

# FAMILY TRADITION

Fourth-generation Austinite Dorothy McPhaul is carrying on a family business started in 1918 by her grandfather.

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY KELLY E. LINDNER**

Running an antiques shop is in Dorothy Jean McPhaul's blood. Her grandfather, Simon Sidle, opened Simon's Antiques on Red River Street in 1918. Her aunt, Theresa Sidle Mays Hardeman, and her uncle, Tannie Mays, opened an antiques shop on Red River Street in 1946. Her mother, Ilestia Sidle Alexander, and her stepfather, Johnnie Alexander, opened Johnnie's Swap Shop on Red River Street in 1964.

Seeing a pattern? Perhaps that explains the red stoplight that hangs by the door of McPhaul's current storefront at 911 E. Sixth Street, a location her aunt and mother teamed up to open in 1973. McPhaul took it over in 1997, after repainting and re-flooring the store, and she's successfully sold antiques out of this location ever since.

Why does she do it? Besides some affinity for it contained in the very blood of her family line, she loves it.

"Once you go to one Worthington show," McPhaul says, referring to the annual Worthington Historical Society Antiques Show that attracts hundreds of collectors to Ohio every winter, "you'll antique for life."

And McPhaul has found many treasures at estate sales, antique shows and citywide garage sales throughout Central Texas, including in Austin, Belton and Bastrop. She says many of her exact pieces have even been featured on *Antiques Roadshow*.

She's always loved antiques, though

originally, it wasn't her full-time gig. Working in the store used to be something she did to help out her mom on weekends. She taught school for La Grange Independent School District for 38 1/2 years before retiring in 1994 to take care of her mother during failing health and later woman the store full time when her mother passed, in 1997. To be successful, she's taken on several roles in her store, including manager, secretary, market researcher, business developer and owner. Her home is even practically a showroom.

"I don't like anything but antiques in my house," McPhaul says.

Since this career move, McPhaul has seen a great many things change around her, with the exception of her original Johnnie's Antiques sign, which she still hangs above the store in honor of her stepfather, who passed in 1999. While she used to be surrounded by other funky antiques shops like hers on the Eastside, now she's drowning in high-rises and condos. In fact, Johnnie's looks strikingly vintage on its corner, across from a high-rise with a \$10-an-hour parking garage on its first few floors.

"Every day, people are trying to buy the property from me," McPhaul says. "I think they just want to put another condo on it."

Crossing the street toward Johnnie's leads to the promise of crossing into another time, especially when you walk inside. There, you'll find wall-to-wall histories, artifacts, treasures. There, you'll see a whole shelf of clocks from

the late 1800s, a poseable mannequin painted in beautiful detail circa 1930s/1940s, bass baskets that were used as centerpieces in the late 1800s/early 1900s, vintage postcards, assortments of art glass and carnival glass, pottery, collector plates, oil lamps, dolls and toys, and her close-to-priceless, ever-changing collection of jewelry.

Of course, this inventory could all change next week after one of McPhaul's shows, where she often buys and sells with other collectors who love antiques as much as she does. But it's such a unique space, two film crews have asked to film inside it, one that insisted on parking an antique car out front for a period piece.

"Those film folks moved everything around," McPhaul says. "They never broke anything, though."

"Look but don't touch" is a common mantra in the store, especially among children and grandchildren. McPhaul has three children, each who gave her two grandchildren. She even has two great-grandchildren.

"They love coming in the store," McPhaul says. "But they understand that antiques aren't for playing."

But which of McPhaul's children has the Red River affinity for antiques flowing in his blood? McPhaul says the store will probably go to her son Tanny (named for her uncle but with a different spelling).

"Tanny will take over the store when I'm gone," McPhaul says, assured that the business will honor its legacy by carrying on the family tradition.

