

Notable Neighbor: Boots Blaquiere by Kelly Waldo-Paschalis



“Be thankful and keep plugging.” Good advice from Boots Blaquiere, one of the first residents here in Whiffletree. After 37 years living in our neighborhood, she’s got stories...good stories. Throughout the afternoon I spent with Boots, she smiled, laughed, told a few tales and managed to completely charm me.

Delores Killion was born in Dallas, Texas on March 12, 1933. As a child, when people would ask her name, she would reply “Bootsie!” By middle school it had really caught on, but was shortened to Boots. During her years in school, Boots played cello in the Highland Park High School orchestra and continued playing with the orchestra at Southern Methodist University and even marched with the glockenspiel in band. Her musical talents were put to good use in the pit orchestra for several local productions in Chicago and at her church. Many afternoons she could be found playing piano for Life

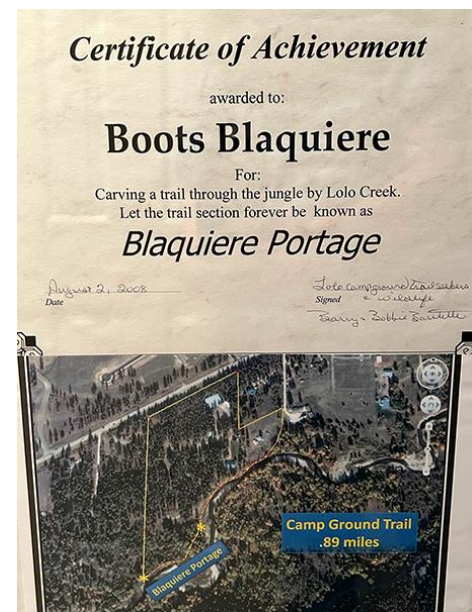
Care, a senior living center here in Plano.

In her lifetime, the 90-year young neighbor has lived in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Chicago, Connecticut and Manhattan. She began working as a tailor doing custom work like suits, wedding and prom dresses. She kept at it for many, many years until a bout with Hepatitis in 1990 forced her to retire from tailoring. But that didn’t keep Boots down. She has kept active all through the years participating in church activities, walking, riding bikes with her daughter and square dancing.



One of the achievements Boots is most proud of is the 15 years she volunteered with the National Park Service in Death Valley National Park. For 3 months during the winter of each of those years, she worked to repair roads and trails, replaced signage and mile markers, installed delineators and transported vehicles to town for service. (Funny how no one wanted to pass her on the road while she was driving a Park Ranger vehicle.)

Boots has totally enjoyed her decades living here in Whiffletree, but it wasn’t the best of times that prompted the move here. She and her husband were living a few miles from here on Frankfort. In July of 1984, they lost a daughter. In January of 1985 both her parents passed and in July of 1985, a second daughter died. It was a lot of loss in a short amount of time. They needed a change and ended up here in Whiffletree in March of 1986; the first occupied home on the West side of Marchman. There were only 4 residents on the East side at the time.



Boots and her husband Ron were instrumental in starting the Whiffletree Home Owners Association. Ron served as president for several years and Boots hand-typed the yearly directories for ten years. She also took care of membership and welcoming. She actually went door to door to introduce herself and meet all the new residents as they moved in. She claims it wasn't hard to figure out who they were. With so few houses in the beginning, whenever she saw a moving truck pull up, she headed out to greet them.



This mother, grandmother, great grandmother and great-great grandmother lights up when she talks about her family. She has been married three times, divorced once and widowed twice. She has biological children and a huge blended family that means the world to her. She said she never uses the word "step" when she talks about her children. They are all her kids. Even when she lost two husbands, she never lost the children. She has 16 children, 15 grandchildren, 23 great grandkids and 6 great-great grandchildren! Most of them came to her 90th Birthday party this past March, traveling from all over the country to attend.



Her home has been the center of many social activities and parties over the years. In the early development of Whiffletree, she hosted a number of Christmas parties in her home and misses how many individual blocks would host events during National Night Out. She laments that people aren't as close or connected as they used to be. One major pet peeve is that not everyone participates in the yearly directory. She feels it's a safety issue more than anything else. She was able to avert a car theft by using the directory to contact the resident and let them know someone was trying to break into their vehicle.

Boots Blaquiere is very small in stature, tiny almost, but her smile and heart are huge. Her family, friends and neighbors would all agree that she has lived her life with purpose and determination. So as we enter this holiday season, maybe we could all take a page from her book to "Be thankful and keep plugging."

By the way, Boots made all the stuffed animals that appear below.

