

## Back to the Future by Beverly Denver

A few months ago, I took a leisurely drive north to The Woodlands. I wanted to re-acquaint myself with a community that has long held a special place in my heart – a place I used to consider “home” and know as well as anyone.

For a long time I was there “on the scene” when news broke and events happened. First, I worked for *The Woodlands Sun*, then *The Woodlands Villager* and then *The Courier*. All the while, The Woodlands was my beat, and its movers and shakers were the people I got to know best and wrote about most often in my articles and columns.

I started my career in The Woodlands in 1982 – when the “new hometown” was less than 10 years old. By then, a few neighborhoods had been built. There were a few churches, a few parks and a few schools. There were a few office buildings. There was a small shopping mall attached to The Woodlands Inn and Country Club. There were golf courses, a few cafes, gas stations and banks.

Even with all that development, The Woodlands was still a relatively small place; getting to know those active in the community was easy and fun!

Ah, the early years of The Woodlands! A magical place in time, when everything was about the future!

Covering The Woodlands was always exciting. Getting to see the developer, George Mitchell, often was a treat. Hearing him speak of his vision and the master plan for The Woodlands was amazing, but even more incredible was being there to see so many of his imaginings become reality.

Groundbreakings, ribbon-cuttings and grand openings! I tried to keep track of how many I attended in those early days. But, after awhile, I gave up. There were just so many of them — another school, church, park or office building, the first hospital, the opening of the Kuykendahl Bridge connecting Harris and Montgomery counties, The Woodlands Mall, the Town Center, The Woodlands Waterway. All of the celebrations were awesome and worthy of note. But each, like another piece in a jigsaw puzzle, made the picture of that urban forest clearer and even more beautiful.

I loved my role in the community — as an eyewitness and recorder of history. I loved sharing with others the great story of The Woodlands.

Recently, I've made more trips to The Woodlands — most often to prepare for the special coverage you'll find inside this issue. I needed to find out what's new and different in The Woodlands now, as well as what we still have to look forward to in the future.

Each time I visited The Woodlands, I tried to put the past behind me. I kept telling myself, "Back to the future Bev. You've got to get back to the future!" But it was tough.

My time in The Woodlands was incredibly special. I was blessed with many great experiences, and now I have many fond memories. So, as delighted as I am to tell you about The Woodlands of today, I just can't help thinking about The Woodlands I used to know and love.