

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



October 12, 2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Today, I'd like to forego our weekly discussion of the daily goings-on at NCH to pay tribute to two lifetime friends of our health system and pillars of our community, who now, sadly, have left us.

With a profound sense of loss for the NCH family, I am sorry to share with you that Dr. Jack Briggs died yesterday.

Dr. Briggs and his family were giants in supporting healthcare in the Naples community. Dr. Briggs was Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1982 to 1994. His mother, Mrs. Beatrice Briggs along with other community leaders, organized the original *Naples Memorial Hospital*, a 30-bed facility, which cared for its first patient on March 6, 1956. Subsequently, under the watchful eye of the Briggs family and other philanthropic community supporters, this modest hospital has blossomed into today's proud and strong 681-bed *NCH Healthcare System*.

During this past year, I was so pleased that Dr. Briggs, along with family and friends, got to dedicate the Briggs Wellness Center, under the guidance of his good friend, Bill Wendling. Dr. Briggs exercised frequently at the Wellness Center. Indeed, he always led by example. As one of his friends suggested, between the Wellness Center and his illustrious career as a chest surgeon, Dr. Briggs may have helped save more lives than anyone in our community's history.

One week ago today, I met with Dr. Briggs and shared with him some of NCH's recent accomplishments. He was impressed with our quality awards, the growth of our system and the new Baker Tower, and expressed a particular interest in our pediatrics programs. I explained we have a new 25-bed facility, a wonderful pediatric intensivist/hospitalist and great pediatric nurses, who are caring for more sick children than ever before at the North Naples campus. Dr. Briggs and his family have committed continuing support to this pediatrics initiative. He was delighted to deliver that message to me last week, and that is how I will remember him.

In a similarly sad note, I share the loss of Mrs. Margaret Sugden. The Sugden name, too, is associated with generosity, funding many wonderful Naples community projects including a theatre, park, and community hall. Mr. and Mrs. Sugden dedicated the magnificent auditorium in the Telford educational building.

My relationship with the Sugdens was a close and personal one. Mr. Sugden, who predeceased his wife a few years ago, was my first patient when I started medical practice in 1977. About a month before she died, I met with Mrs. Sugden. We shared stories about "old Naples," and I updated her on the progress at NCH. She, too, was impressed with our development. Mrs. Sugden was a modest, gracious lady, who, with her family, has meant so much to the growth and development of our community.

We cannot say enough about the kindness of people like Dr. Briggs and Mrs. Sugden. Their support of our healthcare system and our community has benefited each and every one of us. We should all aspire to lead such full and generous lives. We will keep their families in our thoughts.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allen S. Weiss".

Allen S. Weiss, MD
President and CEO