

WE ARE ST. HELENA HOSPITAL

Ester & Les DeGuzman: Exotic Plants & Parakeets

Ester and Leslie DeGuzman are steadfast types. They have been married for 41 years and both have worked in the Clinical Lab at St. Helena Hospital since 1975. Before that they worked in the lab at Loma Linda University Medical Center for 15 years. Actually, Les's education was completely sponsored by Loma Linda University!

The DeGuzmans were recruited to come to SHH by former pathologist, Dr. Elaine Shankel, to help update the lab and organize new equipment and procedures. That was when the cardiac surgery program was getting under way and the lab was being modernized. Ester says, "They were still using test tubes back then!"

Les, supervisor for the chemistry department, was born in the Philippines and received his bachelor's degree in Medical Technology at Loma Linda University. Ester, who works in hematology, was also born in the Philippines and completed her BSMT at Philippine Union College. They have three sons, Lester, Lloyd and Leslie, Jr. (called Alvin to avoid family confusion.) Alvin is the only one married, and is the father of twin boys.

Les has some interesting hobbies. He raises Australian parakeets, and at one time he had an aviary with more than 200 birds. He says he is "now down to two pairs." He also grows exotic orchids and loves to garden. He used to play basketball and badminton, but his sports interest has now turned to fishing, which he loves to do when he can get away.

Ester is a seamstress, and when their sons were young she even tailored their suits. She has made clothes for their relatives, and though the boys are now grown up and gone, she still sews. She also likes to join Les in the garden, and collects plants.

The couple has traveled extensively, and they hope to do more traveling when they retire "someday." They have taken cruises to Alaska, the Caribbean and Mexico. They have also visited many countries, including Poland, Lichtenstein, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France and Italy. Les says he liked Germany best because of the castles. Ester loved France for its museums (the Louvre) and Italy, especially Venice and its canals.

When asked about retirement, the DeGuzmans exclaim, "We are already past retirement age!.. But we love our jobs, the SHH administrative team, our co-workers and the Hospital... We still enjoy coming to work every day, the friendliness and the Christian atmosphere... However, someday when we do retire, we plan to do more traveling." Ester says, "There's a lot to see, right here in the United States."