

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 159, No. 8

## Scholarship honors 'heart of John Marshall'

BY JERRY CRIMMINS

Law Bulletin staff writer

The John Marshall Law School instituted a scholarship for students called "The Heart of John Marshall Scholarship" to honor its longtime employee and friend of the students, Marilyn J. Criss.

Criss has worked at John Marshall for 35 years and leaves "the indelible mark of love" on students through the decades, said Marilyn Thomas, director of public relations for the school.

Criss is "their shoulder to cry on, the knowledgeable mother who can give advice and the great confidante," Thomas said. "She doesn't judge."

Criss' formal title is administrative assistant in the student affair's office. Among other things, she said she supervises the activities of about 35 student organizations.

"I'm responsible for approving their programs and speakers" and overseeing their budgets, she said.

Criss is a native of Lewis, a small town in Indiana. She said she came to Chicago with her

husband after World War II.

She started at John Marshall as the switchboard operator; her first full-time job after her children were grown. When she interviewed for the job, she said she didn't expect to get it.

Afterward, however, then-Dean Noble W. Lee called her at home twice to ask her to take the job.

Finally, she said, "I'll be there."

She began working in the student affairs office about 25 years ago, she said, when the school sponsored only about four student organizations.

"I always felt an interest in students," she said. "When I started, I would say students never saw the dean and only saw a professor in class.

"Then things started to change. Students became more demanding and started to expect more. ... They had more problems."

For instance, she said, sometimes students had no place to go for the Christmas holidays.

"I sort of took them under my wing," she said. "Through the years, I've done many things for them, bought them clothes."



Marilyn J. Criss

"They began to call me their Chicago mother," Criss said.

When students early on asked if they could talk to her, Criss said she had no office so "we went down the hall to try to find a place."

Now she has an office.

"Students come in here for their personal things, their love life and they're crying," she said.

"I'm not here to tell them what to do. I'm the sounding board. They want someone to listen to

them. When they close the door, I can say, 'This too shall pass.'"

"When you're young, you think it's never going to."

She said she tells students, "I love you and I care for you."

Clinical professor Susann M. MacLachlan said, "It's surprising how many students attending law school have significant outside responsibilities in their lives, small children, ailing parents, full-time jobs. And these outside duties lead to an enormous amount of stress."

"I was one of those students years ago with a day job, three small children and a dying father," MacLachlan said. She graduated from the school in 1994.

"Having the motherly affection of Miss Criss and being able to talk to her in the always calm oasis that is her office made some of those more difficult days less burdensome," MacLachlan said. "She absolutely is the heart of John Marshall."

People interested in contributing to the nonendowed scholarship may contact Lauren Prihoda at John Marshall at (312) 427-2737, ext. 871.