

## GEORGIA DUKE: Recognized as Woman Pioneer of the Title Industry

In celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Texas Land Title Association (TLTA) profiled several unique Texas women who pursued professional careers in the title industry when it was rare to do so. Those women best exemplify the spirit of “the pioneer” in their display of strength, determination, tenacity and commitment as they pursued their dreams of owning or managing a title company.

The TLTA has selected Georgia Duke, Austin division president, North American Title Company, and CREW Austin member, as one of its distinguished women.

Georgia learned her trade at age 18 from State Senator William Fly of Victoria, Texas, and took to the title business like “a duck to water.” The senator, who owned a title company in Victoria, instructed her about the rules and regulations of the business, instilled in her the importance of responsibility and character and trained her how to do title examinations, cure title and handle closings. She moved to Houston where she conducted closings for a law firm before going to work for a title company. In a very short time, Georgia was closing 65 deals a month with one secretary. She made herself indispensable to the company; and in less than six weeks, she had earned the title of closer. By the 1970s, she had worked her way up to senior vice president in charge of branch operations and helped set up 11 branches in Houston in addition to closing commercial transactions.

In 1979, Georgia moved to Austin with her husband and high school sweetheart, Bill. She served as president of Commonwealth Land Title Company from 1981 to 1983 before opening Texas Professional Title. She sold her company to North American Title Company in 2000, and continues to work for the company managing four offices in the Austin area.

Georgia believes the industry protects the consumer by supplying information they may not have when purchasing real estate. She sees her job as a one-time mentor – a teacher – making sure the customer understand all aspects of the closing transaction.

“I would definitely urge young women to go into this business, although they don’t get the hands-on training like we used to,” said Georgia. “The TLTA Land Title School is priceless in that regard – it has been a tremendous asset to our industry, and it’s helped educate many people in the title business.”