

Tb Brought Couple Together

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DENVER — By May of 1957, antibiotics had gotten Ray Dones' tuberculosis well enough under control that he was able to play football on the front lawn of the B'nai B'rith building. While he was playing, he noticed an attractive young woman sitting on the steps of the pediatric care building across Colorado Boulevard. He introduced himself, but Cecilia Martinez would have nothing to do with him. Almost 50 years later, Ray and Cecilia Dones, happily married for 47 years, returned to National Jewish to visit the institution that cured their ills and launched their romance.

They had trouble orienting themselves at first and couldn't agree what buildings had been where and where they had stayed. But as they walked around the campus and looked at old pictures, they started remembering the campus as it had been. Hanley housed a movie theater. Southside was the nurses' dormitory, and the Kunsberg School stood where the pediatric building had once been Cecilia's temporary home.

Ray Dones came to National Jewish with his brother from Houston in March 1957. His brother had a severe case of tuberculosis, while Ray had a mild case, in what was then called pleurisy. Cecilia came from Denver in May that year in a very similar situation, with a very ill sister and only a mild case of TB. They were both treated with the still-new antibiotics.

"We had to take 20 dime-sized pills a day. We hated the chalk taste. Yuck," said Cecilia. She swears that she took all her medications, but Ray admits to flushing a few pills down the toilet. He also admits to occasionally sneaking off campus to the nearby Alamo bar where the owner agreed to serve him as long as he swore on a black book (not necessarily the Bible) that he was 21.

Kunsberg didn't exist then, but children took a variety of vocational classes, from typing and bookkeeping to woodworking. Cecilia took classes to become a manicurist and helped out in the campus beauty shop. Unable to get close to her any other way, Ray went for manicures from Cecilia, although they didn't turn out quite as Ray had hoped.

"She wouldn't let me hold her hand," said Ray.

Eventually Ray began acting nicer, said Cecilia, and she accepted his attention. They soon began going to movies in Hanley together and eating meals together in the old cafeteria in the May building. By November Ray and Cecilia were both well enough to go home. Ray kept writing to Cecilia from Houston and came back to Denver a year later for Cecilia's high school graduation and stayed for a month. A year later the Martinez family visited the Dones family in Houston. Ray popped the question and gave Cecilia an engagement ring.

The couple were married in Denver on June 4, 1960, and have lived in the Denver area ever since. They have raised four children. They have both had careers; Ray in toy distribution and trucking, and Cecilia in banking. In September of this year, they came to one of the free spirometry screenings National Jewish hosts all around Denver. When Shelli James heard their story, she told them they had to come back for a visit.

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