

Nancy Ellard kicks into higher gear in retirement

August 22, 2023

RED OAK—The first thing anyone notices about Nancy Ellard is her energy.

She talks fast, using her hands and every muscle in her face to convey what she's thinking. She laughs easily. She works, moving from one task to the next—always on the move.

Ellard retired last year and became a Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteer. In June, she helped clean a family's fire-devastated home in Grand Prairie. A week later, she headed to Perryton after a tornado hit the Panhandle town.



Nancy Ellard

Last month, she went to Corsicana with the TBM Ellis County chainsaw team and participated as a victim in a “mass casualty” police training exercise.

Recently, she went to New Hampshire with teams from Collin County and the Amarillo area to assist with the aftermath of the extreme flooding.

Next, she plans to help remove and replace a fence for a women's ministry.

"I am bold for the Lord," she said. "I love people, if they'll put up with me. ... I'm a motormouth. ... I don't like to sit still. I like to go."

And TBM "gave me an opportunity to do that, and do that while I tell others about Jesus."

On the move

Ellard has been on the move in one fashion or another throughout her life. She's a native of Santa Fe, N.M., who moved to Texas after she married, raising two daughters as native Texans.

She turned her energy into activity, working as a paralegal, investment banker, warehouse manager and chef, among other things. *D Magazine* featured Ellard in 1986 when she started "Texas' first breakfast in bed service, where I went to your home and prepared and served a four-course gourmet breakfast."

On the side, "a long time ago," Ellard participated in dirt bike riding.

"That was great fun," she said. "Mostly, it was just getting to hang out with the guys and jumping off of ledges and stuff like that."

In February, someone at her church, First Red Oak Baptist, encouraged people to attend a TBM disaster relief training event. Told that the initials stand for Texas Baptist Men, she asked if women could be involved. Ellard was told 43 percent of volunteers are women. So, she signed up.

"I didn't yet know what it was all about, but all my life I had wanted to be a

missionary. The Lord told me, 'Nancy, you need to quit praying to be used and start praying to become usable.' Which hurt my feelings, but he was right."

God 'gave me my mission field'

TBM training involves general certification and then specialty training, often in a one-weekend setting. Ellard received her certification then went to a feeding class and then to a box unit class. She walked out of the box class thinking she "didn't need to spend three hours learning how to carry a box to a door."

She headed to a mud-out class, but never made it because she felt drawn back to the box class.

"I went back to the class and said: 'I'm sorry. I really do want to sit here and do this.' And then I found out what a box unit really did."

Ellard began to choke up as she shared the memory. "As I was watching the film ... it struck me that you're not taking boxes to people. You are taking Jesus to people."

At that point, Ellard felt God then told her she was finally ready.

"And he gave me my mission field. He gave me the desire of my heart in his always perfect time and will," she said. "I started crying, and people were trying to talk to me as I was leaving, and they were saying, 'What's wrong with that woman?' I was overwhelmed and excited."

'It has enriched my life'

The volunteer work since her training "has been nothing but a joy." She spoke of the disaster victims she has met while serving and of opportunities

to share the gospel with them.



When Nancy Ellard of Red Oak retired last year, she became a TBM disaster relief volunteer. (TBM Photo)

“They just come and hold you, and hug you, and cry on you, and all you can do is cry with them and offer help, hope and healing,” she said.

“It has just enriched my life. It has given purpose to getting out of bed in the morning. I am deliriously happy to be a part of TBM.”

“I haven’t met a person in this organization—man or woman—who isn’t just filled with the love of God. It just exudes from them in everything they say or do. They never are out of character. They’re humbly thinking about the Lord and giving him glory and working hard. That’s so awesome to me.”

And she’s always ready to go on the next TBM assignment.

“I actually have a room where I keep everything ready,” Ellard said. “The minute I come home from a deployment, I wash everything, I repack it. ... Everything’s there and ready to go. Within five minutes, I can grab my cot and my very comfortable mattress, and I’m ready to go out the door.

“I’m not married. I don’t have children nearby. I don’t even have pets,

except a feral cat, and he looks really sad when I say: 'Here's your water and food for a week. See you around.' And I'm gone.

"And I love it. It's exciting and rewarding. It's like a kid waiting to go to a sleepover—with Jesus."