One day less than a year ago, Ron Bloom reached for his phone to call his next-door neighbor. To the naked eye, his gesture could seem routine. Look closer and you would see a man striking a quiet blow against cancer.

Ron and Lois Bloom have known their share of tragedy. It has taught them that life is for living, for sharing what you have with others. That’s the spirit that infuses their daily life and their charitable decisions— whether it is for the Ronald H. Bloom Family Chair in Cancer Therapeutics held by Howard Sandler, MD, or to support other favorite institutions like USC and Ron’s beloved Trojans, the Skirball Cultural Center, and Disney Hall.

Ron’s full head of brilliant white hair is unmistakable across any room. His demeanor is calm and leisurely, yet he commands attention. “We’re very lucky,” he says. “If we have an opportunity to travel, we take it. But it’s a fleeting pleasure. When you have the opportunity to help, it’s lasting.”

Ron lost his first wife, Sandy, to lymphoma in 1988. Sandy had been Ron’s high school sweetheart, marrying him in his junior year at USC’s School of Public Administration. Together, they’d raised a daughter and a son while Ron built a highly successful real estate brokerage business and industrial property investment portfolio.

Ron describes the last two years of Sandy’s life as “brutally painful and torturous,” but he remains grateful to her caregivers at USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Cedars-Sinai. For Ron, Sandy’s death was “a call.” She had always been involved in philanthropic and cultural activities. Now it was his turn.

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Ron Bloom, pictured with his wife Lois

In 2001, Ron endowed the Ronald H. Bloom Family Chair in Lymphoma at USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, but as he says, “I had it in my mind I had to do more.”

The Ronald H. Bloom Family Chair in Cancer Therapeutics supports the research and clinical work of Dr. Sandler, chairman of Radiation Oncology at Cedars-Sinai. His exploration of cancer therapeutics focuses on prostate and bladder cancer.

“Radiation therapy,” explains Dr. Sandler, “is a kinder and gentler treatment for prostate cancer” with results that are highly successful. Sandler’s research at the Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute focuses on developing radiation treatments that can be more effectively targeted to seek out the cancer, thus allowing therapies to be customized to the specific medical needs of the patient and reducing unnecessary side effects.

“Cancer is very much the scariest thing that can happen to any family,” says Ron. “It altered my life. We need to push to find ways to help the lives of those diagnosed.”

“Cancer touches everyone,” reminds Lois, who lost her father and her sons’ father to the disease and, recently, a 48-year-old niece to pancreatic cancer. She is equally fervent in seeing its malignant touch eradicated.

Ron worked 12-hour days in his early years to be financially independent. He had a clear purpose: “I’ve always had this feeling that I could do a lot with life if I had the proper means, that I could do all those things I wanted to see done.”

That extends well beyond Ron’s home in Southern California. Two years ago, he financed the restoration of the Gyongyos Jewish Cemetery and Holocaust Memorial in Hungary where hundreds of Jews murdered by the Nazis were buried, many without gravestones. “You have to understand the past,” says Ron, “to live in the present.”

And living in the present they do: Ron and Lois drink in life around them. Their house is a destination for dinners and gatherings with children and grandchildren, creating a happily blended family. Lois cooks for everybody. Glancing around the breakfast room in the Blooms’ home, you’ll notice a desk where, in thick volumes bound in leather, Ron meticulously records details on every bottle of wine he uncorks. You’ll also discover bottles sitting out on the dining room sideboard, awaiting a meal or a dinner with family or friends to be opened and savored. “I don’t collect wine,” says Ron, whose cellar includes an ample supply of vintages he has lovingly acquired for many years, “I buy wine to share.”

The words tell you as much about the man’s approach to philanthropy as they do about his enduring passion for wine: Life is to be lived and shared with others.

Philanthropy is simply the other integral part of a fully lived life. As Ron puts it in his typically low-key manner, “I’m delighted to give, and I do what I can.”