

Doretha Edgecomb's Point Of View:

A Friend Is Lost, An Unstoppable Vision Emerges

By Cathy Clark

Doretha Edgecomb recalls – from her perspective more than 30 years later – the relationship between H. Lee Moffitt and her late husband George Edgecomb, attorney, fellow Big Brother and the first African-American judge in Hillsborough County.

She describes the two men as much aligned in many ways. They both were driven, committed to service and wanted to make the world a better place - to do something to leave an impact "... not just for themselves but also to make the world a healthier place, provide opportunities for people," says Edgecomb. "And I think when Lee learned about George's illness and eventually his death, I think that was just a motivation for him to do something in order to make it better for anybody who would be in that situation."

When George required sophisticated cancer treatment, the local options were limited. His death at age 33 left Doretha a young widow with a five-year-old daughter. She says the diagnosis changed her world in ways she still cannot find words to describe. Over the subsequent years she raised her daughter and built a career as an educator and advocate for children, having also served on the Hillsborough County School Board.

Doretha says her paths crossed with Moffitt on occasion during the years following her husband's death, and she knew of Moffitt's goal to create the cancer center.



"It took courage," she says. "But I knew if this was a dream of his, it one day would become a reality. I had no doubt that if this was something that he believed in - and for the reasons that he believed in it - not just for him or others he knew closely who had cancer, but for anybody who was stricken with this dreadful disease and needed the best care,



Photography: Jeremy Peplow

it was Lee's goal to make that happen."

Knowing that George is part of the reason Moffitt worked so hard to make the cancer center a reality is special to Doretha. "For him to use George as an impetus for making this happen will always, always resonate for me as something very special. I'm honored by it," said Doretha, who also has a family history of cancer. Her twin sisters and an older sister are cancer survivors.

"He was unstoppable in his dream for this hospital," Doretha says of Moffitt. "Absolutely tenacious." And she believes that the cancer center itself will be unstoppable during the next 30 years.

She says she gets comfort in knowing that so many people have been treated and cured at Moffitt Cancer Center. "It's kind of like throwing one pebble into the ocean and it keeps perpetuating itself. That's the way I think I see George's life."

Asked if one person like her husband and Moffitt make a difference? "They absolutely can make a difference!" 