Gail Ingersoll: Powerful Intellect, Gentle Soul

Gail Ingersoll was one of kind. She had a powerful intellect, but a gentle soul. She was a renowned researcher and clinician, but she also loved music, art, and the written word. She understood the power of education in transforming people and ideas, and committed her life’s work to serving others.

As director of clinical nursing research at Strong Memorial Hospital and the Loretta C. Ford Professor of Nursing at the School of Nursing, Gail conducted pathbreaking research in clinical nursing that led to improvements in patient care delivery and the work environment for nurses both in Rochester and across the country.

Gail died in November at the age of 62. Those of us who knew her well recognized that she could be incredibly focused and determined. She was persistent in achieving her own goals and unselfishly worked to help others accomplish theirs. Those of us who loved her witnessed these traits right up to her last moments.

Gail surrounded herself with beauty. Her home was filled with the works of local artists and artisans. Since the birth of her grandchildren, Evangeline and Anellese, Gail included their masterpieces in her home as well, and considered these her most precious works of art.

Gail was a voracious reader. She kept a running list of the books she read, including a short summary of the plot and her personal rating of the book’s overall value. If you were looking for a great book to read, you only had to ask Gail. She could list immediately five or six “must read” books that she felt would be just right for you.

Gail was a fabulous and gracious hostess and her annual Christmas party was a special event, one that we all looked forward to each year. She worked for days preparing for the event, making unique and wonderful hors d’oeuvres and desserts. Although her home was large, with plenty of room to roam, we all seemed to congregate in the kitchen or around the dining room table, enjoying the good food and conversation. At the end of the evening, Gail willingly shared any and all recipes, which often became favorites in our own households.

Gail chose to become a nurse because she believed that making a difference in someone else’s life enriched her own. She found great pleasure in her role as mentor, and those of us who benefitted from her mentoring over many years have become better people as a result of her influence. We will greatly miss her insight and advice, but most of all we will miss her presence in our lives.

—Lisa Norsen and Patricia Witzel

Norsen is the associate dean for innovation and community outreach at the School of Nursing, and Witzel is the associate vice president of the Medical Center and the chief nursing officer at Strong Memorial Hospital.