

Jessie Street is short in length, long on memories

Neighbors share total 130 years on 2-block road



Pat Oakes

Barton Creek

When you stop and think about it — and add up the years — Jessie Street neighbors Bob and Ada Reed and Jean Cassell have shared 130 years of neighborliness.

Bob and Ada, who live at 801 Jessie, bought their lot in the Okie Heights subdivision in 1938 from Realtor Carl Wendlandt for a grand total of \$350.

At that time only a block or so of the unpaved street existed. The rest of the street was pasture with a few native trees and lots of cows. In 1950 Jean and her mother Mary Cassell bought their lot in the Bluffview addition 12 years later at 608 Jessie for \$1,500.

Bob laughs and says, "We were told by a number of Realtors that the more desirable property was on the north side of the river."

Jean says, "We could see the downtown skyline from our lot. There just weren't many trees then. Mother and I planted two Spanish oaks. Everyone planted trees and they are so beautiful now."

Ada says, "We planted two pecan trees in the back yard that first year. They are nearly 50 years old."

Two-block-long Jessie Street is just two blocks off of South Lamar at Treadwell. The now tree-shaded street was developed between the late 1930s and 1960. The land was originally a part of the Isaac Decker League. (The Isaac Decker house, also known as the Inney house and the Cater Joseph house, is at 1610 Virginia.)

"My father was riding on horseback down Congress Avenue in 1881 when he heard a lot of commotion by the capitol," Asa said. "He rode back there in a hurry and watched it burn."

She also remembers that when she was a little girl she lived in the two-story house which was at the corner of what became Treadwell and South Lamar (then the Fredricksburg Highway).

The house had been the home of the Dawson family. (Molly Dawson Elementary School is named after a member of the family.)

Ada's grandfather, John Simeon Pannell, was the first dairyman in Travis County and at that time the Pannell family had a dairy on the old Dawson property.

She treasures a book which was given to her in 1912 by a neighbor, Mrs. L.C. Chilton, who lived and wrote in a small house which was where Lamar Plaza is now.

Both Jean and the Reeds remember when Lamar Plaza was built. At that time the property was a mesquite covered field which was at street level. Fill was added and the

site was raised at the time the shopping center was built.

Prior to that time the nearest grocery store was at Wende's Store on the Fredricksburg Highway where McDonald's is now, or at the Smith Grocery on Kinney Avenue.

It wasn't easy to get to South Austin in 1938. The only bridge was the Congress Avenue bridge. Lamar Boulevard and the Lamar bridge had not been created. Travelers had to cross the Congress Avenue bridge, turn onto Barton Springs Road and then onto the Fredricksburg Highway.

By the time Jean and her mother moved into their home, the Lamar bridge had been built.

Jean remembers watching the First Street bridge being built. They all remember the railroad bridges which were built at Lamar. The first arrangement had the trains going under the road, but switching the trains became a real problem.

A new bridge was built with the train track on top and the cars going underneath.

"When we wanted to go out to eat we went to the Night Hawk on Congress Avenue or to Youngblood's Chicken where the Rainbow Inn is now," Bob says.

"We would go to the Harris Wayside Inn on Barton Springs, too," Jean says. Another option was to go to Jerry Jacobs Pit Barbecue, located for many years where Pee Wee's is now, on Barton Springs Road.

"Jerry knew everyone who came in and called everyone by name," Bob says.

Both the Reeds and Jean Cassell have nothing but praise for the wonderful neighbors they have had through the years. Ada fondly remembers when the neighbors established a birthday club, the Okie Heights Club, so that everyone got in on the celebrations.

The organization became more formal in 1945 when it was given a name and in 1950 when bylaws were drawn up. It had grown out of neighborhood coffee klatches in the mornings when mothers and their children got together for a visit.

During the rationing of the war years, everyone pitched in to be sure that there was enough sugar to make a cake. The group, changed by time, of course, still meets. It is down from a peak of about 24 members to eight, but they still enjoy getting together and remembering the joys and sorrows they have shared.

Bob Reed came here in 1934 from Dallas with the yeast, baker's

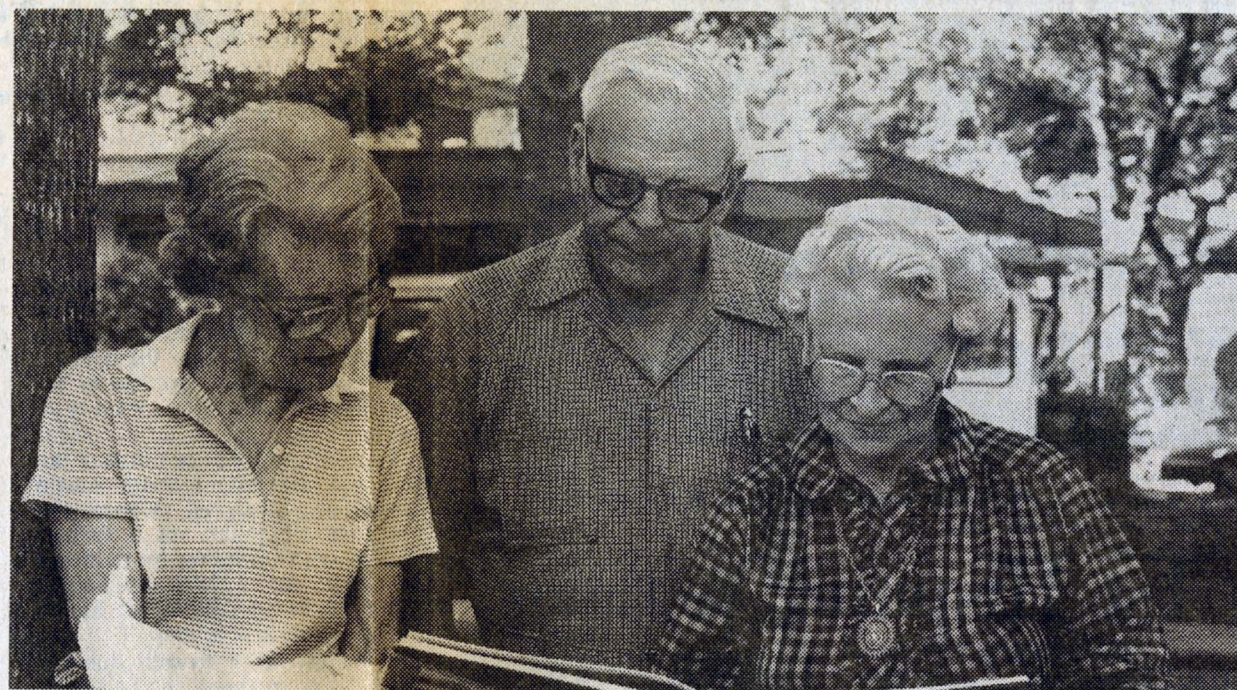


Photo by Pat Oakes

Standing beside the tall Spanish oak she and her mother planted in 1950, Jean Cassell, left, and her Jessie Street neighbors Robert and Ada Reed look over some old photographs of Austin's history.

malt and corn division of Anheuser-Busch and met Ada shortly after in the Buttercrust Bakery which was located where Goodwill is now.

They married in 1937 and have lived on Jessie Street for 48 years. Bob worked for 14 years with Anheuser-Busch, 14 years with Austex Foods, and 14 years in the parking and traffic division at the University of Texas.

Ada taught for several years at the Texas State School for the Deaf. Ada remembers, "We used to hear so many more trains — there just aren't as many now."

Bob recalls, "We used to hear all of the loud music and the races which came up from Auditorium Shores. We don't now since they moved out to Decker Lake."

Jean is filled with very mixed feelings now. After being in Austin since 1943 and working as a UT librarian from then until retiring in 1977, she has decided to take a big step and move back to her native Nebraska.

She will be living in a retirement village associated with her alma mater, Doane College, in Crete, Neb. Her departure brings about a real void in a number of volunteer groups in Austin.

Her "retirement" has been a busy one as she has given her time and skills to the Capital Area Food Bank, the Lifetime Learning program, R.S.V.P., the Austin State Hospital patient library, Wild Basin, the Catholic archives in the Chancery, and has been active in the Congregational Church of Austin, both as a member of the choir and various boards.

Both the Reeds and the Jean see changes coming to their quiet street. Jean realizes, of course, that her moving is a part of that change.

New families will come and settle down. The three wish for the new folks the kind of friendliness and stability that they have enjoyed for so many years.

Zilker Zamboree

The 36th Zilker Zamboree will be Saturday from noon until 4:30 p.m. at Zilker Elementary School.

The Zamboree is an officially-sanctioned Sesquicentennial event and will have all kinds of entertainment: square dancing, a mariachi band, a fiddle group, a country and western group, and the singer/guitarist John Dunn.

There will also be a dunking booth, a barn dance and all kinds of good food.

A major highlight of the day will be the sealing of a time capsule at 4 p.m. The time capsule will be re-opened at the Zilker Zamboree in 50 years — during Texas' 200th

birthday.

Thanks to the modern computer, everyone can write a three-line message to go into the time capsule. The message will cost a small fee.

Lula Connor Weaver, a 105-year-old neighborhood resident, will be sending her message via Zella Fray, the organizer of the Zilker PTA fund-raiser.

Tickets can be purchased at the school. They are five for \$1 through Friday and four for \$1 on Saturday).

Association plans meeting

The Barton Hills/Horseshoe Bend Neighborhood Association will meet at 7:30 p.m. May 1 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church at the corner of Barton Hills Drive and Barton Skyway.

Because the meeting will be just

two days prior to the May 3 primary, it will be a candidate forum. Plan now to attend and learn about the candidates and their views.

Brownie Troop 434

The April meeting of Zilker Brownie Troop 434 was a great success with more than 50 people attending the potluck supper and skit night at the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints on Bluebonnet.

The 15 Brownies entertained their families by putting on two skits, one about turning a "regular" girl into a Brownie and another about the American flag.

Meredith McGee was recognized as the Brownie who sold the most Girl Scout cookies.

Several weeks ago the girls went to Rocky Road Ranch in Wimberley. The third-graders spent the night there, but the second-graders only go to spend the day. Troop leader is Tom Welsh who is assisted by Jane Cravey.

Vote

Don't forget to vote in Saturday's run-off election for Austin Community College and Austin Independent School District trustees.

Precinct 325 will vote at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Precinct 332 will vote at Zilker Elementary School, and Precinct 342 will vote at Barton Hills Elementary School.

Recycling

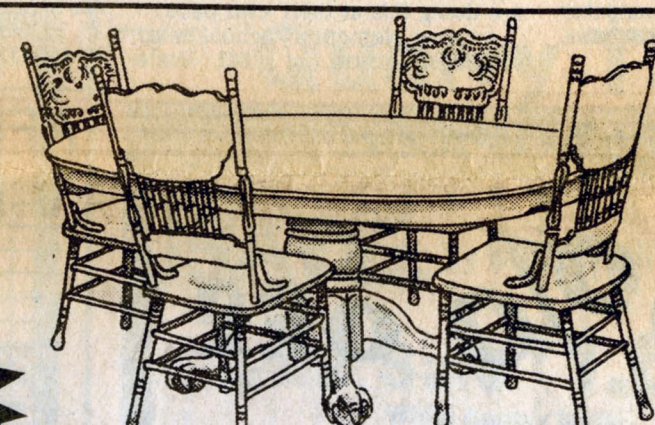
The Zilker neighborhood had a participation of 38 percent of its households and 13.2 tons of recyclable materials were collected.

The Barton Hills/Horseshoe Bend neighborhood had a participation rate of 37 percent rate of participation with 12.7 tons collected.

Don't forget to put your newspaper, bottles and cans out on Tuesdays to be collected by the city recycling crew.

To help Pat keep up with activities in the Barton Creek area, call her at 442-0521.

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