Martha Schmidt will celebrate her 89th birthday next month. The outgoing octogenarian was born on a Louisiana cotton farm fifty miles south of Shreveport during the early years of the depression. Although the youngest of nine, Martha was a welcome surprise to her middle aged parents.

She remembers attending the same elementary school as her older siblings during the World War II years and watching her brothers and sisters’ husbands leave to serve. Her oldest brother, Ernest Holcomb, stormed Normandy with the 101st Airborne Division. He was in a glider picking off German soldiers who were aiming for Allied troops on the beach. After surviving that assault, he was sent to the Battle of the Bulge, where he chauffeured General Patton’s Jeep. Despite the danger, Ernest returned home safely and lived to the ripe old age of 77.

Martha’s youngest brother, Herman, joined the marines when he was just 17. The only information he shared is that he took photographs from airplanes. Could he have been involved in reconnaissance? Espionage?

“Our generation didn’t boast about our service or accomplishments,” Martha said. Another brother, Hardy, served stateside, as did her sister’s husband, who was renown for baking excellent pies in the Air Force.

After the war, Martha’s siblings convinced her parents to move so Martha could benefit from Texas’ superior school system. She excelled in office skills, and after graduating high school with honors, Martha went to live with her sister in San Antonio. She was secretary to the accountant at McKesson, when she caught the eye of co-worker Joe Schmidt. They were married for 49 years and raised their children in Hollywood Park. Her son, daughter, and their families visit Martha often at her home in Independence Hill Retirement Community. The little ones love to watch the koi fish swim in the indoor pond, and Martha appreciates the on-site hair and nail salon. She has made many friends in the five years she has lived there.

When Martha’s children grew and became more independent, she helped a friend found the Diamontrigue business in the early 1970s. Her idea to market the jeweler’s ability to duplicate expensive diamond pieces in cubic zirconia for travel led to the creation of the retail store in Dijon Plaza. Martha was in charge of banking, hiring, and payroll and remained an integral part of the business for 37 years.

“It is so strange how life happens,” Martha said. “Somebody up there has a big book. If you want something written on your page of life, you’d better make it good.”

For more information about the lifestyle offered at Independence Hill, call (210) 764-5260, or go to www.independencehill.com.

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By Amy Morgan

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