

“Alzheimer’s is like a shipwreck at sea and hospice has the only lifeboats ready to help the survivors sinking in deep water.”



Mary Johns

Photographed by Susan May

A true love story

After 32 years of happiness with loving husband Ron, Mary was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Mary resides in a residential care facility where Ron visits her every morning, afternoon and evening. For both Mary and Ron, this is their 2nd marriage. Mary was married for 40 years and Ron for 25 years to their prior spouses who passed away within 3 months of each other. Ron managed the Clackamas County branch bank in Wemme, OR just across the street from the post office where Mary worked. After the deaths of their spouses, Ron would cross the street every day to retrieve the mail from Mary. In a short time, they fell in love and were married on September 11, 1976. Ron has two daughters and Mary one from their previous marriages.

According to Ron, Alzheimer’s is like “a shipwreck at sea and hospice has the only lifeboats ready to help the survivors sinking in deep water.” Without Willamette Valley Hospice, Ron feels that he and Mary would not have been able to make it on their own. “Hospice means much more than terminal illness; it is like a safety net giving comfort and much needed help for all the complicated problems of modern life.” Ron and Mary take life one day at a time and at 82 and 90 years of age respectively, they enjoy the life that is left to them together. Ron says they are not rich financially but have been blessed with a wealth of love and happiness in their life together and whatever time remains will bring even more of these riches.