

Luminaries

Where the Stars Come Out Every Monday

Cover Story

The Post's gift to IRMH A place of peace



Helen and Dick Post stand in the chapel at Indian River Memorial Hospital that bears their name.

BY BILL CHURCH Special to Luminaries

"There are no pockets in shrouds," chuckles Dick Post, his alternate for "you can't take it with you."

"What do we need that we don't have?" adds Helen Post.

Thanks to this life philosophy, Vero Beach and its people have been among the beneficiaries of this couple, married 50 years, who love to give and love to laugh. Behind it all, however, is a serious background, especially in their giving to Indian River Memorial Hospital.

Hospitals can be emotional places.

The joy of a new baby. The worry of a serious illness. The despair at the passing of a loved one. Sometimes, we just need a place to sit quietly, meditate or pray to the God of our choosing. At Indian River Memorial Hospital, that place of refuge has been provided by the Posts, who understand the emotions. They've been there.

Dick and Helen Post lost their first born son to leukemia when he was just 5-years-old in 1962. When they moved to Vero Beach in 1990, they went looking for ways to donate to the hospital, and discovered the facility lacked a chapel. The result is the breathtaking non-denominational Post Chapel and the Meditation Garden just across from the hospital's main entrance, built with funds from the Post Family Trust and completed in 1996.

"The chapel is one of the best things we have ever done," Helen says. "The most rewarding part is that the chapel is doing what it's supposed to do, serving patients, employees, families, everyone. Even doctors tell me they use it before performing operations."

The chapel guest book has been filled over and over with names of visitors from around the country, together with all kinds of prayers, heartfelt remarks and thanks.

Although the Posts discourage holding services in the chapel, wanting to keep it available for those who wish to meditate, they have made a few exceptions. They approved a wedding service in the chapel, for example, so that the terminally-ill mother of the bride could attend.

No taxpayer or hospital funds were used to build the chapel, and an endowment provides for continuing maintenance and upkeep. The 16 stained glass windows and 16 etched glass door panels were donated. All are filled with religious symbols to offer comfort and peace. In addition to one of the windows in memory of the Post's son, two others also remember young people who died too young, one the victim of a drunk driver and another killed while riding her bike in Vero Beach.

"Everyone who helped build this chapel was enthusiastic and determined to.. make it perfect," Helen says.

Helen is a member and former chair of the Indian River Memorial Hospital Foundation board, the fundraising arm of the hospital. She and Dick took the lead when the board decided to start the Vero Beach Boston Pops Orchestra concerts to raise money. The famed orchestra has visited in alternate years, beginning in 2001.

Helen is also a board member of the Riverside Theater and the Vero Beach Museum, while Dick works with the Cancer Society and the 100 Club, which helps families of police and fire personnel killed or injured in the line of duty.

Over the years in their former New Jersey home and here, they have actively supported organizations that fight leukemia and cystic fibrosis. They prefer to give seed money to get things started, then move on and help another program.

"We've had great opportunities to help people," Dick says. "We wanted especially to help terminally-ill children."

The Posts have also been great benefactors of Endicott College in Massachusetts, where Helen graduated in 1952 and where Dick serves on the Board of Trustees. They have funded scholarships and made a major donation toward a new conference center. The Post Sports Center at Endicott is named in their honor.

Helen later attended and earned a graduate degree from Seton Hall University, after her children were born. Dick watched the kids at night while Helen bagged a straight-A average and went on to teach middle-school math and computer science for 17 years.

The couple met when Helen paid a visit to her family's business, Federal Leather Co., and spied Dick working there, fresh out of Rutgers University. Dick went on to a successful career running one company and then becoming a banker. He continues to own and market an investment management company.

After a lifetime of giving dollars and time, Helen says it's time to step back from their busy life and devote more time to family - their three children and eight grandchildren in New Jersey and Illinois.

"Our oldest grandchild is about to go off to college and I feel like I missed a lot of his life," Helen says. "And, we have a new grandchild just a few months old who needs our attention."

Dick and Helen Post have more than earned the right to relax.