

SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL PERSPECTIVES

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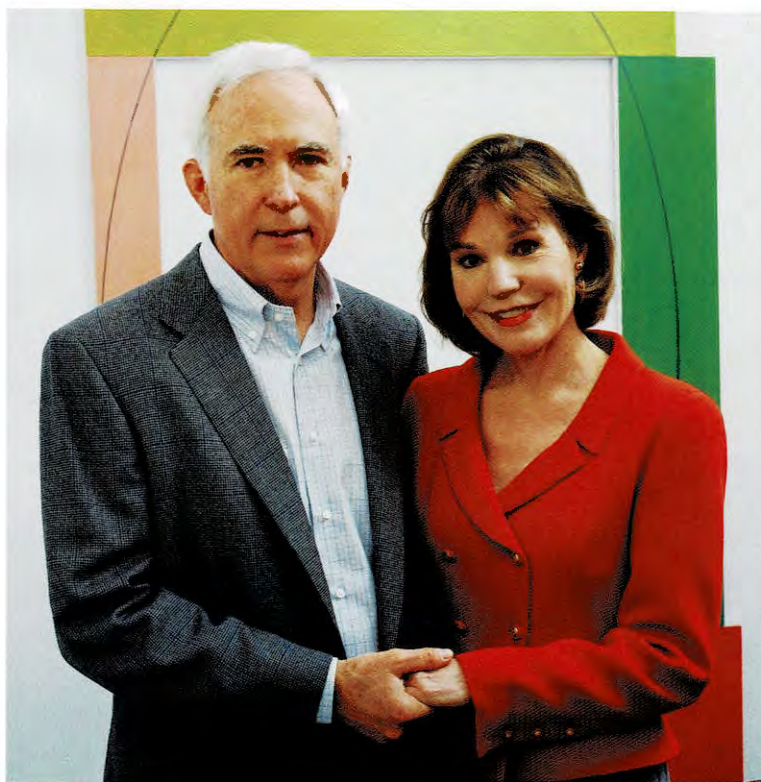
Perfecting the Art of Giving

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By Donna Steph Hansard



William T. and Gay Ferguson Solomon

Instilled with a sense of responsibility to others and a determination and desire to give back to their communities, William T. and Gay Ferguson Solomon have made a tangible difference in the lives of family members, friends and colleagues — even impacting the lives of people they have never met. That lifelong resolve has translated into contributions of both time and financial resources to initiate significant changes that continue to leave a mark on Dallas.

Chairman of Austin Industries Inc., one of the largest construction companies in Texas, Mr. Solomon is a graduate of Southern Methodist University and the Harvard Graduate School of Business. He is a member of the boards of Belo Corp., Hoblitzelle Foundation and Southwestern Medical Foundation and is chairman of the leadership council for The

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas' *Innovations in Medicine* fund-raising campaign.

An active participant in community affairs, Mr. Solomon has served as chairman of the Dallas Citizens Council, the Dallas Together Forum (which he co-founded in 1991), the Greater Dallas Chamber and Northaven United Methodist Church; and as executive board chairman of the SMU School of Engineering. His numerous awards include the first Spirit of Service Award from the Dallas Indian Lions Club in 2001, the J. Erik Jonsson Ethics Award from the Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility at SMU in 2000, and the first Annette Strauss Dallas Together Forum Award in 1999 for his leadership efforts in workplace diversity and minority economic opportunity. He was named to the Texas Business Hall of Fame in 1996 and was honored as Texas Minority Business Advocate of the Year in 1995 by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Mrs. Solomon, an honors graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, is a homemaker, painter and interior designer. An ardent supporter of a variety of civic and religious organizations, she currently serves on the boards of the Dallas Museum of Art and the Dallas County Community College District Foundation and on the advisory committee of the CONTACT Counseling and Crisis Line, which recognized her with its Spirit of CONTACT Award in 2003 for her many years of dedicated service and support. She also has served on the boards of Northaven United Methodist Church, the Mental Health Association of Greater Dallas, Dallas Services for the Visually Impaired, the YWCA of Metropolitan Dallas, and the SMU Willis M. Tate Distinguished Lecture Series. She has co-chaired a National Day of Prayer and has been active in the Junior League of Dallas, the Crystal Charity Ball and a number of other prominent organizations and civic events.



William T. Solomon

Mr. Solomon's hands-on involvement in leading fund-raising efforts for UT Southwestern sparked the couple's recent contribution to the medical center. Seeing a challenge and an opportunity, the Solomons donated \$10 million last February to help develop and launch a new patient-focused program in UT Southwestern's general internal medicine division, the area in which physicians see the greatest number of patients.

In a recent interview, the Solomons discussed the reasons for their deep involvement with UT Southwestern as well as their love for each other, their family and the Dallas community.

You have been together more than 40 years and I understand your romance started in high school. How did you meet?

Mr. Solomon: Gay and I were in the same class at Highland Park High School. During our senior year we were in a couple of extracurricular activities together. One was the Round Table, a weekly discussion group, and the other was the National Honor Society.

I initially was attracted to Gay at a National Honor Society annual banquet. We sat across from each other, and I enjoyed our conversation. Shortly thereafter, I asked her out on our first date. Not long after, she headed for UT Austin, and I headed for SMU. We continued to date through college and married right after Gay's graduation.

Mrs. Solomon: I was smitten at the National Honor Society banquet, too. I thought Bill was a charming conversationalist. He asked good questions, and he drew me out, which I thought showed a real maturity.

Mr. Solomon, your grandfather founded Austin Industries. Has it changed much? And did you grow up in an environment where you were encouraged to build things?

Mr. Solomon: My grandfather founded Austin Bridge Co., where I went to work when I finished Harvard Business School in 1967. I became president and chief executive officer three years later in 1970. From that point, we began to diversify the business beyond

bridge- and road-building and, as a result, changed the name of the company to Austin Industries. Today, we are quite a bit larger. We continue to build roads and bridges, but our largest businesses are commercial and industrial construction.

And yes, I did build things with my dad. We built a boat, for example. However, my greater interest is in the business and people aspects of construction.

In 1986, Austin Industries began its transition to an employee-owned business and today all 6,000 team members have a financial stake in the company. What made you decide to make these kinds of changes, and what have been the benefits?

Mr. Solomon: I believe that achieving a high degree of employee participation translates into building a high-performance company. The establishment of our employee stock-ownership plan in 1986 was another step in that direction. It benefits our employee owners by allowing them to gain financially from their efforts. Employee ownership allows people to recognize that it's their business, not somebody else's business. In turn, that benefits our customers, as it helps us achieve a level of performance that might not be achievable without employee ownership. It is also a strategy for assuring the continuity and independence of the business.

Mrs. Solomon, I understand that you paint. What kinds of media do you prefer?

Mrs. Solomon: I mostly paint in oils. And though I've shown and sold some, my work is mostly for family and friends. There have been times in my life when I have been so involved that I didn't have time to paint, but there have been other times when I have painted quite a lot.

I just finished a portrait of my daughter. I like to paint people, but they are the hardest. It's much easier to paint something that people don't have distinct ideas about, such as landscapes, still-lives and even abstracts.

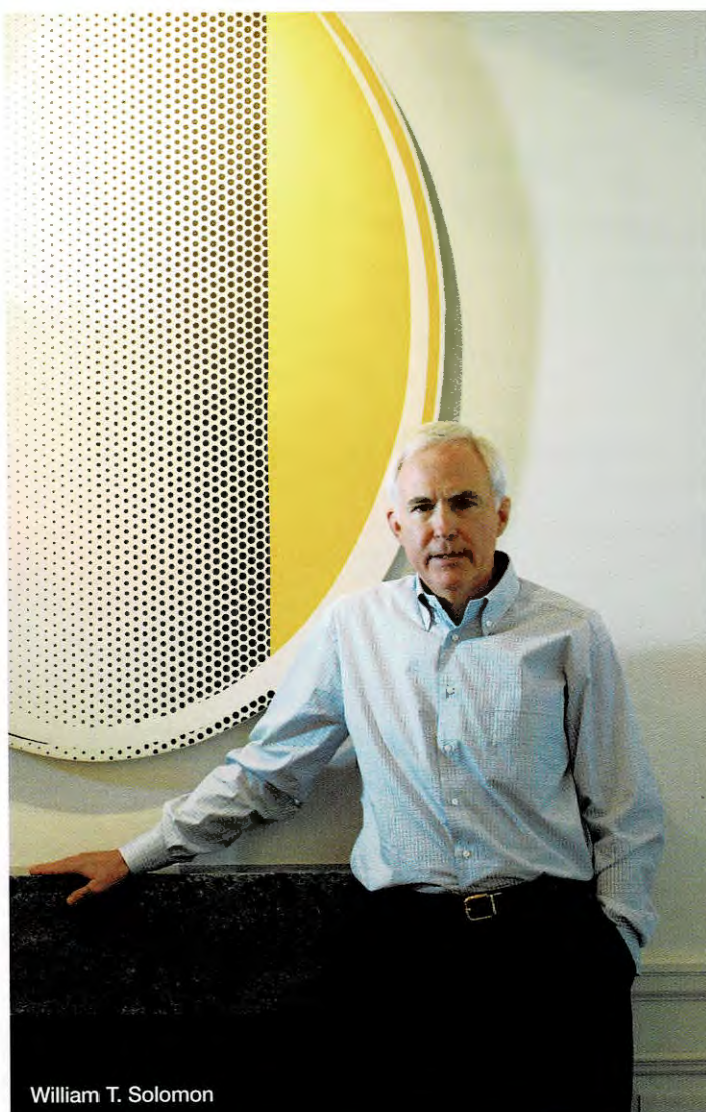


Gay Ferguson Solomon

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Have the two of you ever collaborated on a project?

Mrs. Solomon: I guess the closest collaboration we've done was the development of our Colorado property south of Aspen.

Mr. Solomon: We bought a home with about an acre and a half of property in Colorado in 1989 and have added to it over the years until we now have 30 acres on which we built houses for the children and grandchildren. It is a rugged piece of property in the mountains, surrounded by national forest. We reclaimed some old beaver ponds and developed trails to make the property more accessible. Gay has done the furnishing of the homes, but the development of the overall project has been a joint effort.

Who has had the most influence on your life, and why?

Mr. Solomon: My parents and grandparents influenced me the most growing up, and Gay in my adulthood. My parents and grandparents had a strong set of core values that I respected and which taught me integrity and responsibility. And Gay and I are very alike in many ways, but different in others.

You have been committed to workplace diversity and minority economic opportunity. When and why did this become important to you?

Mr. Solomon: My focus on this issue began during my two years as chairman of the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce in 1983 and 1984 and my two years as chairman of the Dallas Citizens Council in 1989 and 1990. In these roles I repeatedly ran up against our growing minority population's sense of disenfranchisement and the deleterious effect of that on the broader community. I and other business leaders at the time committed to do something about it, and we knew that each of us in our own companies needed to set an example.

Promoting diversity at Austin Industries has proven to be good business as well as good citizenship.



(L to R) Front: Austin, Donna, Florence, Bryant and Gay Ferguson Solomon. Back: Bill Solomon Jr, Bill Solomon Sr. and Bill Solomon III

What motivates you to volunteer your time and give so generously of your financial resources to so many causes?

Mrs. Solomon: It's concern for others and gratitude. I really care about people, and often my life experiences have led me to see an opportunity or a need. For instance, with medicine, my father was sick from the time I was 6 to 16, when he died. In addition, I had surgery as a child. Both those experiences have made me aware of how frightening and difficult it can be for families. Trying to improve people's medical experiences is important to me.

Mr. Solomon: I was raised to believe that we should all give back to others. In addition, it seems clear to me that as part of a community, we are all in one boat, and we will ultimately sink or sail together. We benefit our own families and friends, as well as others, by contributing to building a stronger community.

Mrs. Solomon, what made you decide to get involved with the Dallas Museum of Art, and what are your aspirations for the museum?

Mrs. Solomon: I have always been interested in creating art, and I receive pleasure from art. I like the direction in which the museum is going, particularly in getting more people involved from all sections of the community. And I'm really excited about the Arts District and what that will mean for Dallas.

You and your husband collect contemporary art. What in particular draws you to contemporary art?

Mrs. Solomon: Contemporary art is fresh and unpredictable, and there's often much more to it than what you see on the surface. In addition, the more you learn about it, the more you enjoy it.

Mrs. Solomon, you serve as a board member of the Dallas County Community College District Foundation and the Highland Park Independent School District Foundation. Why is public education an area in which you invest your time?

Mrs. Solomon: Public education is a key determining factor of our economy and our culture. Education has enhanced my life so much, whether I'm reading a book to myself or interacting with a grandchild. Making education a fun and happy experi-

ence can greatly affect a child's psyche for the rest of his or her life.

Mr. Solomon, you have served as chairman of a number of organizations, including Austin Industries, the Dallas Citizens Council and the Greater Dallas Chamber. What have you learned about leadership?

Mr. Solomon: Effective leaders need to be good listeners and understand where others are coming from. They need to be able to sell a common vision and promote a common set of core values. And they need personal integrity that others can rely on.

Mrs. Solomon, you have served in leadership roles for several organizations dedicated to improving health and human services, such as CONTACT. What has been your involvement with these groups, and why have they been so special to you?

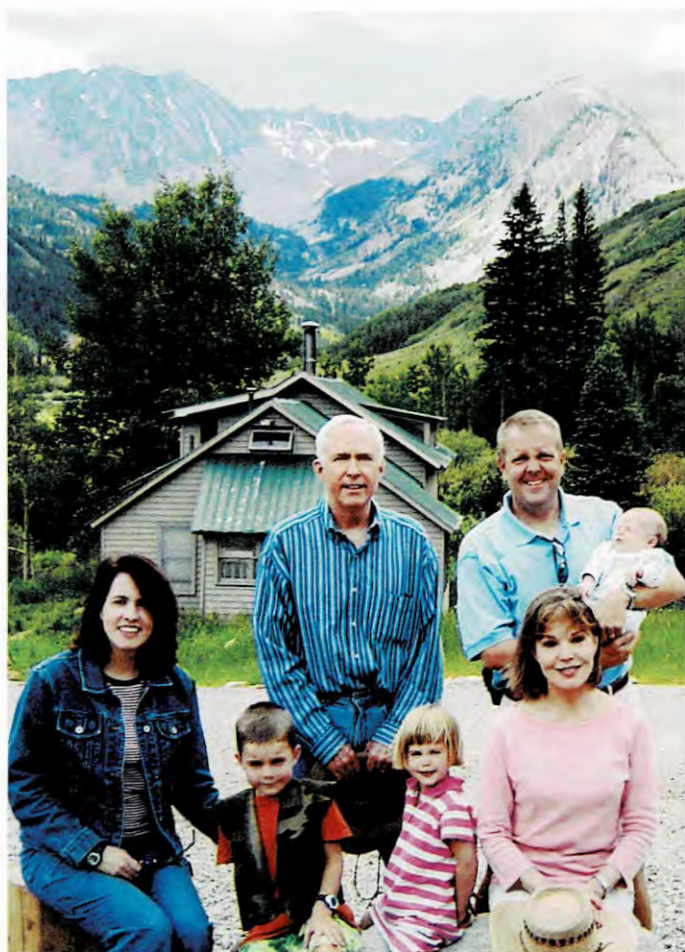
Mrs. Solomon: With each group, I've felt empathy and a sense of identity with the people being served. My heart is there. I have been fortunate enough to have people looking out for me over the years, and I want to make sure that same opportunity is available to all people in Dallas.

Mr. Solomon, you have been involved with Southwestern Medical Foundation as a trustee, committee chair and donor for many years. What attracted you to the Foundation in the first place?

Mr. Solomon: I was attracted by the importance of what UT Southwestern was doing and the medical center's exceptional achievements, and I wanted to be a part of it.

Why did you agree to chair the *Innovations in Medicine* campaign at UT Southwestern, and what kinds of comments are you hearing from donors and people you approach?

Mr. Solomon: First, I have been struck by the enormous credibility that UT Southwestern has among a broad constituency — whether it be patients or donors or the business community. There is recognition of the importance of the work being done at the medical center



(L to R): Meredith Boyd, Will Boyd, Bill Solomon, Margaret Boyd, Wes Boyd holding George Boyd and Gay Ferguson Solomon.

and a desire to be supportive of it.

Secondly, I have heard donors and prospective donors express interest in patient care at UT Southwestern and how important that is to them, along with the great research and teaching being done. For individuals and their families, patient care is where the "rubber meets the road." That kind of feedback led to the formation of the Clinical Services Initiative as well as expansion of the campaign's goal from \$450 million to \$500 million.

You made a very generous gift of \$10 million to support this initiative. What kind of return do you hope to see on your investment?

Mr. Solomon: I see UT Southwestern as a three-legged stool. One leg is research, the second is teaching, and the third is patient care. In terms of the first two, UT Southwestern is truly world class and second to none.

The third leg, patient care, is the newest of the three and is still developing. While the quality of medicine which patients receive at UT Southwestern is excellent, the delivery system is less uniformly patient-friendly.

This problem is not confined to UT Southwestern. The scale and complexity of large medical centers today and the cost pressures associated with delivering medicine often result in the primary focus not always being on the patient and his or her family.

Gay and I recognized that UT Southwestern has a unique opportunity to bring the quality of the patient's experience up to the same world-class level of excellence which the medical center already has achieved in research and teaching. Our gift is intended to give the general internal medicine division an opportunity to be in the vanguard of UT Southwestern's new Clinical Services Initiative and to serve as a model for other divisions and departments within the medical center. While we recognize this is a long journey, we are very pleased and excited about that goal.

Mrs. Solomon: I believe two things must be addressed. One is changing the culture and taking into account patients' feelings. The other is changing patient systems, so that as a patient you don't have to repeat yourself; you can get someone on the telephone quickly; and you can be expedited through the system so that you don't encounter more headaches than you already have.

As you reflect on your lives, of what accomplishments are you the proudest — personally, professionally and civically?

Mr. Solomon: My marriage is very important to me, and also the way our children have turned out and the way our grandchildren are developing. I'm also proud of the way we've grown the business, Austin Industries, and diversified it. I'm proud of the integrity that is a hallmark of Austin's work and the contribution that it makes to the community.

I'm also proud of the work that I've been able to do in the community through the Greater Dallas Chamber, the Citizens Council and the Dallas Together Forum — and the fact that those efforts have contributed to a broader base of participation from people who hadn't been able to contribute in the past.

Mrs. Solomon: I'm proudest of my 40-year marriage, and I'm proud that our children are good, kind people. I'm also very pleased that CONTACT Counseling is thriving, and I'm thrilled to have played a part in that.

What advice would you give a young person today who wants to help make Dallas a better place?

Mr. Solomon: I sometimes hear people say that they don't know how to get involved. I would say to that person that there are thousands of ways to get involved right in front of our noses. When we take advantage of those opportunities that are most proximate to us — no matter how small or insignificant they may seem — we usually find that all kinds of other doors will open.

The Charles Cameron Sprague Community Service Award is presented to those who have provided significant support to the fields of medical education, medical research and patient care in North Texas. What does this award mean to you?

Mrs. Solomon: I hope it will demonstrate to others that helping improve the delivery of service to patients is something of great importance to the medical system and will also help improve the community as a whole.

Mr. Solomon: I value this award because I value UT Southwestern and Southwestern Medical Foundation. I also value community service, which this award embodies. Thirdly, Charles Sprague, who this award is named after, is a longtime friend and hero of mine. The fact that his name is connected with the award makes it especially important to us. ■