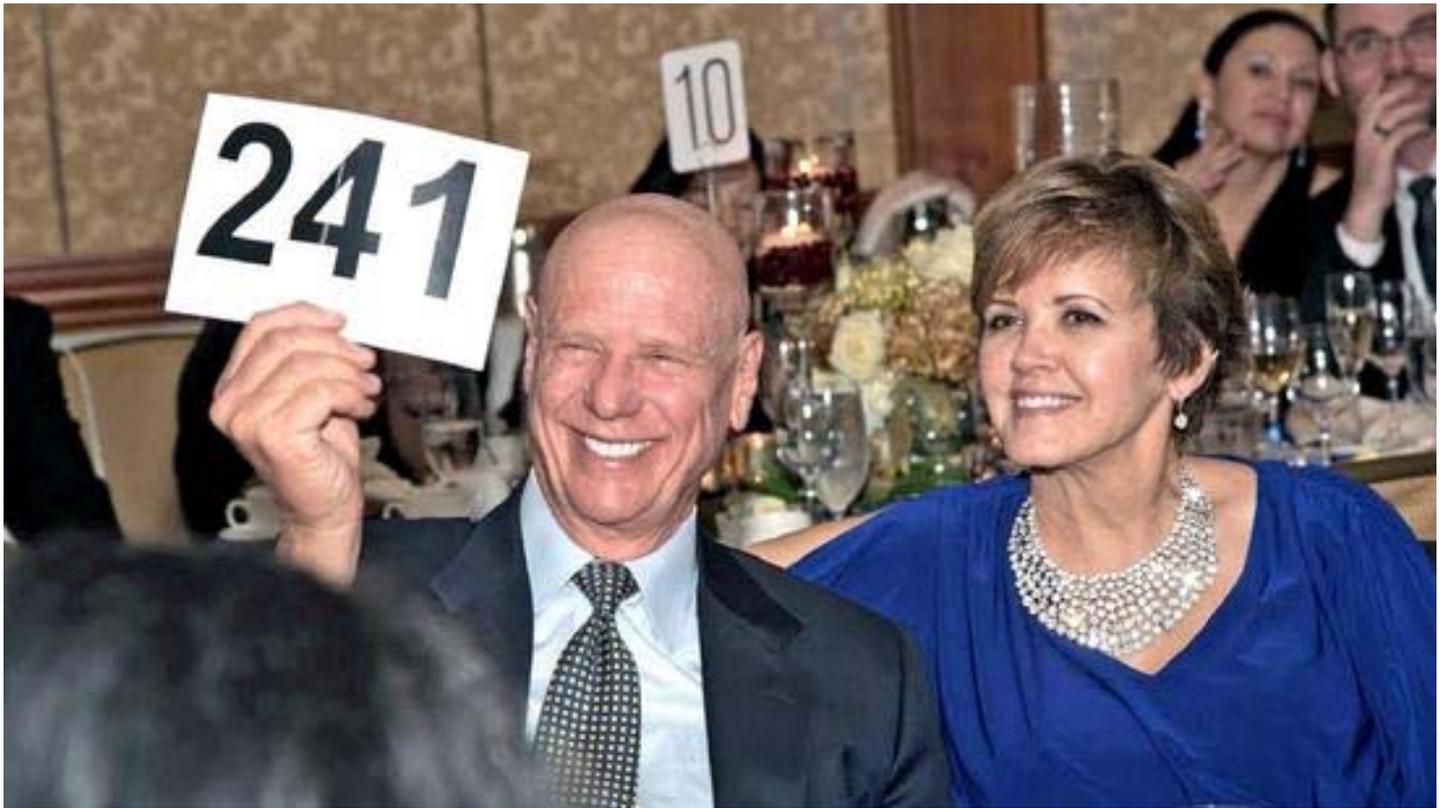


The Crowd: Advocates working for a dementia breakthrough honored



By **B.W. Cook**

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It was an unseasonably warm Palm Desert afternoon in January. A breeze traveling over the rocky Santa Rosa Mountain cliffs and down the green fairway of the golf course filtered into the house through open glass doors as the phone rang persistently.

"Hello?" I answered in haste, running to catch the call before it went to voice mail.

"Mr. Cook, this is the Palm Desert police. We are with your father."

I interrupted the officer before he could explain.

"Is he OK?"

"He is fine. However, he is lost and cannot tell us where he lives."

"Lost? He was just in his home down the street from me. I left him an hour ago."

"We received a frantic call from a woman who came home to her house, entered and found him sitting in her living room reading a book."

My father, then 90, was suffering from [dementia](#). He had wandered off, out of his desert residence, going for a walk on the golf course. He lost his bearings and decided that this particular home looked right, so he entered an open door on the terrace and made himself at home.

The homeowner arrived and greeted him with a startled scream. He didn't understand who the lady was or why she was in his home screaming. When the police arrived following the homeowner's call, my father had no identification, but he did know to give them my name, and they were able to track me down and call.

Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are among the most daunting of health concerns facing our aging American population. Medical professionals predict that such diseases, given recent statistics, will overwhelm caretakers, and the cost of services will threaten the stability of Medicare and other budgets in coming years.

Last month in Orange County, UCI MIND held an event billed as December to Remember at the posh Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach. Co-chaired by **Lucy and Roger Lisabeth**, the cause has a very personal connection. Advocates of research that could lead to a cure are often touched by dementia. In the case of Lucy Lisabeth, the retired teacher was diagnosed at 62 with mild cognitive impairment. Two years later, the diagnosis morphed into early onset Alzheimer's.

Her condition led Lucy and Roger to UCI MIND, O.C.'s only state- and federally funded Alzheimer's disease research center.

Lucy Lisabeth shared her personal journey with the sold-out dinner crowd.

"There is nothing we can do now to cure this disease," she said, "However, we can change how we deal with it every day by staying positive."

Roger Lisabeth added, "One in every six women age 65 and older will develop Alzheimer's disease. Lucy is one of the six. She didn't get to decide, and we don't get to decide who does and does not get Alzheimer's. But we can help change the trajectory of this disease by supporting research for better treatment, prevention and cures."

To this end, A December to Remember honored local advocates working for answers. The annual UCI MIND Award was presented to **Ira Lott** of the UC Irvine School of Medicine. The Community Leadership honorees were **Burton** and **Linda Young**, business executives who have devoted their resources to the cause. And UCI alumna honoree **Elsa Ramon**, a broadcast journalist with CBS2 and KCAL9, was also recognized

VIPs in the crowd included Drs. **Frank La Ferla** and **Joshua Grill**, co-directors of UCI MIND, **Larry** and **Wendy Tenenbaum**, **Neil** and **Susan Bershad**, **Paul** and **Roz Wexler**, **Tom** and **Donna Chou**, **Gordon** and **Susan Motijasevic**, **Bobbitt** and **Bill Williams**, **Bill** and **Amy Young** and the charming **Jeannie Lawrence**.

To learn more visit mind.uci.edu.

B.W. COOK is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.

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