

In The Spotlight

By Debbie L. Sklar

Dedicated to Helping Alzheimer's Patients

After 34 years of marriage, Ben Allen, an Irvine resident and part-time employee at Alzheimer's Orange County, spends his days trying to find small moments to connect with his wife, Judy, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's 9 years ago.

The first 5 years after diagnosis, Allen served as his wife's primary caregiver, and their days were filled with many ups and downs as they learned how to manage memory loss, mood swings and other symptoms. But through their hardships, he always found ways to connect with his wife even when she couldn't.

Allen is the latest recipient of Fairhaven Memorial Park & Mortuary's Oliver Halsell Care Award for his exceptional care of his wife and the community. He will be recognized with five other local honorees at the Annual Oliver Halsell Care Awards banquet in November. Additionally, as part of this award, Fairhaven will donate on his behalf to Alzheimer's Orange County.

Through Alzheimer's Orange County, Allen educates families affected by the disease



challenges they will face and how to find meaningful connections with their loved ones. He is also an instructor for the organization's signature program Memories in the Making, a program that uses art as a form of expression for those with Alzheimer's.

"When words fail, art speaks," Allen said, stating the motto of the program. "Many people with advanced dementia become uncommunicative. Art gives our loved ones a way to say, 'I'm still here.' When I see new facilitators really grasp this principle, I know the time and effort has been an investment that will pay a good return."

Here is more about Allen.

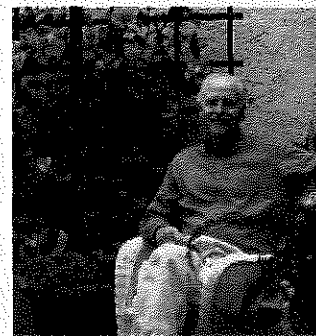
Q: What does receiving this award mean to you?

A: I am deeply moved and humbled. It's an honor to re-

ness and encouragement to those living with Alzheimer's.

Q: What is the best part of your profession?

A: My work is largely about educating families that are affected by Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, so they are equipped to respond to the challenges that come when a loved one has dementia. I feel like all my work experiences over 40-plus years have prepared me for what I'm doing now. When I'm speaking to a group or an individual, I see them receive immediate benefits. In most cases, they leave with hope and encouragement.



Q: What is one experience that touched you at work?

A: Once, a woman came up to me after a presentation with tears in her eyes and said: 'My

understand what she was going through. Thank you.'"

Q: How do you stay connected with a spouse who has Alzheimer's?

A: With Judy, I help her eat lunch almost every day, which is an important time of connection. Another strong connection is when her community has live music. If she's feeling up to it, I'll take her in my arms and start moving a little bit to the music. At those times, I can see and feel an instant connection. And even without words, I know she totally understands that our dancing is an expression of our love.

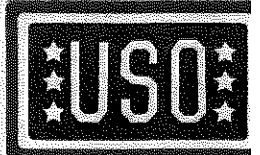
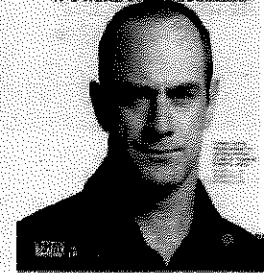
Q: What keeps you motivated?

A: I live for the moments Judy and I still share together, and I want to continue to share that job with others going through similar situations.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: Tennis, ping-pong, and birding are at the top of my list. Also, I have two step-daughters and three grandchildren, and I love spending time with them. Our oldest granddaughter is a summer intern at Alzheimer's Or-

NO MORE
"IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS"



Until Every One Comes Home

Advertise in
The Senior
Reporter's
CLASSIFIED &
PROFESSIONAL
SERVICE
DIRECTORY

Only

\$37.50/
mo with a 6-mo.
commitment

seniorreporter
@aol.com
or call
Bill Thomas at

ups and downs as they learned how to manage memory loss, mood swings and other symptoms. But through their hardships, he always found ways to connect with his wife even when she couldn't.

Allen is the latest recipient of Fairhaven Memorial Park & Mortuary's Oliver Halsell Care Award for his exceptional care of his wife and the community. He will be recognized with five other local honorees at the Annual Oliver Halsell Care Awards banquet in November. Additionally, as part of this award, Fairhaven will donate on his behalf to Alzheimer's Orange County.

Through Alzheimer's Orange County, Allen educates families affected by the disease and other forms of dementia on how to respond to the many

He is also an instructor for the organization's signature program Memories in the Making, a program that uses art as a form of expression for those with Alzheimer's.

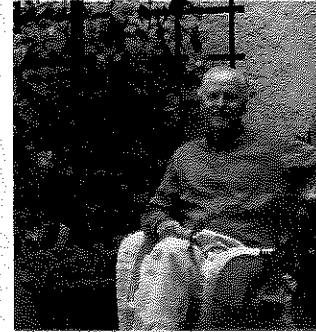
"When words fail, art speaks," Allen said, stating the motto of the program. "Many people with advanced dementia become uncommunicative. Art gives our loved ones a way to say, 'I'm still here.' When I see new facilitators really grasp this principle, I know the time and effort has been an investment that will pay a good return."

Here is more about Allen.

Q: What does receiving this award mean to you?

A: I am deeply moved and humbled. It's an honor to receive this award and I can only hope it will bring more aware-

like all my work experiences over 40-plus years have prepared me for what I'm doing now. When I'm speaking to a group or an individual, I see them receive immediate benefits. In most cases, they leave with hope and encouragement.



Q: What is one experience that touched you at work?

A: Once, a woman came up to me after a presentation with tears in her eyes and said: 'My mom died from Alzheimer's 20 years ago and now I un-

the music. At those times, I can see and feel an instant connection. And even without words, I know she totally understands that our dancing is an expression of our love.

Q: What keeps you motivated?

A: I live for the moments Judy and I still share together, and I want to continue to share that joy with others going through similar situations.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: Tennis, ping-pong, and birding are at the top of my list. Also, I have two step-daughters and three grandchildren, and I love spending time with them. Our oldest granddaughter is a summer intern at Alzheimer's Orange County.

**Advertise in
The Senior
Reporter's
CLASSIFIED &
PROFESSIONAL
SERVICE
DIRECTORY**

**Only
\$37.50/
mo with a 6-mo.
commitment**

**seniorreporter
@aol.com
or call
Bill Thomas at
(714) 458-5703**