

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DECEMBER 17, 2018
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2018-0607
2617 FISET DRIVE

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1954 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, L-plan, frame house with mid-century Modern design concepts, including a “flounder” roof over the principal projecting bay; carport on the front of the house with a recessed entry into the house; modern replacement sliding windows in horizontal patterns; asbestos siding.

RESEARCH

The house was built in 1954 by local builder Rhea Merritt, perhaps based upon plans by Charles Croft, who with his wife, Carol, were the first owners and occupants of this house. Charles Croft was born in Oklahoma but grew up in East Texas. After his service in World War II, Croft came to Austin to study at the University of Texas School of Architecture; he graduated in 1953. He began his professional architectural career with John Lynn Scott in Austin, then moved to the firm of Fehr and Granger, one of the leading architectural firms in the city, and specializing in mid-century Modern architecture. Croft then moved to the Rio Grande Valley, where he worked for several years before returning to Austin and working with another prominent local firm, Jessen and Jessen. He then established his own firm, which was in business in Austin for many years. Croft was a prolific architect and designer, with commissions ranging from residential to institutional, educational, and commercial buildings. Among his Austin works are Westlake High School, portions of the old Robert Mueller Airport (under Fehr and Granger), the University YMCA, and Westwood Country Club. He was also active in civic groups in Austin, serving on neighborhood association boards and other organizations. He and Carol lived in this house from around 1954 until around 1960.

Following the Crofts, the house was owned and occupied by Charles and Martha Gorin, who lived here until very recently. A native of Waco, Charlie Gorin was a left-handed pitcher and batter for the University of Texas’ baseball team in the late 1940s, on teams that won the first-ever back-to-back College World Series championships in NCAA history. He then went on to play professional baseball, finishing with the Milwaukee Braves in 1955. Gorin then returned to Austin, where he played minor league baseball, and became a teacher and coach at Anderson and Lanier high schools. He later became a school administrator for AISD. Martha Gorin worked for Joske’s Department Store in the 1980s. A neighbor, who knew him as “Coach,” related that he was an active man who was generally outside doing various activities, including throwing a ball around. He just moved to an assisted living facility.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house is beyond the bounds of any City survey to date.

Staff has evaluated this house for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the house does not meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house is a very restrained example of mid-century Modern design, but apart from an interesting roof form, does not exhibit the distinguishing features of mid-century design, specifically, the use of natural

materials, large expanses of glass, or the use of modern technology, such as cantilevered rooms, etc. While the house may have architectural merit for its design, it is certainly not among the best mid-century Modern designs in Austin. Staff believes that the house does not qualify under the criterion for architectural merit.

- b. **Historical association.** The house is associated with architect Charles Croft, who designed Westlake High School and worked with Fehr and Granger in their design for the old Robert Mueller Municipal Airport; and later with Charlie Gorin, a former UT and Milwaukee Braves baseball pitcher and teacher and coach at Anderson and Lanier high schools. There may be significant historical associations with these two families.
- c. **Archaeology.** The house was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The house does not possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Encourage rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, including a postponement to fully evaluate alternatives to demolition, then relocation over demolition, but release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center.

LOCATION MAP



-  N
-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2018-0607
2617 FISET DR



1" = 167'

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.

2617 Fiset Drive
ca. 1954





OCCUPANCY HISTORY 2617 Fiset Drive

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
November, 2018

- 1992 Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin, owners
Retired
- 1985-6 Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin, owners
Charles: Dean of boys, Reagan High School
Martha: Employed by Joske's, department store, 5901 Airport Boulevard.
- 1977 Charles P. and Becky R. Gorin, owners
Teacher, Anderson High School
Also listed is Debbie A. Gorin, a student.
- 1973 Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin, owners
Teacher, Lanier High School
- 1968 Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin, owners
Teacher, Lanier High School
- 1965 Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin, owners
Teacher, Lanier High School
- 1962 Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin, owners
Teacher, Lanier High School
- 1959 Charles B. and A. Carolyn Croft, owners
Architect, Fehr & Granger, 403 E. 15th Street.
NOTE: Charles P. and Martha R. Gorin are not listed in the directory.
- 1958 Charles B. and Carol Croft, owners
Architect, Fehr and Granger (Arthur K. Fehr, Charles T. Granger, Herbert C. Crume, Langford Griffin, and George Zapalac, principals), architects and planning consultants, 403 E. 15th Street.
- 1957 Charles B. and Carol Croft, owners
Architect, Fehr and Granger (Arthur K. Fehr, Charles T. Granger, Herbert C. Crume, Langford Griffin, and George Zapalac, principals), architects and planning consultants, 403 E. 15th Street.
NOTE: The address is not listed in the cross-reference section of the directory.
- 1955 The address is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: Charles B. and Carol Croft are not listed in the directory. The 1954 city directory shows Charles B. and Carolyn A. Croft living at 4801 Avenue F; he was an architect for John Linn Scott and Associates.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**Charles and Carolyn Croft (ca. 1954 – ca. 1960)**

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Charles Croft as the 9-year old son of Albert and Geneva Croft, who rented the house at 3718 Stevenson Avenue in Austin. Charles Croft was born in Texas and was the oldest of Albert and Geneva Croft's 3 children. Albert Croft, 30, was born in Missouri and was a stone cutter at a stone quarry. Geneva Croft was also 30, had been born in Missouri, and had no occupation listed. The family lived in Kansas City, Kansas in 1935. Charles' younger brothers were Harold, 4, who had been born in Kansas, and Kenneth, 2, who had been born in Missouri.

Charles B. and A.C. Croft were married in 1948 and divorced in 1979 in Travis County. Their son, Charles B. Croft, Jr., a U.S. Marine, ended his life in an apartment on South Lamar Boulevard in 1980. Charles B. Croft, Sr. married Lisa C. Taylor in September, 1988.

Wednesday, July 23, 1975 The Austin American-Statesman Austin, Texas—Page 20

United Way fills two top positions

Charles B. (Chuck) Croft and L. S. (Scotty) Curtis have been named to top positions in the United Way campaign.

Croft will head the

Business

architects portion of the architects-engineers section of the Professional Division and Curtis will

head the engineers portion. Both men were appointed by Jim Campbell, chairman of the Professional Division. The men will contact the architects and engineers to help meet the United Way goal of \$1.4 million set for 37 agencies.

Curtis is vice president of Bovay Engineers, Inc., and Croft is owner of Charles Croft Architects.



CHARLES B. CROFT
Architect section



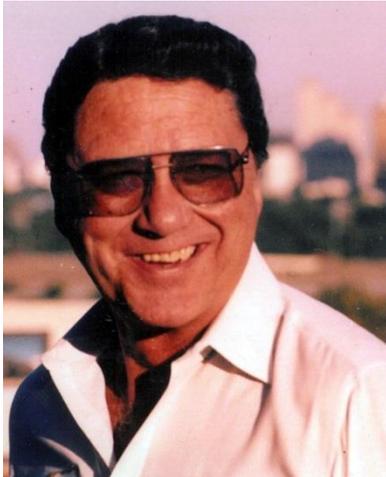
L.S. CURTIS
Engineer head

Charles Croft leads the architects section of the United Way appeal
Austin American-Statesman, July 23, 1975

Charles Benjamin Croft was born in 1927 in Enid, Oklahoma. He grew up in the East Texas oilfields and left in 1945 to attend the University of Texas at Austin. He enrolled in the College of Engineering. After serving in the Marine Corps in World War II, he returned to the University of Texas and enrolled in the School of Architecture. He graduated in 1953. Croft's first job after college was with John Lynn Scott. That job was followed by one at Fehr and Granger. Croft then relocated to the Texas Rio Grande Valley where he worked with John York and then with Alan Taniguchi. He returned to Austin and worked for Jessen and Jessen briefly and then had his own firm for many years. Notable projects are Westlake High School and Robert Mueller Municipal Airport in Austin and Casa del Sol in Harlingen, Texas.

Interviewed conducted by Toni Thomasson on August 23, 2016. [View transcript here.](#)

From the Austin History Center Architectural Archives Oral history Project (2015-16)



CHARLES B. CROFT, FAIA Charles Benjamin Croft (Chuck) was born in Enid, Oklahoma on the tenth of November, 1927, to Esther Lewis and Glenn W. Croft. He moved to northeast Texas at the age of five and spent the rest of his youth in the booming East Texas oil field, mostly in a Sinclair Oil camp near Wright City. Chuck attended the famous Gaston School where he lettered in five sports. He joined the US Marines and served in the Pacific, attached to Naval Security in Hawaii. During his service, he was a member of Taskforce Seven on Enewitok Atoll testing the atomic bomb and was one of the 62 marines dispatched to Peleliu Island to force the final surrender of the last Japanese combat element of WWII. He was also active in intra-service sports in the Pacific theatre and represented the Marines in tennis, water polo, boxing and martial arts. After the Marines, Chuck married his high school sweetheart, Carolyn McWilliams, with whom he had five children. In 1949, they moved to Austin to attend University of Texas School of Architecture. Chuck pursued his passion for architecture for the next 60 years: designing and creating iconic buildings and environments such as Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, University YMCA, Westwood Country Club, Northwest Recreation Center, The Pinnacle in Oak Hill, Westlake High School, and many other schools, municipal buildings, commercial buildings and residences in Austin and other Texas locations (including the “Casa del Sol” in Harlingen). His career spanned more than 1,600 jobs in Texas. He was a dedicated professional who served the American Institute of Architects and Texas Society of Architects and received many design awards and accolades, including the prestigious AIA Fellow. Chuck believed in being socially and politically engaged and set an example as a community leader and grass-roots political mover. He was president of both Allandale and Walnut Place neighborhood associations and served as an election judge wherever he lived. He served on numerous municipal, professional and community boards, councils and organizations. Chuck later married Lisa Sears, and together they built a thriving design/consulting business. As his constant companion, Lisa was present when Chuck peacefully passed away at home. Chuck was an unrivaled storyteller, comic, and tease, with a love for Longhorn football, silly hats, family games, and grandchildren. His dogs, Wolfie and Buddy, were devoted companions. Chuck was preceded in death by parents, Glenn and Esther, younger son Charles B. Croft, Jr. and first wife Carolyn. He is survived by wife Lisa Sears Croft, brother Bill Croft, sisters Bette Young (Don) and Linda Yarbrough; children David Croft (Terri), Cathy Anton (Bruce), Jan Swanson (Greg) and Carol Anne Croft; grandchildren Jeremy, Kimberlee Schoppert (Scott), Paul, Benjamin, Forest, Sean, Justin, Chris, and Charlie; four great grandchildren Kieran, June, Emme, Baker; and many nieces and nephews. There will be a

celebration of his life at Cook-Walden Funeral Home on Saturday, December 16th at 11:00. Friends and family are invited to share stories.

From Dignity obituaries. The Austin American-Statesman published a shorter version of this on December 14, 2017

Charles and Martha Gorin (ca. 1960 -)



Charlie Gorin, pitcher for the Milwaukee Braves (1954-1955)



CHARLEY GORIN
Back home again.

FOR AUSTIN

Charley Gorin Hurls

The pitcher the Austin Senators have been waiting for, ex-Texas Longhorn left-hander Charley Gorin, will once more hurl for the home folks—and the Senators—at 4 p. m. Sunday. That's when manager Ernie White and the club return home to open a six-day stand against San Antonio first and Amarillo next.

Waiting here for the starting assignment is Gorin, just in on reassignment from Atlanta. The crafty little lefty had opened the season at Houston and worked only four innings before being transferred onto the Atlanta roster.

Gorin's switch to the Senators was a story with a happy ending. "I've wanted to pitch here

for the past two seasons. I've always called Austin home," said Gorin.

"I've been trying to deal for Charley ever since Austin got in the Texas League," answered Senator president Allen Ruschel.

Gorin, sent to Austin in exchange for another southpaw, Hal DeMars, has been one of the most popular local pitching heroes since 1945 when he was on Toney Burger's Austin High team. He later starred for Texas' 1949 and 1950 NCAA championship clubs. All of his pro experience, dating back to 1950, has been in Class AA or better leagues. Gorin is 31 years old.

In addition to Gorin, the

Senators added still one more pitcher, right-hander Bob Stoico, to the staff Saturday and he, too, is on hand for the current series. Stoico, the 11th member of the Senator staff, appeared in 15 games, recording an 0-3 mark, for Austin last year.

He returns after a six-months service tour.

Special programs during the home stand will be the season's first Ladies Night, plus Travis High School Night, at the 6:30 p. m. double-header with San Antonio Monday, Amarillo's first Texas League game in Austin Wednesday, Lamar Junior High Night Thursday, and Family Night and Porter Junior High night Friday.

Charley Gorin pitches for the Austin Senators baseball team
Austin American-Statesman, April 26, 1959

Rhea Merritt

2617 Fiset

184

3

Frame res & carport atchd

Shoalmont #5

58572

11-1-54

10000/

owner

8

Building permit to Rhea Merritt, builder, to construct the house (1954)

NW
1/1

3

WATER SERVICE PERMIT

Austin, Texas

INDEXED

No. 8310

Received of RAY MERRITT Date 11-17-54
 Address 2617 Fiset Drive
 Amount TWENTY AND NO/100 \$ 20.00
 Plumber Dat's Plumbing Elect Co. Size of Tap 3/4"

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Date of Connection | <u>12-2-54</u> |
| Size of Tap Made | <u>3/4"</u> |
| Size Service Made | <u>3/4"</u> |
| Size Main Tapped | <u>6" C.F.</u> |
| From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock | <u>25'</u> |
| From E- Prop. Line to Curb Cock | <u>30'</u> |
| Location of Meter | <u>CURB</u> |
| Type of Box | <u>LOW</u> |
| Depth of Main in St. | <u>3'</u> |
| Depth of Service Line | <u>2'</u> |
| From Curb Cock to Tap on Main | <u>see</u> |
| Checked by Engr. Dept. | <u>2/29/54 [Signature]</u> |

| No. Fittings | Size |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| | Curb Cock |
| | Elbow |
| | St. Elbow |
| | Bushing |
| | Reducer |
| <u>4</u> | Pipe <u>4" 3/4" COP</u> |
| | Lead Comp. |
| <u>1</u> | Nipples <u>TLC</u> |
| <u>1</u> | Union <u>" LID "</u> |
| <u>1</u> | Plug <u>3/4" COP</u> |
| <u>1</u> | Tee <u>3/4" ANGLE</u> |
| <u>1</u> | Stop <u>3/4" ANGLE</u> |
| <u>1</u> | Box <u>LOW</u> |
| <u>1</u> | Lid <u>"</u> |
| | Valves |
| | Job No. <u>W 323-502</u> |
| | Req. No. <u>[Signature]</u> |

INDEXED

Water service permit for this address (1954)

Receipt No. 22566 Application for Sewer Connection No. 34061

Austin, Texas 12-13-1954

To the Superintendent of Sanitary Sewer Division, City of Austin, Texas.

Sir:—

I hereby make application for sewer connection and instructions on premises owned by

Rhea Merritt 617 First Street,

further described as Lot 3 Block B Outlot _____ Division _____

subdivision Trueman 5 Plat 184, which is to be used as a Res

In this place there are to be installed 8 fixtures. Plumbing Permit No. 10871

I agree to pay the City of Austin, the regular ordinance charge. 12-14-54 107

Depth at Prop. Line 3'

Respectfully,

Stab-Out Connected } 3' WIRELL
(Location)

Fanell

Date 12-23-54

By Burr

NOTE: Connection Instruction 8" Sewer in Dr. 5' Dia

Main 14.5' Ho 5" R
6" stub 83" WIRELL 6704 A 2885
A 3071

Sewer connection application for this address (1954)

City records indicate a permit to remodel of the house in 1982, including new siding, a permit to construct an addition to extend the carport in 1987, and a permit to replace windows in 2016.