Elizabeth Battros’ bright smile, vivacious personality and zest for life belie her status as an octogenarian. Not long ago, she and her business developer husband, Mitchell, owned the most popular upscale clubs in San Antonio, including famed Mad Michael’s, Mitchell’s and the London Steak House. They rubbed elbows with the elite politicians and dealmakers in the city. Good friends included members of District Attorney Nico LaHood’s family and former Mayor Henry Cisneros, City Councilman Van Archer and County Commissioner Jeff Wentworth.

“My husband could do anything,” she enthused. “Everybody loved Mitchell.” The couple met at Jefferson High School, to which she transferred her senior year. She and her mother moved from Shreveport after the death of her father to be closer to family and support of St. Georges Maronite Church, which serves the Catholic community of Lebanese descent.

The Battroses started out with “one little bitty restaurant” at Stinson field, which they grew into a conglomeration of businesses: office buildings, restaurants and shopping centers. “My husband would build, and I’d decorate,” she said, although she also owned businesses of her own, Liz’s coffee shop, a resale shop and a tanning salon over the years. Mitchell’s Sports Bar, at 1923 Lockhill Selma, still operates today.

Elizabeth loved the clubs with the big band music and dancing. She was an acrobat and still proudly remembers winning two Jitterbug contests in her youth. Mad Michael’s was especially known for its band led by Mateo Carmargo and his wife Belia.

“Even if you didn’t know how to dance, when he played, you danced,” Elizabeth said. Camargo was a local radio personality on KCOR, San Antonio’s Spanish language radio station in the 1950s. He was a popular broadcaster who showcased Latin American music along with local news and politics. After his death, a park on San Antonio’s West Side was named in his honor.

Elizabeth has had a bird’s eye view of the growth of San Antonio. She and Mitchell raised their family in Castle Hills. Their three children attended Churchill High School, with older daughter, Michele, being in its first graduating class. Daughter Stacy and son, Mitchell Jr., still reside in San Antonio. Elizabeth has 7 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

In the 1980s, with the children off to college, and careers well under way, Elizabeth convinced Mitchell to indulge her spirit of adventure. They completed a series of travels that took them around the world.

In 1982, the Battroses traveled England, France, Italy and Spain: Her favorite spot was Italy, Elizabeth said, citing the culture’s slower way of life, the food and the friendly people. Her most important travel tip is to hire a cab driver as a guide rather than sign up for a group tour.

“Our driver invited us to his home. I was dying to get to see what an apartment was like in Rome. Then he was able to take us through all the little towns to Florence, where I had a leather coat made. Europe was so picturesque,” she said.

They went back to Europe the next year, taking in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In 1984, they chose the Middle East: Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Israel and Greece.

“We went everywhere,” she said, “Everything was exciting, because we hadn’t seen it!” 1986, they were off to Hong Kong, Japan and Red China, with a stop in Hawaii on the way home. “China was like stepping back in time 1000 years,” she said. “People were paving the streets by hand.” And Elizabeth marvelled at the orderliness of Japan. “They didn’t even have dust on the cars!” she exclaimed.

Pictures of trip highlights and artifacts bedeck the walls of her home in Independence Hill Retirement Community, where she moved last spring. And her home would not be complete without a candy dish, from which she generously encourages visitors to partake.

An enthusiastic advocate of exercise, Elizabeth is pleased she can enjoy the fitness classes offered at Independence Hill. She also loves the Friday Night and Big Band Dances, the last of which featured an Arabian Nights theme and belly dancers. She regularly attends Holy Spirit Catholic Church, although members of the family still participate in festivals hosted by St. George’s Lebanese community.

In the 1980s, Elizabeth Battros travelled around the world with her husband Mitchell, indulging their spirit of adventure.

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