

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: EVELYN ROBERTS

Sometimes it's the quiet ones that surprise you. For over three years now I have sat at the lunch and dinner table with Evelyn Roberts, and not once have I heard her raise her voice. Not once have I heard an unkind word come out of her mouth. And not once have I seen her express either frustration or irritation! Evelyn, in short, is a remarkable woman.

Evelyn was the third of five children born to Mr. and Mrs. Lystra Beadle of Portsmouth, Ohio. For what it is worth, here are some character traits typical of a middle child, as defined by an expert in the field: "He tries not to make waves and is easy going and even tempered. He is artistically inclined and introverted. He often feels life is unfair and thus fights against injustice. He is kind, helpful, and generous to others."

She loved school, especially the homemaking classes, and was a dutiful daughter to her parents. She smiles as she recalls her upbringing with its clearly defined guidelines; for example, Portsmouth was on the Ohio side of the Ohio River. She was not allowed to date anyone from the other side of the river because that was Kentucky! Gasp!

A few years after finishing high school she went to work for Eastman Kodak in Oklahoma. She had no particular career plans—the job was just something to do while she waited for life to happen.

And happen it did. A friend of her boss frequently dropped by the office for a cup of coffee or to entice the boss out for a golf game. If her boss was busy with a client at the time the friend sat on the

secretary's desk and chatted with her in the outer office while he waited.

His name was Eugene (Rocky) Roberts and yes, you guessed it, he and Evelyn were married in February of 1955. His work with the Addressograph-Multigraph Corporation took them cross country to places like El Paso, TX, Portland, OR; Cleveland, OH, and finally to the crème de la crème of company positions, regional manager



in Houston, TX **Evelyn Roberts, 1955**

Their two children were teenagers when they came to Houston and both graduated from Memorial High School. Their older child, Rock, an outstanding student, went on to Rice University. He had a room in the dormitory but asked that his room at home be kept intact for him so he could have privacy for serious study when needed. His parents gladly agreed. His sister Cathy, two years younger, was also thrilled

One day when he had had a long study session he left papers spread out on his desk while he went back to the campus for classes. While he was gone his mother went in to clean his room and was fascinated by some shapes and puzzle-like papers on his desk. She didn't know

what kind of class they were for but assumed they were for something like Finite Math or maybe Psychological Testing. In any case, she found some blank sheets of paper and began working the problems. When Rocky got back from campus he was surprised—and impressed—that his quiet, unassuming housewife/mother had solved some difficult equations, and Evelyn was quite pleased with herself.

Bolstered by her new-found self-confidence she decided to take the next step. Shell Oil Company was advertising for help and she went downtown to apply. The first order of business was an Aptitude Test, and lo and behold, the problems were the very ones she had worked at her son's desk. She couldn't believe that was all there was to it, and she inwardly quaked as one after another of the other applicants was visited in the outer office by an HR person saying, "We're sorry. Your test scores were not up to our standards, but you may try again in six months if you like." Expecting the same visit, she was surprised when a different lady came out and said, "Mrs. Roberts, would you come with me please for an interview?"

The result was that this modest mother/housewife with no degree and little experience went to work in the Land Department of Shell Oil's Wood Creek office near her home at age 55 and stayed on, at their request, past retirement age of 65! She has received a Shell pension ever since!

That night when she announced her new job to her family Cathy, the

teen-aged daughter, laughed so hard she fell off the sofa where she had been stretched out and landed on the floor, literally LOL (that's "laughing out loud" in texting.)

Rocky was very proud of his little wife, and so were her children once they got over the shock of having a "working mother." Rocky finished Rice and married his soul mate Cindy, with whom in their love of animals he used to volunteer at the Houston Zoo. They live now in Washington D.C. with their two adopted daughters.

Cathy, also very bright, went on to college and took a Master's in Calculus. Today she is a Calculus teacher living in Austin with her four children, two sons and two daughters.



Evelyn at Treemont, December 2012

After Rocky's death Evelyn moved to Treemont, where she leads a quiet but pleasant life with frequent visits from family and friends.