

Betty and Fred

Ruth and I had forty-three family members to our home for the family Easter dinner. Ruth's sister could not come because of illness, but her daughter, Judy, and her ten-year old nephew, who she is caring for, were able to be here. Ruth's two brothers, Ardyn and Dale, and their wives, children and grandchildren (and one great-grandchild) were here too. My sister, Alice, came over from Findlay with Dale and Eleanor. The special guest of honor was Ruth's ninety-three year old mother, Helen, who spent the afternoon with us, and who really enjoyed seeing all of her family. The remaining two guests were Betty and Fred Gressard, whose children and grandchildren are on the two coasts and who would not be with them this holiday.

Ruth and I included Betty and Fred in our family count, because we have become so close to them over the last few years. We eat lunch with them nearly every Sunday after church, and since our grandchildren often attend these luncheons, Betty and Fred have become their honorary grandparents. Ruth and I have commented to one another many times that Betty and Fred have become our role models with regard to how to retire, how to age and how to live the "senior" years. Ruth and I want to be like Betty and Fred.

Betty and Fred have lived almost all of their non-Navy years in Kent. Mention a Kent family and they know them...they not only know them, but also know where they live and where they use to live. They celebrated their eightieth birthdays this past year, and have a lot to teach each of us about living a full life. Betty was an avid golfer, but had to give it up a few years ago when she broke her elbow in a fall. She still walks about 3 miles each day and attends her "young mother's breakfast" every Monday morning, as she has done for nearly sixty years. Fred had a quadruple heart bypass and both knees replaced, and still walks 5 miles a day and plays 18 holes of golf four or five times each week in good (and bad) weather. They travel (Spain, Seattle, San Francisco, Hilton Head in separate trips already this year), and Betty still rides the roller coasters at Six Flags and Cedar Point. They attend all of the Kent State football and basketball games, live an active social life, help other people, and... they don't talk about getting old. The latter is probably because they don't see themselves as old. Yes, Ruth and I want to be like Betty and Fred.

After I introduced them to the rest of our family, and said they were our role models, I mentioned several other people that had positively impacted our lives. To that, Fred said, "You can't have any other role

models.” They also have a wonderful sense of humor, which is something else we love about them.

There have been other people older than I, besides my parents, who have made a big impact on me. Mr. Groth and Ida Moore in my teenage years, and Ruth’s father Dave and his brother, our Uncle Charles... have all made a big impact on my life. All of those role models are gone. Recently, Bob Stevenson, Jim Myers and Jim Schubert, three of the most positive people I have ever met, have moved me to be a better person. Evelyn Dickinson, who died recently, moved me too, by facing life head on...and by having a positive attitude that allowed her to buy a new BMW convertible a few weeks before her death. There are so many wonderful people who live such wonderful lives...and who teach us how we should attack our remaining days on Planet Earth. There are others who are younger who have made an impact on our lives too (another story maybe). I know I’m probably leaving out some important people in this story ...but my message is that we only need to look around us to find many others for inspiration, for ways to live better lives ourselves. Ruth and I are inspired by Betty and Fred, and, ...oops Fred, ...a few others nearly as wonderful. We want to be like Betty and Fred!

The End

April, 2001