Bill Weidemann is a man who has certainly lived a full life. In fact, his story sounds more like an adventure taken straight out of a history book. At the age of 84, it is clear that Weidemann still has his sharp wit in tact. His smile is contagious, and his stories are quite humorous.

A resident of Independence Hill Retirement Community in San Antonio, Weidemann loves his surroundings. “I like to attend the parties they throw here,” Weidemann said. “I’ll get up and dance and have a good time. Some of the other fellas just sit there. Not me. I’m always having a ball.”

Surrounded by old photo albums, Weidemann took me on a personal journey – a diary of his life from beginning to present-day. Every black-and-white photo had a story behind it – a time in his life so near and dear to him. He recalled the past with such great detail that it was as though certain events happened only yesterday. To hear Weidemann tell his story is to hear one man’s amazing journey told through the pages of American history.

Born in New York City and raised in the Bronx, Weidemann used to watch the kids skate around his neighborhood. This sparked an interest for a new hobby. So when he was a teenager, his mother bought him a pair of skates and off he went.

“I started skating around,” Weidemann recalled. “Then I got involved in the sport of skating. Next thing I know, I’m going to the Brooklyn Ice Palace with guys who competed in the 1932 Olympics. I was racing with these guys.”

Weidemann eventually joined the Acme Wheelmen team. He would go to competitive sport skating meets and compete in places like Lake Placid, Conn., and New Jersey. And he was very good at it.

“When I first started skating, you had classes.”
B and C, with A being the best class,” Weidemann explained. “Just before the war was over, I was placed in class A, and I could have easily been on my way to the Olympics. But then I was drafted into the service before that could ever happen.”

So Weidemann hung up his skates and never looked back. In 1950, he joined the Core of Engineers in the U.S. Army, which took him to Dothan, Ala. On his way to Dothan, Weidemann recalls taking the train down south and making a pit stop in Georgia. “Oh boy, that was my first taste of Southern food,” he said. “It was also a culture shock for me, being from up east.”

After he completed his service in 1953, Weidemann returned home, where he met and married the love of his life, Eleanor. At the time, Weidemann was also a culture shock for me, being from up east. “I wound up on corporate staff,” he said. “I was writing management programs for the engineering department. I guess they liked what they saw because next thing I know, I’m in the corporate division working for the president and management again, I had 26 female clerks who used to sit around and chit-chat about their boyfriends and husbands making them mad and getting on their nerves. So I told those girls, ‘I always get the last word in my house. And do you know what those last words are? Yes, dear?’”

Weidemann recalls a roar of laughter erupting in the office after that initial “break the ice” meeting with his new staffers. From there, it was smooth sailing with his new staff. Those proved happy times for Weidemann, who remained in the Westchester office for six years before officially retiring from New York Telephone in 1988.

Six years after Weidemann’s retirement, his wife of 40 years passed away. Weidemann and his two grown children, Bill Jr. and Donna, survived her. “After Eleanor passed away, I needed a hobby,” he said. “I needed something to occupy my time.”

And that’s when Weidemann took up fly-fishing. He joined the Trout Unlimited group under the Croton Watershed Chapter and became the member of the year. Hiking on the wall in Weidemann’s apartment are glass-framed flies, ties himself – an impressive art form in the world of fly-fishing that requires great attention to detail. “I tied flies, and I built rods,” he said. “I used to go fly-fishing with my group. We would go up and down the countryside. It requires great attention to detail.”

While Weidemann’s fly-fishing days may be behind him, he still has one more rod he wants to complete. Today, Weidemann is surrounded by precious photo memories displayed in his apartment at Independence Hill Retirement Resort Community. Every photo tells the story of a life well lived – a collection of memories that will forever live in his heart.

Independence Hill is located at 20450 Huebner Road in San Antonio, Texas. For more information, call 210-591-0013 or visit www.independencetexas.com.