By Amy Morgan

Her youngest grandchildren call Elaine Carter, Red, (including the grandson named Blu, short for Blucher). Their granddaughter and eight grandsons, ranging in age from 30-12, are the jewels in the crown of she and her husband, Ned’s, colorful life story. The couple celebrated 60 years of marriage in December, thirteen of which they have resided at Independence Village in Stone Oak, the fantastic and upbeat neighborhood of resort style homes for adults 55+.

The Carters grew up in Kingsport, Tennessee, a small community where everyone knew each other, most babies were delivered by family doctor T.B. Yancey (Ned’s grandfather) and high school Christmas formals and Saturday night dances at the Episcopal church hall were the highlight of the teenage social scene.

Elaine is the eldest of three girls; Ned the eldest of three boys. Ned’s younger brother, Locke, and Elaine were school chums. He convinced Ned and Elaine to double date with him and her sister Janet, whom Locke eventually married.

“Although our experiences were different – Ned rode horses – and I roller skated and rode bikes in town – our values were the same,” she said.

Ned was a chemistry major the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, and a member of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, while Elaine was an English major at East Tennessee University and a Kappa Delta sorority. After their Christmas wedding in 1956, Ned continued his education at the University of Tennessee, teaching freshman chemistry while earning a Ph.D. in organic and physical chemistry. In 1961, Ned earned a post-doctoral degree following research for Oak Ridge Laboratory, where atomic energy had been developed. He was inducted into the Sigma Xi Honorary Society for outstanding researchers worldwide.

Elaine went to work in the advertising department of Rich’s Department Store, which rivaled Neiman Marcus in the South, she said. She wrote advertising copy and radio ads. She remembers going to work in a hat and heels and always being ready to stand in if the ad team needed a model or someone to display a product. Elaine said she still can’t stop critiquing commercials.

Their first two children were born during their time in Knoxville. After completing Ned’s studies, the Carters moved to Longview. Ned worked as a chemist at Texas Eastman Chemical, where he researched how to use the natural resources of oil and gas to create products for the film industry – specifically catalysts for film and plastics, he said. He personally holds many patents from the research he developed during his 40 years with the company. His chemical research formed the backbone of products with which many might be familiar today.

They were active parishioners at Trinity Episcopal. Elaine had their youngest child and volunteered in many community capacities: serving as president of the Longview Junior League and working with the Longview Museum, school board and city council. Being aware of the needs of others was a lesson she learned from her mother, Elaine said, who, was always ready with a casserole to help someone in need.

Recently, the couple returned to the Carter family farm, Ned & Locke, named after the three Carter boys, where 50 Yanceys and Carters gathered at the more than 100-year-old farmhouse. The reunion continued Elaine’s tradition, started in the 1970s, of designing special monogrammed “comfort cups” – a forerunner to today’s personalized Yeti.

In their spare time, Ned enjoys golf and reading, and Elaine is an avid bridge player.