



Cele Keeper

January 11, 1927 - December 3, 2020

Cele Keeper arrived on earth in 1927 long before televisions, cell phones, CD players, fertility drugs and artificial intelligence. And there were street cars for public transportation.

Born in Houston, she went to Poe Elementary, Lanier Junior High (now Middle), Lamar Senior High and was graduated from Rice (then) Institute in 1946 at age 19. She had a wonderful time dancing with all the sailors Wednesday nights at Autry House. Needless to say, her future career plans were not etched in stone.

Her first job was at a large women's department store. There was an employee discount on clothes. Then a real job at Baylor College of Medicine where she trained to be a laboratory technician in the Dept. of Medicine and helped teach Laboratory Diagnosis to sophomore medical students.

She met the love of her life, Sam, at a dance and they spent 67 years mostly delicious years together. Sam died in October 2016 and her life hasn't been much fun since then. Before he died, he intoned, "Well the good news is that if Trump gets elected, I won't have to be here to endure it."

Sam and Cele had two wonderful kids. Son, Gary, a vice-president of Showtime Cable network, died of AIDS in 1990. Wise and thoughtful daughter, Lauren, spends lots of time with Cele helping her navigate the complexities of

aging.

Cele and Sam had a bookstore, The House of Books, here in southwest Houston from 1959 to 1969. Sam kept his money-making job and Cele ran the bookstore, (where profit is not the motivation), loving every minute of it. A nightmare then ensued when computers became part of their business lives and publishers could not get orders straight. EXAMPLE: She ordered 5 copies of the Seventeen Book of Etiquette (a great Bat Mitzvah gift.) The publisher sent 517 copies. That did it. They sold the store.

Cele then spent time volunteering at the Houston Council on Human Relations, a make-Houston-better non-profit agency.

You have just read the back story.

Then in the early 70's along came an offer to learn to become a therapist at the Texas Institute of Child Psychiatry with Dr. Irvin Kraft. That was catnip and Cele was there three plus years doing individual and group therapy. One day she told herself it was time to get a graduate degree so she could make some money for her efforts. At age 49 she applied to UH Graduate School of Social Work and was accepted.

After she graduated, the Dean asked her to teach Human Sexuality, an elective, which she did for 13 semesters.

Cele also established a private practice from which she retired in 1995. During those years she had professional articles and book chapters published and was also conducting group supervision sessions for the therapists and counselors at Montrose Center, Women's Home, Legacy and Planned Parenthood.

During these years she became an adjunct professor at Baylor College of Medicine in the Menninger Dept. of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

where she was part of a team that taught Human Sexuality to sophomore medical students.

In 1993 The National Association of Social Workers chose Cele as the recipient of that year's Lifetime Achievement Award. The Mayor and City Council of Houston then declared May 31, 1993 as Cele S. Keeper Recognition Day for her accomplishments and contributions to the community.

In 2007 Sam and Cele endowed a Professorship in Peace and Social Justice in the Graduate College of Social Work. Our first was professor Jody Williams, the 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate for her work against land mines.

In 2010 Cele wrote a book, "It's Never Too Late to Grow Up," part-memoir and part rumination focusing on life experiences and insights. She enjoyed a huge book signing at Brazos Book Store. Later that year Sam's health became precarious, so she was unable to travel or market the book, but it did sell well in Houston.

Cele also has an essay in The Noble Generation, Vol II, entitled "Dancing in the Dark." Published in 2004, It is about losing her first boyfriend, Stuart, who was swept off his ship in a typhoon near Okinawa during World War II.

In 2013, Cele, who is a Fellow in the American Group Psychotherapy Association, received the Group Foundation Social Responsibility Award at the organization's annual meeting in New Orleans.

Now 93, Cele is a political junkie and a yellow dog Democrat who suffers a conundrum: She loves politics and mostly loathes politicians.

And she is also addicted to sports: The Astros, the Texans and the Rockets. And tennis, especially Roger Federer.

Cele calls herself a "treeaholic" and has favorite trees all over town. She currently serves on Dean Detlaff's Advisory Committee. And that's about it.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a donation to the following charities, American Civil Liberties Foundation, Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders and Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, Inc.

Join Zoom Meeting December 18, 2020 at 10:00 AM

<https://zoom.us/j/98490957037?pwd=KytpTIRiS3RYOUNaUHFxSS9RYkJidz09>

Meeting ID: 984 9095 7037

Passcode: 070949

Tribute Wall

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“ I had the pleasure of knowing Cele for 20 years through my role of Director of Alumni, Career & Professional Development at the GCSW. She was always ready, willing and able to serve her fellow social workers. I remember having ice cream sundaes at Cele and Sam's condo several years back in support of GCSW Clinical Practitioners and I have a personally autographed copy of her book from the Brazos Book Store signing. I witnessed her humor, laughter and generosity over the years and will cherish the fond memories I have of her always. Ann Liberman

Ann Liberman - December 18, 2020 at 10:08 AM