

VOLUNTEERS

A Tap on the Shoulder...

Resist the temptation to picture a typical couple in their late 70's living in a retirement home. Illustrious and Right Worshipful Brother, 33°, Dale and Sister Joan Mortimer defy any stereotype that might come to mind. Attractive, and radiating energy and health, they didn't come to Masonic Retirement Village to retire, but to continue to live fully... and to give fully. Joan regularly serves up desserts at the ice cream parlor and decorates the Iredell Gardens windows for the upcoming holidays. Dale works with Joan at the ice cream parlor, clerks at the gift shop, and is responsible for setting up the PA system for guest speakers. Both routinely help the less ambulatory, with Dale escorting wheelchair-bound residents

"One thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve." – Albert Schweitzer

around the grounds, and Joan taking communion to those who cannot attend church in person. Brushing off any special recognition, Joan explains that here, "Everybody pitches in and helps everybody."

Old habits are hard to shake, and with Joan beginning her work with Eastern Star at 19, and Dale joining the Masons at 22, volunteering has been in

their blood for quite awhile. One of the biggest reasons Dale feels people join the Masons is through direct inspiration. "You know someone who is a Mason and you're impressed by the life he lives." In Dale's case, his brother's brother-in-law provided the initial impetus. Soon, Dale found himself like the other neophytes, sitting at meetings, "dumb and happy, until the first thing you know somebody taps you on the shoulder and gets you moving in the right direction. You get a little part to play and you grow from there." Dale "grew" all the way to become a 33rd degree Mason. While he held high offices such as District Deputy Grand Master, it didn't take the

"worker" out of him. To illustrate the philosophy

responsible for his success, he brings out a small gilt toilet plunger, which was once awarded to Joan and him because they always "just plunged in."

Plunging in seems to be the way of life throughout the Home, with nearly 26,000 volunteer hours logged last year. Residents help out in the chaplain's office, post office and library, serve

as artisans for the gift shop, drivers, personal shoppers and class instructors, and even knit hats for cancer patients.

Just as important as the logged volunteer hours, however, are times residents provide unscheduled, person-to-person help. Whether it's answering the call at midnight to drive a neighbor to the hospital when his spouse has been taken in an ambulance, or just sewing a button on for someone who can't, the Mortimers, and other able residents, are at the ready to do what needs to be done.

"It's part of the Eastern Star teachings. You're supposed to help one another," Joan states simply. Dale echoes her thoughts when asked what the fundamental Masonic teachings are. In an age when altruism seems to be at a persistent ebb, his answer resonates with particular poignancy: "Brotherly love, relief, truth, brotherhood."

