

Doing for Others, a Family Motto

by Evelyn Evans



With a twinkle in her eye, long-time Hutto resident Margaret Crislip says, "To do for others was our family motto." As soon as she could drive, Margaret began transporting her neighbors to the grocery store and church. Even now she visits friends and strangers in the nursing home, attends club and church events, and welcomes newcomers. "When people call, I go," Margaret said.

Although Margaret makes frequent references to her ancestors, she has her own dream for the future. Standing in the front yard of her home on 1660 South Margaret points down the road toward the Hutto cemetery and then to the back of her property. "I want to build an Independent Living Unit for seniors on this twenty acres. Later we'll add assisted living." Although those plans are in the beginning stage, Margaret has high expectations for a facility that will allow long-time residents, like herself, to spend their latter years in Hutto.

From her yard, Margaret gazes across the road at the new Ray Elementary School and recalls her Martin and McCutcheon ancestors who helped settle Hutto. "The Martins came from Scotland," Margaret says, "and bought 800 acres at fifty cents per acre on Brushy Creek." Her McCutcheon relatives are buried in Shiloh-McCutcheon cemetery on Brushy Creek where a Presbyterian Church once stood. Margaret continues to be involved in the maintenance of that property.

Margaret, one sister and a brother were born nearby and played in Cotton Creek with the Overton girls. "The water was clear. There was no trash then," Margaret says. They rode a horse to school until Hutto got a bus. In high school from 1938 to 1940 Margaret, dressed in a knee-length skirt, a hat with a plum, and bobby sox, strutted her stuff as Hutto's drum major. "We lived a protected life," Margaret said. "I saw only one movie in my childhood 'Gold Mine in the Sky' a Dale Evans-Roy Rogers favorite."

After high school she moved to Austin but her parents still insisted she come home every weekend. "Austin was a small town then," Margaret said. "People tattled if you did anything wrong. In the dark ages everything was a sin," Margaret said.

Margaret's transformation from "Country girl" to traveler began when she and

younger sister Beth took a job with the defense department in Washington D.C. during World War II. The two women traveled by train to the nation's capitol where they lived in one bedroom across from Arlington National Cemetery. From their window they could see the funerals of fallen soldiers and watch the families come and go.

While in Washington, Margaret took correspondence courses from Virginia University and modeled suits, coats and evening wear for department stores. She proudly displayed a picture showing herself as a tall, slender young woman with polished nails and high heels clad in a sophisticated dark suit with a long jacket and skirt that ended at a mid-calf length. The hats, Margaret said, "were copies from a Neiman-Marcus catalogs."

Weekend trips while they lived in Washington took them to New York and Baltimore to shop. After the war, Beth and Margaret transferred back to downtown Dallas for work at military headquarters. In 1946 she and 400 other women were sent to San Antonio where they worked at 4th Army headquarters. It was here that she met her husband James Crislip while having a coke with friends.

"He was bashful," Margaret said. "It took a long time for him to get up enough nerve to hold my hand."

After James came back from Korea the family was stationed in Tokyo, Japan for three years giving her an opportunity to travel Japan, Singapore and other places. She and a friend drove from Austin to San Francisco where they shipped the car to Tokyo. Margaret with her small son took a thirty-six-hour flight, which fueled in Hawaii where Red Cross volunteers bathed her son and gave them a place to lay down. In Austin, her second son, Rick, was born.

On her husband's next tour, the family shipped out of New York to Germany, taking the train to France to settle in Paris where James trained reservists and ROTC recruits. It was there in 1960 that Margaret grew ill. She came home to fight her first bout with cancer. Several years later she again went through chemo-radiation treatments for cancer and became a volunteer for the American Cancer Society..

When James was discharged in 1982, the family built the house, which Margaret still occupies on 1660 South of Hutto. Her mother Ann Martin had a previous house at this location. After some time sister Beth Sharpe and her husband came from Dallas to live in a house adjacent to Margaret's.

During her middle years Margaret was known for her church, school and civic work. She said, "We were church mice—all ways there with casserole in hand for ever dinner. We entertained preachers and missionaries." She is on the board for the Hutto cemetery and was a charter member of the Hutto Chamber of Commerce. (Oct. 7, 1986).

