Getting to Know the Novacks

By: Michael D. Landes President, Eisenhower Medical Center Foundation

Deborah and Kenneth Novack

Eisenhower Medical Center has the distinction of being among the nation's 100 Top Hospitals®, a special accomplishment for a not-for-profit hospital. Dedicated donors like Deborah and Kenneth Novack, who in 2004 helped launch the Schnitzer/Novack Breast Center at the Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center, are a shining example of the generous spirit upon which Eisenhower's success is built.

Debby and Ken recently sat down with Eisenhower Medical Center Foundation President Michael Landes and spoke candidly about their lives in the desert, and their hopes and plans for the future. Michael: Debby and Ken, you are spending more of your time in the desert at your beautiful home at The Reserve, but you've actually been coming to the desert for years, haven't you? Debby: Since I was about 12-years-old. My parents used to bring me to Palm Springs for spring vacations, but it got to the point where they decided they wanted and needed sun to escape the winter months in Portland. All and all, I've really been coming down here for about 40- plus years. Ken: My grandparents lived in the Las Palmas area and I used to go there often. My first memories of the desert are of the early '50s and of the old Desert Inn. Debby: I remember when we would take a drive in the car and we would head toward the Salton Sea. It was nothing but orange groves at that time.We would stop and have fresh squeezed orange juice and date shakes. There were these little roadside stands as far as you could see, as far as you could drive. It was like going to Hawaii. And then, over the years, I could see it becoming a city. Michael: What has made you want to spend more time down here in the desert? Ken: Well, Debby has always loved the desert and I want to be where Debby is. I felt I was reasonably happy with where our businesses were, and my measure of being successful was being able to build an organization that would continue the business. You need a structure in an institution that is stronger than any particular individual. So, I was at a point in my career where I could see that in a few years I would want to move on, and it just seemed appropriate for me to physically relocate and do some different things. My view is that you want to leave something while its still going up, not being the one who's always hanging in and hanging around. Michael: You are Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Schnitzer Investment Corp. and you are retiring as Chief Executive Officer in January – to be Chairman of both Schnitzer Investment Corp. and Schnitzer Steel Industries. How would you describe your business? Ken: Schnitzer Investment Corp. is a private company engaged principally in the real estate development and ocean shipping business. Schnitzer Steel Industries is a publicly held company engaged in the steel manufacturing, scrap recycling and auto parts business. Michael: Let's have you share with us why you decided to support Eisenhower's breast cancer treatment center and share with us your impression of the Eisenhower Schnitzer/Novack Breast Center facility. Debby:Ken's sister had breast cancer a few years ago, and in my broader family, I have a couple of cousins and an aunt who have had breast cancer. Being a woman it seems so prevalent and yet preventable. The facility is fantastic! I have to tell you that I've had more friends – probably once a week or every other week – come up to me and say: "I just had a mammogram and I couldn't believe the treatment.The facility was bright, it's cheery…the staff was so efficient and nice." "We had such a great experience, next year I'm having my mammogram at Eisenhower in the desert instead of Chicago or Ohio." So, quite frankly it's been an absolute adrenaline high.

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And this may sound really crazy, but I sort of have this little superstition – a wish you might say – that through our Foundation's funding of the cancer center, maybe, just maybe, I'll be one of those lucky ones who never has to experience anything beyond a yearly mammogram. I'm also hoping that the breast center will in a positive way encourage women to not be afraid of the whole experience of early detection. The more people have exams, the more they will encourage others to do so. They will find that it's not always a scary situation, and this will ultimately save lives. Michael: We are thrilled to have your Foundation's support and promise to keep it on the cutting edge of patient care. Ken, you were recently selected as a member of Eisenhower Medical Center's Board of Directors, and we're very honored to have you. What led you to want to be involved with Eisenhower at that level? Ken: Health care has always been a big focus for Debby and me.We have two passions: health care and education. Both Debby and I were brought up to be of service: that if you're going to live in a community you not only have a financial obligation to it, but you must serve in that community the best you can. Through Schnitzer Investment Corp. our family donated the new campus facility for Oregon Health Sciences University where Debby and I have been involved for over two decades, and now we are involved with Eisenhower. Michael: You have both talked about the importance of family.You are also parents.Any insights you'd give about parenting that you have come up with? Ken: My view is that you need to be sure that your children are channeled into lives that allow them to serve their own passions. I can't imagine anything worse than a life that you're not passionate about what you do. Debby: When the children were young, we tried to involve them in very simple ways in the whole concept of giving. And they have been practicing that their whole lives. It wasn't just an obligation that they learned from us – they feel it as well. Michael: What would you like your children to remember you both most for? Debby: I would say people who cared about the community, not just themselves. Michael:Thank you both for deciding to spend more time with us in the desert – we are lucky to have you here.

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