

Looking Into the Future

Dr. Pine helps retired educators live their busy lives.

When Tom Finley noticed in 2013 that his television had become blurry, he knew it was time to see an eye professional. Thinking it was a problem with his glasses, Tom went to his optometrist. Unfortunately, the optometrist told Tom that he had a serious vision problem that would require an ophthalmologist's care.

"Down deep, I knew something wasn't right," Tom said.

Rather than send Tom to a specialist hours away, the optometrist recommended Charleston-based Ophthalmologist Ryan Pine, MD. Tom was thrilled that he didn't have to drive far to get the care he needed.

"We are fortunate that we have someone so knowledgeable and so close. We don't have to go to Bloomington or Terre Haute; there's someone right in our backyard," Tom said.

Two weeks later, Tom saw Dr. Pine, who diagnosed him with macular degeneration. Tom's mother had macular degeneration, he explained, but back then no treatments were prescribed. Today, there is a treatment called AREDS2, meaning Age-Related Eye Disease Study 2. AREDS2 is a vitamin treatment usually containing Vitamin A, C, and zinc, along with other vitamins. Taking these nutritional supplements every day can help people lower their risk of getting late-stage macular degeneration. Tom was so impressed by Dr. Pine's compassion and explanation of his condition and treatment plan, that he insisted that his wife, Ruth Ann, see Dr. Pine as well. Two weeks after Tom's appointment, Ruth Ann visited Dr. Pine for her vision issues as well.

"I've always had eye problems," Ruth Ann said. "When I was 18 months old, I had crossed eyes and cute, little glasses."

Ruth Ann had her first eye procedure at five years old. Being no stranger to eye doctors, Ruth Ann didn't expect anything special about Dr. Pine. Her visit with him proved otherwise. Dr. Pine connected with the Finleys by asking in-depth questions about their health histories, lifestyles,

and even their family life. Dr. Pine told the Finleys that he would keep consistent tabs on their eye conditions, and he encouraged them to reach out immediately if anything happened.

"He makes you feel like you're the only patient he has," Tom said. "And that's a gift."

Tom and Ruth Ann have lived in East Central Illinois their entire lives. Born in Westfield, the two attended Westfield High School and Eastern Illinois University together. Ruth Ann studied business, English, and gerontology for her undergraduate and graduate degrees. Inspired by his second-grade teacher, Tom pursued elementary education for both his bachelor's and master's degrees. Tom paid for college by raising pigs, but knew teaching was his calling.

"I quickly discovered that I preferred chasing kids, instead of pigs," Tom joked.

Tom and Ruth Ann married two years after college. They both taught for 38 years in the Cumberland school district before Tom retired in 2011, and Ruth Ann retired in 2014. Tom won the WTHI-TV Golden Apple Award in 2001, an honor given to the top teachers in the Wabash Valley. He humbly claims that his students won that award for him.

The pair are avid collectors of Willow angel, farmhouse and Mustang memorabilia. Nearing 60 years of playing their instruments, Tom and Ruth Ann play the saxophone and clarinet in the Charleston Community Band. They also



enjoy traveling across the country and babysitting their 10 grandchildren.

"We like to stay active and young by being involved in our hobbies. And we love playing music and have to be able to read those little musical notes! That's why my eyes went bad – I read too much," Ruth Ann joked.

In 2015, Ruth Ann's vision darkened to the point that it required cataract surgery. She never questioned who would do the procedure. Dr. Pine performed the cataract surgery and then a subsequent lens-cleaning surgery (called a Yag laser capsulotomy) at the SBL Outpatient Surgery Center. Now, Ruth Ann reports that her vision is brighter and more colorful.

"I didn't realize that I wasn't seeing color as well before. Colors are much more brilliant now. I got a whole new picture of things," Ruth Ann exclaimed.

The Finleys are grateful to Dr. Pine for helping them continue to do the things they love. Dr. Pine now keeps an even closer watch on Ruth Ann, as she was recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, which can affect eyesight. Since taking the AREDS2 vitamins, Tom's condition has not worsened, even though macular degeneration can progress quickly if left untreated.

"When you see Dr. Pine, no other case is more important than yours at that moment," Tom said. "His objective is to make your life and sight as good as he can, for as long as he can."



For more information about macular degeneration or to make an appointment with Dr. Pine at Advanced Ophthalmology, call **217 348-0221**. His office is located at 1605 Reynolds Dr., Charleston.