

A Valentine's Day love story ... the treadmill romance



76-year-old Barbara Wood and 84-year-old Lloyd Watts met in the exercise room at Frisco Senior Center and are engaged to be married.

Keeping fit leads to love in Frisco

By Britney Porter

While young lovebirds hide behind the bleachers, others tackle the treadmill at the Frisco Senior Center. That's where 84-year-old Lloyd Watts and 76-year-old Barbara Wood met anyway, and now the two are engaged. One year ago, on Valentine's Day, Lloyd proposed.

He turned 84 last November.

"You sure you're not 85?" his fiancée, jokes. "I tease him about his age all the time. He's a much older man. He's a cradle-robber."

Barbara is from Virginia, or "Vuh'ginia" – her accent delights – and Lloyd is from Texas. They didn't grow up in the same home state, but certainly grew interested in each other when they shared their stories.

In 1941, at only 17 years old, Lloyd joined the Navy and became a Medical

Service Corps officer. For 38 months of duty, he was aboard the *Indianapolis*, the cruiser known for delivering the world's first atomic bomb during World War II.

Departing the Philippine Sea, the *Indianapolis* was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on July 30, 1945 and sunk. Of the 1,196 sailors and crew members aboard, 900 made it into the water, but only 300 survived because of a late rescue mission, dehydration, and



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shark attacks. It was the worst single at-sea loss of life in the history of the U.S. Navy.

Fortunately Lloyd wasn’t aboard when the cruiser sank. “I got off of it on July 6,” he says. “I missed it by two weeks. I was aboard that cruiser for 38 months but I got off just at the right time.”

Lloyd retired as a commissioned officer in 1965 and joined the corporate world. “I had a great career, 15 years of corporate life,” he says, “and now I am retired doing nothing but running after Barbara!”

“That’s a job in itself,” Barbara laughs.

Barbara was an executive secretary at Hughes Tool Company. She worked for *the* Howard Hughes, film producer and aviator famous for setting world air-speed records and for building the Hughes H-1 Racer and H-4 Hercules.

“It was the best job I ever had,” she says. “I kept books

for him. His mother and dad had maids, butlers, and chauffeurs, and he paid them even after they were too old to work, and I maintained that payroll. I handled all the personal stuff that went directly to him.”

Once the richest man in the world, Hughes became a recluse in the latter part of his life. “They told me the closest I’d get to him would be the telephone,” says Barbara.

Today, Barbara lives in Little Elm with her daughter, but that’s going to change when she and Lloyd marry. He proposed on February 14 last year at a jewelry store in Frisco. They weren’t there shopping for a diamond, but Lloyd subtly suggested she pick one out.

“Then I suggested she select a mounting ... and then I said, ‘Why don’t we make that an engagement ring?’”

“My proposal was right there in the jewelry store!” Barbara laughs.

Barbara was married for 50 years and Lloyd for 55 years before each lost their spouse. In fact, Barbara introduced

herself to Lloyd in the exercise room to tell him about a grief support group.

“I remember it very well,” she says. “I told him how he could get involved, and we talked a little bit more and then I said, ‘If you’re going to stand here and talk, I’m too tired. Let’s go into the library and talk.’ So we went into the library, and two hours later, we parted and said goodbye and that was it – for the day,” she smiles. “I had been through the grief myself, and thought, ‘Here’s somebody that needs someone, and I was just simply interested in a friendship.’”

Lloyd continues, “I had lost my daughter and my wife in 2005. After those traumatic events, you’re in a daze. You walk around in a fog wondering who you are, what you are, and where you’re going. So, I was lucky to have met Barbara because she had gone through it and pointed me in the right direction. When you’re going through a grief period, you really need someone who understands and can help you.”

Lloyd and Barbara’s first date was at a George Strait concert. Says Barbara, “I was trying to get the program manager here to get a group of us to go see George Strait at Pizza Hut Park, but he said that the seniors weren’t gonna pay that much.”

And before she knew it, Lloyd was at the front desk making a phone call. “So I guess you’re going with me, aren’t ya? I’ve got tickets ordered,” he said. “And I said, ‘I guess I have to, now.’”

Was she nervous on her first date? “I think maybe I’m a little old for that!” Barbara laughs. “We just went and enjoyed it so much, and so we started going to other functions together.”

Lloyd and Barbara enjoy dancing, going to the theater, and playing bridge. “The center has several things you can go to as a couple,” says Lloyd. “They have a very active program where you receive tickets to the Myerson, the Eisemann, and the Bass Performance Hall. The best trip, that cemented our relationship, was the trip we made to Grandbury.”

“We went on a boating excursion and had lunch, and then we went to an opera that night,” Barbara began. “Lloyd likes to tell this story, so I’ll let him.”

“Well, we had an hour to kill so we walked around the square in Grandbury, and I saw a little wine shop. We met two other people on the bus and so all four of us went in and they only ordered a glass, and I said, ‘Let’s get a bottle and have a couple of drinks – you know, there’s only four glasses in a bottle of wine, that’s all.’”

“But I’m not used to drinking that much,” Barbara interjects.

Lloyd smiles, “And I guess we hadn’t had much to eat, but anyway, we each had two glasses of wine. Well, my wine was just fine but hers ... hers had giggles in it. So on the bus coming back we had Miss Giggles, and *everything* was funny, and *everything* got a giggle.”

“Lloyd has a way of making me feel comfortable. We’ve spent almost every day together since we met.”

Lloyd and Barbara travel frequently together. They took a cruise to New England where they stayed four days in New York and watched *Jersey Boys*, and recently, they returned from Vegas. How’d they do in Vegas?

“Terrible,” says Barbara.

“I have now made a down payment on a slot machine and as soon as I can get a title, they’re gonna ship it to me,” Lloyd jokes. “I paid enough I should own one of them lousy things.”

Barbara laughs at all of Lloyd’s jokes. When *Plano Profile* asked her why she admires her fiancé, she says, “Do I have to tell you in front of him?”

And Lloyd teases back, “Should I take my hearing aid out?”

Barbara pauses. “Lloyd has a way of making me feel comfortable. We’ve spent almost every day together since we met. He’s a perfect gentleman and he always puts me first. He calls me every morning after he thinks I’ve woken up – he doesn’t dare call me before 10 a.m. – and he looks out for me.”



After they introduced themselves in the exercise room at Frisco Senior Center, Lloyd Watts and Barbara Wood walked to the library to share each other's stories. Little did they know, a new chapter was beginning in their lives.

When it’s Lloyd’s turn, he says, “Barbara has a unique talent of always being right!”

They laugh, and he continues, “She has a very even temperament that’s easy to be around. Before she met me, she was sort of the meeter-and-greeter here at the center. If a new person came in, in a fog, as many of us are after you’ve lost a loved one, she would make herself known and introduce them to people and activities at the center. So, she has the ability to make people feel comfortable. I like that. She has never met a stranger yet ... for very long, and that’s an admirable quality to have.”

So, when is the Big Day for Barbara and Lloyd? With her finger drawing in the air, Barbara says, “Question Mark! We haven’t set a date yet, but it will probably be on the spur of the moment.”

May *Plano Profile* suggest Valentine’s Day?

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