

Alzheimer's caregiver relates his story to AMC Auxiliary

New auxiliary officers elected during business meeting

by **Brenda Fike**
Assistant Editor

Ted Distler, Jefferson City, a volunteer with the Mid-Missouri Alzheimer's Association was the guest speaker Monday at the Audrain Medical Center Auxiliary's fall general meeting.

Distler's wife, Norma, was diagnosed with the early stages of Alzheimer's in the early 1990s. Distler related his story as a caregiver for his wife and the struggles he encountered and the decision of taking his wife to a nursing home. He had told his wife he would take care of her as long as possible in their home. He did so until the burden got to be too much for him and his health was in jeopardy. In 2005 the doctor told him he had two choices, put his wife in a nursing home, or plan his own funeral. That is when he made the decision to take his wife to the nursing home. "It was the hardest decision of my life," said an emotional Distler.

After his wife entered the nursing home, Distler had heart bypass surgery and then went through a period of depression. After fighting with his feelings, he decided he needed to do something and that is when he volun-

teered for the Mid-Missouri Chapter of Alzheimer's. "I wanted to do something worthwhile," he said.

As for his wife, Distler visits her at noon almost every day. "Sometimes it is frustrating," he said. To help him get past this, he thinks of the happier times. "When I leave, I think of the great times we shared," he added.

Distler, who claims he is not a speaker, held the group's attention as he continued his story.

Distler said he received so much help from the Alzheimer's group, he decided he would like to give back and now he is heavily involved in the group's fund-raising projects, and he travels to organizations to tell his story in hopes it will help others.

"When Norma and I took our wedding vows in 1959, we vowed to take each other until death," he said, and he plans to live up to that vow.

"Norma is still the most beautiful person I have ever seen," he said in closing.

Distler also has an article about his wife's struggles, as well as his as a care giver in the book "Alzheimer's Anthology: Unconditional Love."

Prior to the program, Dave Neuendorf, president/CEO of Audrain Medical Center, addressed the group and gave an update on the



Ledger photos by Brenda Fike

Above, AMC Auxiliary members listen to Ted Distler (right) as he relates his story as a caregiver for his wife who has Alzheimer's.

hospital. He told the members the hospital continues to grow and they are a big part of that growth. "We are tied at the hip," he stated referring to the growth of the hospital and the auxiliary.

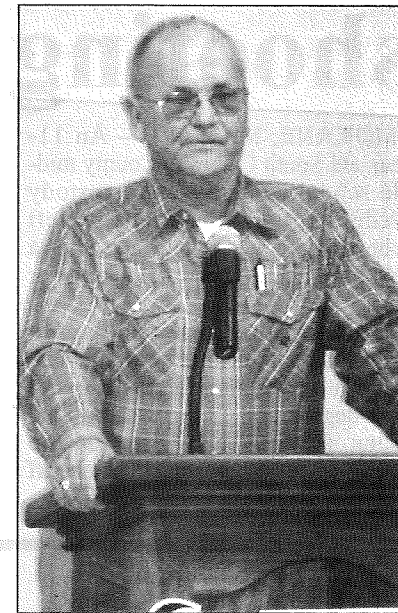
He told of some of the accomplishments AMC has made in the last few years, and the challenges the hospital will face in the upcoming years.

He told auxiliary members they would be part of those challenges and he knows they will be up to the challenge. "You all deserve a pat on the back," he added.

Bonnie Silvey, president of the auxiliary, presided over the business meeting which included reports from various committees including an update from Ruth Ann Menneke, on the Phillips Lifeline units. There are 209 lifelines in operation and she is anticipating this to grow in the future.

Isabelle Winn reported volunteers have put in 18,400 hours as of Oct. 1; and there are 120 adult volunteers. Lola Duffen reported there are 187 auxiliary members and it is time to pay their dues.

Members also voted on two bylaw



changes.

The meeting continued with Lorna Biggers giving a report from the sewing group. She stated the group has made \$1,581 so far this year and they hope to top last year. She also announced the bake sale will be Nov. 12 in the hospital cafeteria.

The last item on the agenda was the presentation of the slate of officers by Doris Kelley, past president and the following officers were elected: Bonnie Silvey, president; Lori Tsikalas and Lola Duffen, co-vice presidents; Murray Purcell, secretary; and Wanda and Don Smith, treasurers.