rowing up in New York, Helen Blair had a world of opportunity, and her success story is proof that she used her intelligence and her gift of creating art to make her mark in the business world. Her story is full of life’s adventures; she is a woman who is well versed in all subject matters.

Blair has called several cities home, but Independence Hill Retirement Resort Community is her home now, and she shares her brilliant smile and words with the other residents there.

“There are happy vibes surrounding Independence Hill, and the residents are the type of people that you want to be around!” Her rave reviews extend to all the employees who know you by name. “I found that by the second day I lived here, everyone on staff knew who I was!” Independence Hill made the transition an easy one. Blair joyfully says “Eureka!” when explaining her home. That is a compliment of the highest order given in a New York minute.

Attending high school at the well-known Erasmus Hall in Brooklyn, N.Y., 60 years ago was a pivotal point in Blair’s career search. One of her art professors noticed her talents. Using clay as the medium, Blair crafted a head statue entitled “Anguish.”

“My son, Peter, recently found this among his older treasures, and he never actually knew what it was. I explained the history of ‘Anguish,’ and one of my top achievements is that Peter is showcasing it in his home,” she says with modesty.

Blair gives a great deal of credit to the Brooklyn Museum for turning her love of art into her passion. “I used to go there after school to admire the artwork. For some reason, they really liked me, and they took me under their wing. I was fortunate and learned so much from them. When I went to college to further my studies, I wrote them a letter to thank all the people that helped me with my career choice.”

Their response was both beautiful and heartwarming: “We like to help young people so that they can give back to society.” That is exactly what Blair set out to do, and she has certainly surpassed her goals.

Continuing with her studies, she attended the State University of New York at Farmingdale Technical Institute for two years. Her career history is a reflection on how this talented woman explored different avenues via her art.

“My first job was in restoration of airplane and art brush. I was paid by the piece!” Having applied for a position with Mogul Hossey and Lingerie as an artist, she went to her second job located in Long Island City. Blair’s boss left the company, and three months later, she was promoted.

“I had to hire an artist to take over what I was doing and was responsible for a staff of seven workers,” she says. “I was only 20, and I was just too young for all the responsibility this position carried!”

Blair then went to work for Abbott Kimball Ad Agency in the art department. Starting as a secretary for two account executives, she then worked with other artists at the advertising agency. Having had the honor of serving wonderful clients such as Vanity Fair, Steuben Glass, Guerlain and Tiffany Jewelry, to name a few, Blair added her touch of class in more ways than one.

“I also had the privilege of making the final paste-ups for the Cancer Society logo,” Blair proudly says. She continued her travels to New Mexico with her three sons and married for the second time.

From there, she went to Oklahoma City and was hired by Gaylord’s Oklahoma Publishing Company as an artist in a printing company. “I eventually became involved in customer service, I loved working with people and helping them with their needs.”

While it was hard work, Blair is a natural when it comes to dealing with and servicing clients. Being extremely personable has worked in her favor in both the business and social worlds. This, remarkable talent (both her creativity and her social skills) still rings true today Blair’s magnetic personality and youthful outlook are refreshing to all of those who are fortunate to call this woman their friend.

Post retirement, she left Oklahoma City and moved to Corpus Christi with her third husband, Roy Blair. She was still actively involved in the community. When she was president of the Padre Island Enrichment Club on North Padre Island in 1998, the residents wanted to establish a “private paradise.” Collectively creating what became the Beach Festival to attract others to this area, Blair wrote for the Island Newspaper and other local media. “I wrote articles on a weekly basis to promote interest in the festival!” As the Beach Festival recruited local bands that wanted to make a name for themselves and local artists who made jewelry and other art forms, the local talent was able to showcase their products for free. The festival was very successful. “We made several thousand dollars by selling raffle tickets, and the money went to upgrading the beach,” Blair says.

“I had a wonderful life with Roy until his passing. We were married for 28 years, and we were true partners. I thank God for his leadership in my life. I hope I make him proud!” Having six children and 10 grandchildren, Blair has one great-grandchild with another due in the next few months.

“She’s family lives in San Antonio, and I have four grandchildren that live here, along with many more family members. In addition, I have relatives in New York, and I have six grandchildren that live here as well.”

In 2009, Blair moved to Independence Hill. She continues to live each day with positive forces such as the friends she has made through a wide range of activities that Independence Hill residents enjoy.

“There is so much chatting and laughter here,” she says. “Day and night, Independence Hill has created a secure environment. You just have to smile at the beauty of the surroundings. It’s contagious and everlasting.”

Meet Helen Blair, a personable woman of great intelligence and creativity.

By: LORI JOSEPH MARMEL
Photography: ROBIN JERSTAD

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