President Gerald R. Ford

PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD

The Eisenhower Medical Center family joined the nation in mourning Gerald R. Ford, 38th President of the United States, who died peacefully at his Rancho Mirage home on December 26, 2006 at the age of 93. Known internationally for a presidency that was filled with challenges, President Ford was recognized in the Coachella Valley as an active and visible local citizen who chose a special town to call home after his term as President.

Survived by Betty, his beloved wife of 58 years, President Ford also leaves behind four children, Michael, John (Jack), Steven and Susan, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. His half-brother Richard also survives him.

Long-time friends of Eisenhower Medical Center, President and Mrs. Ford participated in many milestone events. President Ford's association with Eisenhower Medical Center spanned almost 30 years, and most visibly began with his dedication of the Wright Building in 1979.

"President Ford was a statesman in the highest sense and led us through extraordinary circumstances," reflects Harry M. Goldstein, Chairman of the Board of Eisenhower Medical Center. "We will always be grateful for his leadership of our country, and here locally, for his special kindness and generosity."

In 1982, in the presence of President and Mrs. Ford, as well as the Hopes and Co-Founder of the Betty Ford Center, Ambassador Leonard Firestone, Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush dedicated the Betty Ford Center at Eisenhower, which has since achieved international recognition for its excellence in the treatment of drug and alcohol dependency.

Between 1983 and 1988, President Ford dedicated several more Eisenhower Medical Center facilities as well as new additions to the Betty Ford Center. Continuing his goodwill and enduring relationship with Eisenhower, President and Mrs. Ford were named Honorary Co-Chairs of the 2002 Eisenhower 30th Anniversary Gala, "A Star-Spangled Celebration," in addition to Ambassador and Mrs.Walter Annenberg and Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hope. Julie Nixon Eisenhower emceed the event.

Eisenhower Medical Center was again honored when President Ford, along with civic leaders and other dignitaries, joined in celebrating Bob Hope's 100th birthday in May 2003 at the Annenberg Center for Health Sciences at Eisenhower.

Returning to private life at the completion of his presidency, President and Mrs. Ford built a home in Rancho Mirage where they enjoyed friends, family, golf and fundraising in their desert community. President and Mrs. Ford were known for their generosity and were active in raising money for the Betty Ford Center as well as many other Coachella Valley charities. A regular at the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic golf tournament, President Ford enjoyed immensely his friendship with the Hopes.

"President Ford's foresight, exemplary character and integrity, his lifelong commitment to serving our country and our community have set the highest example of character and caring for us all," noted Goldstein. "We, and our country, have a lost a great man and a dear friend."

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