



PUNTA GORDA — U.S. Air Force and Vietnam veteran David Martens died Feb. 17 after months of ongoing health issues.

Martens, 78, and his partner of more than two decades, Su Miscia, both of Punta Gorda, have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars, in addition to time as volunteers, to the Military Heritage Museum in Punta Gorda.

Martens also served on the museum's board of directors.

“Their legacy ... it wasn’t just the money, it just became who they are,” MHM Executive Director Gary Butler said. “It became part of the museum as far as them rolling up their sleeves and going to work.”

Martens and Miscia recently donated their home in Burnt Store Isles to the museum as part of an endowment fund aimed to help the museum purchase a building. The museum is at 900 W. Marion Ave. in a building owned by Fishermen’s Village.

When the donation was announced in January, Miscia told *The Daily Sun* the reason she and Martens were donating the house.

“We wanted to see where our money was going while we were still alive, and how it helps others,” she said.

The home, in the 500 block of La Caruna Court in Burnt Store Isles, sold last week. Butler said the museum collected around \$800,000 from the sale.

“Dave passed away at around 5:30 p.m.,” Butler said. “Funds for the house were wired to the museum around 3 p.m. that afternoon. I think that he lived long enough to see the first part of that vision to come to reality, which was to ensure that we had the fund and it was funded before he passed on.”

In 2020, Martens and Miscia donated \$100,000 to the museum to renovate its 247-seat Gulf Theater.

When the museum was closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Martens and Miscia took action.

“There was a scarcity in a lot of supplies at that time and Dave and Su took it upon themselves to say ‘We will take care of that’ and they both did,” Butler said. “They went out and started collecting wherever they could — stores, online — all the different supplies and they hired a commercial cleaning person to disinfect everything.”

Butler said it gave him and others the idea of who they both were.

“They are just more than philanthropists,” he said. “They saw a vision and they wanted to see it come alive.”

Beginnings

Martens graduated Charlotte High School before entering the Air Force in 1962.

In March 2021, Martens told *The Daily Sun* he had “all kinds of relatives in the military.”

“My father was a bombardier in World War II ... Also, I was in the Air Force and a pilot, so I enjoy it (military history).”

He was an expert on three-dimensional radar systems and became an instructor at Air Force bases in Mississippi and in Sacramento, California.

After retiring from the Air Force in 1982, he worked for companies as a business development executive specializing in radar.

He later retired but remained involved in community activities similar to his more recent efforts at the Military Heritage Museum.

“I drove out to see Dave the night before he died, and the funny thing is that it was just like a board meeting,” Butler said. “He went through everything that needed to be done and wanted to make sure that we had all our ducks in order.

“It has been sad leading up to his death but I think everybody who looks at it and what a legacy and a role model he was, I think people are excited because he did something (for the museum) that will last forever. He was a good man.”

Funeral service details were not immediately available.