

5101 Aspen Street: the Story and the Memories

We designed and built this house to be quickly reconfigured to whatever we needed for changing life situations. When family or friends came to visit or the kids wanted a slumber party, we always had a place to put them.

When our niece's Liberty High School drill team needed a place to stay before a Houston competition, we were their base.

When accommodations fell through for two visiting coaches from Scotland who were here to teach soccer at the Bellaire rec center, we had a place for them.

When our 95-year old mother needed surgery recently, turned den and adjacent bathroom into her recovery room.

Our house is where the big events were held, from landmark birthdays (30's, 50's, 60's) to holiday celebrations (two fireplaces so lots of room for stockings) to bon voyage parties for close friends moving away.

With circular flow of all the rooms on the first floor, guests clustered in small and big groups. In nice weather we'd throw open the double French doors and let the gathering spill into the backyard – either under the covered patio and on a raised deck beside a waterfall shaded by a mature bald cypress (my spot to drink coffee and read the paper on Sunday mornings). And out under a 500 square foot carport with high ceiling. One departing friend even requested a dance party complete with teacher and we were able to grant her wish.

While our house faces Aspen and has a L-shaped driveway, the garage and carport are accessed from S. Rice via an 18-foot electric gate. That large carport leads into a 575 square foot oversized detached garage which became a spot for fixing bikes, repairing cars, doing woodwork and teaching these skills to the kids and their friends. The garage foundation was reinforced so we could build an apartment or game room if we needed more room or privacy.

We moved into the house the year our daughter started kindergarten at Condit. From this location, we walked her to school for the first year. Starting in first grade, her little brother and I watched her walk to school from the front yard. While I worked full-time, we were centrally located to so I was usually only 20 minutes away and could show up at school functions and volunteer to help.

And when the kids went to Bellaire High School, we were only a half mile away.

Raising our family in this house was like growing up in a small town. We walked or biked everywhere – to the library, the pool, the gym, the grocery store, to restaurants, nail and hair salons, our dentists. We volunteered at the book sales, 4th of July events, Park Patrons because it we were so close to everything. From our upstairs balcony on the front of the house we cheered on parades, trail rides and fun runs.

When our first child left for college abroad, I joined a jazzercise class at the Bellaire rec center to help with the empty nest syndrome. I ended up making a whole new set of friends who helped me adjust to the freedom of being a mom with grown children and then into retirement.

Having police and fire headquarters just a stone's throw away meant we always felt safe and protected. With neighbors from all ages and diverse backgrounds and cultures made this interesting, educational and welcoming place.

This house is solid, built with extra strong sheathing with ½ inch plywood and the painted siding is insulated. There's interior insulation for all the pipes to protect from freezes. There is a beam around the perimeter that is thicker than code required. The garage is larger than standard.

Two fireplaces, one in each living area