

Spry Cleaners...from Page 1A



Chris Spry demonstrating a safety feature on one of his new shirt-pressing machines on Oct. 23. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

job,” Chris said.

When Harbin died, Chris thought for sure he was out of a job – enter Bob and Carol Head, his “two angels” who presented him with an opportunity of a lifetime.

The Heads had long been customers of Harbin’s, and they knew Chris and appreciated his work ethic. Carol even told him once as he carried her laundry out that, if he kept at it, he’d own the cleaners one day. Little did he know that years later her kind remark would come true.

After Harbin’s sudden death, in which Chris found his boss and father figure deceased in the old building, the young dry cleaner felt his world had caved in, especially since he’d lost his mother, too, to a car accident the year before.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do, and I worried about it,” Chris said. “My mother-in-law, Louise Hooper, asked if I had prayed. Embarrassingly, the thing I should have done first I had not done yet, and that was pray to God. So, I prayed.

“That following day, LuAnn Head called me and said, ‘My dad wants to see you.’ I went to see him in his office, and Bob Head asked me, ‘Do you want to own the cleaners?’”

Chris went home, drew up a business plan and returned to see Bob, who believed in him enough to lend him the money that same day, without so much as a credit check, to purchase the business from Harbin’s family in 2016.

Fast forward to today, 11 months after a fire that devastated the Spry Family and put the future of the business in jeopardy, and the Sprys have once again overcome a tremendous challenge. In fact, the fire put him ahead, allowing him to upgrade to all new cutting-edge equipment.

He’s always been able and willing to clean any garment or fabric, from leather to silk, and from rugs to draperies, comforters and shoes; it’s just a more efficient process now.

Furthermore, he can still remove any stain and clean any number of sentimental yet challenging pieces for customers.

Additionally, and what many people may not have known prior to the fire, the dry cleaner continues to feature three employees who work all the time doing any alteration necessary. From hemming pants to mending drapes and crafting custom-tailored suits, Spry’s alters it all.

Now, he has all-new

services for the public, like hydrocarbon dry cleaning, wet wash, fast turnaround pressing, and expanded linen services for restaurants.

And where the second topside building used to be, Chris has installed a drive-thru for customers offering a safe way to pick up and drop off clothing without ever requiring people to exit their vehicles amid COVID-19.

There’s also the new “Wash, Dry and Fold” service that’s great for families and college students on the go who don’t necessarily have the time or energy to do their everyday laundry.

For this service, Spry’s issues free laundry draw string bags that are a set price, which customers can then fill to the brim overflowing and pay just one price every time, with same or next-day turnaround to pick up nicely sorted and folded clean clothing.

Whether it’s everyday laundry or an expensive garment in need of stain removal, Chris takes pride in everything he does, though he’s got a soft spot for cleaning clothes that “other cleaners don’t want to do.”

It’s unfortunate, Chris said, but many cleaners turn clothing away for a variety of reasons, including due to the age of certain items or the age of spots on items, or perhaps the delicacy or dirtiness of some clothing.

Doing many of these types of difficult-to-clean items loses money for the business, so he understands why other cleaners reject them, but he has his own reasons for going above and beyond for customers.

“I love seeing the facial reaction of someone who thinks their garment is lost,” Chris said of customers returning to retrieve their cleaned clothing. “A person’s happiness and appreciation for our talents and skills far surpass any piece of paper with dollar signs on it.”

Assisting Chris and his employees in accomplishing all this work is the upgraded building featuring a state-of-the-art setup that has made the business a one-of-a-kind dry-cleaning venture.

Major changes include the installation of industry-leading equipment to replace decades-old machines that once inhabited the since-demolished second upper building. Now, Spry’s does nearly all cleaning in the basement of the main building.

Chris never used the basement prior to the fire, but

the complete redesign following the blaze has allowed him to implement a custom layout to install everything he needs, where he needs it, to get any job done with optimized speed and safety.

Additionally, Chris has built a separate outbuilding to house the boiler that feeds steam into the business. This is both a safety and cooling feature most dry cleaners can’t afford for space reasons, allowing employees to stay cool as they work away from the incredibly hot boiler.

Originally, the building was built to house a doctor’s office, and it was converted into a dry cleaner years later. Now, the building has come full circle to being a truly efficient, custom-designed dry-cleaning experience.

“We’ve done it not just to be able to save and help the customers, but it’s going to be more efficient for us, more efficient and better for the employees,” Chris said. “You’ll never hardly see a dry cleaner that has an air conditioner, and just having an air conditioner alone makes everybody’s life easier.”

Chris said he is incredibly thankful to God and for all of the community support he’s received in the last 11 months, from people who reached out to offer their condolences and cheer on his efforts, to those who, like one customer, paid his electric bill without telling him.

“I’m so dedicated to this town, just for the fact that everybody has loved us and treated us so good,” Chris said. “I know most of the people from living here all my life, and I worked for the previous owner, so most of my customers have known me for a long time.

“It’s almost like a barber shop – I’ve built a relationship with a majority of the people here. My job is fun, I enjoy doing it, and I enjoy seeing the customers.”

Folks will want to stay tuned to Chris Spry’s personal Facebook page for an official invitation to a Grand Opening event in the coming weeks. Chris wants the event to serve as a celebration thanking everyone for their support. Refreshments will be served.

Spry Family Dry Cleaners can be reached at 706-745-1976 and is open Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and closed Sundays.