



HEART FOR THE ARTS

Orlando native's million-dollar gift sets stage at Dr. P. Phillips Orlando Performing Arts Center.

At an early age, Annette Neel cultivated a passionate interest in the arts, thanks to her parents, Asher and Doris Peter. "They felt the arts were an important part of life, that they inspired you by helping you look beyond the troubles of everyday life," explains Neel, who served as chairwoman of the Junior League of Greater Orlando steering committee that kicked off the Orlando Opera in 1958.

To honor her parents' legacy and continue her ongoing support of the arts, Neel recently gave \$1 million in memory of her parents to the planned Dr. P. Phillips Orlando Performing Arts Center.

"I believe my parents would have cho-

sen to support this project, which is going to mean so much for the city and the region," she says.

As an Orlando native, 81-year-old Neel is a humble, classy and vibrant woman who is more than happy to give back to her hometown. After all, the city helped create her family's good fortune and prosperity, she says.

Sitting in her parlor with Sophie, her Yorkie, Neel points to the portrait of her grandfather, James Jordan Peter, on the wall. "He was sent here as a young man to manage his family's land investments and developments here in Orlando," she says. "The rest of the family stayed in Missouri."

Her grandfather fell in love with Central Florida's warm climate and settled here. His son and her father, Asher Peter, became a real estate broker and owned Woodlawn Memorial Park Cemetery & Funeral Home. Her mother, Doris, was a community leader and served as president of the Junior League of Greater Orlando.

Neel attended Orlando High School, one of only three area high schools at the time. After going off to college, she worked for the *Orlando Sentinel* from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, first as a reporter for the women's section and then, after she became a mother, as a correspondent.