



SUNBEAMS

Ernie Peters—A Legacy

July 21, 1942 – August 19, 2004

Ernie Peters was born in Hartley, Iowa. From 1973 until the time of his passing in August of 2004 Ernie served as the Executive Director of Abbott House. During those 31 years he provided safety and treatment to over 5000 youth.



“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”

Ernie Peters.... *By Fred Tully*

I first met Ernie not long after he graduated from Buena Vista College. At the time, he was employed by the State of Iowa, supervising adolescent delinquent kids. I was working in a state facility in juvenile corrections where some of Ernie’s kids resided. As a beginner, he had a professionalism and poise

that made him a cut above most others. He took his work seriously and viewed this job as his life’s work. In 1968, we entered the University of Iowa as classmates. In school, the faculty viewed him as a talented serious student who was a leader. Fellow students looked up to him.

After graduation, Ernie had a foundation for his life’s work. He put the client first, he subscribed to ethical behavior and he committed himself to hard work. He was promoted to important supervisory positions with the Department of Social Services. While some of our classmates were “white

coat” therapists who sought work with private agencies with whom employment was a status symbol, in contrast, Ernie decided on Mitchell, South Dakota to head an agency that was on the opposite end of the spectrum of status, it was near death.

During those years, many of the standard old private agencies had gone out of existence. When he arrived in Mitchell, he and his family moved into the facility because (Story Continued on Page 4)

Spring Edition 2006

Newsletter Date February 06

Special points of interest:

- ☺ Tribute to Ernie Peters
- ☺ Giving Through Your Will
- ☺ Special Donation
- ☺ Directors Comments

Pheasant Hunter Takes Helpful Aim at Abbott House

He’s not a heart doctor, but you could call him a doctor of the heart and not be wrong.

He wants no recognition for his good works and so he insists on remaining anonymous.

To hear Inga Glissendorf at Mitchell’s Abbott House tell it, the mystery man from Mobile, Ala., is one of those stories that demands to be retold because it’s worth telling.

A few years ago, the man we’ll call Dr. Ken began coming to this area to hunt pheasants. He stayed at White Lake in quarters

Inga and her family had converted specifically for hunters.

Two years ago, during one of his stays and during the course of conversations with Inga, he learned about the girls of Abbott House and what is accomplished there.

Although the Abbott House story is well known here and in this area, it doesn’t enjoy the regional or national reputation of Omaha’s Boys Town, for example. But its mission is equally important: Helping girls in trouble. Many come from broken homes, have suffered sexual or psychological abuse, or abandonment. Abbott House, started in 1939 as a memorial to social activist Grace Abbott, is the last best hope for many of these girls, aged 10-18.

Inga, for 16 years, has been taking care of the Abbott House girls during the evenings; her stories about the girls and the challenges (Continued Page 2)

GIVING THROUGH YOUR WILL

Every year we receive bequests from the estates of deceased friends. These gifts make a tremendous difference and we count on such gifts as we move into the future. When you revise or create your will for the first time, we hope you will include Abbott House. Your estate gift will help us serve the next generation.

As you consider an estate gift to Abbott House, it may be useful to know some of the bequest options you have. For example, you can make your bequest as an unrestricted gift. This permits Abbott House to use your be-



quest where it is needed most. A second type of bequest is designated or restricted to a specific purpose. For exam-

ple, a gift may be earmarked for a program you feel keenly about or for capital improvements. You could even designate a bequest to establish an endowment.

A third kind would be a combination of the first two. That is, part of the bequest might be used as the board sees fit and the restricted part for the predetermined purpose.

Once you've decided on the kind of bequest, you must determine how the bequest will be identified. You have at least three options. First, you can specify a specific amount or item. For example, you could bequeath a vacation home to Abbott House or certain securities or a set amount of money. Second, you can name Abbott House to receive a percentage of the residue of your estate – the amount that is left after the bills and specific bequests have been made.

Finally, you could (continued on page 3)

Pheasant Hunter (Continued)

they face intrigued Dr. Ken. He wanted to help.

He took time from his hunting last year and showed up at the Abbott House for a tour. He gave each of the girls a year's subscription to a magazine of her choice.

A couple of weeks ago, he arrived at Abbott House again, asked for another tour and said he'd been thinking about what he could do this year.

His decision: Give each of the 42 girls \$100 each with but one string attached: They had to give a portion of it - from \$10 to \$100 - to someone else.

"He was really interested in doing something with kids," said Eric Klooz, executive director of the Abbott House. "The girls will decide how and where to use their gift and then write letters to Celia Wallace, thanking her and explaining how they used the money."

I don't think I explained Wallace's role in this. She is a patient of Dr. Ken's. A special patient, in fact, which is how Dr. Ken, an oncologist, comes up with the cash for special gifts.

As a cancer surgeon, Dr. Ken takes any money he receives in fees from friends and donates it in their name.

He's constantly on the lookout for ways to change people's lives for the better. "From what I know of him, he helps children a lot," said Lana Andersen, program director at Abbott House. "I know he's very generous back in Mobile. He stressed that he wanted to do something for the girls, but also for those who had

it worse than they did."

In other words, the girls of Abbott House are helped by a man who doesn't know them or have any connection to them, and they in turn are given the opportunity to help others.

One of life's nicer lessons.

The girls at Abbott House are aware that the \$4,200 gift is from "a special lady in Mobile" and are receiving it just like most kids would.

"A couple of them, their eyes got really big," Lana said.

"I talked to them about the fact that there are people out in the world they don't know and that there are others who care for them. And then I asked them to think really carefully about who you want to help - the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, people in their church, hurricane victims. . ."

I've long been aware that South Dakota's famed pheasant hunting provides a wide range of benefits to this region and our state.

Now I know it's even greater than imagined.

Article provided by the Mitchell Daily Republic, written by Noel Hamiel

His decision: Give all 42 girls \$100 each with but one string attached: They had to give a portion ... to someone else.

Giving Through Your Will (Continued)

name Abbott House as a contingent beneficiary to receive that part of your estate that would have passed to another person had he or she been living. For example, a will can indicate that everything is to go to your spouse unless your spouse predeceases you – in which case the assets, or part of them, could be assigned to Abbott House. As you think through your estate giving plans, you may want to talk with our director, Eric Klooz. Eric can provide more information about our programs and answer questions you might have. He can also provide our correct legal name which you would need to have.

All of this will assist your attorney when you meet with him or her to discuss and finalize your will. As you proceed with your estate plans, we strongly encourage you to inform us

about any bequest decisions affecting Abbott House. This will help ensure that we can honor any restrictions you have placed in your bequest. It also helps our long-range planning efforts if we know where future resources are being directed. Best of all, it gives us the opportunity to thank and honor you in advance.



Directors Comments

“It’s never too late to have a happy childhood”

I have long believed that when an individual comes to the realization that they are “in charge” of their life that they will begin to take ownership. When that happens they are well on their way to a better future.

Every day the staff at Abbott House work with broken children and families. We don’t spend time finding fault with the family or the system but rather we put our efforts into repairing and restoring HOPE for the future.

The children come to us from many backgrounds and various situations. However, they all need love, compassion and someone who will take them from where ever they are and help them begin to grow into what they can become.

Hope comes from the belief that things can get better. So many of the children have lived through situations that, if not dealt with, can cause a lifelong suffering. However, with the right help they can effectively deal with the prior injustice in their lives and begin to move forward.

We are so very fortunate to have the great re-

sponsibility and opportunity to help change lives. I would like to personally thank all of you who have assisted Abbott House over the years. Without your help there are so many who would never have found the hope that you have helped provide.



Eric Klooz
Executive Director

I really believe it is never too late to have a happy childhood. I see them happening every day.

Abbott House
Box 700
Mitchell, SD 57301
Phone: 605-996-2486
Fax: 605-996-4585
Email: erick@abbotthousesd.com



abbott
House

Providing Premier Services for Girls and Families

Ernie's Legacy (Continued)

there were no children. He resurrected Abbott House from the ashes. He built its reputation with referral agencies, he worked to increase private funding and he was good at it. He created a program that was child-centered with focus on quality and the knowledge that behavior disordered children could change. Today, Abbott House is an outstanding facility comprised of hard working professionals committed to reformation of the child. It is, because of Ernie.

What manner of man was Ernie Peters? He was uncommon – he was a gentle-man. He had a strong intellect, a man well-read in his profession. He was a man committed to bringing quality to the child care profession. His work raised the standard of care in South Dakota. If there was royal blood line amongst his peers he would have been a crown prince. He would not have been a king, because his manner was gentle and persuasive and not dictatorial. Ernie changed people's minds with his point of view because people would listen to him. In disagreements many of us often cited Ernie's thoughts to bolster our arguments.

He didn't pursue money or self-recognition in his profession. This was a classy man. He didn't take the easy road; he often took the hard one because that was the path that needed to be taken. It was Ernie's determination and professionalism that put together a program for adolescents on the reservation. For years people talked about creating a facility on one of the Indian Reservations, but the topic was always dismissed with "it won't work." Ernie said, "no one knows if it will work unless we try." He exerted enormous effort and fought many battles to create those services. His trail blazing was monumental work.

Ernie's work defines a portion of who he was. But his work can't be understood without defining him as a person. If Ernie was your friend, you were privileged. He was always willing to listen, he offered wisdom, he made you laugh, and he made you better. He was gentle in his approach. He didn't speak ill of others because generally he tried to understand those he disagreed with. He didn't use the pronoun "I" because he was prone to give credit to others.

Ernie would be pleased that we were complimentary of his life, but he would be more pleased if we took the lessons he taught as a commitment for ourselves. We can – if we always put the child first in our dealings, if we are polite in our interactions with one another, if we not cut costs when those cuts are not in the child's best interests, nor would he want us to spend money extravagantly in programs when we should be more prudent. Ernie's life has meaning because it impacts people's lives and he made the world a better place. He eased the pain of others, he helped them to take charge of their lives, and he provided hope. Although he is not here with us, he lives on in the lessons he taught, in the example he lived. When we act with Ernie in mind, we honor his life, we honor him. Those who called him friend, whose who loved him will miss him, I know I will. But he remains with us because we know what he would say in most circumstances, we can model our behavior after his example. Ernie looked up to "Grace Abbott as an advocate and voice for children. He need not look up; he is her equal, as others look up to him.