

GIVING

Robert E. Schiesske lights up when he talks about his parents. He describes his father, Victor, as resilient and full of integrity. “He battled corruption within his own company,” Schiesske says. “He survived the death of my mother, four bouts of cancer, and continuing congestive heart failure by keeping up his strong work ethic and daily activities.”

Schiesske’s mother, Alice, always connected with people. “You could climb a mountain with her, and she’d fall way behind, talking to the other people on the trail,” says Schiesske (MET’78, GSM’82). “Then, you’d turn and make your way back down from the summit, and everyone you met who was still climbing would have some story about my mother—about how kind she was and the conversation they’d had, and eventually you’d find her again, talking to someone new.” In 1939, she met an Australian rancher on a train; he sent her a Christmas card every year until his death.

The Schiesskes shared a curiosity and a love of learning. They instilled in their son an appreciation of education and opportunity.

To honor his parents, Schiesske has established the Alice (Davis) and Victor Schiesske Scholarship Fund.

Schiesske was working in the IT field when he decided to get a second degree. Knowing how important work was to his family, he looked for a master’s program that would allow him to continue his day job and also give him a good understanding of computer science. “BU had a nice evening program,” he recalls. “I could have supper in the company cafeteria and walk down to campus. It was almost a second job.” He earned a degree from Metropolitan College—and admission to the Graduate School of Management’s MBA program.

After graduation, Schiesske’s connection to BU waned. “Once I had the degree, I would glance through *Bostonia*, but I was never particularly active,” he says. Then his parents passed away, and he asked himself if he could create



CYDNEY SCOTT

An Apt Remembrance

AN ALUM LOOKS TO THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE TO HONOR HIS PARENTS

By Caitlin Cushman

a memorial that people would benefit from, rather than just a granite slab. Years of helping his aging parents with medical issues had given him an idea.

“A lot of people, when they start thinking about giving back, want to get more in touch with the medical community,” Schiesske says. “The *Wall Street Journal* recently highlighted health care as nearly the top choice of retirees for ongoing support.” This makes sense to him. He spent years meeting with doctors and witnessing medical procedures, the effects of degenerative diseases, and the difficulties in geriatric care.

He knew he could give to a national health organization, but he also knew something about return on investment. “A very successful mutual fund manager once said, ‘Invest locally—it’s what you know best and easy to keep

track of progress,’” Schiesske says.

In 2012, Schiesske created the scholarship in honor of his parents. Awards are based on financial need and made to one or more students enrolled in the School of Medicine. This year’s recipient was Veronica Torres (MED’16), who has an interest in general medicine. Schiesske also has made several bequests—among them a stroke fellowship named for his mother and a geriatric fellowship named for his father. Each aims to further research and improve the odds for future sufferers of those diseases and the medical struggles his parents endured.

Thanks to Robert Schiesske’s generosity, these memorials will carry the names of Victor and Alice Schiesske in perpetuity, reminding future recipients to work hard, to never give up, and to stay curious. ■



Supporting health care made sense to Robert Schiesske; his father had survived four bouts of cancer and battled congestive heart failure.