

# Help to cope with ALS

Kay McFarland  
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In the (all of 2005, local banker Ron Edwards underwent rotator cuff surgery. Following surgery, he continued to Jose strength in both arms. In May 2006 he was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a fatal disease of the nerve cells that control the skeletal muscles of the body. There is no known cause of the disease, and at this time there is no cure.

Ron and Linda Edwards are not Pryor natives, but they aren't strangers. They moved to Pryor in 1911 and Ron worked (or The American Bank (now Rogers County Bank). The Edwards' have left Pryor twice to manage banks in Ardmore and San Antonio. They ate currently at home in Pryor.

Ron continued to work at the Arvest Bank (or as long as possible. The most frustrating part of the disease for Ron was the loss of hand and arm control, which effected his ability to eat.

Linda began her search for a way to help Ron feed himself. She discovered there are a lot of products on the market, however, few of them work effectively. Occupational therapists did not have any answers. An Internet search also returned a lot of results for devices that didn't work. Linda, a do-it-yourselfer, went to the workshop and began designing a device to allow Ron to eat in public.

She would return to the house every few hours for suggestions. By the end of the day, she had a working

prototype. "Within 24 hours Ron had a complete attitude change," said Linda.

The Edwards' tried a lot of names (or the new invention but the original term, The Arm Thing, was what stuck. The device is centered on a ball and socket attached to an aluminum base, which allows a 360-degree range of motion. There is a plastic armrest sized to fit the user for support of the forearm. The forearm support rests on an aluminum channel that slides to adjust the vertical height. The arm is held in the channel by two nylon straps with hook-and-loop attachments.

"There was a lot of trial and error," said Linda. "We learned that the ball and sockets required two different types of plastic in order to work smoothly". Henson Manufacturing in Adair does the manufacturing for Brown, while Linda hand-molds a third type of plastic for the armrests. She offers five sizes (XS, S, M, L, XL). Linda determined the sizes by measuring everyone's arm at her church and taking an average. The standard armpiece extends from the elbow to the wrist. The arm and hand will become weaker. For added mobility, Linda offers an extended armpiece that reaches the palm of the hand.

ALS has reshaped the lives of the Edwards' and thousands of other families. The Arm Thing allows Edwards and other ALS patients to remain in control of their lives and function in the main stream of society longer.

"The device has changed our lives," said Ron and Linda.

The Edwards' founded their home business in



Kay McFarland / *The Daily Times*  
Ron and Linda Edwards developed a device to help ALS patients eat by themselves.

August 2006, under the name MTE Devices. They sold the first Arm Thing in March 2001 as a result of an article in the MDA/ALS Newsmagazine. The Edwards' applied (or a patent, which can take up to five years (or acceptance. They decided to start production without the patent. "Ron can't use the device any longer, however, in five years there are a lot of people that could use it," said

Linda

The Edwards' had planned to go into the mission field when they retired. Ron and Linda Edwards are on a mission they never could have planned for, that of helping others cope with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis.

If you need more information on ALS or the Arm Thing you can contact the Edwards' at 825-3363 or lindante@sbcglobal.net.