

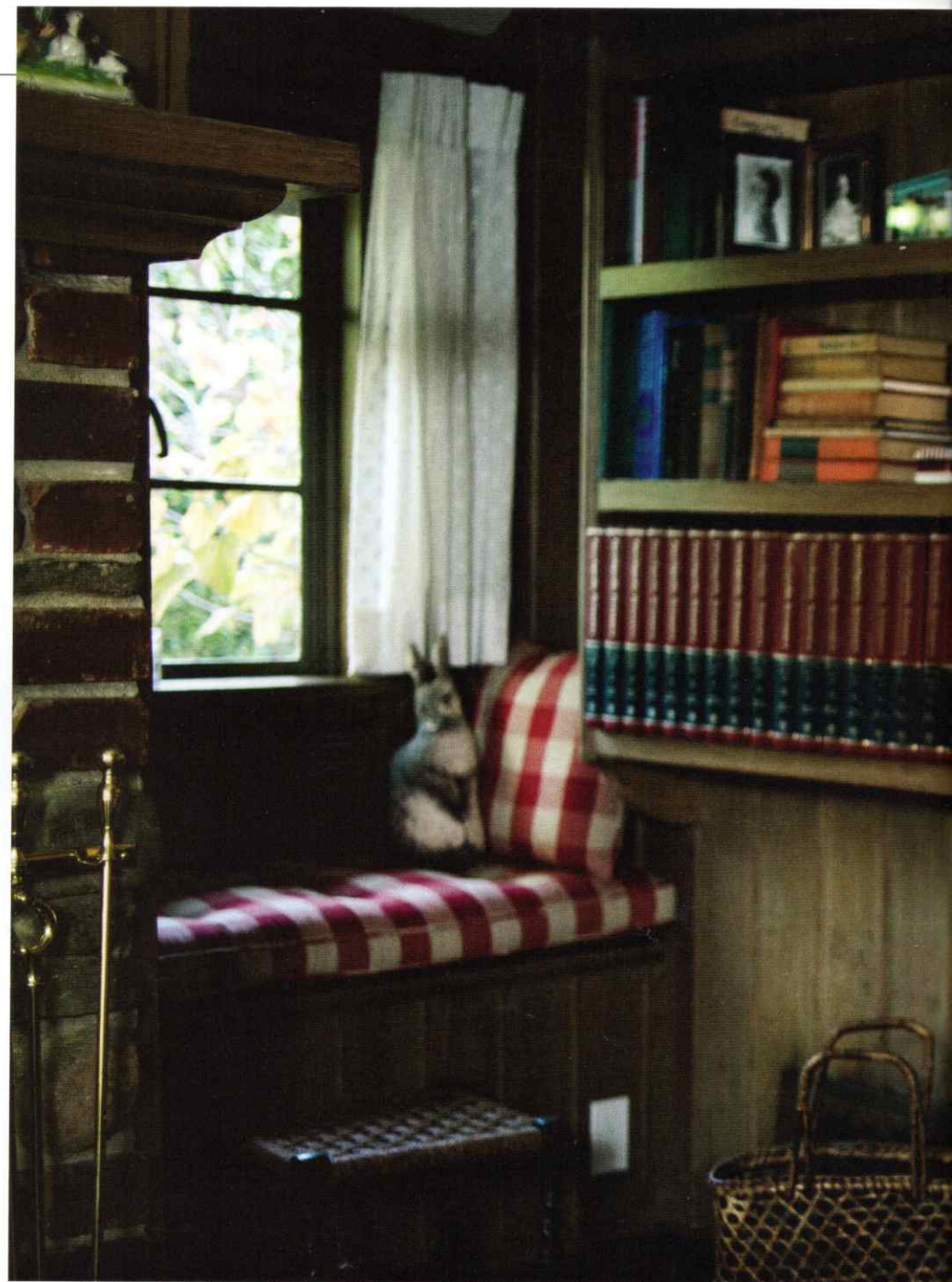
## The Joy of Giving

Trustee William S. Mortensen is carrying on a family legacy of compassion and generosity in his work with Saint John's.

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**W**illiam S. Mortensen is generosity personified. Since he became a trustee in 1987, he has given freely of his time and energy. He has also made abundant gifts to the Foundation—supporting nursing, cardiac care and the Campaign for Saint John's, among others. “Whenever I’ve had an opportunity to help someone, I’ve received more happiness and pleasure than if I’d bought something for myself,” he says. And considering the extent of Bill’s generosity over his long lifetime, not only with Saint John’s but in all aspects of his personal and professional life, it is easy to understand why he impresses most everybody he meets as genuinely happy.

Bill’s bigheartedness and deep belief in “putting people first” has been the cornerstone of his business philosophy. His career began in 1955 as a teller at First Federal Bank, an institution co-founded by his grandfather. In 1969 he was appointed president and was elected chairman of the board and chief executive officer in 1983. Under his leadership, the bank consistently gave back 3% to 4% of its profits to the community and was profiled in *The 100 Best Companies to Work For in America*, largely due to Bill’s long history of



providing equal employment opportunities to minorities and women.

“I grew up in a time of racial discrimination, which I hated, and it was my mission to hire a diverse mix of high achievers, including many women and African-American people,” says Bill. “And as they rewarded us with their excellent service, so we rewarded them.”

Foundation trustee Charles F. Smith, both a former First Federal Bank board member and Bill’s neighbor, attests to Bill’s commitment to serving others. “As long as I’ve known Bill, he’s been a humble guy

who provided the bank with strong, ethical leadership and treated all people equally,” he says. “He was amazingly successful as a businessman—and is an extremely caring neighbor and friend as well.”

### THE BEGINNING OF A BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIP

Bill discovered a further outlet for his philanthropy when his good friend, the late Foundation emeritus trustee John H. “Jack” Michel, invited Bill to join the Health Center’s board of directors. Bill had converted to Catholicism in his early 20s,



and as his father and grandfather were prominent physicians, his involvement with a Catholic hospital seemed a natural alliance.

"I've been delighted to be a trustee ever since," says Bill, who became a life trustee in 2011. "I like having such a strong connection to the hospital and a closeness to the personnel. What is very unique about Saint John's is their strong religious belief system. Patient care is extremely important to each employee, and that's what truly makes Saint John's special."

Through the many years Bill has been a trustee, his most fulfilling experience was

his involvement in the Health Center's rebuilding after the 1994 Northridge earthquake. "It was a huge renovation and the spirit of the hospital really came through at that time," says Bill. "The employees made many sacrifices because they loved what they were doing and they loved Saint John's, and that was very evident."

Bill has been actively involved in many organizations throughout his life, including the Los Angeles Metropolitan YMCA, Pepperdine University and the United Way. He and Nancy, his wife of 57 years, are loyal supporters of Santa Monica-Malibu

Unified School District, and the Santa Monica High School library was named in Bill's honor in 1997.

According to Bill, his most fulfilling charitable involvement outside of Saint John's was his stint as president of the local Boys & Girls Club. "It provides wonderful activities for all young people at a price that anyone can afford," says Bill.

Bill's philanthropic spirit was inspired by his father, a prominent Santa Monica physician who built his practice during the Depression. "My dad made house calls in the middle of the night," Bill says. "He told his bookkeeper that he didn't want to know which patients were not paying their bills, because he wanted to treat all of them equally."

This family legacy of compassion and generosity goes back even further, to Bill's grandfather, a physician and businessman. As cofounder of Santa Monica Hospital, he put people ahead of profits, eventually donating the hospital—rather than selling it—to the Lutheran Hospital Society. "Both my father and grandfather impressed me with their giving natures," says Bill.

Bill and Nancy have resided in Pacific Palisades for 54 years and have lived in their current home for the last 45 years. It's where they raised their five children and now look forward to visits from their nine grandchildren. Of Nancy he says, "The greatest gift God gives to us is being married to the right person."

Bill's favorite room is still his cozy wood-paneled den, where a portrait of the family's golden Labrador, Honey, hangs over the fireplace, and plenty of packed bookshelves accommodate Bill's avid reading habit.

Biographies and historical nonfiction are Bill's favorite reading material. His latest good read was *Truman* by David McCullough. "I moved from disliking President Truman to thinking he was one of our greatest presidents. He had almost no ego." It's easy to understand why Truman's humility impressed him, as Bill is overwhelmingly focused on making his community—and the world—a better place. His life's focus has been to help others and look for the good in others, rather than pumping up his own ego. As a life trustee, he demonstrates that hard work, an enduring spirituality and a devotion to his community, is indeed, its own reward. •