



Photo by Kenda Rios

A HOME-GROWN CLASSIC

Growing up in the community here in East Austin, Betty Washington led a healthy lifestyle which consisted of organic meals and snacks. Her mother would cook homemade recipes such as pasta or gumbo. She also enjoyed chili beans, pickled eggs, chow chow, and apple butter. These recipes were a tradition passed down through her family for generations. The classic family recipe that most anyone knew how to make was onion gravy and steak. Mrs. Washington explained that her father would make this family favorite even at breakfast just because he loved the taste.

Back in those days, almost nothing they ate was store-bought. “Back then, we didn’t have the luxury of ‘canned goods’ and ‘fast food,’ we had gardens,” Ms. Washington said.

During World War II, her family planted a victory garden in her backyard that the whole community shared and thrived from. They planted squash, cucumber, okra, and corn in most of these victory gardens, “our own, organic, garden.” Ms. Washington said. The garden was the main source of snacks and ingredients in their everyday lifestyle. Mrs. Washington clearly remembers

going into the backyard with a salt shaker to pick tomatoes off the vine.

When Ms. Washington and her family moved to 18th street, she was about twelve her new home had chickens and pigs right in the backyard. Her father once slaughtered a pig to make sausage, right in her backyard. They invited new friends to the barbecue. The new neighborhood was friendly

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and just as lively as her last one. Neighbors would lend and swap crops with each other simply because for them,

community was family. The entire neighborhood treated one another as more than just acquaintances. Her memories of her and her friends making bottle dolls and toys to entertain themselves at times when her mother was at work, are fond recollections of those days and that community.

Ms. Washington still enjoys cooking today, though she does it less now. One of her favorite things to dine on from when she was young was Oxtail soup, and, spaghetti. She remembers many of her childhood recipes and dishes to this day, all of them healthy and organic. As a result of her healthy lifestyle Ms. Washington has been living a peaceful, healthy, and relaxing life.

Story by Anisah Aguilar and Kenda Rios

Betty Washington