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**A  
PERSONAL  
HISTORY  
OF  
NORTHWOOD  
HILLS**

**1959 - 1999**

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*By*  
***Stewart and Marion Mitchell***

## **PREFACE**

*I was going to title this "Introduction," but Marion and Stewart Mitchell really don't need one. They were among the original members of NHHA and Stewart served as President in 1992. Marion belongs to so many organizations in the area -- Northwood Woman's Club, Northwood Republican Women, Northwood Hills Book Club -- that she probably knows more neighbors than any of us. Since Stewart was an early settler in Northwood Hills and made a living as a writer, asking him to recount the first forty years of the neighborhood was an easy choice. He was quick to accept and the result, as they say, is history. If you have been here through the years, I hope the ensuing pages mirror your memories. If you are new to our neighborhood, we bid you welcome, and invite you to join us in shaping the future history of our beloved Northwood Hills.*

*-- Fred Williams, president  
Northwood Hills Homeowners Association*

## **In 1953**

we left Dallas for New York with two college degrees and one baby to take a dream job on Madison Avenue. For the next seven years, Marion was a Westchester County mom married to an adman commuter. During that time we had two more kids and banked some highly salable experience. An opportunity to return to Dallas brought me back for an interview in 1959. My Braniff flight had just taken off on the return from Love Field to La Guardia when I got my first look at Northwood Hills. I didn't know its name, but I knew I liked what I saw.

From a thousand feet up, three things struck me. The development was new, it was near two golf courses, and it had curving streets and rolling hills. Those first impressions brought me back weeks later when I returned to Dallas with my little family to begin a new chapter in our lives. Having grown up and gone to school in the area, I knew my way around north Dallas. I was able to find the location I'd seen from the air with no problem.

More than a year before, in the summer of 1958, the "Northwood Hills Addition" and four other new developments had been introduced to a house-hungry public in the annual "Parade of Homes" promotion. The first phase of Northwood Hills consisted of 268 lots bounded on the north by (yet to be built) Spring Valley Road, on the west by Hillcrest, on the south by Alpha and Peyton Drive, and on the east by Carillon Drive. Three model homes on Ashridge and Birchwood were all there was to show at the initial opening. By the time Marion and I got here, nearly a hundred more homes had been built and scores of families had moved in.

## **In 1959, Dallas's northern frontier**

Coit and Hillcrest were two-lane country roads. Spring Valley west of Coit was just a blueprint. And there were nothing but cotton fields all the way north to Belt Line Road. On both sides of Meandering Way, scores of new houses were framing up. On Paldao Drive, three homes were occupied and four more were nearing completion. We fell in love with 7371 -- six weeks before it was due to be finished. Our love affair with the house and neighborhood has kept us here for 40 years and seven grandchildren.



What brought it all about was a bold idea by three men, George Mixon, George Mixon, Jr., and Bill Troth. They envisioned a real estate development of greater magnitude than ever before attempted in the Dallas area -- more than 800 acres of luxury homes ranging in price from \$40,000 to \$200,000.

### **One heck of a gamble in that day and time**

The land that was to become phase one of Northwood Hills had been in the George Drewery family for three generations prior to its purchase by developers Mixon & Troth in 1955. The initial tract of 450 acres was huge by real estate standards back then. It took a lot of vision and guts to gamble on a luxury home addition of such scale and risk.

A major factor driving the developers was the sheer beauty of the site. Bordered on the west by a branch of White Rock Creek, and containing a small, tree-lined tributary, graced with gently sloping hills and native oaks, the land was richly contoured and elevated above the surrounding plains. From our front porch on Paldao Drive, for example, you could see all the way to downtown Dallas.

*The night-time view was like diamonds on velvet -- until the house went up across the street.*

### **The layout: "Park Cities distinctive"**

Capitalizing on their site's natural beauty, the developers chose to enhance it by laying out the streets in gentle curves and graceful bends. It would have cost far less to use the familiar grid layout -- and produced additional lots to sell -- but Mixon & Troth stuck to their vision, described in a 1957 newspaper story as *"the first post-war attempt to duplicate a 'Park Cities' environment for distinctive home sites."* There was nothing else like it in the burgeoning North Dallas real estate market.

Financial conditions at the time kept making decisions more difficult. Interest rates were rising, and financing was complicated by a regulation prohibiting commercial banks from lending money on unimproved land. One of the "Big Three" banks that dominated Dallas back then ultimately backed the venture. But it had to be done through a third party, a trust and mortgage company, which added to the cost.

To help pay for wide streets and paved alleys, Mixon & Troth sold thirty acres of their land at the northwest corner of Spring Valley and Coit Road. to Trammell Crow for a shopping center. The Crow interests later decided to limit the center to five acres and build luxury apartments on the rest.



## The birth of the Holly Tree debacle

The apartments were named Chanteclair, and they were indeed luxurious. Many Northwood Hills residents-to-be lived there while their homes were building. Over the years that followed, Chanteclair changed hands two or more times before falling into bankruptcy. The surviving apartments, renamed Holly Tree, went steadily downhill from there.

The deterioration of Holly Tree under the management of an organization with little regard for tenants or neighbors actually led to the formation of Northwood Hills Homeowners Association. By 1990, Holly Tree had become a breeding ground of trouble that threatened all the surrounding neighborhoods. NHHA was formed that year, and its persistent, well organized protests to the City of Dallas finally culminated in the tear-down of the apartments and clearing of the Holly Tree property in 1997. It was a long struggle, but it unified the neighborhood and fostered a strong spirit of community.

## Back to the future...

When Marion and I arrived with our three kids in November 1959, life out here on the prairie was more rural than urban. On the way to work each

THE DALLAS HERALD  
SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1958



# Parade of Homes

Dallas County

August 15th thru 24th

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE HOMES OF TOMORROW... TODAY

Eighty homes, featuring every modern quality of functionalism and beauty, are affording the people of Greater Dallas an opportunity to inspect the residence of tomorrow today. For the next 8 days these homes will continue to be open to the public in five locations easily accessible to everyone in the Dallas area.

Northwood Hills



Singing Hills

**DALLAS TIMES HERALD**  
DALLAS, TEXAS, SATURDAY EVENING, AUGUST 16, 1958

## Thousands Visit Homes Parade

### J-Day Showing Inaugurated

'Mrs. America' Launches 1958 Event at Five Sites

Bringing Dallas home enthusiasts in five widely separated areas in house and furnishings.

Parade of Homes in progress

PART B  
HOME IMPROVEMENT  
BUILDING REAL ESTATE  
CLASSIFIED



Thousands filed through sites to view that comprise the 1958 parade for which we Clevelanders are proud.

### Distinctive Homes In Northwood Hills

A showcase of distinctive homes, homes are occupied or nearing completion. Four of the Parade is depicted by the Northwood Hills Parade of Homes.

Located along the 12000 block of Anacapa just off Hillcrest and Alpha, the 20 parade homes (as well as several others now open to the public) concrete a previous attempt to duplicate the "Park Cities" environment for distinctive home sites.

The first section of Northwood Hills, developed by George T. Troth, was opened last year. It consists of 116 home sites ranging from a half acre to one acre. A second section will contain 100 similar home sites.

Overlooking nearby Northwood Country Club, homes in the addition are in the \$40,000 to \$55,000 price range (some as high as \$75,000).

Some 33 school and a proposed elementary school are in the plan. The parade of homes is scheduled to continue through the same five sites as the 1957 Parade of Homes.

### Brick, Tile Makers Set Houston Meet

The annual convention of the Brick Products Institute is scheduled for Nov. 10-12 at the Hotel Houston, Houston, Texas.



**PARADE OF HOMES**





# Dallas County Parade of Homes

August 15th thru 24th

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE HOMES OF TOMORROW... TODAY

Northwood Hills



Singing Hills

Fifty homes, featuring every modern quality of functionalism and beauty, are affording the people of Greater Dallas an opportunity to inspect the residence of tomorrow today. For the next 8 days these homes will continue to be open to the public in five locations easily accessible to everyone in the Dallas area.

PART B  
HOME IMPROVEMENT  
BUILDING REAL ESTATE  
CLASSIFIED

## DALLAS TIMES HERALD

AS. TEXAS, SATURDAY EVENING, AUGUST 16, 1958

### Thousands Visit Homes Parade 10-Day Showing Inaugurated

Thousands filed through sites to view that comprise the 1958 Parade of Homes. The homes were opened for the night in Cleveland, Tex. Greer says.

### 'Mrs. America' Launches 1958 Event at Five Sites

Bring Dallas home enthusiasts to five widely separated sites in house and furnishings.



### Distinctive Homes In Northwood Hills

A showcase of distinctive homes, homes are occupied or nearing completion. Four of the Parade homes are already sold. The winding street, with 65-foot set back from property lines complementing the distinctive setbacks, have concrete curbs and gutters. All alleys are concrete paved. Land planning was by Leonard Ayres and engineering of streets and utilities by Gaddy and Looze.

Plans for all homes, restricted to masonry construction with a minimum of 2,500 square feet in the house proper, are subject to approval of a planning committee in order to assure conformity with the distinctive neighborhood development.

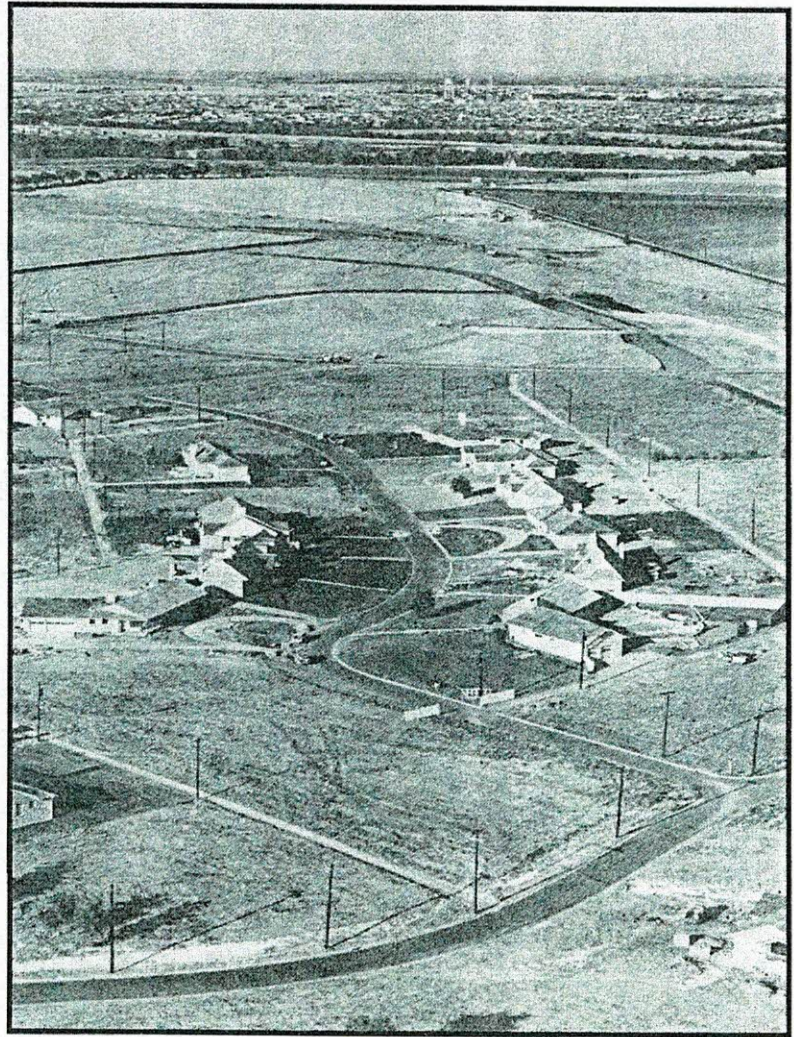
In the planning stage is a proposed 30-acre shopping center at the northeast corner of East Road and Peyton Drive, adjacent to the Country Club, homes in the development. Nearby sites have also been designated for an elementary school and a proposed high school.

Distinctive tria crest and Alpha to Northwood Hills

### Brick, Tile Makers Set Houston Meet

The annual convention of the National Clay Products Institute will be held at the Houston Hotel, Houston, Tex. from Nov. 10-12 at the White

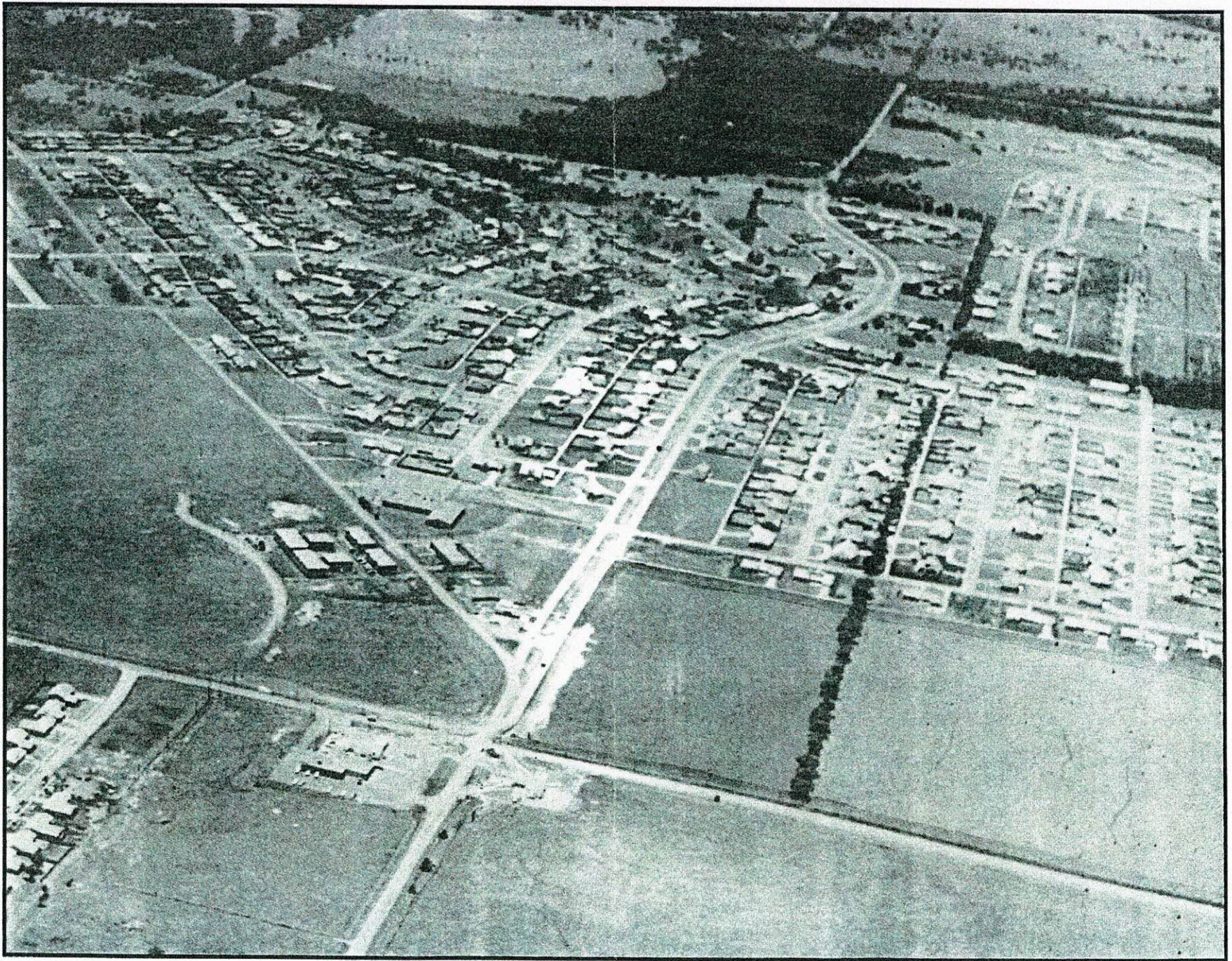
### PARADE OF HOMES



Above: Ten model homes on Ashridge introduced the public to Northwood Hills in August, 1958. That's Teakwood in the foreground, Meandering Way and Birchwood just beyond the houses.

Left: Two newspapers served Dallas in 1958, and both of them gave the Parade of Homes a lot of ink.





*Ten years after the ribbon-cutting, Northwood Hills had spread to the north and west. Believe it or not, the intersection in the foreground is Coit Rd. and Spring Valley. This aerial photo was taken in late 1968 or early 1969.*



morning I would drive past fields of grazing cattle all the way south to Northwest Highway. The heartbeat of Dallas was slow and easy as the sixties began, but the pace was about to quicken.

A little chip-like device made of silicon and metal no bigger than your fingertip would soon change the landscape of North Dallas -- and the world.

This statement appeared in a real estate brochure in early 1960, "*A major factor in the growth of Northwood Hills has been the emergence of a young and expanding electronics industry in the nearby Richardson area.*"

How prophetic.

### Decades of change and the millennium

As the sixties began, Dallas found itself lagging behind Houston in population by 600,000 to 900,000. San Antonio drew more tourists than the other two cities combined. Houston was big oil. San Antonio was the gateway to Mexico. Dallas was a city seeking an identity.

Still, Dallas proudly proclaimed itself the financial center of the Southwest, loaded with asset-rich insurance companies and banks. Southland Life had the taller building, but the larger insurance

company was Southwestern Life, ranked among the nation's top ten. The "big three" Dallas banks were Republic National, First National Bank in Dallas, and Mercantile National, each one marking the Dallas skyline with its own distinctive skyscraper. There was also a funky little snack food maker, The Frito Company, that would soon attract various merger partners, become Frito-Lay, and by the early seventies grow up to be the biggest snack marketer in the world. Success stories in every category of business and industry were germinating in Dallas in the early nineteen-sixties.

### Where were you on November 22?

Then came November, 1963. I remember, as you do, exactly where I was when I heard the news of the assassination -- having lunch in the dining room of the Tropicana Motel on Haskell, across from my company's office building on Central Expressway. That evening our home telephone rang off the wall as friends back in New York called to ask "Just what the hell is going on down there?"

Somehow the image of Dallas as a hotbed of right wing radicals pervaded the northeast, and we were all being tarred with that brush. As events



unfolded in the aftermath of the assassination, it felt pretty lonely out here on the prairie

Our street, Paldao Drive, was the last stretch of pavement to the north until you reached Belt Line Road. Meandering Way dead-ended at the entrance to our paved alley. Spring Valley didn't exist between Coit and Hillcrest. Behind our house there was nothing but a plowed-under cotton field, bois d'arc trees, and the chimney of an old farmhouse by a muddy creek bed. *(Somewhere in that mud were a half-dozen or more lost sneakers from the feet of the Mitchell kids).*

### **Sad sixties become the Soaring Seventies**

As the Oswald, Ruby, and Warren Commission stories played out, Big D in the mid-sixties was a pretty gloomy place to be. But Dallas came back, buoyed by the irrepressible optimism of its business leaders -- names like Thornton, Stemmons, Jonsson, and the brothers Cullum -- until by decade's end the stage was set for one of the most dynamic growth periods in the city's history.

In 1971, Dallas and Fort Worth joined forces for two epochal events: they combined their Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas to become a unified

ten-county mega-market with a growing population of nearly two million, introduced to the world as "The Southwest Metroplex"; and they combined their visions of the future to build DFW International Airport, "An Airport as Big as Manhattan."

**BOOM-BOOM!**

### **The neighborhood comes of age**

As the seventies flew past in a blur of growth and development, the missing link in Spring Valley Road was built connecting it from Coit Road to west of Hillcrest (where for years it dead-ended at White Rock Creek for lack of a bridge). The Northwood Hills Addition spread north all the way to Belt Line. Across Hillcrest, Northwood Hills Estates was sprouting new 3,000 to 3,500 square-foot homes on half-acre lots. In order to fund these new sections, developers Mixon & Troth sold thirty acres to the City of Dallas for Fretz Park, named for an early Dallas architect responsible for several landmark city government buildings. By the arrival of the fateful eighties, Northwood Hills had achieved distinction as a mature and highly desirable neighborhood.

When 1980 rolled in, Dallas was known the world over as the playground of J.R. Ewing and the



home of Southfork Ranch. Downtown office growth had reached such a peak that the "national bird of Dallas" was the building crane. There was no stopping the expansion fever and speculation.

### **An era comes to an end**

Five years later came the fall. And it was heartbreaking. All of Dallas's proud banks failed. Shareholders caught up in the bank holding company boom saw their life savings zeroed out. Giants of the real estate scene went bankrupt. We all wept. It was one of the worst regional economic collapses in the nation's history.

Nearly fifteen years have now passed, and Dallas is still paying for the damage. But signs of resurgence and a new cycle of prosperity can be seen in the dawn of the new millennium.

### **Is the best yet to come?**

Let's visualize the future of our neighborhood from two viewpoints: first, you can drive all the way to the Oklahoma border and fail to find a luxury home community with such deep set-backs on such expansive lots as exist in Northwood Hills. This affords our winding streets and gentle hills a gracious

sweep and scale unmatched in any of the newer developments. Complementing this is the classic style and variety of architecture seen in our homes, unlike the "cookie-cutter mansions" going up on postage stamp lots to the north of us. This should be kind to our values in the marketplace for years to come.

Second, the planned start of construction in 2001 of the interchange at LBJ and North Central has the potential to significantly increase the value of surrounding land. The northwest quadrant of this crossroads, nearest to us, is likely to feel the positive impact most. Demand for well-positioned and generally under-utilized real estate in this quadrant can be expected to attract top quality development. Our neighborhood can only benefit.

### **To be continued...**

*We have lived in our wonderful house for forty years. We're looking forward to many more, and wish for all our neighbors the same measure of joy we have found throughout our own personal history here in Northwood Hills.*

*-- Stewart and Marion Mitchell*



## Post Script

*So many years have passed; so many wonderful families come and gone. Yet a great many still remain in the homes they purchased here in the fifties, sixties and since. Among the original owners still living here are names like Baldelli, Doughman, Forrest, Hartman, McAlister, McCarley, Mixon, Norman, Toan, Troth -- and many more we would like to identify and recognize.*

*On following pages we have listed all those "Northwood Hills Pioneers" who sent us their names after this little history first appeared in the NHHA newsletter. If your name is not among them and should be, please write us at:*

**NHHA Pioneers**

**P.O. Box 800874**

**Dallas, TX 75380-0874**

*Should this story enjoy a second printing, we'll see to it that your name and address are added.*

## NORTHWOOD HILLS PIONEERS

*(Moved into NH prior to 1980, still living here)*

Mixon, Nancy and George Jr.	7272 Paldao Dr.	1958
Ruff, Maude (Mrs. Robt. H.)	7260 Elmridge Dr.	1958
Troth, Nancy	14016 Brookridge Dr.	1958
Adams, Suzy and Quincy	6840 Briar Cove Dr.	1959
Baldelli, Elizabeth	7341 Paldao Dr.	1959
Mitchell, Marion and Stewart	7371 Paldao Dr.	1959
Vial, Elaine and Bob	7067 Elmridge Dr.	1959
Foxworth, Carolyn and Walter	7047 Elmridge Dr.	1960
Norman, Margie and Charlie	14010 Carillon	1960
Forrest, Mary and Ira	7518 Spring Valley	1961
Jamieson, Frances and Bruce	7038 Elmridge	1961
Johnson, Dick and Alice	14058 Brookcrest	1961
Ruff, Martel	14067 Brookridge Dr.	1961
Cain, Ellen B.	7450 Overdale Dr.	1962
Erwin, Sarah and Jim	7525 Oakbluff Dr.	1962
Greene, Bob and Jane	7447 Stonecrest Dr.	1962
Shaw, Marion	7612 Maplecrest Dr.	1962
Toan, Barbara and Fred	7107 Elmridge	1962
Belofsky, Mr. and Mrs. Selwin	6487 Cliffbrook Dr.	1963
Cureton, Jean (Mrs. Allen)	7631 Maplecrest Dr.	1963
Reese, Loraine (Mrs. Geo. E.)	7315 Oakbluff Dr.	1963
Chaddick, Doris (Mrs. William)	6727 Meadowcreek Dr.	1964
Foreman, Betty and Jim	7316 Spring Valley Rd.	1964
Hallmark, Bob and Vera	6817 Meadowcreek Dr.	1964
Stanley, William G.	6707 Dartbrook Dr.	1964
Bondy, Dr. Robert and Gabriella	14141 Meandering Way	1965
McGuire, Donald and Debbie	14127 Valley Creek Dr.	1965
Turrella, Lorraine	7126 Meadowcreek Dr.	1965
McHaney, Betty (Mrs. Joe C.)	7421 Larchview Dr.	1966
Lynn, Bob and Wini	7109 Briar Cove Dr.	1967
Williams, George L.	6930 Gateridge Dr.	1967