

TRINITY LODGE RESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

All four pages in this month's newsletter are dedicated to my story about our General Manager, Kim Giang Ho. I wish I had more time, space, and writing talent to add more detail about her earlier life in Vietnam

For Residents
By Residents

Please help me. Send me your stories. Call or email

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If we're going to keep the newsletter viable, we need your input.

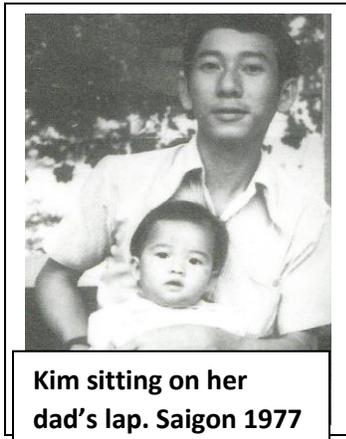


I'm an immigrant. I know what it's like to leave my homeland and seek a new life in a new country. What I don't know is, how would I have coped if I didn't know the language? What if I had come from an entirely different culture? Different foods, different attitudes, different religions? How would I handle a Canadian winter, if I was born in, and came from a sub-tropical country? Kim has a very short answer to my questions. Adapt and learn quickly. I'm so grateful that I was able to persuade Kim to tell me her story. Thank you, Kim.

On the 30th of April 1975, a year before our Trinity Lodge General Manager, Kim Giang Ho was born, the capital city of Vietnam, Saigon, her birthplace, capitulated to the communist regime. Her family, wealthy even by Canadian standards, had all of their possessions confiscated by the new government. Her grandfather, who was a teacher of the English language, lost his job. Her father, Vu Giang a radiologist, lost his job. Vu was reduced to sharing a small home with his parents, eight siblings and two other families. To be able to feed himself and his parents and trying to save for what could be a better future, Vu worked at whatever job he could, mostly general labouring in local factories and mending bicycles in their tiny home.



Vu met his wife, Son Tran in early 1975. He was very close to leaving the country before the communists took over. He had only recently returned from three years of studying radiology at the University of Texas in San Antonio. He chose to remain in Saigon with the young woman that he would soon marry. She is the love of his life forever. Kim remembers, as a young child, although their home was so tiny, with so many people living in it, and all the hardships, it was always a happy place to be. I asked Kim if she had a favorite memory of her childhood in



Kim sitting on her dad's lap. Saigon 1977

Saigon. She replied, without hesitation. Although money was hard to come by, occasionally mom would take her to a bookstore and allow her to choose a book. Kim told me how she treasured those visits to the store and the books.

In 1984, when Kim was eight years old, her mom told her that dad had to go on a business trip. In reality, he was about to be one of more than a million people, who risked their lives by fleeing Vietnam by boat to escape the communist regime. Wikipedia tells us that one fifth of that number did not survive the hazardous journey. Vu spent all of his savings, purchasing a place on a small fishing boat. Twenty-five people were booked for the trip. Before

the boat set off, another thirty-five people demanded that they board the boat. If the crew refused, they would be betrayed and probably imprisoned for life.

After a couple of days, the grossly overloaded boat lost engine power and drifted for three days and nights. Fortunately, they were sighted and rescued by a French merchant vessel. The fishing boat sank within minutes of the last refugee being taken off.

Eighteen days after the refugees left Saigon, the merchant ship unloaded them at Hong Kong. They were taken to a refugee facility. During his two years stay in the resettlement camp, because he was able to speak English, Vu secured the mailman position and because of that,

after eight months of not knowing, Son Tran finally received a letter from him. Because he was able to prove that he had a brother in Canada, Vu was eventually allowed refugee status.

When Vu landed in Calgary, in 1987, a friend in Yellowknife told him that he could get him a job, so Vu decided to take up his offer. As soon as Vu had saved enough money for flight tickets, his wife, Son Tran and Kim joined him.

Kim vividly remembers the family reunion at Yellowknife airport. It was Halloween. 31st October 1989. She was wearing runners and she was certainly not dressed for cold, dark, arctic winters.

Kim laughed as she told me of her first day at school. She ran off home after twenty minutes. Back in Saigon, her grandfather had taught her a few words of formal English. “Good day. How are you?” She had no idea of what “Hey. How ya doin?” meant. Her second day was a vast improvement. She stuck it out ‘till lunchtime! Just like most young people, Kim quickly adapted to her new life and after a year in elementary school, she moved on to Junior High and Senior High, which were both in the same school complex. While in grade eleven Kim had a part time job at the local supermarket. At grade twelve she moved to a better paying job on the check—out for Canadian Tire. Kim told me, if her mother had not been so firm in demanding that she further her education, she would have continued working. What teenager could resist earning fifteen dollars an hour!

After graduation, leaving her parents in Yellowknife, Kim took the huge step of moving to Calgary to study at Mount Royal College. After completing General Studies, she moved on to SAIT in Northwest Calgary to study nutrition. It was while she was at Mount Royal that Kim met Johnny Ho. They were classmates. Their first date was at the bowling alley! She discovered that ten pin bowling was Johnny’s passion. Thus began a courtship that led to marriage on August 11th2001. Johnny had also moved to SAIT, where he studied mechanical engineering.

I asked Kim, how did she start working at Trinity Lodge? She told me that she saw the Trinity Lodge sign every morning on her bus trip to college. She thought it was something like Travelodge. She phoned reception and was informed, “No, we’re a Retirement community, but come in and apply for a job.” She did, it was October fifteenth, 1998. Chef Alan Campbell interviewed her and hired her the same day. He had no idea that one day, the young woman would be his boss!

During her first six months at Trinity, Kim was a server in the dining room, the second six months she worked in the office as an administrative assistant. She moved to our sister community at Valley Ridge for a three-year term, then on to Bonavista Village for two years, gaining experience in the administration of retirement communities. In late 2005, when the position of Office Manager at Trinity Lodge became available, Kim applied for the job and got it. In March 2013 she was appointed General Manager. Kim had two maternity leaves before she became GM. The first resulted in a son named Tommy, the second, another son, Mathew, he was born in 2007. Tommy has inherited his dad’s passion for ten pin bowling. He recently won a thousand-dollar scholarship and narrowly missed another award when placing fourth in the Canadian championship. Mathew is a basketball enthusiast. Both young men attend local

schools. Tommy is still assessing which University has the best Academic and Bowling programs. Mathew is starting High School next year.

Kim's parents, Vu and Son, moved to Calgary a year after Tommy was born. They had no wish to be long-distance grandparents. Son started a job that she loves in Rocky View hospital and is still there after sixteen years. Vu's new job, the best job he ever had, is taking care of his two grandsons while Kim and Johnny are at work.

I asked Kim about her favorite family holiday. No hesitation again. "California's Disneyland. Once with my parents in 1994 then again with Johnny and the two boys in 2011."



"When is your favorite time of the year?"

"Late summer, the courtyards are looking their best and we have just celebrated our twelfth Garden Party. We missed two years because of Covid. We also have some exciting events leading up to Christmas, so I suppose from now to New Year is my favorite time.



Thank you, Kim, for allowing me to send you on an emotional roller coaster as you reached back to the memories of the past. Thank you for all that you and your amazing team do for your Trinity Lodge family.

