

About Sidney and Lois Eskenazi

Growing Up

Sidney Eskenazi grew up on the south side of Indianapolis, the eldest of three children. He lived in a neighborhood where the kids took off their shoes at the end of the school year and didn't put them on again until school started back up in the fall. They were the difficult times of the Great Depression, but that didn't keep the neighborhood kids from playing ball when they could find one. Sidney's father worked in produce so he was able to provide unsold fruits and vegetables for his family. Sidney's mother would bake bread every Friday and the bread would last the whole week.

"It wasn't bad, but we didn't know any better," he said. "It was healthy. We were happy. At least it lasted until my dad died."

Sidney's father passed away when he was 13 years old. A week later, he started as a freshman at Manual High School, and that same day he started his first job. He has been working ever since.

Following his father's death, Sidney's uncle — his father's brother, who had no children — took Sidney and his family under his wing. Sidney credits his uncle with helping him through school, including insisting that Sidney leave Indianapolis to attend Indiana University in Bloomington.

Lois grew up in Chicago, in somewhat more advantageous conditions, across the street from a park where the children and families could find programs, community plays and recreational activities. In the evenings, the alleys were very busy, with kids playing kick the can and hide-and-seek until dark.

Sidney credits his Depression-era upbringing with making him careful about managing his finances and conservative in his wants for material possessions.

"I'm still careful. That's why we're able to do what we're doing (in giving this gift to Wishard)," Sidney said.

Still, it was during his youth that he first found philanthropy and recognized its importance. Sidney's father would donate food and produce to charitable causes, and his uncle also gave what he could. Both men received hand-embroidered handkerchiefs each Christmas from the Little Sisters of the Poor.



Sidney and Lois Eskenazi have provided a \$40 million gift for the new Wishard hospital facilities in downtown Indianapolis.

Education

Both Sidney and Lois Eskenazi studied at Indiana University, where in addition to his bachelor's degree Sidney also earned his law degree. Lois earned a bachelor's degree that would enable her to work as a medical and lab technician.

Sidney expresses tremendous gratitude for his IU education.

"I believe that whatever I have accomplished in life — and I don't like to call it success because I don't know what that means — but whatever I have accomplished, it has a lot to do with getting the education I got," he said.

Family

At IU, Sidney was in a fraternity, and Lois was in a sorority. Lois's roommate knew Sidney from high school. She introduced Lois to Sidney at The Gables restaurant at Indiana University. Among their early interactions was a trip from Noblesville, where Lois' roommate lived, to Bloomington after Sidney drove from his south side home to pick them up.

"He's always very thoughtful and always making everyone happy," Lois said.

"I appreciate her, I really do," Sidney said of Lois. "She's a great wife, a great partner, a good buddy and we like being together. We've got great kids, and I'm real lucky and grateful."

Sidney and Lois Eskenazi have three children — two daughters, Sandy and Dori, and a son, David. They have seven grandchildren.

Sandy works as a physician assistant in Denver. And Dori, who previously worked for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, lives with her husband and children in Chicago. David and his wife live in central Indiana, and David works with Sidney at the family business, Sandor Development Co.

Career

Sidney Eskenazi established a successful real estate development company, Sandor Development Co., in 1963 and has built it into one of the nation's leaders, with more than 70 properties under management in 23 states.

Sandor has offices in Indianapolis and Scottsdale, Ariz., where Sidney's nephew, Jay Stein, manages operations.

Giving back

Sidney and Lois Eskenazi learned early the importance of philanthropy. After the example set by Sidney's father and uncle, he made giving back a priority.

He said it wasn't always easy.

"For many years, it was very difficult," he said. "Very hard. I wanted to be sure I was providing for my family. But then after a while, once I provided for my children, my wife, I wanted to do something."

After a successful business transaction in 1970, Sidney established a scholarship fund at Indiana University. Years later, IU presented Sidney and Lois with an opportunity to support the arts and art students by giving to the Indiana

University Herron School of Art and Design. Today, the Herron School's Eskenazi Hall honors that gift.

Over the years, Sidney and Lois Eskenazi have provided numerous gifts and are recognized philanthropic leaders in central Indiana. When the Wishard Foundation approached Sidney about considering a contribution to the capital campaign, his initial thought was to provide a gift in the neighborhood of \$250,000.

Once Sidney saw how much Wishard does — how many lives it can affect in 1.4 million outpatient visits each year, as a teaching hospital for more than two thirds of Indiana's physicians and the home of one of only two Adult Level I Trauma Centers in the state and the region's only adult burn center — he was stunned.

"He said, 'They really found something to hit me emotionally,'" Lois said of Sidney's reaction. "He couldn't talk about it. He wouldn't tell me until he came home. Every time he talks about it he gets choked up. The magnitude is so overwhelming to us that we could do something like that to affect so many people is just amazing."

Combining the vast scope of Wishard's impact, with Sidney's personal connection to the hospital where his underprivileged neighbors went during the Depression when they couldn't afford care, the opportunity to help was far too great to pass up.

"To find a kid from the south side that started with nothing," Sidney said, "To end up helping the city, the state, the people, his schools, and to be able to do that — all of that — together at one time. It's pretty heady stuff."