

Precinct 287 Civic Association

Organized July 1973. Serving Post Oak Manor and Willowbrook.



April 2024
Volume 58, Number 1

Greetings!

Spring has sprung. The azaleas in the neighborhood have been on display and the birds are in full song. The Prairie Lake's pathway is all but complete and there is a solid bridge with drainage across the stream.

Waiting Under the Willow Foundation (WUWF) is an important part of our neighborhood. I am delighted to share how WUWF and Precinct 287 Civic Association came together for Sassy, a sweet Pit Bull, and Archie, a cat. Their Dad recently became unhoused and was living out of his truck and trying to find a foster for Sassy and Archie. He talked to Tammy at WUWF. I offered to foster Sassy and Archie; another neighbor donated cat toys, a litter box, and other goodies; neighbors who had lost a much-loved dog walked Sassy twice a day and gave him a beautiful purple harness and leash; other neighbors gave expert advice on nail trimming and dog washing. Best of all, one of our neighbors heard the story and offered Sassy, Archie, and their dad a new home, a condo, to help him get back on his feet while he was working two jobs. Two weeks of our community coming together out of kindness and compassion. I love our neighborhood! WUWF has plenty of volunteer and foster opportunities. Visit www.wuwfrescue.org for more information.

We are a part of the Keep Houston Beautiful campaign. This Sunday, April 21st at 2:00 PM, Precinct 287 Civic Association will have a trash pickup along the drainage ditch on the east side of S. Post Oak between Kingfisher and Stillbrook. We are meeting at the corner of Kingfisher and Waxwing. Please wear comfortable shoes (or waders or rain boots) and sun protection. The City of Houston is providing safety vests, trash bags, and gloves. The Civic Association is providing water bottles. We would love to have you roll up your sleeves for an hour and join us. Thanks to Tom Hafley for leading this endeavor.

I hope you enjoy our first e-newsletter.

Grateful to serve alongside our hardworking Board,
Alison Mitchell
President

Notice of Elections

We need new volunteer board members!

At the June meeting, we will have elections for Vice President, Treasurer, and the two West Area Representatives.

If you have previously volunteered with the Civic Association in any capacity, you may run for Vice President or Treasurer.

If you have never volunteered, you can serve as Area Representative. This is a great way to get involved in the neighborhood for the first time. The time commitment is only a few hours per month plus quarterly board meetings. The Area Representatives assist the executive board with budget and planning decisions. They help other committees with newsletter content, National Night Out, and similar events.

The West Willowbrook Area Representative should live in the streets west of Cliffwood between Redstart and Kingfisher. The West Post Oak Manor Representative should live west of Cliffwood Dr between Sanford and Warm Springs.

To submit your name for any position, email the Secretary at precinct287ca@gmail.com by May 15.

Exemplary Neighbor

by Janeen Paprocki

Neighbors help make our neighborhood more connected. If you live in the 4300 or 4400 blocks of Hummingbird, you probably know Mike Graves and have experienced his helping hand.

Recently, after just arriving home from work, Mike stopped to help a neighbor who was independently working on cutting down his tree. As I heard the chainsaw, I looked out the window and it didn't surprise me that Mike was out there leading the efforts and that another neighbor, Andrew Etter, joined in.

This event made me recall that when I moved into the neighborhood, Mike was one of the first to welcome me and offer any help that I may

need.

During my 12 years in the neighborhood, many neighbors have been a recipient of Mike's help. Whether it's helping to clean the street after a tipped over recycling receptacle, mowing lawns for an elderly neighbor, assisting with weather event preparation or cleaning up the aftermath of a storm, there are no limits for Mike's help.

Mike has been a mainstay on Hummingbird for much longer than my 12 years on the block, but his genuine concern for the well-being of others and his generous spirit is much appreciated.



Mike Graves, Andrew Etter, and Chris Marroquin.



General Meeting

Willow Meadows Baptist Church

Tuesday, June 18, 2024

7:00 PM - meet & greet

7:30 PM - general meeting

Yard of the Month

East Willowbrook

Mimi Walker
4502 Kinglet

West Willowbrook

Tammy & George Arnold
4706 Kingfisher



East Post Oak Manor

Susie Rosales & Patricia Payer
4522 Warm Springs



West Post Oak Manor

Allen Schramm
4722 Spellman



Yard of Month is awarded April through September. The volunteer committee includes Roberta Lopis, East Willowbrook; Sarah Barchas, West Willowbrook; Patty Murray, East Post Oak Manor; and Karen Richardson, West Post Oak Manor. You can nominate a neighbor for Yard of the Month by completing the form at www.pct287ca.org/yard-of-the-month or by clicking the button below.

[Yard of the Month Nomination](#)

Resident Profile - Barb & Jeff Mills

by Susan Pitts

From coal mines to kayaks, Barb and Jeff Mills have experienced a lifetime of adventures in filmmaking. Through nearly five decades together, they've interviewed a young Bill Gates and made a film about enemy German submarines patrolling the coast off Freeport. They've scabbled up scaffolding to document the historic restoration of a Houston courthouse, followed a group of groundbreaking musicians to Carnegie Hall, and shot scenes from a camera-mounted kayak. The best part of the job, they said, is the variety of subjects they got to explore and document. "It's amazing," Jeff said, "the different things we've been able to do."

It began one evening in a nearly deserted University of Texas dorm cafeteria that was getting ready to close. After a late evening filmmaking class, Barb and another student rushed across campus to grab some food before the cafeteria closed. Inside, a red-headed young man sat all alone at a table for eight. "Let's sit there," Barb told her friend. She sat down. As they started talking, Barb learned the redhead's name was Jeff. As Barb talked about the class she had just left, the pair realized they had raced to dinner from the same filmmaking class. When class met again, Jeff looked for Barb but had a hard time finding her in the giant lecture hall because she sat in the front row, far from his customary spot in the back. They eventually found one another, though, and a lifelong collaboration was born.

Barb and Jeff were both majoring in the commercial television and film department at UT, but their backgrounds and focus differed. With an artistic background, Barb was more interested in video and graphic art. Jeff, who had switched from an aeronautical engineering major to film after seeing the movie, *2001, A Space Odyssey*, was focused on filmmaking. As they worked on college projects together, they discovered their complimentary skills contributed to good filmmaking. They married in their last year of college and had a daughter a few years later. After graduation, Barb took a job as a graphic designer at NASA. Jeff, a huge fan of the space industry, reverently applied her NASA sticker to their car. Barb worked in the iconic Building 1 at NASA, eating lunch in the cafeteria alongside famous astronauts. Barb reported that in those days everyone ate in the same cafeteria: astronauts, staff, and tourists. She said, laughingly, that tourists would approach her and her fellow office workers in the cafeteria to ask them to pose for pictures, assuming they were famous people in the space industry. While Barb was posing in the cafeteria and creating basic graphic work for NASA, Jeff spent a few years learning the ropes with an Indie film company. The couple eventually decided to open their own company, both quitting their jobs at the same time. Two days later, Hurricane Alicia hit the area. "Seemed like a bad omen," Barb noted.

Despite the inauspicious beginning, their business thrived in what Jeff described as a golden era, when every company and foundation wanted media. They worked with Compaq, which was at the time an up-and-coming computer manufacturer competing with industry giant IBM. Compaq wanted still photos and films to support the release of every new computer model, a job which kept them busy. "We shot like crazy," Jeff reported, "all over the country." On one special shoot at the computer chip making company Intel, they interviewed a very young Bill Gates. Jeff said IBM was the dominant computer company at the time, and whenever a hot new Intel chip came out, IBM always got the first shipment. However, Compaq's computers were portable whereas IBM products were strictly desktop models. Compaq became the fastest growing company in America and at some point, Intel decided Compaq should get the first shipment of a new chip, quite a victory for Compaq over their rival IBM.

Another important client in those days was Panhandle Oil and Gas, leading to shoots in a coal mine and a memorable project to produce an educational video about the building of a pipeline from Houston to New Jersey during World War II. The pipeline was built in only nine months to protect American oil and gas from German submarines patrolling off the coast at Freeport and threatening

oil tanker routes to the east coast. Jeff remembered bunkers on the Freeport beach to protect the oil industry. He said that during the war, "wolf packs" of German subs roamed the American coastline. Fights between German subs and American forces were so frequent that according to Jeff, coastal residents in the Carolinas often sat outside, sipping tea and watching explosions in the ocean off their porches.

Barb and Jeff's work has covered both corporate filmmaking and independent documentary productions. They documented the restoration of the 1910 Harris County Courthouse, producing both a film and a beautiful book, *Palace of Justice*, to record the painstaking process to revive a historic landmark. When looking through the *Palace* book, Jeff and Barb fondly recalled many of the artists and workers on the project. They are still friends with at least one of those workers, Matthew Henson, Sr., a specialist in ornamental plaster restoration. Another documentary, *Little Grouse on the Prairie*, detailed efforts to save the endangered Attwater Prairie Chicken. In the documentary, Barb and Jeff showed how a team effort by local conservationists, the Houston Zoo, and NASA worked to repopulate the species after the Texas bird went from numbering in the millions to endangered status.

Jeff noted that in their work, "You live and die on interviews." Interviewing individuals who can communicate their enthusiasm creates an energy that brings a story to life. People who are passionate make the best subjects, like the young quartet of musicians in the award-winning documentary, *Moonshot: The Remarkable Journey of Apollo Chamber Players*. *Moonshot* told the story of four young musicians on a quest to create all original music commissioned from different composers and cultures. Their ambitious plan to "shoot for the moon" and create "20 by 2020," twenty entirely new pieces in one year, culminated in a performance at Carnegie Hall. Some scenes for this documentary were shot at NASA to reflect the group leader's love of space exploration. Since NASA was almost always open to the public, the crew was on site at 5 AM to set up, film, and be out before Space Center Houston opened for the day. The hours may have been long and the work demanding, but Barb and Jeff's passion for what they did was as intense as the dedication of their subjects.

Jeff and Barb's current project, which Jeff said may be their swan song, follows another passionate subject, Jim Blackburn. Blackburn is a lawyer, poet, and Rice University professor who they describe as "fearless" and a man who "wins fights that people think are unwinnable." The documentary, titled *Calming the Waters*, tells the story of Blackburn's legal battle to protect whooping cranes threatened by water management policies. "You want people who are real, compelling," Jeff said. Their portrait of Blackburn describes a man who is just that: a man who believes the environment itself should be able to be a party in a lawsuit, that the natural world needs representation. For this project, Jeff mounted a camera on a kayak to follow Blackburn's "relaxing" outing on a local waterway. "I was paddling like crazy and shouting at him to slow down" Jeff said of trailing the older Blackburn. PBS has expressed an interest in the film, which Barb and Jeff hope to finish in time for Earth Day 2025.

When describing their adventures during 47 years of filmmaking, Jeff's favorite saying is "What could go wrong?" Life has dropped a few speed bumps in their path, but the work they've done is evidence of things going pretty much right. If you'd like to learn more about Barb and Jeff's work, below are links to some of their projects. The Apollo Chamber Players video is currently available on Prime Video.

Jim Blackburn

<https://www.calmingthewaters.com/the-film>

War Emergency Pipeline

<https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/RQ8iz6mu4Q>

Pan Am Documentary

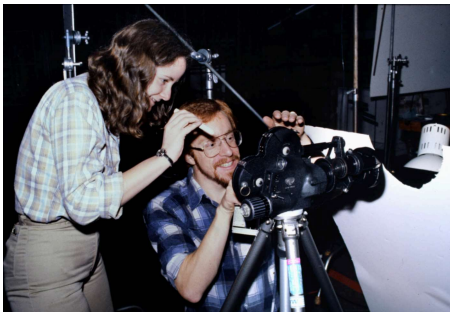
<https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/Xg5FYoGppo>

Blue Sky Studios for Compaq Computers

<https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/oPoyZNAhuR>

Bellaire-100th Anniversary

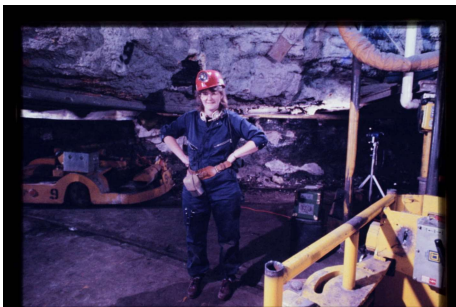
<https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/KnZyNcLs8b>



Young filmmakers Barb and Jeff Mills.



Circa 1983 first bank loan for equipment.



Barb in the coal mine.



Jeff in the coal mine.



A very young Bill Gates.



Interviewing Jim Blackburn at Rice.

Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy

As of mid-March, the construction at Prairie Lake was 60% complete, including the trail and work west of South Post Oak.

The construction crew reported some issues with residents interfering with the construction, such as walking through areas where the rebar had been installed and walking behind operating equipment. The engineer's on-site inspector engaged with some of the residents and was told by one that "they will go and do whatever they want."

For your safety, and the safety of the construction crew, please respect the construction zones and do not interfere with the progress.

Willow Pool

Willow Pool is located at 10500 1/2 Cliffwood Drive. The pool opens on Saturday, May 4 and is open on the weekends in May. Daily operations begin Thursday, June 6.

Family memberships are available for \$250 through Sunday, June 2nd. After this date the fee will be \$275. There is a one-time fee of \$50.00 for new family memberships.

Individual memberships are \$165 and good for one person only. There is a one-time fee of \$25.00 for new individual memberships.

For more information, visit www.willow-pool.org.

Willow Wahoos Swim Team

Registration is now open for the Willow Wahoos Swim Team.

Swimmers must be at least five years old.

The cost for pool members is \$135 for the first swimmer and \$115 for each additional swimmer. The cost for non-pool members is \$190 for the first swimmer and \$170 for each additional swimmer.

Practice begins Monday, May 6 in the afternoons. Practice moves to mornings on Thursday, June 6.

For more information, visit willowwahoos.swimtopia.com.

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Vice President	Edith Napoleon*
Treasurer	Teresa Palmer
Secretary	Barbara Beard
<u>2023/2024 AREA REPRESENTATIVES</u>	
W. Willowbrook	Kathy Long
E. Willowbrook	Janeen Paprocki
W. Post Oak Manor	Jeff Burrow
E. Post Oak Manor	Susan Forrest
<u>COMMITTEES</u>	
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Deed Restrictions	Matthew Camp
Lost Pets	Terry Hawkins 832-652-0715 tlhawk@swbell.net
Membership Database	Teresa Palmer
National Night Out	Monica Alzate
New Resident Welcome	Richard Orellana
Newsletter	Jill Navarro

Security Patrol Secretary	Pat Powell
Signs	Andrew Etter
Super Neighborhood Delegate	Matthew Camp
Yard of the Month	Janeen Paprocki
Website	Caroline Lewis
*Appointed as interim until the next election cycle.	

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