

ERENITY LANE THE INSIDER

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SPOTLIGHT onLois O'Connor

by Mary Daniels

In Memorium: Lois O'Connor 1919 - 2014



It is with great sadness that I report the last of Serenity Lane's three founders has passed away. Lois O'Connor died on Wednesday, January 29, 2014. She was 94.

Along with Dr. Tom Kerns and Sam Graves, Lois was instrumental in securing the old Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity house as the residence

for Serenity Lane. In the beginning she worked out of her kitchen, going through the phone book to schedule appointments around the state for Dr. Kerns and Monsignor Murnane to solicit donations to get things started. She served as secretary/receptionist/bookkeeper and deposited the very first dollar given to her by Dr. Kerns to open a bank account for Serenity Lane.

It was a full year of hard work; painting, landscaping and renovating before the doors were opened for business on May 3, 1973. Monsignor Murnane recruited seniors at Marist High School for nightly painting parties. With gallons of donated paint, they set to work freshening every wall and ceiling. Late one night, Lois and Marianne Lilley (the first director of nursing) had just finished installing tiles when Sam Graves came along and accidentally spilled a 5-gallon can of stain all over their work! Years later they laughed about it, but at the time they were devastated.



Serenity Lane's early years were very lean. Bills went unpaid and suppliers were reluctant to deliver meat and other goods. Lois worked hard to secure donations, most of which came from doctors who belonged to Lane County Medical Society. Some regularly sent \$25 or more each month to help.

Over the years Lois went on to become a premier interventionist and admissions counselor. She was one of the first to be featured in television commercials for Serenity Lane and many who came through the doors were greeted by a smiling Lois who immediately put them at ease.

There are many stories about Lois and her persuasive ways. One day in the early 80's, a patient decided he was going to leave. He walked to the bus station and got on a bus back to Cottage Grove where he lived. Lois and Marianne jumped in their car and followed him. They tracked him down, but he refused to open the front door, so they went around the back and right there convinced him to go back to treatment!

Lois retired from Serenity Lane in June, 1995 but she never lost her passion for helping people find recovery. Father John Kerns, (Dr. Tom Kern's son) shared a story about Lois at a recent Serenity Lane board meeting. Just two years ago, one of the nursing assistants who took care of Lois had a family member who needed help for addiction and Lois arranged for an intervention! That's one remarkable lady.

Lois was married to her husband Bob for 58 years, until his death in 2008. Together they had four children; Doug, Sheryl, Sheila and Roger. There are eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, ages 4 years to 1 month.

Rest in Peace, dear Lois.