Janice Woods Windle is well known for her books, *True Women*, *Hill Country* and *Will’s War*, novels based on her ancestors, but these historical novels are only the beginning of what she has accomplished. Janice Woods Windle has continued the legacy of her family by shaping El Paso through her work with the El Paso Community Foundation.

Janice Woods was born into a long line of strong family members, who made their own impact in this country. In a February 2010 interview with EPCC student Kaitlin Giallanza, Windle spoke fondly about one of the major influences of her life: her mother, Virginia Bergfeld Woods, who paid her way through college during the Depression by teaching seven different grades in the same classroom. Her father inspired his daughter to act upon her beliefs. Her great grandmother Georgia Lawshe Woods became a blockade runner in the Civil War. These family members, and so many more, taught and molded Janice Woods Windle into the person she is today.

Janice Woods was raised in Seguin, TX, 35 miles east of San Antonio. Her parents were avid historians who researched life during the Texas Revolution, the Civil War and other topics. Her father taught second grade for 38 years. As a child, Janice spent time with her parents in public libraries as they researched. After graduating from high school in 1956, she attended the University of Texas at Austin. During her freshman year, she met Wayne Windle, who grew up in Texarkana, TX.

In 1961, the couple was married in Seguin. Wayne Windle continued his studies at the University of Texas Law School. Janice Windle worked as a secretary to Representative George McCoppin, a Texarkana Democrat, from 1958 to 1961. In 1958, the couple had their first child, Wayne Wilton Windle, named after his two grandfathers: Wayne’s father, who had died two years earlier, and Wilton, her father.

In 1961, the Windles moved to El Paso, where Wayne had accepted a job. Janice Windle said in a fall 2010 interview with EPCC student Keila Maynez that she loved the El Paso area, enjoying the mountains and traveling to Mexico. She and her mother attended the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico, during summers to study Mexican culture. Windle transferred to the University of Texas at El Paso after they moved, where she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in political science and public administration.

Once in El Paso, the Windles had two more children: Virginia Laura Windle was born in 1963, named for Janice’s mother and paternal grandmother. She is married to Randy Shapiro and lives in the city. Charles Kendrick Windle was born in 1966. The Windles lost this son in 2000 when he was murdered during a carjacking in Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Janice Windle worked for El Paso mayor Fred Hervey in the 1970s, with one project in particular that would provide her with skills she would later put to good use. She was assigned to design a plan to preserve the Magoffin Home and prevent the city from tearing it down. Then in 1974, Mayor Hervey appointed Windle director of El Paso’s Bicentennial Commission which planned the year-long local celebration of America’s 200th birthday in 1976. Among the accomplishments of the commission was the acquisition of the Magoffin Home for restoration and placement on the list of historical sites.

Out of work at the end of 1976, Windle went job hunting. In 1977, she landed the position of executive director of the newly formed El Paso Community Foundation, dedicated to helping fund charitable organizations. The notion of raising money for “good things” was very appealing to her. The foundation was formed by El Pasoans who wanted funds to stay in El Paso. The idea began with several local organizations including the El Paso Bar Association, United Way, Junior League and the Chamber of Commerce. The Robert and Evelyn McKee Foundation, a charitable entity begun in 1952, paid all the Community Foundation expenses, including Windle’s salary, for the first 5 years.

The Community Foundation has grown from nothing to $100 million in permanent funds although it is considered a small foundation, as Windle said, “in the world of foundation, big is a relative term.” The foundation has given $88 million to nonprofit organizations at the same time it has been growing. In 2010, the foundation awarded $3,703,590 to area organizations. In 2009, it gave 121 college scholarships to area students.

In speaking with Maynez, Windle emphasized that anyone can donate to the Community Foundation. Its website provides a Spirit of Giving Catalogue listing the needs of dozens of groups in the El Paso area. Windle told Giallanza that donors range from the very wealthy to one elderly couple who gave $5 a week towards the renovation of the Plaza. Windle, like her father, encourages others to support what they believe in, as she has done.

Through the Community Foundation, the Plaza Theater, built in 1929 downtown, was saved from demolition in order to build a parking lot in the mid 1980s. Windle recalled in the interview with Maynez that it was a “horrible bloody fight for over 20 years” to save the Plaza. One mayor would favor saving it and then his term would end, and another would come in against the plans to reopen the Plaza. In 2001, El Paso Mayor Ray Caballero was elected and played an important role in saving the Plaza. He drew up a contract with the foundation specifying that if a mayor were elected who was against the reopening of the Plaza, the city had to refund all the money invested in the Plaza. According to Windle, this amounted to about $10 million.

In a very emotional campaign, the foundation raised a million dollars in six weeks to save the Plaza, an amount the foundation paid to buy the building, although it was worth much more. The cost of restoration to turn it into what it was in its original condition was about $25 million. Windle said that events are often sold out which shows that people care about the Plaza and what is going on in it.

Windle led the Community Foundation for 33 years before retiring. Working with the foundation has been “absolutely wonderful,” she said during the interview with Maynez. It has enabled her to meet presidents of the United States and other countries, personalities like Jonas Salk and Bishop Desmond Tutu, as people “who think of themselves as people like huge Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Most of all, it has allowed her to help people work together to aid those in need. She said she has been “very blessed” to have a job that has been so personally educational.

Windle, however, had other interests besides the foundation. She has written short stories about her and her husband’s family for years. Her bestselling novel *True Women* was born in a unique way. Windle told Maynez that Wayne, her oldest son, was soon to be married and she came up with the idea to create a cookbook for him because he loved to cook and had worked in a restaurant as a teen. She told her mother about the idea and the two started a cookbook project that three generations of their family had written since the Texas Revolution: Euphemia Ashby King, Windle’s maternal great-great-grandmother; Betty Moss King, her maternal great-grandmother; and Virginia King, Betty’s daughter and Windle’s grandmother.

In addition to recipes, these women had provided advice in the book on how to take care of a rattlesnake bite, how to treat horses with pneumonia and other home remedies, along with other lore. Windle thought it would be fun to include this folk wisdom continued on page 11
Company never saw combat, President McKinley of his life. The war ended before the men finished
he did through the Times. In three days, 115 men had signed up. Hart was given a commission as
Captain and would be known by that title the rest of his life. The war ended before the men finished
their training in Galveston. Although Hart’s company never saw combat, President McKinley
chose Hart as a member of the Cuba Commission to negotiate Spain’s surrender, as he was fluent in
Spanish, among other languages.

According to an El Paso Herald-Post article dated March 4, 1938, Hart acted as an interpreter for
Maj. Gen. William R. Shafter after the surrender of Santiago. Hart then served on the staff of Maj.
Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, who was made military governor of Havana and Pinar del Rio and was also a member of the American evacuation board.

After a year in Havana, Hart returned to El Paso. He began crusading against open gambling and brothels, helping to bring about reform through the mayoral election of Charles R. Morehead in 1902. Morehead and Hart also shared a belief that El Paso needed an adequate supply of well water with the mesas, instead of the muddy Rio Grande. This ultimately led to a municipally owned water company in 1910, ending Hart’s decade-long crusade for “Pure Mesa Water.”

Hart also spent years advocating for a railway to extend north from El Paso. The line, which would eventually run all the way to Kansas City, MO, connected El Pasoans with the cool summer air of Cloudcroft, NM.

Hart was elected President of the Southwest International Miners’ Association in 1902 and shortly thereafter began writing to the Texas State Legislature to establish a school to serve El Paso’s extensive mining industry. This materialized in 1914 with the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy, today known as UTEP.

After a previously unsuccessful attempt at retirement, Hart sold the Times on April 22, 1910. For the first time in more than 25 years, Hart’s voice was silent in the press.

Although he remained an El Paso resident, Hart spent his summers in Mountain Park, NM, where he died in 1966, she left a cardboard box marked “For Janice”. Hart continued from page 3

in the cookbook along with a one page summary about each of the three women, and she did just that. At the rehearsal dinner for the young couple, the reaction to this cookbook from her son’s friends made her realize that she could write more about these women and people would be interested. She began researching what would become True Women; the cookbook would be shelved for years, finally being published in 1997, complete with updated recipes.

True Women, published in 1993, deals with ancestors on both her mother’s and father’s sides, with action beginning in 1754 and ending in 1946. The title is taken on both her mother’s and father’s sides, with action beginning in 1754 and ending in 1946. The title is taken from a CBS miniseries starring Dana Delany and Angelina Jolie and was made available as a DVD in 2004.

Hill Country, Windle’s second novel, is about the life and political activism of her paternal grandmother, Laura Hoge Woods. She often wrote President Lyndon Johnson, the son of her best friend, expressing her opinions, and he once called her for advice on how to end the Vietnam War. She told him his problem was that “you do not have enough Texans in your cabinet.” Woods had begun to write a book about her life when she was in her 70s; she won election to public office at 87. When she died in 1966, she left a cardboard box marked “For Janice when I’m gone,” providing material which Windle used in the book, published in 1998.

Janice Windle’s third novel, Will’s War, published in 2001, is based on the trial her grandfather, Will Bergfeld, of German descent, had to endure for suspected treason during the World War I era. Windle credited her lawyer husband for helping her to re-create the trial. The story is told through Bergfeld’s wife, mother and sister, who were with him during the six-week trial. It took Windle 17 years to complete the series of books. Windle said that without her husband’s help and encouragement, her writing career would have ended early.

Like her grandmother, Laura Woods, Windle was always interested in politics. She worked actively on several political campaigns, including those for former president Lyndon B. Johnson and former Texas governor Ann Richards. Known throughout the country for her foundation work, she was part of a delegation that helped Costa Rica establish the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress. In addition, she, along with 13 other delegates, was chosen to spend three weeks assisting the newly elected Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, in 1991 to establish a non-profit sector.

Janice Windle was named El Pasoan of the Year in 2008 by newspaper El Paso Inc. In 2010, she received the Lifetime Achievement BRAVO Award from the League of Women Voters of El Paso “in recognition of her leadership in improving the condition of mankind on both sides of the border by developing conformity of laws regulating charitable gifts...”. She was also inducted into the El Paso Commission for Women’s Hall of Fame and has received numerous other awards.

In 2008, Windle became President Emeritus of the foundation, “focusing on [its] supporting organizations, donor relations and fund development,” according to El Paso Inc. Janice Windle works every day at the Community Foundation. This “true woman” still has work to do. She said to Maynez, “I think when you find something you love to do, don’t stop.”

The El Paso Browns won the Southwest Championship in 1886. Juan Hart is seated, second row, second from the right. (Photo courtesy of El Paso County Historical Society)