

Reliving Yesteryear with Fireside Chats

Story by Monica Pryts

Photography by
Nicole Cassano

Residents of Grove Manor in Grove City have been reliving days gone by thanks to volunteer Ed Junk, who visits nearly every weekday to share old-time radio shows, trivia and history lessons, often with props and complete with a cozy fireplace.

"We got some of the best humor out of this guy," Ed chuckled one afternoon as he and seven residents of the nursing home listened to a Will Rogers recording on an old-fashioned radio. Ed's "fireside chats" are a nod to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's radio addresses to the American public from 1933 to 1944.

The group sat around the fireplace as Ed, wearing a tie and cardigan similar to what men wore when families would gather around the radio decades ago, shared some tales about the actor, cowboy and vaudeville performer.

"I think they're wonderful," resident Mickey Edminston said of his visits. "It certainly lightens the day."

In addition to the radio shows, Ed, 59, of Hermitage, presents "this day in history," which highlights significant events from years past. He also creates presentations in memory of a noteworthy person's birthday or death.

National events such as the anniversary of a war or President Barack Obama's inauguration also play into what kind of program he'll put together, and holidays or seasons factor into his selection as well.

The self-proclaimed history buff told those gathered to hear about Will Rogers that their next chat will focus on "The Shadow," a popular radio show that once featured Orson Welles as the title character.

"Don't touch that dial, and keep the flame a-flickering for our next 'fireside chat,'" Ed said.

Ed is very popular and a wonderful example of volunteerism, said Jackie Kovach, Grove Manor's admissions/referral manager.

"He's very good. I think it's super that he's willing to give his time,"



resident Bernice Cummings Eakin said. "He's very knowledgeable."

Ed, who is retired from the Pennsylvania Treasury Department, recalled witnessing his first historic event in 1960, when he was 7 years old: John F. Kennedy made a campaign stop in the Shenango Valley when he was running for president.

"I think that's where I got my real interest in history," he said, adding his first self-taught lesson was memorizing the names of all the U.S. presidents.

Ed has enjoyed brushing up on all kinds of facts ever since and loves sharing them with folks who lived through the events or have fond memories of a favorite performer or celebrity.

He always researches his topics before coming to Grove Manor, usually in his home library; he doesn't own a computer because his collection of materials — books, records, cassettes and CDs — is so extensive.

"I do it from memory," he said of his presentations, which he considers rewarding experiences that will always be special memories for him.

Ed also takes requests from the residents, so he's still learning new bits of trivia himself.

"It's the sense of satisfaction that you're doing something to brighten their day," he said, noting that even dementia patients have responded positively to certain songs.

Despite being Shenango Valley residents, Ed and his mother, Evelyn, felt the Grove City nursing home was the perfect place for her after a period of failing health, and she moved there in summer 2009.

She passed away March 1, 2011, and Ed has continued to return every week, volunteering his time with people who feel like family. His father, Thomas C. Junk, passed away in 1999.

"I felt at home here," he said of the first time he visited Grove Manor. ▽

For more information about volunteering at Grove Manor, call Sandy McConnell, life enrichment director, at 724.458.7800.

Monica Pryts

Monica is a staff writer for Allied News, Grove City, and lives in Sharpsville with her husband, Steve, and their crazy cat, Cheddar. You can contact her at 724.458.5010, mpryts@alliednews.com or find her on Facebook.



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lieve me, I feel like a fraud (again). But like I realized last May, all I can do is try and make it right. Our group has raised more than \$5,000 and climbing, and I plan to make Running Against Traffic(k) a yearly challenge.



Members of Running Against Traffic(k), who participated in the Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon on May 5. Danny is fifth from the left in the back row.

I am writing this five days before race day and, quite frankly, I still don't know if I can run 13.1 miles. My longest run so far has been a little longer than eight miles and once I hit that eighth mile, I passed out on a picnic bench and asked if I could use a stranger's phone so I could call my sister to come pick me up.

Believe me, I'm a competitor and I'm going to compete. I'm going to cross the finish line even if I have to crawl. I'm pretty sure Vegas has me at 2-to-1 odds to finish dead last. But I will finish.

I am not guaranteeing I'll finish on Sunday to sound like a Michael Jordan-like competitor. And this guarantee that I'll run a full marathon in the next two years isn't just to try and justify my inability to in 2013.

I'm going to finish on Sunday and continue to run and raise awareness of human trafficking not to prove anything to myself or anybody. My 34 fellow runners and I will continue to run to stop trafficking because we are not running for ourselves.

We are running for 27 million. **V**

Editor's note: Danny's time for the 2013 Pittsburgh Half Marathon was 1:57:08

Danny Massaro

Danny is a freelance writer from New Castle who fell in love with writing because he had so many opinions and nobody to tell them to. He enjoys writing about sports, his family, and past experiences – or any combination of the three. He is a gasoline and fuel salesman, co-founder of *thecalvmuscle.com* (currently under repair), an avid Cleveland sports fan and a pizza and wing connoisseur.



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