to do. Church isn't necessarily Christ-like behavior, and so long as they're doing Christ-like behavior, we're good.

Gus Nolan (44:32):

I'll go along with that. [Laughter] If you had a chance to speak to the Board, what would you tell them? What is something about Marist that is precious that should not go?

Cathy Newkirk (44:51):

Well, I definitely think there should be tenure. And I think there should be more discussion. I think we've talked about this in our reading the other day. Discussion, disagreement and consensus. We don't have a lot of that anymore. Our meetings are more just giving out information. There's not a lot of discussion and I don't think you can move forward with knowledge and search for the truth unless you have more of that. I remember the early days when there would be big discussions and shouting across the room, but still it all worked out in the end.

Gus Nolan (45:32):

Would you attribute this more to the leadership? In other words, if there was a new president of the faculty or chair of faculty? Would it change much if there was a new person there?

Cathy Newkirk (45:46):

No, I think it has to be a whole college culture. Again, I don't think Marist is unique in this that colleges are going more for a corporate model than an academic model. I think that's what has to change.

Gus Nolan (46:01):

Making money is more important than making information.

Cathy Newkirk (46:01):

Right. Than the search for knowledge or the search for the truth. I do think that's what we have to do is we have to come back around to an academic environment, not a corporate environment.

Gus Nolan (46:16):

Do you think Dennis might be able to do some of that as he returns?

Cathy Newkirk (46:18):

Well, Let's hope. Let's hope. One thing we can be sure of is he loves the college and he's dedicated to it to come back out of retirement. That's amazing.

Gus Nolan (46:29):

Talking to the Board. What are some of the other observations that you would make? You want to have tenure. Should the Marist Brothers still play a big part? They have the Marist Novitiate here now. Is that making it too religious?

Cathy Newkirk (46:51):

No, 'cause I didn't even know they were here. Where are they?

Gus Nolan (46:56):

The building is over there. It says Marist Novitiate on it.

Cathy Newkirk (46:58):

Where? On campus or across the river?

Gus Nolan (47:02):

No, on campus.

Cathy Newkirk (47:03):

Huh!

Gus Nolan (47:05):

The old Kirk residence.

Cathy Newkirk (47:06):

Oh, okay. I did not know that. So obviously they're not too big of a presence on campus.

Gus Nolan (47:17):

Although I'm trying to get that young man here to find out what the heck has brought you in here. Cause you had to go to Marist schools. But he did play a part in the summer camps in Esopus. You might be familiar with that.

Cathy Newkirk (47:30):

No, I think that to keep that heritage and have that connection is great. It's always been a positive, certainly never a negative for the college to have that.

Gus Nolan (47:41):

What is the Marist spirit in your view?

Cathy Newkirk (47:46):

Well, it is service that we were talking about. Taking care of each other as a community. Working together for a common cause, which is to help each other and to learn and to grow. I think the Marist Brothers were always a great example of that. Doing things quietly.

Gus Nolan (48:05):

Of course, that's a little different from to live hidden and not known to the world--which is the Marist spirit, you know, not to take credit for the work. We used to have a wall around here to keep us in. Then we took the wall down. That was another interesting decision. In this day and age you have to have a meeting, you have to have environmental considerations. So Nilus talks to Foy about, the wall is beginning to crumble, what do you think we should do, replace it? So Linus says to Nilus, "well, what do you think?" He says, I think we should take it down. Let's take it down. End of discussion. He had his own bulldozers, so he took the wall down.

Cathy Newkirk (48:55):

And then we had to put the fence back up cause the kids were crossing the street, and they were going to get killed. [Laughter].

Gus Nolan (49:01):

So we built a tunnel.

Cathy Newkirk (49:04):

Which is great. It's too bad we waited so long for that. That tunnel really connects both sides of the campus and it's short and safe and bright. And you never feel unsafe.

Gus Nolan (49:14):

It's an architectural picture. It's a beautiful thing at night to see it lit up. I understand there's a constant supervision of it, but I just heard that, I never went to see whether this is really true. Uh, all right. We're getting into almost fifty minutes of our discussion. Is there something that you would want to add to this? I've kind of given you a broad sweep. You have a gripe you want to say? [Laughter]

Cathy Newkirk (49:48):

No, no. I say we're certainly not perfect by any stretch, but over the years--and it's been almost forty for me--

Gus Nolan (49:59):

We know we're not perfect. [Laughter]

Cathy Newkirk (50:05):

That's a good thing that we know we're not perfect! But the faculty have been wonderful over all these years. The students have been wonderful over all these years. We just have to stay on that path.

Gus Nolan (50:16):

What do you see yourself doing once you do retire, which is not to be too far off the line--maybe another year or three? Do you see yourself working, volunteering to a low literacy thing or, working in a hospital?

Cathy Newkirk (50:35):

No, I haven't really thought about it. Just visiting West Virginia where my daughter is. She's, she's gonna probably be staying there. So we've been traveling around and I haven't got plans. I don't make those kinds of plans. I wait and see what comes in front of me.

Gus Nolan (50:56):

What is Jim doing now?

Cathy Newkirk (50:56):

He's still working also.

Gus Nolan (50:58):

Thank you very much. We'll put this into our archives. Well, I'll get a transcription of this--the students doing, it will have to call maybe to say, "What was this?" But we'll try and clarify whatever.

Cathy Newkirk (51:21):

Oh, so they transcribe it?

Gus Nolan (51:22):

Yeah, To try and take this into a readable thing. Okay! Thank you, Kathy.

New Speaker (51:32):

Thank you. Do you want the great thinking here?