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Couple works together to fight battle of Alzheimer's

By CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
For The Dallas Post

Kay Fairley feels like a war veteran.

"We've been at this for a long time," she says of the fight against an insidious enemy.

Hoping to stimulate a response from the tangle of neurons in her husband's brain, she writes notes on a message board every morning for him to read at breakfast.

But the war zone in the mind of her husband, David, is ever-shrinking and, after 19 years, the couple is slowly losing its battle with Alzheimer's disease.

It wasn't always this way.

The Fairleys met on a Thanksgiving holiday at Hess's college bar in Bloomsburg. She was a student at Penn State. He was an electrical engineer from Bucknell, working for Hughes Aircraft in California while getting his masters at the University of Southern California.

After love at first sight, he said, "Of course, you won't mind living on the boat." From California to North Carolina, the couple moved around the country because of David's career. While owning a scuba diving business, they lived on their 41-foot yacht.

It was the adventure of a lifetime, says Kay.

Until one day David asked

Kay to give Western Union his address and Social Security number, both of which he had forgotten. Red flags went up. It was the first inkling of a problem.

So, now, as a veteran fighting a losing battle, Kay Fairley has learned a few principles along the way and wants to pass them on to others.

1. Don't be too quick to judge either yourself, the victim, caregivers or people involved in the disease.

In the early stages of the disease and because its onset was so subtle, friends were skeptical of Kay's suspicion that her husband had Alzheimer's.

"Everything seemed rather

normal until you spent two or three days with him and realized something was wrong," she said.

Many of their friends refused to believe the truth of the situation. Kay doubted her own instincts.

"Am I crazy or overreacting; it makes you feel like you're crazy," she said right up until the final diagnosis was made at Duke University.

Now that the couple is homebound, friends think there is nothing they can do anymore to help. On the contrary.

"It still helps out, though, if sometime someone would

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST
Dave Fairley, a retired electrical engineer for Howard Hughes Aircraft, sits at a breakfast table made for him. His wife, Kay, writes notes on a message board each morning to stimulate and inspire him.



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST
These second graders at Wycallis Elementary School had one heck of a good time during their annual Hoedown presentation.

Swing your partner, do si do style

By REBECCA BRIA
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For Matthew Krivak, it was like being back in second grade. Krivak went to Wycallis Elementary School's Annual Second-Grade Hoedown last Friday with his wife, Lisa, to see their son, Nicholas, perform. About 35 years ago, it was Matthew Krivak on stage at the hoedown.

Three classes of second-grade students performed skits with stick ponies and rhythm instruments, sang cowboy folk tunes and performed three square dances and a country line dance at the hoedown. In addition to their afternoon performance for parents and afternoon kindergarten students, the second-graders staged their hoedown in the morning for the entire school.

Makenna Bryant, 7, of Dallas, could not sleep the night before the hoedown out of excitement, her mother, Michelle Bryant, said before the show. Makenna's little sister, 2-year-old Hayla, dressed festively and wore a red scarf to attend the show.

Parents decorated the gymnasium with corn made out of yellow and green construction paper and children's western-themed clothes. "Wanted" posters in which second-graders drew pictures of themselves also lined the gym.

The song, "These Boots Are Made for Walking" played as the

children happily walked and waved to their parents on their way into the gym. The second-graders were dressed as cowboys and cowgirls and wore cowboy hats scarves around their necks, denim pants, jackets and skirts and plaid shirts.

Songs such as "The Old Barn" and "Oh, Susanna" soon filled the room while the children took turns going down onto the floor and square-dancing.

"All join hands, single right. Do si do your partner. Single left," said a square-dance caller on tape.

Another highlight of the hoedown was a country line dance in which the second-grade teachers, Colleen Williams, Jeanne Egan and Beth Faerber participated. The three second-grade teachers show the students the line dance every year and join them during their

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The annual hoedown at Wycallis Elementary School brought Caitlyn Pike and Ben O'Connell together.

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70 years? Yep, they have been married that long

By REBECCA BRIA
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Their love, more than seven decades strong, keeps growing.

Robert and Elsie Williamson of Druid Hills Road in Shavertown, are celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary today, November 25. "It's just gone too fast," Robert said. "It really has," Elsie added.

Elsie Johnston loved to square dance in her teenage years and every Saturday night in the mid-1930s, there was square dancing at Dallas High School. One night in 1935, Robert Williamson, 22 at the time, saw Elsie, who was 16, and asked her to dance. The two began dating and often went to square dances together. On July 3, 1936, Elsie's 17th birthday, Robert proposed with a diamond ring. Elsie said yes, but only after insisting that Robert get permission from her father for her hand in marriage.

"It's so long ago and I haven't proposed to many since," Robert joked as he tried to remember the details of proposing.

The couple was married on Thanksgiving Day, 1937 at the Dallas Methodist Church by Reverend Francis Freeman, admitting there was no special reason they married on the holiday. Their attendants were Alice Johnston Kishbaugh, Elsie's sister, and Robert's brother, John. Elsie wore a blue velvet gown and Robert donned a suit, common wedding attire at the time.

"We were married in the Depression and things were a lot different then," Elsie said.

Robert and Elsie recall their wedding day was unseasonably warm and sunny, remembering taking pictures outside without wearing jackets or coats. A reception for approximately 30 guests, mostly family, was held at Elsie's parents' home after the wedding. The newly-married couple could not afford a honeymoon, so they went to their new apartment in Dallas after the celebration.

"It was altogether different than today," Elsie said. "No limousines or anything like that."

Elsie was born on July 3, 1919, in Dallas a daughter of the late Alex and Frances Johnston. At about age 17, she worked in the office of *The Dallas Post* assembling *The Opinator*, Wyoming Seminary Preparatory School's newspaper which is still in existence today. She graduated from Dallas Borough High School in 1937.

Robert was born on March 12, 1913 in Vernon (near Centermoreland) to the late Ida and John Williamson. At age 7, the family moved to Swoyersville and later to West Wyoming. Robert graduated from Wyoming High School in 1931 and, in 1944, was drafted into the United States Navy. Though he had to leave home, Robert never made it further than Miami, Fla. because he was already 31 years old. He worked for the General Cigar Company and retired as District Manager following 46 years of service.

The Williamsons have one son, Robert Jr., 68, who lives in Trucksville with his wife, the former Carol Hemenway. They have three granddaughters; Lori Nye and her husband Daniel, of Deltaville, Va.; Robin Edwards and her husband Gary, of Albrightsville; and Dawn Ross and her husband Joseph of Wil-

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