

Connie and Gordon Bell

Connie: 72 Gordon: 74

The first thing one notices when walking into the Bell home is the dogs. Ceramic, toy, stuffed, they line the living room where Connie and Gordon sit. Connie's sister had started the collection as a young child, and when she passed away from polio at age 15, Connie took the collection over. This display is just a small reminder of the Bells' attitude that growth continues despite the trials of life.

Prior to dating Gordon, Connie was going through a particularly hard time. She had suffered from seizures her whole life and had personal burdens to carry. At 6 ft. 9 in. Gordon was a strapping young man with a great zest for life and fun. He asked her out, and at the end of their date he requested that they pray together; this act impressed Connie far more than flowers ever could. They have now been married for 49 years.

In addition to Connie's seizures, she has scar tissue on her temporal lobe and has had discs removed from her spine. She spends most of her time in a chair and cannot support her head. Gordon was diagnosed with MS at age 64 and lost basic motor skills for some time. With a positive attitude and physical therapy, he has resumed an amazing amount of dexterity. A sign hangs in their home that says, "The Olympics Are Coming!" with their physical therapy exercises listed below.

Because Connie and Gordon are homebound most of the time, they have each other for primary company. They like to play Scrabble, which helps with Connie's brain functioning, keeps them sharp and allows them time to discuss important topics. Gordon calls himself "Mr. MacGyver" because he knows how to make something out of anything; he put this skill to use when he wasn't able to grasp with his hands. He made adaptive devices so he could use his keys, turn doorknobs and cook.

Connie and Gordon believe that a positive attitude is everything. They also believe that marriage is not about "50/50", it's about "100/100" and giving 100% to the other partner. Their secret to a happy marriage is open communication and never going to bed without saying "I love you" and praying with each other. In fact, Connie has said that unless a trip or a hospitalization has separated them, they have never strayed from this routine. They say the most rewarding things about marriage are growing together in spite of trials and tribulations, sharing their faith in God and having a wonderful son, daughter, and two grandsons.