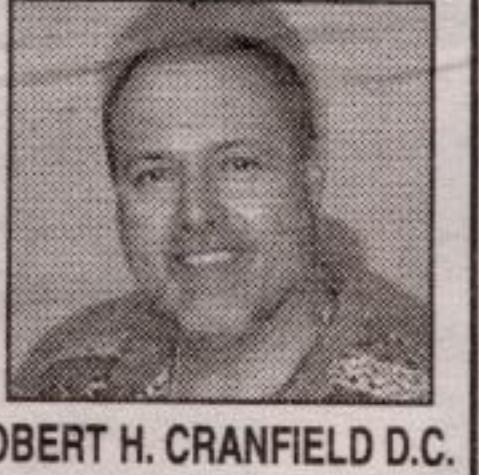


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Parkinson's is a 'frustrating' and incurable disease

BY LISA TALLYN
Staff Writer

Looking back, the first sign Norm Bigg had that there was anything wrong with him was about three years ago.

He was walking while on vacation in Florida and his wife Kay noticed that his right arm wasn't moving.

He didn't think much about it then or even when it continued to occur. But when nearly a year-and-a-half later he noticed a

tremor in his right hand he decided to make an appointment with his doctor.

His family doctor sent him to a neurologist who very quickly diagnosed him with Parkinson's disease.

April is Parkinson's Month and *The Independent & Free Press* is featuring two area residents who have the disease and whose wives are launching a Parkinson's support group.

"If they came in and said I had cancer I would have been terrified, but not with this," said Bigg, 69, who maintains a positive attitude about the incurable disease that is a slow, progressive neurodegenerative illness.

The retired pilot has most of the symptoms that come with Parkinson's including tremor, stiffness, slowness of movement, difficulty with balance, fatigue, soft speech, and stooped posture.

Bigg, who lives in Georgetown, takes 21 pills plus vitamins throughout the day to help him function better.

He admits however, the disease can be very frustrating. "It's made me

have a life change," said Bigg who has had to give up the wood-working he has long enjoyed. He now spends a lot of time on the

Internet and doing work with an association for retired pilots.

Another local resident Ken Faulkner, 70, also suffers from Parkinson's.

His wife Marion said her husband was diagnosed about 14 years ago after noticing stiffness on the left side of his body and the fact he was having trouble cutting meat.

"We were kind of devastated; he was so young," said Marion.

She said "life went on normally for five years" until due to worsening symptoms her husband had to go on long-term disability.

"My husband is actually better now than he was three years ago," said Faulkner who credits the improvement to

new medication he is taking. She said he takes about 15 pills a day for the Parkinson's and they do a good job of masking the symptoms.

"He's now fairly self-sufficient," she said.

Both Kay Bigg and Marion Faulkner remain positive about their husbands' illnesses but have been frustrated because there is so little support and information available for people who have the disease or their caregivers.

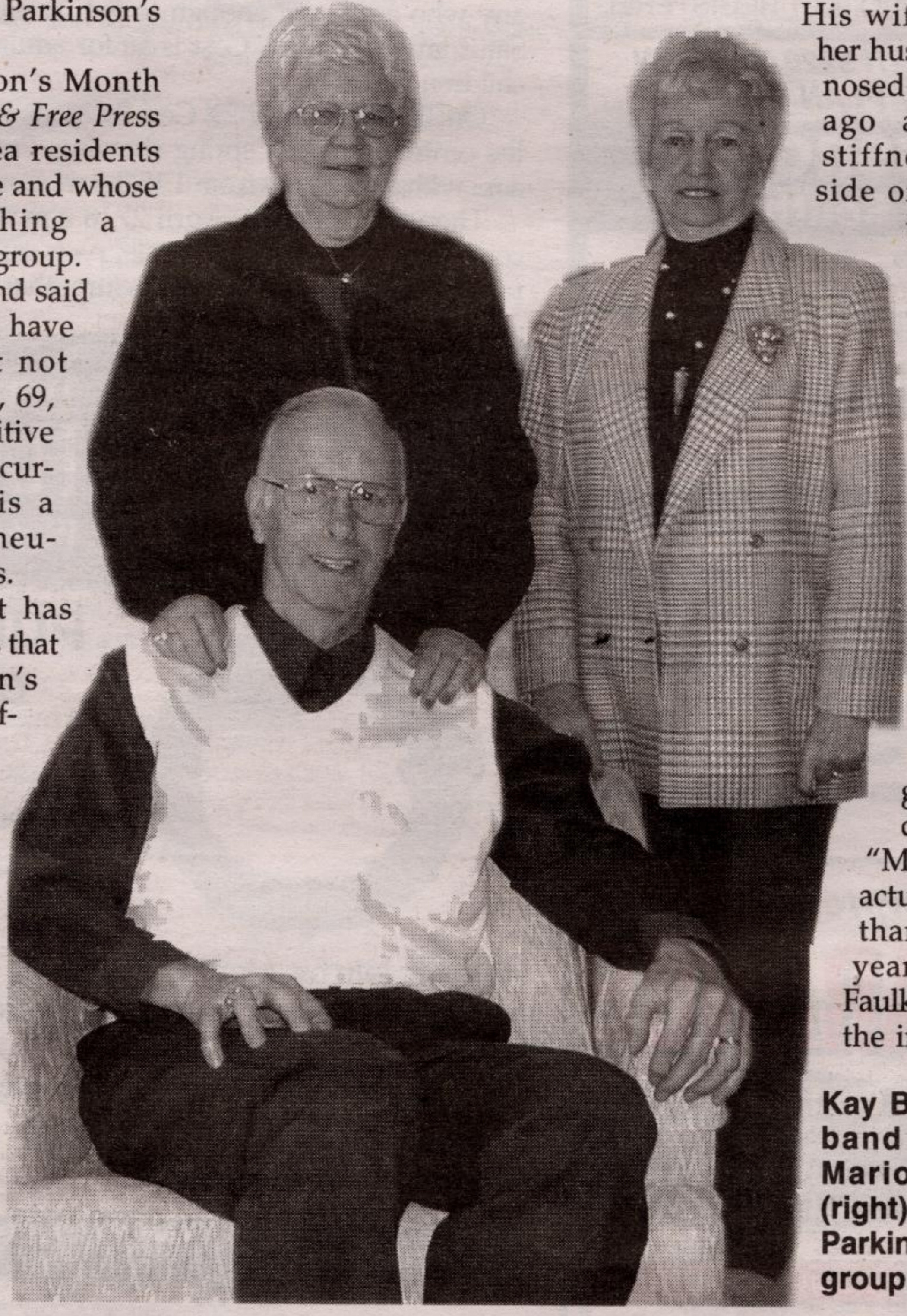
So the two of them are launching the North Halton Support Group for Parkinson's that will have its first meeting 7:30 p.m. next Thursday (April 25), at Georgetown Seniors Centre.

"The support is for the people who have it, but also for the caregivers," said Bigg.

She said the group is for residents of north Halton and upcoming meetings will feature a pharmacist, physical therapist, speech therapist, nutritionist and experts from other areas who can provide information for those with the disease and their caregivers.

Everyone is welcome to attend and can call either her 905-702-0013 or Faulkner at 905-877-5858 in advance, but it is not required.

Bigg added both she and Faulkner will be selling tulips for \$5 a bunch at Georgetown Market Place on Saturday, April 27. Money raised will go to the Parkinson Society of Canada, which is working on finding the cause and a cure for the disease.



Kay Bigg, with husband Norm and Marion Faulkner (right) plan to start a Parkinson's support group.

Parkinson's support group is forming

If you have been diagnosed with Parkinson's or are caring for someone who has been diagnosed, there is a support group being formed in Georgetown.

Meetings will be held once a month to exchange information about this disease and to support both the patient and the caregivers.

The first meeting will be held on Thursday, April 25, 7:30 p.m. at the Georgetown Seniors Centre, 318 Guelph St.

If you are interested, call 905-702-0013 for more information.

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