Living Legends

By Cara Lindberg,
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Bonnie & Dan Sandman

Bonnie and Dan Sandman at the History Center's annual 1879 Founders' Circle Dinner.

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They've lived in the "The Buckeye State," the "Lone Star State," and even London, England, but the Sandmans call Pittsburgh home. A Cincinnati native, Dan Sandman got a lot more from Ohio State University than an undergrad in history and a law degree—he met his future wife. Bonnie Allison Sandman, a Doctor of Philosophy in psychology, traveled around the globe with her husband, whose career began with Marathon Oil Company in 1973.

As Marathon became part of United States Steel Corporation (a company Dan has always been proud to work for), the Sandmans eventually took up residence in the 'Burgh. "We love Pittsburgh. There's just such a great sense of community and service here; we've lived here longer than any other place."

Bonnie and Dan quickly adapted to life in Pittsburgh and soon found themselves involved with a number of charitable organizations, including the History Center. "This city is blessed with a lot of wonderful non-profits. I think of the History Center as sort of embodying all the best things about Pittsburgh—a unifying force in the community ethnically and otherwise—appealing to all types of people with the Sports Museum, Meadowcroft, Fort Pitt and its different cultural collections," Dan commented.

This appreciation and dedication to Pittsburgh's heritage led Dan to the History Center Board Chairmanship in 2006. "I enjoyed my time as chairman. The board is made up of a very solid group of contributors—energized and effective."

Bonnie, who currently works as a career choice consultant, is active with the boards of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR), St. Clair Hospital, and the Personnel Board of Allegheny County.

"Everyone needs to find their own way to contribute. It's important to search for the causes that are right for you. There are more and more couples with the spirit of philanthropy in Pittsburgh who realize the importance of giving, whether it's your time, talent, or dollars."

Dan even gathered his closest friends (a big crowd) for a birthday party at the History Center and encouraged guests to contribute gifts to the History Center's Endowment Campaign. "Individual contributors all come together to make the History Center the great institution that it is. Testamentary gifts are so important."

The Sandmans' passion for arts and culture also compelled them to commission a John Buxton painting, "Washington at the Point," which was on display at the History Center and will eventually return. Dan calls artist Buxton a "Pittsburgh treasure."

And Bonnie still tickles the ivories on the Knabe baby grand that sits stately in the family's living room, a piano that was passed down from Bonnie's great uncle and once belonged to famed actress Ginger Rogers. "They were neighbors in the same apartment building at 55 Central Park West. She was moving and the men were having trouble getting the piano out. My uncle offered to buy it and it's been in our family ever since."

The Sandman family includes two daughters: Erica, who is married and lives in Boston, and Christina, a senior at Upper St. Clair High School, who will attend New York University next fall.

The Sandmans commissioned John Buxton's *Washington at the Point* for the History Center.

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