

Earl Campbell’s mom was her family’s MVP

By Asher Price
aprice@statesman.com

Asher Price is an American-Statesman reporter whose book, “Earl Campbell: Yards After Contact,” will be published in September by UT Press. In honor of Mother’s Day, he put together a condensed look at the relationship between Ann Campbell and her 11 children.

Forty years ago this month, a long line of residents of the East Texas community of Swan lined up to visit a new four-bedroom house amid the pines and farmland northwest of Tyler.

In many ways, the house — brick, low-slung, insulated — was unremarkable,

a middle-class sort of place, one that wouldn’t be out of place in any number of 1970s suburban developments. But here, in poor and rural Texas, it was a monument to tenacity and frugality and, chiefly, to a remarkable single mother’s love for her 11 children, including the one who had paid for the house with his first professional contract, Earl Campbell.

When her husband died 13 years earlier, in 1966, Ann Campbell had two dollars in cash, a rose farm to tend and all those children to support — including 11 year-old Earl, destined to be a Heisman Award winner, NFL MVP and Rookie of the Year, and, for a glorious period in the late 1970s

and early 1980s, the most beloved man in Texas.

In many ways, Ann Campbell was a forerunner to the single mothers of famous athletes of our day, ones who became media sensations in their own right. The camera has lingered on the mothers of Michael Phelps, Lance Armstrong and LeBron James, all fixtures at their swim meets, bike races and basketball games. Kevin Durant started crying in 2014 during his NBA acceptance speech as he praised his mother, Wanda Pratt, there in the audience. “We weren’t supposed to be here. You made us believe,” Durant said.

See CAMPBELL, D5



Ann Campbell, seen here in 1977, became a widow when her husband died in 1966. She was left with a rose farm and 11 children to raise, including future Texas football legend Earl Campbell. [LYNN FLOCKE/AMERICAN-STATESMAN]



Mother and daughter Vicki Bly and Sydney Sue are also co-owners of the Wayback. [PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY CYNTHIA J. DRAKE]

Building a dream

Wayback Cafe a long time coming for mother-daughter duo

By Cynthia J. Drake
Special to the American-Statesman

Vicki Bly surprised her daughter, Sydney Sue, with a question after Sydney’s graduation from the University of Texas in 2013.

Bly had been eyeing 3 acres of land sandwiched between Bee Cave Road and the Barton Creek Preserve, an area thick with live oak trees and not much else. She thought what Westlake Hills needed was a gathering space for the community, and it seemed an ideal spot for a little cafe.

“I was looking for a different career and a change,” says Bly. “This property came up for sale, and I asked Sydney if she wanted to go into business together.”

Her daughter’s response: “Heck yes.”



Inside the Wayback Cafe.

So began a five-year journey for the two to develop the Wayback, which opened in December. The property doesn’t just include that cafe but also eight neat little board-and-batten cottages for overnight guests, a drive-thru espresso hut offering cheery window

service to morning commuters, a saltwater pool and cabana bar and plenty of space for outdoor events overlooking the lush Hill Country terrain.

A lot happened over those five years: “She got married, I got divorced,” laughs Bly, and her first grandchild was

If you go

The Wayback Cafe and Cottages

512-520-9584
waybackaustin.com

born. The mother- and-daughter team learned a lot in the process.

“We became close,” Bly says about the business venture with her daughter. “We work well together. We have the same vision, but we have different talents, so it’s divide and conquer.”

And Sue developed a new appreciation for her mom.

“Growing up, I didn’t realize the efforts that took for her to own a company and raise four kids at the same time.”

Though the two didn’t

See WAYBACK, D5

FAMILY MIXTAPE

Parents, are you over May? Me too

By Kristin Finan
kfinan@statesman.com

It’s been a long school year. We parents have weathered another nine-month stream of conferences and 504 meetings and soccer games and dentist visits and birthday parties. We’ve lent a hand with science fair projects and show-and-tells and baking experiments and slime bars and still managed to send our darlings off each day with a lovingly packed homemade lunch. (Actually, my husband handles lunches — love you, boo.)

We’ve lost sleep worrying about ADHD meds and food allergies and homework and friendships and extra-curriculars and may have even lost our temper at said extracurriculars while having a cheer mom moment or two (sorry, Coach).

Most of the time, though,

See MAY, D7

About this series

Family Mixtape is an occasional series featuring stories about what it means to be a family — in all its many forms — from Statesman reporters and writers in the local community. Have a story you’d like to submit? Send it to kfinan@statesman.com.



IN TRAVEL | D10

READY, SET, BATH!

For a break from London, consider this picturesque town

Heavenly Hawai'i!

5 NIGHTS FROM \$1,518¹

INCLUDES ROUND TRIP AIRFARE FROM DALLAS TO HONOLULU

Book Now through June 30, 2019

O'AHU, HAWAII

AAA TRAVELS WITH YOU

CALL: 888-467-4957, Press 2

CLICK: AAA.com/PleasantHolidays

VISIT: 3 Branches in the Austin Area to Serve You

O'AHU, HAWAII¹

HILTON HAWAIIAN VILLAGE WAIKIKI BEACH RESORT

INCLUDES:

- Five nights' resort view room accommodations
- Kids 17 & younger stay FREE²
- Guaranteed upgrade to partial ocean view room accommodations* (\$120 value)
- RESORT FEE WAIVED³ (\$225 value)

TRAVEL:

- Select dates through December 31, 2019
- Ask About Rates From Your Local Airport!

EXCLUSIVE AAA VACATIONS⁴

BOOSTED BENEFIT

\$150

ACTIVITY VOUCHER

PER BOOKING⁵

Rate is per person, land and round trip economy-class airfare from DFW only, based on double occupancy for check-in on October 14, 2019 & includes taxes, fees and surcharges collected by seller at time of booking. Airfare is non-refundable. Itinerary changes/cancellations are subject to Pleasant Holidays, airline and/or other supplier-imposed fees from \$25 (for Canada or contiguous U.S. travel) or from \$50 (for all other travel) per person, plus applicable fare differential (certain changes involve pre-notification deadlines). See General Disclaimer for additional information regarding air. *Kids stay free in same room as adults using existing bedding. Occupancy limits apply. ¹Triple Value Supreme Promotion. April 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020. Book a minimum of 5 nights and receive reduced rates, a guaranteed upgrade to partial ocean view, and guests will not have to pay the mandatory resort charge. Any unused inclusions may not be accumulated, substituted, or can they be rebooked for cash or a refund. Inclusions are subject to change and may be substituted with other comparable inclusions. ²Blackout dates October 26 through 31, 2019. Must be booked by June 30, 2019 with travel complete by December 31, 2019. Minimum 5 night stay at participating AAA Vacations[®] properties required. Activity Voucher: Activity voucher is per booking, valid toward the purchase of a select optional activity, not valid for hotel direct activity bookings and is non-refundable, non-transferable and has no cash value. Activity voucher applies to the following destinations: Mexico, Hawaii, Central & South America and all other Caribbean destinations. Additional savings or activity voucher amounts vary by destination; ask your AAA Travel Agent for more details. ³For all offers, unless otherwise indicated: Rates quoted are accurate at time of publication & are per person, based on double occupancy. Gratuities, transfers, excursions and, for non-all-inclusive offers, airfare taxes, fees & surcharges, are additional. Advertised rates do not include any applicable daily resort or facility fees payable directly to the hotel at check-out; such fee amounts will be advised at the time of booking. Rates, terms, conditions, availability, itinerary, taxes, fees, surcharges, deposit, payment, cancellation terms/conditions & policies subject to change without notice at any time. Cruise rates capacity-controlled. Advance reservations through AAA Travel required to obtain Member Benefits & savings which may vary based on departure date. Rates may be subject to increase after full payment for increases in government-imposed taxes or fees and, except for all-inclusive offers, for supplier-imposed fees. Blackout dates & other restrictions may apply. As to all-inclusive offers only: Other restrictions may apply, including, but not limited to, baggage limitations & charges for first & second checked bag, standby policies & fees, non-refundable airfare/airline tickets, advance purchase requirements & supplier & airline-imposed change/cancellation fees up to & including the price of the fare plus any applicable fare differential (which may involve pre-notification deadlines). Air component of packaged offers may be non-refundable; refunds are subject to supplier & airline terms & conditions. Supplier & airline fees & policies may vary. Contact your supplier & ticketing airline for more information for baggage fees & other details. See www.flybags.com. Rates including roundtrip air transportation for travel dates or from gateways other than those advertised may differ. Not responsible for errors or omissions. AAA Texas acts as an agent for Pleasant Holidays[®]. © 2019 AAA Texas, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Pleasant Holidays



Mother and daughter Vicki Bly and Sydney Sue are also co-owners of the Wayback. [PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY CYNTHIA J. DRAKE]

WAYBACK

From Page D1

have formal training in architecture or design, Bly was formerly the owner of Austin’s his-toric Bremond House Bed and Breakfast. They started by consider-ing how they wanted their guests to feel. “We didn’t have a business plan, we just wanted to create a place where people could be happy,” says Sue. “We drew every square inch of this property on graph paper.”

She pulls out those original pencil-scratched sketches with lift-up flaps and clipped magazine photos, and she and her mom laugh as they look around the cafe, seeing the real-life actualization of their dream around them.

At one table, a hus-band and wife enjoy a quiet lunch, while at another, a group of female friends giggle at an inside joke. Honey-toned wood against crisp, white walls and a hearth give warmth and elegance to this minimalist space that welcomes travelers and locals alike with its simple, fresh and locally sourced menu.

“We wanted a cam-plike feeling. We tried to add colors that make you relax and get back to this intimate space that’s more like sitting in your dining room than in a restaurant,” says Sue.

After dining there one evening, a guest remarked that she felt like she was in a Nancy Meyers film (“The Holiday,” “It’s Complicated”). It was



Mother and daughter Vicki Bly and Sydney Sue look back on their original sketches for the Wayback.



Sydney Sue, co-owner of the Wayback, showcases some local art inside the cafe.

the perfect compliment. “I almost cried,” says Bly.

Elevated camp cuisine

The Wayback is now open for break-fast, lunch and din-ner daily and offers a special brunch

menu on weekends. Complementing the stripped-down, rustic Southern chic vibe of the entire property, the menu currently offers a handful of entrees and appetizers created in collaboration with chef Austin Alvarez, plus cocktails and caf-feinated concoctions

from bartender Coleman Dewayne. The menu will change seasonally, but the beef burger on freshly baked brioche with caramel-ized onions, Gruyere and house-made pickles (\$15) will be a mainstay. Breakfast favorites include a biscuit sand-wich with breakfast



Bartender Coleman Dewayne squeezes some fresh orange juice at the Wayback Cafe.

sausage, sharp cheddar and aioli (\$8), or plan-tain pancakes (\$8) for a touch of sweetness. The wine list is populated solely with organic wines from estate vineyards, and Dewayne has had artis-tic license to delve into some new flavors for his coffee and cocktail program, including a turmeric and black pepper-infused Golden Milk Latte, or the just-this-side-of-sweet Ranch Hand cocktail, starring Cardamaro and vermouth. The coffee hut offers a full slate of coffee and espresso drinks, plus Southern scratch bis-cuits and house-made jams to go (based on what’s in season, you’ll find jams such as ginger pear or fig and currant). The Wayback is start-ing out with a small canvas, focusing on craft and quality, and looking to expand from there, with plans to plant an on-site gar-den and host outdoor dinners on the patio.

Memories from way back

Bly relished her role welcoming out-of-town guests to the Bremond House in the ’90s. “People came from all over the world. This was before cellphones, and I got letters from guests, people saying how much they loved staying there,” she says. Sue remembers as a young girl witnessing the excitement of intro-ducing guests to Austin — so small compared

to what it is now. “It was before the big high rises, and you could still hear the Austin Symphony and see the Fourth of July fireworks from there,” she recalls. They wanted to bring that excitement of find-ing a hidden Texas gem to their guests. Each cozy cottage (priced at \$275 and up per night) is thought-fully decorated with delicate Southern touches like cowhide rugs, hand-tooled leather keychains (“No magnetized cards — we wanted traditional keys,” says Sue) and locally produced toi-letries. Some of the cottages include beds tucked into nooks and private backyard spaces. Classic white plush bedding plus the fresh Hill Country air is an ideal formula for restful sleep. Her mother always tried to instill an appre-ciation for art and creativity in her four kids, Sue says, some-times driving the family around the country or to Mexico to meet with favorite artists. She also remembers dreaming up a special headboard in middle school with hot pink velvet fabric and green buttons. “My mom made it for me,” she says. Bly was always one to encourage the real-ization of dreams, whether the dreams were made of hot pink velvet or 3 acres of tree-covered land. And this time, they created the dream together.

CAMPBELL

From Page D1

“You kept us off the street. You put clothes on our backs. You put food on the table. When you didn’t eat, you made sure we ate and (you) went to sleep hungry. “You sacrificed for us. You’re the real MVP.” The story of how Ann Campbell shep-herded her son and other kids through school and into adulthood is a peek into the kinds of sacrifices Durant was talking about. The Campbell fam-ily had lived in a creaky, cramped cottage with peeling linoleum floors. A rough dirt driveway led to the front door; across the road sat a junkyard. The backseat of an old automobile served as the porch bench. The family would wake up cold in the winter, even though they nailed quilts to the

walls as rudimentary insulation. “You’d walk through that house and you might step through the floor” is the way a high school classmate of Earl Campbell’s described the place to me. Alvin Flynn, whose family owned the land once worked by Ann Campbell’s father and who would drop off hand-me-downs and fresh deer meat for the Campbells, remem-bered that the cracks in the wood-frame house were so wide that you could see outside. Rain leaked through the roof. The bathroom was an outhouse. Three or four kids crowded into each bed. Earl Campbell’s first agent remembers that when he journeyed to Tyler to get Ann Campbell’s permission to represent her John Henry of a son, he could feel the wind blow-ing inside the house. Ann Campbell, newly widowed, stricken but indomitable, took stock of a suddenly dire

situation. Her young-est child was just 3 years old. She began clothing the kids in Salvation Army castoffs and made sure to give them as much loving as she could muster, without playing favorites. She kept the house neat, and visi-tors remembered it as full of family pictures. The wood-frame home is “not much to some-body coming in,” Earl said his senior season, when he was the most heavily recruited foot-ball player in the state of Texas. Because Earl and his brothers didn’t have luggage, they packed their uniforms for away games into Brookshire’s supermarket brown paper bags. “But to me, it’s the world. We don’t have much, but we’re happy with what we’ve got. I’m happy and I’m loved. That’s all I want. Without love, you’re nobody.” Self-reliant, Ann Campbell baked bread,

See CAMPBELL, D6

AUSTIN AUCTION GALLERY

Achieving Exceptional Results | April 2019 Auction

GIA 768CT Diamond & Trillion Diamond Estate Ring

SOLD \$22,000

Monumental Carved R.J. Homer Grandfather Clock

SOLD \$47,000

Highly Carved Chippendale Settee

SOLD \$2,400

Sevres Style Center Piece

SOLD \$900

French Gilt Bronze Elephant Figural Clock

SOLD \$3,500

Hepplewhite Style Demilune Figural Painted Cabinet

SOLD \$1,700

Fabulous Gold Leaf Mirror

SOLD \$2,300

Eric Sloane (D.1985) 'First Shot' Oil on Canvas

SOLD \$4,500

French Bronze & Marble Cassolettes

SOLD \$1,900

Neoclassical Style Dore Bronze Candelabra

SOLD \$2,500

A Single Piece, A Collection, or An Entire Estate
Let Austin Auction Gallery Market Your Treasures to the World

Call Today for a Consultation!

8414 Anderson Mill Rd. • 512-258-5479
VISA / MC / AMEX / DISCOVER 18% Buyers Premium, Ross Featherston #8069