Dream Ride

A U.S. Air Force veteran and Independence Hill resident enjoys an aerial view of San Antonio in a classic biplane.

The vintage biplane circled San Antonio. On this cold November morning in 2014, it gave its passenger, octogenarian Truman Marr, a perspective the retired U.S. Air Force officer and navigator hadn’t seen from a military craft in decades.

A resident at Independence Hill Retirement Resort Community, Truman wouldn’t let 34-degree temperatures and an open cockpit keep him from this ride—part of the Dream Flight program sponsored by Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation. The nonprofit group honors seniors and veterans living in long-term care facilities with such flights nationwide. As the plane landed at historic Stinson Field, Truman was all smiles, reports son Nils Marr, who lives in San Antonio and visits him at Independence Hill.

Truman, 87, now lives at the community’s assisted living facility, after years in an Independence Hill cottage with his wife, Frances. Truman still remembers his childhood in Brooklyn, N.Y., and how he courted his wife before they married in 1954. “I took her to my favorite night club,” he says, recalling the music of the Big Band era.

Sadly, Frances died the weekend Nils and his brother, Tracy, were moving their parents to the assisted living apartment. Truman has the couple’s longtime pet Gigi, a teacup poodle, for companionship. “These two are side-by-side best friends,” says Nils. Truman also visits with tablemates at meals and with attentive staff at Independence Hill. “I can’t say enough good things about the care he receives,” Nils says.

Truman enjoys outings to Stone Oak’s Local Coffee to play the card game cribbage with his son. The mathematical aspect of the game appeals to the former navigator, says Nils, explaining that before the computer age his dad navigated flights over oceans using an age-old sextant and the stars.

Commissioned out of R.O.T.C. at New Mexico State University, Truman was stationed at countless Air Force bases stateside and in Okinawa, Japan, and he did a tour of duty in Vietnam. He retired after 23 years while at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska, where he and Frances remained. He taught computers and worked for Ameritrade until the couple moved to Navarre, Florida, in the late 1990s. “It was beautiful,” Truman says.

Truman and Frances enjoyed beach living until moving to Independence Hill. “He was very dedicated to my mother,” Nils says. “My mother was everything to him.”