

Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair

Cornie sees deeply and broadly, and her vision in the world of health care ethics has guided the Center to all it has accomplished. Her profound understanding of the impact of this work on the community she loves. And yet it also casts a gentle glow of grace and modesty that are the abiding hallmarks of her character. Always, for Cornie, the focus is the Center and its work - never the boundless energy and devotion she has brought to her multi-faceted roles as wise leader, tireless fund-raiser and generous contributor.

Honored in the creation of the Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair - a tribute that was a complete surprise to this humble champion of the Center's work - Cornie wears the mantle of her accomplishments with pride, but also a degree of discomfort at the attention it draws to her own contributions. "I just think it's very important to support your community, it's a basic value," she says. It is, as she puts it, "a reflection of the values that my parents gave me, and the church has given me, that you should care for your fellow humans. It's about treating people with respect."

The granddaughter of a Wisconsin country doctor, Cornie understood early on the vital role a physician plays in building a healthy community. Her father, a Weyerhaeuser lumber executive, nurtured her interest further when he established the revered Gold-Headed Cane Award at OHSU. The award honors a graduating medical student that best exemplifies the qualities of "the true physician: integrity, humility, compassion, outstanding dedication and skill in the care of patients."

In 1991, when the Center for Ethics in Health Care was a year old, it took just one meeting with Susan Tolle for Cornie to catch the vision of all that the Center could accomplish. Having cared for both her in-laws and her parents at the end of their lives, she knew first hand that the medical system too often fell short in supporting patients and families during difficult times.

If you talked with Cornie herself about her years of dedication to the Center, you might quite reasonably deduce that she arranged a few lunches and then wrote the occasional note of appreciation to those who supported the Center's work. For many years, Cornie contributed the equivalent of a full-time job to the Center, carefully nurturing hundreds of relationships with donors, lending her formidable intellect to helping guide policy. "Cornie has been a visionary guide, respected mentor, and cherished friend to the Center for Ethics for almost all of its existence," says Susan Tolle. "She has set the highest of standards for the work we do and has always led by example. She is our inspiration in so many ways."

For Cornie, memories of the mountains of notes written, messages crafted and lunches attended melt away into gratitude when she muses on the many gifts she has gathered from these labors. "It is quite easy to persuade people to hear the Center for Ethics's story because it is always exciting and constantly changing and growing." Even after all these years, when the draw of her seven grandchildren diverts more of her time and attention, she is totally engaged when talking about the Center's work - her light still shining brightly, guiding the Center forward.