

## ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2024-0162

HLC DATES: May 1, 2024; June 5, 2024; July 3, 2024; August 7, 2024; September 4, 2024; October 2, 2024; November 6, 2024

ZAP DATE: January 7, 2025; January 21, 2025; February 6, 2025

APPLICANT: Historic Landmark Commission (owner-opposed)

HISTORIC NAME: Running Rope Ranch

WATERSHED: Shoal Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 7304 Knox Lane

ZONING CHANGE: SF-3 to SF-3-H

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 10

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Recommend historic zoning (SF-3-H) only for the portion of the property already restricted by the conservation easement and critical water quality zones. Exclude the portion of the property set aside for the construction of a detention pond and drainage.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DESIGNATION: community value, historical associations, archaeology, landscape features

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: May 1, 2024 – Postpone the public hearing. September 4, 2024 – initiate historic zoning. November 6, 2024 – Recommend historic zoning under the criteria for community value, archaeology, and landscape features for the conservation easement, critical water quality zones, and THC-identified archaeological sites located on the property.

ZONING AND PLATTING COMMISSION ACTION: January 7, 2025 – Postpone the public hearing. January 21, 2025 – meeting canceled. February 6, 2025 – no action taken; motion to grant historic zoning did not pass (3-7-1; Commissioners Flores, Boone, Fouts, Floyd, Pyzycki, Stern, and Major voting nay; Commissioner Smith recused).

CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

CASE MANAGER: Kalan Contreras, 512-974-2727

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS: Austin Independent School District, Austin Lost and Found Pets, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Friends of Austin Neighborhoods, NW Austin Neighbors, Neighborhood Empowerment Foundation, Northwest Austin Civic Association, SELTexas, Sierra Club, Austin Regional Group, TNR BCP - Travis County Natural Resources

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: As the property is documented as a state archaeological site, collaboration with the Texas Historical Commission may be required.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

***§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(ii) Historical Associations.*** *The property has long-standing significant associations with persons, groups, institutions, businesses, or events of historical importance that contributed significantly to the history of the city, state, or nation or represents a significant portrayal of the cultural practices or the way of life of a definable group of people in a historic time.*

The property is most recently associated with the Knox family and Running Rope Ranch. The farmstead may have an earlier association with the Spicewood Springs settlement served by Esperanza School.

The ranch complex at Knox Lane and Running Rope Lane, known as 7304 or 7306 Knox, was constructed in the early twentieth century—as early as 1900 according to an interview with long-time owner Margaret

Knox<sup>1</sup>—and augmented heavily by the Knox family in the 1940s and later. Located less than a mile from the original site of the Esperanza School,<sup>2</sup> now located at Zilker Park, the farmstead was part of the rural Spicewood Springs community.<sup>3</sup> The land was purchased in the 1930s by Mary Lou and Warren Penn Knox, according to an oral history given to writer Carol Jones for the Northwest Austin Civic Association by their grandchildren,<sup>4</sup> though archival records of the Knox occupancy there do not extend to before the 1940s. W. P. Knox, the district commissioner for the Boy Scouts of America, turned the property into a day camp for boys called Running Rope Ranch in 1947. The ranch offered riding lessons, hiking and survival training, and swimming in the spring-fed pool. The land boasted seven natural springs, later identified by Margaret Thomas Knox as a habitat of the threatened Jollyville Plateau salamander.<sup>5</sup> From 1959 to 1966, legendary Austin horsewoman Ginger Pool taught at the ranch.<sup>6</sup> The Knox family operated the day camp for ten years.

In later years, James and Margaret Thomas Knox and their children moved to the property. Margaret Knox, Captain W. P. Knox's daughter-in-law, was the daughter of famed Austin architect Roy L. Thomas. She married aviator and P.O.W. James Knox in 1944. After he retired from the military, the couple moved back to his family home on the ranch in 1966. There, Margaret Knox, described as a "contemporary Mother Goose"<sup>7</sup> by author Robyn Turner, worked as a seamstress, a beekeeper, a children's book author, and a wildlife rehabilitator until her death in 2022.

**§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(iii) Archaeology.** *The property has, or is expected to yield, significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.*

The building is documented as a Texas archaeological site (41TV156). Preliminary research by the University of Texas indicates a high probability of significant archaeological data, including evidence of middens and springs purported to be used by Native American residents of the land.

The Knox property was identified as an archaeological site in 1969,<sup>8</sup> though it appears only a cursory survey of two middens was completed by State archaeologists at that time. Notes from the development of the adjacent Walter Carrington subdivision suggest that the listing of the property was done to foster goodwill with the Northwest Hills residents at the time considering the enactment of the Texas Antiquities Code.

Exact locations of archaeological resources are unavailable: state archaeological site information is not disclosed to the public to dissuade vandalism, and information obtained from the Texas Historical Commission on the site's relative location and integrity may not be distributed.

**§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(iv) Community Value.** *The property has a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, a neighborhood, or a particular group.*

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, Robyn. "Margaret Knox." In *Austin Originals: Chats with Colorful Characters*, 71-74. Paramount Publishing Company, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> "1866 Esperanza School at Spicewood Springs." Travis County Historical Commission Blog, 2017. [https://traviscountyhistorical.blogspot.com/2017/02/1866-esperanza-school-and-spicewood\\_3.html](https://traviscountyhistorical.blogspot.com/2017/02/1866-esperanza-school-and-spicewood_3.html)

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence with Vice-Chair Richard Denney, Travis County Historical Commission

<sup>4</sup> Carol Jones for NWACA News, May 2022: <https://nwaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05-May-NWACA-Newsletter.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> "Jollyville Salamander." Austintexas.gov: <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/jollyville-salamander>

<sup>6</sup> "Ginger Poole." The Chronicle of the Horse, 2006: <https://www.chronofhorse.com/article/obituaries-021006?page=2>

<sup>7</sup> Turner, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> "Universal Data Form: 41TV156." University of Texas at Austin, 1969. Courtesy of Travis County Historical Commission.

The property has served human inhabitants of the Spicewood Springs area for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Many communities, from the area's original Native American inhabitants to the children served by the day camp there in the mid-twentieth century, have valued this site for its natural springs.

The property has been noted in several Northwest Austin Civic Association publications and by neighbors as a community fixture for many years during its occupancy by the Knox family. It also appears to be of value as one of the last remaining indicators of the original Spicewood community served by the Esperanza School; the oldest building on the site—a log cabin like those utilized by cedar choppers and early ranchers—has been moved to its current location, but likely came from somewhere nearby with the same or similar historic context.

**§ 25-2-352(3)(c)(v) Landscape Feature.** *The property is a significant natural or designed landscape or landscape feature with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.*

While some of the original ranch has been developed and some outbuildings removed, natural springs and a spring-fed swimming pool remain. These landscape elements show the progression of the site and its occupants' needs: natural springs were likely used by the site's original Native American residents, then by the occupants of the farmstead, then converted to a swimming pool for the children of Running Rope Ranch.

Should the property achieve historic zoning, Historic Preservation Office and Watershed Protection staff will collaborate to ensure that appropriate restoration of the pool-enclosed spring is possible. Portions of the concrete pool structure will be removed to rehabilitate the spring; modifications to this historic landscape feature can be mitigated by installation of interpretive materials, reuse of non-harmful existing masonry elements, etc.

PARCEL NO.: 0140030611

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: ABS 217 SUR 15 DAVIS G W ACR 5.772

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX EXEMPTION (non-homestead, not capped):

AISSD	COA	TC	TC Health	Total
\$1,751.82	\$1,817.24	\$1,241.88	\$410.46	\$5,221.40

APPRAISED VALUE: Land: \$1,137,500; Improvement: \$246,522; Total: \$1,384,022

PRESENT USE: vacant

DATE BUILT/PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: ca. 1907; 1907-1974

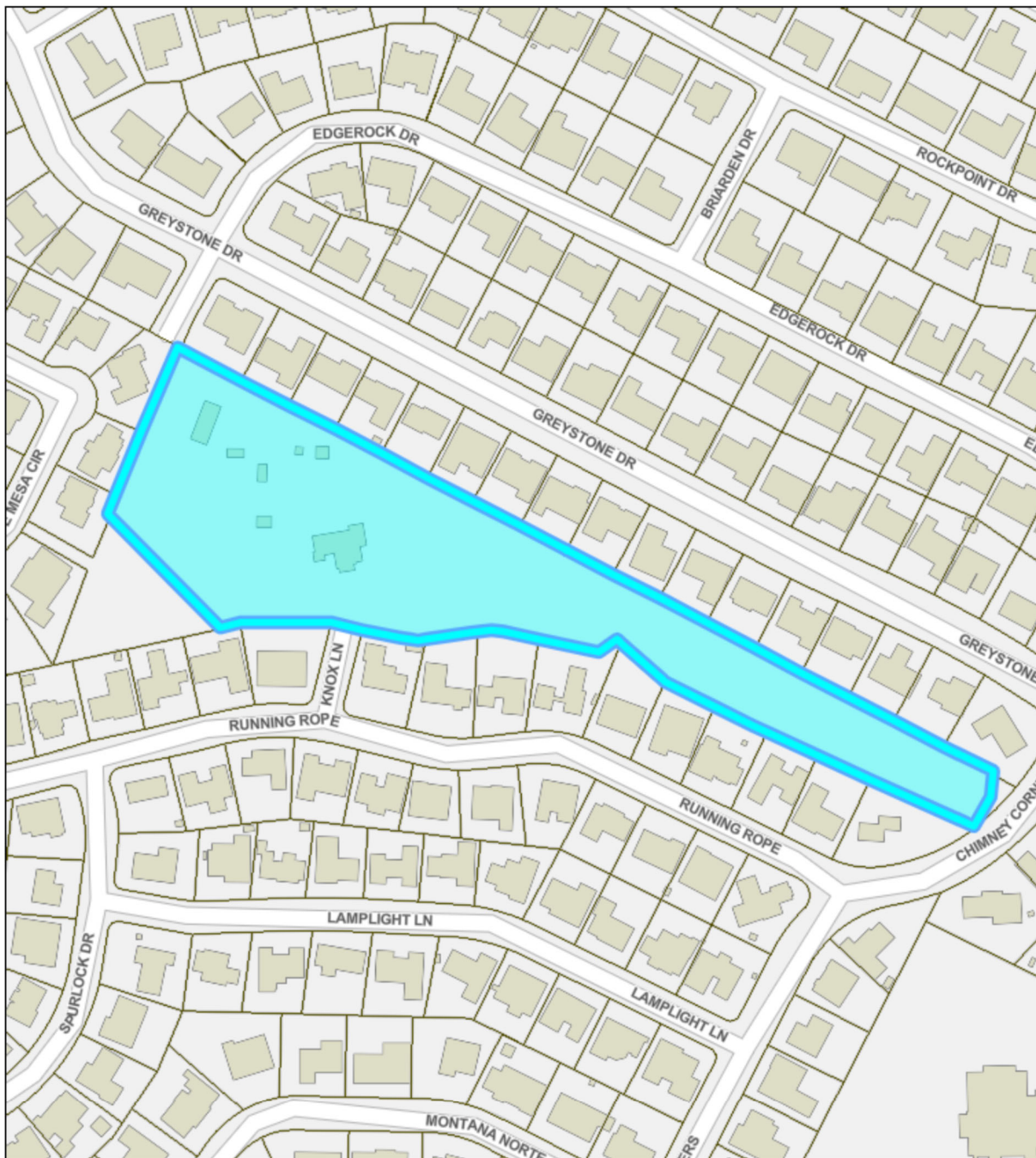
INTEGRITY/ALTERATIONS: The area within the current proposed conservation easement and critical water quality zone is undeveloped, and—though archaeological resource locations are not available to the public—there is no evidence that the subsurface resources therein have been disturbed since their documentation in 1969. However, archaeological site information is not available to the public to dissuade vandalism, and information obtained from the Texas Historical Commission on the site's relative location and integrity may not be distributed.

PRESENT OWNERS: Chase Equities, Inc. (Jimmy Nassour)

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): G. W. Davis

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Property evaluated as state archaeological site #41TV156

## LOCATION MAP



1: 2400

Lot Lines  
Lot Line

12/20/2022

**GF 22-169703**

7304 KNOX LANE



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## PROPERTY INFORMATION

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### *Photos*



*Google Street View, 2022*



*Annotated 1940 aerial photo, courtesy of Commissioner Rich Denney, noting property entrance and that the buildings onsite predate the Hart Ranch.*



*1958 aerial photo showing additions to main house and outbuildings*

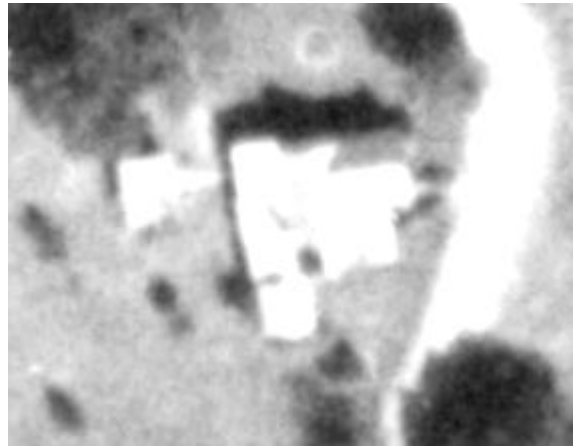


*1965 aerial photo showing main house, outbuildings, and riding arenas*





*1976 aerial photo showing neighborhood development on farmstead*





*Footprint progression from 1940, 1965, 1977, 1984, and 1997 aerial photographs*

### *Occupancy History*

City Directory Research, October 2022

Address not listed in City directories.

### *Biographical Information*

**Knox-Rogan.**  
One of the most beautiful of home weddings was solemnized Saturday evening at the home of the bride's parents, Judge and Mrs. Charles A. Rogan, when their daughter, Miss Mary Lou Rogan became the bride of Warren Penn Knox of San Antonio. The ceremony was pronounced by the Rev. A. Frank Smith of San Antonio, in the presence of a large group of friends of the young people.

Immediately after the ceremony Mr. and Mrs. Knox left for their home in San Antonio, where a furnished bungalow awaits them. The bride's going away suit was a modish spring model coat suit with accessories to correspond. A corsage of roses was prettily worn with it. The wedding bouquet tossed by the bride as she departed, was caught by Miss Ruth Robbins. The bride is the attractive daughter of Judge and Mrs. Rogan and was reared in Austin. She graduated at the Austin High School and the University of Texas. She is an Alpha Delta Pi, and has been teacher of Spanish in the Main Avenue High School of San Antonio.

The bridegroom, Warren Penn Knox

is a graduate of New Hampshire State College, his home being in Madbury, N. H. During the war he was a first lieutenant in the Fourteenth Cavalry, Fort Sam Houston. He is now connected with the Chamber of Commerce in San Antonio.

Out of town guests for the wedding were: Misses Ruth Robbins, Reagan; Lucile Bell, San Antonio; Emily Dickson, San Antonio; Mrs. W. L. Freeman, and Master Robert Willis Freeman, San Antonio; Messrs. James D. McCusker, San Antonio; Dee Montgomery, San Antonio; Itoe L. Montgomery, San Antonio; Mr. and Mrs. P. D. Warren, Boston, Mass; Mr. and Miss Palmer, Boston, Mass; ((relatives of the groom)); Rev. A. Frank Smith of San Antonio.

*Knox-Rogan. The Statesman (1916-1921); 07 Mar 1920: A2.*

## **BOY LEADERSHIP COURSE AT ST. EDWARD'S; KEEN INTEREST IS MANIFEST**

The boy leadership training course, sponsored by the boys' life bureau of the Knights of Columbus is being conducted at St. Edward's College by Professor Ray Hoyer, B. S., A. M., director of the graduate department of boy guidance at the University of Notre Dame, assisted by W. P. Knox, assistant regional scout executive of Austin. Professor Hoyer is also assisted by Rev. E. Vincent Mooney, C. S. C., A. M., LL. B., head of the department of social sciences at St. Edward's College.

## **Circus Scheduled Friday**

The Capital City Circus, which shows here Friday and Saturday at its home lot, the 2200 block on Leon street, is an Austin product. All performers are Austin people recruited and trained here, while the equipment has been made or purchased in Austin. W. P. Knox, who is directing the organization and training the circus, is a former boy scout executive, and has been a camp director and boys' worker for many years. This is the fourth home talent circus that Mr. Knox has directed. His last show was at Kingsville.

The Capital City Circus has all the features of a big circus, with clowns, aerialists, animal acts and side shows. The grounds have taken on a real circus appearance. High poles from which the trapeze and swinging ladders are suspended have been erected and are in use daily. The circus rings are also busy as animals are being rehearsed in their acts. The trained animals include horses, ponies, mules, dogs, goats, pigs, rabbits and ducks. A yoke of red steers, pulling a small covered wagon, is one of the features. The menagerie will include many kinds of wild and domestic animals.

Knox said he has had excellent cooperation from the various organizations and individuals in making this Austin circus a success.

*BOY LEADERSHIP COURSE AT ST. EDWARD'S; KEEN INTEREST IS MANIFEST. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 15 Aug 1924: 4.*

*Circus Scheduled Friday. The Austin American (1914-1973); 03 Sep 1933: A2.*



## 3 Scout Leaders To Attend Course

Three executives of the capitol Boy Scout area will attend a regional troop camping course to be given in San Angelo April 21-23,

it was announced Wednesday.

The three are Warren P. Knox, district commissioner; Jack Stoltz, university student, and Noel P. Amstead, assistant scout executive. Other members of the local council expect to attend the course to be given in Houston May 19-21.

A course in troop camping for scouters of the council will be held here May 27-29 by the men trained in the regional courses.

*3 Scout Leaders To Attend Course. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 19 Apr 1939: 3.*

## Knox, Thomas Rites to Be Solemnized Here Saturday

Miss Margaret Ruth Thomas, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Leonidas Thomas, will become the bride of Aviation Cadet James W. Knox, son of Lt. and Mrs. Warren P. Knox, Saturday at 8:30 p. m. at the University Methodist church with the Rev. Edmund Heinsohn officiating.

Wedding music will be played at the organ by Miss Beulah Beaver. Alice Mungula will sing d'Hardelot's "Because" and Grieg's "Ich Leibe Dich."

Miss Vivian Knox, sister of the bridegroom, will be the bride's only attendant. Aviation Cadet Knox will be attended by John A. Focht, Jr., best man. Ushers will be Will Roy Thomas, brother of the bride, and Aviation Cadet Ralph B. Lawrence.

After the wedding a reception for the bridal party will be held at the home of the bride's parents. Guests will include members of the immediate families and close friends of the bride and bridegroom.

Miss Thomas and Aviation Cadet Knox are both members of old Austin families. She is the granddaughter of Mrs. George W. Beaver, and he is the grandson of the late Judge and Mrs. Charles Rogan.

Both attended Austin high school and the University of Texas. Aviation Cadet Knox was a student in the university when he joined the Army air corps in the spring of 1942. While in school he was a member of Alpha Phi Omega and the Naval R.O.T.C. unit. He will receive his wings and commission June 24 from the San Marcos navigation school.

*Knox, Thomas Rites to Be Solemnized Here Saturday. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex. [Austin, Tex]. 18 June 1943: 6.*

## **Class Views Pack Exhibit**

The pupils of the 6B class of Fulmore School have recently seen two demonstrations of transportation methods which is now under study.

The first was the exhibit and demonstration of packs, yokes, and saddles, by Captain W. P. Knox of Running Rope Ranch, held on the Fulmore grounds. The exhibit of packs carried by man included the Korean pack, the Indian pack basket, the Army packs, the Boy Scout pack, barrel stave pack, rucker sack, grain sack, Alaskan pack frame, and tump line.

*Class Views Pack Exhibit. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 11 Nov 1947: 11*

### **Running Rope Ranch**

#### **A Day Camp for Boys**

**Age 7 to 15 Years**

The camp combines ranch and outdoor activities, physical development, equitation, hiking, cooking and handicraft. Noon meal served campers.

Enrollment limited to 25 for five weeks beginning June 6.

**CAPT. W. P. KNOX**

**R. 4 Box 392 Phone 7-9684**

**RAIN.** W. P. Knox, who runs the Running Rope Ranch on Balcones Trail at Austin, reports that 1.80 inches of rain fell there Sunday, boosting his May total to 2.15 inches and the 1952 total to 10.05.

Display Ad 14 -- No Title. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); May 1949: 5.

Reuben's HALF ACRE. DAVE SHANKS Farm-Ranch Editor. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex. [Austin, Tex]. 22 May 1952: B3.

# Young Pioneers Hit the Trail We

By DAN GROVER

The Running Rope Ranch was flush with the flavor of the Old West Thursday morning.

For Captain W. P. Knox, US Army retired — fearless Indian fighter — was heading westward with his small brave band of pioneers in an oxen-drawn covered wagon.

"All right, men," he ordered sharply. "Let's get the yoke on the animals and hit the trail."

The other pioneers helping him get the vicious beasts hitched up were Charles Yett, study Indian guide; Tom Broad, lean plainsman; and his sister, Betsy Broad, the belle of the expedition into the wilds.

"Haw, there. Gee!" Capt. Knox shouted to the oxen.

AND WITH ALL this exciting activity under way, Capt. Knox was enjoying his favorite hobby: teaching outdoor life to Austin youngsters in an atmosphere charged with imaginative Old West enthusiasm.

What does it matter if the powerful "oxen" are two half-grown whiteface calves, bored with the whole thing?

And what difference does it make if the prairie schooner will only carry three kids and a dog?

Nor if the wild country is only a short drive from Austin off the Balcones Trail?

Capt. Knox and the youngsters who come to his day camp go back a hundred years in history. It's hard to tell who gets the biggest kick out of it—the captain or the kids.

"These beasts are getting too big for this yoke," Knox told a Statesman reporter and photographer who came out to watch the westerning get under way. "We'll have to get rough with them."

The Indian guide, Charles, in real life the son of Mr. and Mrs. James Yett; Plainsman Tom and Belle Betsy, children of Mr. and Mrs. John Broad; all of Austin, lit into the team to get the show on the road.

WHILE THEY WERE getting the wagon tongue connected, Knox regaled his listeners with a few facts about himself, the sort of things that have kept his youngsters open-mouthed at the Running Rope Ranch sessions.

"I'm really a damyankee," he chuckled. "Born near where they had the battle of Bunker Hill. In Charlestown, Mass. Right on Bunker Hill Street, as a matter of fact."

The two calves looked half asleep as he cinched the yoke hoops with a bit of bailing wire and continued:

"My father knew Buffalo Bill. Knew him well. I went in the Army in World War I. Later got out to work on the King Ranch. Learned rope tricks. Went traveling with Colonel Johnson's World Champion Rodeo."

About that time, the pioneer expedition suffered a slight setback as it developed that someone had left a gate open. A saddle horse and a Shetland pony were ambling leisurely out the open gate.

"Hey, boys," Knox shouted, restoring the guide and plainsman to their original status. "Somebody left the gate open. Get those horses before they get away."

While Charles and Tom tore out after the horses, Knox went on:

"Always wanted a place like this. Went back into the Army and stayed in through World War II, then to Korea. Retired before the trouble in 1949, but knew it was coming."

The boys brought the horses back

in, accompanied by a friendly collie dog.

"That dog's name is Rex," Knox said. "He's highly trained."

The captain said that an expert named Vincent Orepazo was the man who taught him—the captain—his rope tricks. This is the same man who taught Will Rogers his stuff, he added.

"Will Rogers was good, all right," Knox said as he took time out to show some of his rope tricks. He twirled a rope in his right hand, the loop spinning around in a perfect circle.

"NOW I'LL CHANGE it to my left hand," he announced, and he did just that. "Two ropes at once now," and he had two lariats circling.

"Now," he said, perspiring freely, "I will attempt to spin a rope from my teeth." He bobbed his head, bit the end of the noose, circled it, then picked up two other ropes in his hands and had all three going at once for more than a minute.

"There it is," he said, completing the act. He then tied a batch of fancy knots, climaxing with tying a different knot with each hand at the same time.

"Will Rogers had a knot trick," he recalled. "He'd tie a knot in a rope and tell the audience that 'Congress is all knotted up.' Then he'd snap the rope and the knot would disappear. Let's try that one."

The captain tied a knot near the end of a rope. He snapped the rope. The knot was still there.

"Well, well," he remarked. "Did not work that time."

"Will Rogers," he confided, "had a piece of lead in his rope to unsnap it."

But it was getting time to hit the trail. Miss Belle Betsy was in

the wagon. The massive oxen could not budge the wagon at first, so the two pioneers gave it a shove.

The captain walked alongside, prodding the oxen. Capt. Knox sniffed the air and said: "Might get some rain."

The historic departure der way. The outriders, riding their saddles, were topping the line leading to the Old West. "Keep a sharp lookout," Capt. Knox warned. "This is manche country."

Young Pioneers Hit the Trail West. Grover, Dan. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); July 1953: A13.



# Campers Plan Sports, Exhibits To End First Summer Session

Campers at Running Rope Ranch north of Austin Friday will complete their first summer session with a horse show, swimming meet and handcraft exhibit.

Owned and operated by Captain and Mrs. W. P. Knox, the ranch serves as a day camp for boys, featuring instruction in horseback riding, arts and crafts, swimming and nature.

Parents and friends of the boys presently enrolled at the ranch are invited to attend the Friday exhibition.

Boys who will participate are John Alvis, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Alvis; Kenny Dryden, son of Dr. and Mrs. S. H. Dryden; Bill Duncan, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Duncan; Tom Elkin, son of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Elkin; Merrin Fatter,

Hawkes, son of Mrs. E. H. Hawkes.

Also, Ralph Jones, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Jones; Bobby Kelly, son of Mr. and Mrs. Everette Kelly; John Knippa, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Knippa; Billy Page, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Page; Phacion Park, son of Mr. and Mrs. P. S. Park; Ben Powell III, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Powell Jr.; David Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs.

*Campers Plan Sports, Exhibits To End First Summer Session. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 30 June 1955: A17.*

# Rope Tricks Next Zilker Fare

Comedy, band music and the rope artistry of Captain W. P. Knox are on the fare of Zilker Hillside Theater Thursday at 8 p.m.

Weldon Covington and his 50 musicians of the Austin Municipal Band lead off the Starlight Revue with a half-hour concert followed by a 15-minute sing-song with Rod Kennedy.

Rope tricks of "Chief Running Rope" as Knox was titled by an

Indian tribe following an appearance at Madison Square Garden, brings an unusual talent to Zilker's open air stage—a talent which was known to many hospitalized GIs around the world whenever Capt. Knox had the time to demonstrate his hobby. Knox moved to Central Texas several years ago and established a ranch to which he transferred his Indian name.

Highlight of the evening is You-

zovytch, Susan Miskill and Diane Berebovytch.

YouTheatre is a year-around drama project for boys and girls of junior high age. Directed by Mrs. Betty Kennon of Austin Recreation Department, YouTheatre meets weekly at Austin Athletic Club.

Starlight Revue is the regular Thursday evening program at Zilker Hillside Theatre, which offers

*Starlight Revue: Rope Tricks Next Zilker Fare. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 27 June 1962: 10.*



American-Statesman/UPI

## WESTERN FLING DING AT RANCH

One hundred fifty guests gathered at Running Rope Ranch, off Balcones Drive, Saturday night for a Western Fling Ding hosted by 10 graduating seniors at Austin High School.

Those entertaining at the celebration, from left, were Phocion S. Park Jr., Terry Baylor, Thurston Bland, Mickey Edwards, Drew West, David Rohrer, John Raish, John Roh-

rer and David Coonrod. The 10th host, Steve Bone, is not pictured. During the evening there was dancing and western music. Parents of the seniors are Mr. and Mrs. Phocion

S. Park, 2501 Westover; Mr. and Mrs. Togle Baylor, 5908 Manor Road; Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Edwards Jr., 5333 Wellington; Mrs. W. A. Rohrer, 3716 Meredith; Mr. and Mrs. Robert K. Coonrod, 2801 High-

*WESTERN FLING DING AT RANCH. The Austin American (1914-1973); 06 May 1962: D17.*



*Jim Knox*

U. T. Austin—UNIVERSAL DATA FORM

FORM DATE *Oct 31, 1969* SITE *41 TV ~~159~~ 156*

Two small burnt rock middens in developing housing division in Northwest Austin. (*Hyland Hills - Northwest*)

Walter Carrington / developer Jim Knox - former owner

Jim Rush - *James W. Rush* Director of Marketing - contacted Dr. E. Mott Davis of the Dept. of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin concerning excavation with stipulation that Walter Carrington Homes could use the excavation in a public relations program (showing that the Co. is conservation minded & supports the recent antiquities law).

Universal Data Form: 41TV156. University of Texas at Austin, 1969. Courtesy of Travis County Historical Commission.



## VOLUNTEERS

Capt. W. P. Knox, chairman of the Volunteer Council of the Texas Confederate Home for Men, presents the state volunteer insignia patch to Susan Sifuentes for her personalized services. Miss Sifuentes is a new volunteer representing the future nurses of Austin High School. She, who played table

games with patients in the recreation room twice weekly after school, will continue to do so this summer. Many more of the older high school students are needed to help this summer.

Mr. and Mrs. Knox recently entertained the Volunteer Council at a barbecue supper at their Running Rope Ranch to show their appreciation to Council members for the service they have given this past season. This was the last meeting of the season.

## Capt. Knox, Longtime Scouter, Dies

Capt. Warren P. Knox, 7306 Knox Lane, died Monday in a local hospital.

He was a longtime resident of Austin, and a member of the University Methodist Church. He was a graduate of the University of New Hampshire, a longtime Boy Scout volunteer worker for the 15-county Capital Area Council and holder of the Silver Beaver Award. He was a veteran of World Wars I and II, and a captain, U.S. Army, retired. He was a life member of Marshall Ford Game Protective Association, Operator of Arrowhead Ranch Camp in Kerrville and Running Rope Day Camp in Austin.

Survivors include his wife, Mrs. Mary Lou Knox, Austin; one son, James W. Knox, Austin, one daughter, Mrs. Max W. Schulz, Schenectady, N.Y.; one sister, Miss Alice R. Knox, Tauton, Mass.; two brothers, W. E. Knox, Scarsdale, N.Y., and Henry Knox, Wrentham, Mass.; and four grandchildren.

Funeral services will be at 5 p.m. Wednesday at Weed-Corley Funeral Home with Dr. William A. Holmes officiating. Burial will be in Oakwood Cemetery.

*VOLUNTEERS. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 28 May 1965: 8.*

*Capt. Knox, Longtime Scouter, Dies. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 27 July 1971: 17.*

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS  
NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING  
CLAIMS  
AGAINST THE ESTATE OF WARREN  
PENN KNOX, DECEASED:**  
Notice is hereby given that original  
Letters Testamentary upon the Estate of  
Warren Penn Knox were issued to the  
undersigned on the 17th day of August,  
1971, in the proceeding indicated below,  
which is still pending, and that we now  
hold such Letters. All persons having  
claims against said estate are required to  
present the same within the time  
prescribed by law to James Warren Knox  
Knox, whose residence and post office  
address is 7304 Knox Lane, Austin, Texas  
78731.  
Dated this 18th day of August, 1971.  
James Warren Knox  
Vivian Knox Schult  
**INDEPENDENT EXECUTORS OF  
THE  
ESTATE OF WARREN PENN KNOX  
No. 31,504, County Court of  
Travis County, Texas.**

*Legal Notice 1 -- No Title. The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); 20 Aug 1971: 66.*

# She knew what she wanted to 'bee'

## Margaret Knox's autograph party features cookies, first graders

At right, Bob Sullivan explains his demonstration bee hive at Doss Elementary. Below, Doss students perform a song about bees they wrote as Margaret Knox, right, and Jim Knox, center, listen.

Staff Photos by Jim Shahin



By JIM SHAHIN  
American-Statesman Staff

To bee or not to bee. For author Margaret Knox, there was no question.

"All my life I wanted to keep bees," said Knox, 58. "In '77 we were finally in a position to do so. We started out with two hives, a his and a hers. Which is kind of a joke around our house because bees are always fighting, just like husbands and wives."

She and her husband, Jim, now have 35 hives abuzz at their home at 7304 Knox in Northwest Hills. "Each one has a name," she said. "Not a number, like most folks."

Her interest in bees led her to write a book, "Betsey's Bee Tree." Last Friday, two days after it officially rolled off the Shoal Creek Publishers presses, Knox was making the rounds.

Surrounded by small bees fashioned from colored paper and minglers chewing peanut butter cookies made with honey, Knox found herself at a somewhat unusual autograph party. Notable critics were not present, but Ellen Sharp was. And Ms. Sharp lauded the work.

"I think it is a good book," said Sharp, "because you could tell the main person, uhm, bee easily by a blue bow on it. Plus, I like it 'cause it's just a real good book."

Sharp, a first-grader at Doss Elementary, was voicing the general critical judgment of her peers at the party in the school library.

The book is Knox's first. But judging from the response last week, the children's story is, as a reviewer might intone, a triumphant achievement.

"I had never tried anything like this before," said Knox, whose marriage to an army officer meant constant travel and little work outside the home. "I just thought I'd try."

Her daughter, Pat Partridge, who

attended the Kansas City Art Institute, illustrated the book. Both of them worked on it for about nine months.

"I worked from a rough idea that she had down," said the daughter, who also attended the autograph party along with Knox's husband.

"It wasn't too hard, because I think in those kinds of (illustrated) figures," said the mother.

In another part of the room, students swarmed around a demonstration bee hive constructed by Bob Sullivan. He was explaining the workings of the hive, how queens are selected and the method of collecting honey. He has donated hives to several Austin area elementary schools.

"I don't push them on anyone," said Sullivan, who started making the demonstration hives three years ago. "Usually, someone from a school will ask me for one and I'll make it."

"We have been studying bees," said first-grade teacher Virginia Mullens. "We normally do in the fall. But this time the studies were made much more exciting because of all this." She gestured to the hive and Knox's book.

She said Sullivan has spoken to Doss classes on bees and hives and Knox has explained how a book is put together. "It was really a wonderful session," she said. "The kids learned so much."

The students, carrying books signed by the author, began filing out of the library. They were excited and at least one boy said his fear of bees was reduced.

The Knoxes and Sullivan answered questions raised by the students. The children asked about bees, the book, the author's personal life. But one question stood out. The student seemed to understand various complexities of the book and honey-making processes, but, she asked illustrator Partridge, "How do you stay inside the lines?"

JIM SHAHIN American-Statesman Staff. The Austin American Statesman (1973-1980), Evening ed.; 23 Oct 1980: K1.





# Margaret Knox

*Margaret Knox*

*"I've had one neighbor tell me, 'People like you ought to stay in the country.' I told her, 'I WAS in the country till ya'll moved in around me'."*

"And believe it or not, there's this charming little lady who lives on a 15-acre bee farm right smack dab in the middle of Northwest Hills. Her name is Margaret Knox, and she's written a delightful children's book *Bersey's Bee Tree*." The words of Paul Craig, speaker at a UT writers' workshop, stayed with me until I had to see for myself.

To get there, a person must not only be determined, but also specifically directed. After driving through an affluent neighborhood I am struck by the contrast of the Knoxes' unassuming 75-year-old farmhouse. A turn onto their dirt lane brings a fairytale feeling. The narrow road winds through trees, and curves around an olive-green stucco cottage capped with a crimson tin roof.

To the right, a community of beehives nestles under a wild oak grove. Further ahead, another cluster of hives grows out of a sunny meadow, each hive displaying a rainbow painted on its facade. To my left, Margaret Knox stands beneath an arbor laden with vines of orange ladyfinger blossoms — just ripe for children to flaunt on their fingertips. She looks eloquent just now, welcoming me with a perfectly-groomed giant poodle by her side.

We relax in swinging canvas chairs, which she says came from the annual Renaissance festival near Magnolia, Texas. Sipping honey-flavored tea to a symphony of locusts beneath the grape arbor, we chat. She's a contemporary Mother Goose, nestled in the heart of suburban America.

"Feel pressured to change with surroundings? Yes, we sometimes do. I've had one neighbor tell me, 'People like you ought to stay in the country'." Margaret, in bewildered, matter-of-fact manner, continues, "I told her, 'I was in the country till ya'll moved in around me'."

The petite lady with fluffy white hair speaks from within a polished appearance. But her down-to-earth messages reflect an attitude atypical of the stereotyped upper crust. Both she and her home seem to be steeped in good taste; there is an unmistakable statement of class.

"This is my husband's family's land, and my one desire is that we never have to sell. But it's not easy. We have a lot of approaches."

"Our old ranchhouse isn't built well at all. It's small and has all kinds of problems. But I don't want a big house, to scrub four baths. I guess I'm getting eccentric in my old age, but I really like it. And I don't want to change it. That's the hard part — to be in this area and not change."

*Do any of your neighbors complain about the bees?*

"Just the one. I work real hard for them not to complain. We're lucky we have the creeks and springs, and we also keep water right in the beeyard. But those bees will hang around the neighbors' swim pools. They've got a mind of their own, and if they take a notion to go elsewhere, there's not much you can do about it."



"When Jim retired in 1966 and we came back to this property, our mailbox was where the Texaco station is now,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile through pavement and houses. We had deer feeding in the front yard and silver fox we fed at night under the tree. The stars looked that big! You could come out and not see a light — which I loved. So I don't feel like I'm in the country any more, but we're keeping it as country as we can.

"I was born and raised in Austin, so I really like it here. I just pray it'll never get too big and citified. It's still a friendly little town, I think. And I've heard more delightful tales about all the things people did to help others who were in trouble over the recent flood. Now, maybe those things would have happened in a big city, but I don't much believe so. Columns and columns of names of people who would give their time and services. Churches, Red Cross, neighbors, strangers, everyone helping everyone.

"The flood didn't affect us much up here, except that our spring-fed pool is full of debris. So I've stayed busy trying to clean it. And I like to sew, I dabble in art, we do our own yard work, and keep bees. All these lovely articles about running a home, raising a family, having a career — how in the world can anybody do a good job of any of it? Some people seem to be able, though. I have friends who play bridge and socialize and don't understand why I like to stay home so."

Explaining the history of each piece of furniture

inside her house, and offering samples of honey which she displays and sells from a back room nook. Margaret reveals her artistic flare in it all. Obviously a perfect housekeeper, she also designs attractive displays for the honey — choices of calico-ribbioned baskets to support crock jar containers, or simple pint jars glowing with the golden sweetness. And the label, "Honey Hut Honey — from local bees with love. Austin, Texas."

"I've always given my children medicine made from honey, whiskey and lemon juice. It's just the best thing for a croup." Here are samples of "Crop's In" postcards sent to regular customers at honey harvest time. And on a wooden wine barrel which stands in the center of the nook, sits the book about Betsey's bees.

As we settle into her small office, Margaret tells the saga of why she wrote the book. "Jim and I started keeping bees in 1977 when we took a course in beekeeping at Matthews Community School. The more I got into it, the more it fascinated me. The course helped a lot, but when you learn is when you get the bees. We got our two hives and called them his and hers, a big joke. Because the first thing you find out about beekeeping is that no two people keep bees alike. We belong to the Austin Area Beekeepers Association. It's on a friendly basis, but it's funny how everyone differs in their ideas about beekeeping.

"Most beekeepers are calm, gentle people. Even



above: "I was born and raised in Austin, so I really like it here. I just pray it'll never get too big and citified. It's still a friendly little town."

"Consequently, the first sentence in my book, 'The sun was peeking over the hill'."





the men. There's an easygoingness, and they just seem to commune better with the whole universe. And I think it's from observing bees, because there's nothing that's more in tune with nature than a colony of bees.

"So our *his* and *her* hives were just kind of a joke. But the big joke is that now we have 52 hives that all have names." As a matter of fact, the lingo at the Knoxes' farm more closely resembles a Bluegrass music festival than an apiary:

"Peach Pickers, Happy Hobos, Cedarchoppers, Stumpjumpers, Lexington Ladies, Nighthawks, C-Bees, Pflugerfille Pflock — we name them for the places where we get the hives, or else from the way they behave. It's just a lot easier to talk about the Toilers or the Plaza Paisanos than to say Hive #5 on the back row.

"The first hive we got we called the Happy Hobos. There's just something about bees swarming that makes them look like they're happy. They were on a little thistle and all we had to do was shake them off into the hive. Since then, we've really gotten some lulus. Yes, that easy initiation was made to order for two green beekeepers.

"I've been stung many times, and it's true that the more times you get stung, it isn't quite as big a deal. Part of it is understanding your bees. When they're working hard, they're not really concerned about you unless you swat them or knock their hive over. They may bump into you, because they're loaded with

nectar and they get clumsy. But if you're not aggressive, they go on about their business. The other trick is to act slow.

"Otherwise, they'll get on the defensive and the guards will come out and run you off. I wear the veil and hat. A lot of old time beekeepers pride themselves on never wearing protection and I say, 'Bully for them,' but I don't like to get stung."

From a shelf, Margaret pulls 10 journals she's filled with her observations of the bees' activities. "They remind you of people when you watch them so much. The little ones all come out and scrub the porch at certain hours every day. They can't fly yet, so their duties are house duties. It's as if Mama said, 'Get out there and clean the porch.'

"So here I was, taking all these silly notes, and I said, 'Jim, I've just got to write a story, because kids are scared to death of bees and it's so stupid!'"

*Have you always written journals on everything you do?*

"No. My son Chris got me started. He's a naturalist, and in high school he started keeping a journal when he backpacked. I now realize that keeping a journal will open up your mind like nothing else will. I don't care how silly the thought is. If you put down what you think, it starts falling into place and you think more. You see more in everything you do. It's just fascinating."

*How did you know where and how to begin your book?*



Margaret's book Betsy's Bee Tree.



"I just naturally think in animation, anyway. And because I was trying to make children understand about bees, I tried to imagine what it would be like to be a young bee inside a hive.

"It's just so much fun to watch them in the morning. Get up before daybreak and see them come in. Oh boy! They're so happy. So glad to be alive on a new day. Consequently, the first sentence in my book, 'The sun was peeking over the hill.'

"Then I called my daughter, who's a graduate of Kansas City Art Institute, and said, 'Pat, I'm going to write a book about bees, and will you do the illustrations?' Of course, I'd never written a book in my life and I don't think she really thought I meant it, so she said, 'Oh sure, Mom' — you know.

"I just started writing. I don't know how real authors do it, but I'd go along some, then call Pat and tell her about it. Maybe send her some thumbnail sketches, although I'm not an artist. That's the way we did the whole thing. I'd start to tell her how I think this bee ought to be, and she'd take over with, 'Yes, I know what you mean.' We had a lot of fun with it."

Pulling from a portfolio the original illustrations

done with watercolor and colored pencils, we marvel at the beautiful guashes and detail. Even highlights in the bees' eyes are hexagon shapes, as in a bee comb.

"I started writing in June of '78 and had it pretty well written in six months. Of course, you know how that is — you just polish and polish, even on a little 32-page book."

Margaret says the most difficult aspect of the entire project arose in her dealings with publishers, after the manuscript and illustrations were completed. Determination, along with confidence in her product, finally saw her through.

"But I thoroughly enjoyed writing the book and hope to write another one."

Besides staying home to write and keep bees, Margaret and Jim can be seen around town under eaves, hanging from staircases, in treetops — rescuing swarms.

"You know, people get bothered by invading swarms, and they love for somebody to come take them away. We do it free, but warn them that we're not professionals. 'If you don't pay, you get Mutt and Jeff.' and here we come!"



"That's the hard part — to be in this area and not to change."



# **An Interview with Mrs. Margaret Knox**

*- Luci Thompson*

I interviewed longtime Northwest Hills (NWH) resident and neighbor Mrs. Margaret Knox about what it was like to live in NWH before the area was developed. You maybe familiar with the street called Running Rope, but did you know it was a boy's summer day camp called Running Rope Ranch?

Running Rope Ranch was started by Warren and Mary Lou Knox and ran for 10 years. Warren came to Texas from Vermont after World War I. He was in the Cavalry during the war. Warren was a fan of film star Will Rogers, and he proposed to Mary Lou on horseback. Warren and Mary Lou decided to settle down in Austin and he bought 250 acres here in NWH in the 1930's for \$15 per acre. It was a large ranch that went from the corner of Far West and Chimney Corners to West Rim and along Greystone Drive that backs up to Running Rope.

Warren was a Silver Eagle Scout and enjoyed teaching what Scouts needed to know. He loved doing rope tricks and he often showed them to the boys. The boys learned to ride horses, tie knots, and start fires. They were fed a hot meal for lunch cooked by an African American cook named Ulah.

Margaret Thomas met James W. Knox at a church picnic at Barton Springs. James brought Margaret out to the ranch for picnics while they were courting. James joined the Army Air Corps the day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, and he married Margaret soon afterward.

James and Margaret Knox spent many years traveling with the military, but settled down in NWH in 1966. I asked Mrs. Knox what it was like when they moved back here in 1966, and she said it was beautiful open country with lots of deer. The gate to their property used to be at the corner of Far West and Chimney Corners. They had a peach orchard where the GW Boutique is now located. They also had a herd of goats, a few white-faced cattle, and horses. Their daughter Patricia was in college, and their son James Christopher (Chris) was in high school at McCallum.

I asked Mrs. Knox, "What types of animals would you see on the ranch?" She said there were deer, red and silver foxes, raccoons, herons, armadillos, rabbits, possums, and occasionally skunks. Coyotes weren't around back then, and there used to be more rabbits. Her son Chris had a love of nature. He raised a Red Tail Hawk named "Lots" for Lord of the Sky and a baby raccoon name "Loki." But his most surprising pet was an American alligator named Harvey, who used to live in their natural spring pool. Harvey was donated to the San Antonio Zoo years later.

There is even a threatened animal species, the Jollyville Plateau salamander, that lives in the largest of their seven natural springs. The salamander is brown with pink ruffles for gills. Close to the water spring was an old Native American Indian mound, too. I

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asked Mrs. Knox what her favorite memories were about Running Rope Ranch and she said coming out to the ranch for picnics and family get togethers at the pool.

I want to thank Mrs. Knox for letting me interview her while I work toward my Girl Scout Bronze Award.

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*2017 interview by Luci Thompson for NWACA News: [https://issuu.com/peel\\_inc/docs/1704nac](https://issuu.com/peel_inc/docs/1704nac)*

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# History Interview: Betty Wood

— Carol Jones

Betty Wood has had a life of adventure, teaching and living all over the world. She has been in this neighborhood for almost 50 years. To her, Northwest Hills has always felt like a small town inside of Austin.

Betty is from Pampa, in the Texas Panhandle. She was born during the Great Depression and the devastating Dust Bowl years. When the dust storms started, they would place wet towels over the windows and doors, and over their faces so that they could breathe. Afterward came the task of cleaning up the dust that had relentlessly sifted into the house.

She was thrilled to be able to go to college, majoring in Business Education with a minor in English. When jobs for teaching opened in the Defense Department, she and her first husband applied. They were sent to France, then Germany, Ethiopia, Japan, and the Philippine Islands. In those years, she taught American children stationed at military bases.

After her Defense Department travels, Betty knew she didn't want to live in a small rural area, so they moved to Austin. Her first house in 1972 was at 4004 North Hills Drive, just up the hill from the new Murchison Middle School. It cost \$43,000, a lot of money then. They briefly thought about buying an empty lot with a beautiful view up on the peak of Cat Mountain. But that lot cost \$15,000, too much for just land.

She is friends with some original residents of Northwest Hills, such as Margaret Knox. She has fond memories of swimming at the spring-fed pool at the Knox farmhouse, part of the original sprawling Running Rope Ranch. When one of her kids got injured, Dr. Stanley Casner was right there in the neighborhood on Spicewood Springs Road. Northwest Hills had it all: grocery stores, a post office, new schools, and churches. It truly was a small town within Austin.

*Continued on Page 12*

NWACA News, January 2021: <https://nwaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-01-January-NWACA-Newsletter.pdf>

## Captain Knox and the Running Rope Ranch – Carol Jones



Knox created a one-ring circus on the property with bleachers and a metal roof, featuring his trained animals. "How old are you?" he would ask Rosie, the miniature cow. Rosie would answer by tapping her hoof on the ground the correct number of times. Parents brought their kids there for one-of-a-kind birthday parties.

It's hard to imagine how much of present-day Northwest Hills was part of the Running Rope Ranch. It was an adventure out in the wild country just to get there from Austin, driving on a long winding dirt road from Balcones Drive on the east (now Mopac).

There was a large Quonset hut on the west end of the ranch, near current-day Enclave Mesa. The hut had a swing inside, hung from the ceiling on 20' long ropes. If someone pushed you hard enough, you could touch the horns of a mule deer mounted over the fireplace. The kids all loved that fantastic swing. It made them feel as if they were flying through the Quonset hut. At the back of the spacious building was a large kitchen with a serving window to the outside. There were lots of barbecues and picnics at the ranch.

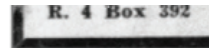
### Running Rope Ranch A Day Camp for Boys Age 7 to 15 Years

The camp combines ranch and outdoor activities, physical development, equitation, hiking, cooking and handi-craft. Noon meal served campers.

Enrollment limited to 25 for five weeks beginning June 6.

CAPT. W. P. KNOX





Tucked away on a quiet side street in Northwest Hills is the remaining few acres of the Running Rope Ranch. In the mid-1900s, it was a rollicking boys day camp, with horseback riding, hiking, and other outdoor activities.

In the 1930s, a visionary named Warren P. Knox purchased 250 acres far out in the country. According to his family, he paid somewhere between \$1.25 - \$15 per acre. Everyone told him it was a big waste of money. The land consisted of Hill Country scrub oaks, cedar breaks, cactus, and rocks. Also, it was miles away from Austin. Nobody could imagine wanting to live that far away from town.

But Knox had imagination. He had served in the Cavalry in WW I and was very comfortable around horses and other animals. Having his own ranch was likely his dream come true. A 1949 newspaper ad proclaimed Running Rope Ranch as a "Day Camp for Boys Age 7 to 15 Years," with "ranch and outdoor activities, physical development, equitation, hiking, cooking and handicraft."

On July 23, 1953, the Austin newspaper had a feature article about him. "... Capt. Knox was enjoying his favorite hobby: teaching outdoor life to Austin youngsters in an atmosphere charged with imaginative Old West enthusiasm." He was a big fan of Will Rogers and liked to demonstrate rope twirling tricks and knot-tying techniques. His granddaughter Pat Partridge remembers him coming to elementary schools to make balloon animals, perform magic tricks, and tell Wild West stories. His grandson James Christopher (Chris) sent me a picture of Captain Knox balancing on a tightrope.

The animals at Running Rope Ranch all had names starting with "R" to match the ranch name, such as Rex, Rebecca, and Rosie. Captain



Several people I spoke to described Captain Knox as "larger than life." Former Austin resident Kate Lyon has many fond memories of him. Her parents would drop her off at Running Rope Ranch for the whole day. She took horseback riding lessons and rode around in the Captain's Jeep over the bumpy caliche roads. He had wooden crates of sodas for the kids to enjoy in the screened-in porch of the house.

Kate remembers that he wore a suit when teaching Sunday school at University United Methodist Church, where she learned more about rattlesnakes than religion. But when Captain Knox was with his animals, he always wore jodhpurs and tall riding boots, like the Cavalry man he was. "I adored him," she says. "He was generous, charming, funny, and he loved kids."

Chris Knox remembers searching for Indian arrowheads on the property with him. After a good rain, those treasures would surface. In later years, Chris realized that the Captain probably had filled his pockets with arrowheads and scattered them secretly so that the kids would have an exciting adventure. Just like a fun-loving grandfather would do.

Captain Knox's daughter-in-law, Margaret Knox, passed away recently in January 2022. She was featured in a 1982 book called *Austin Originals: Chats With Colorful Characters* by Robyn Turner. She was also featured in a 2017 NWACA newsletter interview by Girl Scout Luci Thompson. I was very fortunate to be able to spend time with Margaret's children, Pat and Chris, who have generously given their time to tell me stories about Captain Knox and send me pictures. An entire book could be written about everyone in the fascinating Knox family, who gave so much joy to Austinites.

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*Carol Jones for NWACA News, May 2022: <https://nwaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05-May-NWACA-Newsletter.pdf>*

## Margaret Knox

 [dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/austin-tx/margaret-knox-10544199](https://dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/austin-tx/margaret-knox-10544199)

### OBITUARY

October 13, 1924 – January 20, 2022

Born October 13, 1924 in the house her father designed and built on Hemphill Street in Austin, Margaret was the youngest of three children born to architect Roy L. Thomas and his wife Ruth E. (Beaver) Thomas.

Margaret attended UT and was a huge fan and long time supporter of UT's football team - "Hook'm Horns!" - declaring her blood to be burnt orange.

She married the love of her life James W. Knox on June 19th (Juneteenth) 1944 only to see him whisked away into WWII as a navigator on a B-17 (Pistol Pack'n Mama) where after 10 1/2 missions he was shot down over Bulgaria and held as a prisoner of war for nine months before being freed and finally coming home.

Margaret was the anchor of our family. Being a military wife she was faced with moving her family from place to place every few years. Making each new location a home for us whether here in the U.S. or overseas. She loved experiencing new cultures, making new friends and learning new languages. She was the constant core of our family. Helping her children weather losing old friends, to be open to making new ones, navigating new schools and sometimes new languages and customs.

Margaret loved Nature and all its inhabitants. There were always dogs and cats in our lives as well as lizards, turtles, snakes, bugs, a flying squirrel, a ferret, a pigeon named Mutts, an alligator named Harvey, a raccoon named Loki, a Red Tailed Hawk called Lots (Lord Of The Skies), just to name a few.

Another passion of Margaret's was fashion. She loved to sew and create. She had an outfit for every occasion and then some. I believe she would have been a fashion designer if that path had ever been opened to her.

She was a professional seamstress for many years helping to support her family and put her children through school.

When her husband retired from the Air Force in 1966 they moved back to Austin, which had been the hub of our family's world, to live in the old family ranch house on what was left of the Running Rope Ranch.

Finding themselves in retirement with kids grown and flown Jim and Margaret began to explore new avenues. Ever the fisherman Jim had more time to enjoy boating and bass fishing. And Margaret took up what she loved - being a seamstress again. But Margaret became restless so took up dog training and began competitively showing her standard poodle Nanook. Shortly thereafter she and Jim partnered up with some friends and opened up the "Gingham Dog & Calico Cat" grooming and boarding kennel.

Later bee keeping became a passion. Traveling all over the state selling the honey and bee's wax products from their hives at fairs, festivals and from their home. And never taking an idle moment Margaret set out to educate children by writing and getting published an illustrated book "Betsey's Bee Tree" all about the wonders of a bee's life. She traveled to local schools giving talks and readings of her book. She also had a traveling observation hive encased between two panes of glass so everyone could observe the hidden world of a living hive - queen bee and all.

Then the travel bug bit. It was time to hit the road in a big bus-like RV known as the "Brownhound". Getting out and seeing the country, visiting favorite places, parks, going to hot-air balloon festivals, seeing friends and family. Living the good life - on the road again. (Margaret loved Willie Nelson's songs).

After her husband of 67 years passed away and her children grown with families of their own Margaret began searching for someone to nurture and became interested in Wildlife Rescue of Austin. She volunteered with them caring for a variety of injured and orphaned animals. Her specialty became caring for orphaned fawns and later baby squirrels. Anything Margaret took an interest in benefited from her loving care and attention.

On top of all this Margaret loved crossword puzzles, she was a wicked Bridge player and had a clever wit. She loved jokes. She loved hearing and telling them and sharing in the laughter.

Her passing is like the end of an era. She will be missed by all who knew her.

*Obituary for Margaret Knox. Dignitymemorial.com*



## Update On The Knox Preserve

Margaret *Thomas* Knox passed January 20, 2022 allowing the development of the Knox Preserve subdivision to proceed. We've had several past articles in the newsletter on Mrs. Knox so I won't dive into her history here. But briefly for context, her husband James Knox inherited the property from his parents. His father, Capt. Warren Penn Knox, was prominent in Boy Scouting in Texas, acquired the property and after WWII started Running Rope Boys Ranch. Barring a thorough deed search, by 1946 the newspaper reports "W.P. Knox" buying the 184 acre property (The Austin American, 26 Apr 1946, Fri, Page 20). By 1947 Running Rope Ranch is up and running in the news.

The farmstead (a core house that was extended over the years; out buildings; cleared fields) is extant in the 1937 aerials of Travis County that have recently become available. An oral interview of Margaret Knox for the book *Austin Originals*, 1982, puts the farmhouse at ca. 1900 at least. Based on the history of this area, could the property be older? Maybe. For example, Esperanza School, which was above Spicewood Springs, was a one room log cabin started in 1866 serving this area.<sup>1</sup> The school was less than a mile from the Knox Preserve. Old aerial photos seem to indicate an older entrance to the property may have been off of Spicewood Springs Rd. not far from the school. Could the property be that old? We don't know without a lot more research, but from the history of the school we know there was sufficient population in the community of Spicewood Springs in 1866 to warrant a school. The log cabin school was open until 1893; so close in time to the age of the Knox house quoted by Margaret Knox. The Thurns, a German family, settled on Bull Creek in 1855 on what is today's Old Spicewood Springs Rd. at the bottom of what was known then as Thurm's Hill. Their homestead was in today's Bull Creek Park, roughly the 5300 "block" of today's Old Spicewood Springs Rd; most of it was obliterated by Loop 360 construction; the current round of work is probably finishing off any potential sub-surface remains. All to say, settlement in this area goes back a ways and the Knox Preserve, with its own spring (called out on property plats as "Indian Springs"), close to Spicewood Springs, its namesake road and Esperanza School would have been a .. what's the saying in real estate? Location, location, location.

I've been in contact with Ms. Kalan Contreras, Historic Preservation Officer, City of Austin Planning Department, swapping history on the property. She attended the Historic Landmark Commission meeting September 4<sup>th</sup> where they are considering "initiation of historic zoning on the property"; the review includes not only the house, but potential archeology of the site in

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<sup>1</sup> *Esperanza School was one of earliest one-room rural schoolhouses in Travis County. The one-room log cabin was built on the property of Richard McKenzie in 1866 above Spicewood Springs, today's 3511 Starline Drive, and served children from neighboring farms in the period before public education. In 1893 when a larger Esperanza School was built at another site the log cabin structure was put to other uses. The cabin was later moved to the Zilker Botanical Garden and restored. Bull Creek School discussed in last month's newsletter, later renamed Pleasant Valley School, also started as a one-room log cabin the next year, 1867. Spicewood Springs and its namesake community and road appear on the USGS topographic maps of Travis County surveyed 1895-1896.*

general. Everything is tentative at this point. An argument is being made to preserve the house, either on-site (possibly to an alternate spot on-site) or off-site to another location.

The Knox Preserve is one of the last relatively untouched areas in Northwest Hills up on the mesa which is today our NWACA neighborhood so it would be good if the developer would hire a firm to conduct a more thorough archeological assessment of the property as a whole. A cursory survey by UT was done in 1969 confirming prehistoric Native American presence on the property. While the wetland critical environmental feature (CEF; the springs area) will be preserved, once the bulldozers move in for development outside the CEF anything that is there is going to be lost. Fingers crossed.

*Commissioner Rich Denney for NWACA News, 2024: <https://nwaca.org/newsletter/>*

10

1495 AC WATER SERVICE PERMIT

Lot 1495 AC Block 789 Plat Sec. 789 Austin, Texas

Received of James W. Knox Date 10-18-78

Service Address 7304 Knox Ln. Size of Meter 5/8"

Amount One hundred and seventy five dollars P.R.V. Yes ✓ No ✓

Subdivision WPA Knox Vol. 191. Pg 191 RECEIVED FEB 1 9 1978

RESIDENTIAL WATER

Date of Connection 12-1-78

Size of Tap Made 1"

Size Service Made 1"

Size Main Tapped 8 CI

From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock 7'

From 5 Prop. Line to Curb Cock 1'

Location of Meter Curb

Type of Box ROUND - SMALL

Depth of Main in St. 10"

Depth of Service Line 10"

From Curb Cock to Tap on Main

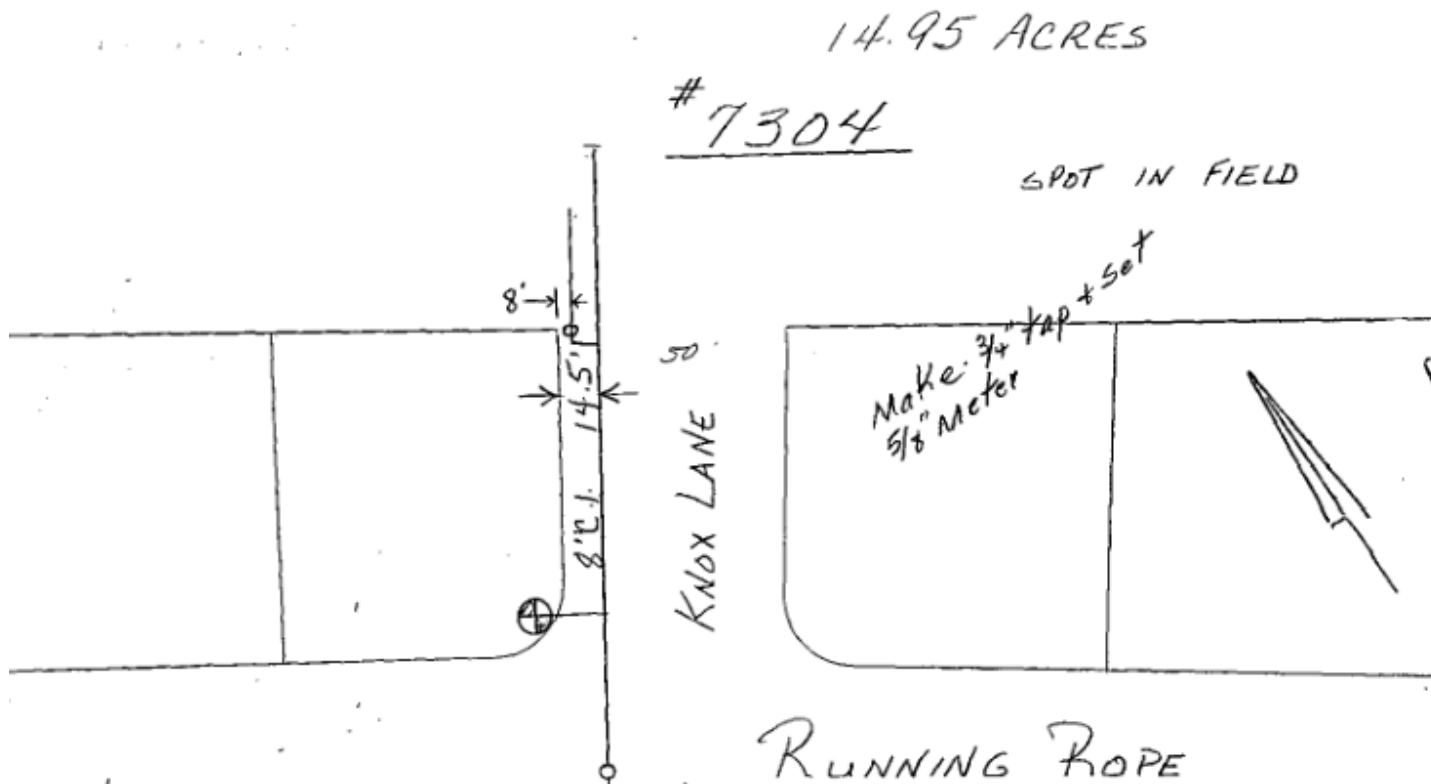
Zone: East ✓ Central ✓ West ✓

WLP 0053

No. Fittings	Size	Material
1	15' Pipe	PE 1"
1	Corp. Cock	
1	Cop. to Iron ell.	
1	Cop. to Cop. ell.	
1	Cop. to Iron Coupling	
1	Cop. to Cop. Coupling	
1	Angle Stop	
1	Stop	
1	Bushing	1" METER
1	Nipples	8 x 3/4"
1	Service Clamp	8 x 1"
1	Valve	
1	Meter Box	ROUND SMALL
1	Lock Lid	1"
1	Drain Tile	
1	Drain Tile Lid	
1	Stop & Drain	

Job No. 8213530040454639

Foreman John Buntello





C8ms- 90-0005

APPLICANT: Vivian Knox Schulz  
ADDRESS: 7304 & 7306 Knox Lane  
SERVICE: Multi-service  
DATE: 7-17-90  
CO:

C8i - 90-0018

APPLICANT: Mrs. Max W. Schulz  
ADDRESS: 7306 Knox Lane  
INQUIRY: Legal Tract  
DATE: 5-9-90  
CO: 1-0403

FILE: C8ms-78-038

APPLICANT: KNOX, Mary Lou Rogan

PLAT #:

LOCATION: 7306 A & B Knox Lane

Water & Sewer - 10-6-78

*Tap records, 1978-1990*