

Martha Pattillo Siv
Pampa High Class of 1964



Martha Pattillo Siv was born and brought up in Pampa, Texas. Her parents, Jean and Ellice Pattillo were both teachers. They moved to Pampa in 1944 and made their careers as fine teachers in the Pampa school system. From an early age they instilled in Martha their love of learning, reading, languages, travel and staying in close touch with family and friends. Thanks to her parents and long summer trips, by the time she was in fourth grade, Martha had visited forty states and Canada and Mexico; wanderlust was well implanted.

During her years in Pampa schools, Martha was motivated and guided by many outstanding teachers. She spent many happy hours at the Lovett Memorial Library, often challenging herself to read one hundred books each summer. She was an avid speller and loved writing. Thanks to 4H she developed a feel for sewing and design. At Robert E. Lee Junior High School she was salutatorian. At Pampa High School she was active in various clubs and honor societies. She began her study of French, inspired by her father and a distant family connection to France. She played the clarinet and oboe in the award winning PHS Band, cementing her love of music. She continued to study hard, and was very proud to be valedictorian of the PHS Class of 1964.

Well prepared at PHS, she was awarded a scholarship to the University of Texas at Austin, where her mother had graduated. She majored in French and Plan II, a nationally recognized liberal arts honors program, and graduated in 1968. That summer she was selected as an exchange student to Peru, kindling her interest in international travel, Latin America and Spanish. Reminded by supportive parents that their legacy would be a good education, she wanted to do graduate studies. She chose Library and Information Science, based on her love of books and learning, organizing and sharing ideas. This turned out to be a wonderful career choice.

Fortified with her MLS and her desire to see the world, she struck out for her first job in Washington, DC. Determined to realize her dream to know France, she saved her money and took her first trip to Europe. She loved Paris and wanted to live there. She found an interesting job running the library at an international affairs institute, in English, French and Spanish. Still in love with Paris and eager to enter the United Nations system, she applied at UNESCO headquarters. Eventually she received an offer, but at the UNESCO office for Asia in Bangkok, not in Paris. She took this job and thus began her UN career and her love of Asia. Traveling throughout the region and developing libraries and information services, she also honed her hobby of collecting handicrafts and supporting women and community groups. She was based in Bangkok during the mid-1970's at the end phase of the conflicts nearby, and took a special interest in Cambodia.

Then she transferred to the United Nations in New York, beginning at the UN Library and later developing library and information services at several UN agencies and visiting some forty countries. During these New York years, she continued her interest in handicrafts and women's development in Asia and beyond. She founded a company with two friends, South China Seas. They focus on beautiful objects made by women and community groups, offering them new horizons.

One day in New York she received a letter from a friend in Bangkok, saying that he had met an extraordinary young man, Sichan Siv, who had just escaped the killing fields of Cambodia, and was being resettled as a refugee in Connecticut. The friend gave him Martha's address and number, in case he came to Manhattan. They met on September 15, 1977 and the rest is history. Martha and Sichan married at the First Presbyterian Church

in Pampa on December 24, 1983. At -7 degrees F, that day Pampa was one of the coldest places in the US and Sichan fulfilled his desire to become a naturalized Texan. They have spent much happy time in Pampa and the Panhandle, often featured in the local media.

After completing his Master's at Columbia University and working in New York, in 1989 Sichan was selected to work at the White House by President George H.W. Bush, as Deputy Assistant to the President. This was truly an American dream story for a refugee from Cambodia who had arrived in America just thirteen years earlier with two dollars in his pocket. With this extraordinary opportunity, Martha and Sichan relocated to Washington, DC and enjoyed every day of four years at the White House. Martha transferred to the World Bank in Washington. From 1989 to 2006 she was a senior information manager on a variety of innovative projects to capture and share the lessons learned from World Bank development activities, receiving international recognition. From 2001 to 2006, Sichan was honored to serve as a United States Ambassador to the United Nations in New York, appointed by President George W. Bush. These years at the highest levels of diplomacy in New York enabled Martha to use her six languages, apply her social and international cultural skills, and showcase America.

In 2006, Martha and Sichan decided to wrap up their East Coast careers and move to Texas, choosing San Antonio. In 2008, Sichan's memoir *Golden Bones*, an Extraordinary Journey from Hell in Cambodia to a New Life in America, was published by HarperCollins and has become an international bestseller. He dedicated Chapter Thirteen to Texas, detailing much of Martha's life and highlighting Pampa and the Panhandle. Sichan's mother's message in *Golden Bones* permeates his life and achievements: "Never Give Up Hope." Martha and Sichan love San Antonio as their base, and spend much of their time traveling for Sichan's public speaking and book related events. They bring the World to Texas and Texas to the World.

Martha manages her expanding South China Seas business furthering the economic development of women and communities. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, and is involved in mentoring and entrepreneurship. She is active as a volunteer and member in several

organizations, including the First Presbyterian Church, Teachers Across Borders, Friends of Khmer Culture, Caring for Cambodia, San Antonio 100, Boysville, etc. Martha is honored to come full circle and to be inducted to the PHS Hall of Fame: From Pampa to Paris to Phnom Penh--and back to Pampa. She hopes that her life based on lessons instilled by her parents, determination and persistence developed in Pampa and Sichan's mother's message of Hope will inspire young people to realize their dreams.