



ellie rucker

on vacation

## The perfect tan

If you've been basking in the sun in search of the perfect tan, you may be hurting your skin. Page E4.

Austin American-Statesman

# life/style

Sunday, June 22, 1980 E1

# No time for apathy

## Involvement is the name of her game

By CHERYL COGGINS  
American-Statesman Staff

For those developers and businessmen who haven't been exactly thrilled with the success rate of Austin's neighborhood groups, here's a tip: Blame it on the Bluebirds.

After all, Sally Shipman, the longtime neighborhood activist who now sits on the city's planning commission and is one of the most powerful voices in the Austin neighborhood movement, learned the meaning of the word "involvement" when she introduced Camp Fire Girls and its program for first, second and third graders, Bluebirds, to Austin.

"I'm the kind of person who has always been active. I just have a lot of energy. When I first came to Austin in 1964, there were no Camp Fire Girls, so I organized them here," she says.

That bent for civic involvement eventually led to the sidewalks in Shipman's neighborhoods, which she considered woefully inadequate. She became involved in her neighborhood association, the West Austin Neighborhood Group, rallied the forces to fight city hall over the needed sidewalks, and somewhere in the process blossomed quite possibly into Austin's neighborhood activist extraordinaire.

From the sidewalks in West Austin, Shipman has worked through the system so smoothly she now sits on the city's planning commission, which is charged with writing the city's master plan and making recommendations to the Austin City Council on zoning, subdividing, capital improvements and water and sewer extensions. Observers say Shipman is one of the most effective members on what may be Austin's most important citizen commission or board.

As a member of the planning



Staff Photo by Bob Daemrich

*'I feel like a neighborhood has a right to exist.'* — Sally Shipman

commission, there's little doubt Shipman listens to neighborhood complaints and suggestions with an understanding maybe few other commissioners share.

"I feel like a neighborhood has a right to exist," she says. "People buy into it with certain expectations. One person does not have the right to infringe on the community for his own benefit.

"I personally feel the Texas frontier land use ethic is not appropriate for the '80s. Texans basically have felt, 'My land is my land and I'll do

as I please.' I think that's fine as long as you don't infringe on the rights of the community," Shipman says.

Now that kind of speech could fall easily from the lips of most of the city's neighborhood activists. But those words may carry a little extra weight coming from Shipman, simply because she's turning herself into a professional planning consultant.

After becoming involved in neighborhood, E9  
See Neighborhood, E9

## They're cutting razor-sharp political teeth

In Austin, you'll find women who rank neighborhood integrity second only to family. Staff writer Cheryl Coggins talked with some of those women. Here are their stories; Monday's story looks at why they became involved.

By CHERYL COGGINS  
American-Statesman Staff

They shun frozen dinners, love the

Little League, pledge allegiance to the Brownie Scouts and seem firmly convinced the best life lies somewhere in those vows to love, honor and cherish.

But just because many of these ladies cut their political teeth on garden club agendas and PTA proposals, don't underestimate how sharp those teeth are.

Just ask the developers who

wanted to put apartments up along the land hugging Barton Creek. Or talk to the city about its thwarted plans to widen 38½ or Red River streets. Or maybe chat with the Michelin Tire Co. about the plant in North Austin that never was.

They surely have noticed how a major say in the rearing of Austin has passed from the hands of the city fathers to, in many cases, those of the city mothers. And that not-so-quiet rerouting of power has come through the neighborhood associations and other environmental and civic groups that have grown, some say like weeds, throughout this community in the last five or six years.

Although the neighborhood associations — close to 90 are registered in the city's planning department with about 45 of those considered active to some degree — involve as many men neighbors as women neighbors, many of the forces that have provided continuity and subsequent strength for the older organizations are the mommas who found themselves diapering the baby with one hand and organizing petition drives with the other.

These aren't radical women; these aren't militant feminists. "You don't find them being members of NOW (National Organization for Women)," said one neighborhood association member. "They have a strong sense of family. They get a protective edge."

That protective edge is what lured many of the women into the movement. "I am a housewife and I had been concentrating on my family and home," says Betty Brown, one of the movers and shakers behind the Barton Creek-Horseshoe Bend Neighborhood Association and the Save Barton Creek movement. "I had never gotten involved with anything civic or environmental.

"... but there was civic person underneath layers and layers of

See Activists, E10



Staff Photo by Larry Murphy

*'There was civic person underneath ... layers of housewife.'* — Brown



# Neighborhood

From E1

borhood issues, Shipman returned to school and earned a master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Texas. She decided to go for the degree after her neighborhood work told her she needed more credentials to be more effective.

"When I first got active in the neighborhood group, I really felt frustrated," she says. "I felt like I was being treated like the little woman in tennis shoes.

"So I thought, 'By golly, I'm going to get credentials. And instead of standing up in front of the council and saying 'I'm Sally Shipman, a neighborhood resident who cares,' I could say, 'I'm Sally Shipman, urban planner.'"

When she applied for the community and

regional planning program in the School of Architecture at the University of Texas, Shipman says she was asked why she wanted to enroll in the program. "I said 'I want to have some clout,' and the man said, "That's one thing you'll get with this degree.'"

Although Shipman was pretty successful even before she completed that degree — she got her sidewalks in West Austin and she can claim partial responsibility for the We Care Austin program to beautify Congress Avenue which is expected to start this spring — she still thinks the decision to return to school was necessary to facilitate her neighborhood goals. "The degree gave me credibility. But my work on the planning commission gave me more than I have ever given it."

Along with her duties as wife and mother, Shipman remains extremely active in We Care Austin, a women's environmental group; in her neighborhood association; and on the planning commission. And she hopes to put her experience and education to professional use soon as a planning consultant.

She also wants to be reappointed to the planning commission when her term expires in June to make sure goals she set for herself on the commission are carried out. One such goal involves educating the public about proposed revisions in the city's zoning ordinances. "It should become a community document," she says.

She also wants to see neighborhood associations keep their piece of the pie. "My

second objective was really a concern for neighborhoods and neighborhood integrity," she says. "Neighborhoods are the nucleus of community life, its grass roots."

Even though Shipman's involvement in her neighborhood has turned her into an urban specialist — "I'm overzealous," she says. "I find this fascinating" — there other important duties she won't neglect, like the Bluebirds.

"When I got my master's degree, other students and my friends asked me, 'What are you going to do?' Well, I knew I couldn't be employed 8 to 5," she says.

"That's because I really enjoy kids. And I have the Bluebirds. I'm the one who bakes the cookies and I'm the one that goes on field trips."