

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## **\$300,000 gift from Shirley and Norman Alweis supports vision research, care at UT Southwestern**

DALLAS – May 22, 2007 – Although Norman Alweis never allowed his severely limited vision to stand in the way of a full and successful life, he and his wife, Shirley, felt compelled to do whatever they could to fight blindness. Their desire to help others now has prompted a \$300,000 bequest from Mrs. Alweis to support ophthalmology research and clinical care at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

The bequest, made to Southwestern Medical Foundation, will establish the Shirley G. and Norman Alweis Endowment Fund for Vision. Among the studies supported by the fund will be research into age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of blindness in the U.S. for those over the age of 60.

Mrs. Alweis died in 2006 at the age of 93. Mr. Alweis, a longtime Dallas retailer, died in 1992 at age 81.

“My uncle was a very active person, in spite of his poor eyesight, but he was very committed to the cause of preventing blindness and aiding those with vision impairments,” said Don Alweis, a nephew of the couple from Billings, Mont. “He and my aunt were both very grateful for the excellent care they received at UT Southwestern. This gift was a way for them to extend their thanks, while supporting a cause they devoted a good deal of their lives to.”

Nearly 2 million Americans have lost vision due to advanced AMD, and another 7 million are in the early stages of the disease and are at risk for losing vision. AMD damages the macula, the small area near the center of the retina that blurs central vision. Wet AMD, also known as neovascular AMD, is caused by abnormal leaking blood vessel growth under the macula, leading to loss of central vision. Dry AMD, which is the more common and less severe form, occurs when light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly degenerate.

“This is a tremendously important gift on a number of levels,” said Dr. James McCulley, chairman of ophthalmology. “With no known cure, AMD is among ophthalmology’s most compelling areas of research. We are optimistic about the strides that can be made with additional funding, and this gift is particularly special because it was heartfelt.”

Shirley and Norman Alweis were married in 1936 in San Diego. In 1950 the couple moved to

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Dallas and purchased Gus Roos, a men's clothing store at Elm and Akard streets. They were longtime members of Temple Emanu-El and were active in a wide variety of civic organizations, including the Dallas Museum of Art, Friends of the Dallas Public Library and the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind. After her husband's death, Mrs. Alweis remained dedicated to Reading & Radio Resource and the Dallas Chapter of the American Foundation for the Blind.

“Shirley and Norman Alweis had the generosity of spirit to recognize the importance of advancing ophthalmology research for the sake of future generations while they themselves were dealing with the effects of impaired vision,” said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. “On behalf of the many patients who will benefit from their support, we want to express our sincere gratitude for this important and meaningful gift.”

W. Plack Carr, president of Southwestern Medical Foundation, said, “Mr. and Mrs. Alweis were active in the Dallas business and philanthropic communities for many years, and we are honored by this wonderful bequest. Patients with macular degeneration and other vision problems may have a future of better sight, thanks to the generosity of this couple and others like them. This gift should be a source of great gratification for the Alweis family.”

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