Hand in Hand

By Amy Morgan

Cyrus and Louise Bradshaw have been walking together through life since they wed in 1956. They’ve been each other’s constant companion through 63 years, five children and eight grandchildren. Even now, the couple remains so close they finish each other’s sentences as they enjoy their senior years at Independence Hill Retirement Community.

The Bradshaws met on a blind date in El Paso, where Cy was completing his Army service at Fort Bliss and Lou was studying Theology in college. Cy’s proposal was more attractive than her last few hours of class, she said, so they married and traveled with his civil engineering career. Lou was able to take a china painting class once they settled in North Central San Antonio, close to their home parish of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, where they still attend. She was inspired by her mother, who enjoyed creating porcelain art herself, but the real catalyst was the wife of one of Cy’s co-workers, who introduced Lou to painting teacher Frances Parks.

From the first class Lou was hooked. She developed her skill, the results of which are now displayed throughout the couple’s home. She is particularly fond of a collection of four china plates depicting homes where her mother lived and a 24-piece nativity set that she painted by hand. Lou still keeps a small kiln that can fire 6-inch plates or mugs.

As time progressed and their children grew, Lou and Cy became friends with other artists. Lou even recruited professionals to teach art seminars for fellow painters. They remember the Riverwalk craft fairs in the 1970s when they were just beginning. Not only did she exhibit her porcelain work, she and Cy are proficient at other types of handicrafts. Lou creates wooden crosses and ornaments using a scroll saw, and Cy is an accomplished woodworker.

The two shared a garage/workroom in the Stone Oak home where Cy made hand tooled furniture. A plant stand and recipe box traveled with them to Independence Hill, but Lou says his most impressive piece is a freestanding, lined jewelry cabinet Cy made for their daughter. The Bradshaws share fond memories of working side-by-side with favorites like Antiques Roadshow and American Pickers playing on the TV in the background.

Lou offers the results of her talents at Independence Hill’s annual Holiday Bazaar. She pairs well with friend Juanita, with whom she shares a table. The two couples dine together most evenings. This year, the Holiday Bazaar, which is open to the public, will be held December 4, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Lou played an important role in Alzheimer’s Association Painting for a Cause fundraiser last year. She was one of the Independence Hill residents who painted together in September. Lou’s painting raised one of the higher sums of the entries sold at auction.

“I had never done anything like that,” she said. “I felt brave.” Never one to remain idle, Lou plays bingo and Bunco and continues to create items for the bazaar. For more information on the lifestyle offered at Independence Hill, call (210) 764-5260, or go to www.independencehill.com.