



The late John Kinsman was a man of strong convictions and a deep desire to protect the rights and dignity of the individual. As a teen in Oregon during the Great Depression he understood the importance of frugality, and he knew – first, from his own early working experiences in small Central Oregon communities, and then as a successful individual investor in Milwaukie – the value of hard work and independent thinking.

While long interested in ensuring that the medical system was respectful of individual wishes, he also developed a strong belief in the importance of compassion in health care as he supported his beloved wife, Betty, during her long final illness. Comfort, he realized, was an essential part of the caring relationship and this vital quality was too-often absent in end-of-life care.

Soon after Betty's death in 1989, the year of the Center's founding, John Kinsman made an unprecedented personal gift to endow an annual statewide Kinsman Ethics Conference. His vision was that the conference would inspire and nurture independent, innovative thinking to find ways to create new and better practices to support, honor and comfort patients at the end of life, while also addressing the growing number of ethical issues arising in health care.

His commitment to the Center has continued through The Kinsman Foundation, established by John and Betty in 1983 and now administered by John's son, Keith Kinsman. The Foundation has generously supported key Ethics Center programs, most recently a series of Palliative Care conferences designed for Oregon's smaller communities – such as Coos Bay, Astoria and John Day – which continue John's legacy of finding effective ways to ensure that individual voices about health care wishes are heard and respected.

"My father was an uncompromising individualist, who placed high value on the rights of each person," says Keith Kinsman. "He recognized the compelling vision that he shared with Susan Tolle and the Ethics Center to improve care and patients' rights at the end of life. And, given his own frugal temperament, he especially appreciated the fact that the Center is managed with prudent fiscal oversight, which allows it to accomplish a great deal with unusual economy. It's no accident that he described the Center as the best investment he ever made."

For the Center, the impact of John Kinsman's vision is profound. "John's generosity and foresight have allowed us to create learning and empower local leadership throughout the state," says Susan Tolle, M.D., Director of the Center. "The lasting result of this work is that health care professionals throughout Oregon now have deeper respect for the rights and dignity of each individual."