MARTHA BEVIS: A LEADER AHEAD OF HER TIME
1927 – 2007

Far-seeing with boundless energy, rare insight, and unstinting generosity can only begin to describe Martha Bevis. Born in 1927 to Maurice and Hazel Lackey in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, Martha ventured to New York City not
long after graduation from the local Hiddenite High School and became a successful clothing modeler. In New York she met and married Richard Bevis, a WWII veteran. They then moved to Houston, Texas, where they lived until he was called to Washington, DC, during the Korean War. There Martha became an assistant to Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson. Later, after going back to Houston, she was recalled to Washington to serve on the staff of then Vice-President Johnson, returning on weekends to Houston. Afterward she remained in Houston, becoming the mother of four boys she and her husband happily raised.

But Martha did much more. She was a founding member of Lamaze Houston and the Houston Organization for Parental Education (HOPE), two groups that succeeded in promoting natural childbirth by women in Houston hospitals. She was also a founding member of the La Leche League of Houston, dedicated to promoting the benefits of breastfeeding. In the 1970s she launched the Safe Water Foundation of Texas, through which she quickly began to unearth and disseminate enormous amounts of important information about research relating to fluoride and water fluoridation. She was always quick and ready to airmail material to those who sought or could use her help, including scientists.

Seldom does one meet and get to know someone with the keen insights that Martha Bevis had. It was amazing to see how quickly she spotted errors and shortcomings in research reports. She was one of the first to question whether Harold Hodge had misrepresented Kaj Roholm’s estimate of the amount and duration of fluoride exposure needed to cause crippling skeletal fluorosis. She was also one of the first to compile extensive evidence on the weakness of claims for anti-caries effects of fluoride. Her lawsuit in Harris County, Texas, brought by her Safe Water Foundation against fluoridation, won a supporting judgment of fact by Judge Anthony Farris. However, as so often happens, this verdict was made ineffective in the appeals court.

Martha’s death on April 22 of this year while working at her desk came as shock to all. Those who were fortunate enough to know Martha will always be grateful for all she did for them, including her generous support of the ISFR and Fluoride.

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