

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: bellis@undisclosed.com

To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com

Date: December 8, 2014 7:46 p.m. EST

Subject: Essay on Death With Dignity by Charles Hamlin, MD

Dear Sir,

Dr. Hamlin was a school classmate of mine some 60 years ago. Of course we were teen-agers then, the issue of end-of-life seemed like an eternity away. As it happens, I have lived most of my adult life in Oregon which has been the pioneer in allowing a person to choose to end his or her life in a dignified and pain-free manner. I voted in favor of this law on both occasions that it was presented to Oregon voters, and encouraged Oregon's Attorney General's subsequent successful efforts to oppose the federal government's attempt to invalidate it. I am currently enjoying good health, and do not know if I will ever elect to use the law myself. But I already have benefited from the fact that it is there because I know, should I decide to take that course, that it is available to me. To those who oppose it on religious grounds I would simply say no one is asking that you do something against your religion, but please do not impose your religious beliefs on others. And for those who argue that to allow it in the limited cases covered by the current law will invite a wider and more controversial use later, that has not happened in the 20 years since Oregon first passed the law, and is an issue we can face and discuss when and if it is proposed at some future date. And for those who say no physician should participate in ending a life, I have lived in a family that includes three generations of physicians, and believe that many decisions physicians are already called upon to make are not dissimilar, and the critical element is that it is the patient, not the physician, that is deciding to take this step. This law has been utilized in a very respectful and responsible way for 20 years in Oregon, and I am very glad to know that this option will be available to me if I so choose.

Sincerely,

Barnes Ellis

Barnes Ellis is General Counsel at Mercy Corps, a large international relief and development agency. Prior to joining Mercy Corps in 2010 he had been a trial lawyer in Oregon handling business disputes. He is Chair of the Oregon Public Defense Services Commission, responsible for indigent defense throughout the state. He is a graduate of Yale College (B.A. 1961) and Harvard Law School (LL.B. 1964).