



While still a young married couple, they moved from El Paso to Oklahoma City and then to Wichita Falls in Texas, where they created fencing classes at the local YMCA. From the late-1950s through the 1960s, Bill and Marreta established themselves as elite fencers, and in 1968, both Bill and Marreta were in the U.S. top 25 at the XIX Olympic Trials. Fencing is one of only four sports found in every one of the Olympic Games, and although neither Lowry has officially competed, they have attended and assisted at several Olympics over the years. "It is Broadway, with all the razzle dazzle," says Marreta.

"Great excitement, tension, anticipation of all these different countries

While her parents were debating the days events, she would raise her head from the back seat and sleepily inquire if they were going to talk about French all night. "They are French", she says.

tries with their tales
temperament on display
The couple
all landed in Dallas a
helped keep classes
organized while con-
tinuing advanced
instruction, offici-
ating at competi-
tions and taking

Although marriage is the technical term, Marietta offers "Windsor-Towry sports and recreation" as a more apt description of their 56 years together. They were serious athletes while their daughter, Pamela Towry Church, was growing up. As a child, she would spend Saturdays under a scoring table with blan- kets, toys and books. On the way

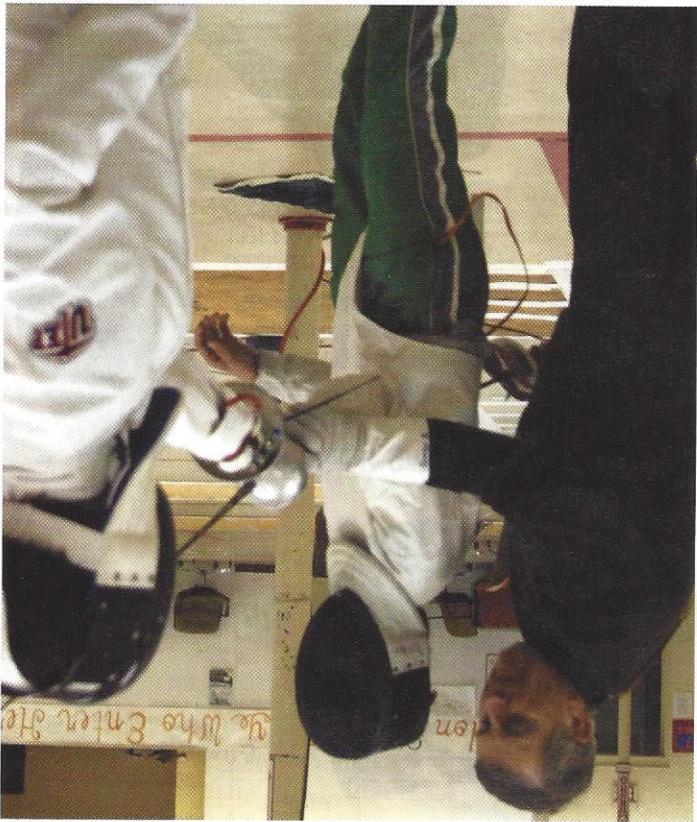
This ancient sport of precision and timing is kept alive in El Paso thanks to the guidance and commitment of Bill and Marieette Towry, a couple whose dual passion continues to benefit each other and students and refusess to allow them to become spectators in their golden years.

Marieetta was first introduced to the sport by her father, an accomplished fence rider and instructor. Initially, she was not interested, but then the competitive excitement of fencing caught hold and she was swept up in it. Marieetta claims that she was a "daddy's girl" in a male-dominated sport, and initially, women fenced in skirts.

In 1948, Bill, fresh from the Army and new to college life, began to take fencing lessons from Marieetta's father. It was an exciting time for the pair of "sword-crossed lovers." The two young fencers fell in love with the sport and with each other and were married in October of 1951.

The allure of Fenicio dates back to 1190 BC. It has entertained kings and queens and to this day sells out an Italian stadium. It is considered a highly competitive sport of physical chess that has changed over hundreds of years from deadly combat to a split-second scoring game. The tip of a Fenicio's sword is said to be the second fastest object in a sport, only to be bested by the marksman's bullet. Sometimes, the touch of the blade electronically registers within 1/25th of a second, with Fenicos doing intricate footwork while attacking and parrying.

FEATURE FENCING



SO who would win in a fencing match between the two? "We don't do that," Marcella says firmly. "But if we did," she adds with a laugh, "I would out-think him even though he may try brute force." "Don't believe her," he replies. Their playful banter belies their age, bringing a youthful spark to the eyes of two so young at heart. **EP**

After almost 60 years together, Bill and Marcella Towry are definite-
ly not strangers to each other. There is affection in the way Bill calmly
lays a hand on Marcella's arm when she turns to him to discuss a stu-
dent. "Did you see the way he lost his temper?" she says of a youth she
had reprimanded during class. "Yes," says Bill, "yet it shows me that
he wants to win." She nods in affirmation, knowing that the student's
outburst was unacceptable but, with time, controllable. "We work well
together," he says. "We do not have to compromise because it is our
common interest. The two of us together make a good coach."

Frenchie allowed Noah to travel around the United States and to different countries—a perk that is par for the course in competitive fencing. “Fencing broadens your world,” Maricetta says. “You meet students that when you walk into a club, you never meet a stranger. So many people, and you know people in other countries. I tell my friends, ‘Fencing broadens your world.’”

"I am willing to train and work hard enough," he says. "I can achieve anything I set my mind to."

Former student Noah Alpern still drops in on the Towrys to catch up and bring flowers. Noah, now a successful businessman in Austin training for his first marathon, qualified for the 2000 U.S. Olympic trials under the tutelage of the Towrys. "Bill is a heck of a guy and has always had a lot of energy. They have been there for me from the start. They are great people who are by no means easy on you when

The Baker family decided Frenching looked like fun after watching their children fence, and they decided to join. "It offers an opportunity for us to interact with them," says Father, Mark Baker. When his son was younger, he had seizures that affected his lower body control, and he believes Frenching has been the best physical therapy for him. "He has improved spectacularly," he says.

At the brightly lit El Paso French Center, fences slide across the floor, arms extended, in warm-up drills. Youth center Casey Blough has just finished a lesson with Bill and has his elbow slung on Bill's shoulder in a gesture of camaraderie and ease. "It is a rush to work with Bill," he says with obvious respect for his 80-year-old coach. "He is like talking with blade work, picking up off of what's different." Casey says he enjoys fencing as an individual sport that is analytical; it helps him forget about everything once on the mat and has assisted him in controlling his anger.

In 1986, they started up their sport in Central El Paso with six students and a desire to introduce fencing to new enthusiasts. Twenty years later, they have evolved into the El Paso Fencing Center, which emphasizes competitive fencing (Texas Excalibur) and UTEP's recreational sports team (Texes Steel). "I have immense pride for them," says their coach, Pamela. "They have homegrown fencing at a grassroots level. They are not New York chic, where big fencing clubs are, yet they turn out great," Pamela.

