On Campus

In Search of a Cure, for Love

Summer 2012



Herbert and Florence Irving (Jenica Miller)

Herbert and Florence Irving, who are Columbia University Medical Center's leading benefactors, have committed to give $40 million to the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center, which encompasses all cancer-related research, patient care, education, and prevention efforts at CUMC and its partner, New York–Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia.

With their new gift, the Irvings have given a total of nearly $200 million to CUMC and the teaching hospital, of which $177 million has been dedicated to cancer-related programs.

The Irvings say they are inspired to finance cancer research because of their own good fortune to be alive and in love after more than seven decades together. "The

global prevalence of cancer, and how it robs people of precious time with loved ones," says Herbert, "is what motivates us."

In a recent *Wall Street Journal* profile of the couple, reporter Melanie Grayce West '05JRN recounted intimate details of their romance: how when Herbert was stationed in Europe during World War II, his young wife mailed him large packages of sardines, herring, and candy that overflowed from his pup tent; how they were once so poor that they ate dinner nightly at Florence's mother's home in Brooklyn; and how, after the war, they bought a house on the GI Bill, settled in Long Island, and raised a family.

When in 1969 Herbert cofounded Sysco Corporation, now the largest food-service distributor in the US, he and his wife never imagined becoming wealthy philanthropists.

"In between is a lifetime," Herbert told the *Journal*. "These things happen little by little."



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >