Ruby and Jimmie Norman look forward to celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary this summer almost as eagerly as they anticipate the opening day of baseball season. The dedicated St. Louis Cardinals fans held spring training season tickets right behind the home dugout for more than 20 years, relinquishing them only upon leaving Florida in 2019 to join the Independence Hill Retirement Community. The couple moved to be closer to their daughter, Shela, who lives in Spring Branch.

Jimmie grew up listening to Cardinals’ games on the radio. KMOX’s broadcast across the Midwest was a mainstay of the Northeastern Arkansas farming community where he spent his boyhood.

“I remember picking cotton one time when the Cardinals were playing in the World Series,” Jimmie said. “My dad let me go into the barn and listen to the game with my grandpa.” Jimmie returned home after a four-year stint in the Navy, and the Normans met at Beebe Junior College, where Ruby was a friend of Jimmie’s sister.

The couple moved to the St. Louis area and spent decades working in separate careers. Ruby taught elementary school, and Jimmie was a manufacturing engineer at McDonnell Douglas. When they left St. Louis for the warmer climate of Jupiter, Florida in 1999, the Normans’ first stop was the Cardinals’ ticket booth. They hit the ballpark before getting a bite to eat or find a place to live, Ruby emphasized. They remember happy times with fellow fans, many also from the St. Louis area, who met before the game to “help out the manager,” Jimmie said.

“I told the people at the ticket booth the Cardinals would come down in full steam,” Jimmie said. Of the 8000 seats in the stadium, three-fourths would be filled with fans from St. Louis, earning the team the fourth largest attendance in both leagues.

After their children, Shela, and their son, Brent, left home, the Normans began investing in and managing real estate. At one point, they owned 27 properties. Ruby just deactivated her realtor license this summer at the age of 84. The couple worked synergistically to manage their business.

“You have to be a team, especially when you are doing something collective like buying and selling houses,” Jimmie said. They fondly remember their most lucrative deal — the purchase of a high-rise apartment in Florida that was converting to condos right when prices started to skyrocket. They sold it the next year at great profit.

Their advice to those interested in investing in real estate, “Have a good tax accountant, because if you make a penny, you want to keep it.”

The couple is planning a Disney cruise this fall with their family — including the four great-grandchildren — to commemorate their milestone anniversary. They jumped at the opportunity this Valentine’s Day to renew their vows along with 15 other couples at a special ceremony planned by Independence Hill. The event was held in Ivy Room, beautifully decorated with wedding portraits and dresses, and included photography and cake cutting.

The Normans enjoy their Sunday School and Young at Heart fellowship group at Parkhills Baptist Church. The two remain a committed team – in baseball and life.