

Retarded couple finds difficulty in married life

Clay and Joyce adapt to independence

GAINESVILLE (AP) — At first, it was simple. Clay loved Joyce. And Joyce loved Clay. So Clay and Joyce eloped.

But almost a year after the Carringtons' impromptu marriage, the mentally retarded couple — both clients at the Joe Walter Workshop in Gainesville — say things haven't gone as smoothly as they imagined.

Oh, they still giggle, hold hands, smooch on the couch. But they have come to realize that life isn't as easy when you're on your own.

"He helps me take the laundry downstairs, and he helps with the cooking and the housework," Joyce says, smiling at her husband. "Sometimes he just sits there and watches TV."

Clay writes the checks out, pays the rent, gets medicine from the drugstore and checks the mail. And no, he does not leave his wife to the drudgery of the kitchen while he watches Vanna White. Well, OK, but only sometimes.

Clay spent most of his life under the warm wing of his parents, special schools, and group homes. Joyce attended special classes at regular schools and rarely spent a night away from her family's home in Dallas.

Neither was familiar with independence, but both have had a crash course in growing up since their 1986 wedding.

Kevin Callaghan, the Carringtons' caseworker at Joe Walter, says marriages between the mentally retarded are becoming more common as society accepts their handicaps.

"I'd say it's happening more because people are beginning to look at the mentally retarded as people," Callaghan says. "People are beginning to look at them as people with abilities rather than disabilities."

The Joe Walter Workshop recognizes that the mentally retarded have skills and can do jobs catered to their capabilities, says Glenda Wat-

son, personal and social work adjustment supervisor.

Through working and participating in the workshop's assisted apartment living program, both Callaghan and Watson say the couple's self-esteem has skyrocketed.

"Joyce was of the belief that she couldn't learn, so she didn't want to try," Callaghan says. "It wasn't six months later that she could tell you things like, I can do this, I can do that."

Although the Carringtons' caseworker said he had reservations about the couple's spur-of-the-moment union, he admits they have adapted remarkably well to independence.

"After two weeks it was apparent that they could make it if they wanted to," he says.

Clay and Joyce met the County Southeast Work Training Center in Dallas after Joyce, 21, heard through the grapevine that Clay, 24, was not only handsome, but wealthy.

"I said, 'I want this guy,'" she says, laughing.

Like many young couples, the two courted for awhile, taking in movies like "Police Academy III" and "Pee Wee Herman's Big Adventure." It wasn't long before they fell in love, went to a justice of the peace in Dallas and tied the knot.

The next day, they had their first lover's spat.

Clay's Dallas group home did not allow married couples, and Joyce didn't want to live with her family. When Clay suggested moving to Gainesville and working at Joe Walter, the city girl in Joyce rebelled.

"She wanted to move back with her parents," Clay recalls. "She said I was dumb and stupid."

In the end, Clay's stubborn insistence on the move won out, and the young couple is slowly adjusting to their new life, although they frequently return to visit Dallas.

They live in a small, but comfort-

able government-subsidized apartment in Gainesville with two parakeets, Stephanie and Tom. According to Callaghan, the couple's rent is \$118 per month plus utilities, and they are able to pay their bills through workshop wages and Supplemental Security Income.

"The two of them have been good with money from the start," he says. "Every month they have managed to save something."

Although Callaghan and Watson help the Carringtons with their finances, Clay and Joyce make most of the spending decisions themselves.

Callaghan takes the couple to the grocery store and Watson offers advice on planning menus, although they say Clay and Joyce now make most of the culinary decisions.

"When we need other things, we go to Wal-Mart or K mart," Clay says, pointing to his feet, "and this is our transportation."

Although the couple's relationship has been successful, both say it hasn't been without crisis. When the subject of children came up, Joyce insisted that she wanted to have a baby. Clay was completely against a pregnancy.

"I said it would be too much of a problem," Clay says. "We would always have to get a babysitter. Or Joyce would have to stay home and we would have only one income."

Clay says he discussed the problem with Callaghan, and the couple finally agreed they weren't ready for children.

But it wasn't the last of the strong-willed couple's problems. Joyce still isn't sure she wants to stay in Gainesville, but Callaghan says she is starting to feel comfortable in her new home.

"It's pretty hard to get married and move to a completely foreign town," he says. "This is a really big chance for both of them. They really have courage."

Roadside attractions on I-35 include swimming pig show

GEORGETOWN (AP) — On a 100-mile stretch of Interstate 35 in Central Texas, tourists can watch a pig swim and venture below the highway to watch a re-creation of Creation.

It's America at play on a summer day. A straight stretch of highway, tourists yearning for something to tour, lots of billboards and a curious combination of businesses ever willing to quench the nation's thirst for roadside entertainment.

First, there's Georgetown's Inner Space Cavern, discovered in 1963 by state highway department drillers checking whether the ground would support an overpass over I-35.

Now, the cool cavern winds 40 feet under the interstate. Underground, a tour guide points out where the northbound lane runs overhead and mentions other noteworthy features.

"This is one of our imagination rooms, and if you'll use your imagination you can see King Tut," said tour guide Kim Gray. "He's sitting on top of a Texas-sized duck foot. Over in the back is a mermaid riding on a dolphin. You might notice that our mermaid is missing her tail. Jaws has it over there."

One of the highlights is the Creation re-creation, a sound-and-light show sufficiently religious to have drawn objections from atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair. The production, which begins in the kind of darkness that only a cavern can provide, happens at the Flowing Stone of Time in the cavern's Outer Cathedral.

In addition to inspiration, the cavern offers education, such as helping end the continuing confusion over stalactites and stalagmites.

Directly across I-35 from the cavern is the Candle Factory, complete with a first-hand look at candle-dipping.

"I was never involved much with candles, except for buying and burning them," said Ellen Nuckolls, who, with husband Paul, bought the candle business in June from its original owners.

For the record, it takes 17 dips to make most candles.

The cavern tour continues in San Marcos at Wonder World, which features, according to a brochure, "eons on top of eons of time revealed through layers of sedimentation." The tour "tells the dramatic story of the birth of Wonder Cave, from its geological origins to its use as a secret gambling parlor at the turn of the century."

Like many of the I-35 attractions, Wonder World has a souvenir shop. This one claims to have "10,001 unique collectibles."

There is a certain air of familiarity in many such shops. The giant Texas fly-swatter is ever-popular, as are whips and the usual collection of T-shirts and postcards.

Since 1954, Ralph the Swimming Pig has been among the top attractions at Aquarena Springs in San Marcos, just west of I-35. Due to logistical difficulties, there have been and are now many Ralphs. But only one was named Ralph.

"He has to retire when he reaches 100 pounds because he can't swim anymore," said Erin Harwell, a public relations official for Aquarena Springs.

The San Marcos attraction is among the most lasting and popular of the I-35 sights. It opened in 1946 with its first glass-bottom boats and drew 450,000 visitors last year.

"The original Ralph was Ralph and they got him through one of our swimmers who lived on a farm and had taken our attractions supervisor home for Christmas," Harwell said. "The pig liked to swim. The first Ralph was a natural. They were looking for a new attraction. They had had sea lions and they had problems with them because this is fresh water and sea lions don't really do too well in it."

A typical Ralph can ham it up in the show for about six months before becoming too much of a porker. At any one time there are about six Ralphs — all with different names — to swim the 13 shows a day.

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