

*Life in Mill Brook*

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With the advent of true summer heat upon us, my family piled into our cars and neighbor's truck and journeyed to the baby blue stucco house on Eastwood Lane for a new life. Wires no longer hung overhead like rope in the streets, roads widened, and oaks and pines shadowed properties and gave homes pleasant tans in the July sun. And just like that, we set off into our new house to discover what it would feel like to roam the halls and climb the stairs as owners. This seemingly unknown territory grew incredibly welcoming as moments passed and we could sense ourselves blending in beautifully with all that surrounded us.

The maze-like set up of the neighborhood further intrigued us, and my sister and I constantly set out on foot to stumble upon new paths, roads, and the highly regarded: Brook Road Park. It is through our stumbling that we met our future church brothers and sisters, classmates, and family friends- people who did not need all of the time in the world to know that our family would always be around to offer support and a helping hand.

Housed comfortably on the Forest Road that wrapped itself around the edge of Mill Brook was the elementary school that allowed me to uncover my intelligence. In this school, I met teachers who encouraged me that I had something knowledgeable to offer, students who motivated me to push onward despite difficulty, and a staff of dedicated lunch aides who were not afraid to chip in and purchase lunch when I had forgotten cash at home. This close-knit community allowed for my development on a uniquely personal level; one that would launch me on an independent voyage overseas that went on to later craft my leadership and responsibilities.

When cars wore trees and power lines decorated patchy lawns, Mill Brook stood in solidarity for all damaged by the effects of Hurricane Sandy. I watched an outpouring of love and charity unfold before my eyes when a friend lost her home to a generator caused fire. The people of the community did not fear offering themselves, their homes, and their hands to help rebuild what was carried away with powerful waters in 2012. Mill Brook is a land of peacemakers who make up a second family to nearly all who populate it. With its arms around me, I am never lost.