

THE ROMANCE OF SERVICE

By A. James Fuller and Michael G. Cartwright



Harold & Ann Cory Bretz '48

Their eyes gleam as they look at one another and even a casual observer of the elderly couple can sense their deep love for each other. As they talk about their lives, they reveal another romance, one that has spanned as many decades as their own love. In their long careers as scholars and educators, Harold and Ann Cory Bretz discovered the romance of service. When asked about why they did so much for others, Harold's eyes twinkle, his smile broadens, and he exclaims, "It feels good!" They do not believe that the motto "Education for Service" is a very accurate slogan. "You've got the cart before the horse," Harold says, as Ann chimes in, "Service is not planned. Education is the foundation and service is the result." In their minds, the motto should be something like "Service Because of Education." Rather than being an end, service was an extension of their work in other areas. It was something they loved doing, not something they planned for, not something they felt obligated to do.



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Ann Cory was born and raised in Indianapolis, the oldest of five children. Her parents were firm Christians and members of the Baptist church and they supported Ann's intellectual bent. She remembers that she was always "interested in learning," but after graduating from Manual High School, she got a job and worked for four years. She was interested in going to college, but was hesitant to do it. She managed to take some correspondence courses at the University of Chicago, but was still unsure about actually going to school. Finally, her father made the decision for her. She remembers that, "he took me by the hand," and took his daughter to Indiana Central College for a visit. They met with a professor, sitting on the front of his home in University Heights to discuss the situation, and Ann was soon persuaded to enroll. Her correspondence credits transferred to Central, so she had a good start.

She was very interested in teaching, and she excelled in her college studies and enjoyed her student teaching at Southport High School. Her specialization was in English and History, and she knew she wanted to teach. But Ann worried that she might not be a good teacher. Yet she believed she had to do something to help others because the "idea of service was so strong" at the school. She believes this came from the Christian nature of the college, "as a Christian, you had certain responsibilities" to those around you. Several professors influenced her and helped give her confidence in her abilities, including Professor St. Clair in history and Professor Meckley, the orchestra director. She graduated in 1948 and began teaching English.

She also married Harold Bretz. He had grown up in Indianapolis and worked at the State Board of Health after graduating from high school. He went to Purdue and eventually earned his doctorate in 1957. The couple met at Manual High School and she visited him on the Purdue campus later and they soon fell in love. They married not long after she graduated from Indiana Central and she worked as an English teacher in Lafayette while he continued studying for his doctorate. When he earned his degree, they moved to Chicago, and Ann worked at a variety of jobs before ending up teaching at Vander Cook College of Music. The school was dedicated to the instruction of music teachers, and Ann was professor of Humanities. She was drawn to the school in part because she was interested in music and she played piano and violin and sang. She taught English and other subjects at the college, but music was an important part of



taught literature while serving as chair of academic studies at Vander Cook College. They both were active in professional organizations and often attended conferences in each other's disciplines. They enjoyed the cross-fertilization that came from such connections between them. Harold was the pragmatic realist and Ann was the romantic idealist. They allowed their differences to complement and fulfill one another rather than making them points of conflict. They had no children and threw themselves into teaching.

They were always helping others. This was most obvious in two areas. First, they were active in their service to the professional organizations to which they belonged. They volunteered many long hours of effort to these organizations, working as officers in them. Second, they were great friends to the University of Indianapolis, her alma mater. Over the years, they gave liberally to the school. While their gifts were usually not as large as those given by more wealthy donors, they gave consistently. To take but one example, when Ann learned that the Lantz Center for Christian Vocations was beginning a scholarship for students in 2000, she immediately wrote a check to provide the initial gift for the student scholarship.

When asked about their financial contributions to the University, they insist that their gifts "were not sacrifices!" They were both raised in Christian families and carried on the tradition of tithing. This helped instill discipline in their family economy and they tried to live by Harold's financial philosophy to "live on a third, save a third, give a third." They had no children and they adopted the school. As Ann puts it, "the University has become our child. It is our family." In addition to giving money, Ann also served on the University's Board of Trustees, giving many hours of labor and care to the support of the institution.

In June 1990, Ann and Harold were honored as the inaugural recipients of the "Gene and Joanne Sease Award" in honor of those couples who have given of their time,



her giving to others. As Ann puts it, "there really was a lot of service connected to music because so much of it was in church and in education." She performed during church services and taught music to young people. Over the years, she also led Bible studies and led women's prayer meetings.

During this time, she also began working on a PhD at the University of Chicago. It took her ten years of part-time study, but she eventually earned

her doctorate in Religion and Literature in 1973. Her director was the highly respected religious historian Martin E. Marty, and she wrote her dissertation on religious experience in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Marty was a mentor, friend, and advisor, as were other professors at Chicago. Together, Harold and Ann Cory Bretz embarked upon long careers as professors, as he taught biology at the Illinois Institute of Technology and she



talent and treasure to the University of Indianapolis. In 1995, Harold was named an Honorary Alumnus of the University. As part of the University's centennial celebration in 2002, the University's trustees honored Ann Cory Bretz for her lifetime of service by naming the newest residence hall "Cory Bretz" in her honor

Ann and Harold believe that "service is an attitude. It is an approach." They refuse to accept the notion that people are here to earn money. But they also believe that "service is a dynamic thing. It is not a goal." They do it for a number of reasons, but the most obvious is because it brings them joy. Harold urges others to engage in service. "Try it, you'll like it," he says, and he argues that no gift, no action is too small. It is like casting "bread upon the waters," he says, and the two of them sincerely believe that people are given the ability to earn money and the skills to do things so that they will be able "to do more than just live for themselves." They emphasize the importance of holding positions in the community and in organizations. Harold advises today's students to "get involved. Do something!" Being thrust into a position of responsibility requires one to make decisions and take action. Ann remembers her own service

as a teacher and reminds today's educators that it "is more than a job. A teacher has to love teaching. You have to have a passion for it; it can't be just a job." She believes that a teacher has to have a love for people and must have a "respect and love for students as people" to succeed.

Today, they are retired and Ann's health is declining. They live in a retirement community in Greenwood, Indiana. He has a small apartment in one wing of a building and she is in a room in the medical wing. They see each other every day and hold hands as they walk along the corridors. Of course, Harold helps her when she needs it, but they hold hands like a young couple in love. The romance, the spark, is still there. They gaze in admiration at one another as each listens to the other speak. As Ann puts it, "there has been something special about our love for each other." They have complemented each other personally and professionally and have shared the romance of service over the course of a lifetime.

— *Inaugural Recipients
Sease Award¹ 1990*

— *Harold—Honorary Alumnus 1995*



Whereas Ann Cory Bretz has enjoyed a distinguished career as a scholar, writer, professor, and college administrator and garnered numerous honors in recognition of her service to the community, to education, and to the church; and

Whereas Harold Bretz has distinguished himself as a scholar, professor, and administrator in higher education and has been recognized by the Alumni Association for his devotion and service to this institution;

The University of Indianapolis Institutional Advancement Committee therefore recommended to the Board of Trustees in this Centennial year that North Hall be renamed

Cory Bretz Hall

in honor of
Distinguished Trustee Ann Cory Bretz '48 &
Honorary Alumnus Harold W. Bretz '95.

Motion seconded and passed unanimously by Board of Trustees.



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Harold Bretz (Honorary Alumnus '95) & Ann Cory Bretz '48

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- B (p. 135) Ann Cory behind the podium on awards day in 1948. Photograph from Alumni Files, used with permission of Frederick D. Hill Archives, University of Indianapolis.
- C (p. 135) Ann Cory Bretz and Harold Bretz early in their marriage. Photograph from Alumni Files, used with permission of Frederick D. Hill Archives, University of Indianapolis.
- D (p. 136) Ann Cory Bretz holding paper and book during the time that she taught at Vander Cook College in Chicago. Photograph used with permission of the Frederick D. Hill Archives.
- E (p. 136) Harold Bretz during his teaching career at Illinois Institute of Technology. Photograph from Alumni Files, used with permission of Frederick D. Hill Archives, University of Indianapolis.
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- G (p. 137) Formal photograph of Ann & Harold Bretz. Photograph used with permission of the Frederick D. Hill Archives, University of Indianapolis.
- H (p. 137) Exterior of Cory Bretz Hall on the campus of the University of Indianapolis (fall 2002). Photograph used with permission of the Publications office at the University of Indianapolis.