



# CYPRESS MILL *Chronicle*

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF CYPRESS MILL

December 2018

Volume 18, Issue 12

## *Life Is What You Make It*

*shared by Sarphonn Paul, transcribed by Jackie Devine*



My first childhood memories are of my sister and me running through the rice paddies of Cambodia as my mother worked in the fields.

We lived in a small remote village. Looking back, I can still see her bare-foot and wrapped in a sarong moving in unison with other women as they were forced

into slave labor tending the rice fields to offset the shortages of manpower, draft animals, and farm implements.



It was the 1970's, the Lon Nol government had been abolished. The new regime was executing hundreds of thousands and others dying of disease and starvation were being evacuated to brutal labor camps. Buddhist monks and educated citizens—teachers, doctors, musicians,

artists and intellectuals—were being interrogated, tortured and killed.

My father, a teacher, fled during that time. He later sent for us. There was no time to grab even the barest essentials or say goodbye to loved ones. Unprepared for the journey and with no guarantees for our safety we es-caped to the Thai

border. We slept during the day. At night, we walked and crawled through the underbrush of the jungle, laced with landmines, staying hidden and out of sight. In the distance we could hear gunshots and people crying and screaming. Even as children we knew there were people out in the darkness that we couldn't see being hurt.

We arrived at the refugee camp in May 1981, where we found Dad and my maternal family members who I had never met. As bad as the camp might seem by today's standards, it was much better than the life we left back in the village. It felt like paradise.

In August 1981 we learned we had been chosen to migrate to the US. We were assigned to Houston, Texas. I remember seeing the great big plane on the tarmac and thought I was going to heaven.

Flying into Houston created another mind shift. Seeing the buildings, cars, and people speaking languages I didn't understand was mind bog-gling. We were housed with other refugee families on Caroline Street in Houston. Curtains, giving us privacy, separated our living quarters.



*(Continued on Page 2)*

# CYPRESS MILL

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## Newsletter Deadline

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*(Continued from Cover)*

Within a few days, we were sent to live in Conroe where my dad found a job as a custodian for Conroe school district. Four to six weeks later, Mom also got a job. At first, he walked. Then, he bicycled to work. Rain or shine. Proudly, he would boast later, "I never missed a day of work."

Mom and Dad always put education first. They told us, "We can't give you much, but we can make sure that you get a good education."

Growing up, we were expected to help them when they picked up extra jobs. There was very little free time. Weekends, holidays, evenings, they would clean offices, churches and residential homes.

My sister and I were sheltered. There was no dating, school parties, or sleepovers.

As I contemplated college, my only options were Sam Houston or the Uni-versity of Houston. Either one I would have to commute. I chose Sam Houston. This is where I met my husband. He was Hindu; I was Buddhist. Because both families believed in arranged marriages, we broke all the traditional rules.

After graduation, I held several corporate positions. One day out of the blue, my husband came home and told me he had bought me a liquor store. I'd no idea he had planned to make such a substantial investment, nor why he chose a liquor store.

I guess it was because of my parents. After they retired, they cashed in their entire retirement and bought a liquor store in Jefferson, Texas. Frank-ly, it's incredible that they made it. They knew absolutely nothing about selling liquor. But, they survived and have been very successful.

It has been a real journey, I traded a life of stability with recurring paychecks to that of the entrepreneurial path —with no guarantees: a life of competition, employee relations and razor-thin profit margins. However, it has changed my life, in a good way. Now I own two locations, my origi-nal shop at 290 and West 34th Street, and Civic Liquor & Wine here in Fair-field. I enjoy the challenge.

In closing I asked Sarphonn after all is said and done, what had she learned from life. Her answer, "Opportunity is out there. Hard work will take you places. Look at my parents starting with \$50. Look how far we have come. Hard work and dedication will take

*(Continued on Page 4)*



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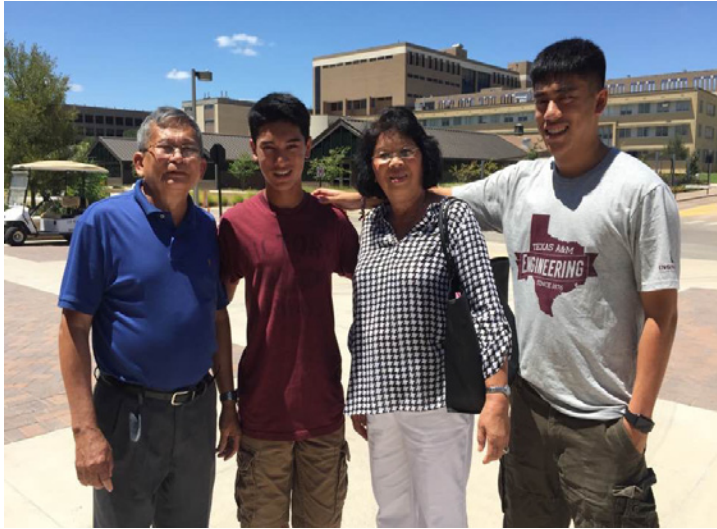
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(Continued from Page 2)

you anywhere you want to go!”

*Sarphonn and her husband have two boys. Shawn just turned 20 and is a student at A&M, and Andy is a junior in high school. Although they are American through and through, Sarphonn insists that she is trying to instill in her children the love of education and the importance of the strong work ethic that her parents passed along to her and her sister.*




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*Jesus said, "Come to me ...and I will give you rest."*



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Traditional worship: 10:45am  
Children's worship: 10:45am  
Bible Study: 9:30am

### Hanging of the Green

Service: Sunday Dec. 2  
10:45 am

### Wednesdays:

Dinner: 6:00pm  
Prayer & Bible Study: 6:30pm

### Christmas Music Service:

Sunday Dec. 16 10:45 am

### Thursdays:

Men's coffee &  
Life Focus: 9-10:00am

### Christmas Eve Service:

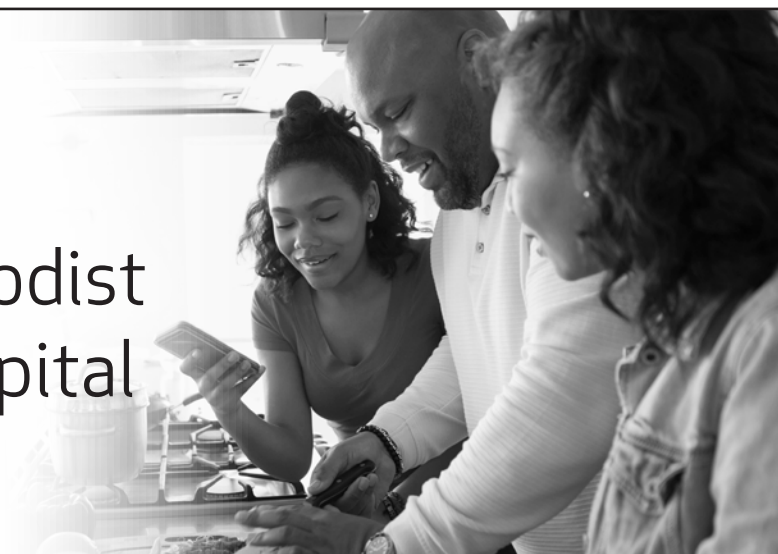
Monday Dec. 24 5:00 pm

### 1st & 3rd Fridays:

Ladies Fellowship 10:00 am

14515 Cypress North Houston Rd 77429  
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## Meet Elle

*submitted by Traci Graper*



Elle Graper, a nine year old Fairfield resident, has been chosen as a Houston finalist for a PBS television show, hosted by Ethan Bortnick, called the Celebration of Music. Elle was chosen out of hundreds of contestants to compete in the Houston finals along with twenty-one other child musicians.

Elle is an avid dancer, singer and actress and has performed in several local shows. She has trained at Theatre Under the

Stars: Humphreys School of Musical Theatre since she was four years old, where she enjoys performing at local community events as well as volunteering with The River Program for inclusive arts. She has had the opportunity to train with the Joffrey School and A Class Act New York. Some of Elle's favorite roles have been "Zuzu Bailey"



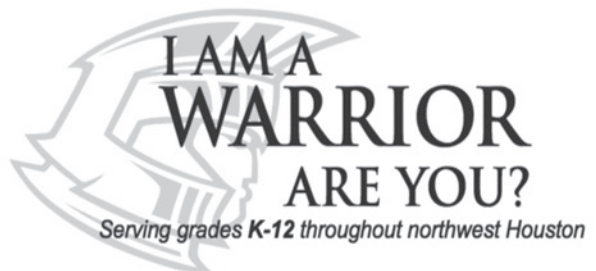
in Houston Grand Opera's World Premiere of *It's a Wonderful Life* and "Little Nanny Tickle" in TUTS *Sleeping Beauty* and *Her Winter Knight*. Elle loves lending her talent to bring awareness and raise money for causes she believes in.

As a child, music has always been something that has given Elle hope and an outlet to cope with the struggles of having Cystic Fibrosis. When Elle isn't at dance class, singing a song, or performing on stage, she is working hard to fight the progression of her disease. Elle spends three to five hours each day doing breathing treatments and wearing a vest in order to try and fight the build up of mucus in her lungs. Music and performing not only help strengthen Elle's lungs, but allow her to escape the world of doctors and pills and just be a kid. Elle often comments that "I am just really lucky that I happen to love the things that work to keep me healthy". Elle's childhood dream is to move to New York City and perform in a Broadway show.

The Houston concert for The Celebration of Music will be held at Match Theatre on December 14th. One finalist will be chosen based on popular vote, and will proceed to the Los Angeles final show. You can read more about Elle, watch her video, and vote at <https://celebrationofmusic.com/elle-graper>.



## CYPRESS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



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