

Don & Jane Wilson - A Portrait In Family Values *By Tracy Bunch & Gloria Hill*

*Well, I recall a young man who was driftin' aimlessly
And a young waitress who seemed lonesome as could be
But in a little cafe right off of fourteenth avenue
With a whole lotta help from up above
We met and things sure turned around for me and you
And all because two people fell in love...*



Maybe you've heard the song, **Two People Fell In Love** by Brad Paisley. It would probably be a big surprise to Mr. Paisley to realize just how closely his song reflected the story of Don and Jane Wilson. Don Wilson never dreamed when he wandered into the City Café in Murfreesboro, TN in 1952 that he would meet and fall in love with the prettiest girl he had ever seen. He was a soldier in the United States Air Force, stationed in Smyrna, Tennessee and a very long way away from his home in Spencer, South Dakota. Jane had only her mother to count on. Her father had passed away when she was only one year old. Over fifty years of marriage, ten children, twenty-six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren later, they have certainly left their mark on this world. The beauty of their love story as well as their unshakable faith in God has been the guide their children were given to find their way in life. They always followed the beliefs taught by their parents and always remained focused on family values.



Wilson children in 1969, Row 1 L-R: Kathy, Gloria, Kevin, Karin; row 2: Tracy, Gary; back row: Patrick, Donna, Dennis (Mike). Keith was not born yet.

Raising a family is never easy, and the Wilson family was no exception. Jane, who is known as “Mother” to her children and grandchildren, stayed home to monitor the every movement of each of her children. Don, “Daddy” worked sometimes three jobs to provide for his quickly growing family. Yet, somehow, they managed to impress their values and beliefs on all of their children. Moral values such as honesty and integrity were expected, not optional. When a rule came into question, Daddy referred to his *own* child rearing handbook, not Dr. Spock who was so popular. The Bible is where he got most of his answers in life. It was always a matter sticking to priorities that kept our family so close. God, family, work, and all the rest came after. These days that seems so hard to follow, but it wasn't easy then either.

The decision for Jane to stay home and raise the kids was one that Don and Jane both agreed upon from the beginning. It was a sacrifice, but not one that was ever regretted. Jane was an amazing mother. Jane had begun caring for her nieces when she was only nine years old. Every child was bathed, powdered and put to bed in clean, line-dried sheets every night. Jane baked daily, raising her family on fresh breads, home cooked meals and incredible desserts. Her biscuits are still something to get excited about. Not only was Jane an amazing cook, she read daily to the kids. Everyone got a library card as soon as they were old enough. We all know the story of The Little Red Hen by heart. Mother taught us games, fair play and how to get along with others. Mother bandaged boo-boos, soothed broken hearts and taught us to keep moving when we wanted to give up. Chef, nurse,

psychologist, teacher and nanny, Mother always worked. Looking back, she was definitely under paid!

Don stayed in the Air Force until 1956. They moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota where Don found work (much to

Mother's dismay). They moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1962 where Don began working for Tip Top in Omaha. While not Tennessee, it was a *little* farther south. Finally, in 1973, they managed to move back to Tennessee where it had all started. Dorothy Bennett, Mother's oldest sister, referred Don to Bob Lowe to find a large enough house for what was then nine children. The Scales house on Rocky Glade Road became home to the Wilson family in May of 1973. Each of the kids have a special memory of that house, whether it was exploring the crawl spaces beneath the house for the younger kids, or meeting a future husband as Donna Rigsby did.

The move to Eagleville made perfect sense and fit very well with the life Don and Jane wanted for their children. Don hoped to start his own tool and die company soon and it was a great place to raise a family. Eagleville was just what they were looking for. A closely-knit community with a K-12 school was a much better place to teach their values than a busy city. Nine of the ten Wilson kids graduated from Eagleville High School. Only the oldest, Dennis graduated in Iowa. Like moral values, education was also not optional. Everyone was expected to graduate with the best education possible. College was an option for each child. Once the commitment to the community was made, the Wilsons quickly grew to love their new home. While not all of the kids live in Eagleville now, no one is further than forty minutes away. It would seem that it is *still* a great place to raise a family.

Don Wilson served as vice-mayor of Eagleville from 1982 until 1990. He served on the Eagleville City Council from 1981 until 1990. Don also served on the Planning Commission until 2005. Appointed by Nancy Allen, he continues to serve on the board for Horton Utilities for approximately twelve years. His continued service to our community is something his family is very proud of.



Granddaddy Don having a tea party with granddaughter Hannah Wilson

Tru-Line Tool and Manufacturing was started in what had once been Eagleville Florist and Gift. Don still worked full time as a tool and die maker while his company grew. We still aren't certain exactly when he slept, but he never seemed to run out of energy or ideas. The company is now located a little further up highway 41-A, and is very different from that first small shop. Don's idea for a family owned business has grown by following his original plan of providing quality products and dealing honestly with all of his clients.



Recent photo of Jane & Don

Each of the ten children found a career and began their own families. Dennis, the oldest moved to Eagleville permanently in 1980. He became a vice-president with UTAB in Nashville. He built a home in Christiana where he lived with his wife, Karen. Karen and Dennis (Mike, as non-family members call him), adopted Eric and Laura from Latvia in 1998. Dennis had an older son, Tim from a previous marriage. We lost Dennis in 2002 after a failed liver transplant. He was our practical joker and family comedian. He was our hero and best friend. We all miss him very much. While we will always grieve his passing, we still laugh at all the times he got the better of us by pulling just *one* more prank. While Dennis was in the hospital, we were touched by the concern of so many people in Eagleville who continued to pray for him and the family. We deeply appreciated all of the support and love we were shown.

And the other nine?... The twins, Karin and Kathy are both registered nurses working at Vanderbilt. Karin is the charge nurse in the pediatric recovery unit. She is married to Greg League, a tool and die maker and has three children. Kathy is the charge nurse for the emergency department. She is currently a first-responder for the College Grove Volunteer Fire Department. She is married to Dale Nippers and has two sons. Gloria married Ronnie Hill and helps to manage their farm. Gloria is currently on the Beautification committee and helping at her husband's company, Farm Sales and Service in Eagleville. She is also the local soap maker. She has two children and is the only grandma of the group. Tracy is a customer service specialist and is married to Scott Bunch. They have four children. Donna is the office manager for Tru-Line while her husband, Doug Rigsby is the quality control engineer/sales representative. They have two children.

Patrick is married to Sharon Wilson and living in Eagleville. They have four children. Patrick is the Vice President and floor supervisor at Tru-Line. Gary and his wife, Theresa have one daughter. Kevin and Terri Wilson have three children. Gary and Kevin are certified tool and die makers with Tru-Line. Keith, the youngest, married Shannon. They are currently expecting a second child. Keith is employed at Johnson Controls. Nine of the grandchildren are currently attending Eagleville School.

Now that the kids are all grown and gone, Mother has stayed busy collecting Barbies and Snow Village pieces. Her collection warrants it's own room and is fascinating to see. Christmas was always special in our house, now Mother can enjoy it year-round. Don remains busy with his tractors and his horse, Pride. In case you haven't been able to keep a running count, Don and Jane have 26 grandchildren, 16 boys and 10 girls. They also have two great-grandsons, Tyler and Caleb. Two of the grandsons, Tim Wilson, Dennis' oldest and Brad Robinson, Gloria's oldest both recently returned from active duty in Iraq. Paul Rigsby, Donna and Doug's oldest is currently the chief of police in Nolensville, TN. Don and Jane are very proud of the service and bravery of their grandsons.

Don and Jane Wilson haven't changed much after all these years. They may move a little slower, and the kids are all on their own now, but the one thing that never changed was the amazing love and respect they have always shown each other. They managed to set an example that continues on with a third generation. Don's service to his community and family and Jane's unwavering guidance are perfect examples of what made them such wonderful parents and valuable members of the Eagleville community. Maybe it was a whole lotta help from up above. And all this because two people fell in love....



Left to Right: Karin League, Gary Wilson, Gloria Hill, Shannon Wilson, Keith Wilson, Jane Wilson, Don Wilson, Kathy Nippers, Kevin Wilson.
Back Row left to right Donna Rigsby, Patrick Wilson, and Tracy Bunch