

THE GOOD FIGHT

Colin and Barbara Watson applaud scientific investigation at SRI with a donation earmarked for research

While living in Vancouver as a young man, Colin Watson's father, Harry Homer Watson, enlisted with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He served from 1939 to 1945, first in the United Kingdom, next in the invasion of Italy in 1943, and then in the subsequent actions in France, Holland and Germany, post D-Day. The senior Watson died in 1960, partially, his son suspects, from war-related ailments.

But for all that his father gave, Colin Watson is determined to give even more.

Today, this Toronto philanthropist keeps his dad close through donations—both in time and in money—to Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. Indeed, it was largely because of its strong tradition as a veterans' hospital that Sunnybrook captured the attention and beneficence of Colin and his wife Barbara a dozen years ago when they were seeking a home for their charitable efforts.

The Watsons' relationship with Sunnybrook began in 1996, when Sunnybrook Foundation invited Colin, then CEO of Spar Aerospace,

to become a director. He accepted and invested several years in the post. Also around that time, the couple began to invest in the hospital materially, passing generous contributions across the philanthropic divide.

All told, the Watsons have bestowed some \$250,000 of their own money to Sunnybrook's cause over the last decade. "There's so much that needs to be done," says Barbara. "Some of the patient care areas definitely need to be renovated. They're old and out of date. The quality of the environment needs to match the quality of care."

The Watsons' most recent donation—\$130,000—was their most sizeable. It was unique, too, for being the first one the couple allocated to a particular destination at the hospital.

"We asked that it go to [the] research department," says Barbara, who was thrilled to participate in a recent tour of the hospital's research arm, Sunnybrook Research Institute. "I think research generally is very important. I have a daughter who is diabetic. I think what they're doing with stem cell research at Sunnybrook Research Institute is very

important and that it, down the line, will help people with diabetes, along with a whole lot of other things, as well."

The promise that lives in this area of the hospital, says Colin, is "staggering." Now retired, he peeks in on it from his seat on the finance committee of Sunnybrook Foundation's Governing Council, a position he's held for the last four years.

But it's the hospital's military legacy that persists as a theme in the Watsons' accounts of their Sunnybrook experience. "It's probably one of the more mundane aspects of the hospital," says Colin, who has lovingly catalogued his father's wartime artifacts for his grandchildren's eventual safekeeping. "But my father spent five years with the military overseas and suffered badly for it. I like to think that his colleagues are well looked after at Sunnybrook." ■



Barbara and Colin Watson

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