Giving
to the School of Nursing

Ellen Chaffee (MLit ’50), faculty member and longtime teacher of anatomy and physiology courses at the School of Nursing, was honored as a “Great Professor,” one who provides the undergraduate with the “necessary stimulation to commit his life to an active cultivation of the mind,” in the 1966 Owl yearbook.

Even 10 years after retiring from the faculty of the School of Nursing in 1984, Chaffee was still having an impact on students at the school. That’s when she made a substantial endowed gift to the school to support the maintenance and enhancement of the nursing skills and anatomy and physiology laboratories. Every undergraduate and many of the clinical graduate students since 1994 have taken courses in those facilities. How many thousands of students have benefited from the generosity of this alumnus and former faculty member? How many procedures and processes have been learned and refined there, to be put to later use in hospitals and facilities around the world?

During her time as a faculty member, her contributions to students and the profession were extremely significant. Coming to Pitt in 1947 as a nursing instructor, Chaffee went on to teach courses in anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology; to develop theoretical and practical courses on operating room, obstetrics, and medical/surgical nursing; and to write the seminal textbook on basic physiology and anatomy that was used at nursing schools across the country. She often was heard to say that teaching was her favorite part of being at the school. She committed to doing “whatever it took to help them learn.” On perhaps the grandest scale, that’s exactly what Chaffee did with her endowed gift to the School of Nursing. By making sure that these critical spaces have contemporary equipment and current technology, she was ensuring that future generations of students will have access to enhanced learning opportunities.

Over the 75 years of its existence, the school has been the beneficiary of many gifts from donors all around the globe and these gifts guarantee that the school will have the resources needed to support students and faculty, course work, and research infrastructure. All of these gifts impact the quality of life at the school and help it to meet its mission. Chaffee’s gift, however, benefits each and every student at the school and the patients that they will successfully care for in the future.

To make your lasting impact at the School of Nursing, please contact Janice Devine, director of alumni relations and development, at jad154@pitt.edu or 412-624-7541. Giving options can be tailored to your interests to maximize the benefit of your gift.

*A Poem to Dr. Chaffee on the occasion of her retirement

Your wit will be missed by one and all, and the way you brightened Victoria Hall.

You taught of organ, cell and tissue, and worlds can’t express how we’ll miss you.

Your lectures illuminated, your arguments stimulated; your jokes titillated and your smile radiated.

We don’t know why with cadavers your interest arouses but we respect your brain and the wisdom it houses.

There are skeletons in your closet, we highly suspect and bodies in the cellar from which to dissect.

And though this reeks of Arsenic and Old Lace, we render it all with a smile on our face.

For when we ponder the minds you’ve helped mold you’d be underpaid with a room full of gold.

For all of your service, love, and devotion, A “Here’s to you” would take an ocean.

But one as special as you deserves a salute, So despite access to trumpet, drum or flute …

Here’s to you, Ellen, and your earned leisure and fun, And to all future Tobies’ who’ll romp in the sun.

To know you gives us reason to boast, And we hope you remember it’s you we toast!

Sandra Johnson, 1984

*Toby was the name of Chaffee’s beloved dog