



# A treasured elder...

## Rosemary Hall

*Enjoying life, still helping others*

Treasure  
Our  
Elders

**S**eated in her immaculate room at Central Park Health & Rehab Center in Brandon, Rosemary Hall is surrounded by photos of family and memories of nearly 80 years of a life lived in service to others. Here at Central Park, this Ohio railroad man's only daughter is fondly known as "Lady Bean Counter" and "Chief Money Bags" to the ladies of the facility's Red Hat Society, of which Hall is a very active member. "All of us take vows of silliness," Hall said of her sisterhood of the scarlet bonnet. "The main thing is to have fun, dress up, sing and make others feel better."

### Florida transplant

World War II was in full swing when Hall and her family moved to St. Petersburg because her frequent bronchial, sinus and allergy attacks were becoming worse. She had just graduated from high school in Kentucky and had plans to attend Georgetown University, but instead took a job as a cashier at Margaret Ann Stores, a Florida grocery chain later gobbled up by Winn-Dixie. Hall advanced to head cashier before meeting and marrying a co-worker shortly after the war ended. The couple raised two girls while Hall went to work for many years in the credit department at a nearby Western Auto Stores location. When the company downsized and consolidated its credit operations, Hall reluctantly agreed to a transfer to its new central credit department downtown. "It didn't work out, so I quit," she shrugged. Hall's marriage ended at just about the same time, so at almost age 40, she was both single and without a job. "I didn't feel sorry for myself



**At Home:**

*Hall's brightly lit room is decorated with stuffed animals, rare figurines and family mementos. "This is my home. This is where I want to be."*

one bit," Hall recalled stoically of that tough time. "You pick up and you go on with life."

Hall quickly found employment in the collections department at Tampa General Hospital, a job from which she later retired after almost 20 years' service. She also began dating, fell in love with and married John Hall, who was, ironically, a regional manager of the Western Auto Service Department. The couple traveled all over the world and remain together to this day.

### Transition

Hall suffered a serious stroke four years ago and spent three weeks in Tampa General's intensive care unit. She was later transferred to Central Park for post-stroke therapy and rehab. "I came here very confused, but John and my family visited every night." She was soon discharged back home, but within a year was back because 83-year-old John had suffered a heart attack, endured three back surgeries and was no longer able to take care of her at home. "I knew this is the place I wanted to be," Hall said. "I had many good friends here."

### Daily life

Hall quickly adjusted to daily life in the cheery, sunlit facility. She started a club to read the bible, books and newspapers to those with poor eyesight. She took part in voter registration drives, current events classes and facility quilting bees and bazaars to raise money for charity. Soon she was elected President of the Resident Council.

Hall spent much of her free time having one-on-one conversations with Central Park's new patients, helping them to adjust. "Some are confused and disoriented and just want to go home; some feel alone, so you try to calm them down," she said with a certainty that shows she has been there, done that. "It's not so hard with the women because we bond more easily. But with the men, you have to give them responsibilities and a job to do so they feel needed and vital." Hall betrays her discomfort at being asked so many questions about adjustment. "We're like any other community. You have some of everything here."

### "Best place"

Hall's children, five grandchildren and her new great-granddaughter all live in Florida, many nearby, and visit often. Hall is happiest during football season (Central Park is home to many Tampa Bay Buccaneers fans) and when her favorite liver and onions dinner is served in the elegant dining room. "When the state was in here recently, they said this is one of the best places in town, and I know that to be true. If I can't be home, here is the best place for me."

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