Leonore Annenberg

“A SHINING POINT OF LIGHT”

On March 12, 2009, Eisenhower Medical Center lost a beloved friend and beneficent supporter, and America lost a true patriot and an incomparable benefactor with the passing of Leonore Annenberg.

The extraordinary life of Leonore Annenberg covered an expansive, diverse canvas of philanthropic and civic-minded ventures across America. Leonore Annenberg and her late husband Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg were committed to education and the arts, to patriotism, and to living lives of honor, service and vision.

Working side by side with her husband, Leonore was an ardent philanthropist and patron of the arts who served as Chief of Protocol with the rank of Ambassador under President Reagan. A graduate of Stanford University, Leonore also received honorary degrees from Brown University, the University of Pennsylvania and La Salle University. Throughout her lifetime, Leonore was distinguished with numerous awards and honors, including the inaugural Andrew Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, and the United Nations Association of the United States of America’s Global Leadership Award in 2005 for her work in education, the arts, medicine and communications.

Leonore embodied the spirit of America. With her husband Walter, Leonore worked tirelessly as one of this country’s most prolific philanthropists and civic leaders. In 2002, she succeeded her late husband to become the chairman and president of the Annenberg Foundation, which has donated more than $2.5 billion since its inception. Serving on the boards of numerous distinguished institutions, Leonore Annenberg left an indelible mark, endowing some of America’s finest museums, orchestras and universities with the promise of hope and the reality of funding.

Here, in Rancho Mirage, the Annenbergs were our neighbors. Their history is our history, inextricably entwined with the foresight to build Eisenhower Medical Center and with the vision of it as one of the finest medical institutions in the country. To that end, the Annenbergs offered valuable insight, business savvy, financial support and the broad outreach of their acquaintances and friends.

The impact of the Annenbergs’ support of Eisenhower Medical Center is utterly immeasurable. From the inception of Eisenhower Medical Center, to the creation of the Annenberg Center for Health Sciences, to the new Walter and Leonore Annenberg Pavilion, we have been incredibly blessed by our long-time partners. The Annenbergs’ generosity has forever changed the lives of Coachella Valley residents through their unparalleled support of Eisenhower Medical Center.

In January, 2007, coinciding with the groundbreaking for the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Pavilion, Leonore Annenberg and the Annenberg Foundation announced a new gift to Eisenhower— $30 million—the largest single donation ever to Eisenhower. “Great moments like this have filled Walter’s and my life with such joy,” shared Leonore. “This medical center, including the Eisenhower Board members, physicians, and staff, has meant so much to our lives as well as to the development of the entire Coachella Valley. Over 35 years have passed,” Leonore continued, “and I am honored to be here to say that I have seen Walter’s dream come true for Eisenhower. This has become a top 100 hospital in America—it has become the place of excellence we all have hoped for.”

Former President George H.W. and Barbara Bush praised Leonore at the Annenberg Pavilion groundbreaking. “I always talk about being one of a thousand points of light,” shared President Bush in a video message.“Well, Lee is a shining point of light in the galaxy because she’s done more than most people could possibly dream of doing.”

Amen.

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