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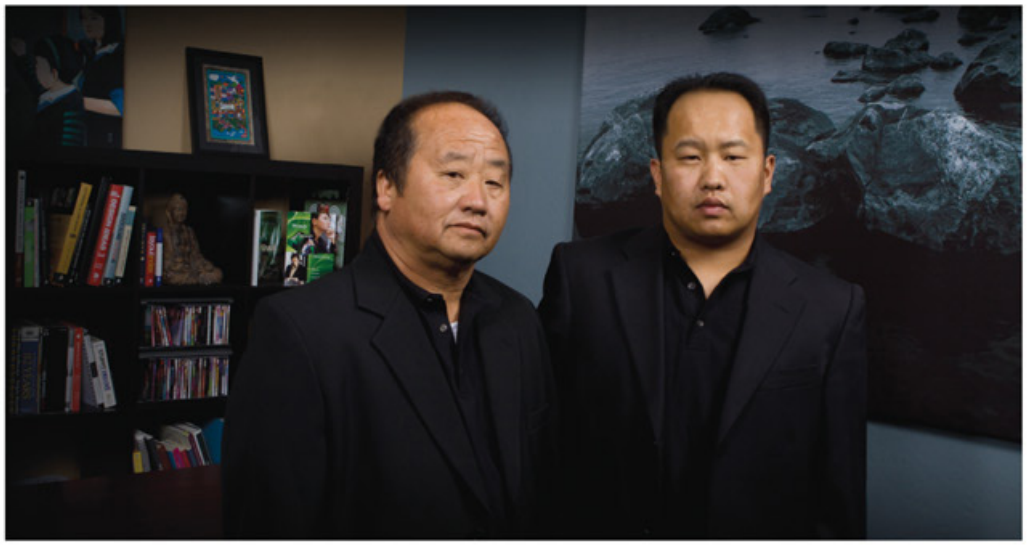
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There is an old saying, "Is it the person that defines the journey or is it the journey that defines the person?"

I think each of us can find our own meaning and significance to this question. Myself personally, I think that the last five years of publishing Txhawb has significantly shaped me into a different person. The process of interviewing, questioning, designing and learning about individuals and businesses in my community through my work, has actually taught me more about myself.

2011, will forever be written in history as the passing of the great General Vang Pao. It is such a great loss for all Hmong people throughout all parts of the world. I want to take this opportunity to thank the General Vang Pao family for allowing Txhawb to interview him for our 4th issue. And I want to dedicate the 2012, 5th issue of Txhawb as a tribute to General Vang Pao for all that he has done for us. I hope that all of you enjoy the feature story we have produced in his honor.

So much of General Vang Pao's history has come to define our collective Hmong history. In General Vang Pao's case, it is definitely the man that defined the journey. Yet, the question that is upon us now is: "Where do we each go from here?"

If you asked me, I would say, we each committ to pushing ourselves even harder towards our own individual goals, but always remembering that we are all still connected as one people and that we are better when we work together and share ideas.

Never forget who you are or be ashamed to be Hmong. I think throughout history, different groups whether in China or Southeast Asia have tried to erase our history to limit our self worth and progress. It's almost like a child who has never known his parents. Without knowing your history, you will never know your own worth and potential. We can not do anything about what has happen to us in the past, but our future is whatever we choose to shape it into.

With each passing year, Txhawb becomes harder and harder to produce. It requires so much creative talent from so many people. Thank you to all the contributing writers, photographers, designers, artists, marketing and sales staff, radio and Hmong TV people who have helped to make our 5th issue possible. I especially want to thank Noah Vang and Tua Vang for their extra efforts.

"Thank you" to all the advertisers for your continued support. 2011 has been one of the worst financial years, yet most of you still believed in Txhawb and our work and found a way to support us.

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Once again, Txhawb belongs to our whole community, that is the main reason why I decide to make it a free publication from the very beginning - so anyone can access it. Please provide insight on what you would like Txhawb to become and I hope you enjoy the 2012 issue.

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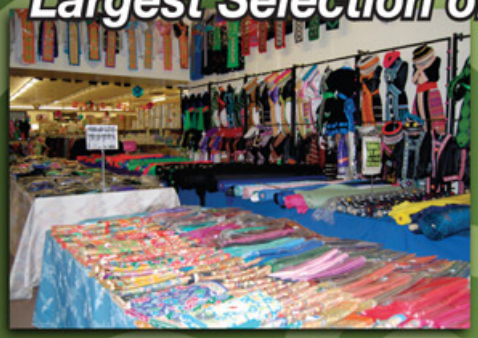
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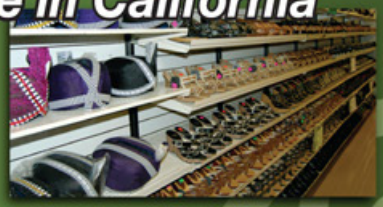
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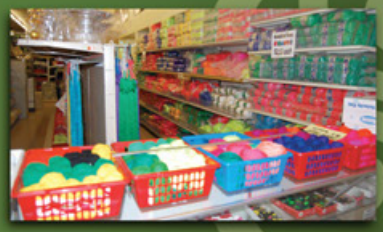


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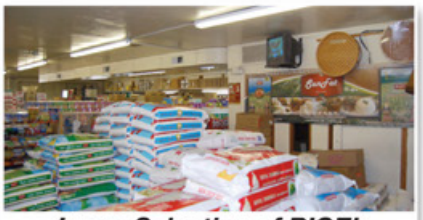
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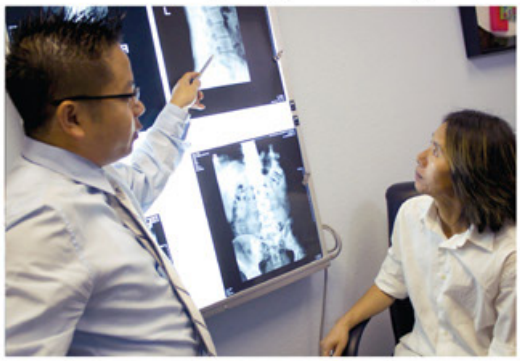


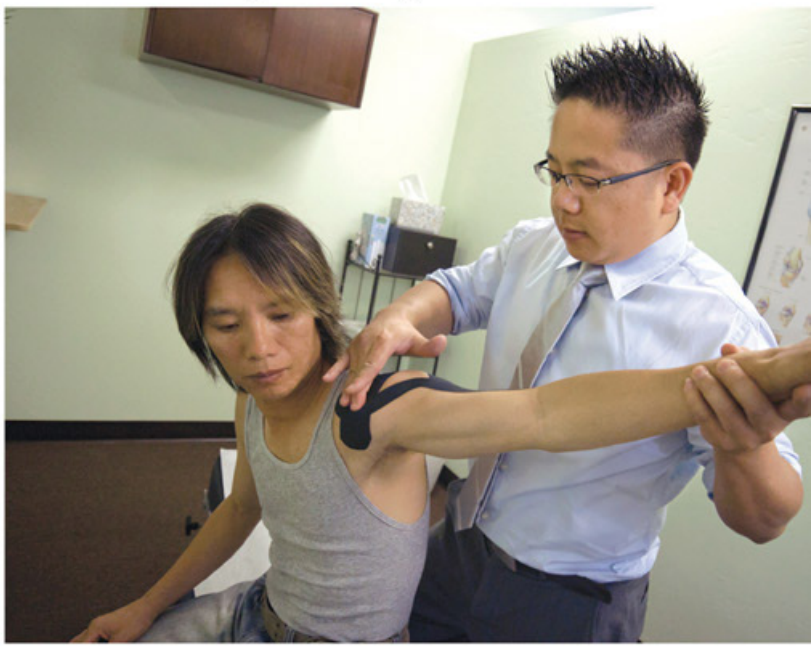
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The English version of this story available at: www.txhawb.com


photo by **Tudor Stanley**

NCO TXOG
NAIS PHOO
VAJ POV

Tus sau: Tuam Vaj

Nais Phoo Vaj Pov yug hnub tim 8 lub 12 hli ntuj xyoo 1929. Nws yug nyob rau lub zos Hav Thab Seeb; lus Nplog hu ua Phuv Khoos Khaub, Toj Xeem Khees Kais, Nom Hej, Muas Khas, Xeev Xees Khuam. Nws txiv hu ua Neej Tswb Vaj hos nws niam hu ua Ntxhoo Thoj. Niam thiab txiv yug tau lawv cuaj tug tub thiab cuaj tuag ntxhais. Rau tug tub tau tag sim neej rau thaum tseem yau lawm yog li tshuav lawv peb leeg xwb. Nyob rau xyoo 1954 nws tus tij laug Vaj Nom Tub tau tag sim neej lawm. Los txog xyoo 1972 nws tus kwv Vaj Paj Vws los kuj tau tso lub ntiaj teb tseg lawm thiab yog li thiaj tshuav Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tib leeg tub thiab ob peb tug cov muam nyob los txog ntua rau hnub tim 6 lub 1 hli ntuj xyoo 2011 uas nws tau ncaim nws cov muam thiab nws tsev neeg Hmoob mus lawm.

Txij li kuv xeev xwm los kuv yeej hnov txog Nais Phoo Vaj Pov lub npe lawm. Thaum tseem yau kuv kuj paub tsis txog tias nws muaj nuj nqis npaum cas rau haiv neeg Hmoob thiab yog leej twg tiag tsuas yog hnov lub npe xwb. Thaum kuv muaj hnub nyug 7 xyoo kuv pom nws ib daim duab uas kuv txiv tau yees cia. Lub sijhawm ntawd Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tawm hauv tebchaws Asmeslikas los ncig saib teb chaws ua si nyob rau hauv lub tebchaws Thaib. Thaum no peb tseem nyob ua neeg thoj nam tawg rog hauv lub yeej Vib Nais. Xyoo 1985 yog thawj zaug ntawm kuv lub neej uas kuv pom Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tus duab tias nws zoo li cas. Txog xyoo 1988, kuv niam thiab kuv txiv tau txiav txim siab tawm hauv thoj nam Vib Nais tuaj mus rau tebchaws Asmeslikas.

Nyob rau xyoo 1994, thaum ntawd kuv kawm ntawv nyob hoob 9, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tau tuaj ncig saib tsoom kwv tij neej tsa Hmoob nyob rau sab qaum teb California. Yog li, thawj zaug hauv kuv lub neej, kuv thiaj tau muaj txoj hmoo tau ntsib thiab tuav kiag Nais Phoo Vaj Pov txhais tes. Tsis tas li ntawd xwb, lawv kuj muab lub sijhawm rau ob peb leeg los muab lus nug Nais Phoo Vaj Pov. Kuv kuj npaj siab heev yog li kuv thiaj tau tsa tes los ua ib tug uas muab ib lo lus nug rau Nais Phoo Vaj Pov. Lo lus uas kuv tau nug rau nws yog hais txog seb peb cov menyuam Hmoob li kuv thiab coob leej ntau tus yuav ua li cas rau peb lub neej lawm yav tom ntej.

Kuv nco ntsoov Nais Phoo Vaj Pov cov lus uas nws teb rau kuv hais tias, "Lub neej Hmoob txom txom nyem. Muaj txoj hmoo peb tuaj txog rau lub tebchaws Asmeslikas no. Nej cov tub cov ntxhais yeej meem mob siab ntso nrog luag kawm kom txawj kom ntse thiab paub luag tej txuj ci thiaj los nrhiav tau laj tau kam, los khwv nyiaj khwv txiaj… thiab tig rov los pab thiab rub yus tsev neeg Hmoob kom muaj noj muaj haus thiab muaj lub neej ua zoo xws teb xws chaw." Nov yog thawj cov lus uas kuv khaws ntsoov cia los ntawm Nais Phoo Vaj Pov.

Los txog rau ob peb xyoo tom qab no kuv kuj tau los muab kuv lub sijhawm, tswv yim thiab dag zog pab txhawb rau Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tsoom qub tub rog. Thaum Nais Phoo Vaj Pov pom yus muaj lub siab dawb hlub tshua yus haiv neeg thiab pom tias yus muaj cuab peev xwm pab tau nws lawm nws kuj ua lub siab loj rub yus los nrog nws khiav dej

num ua ke pab pub rau nws tsev neeg Hmoob. Kuv kuj muaj txoj hmoo uas Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tau tso siab rau kom los pab nws.

Kuv kuj zoo siab hais tias peb tiam hluas li kuv ntshe tsis muaj pes tsawg tus uas tau los khiav hauj lwm ua ke nrog Nais Phoo Vaj Pov li kuv thiab. Thaum no kuv kuj muaj txoj hmoo tau nrog Nais Phoo Vaj Pov nyob sib ze tawm rooj rau txhia qhov chaws tsis yog hauv California no xwb tabsis mus rau Wsiconsin, Minnesota thiab Washington DC huv tib si. Lub sijhawm kuv tau los khiav hauj lwm pab Nais Phoo Vaj Pov kuj tsis ntev kiag tabsis muaj nuj nqis heev. Wb lub sijhawm ntawd tau ob-peb lub xyoo xwb tabsis yuav tsis muaj ib yam dabtsi yuav los pauv tau hlo li vim kuv kawm tau ntau tsav ntau yam hais txog nws lub neej, nws txoj kev coj Hmoob thiab nws tus npau suav rau nus haiv neej Hmoob.

teev kev rau Fresno lawm los nws tseem tuaj tau. Yog li mas peb cov hluas twb tsis npaum nws lawm. Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tau hais rau kuv tias sawvdaws tos ntsoov nws xwb yog ntshe nws muaj mob lawm es mus tsis tau xwb. Tsis li ces nws yeej yuav mus koom kom tau sawvdaws xwb.

Cov laus thiab coob leej ntau tus yeej tau hais lawm tias Nais Phooj Vaj Pov yog ntuj tso los coj Hmoob yog li nws thiaj hais tias "kuv txoj sia muab cog kiag rau Hmoob". Lub sijhawm kuv nrog nws xwb nws ua tau rau kuv thiab peb coob leej ntau tus uas nyob ze ntawm nws pom tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov yog ib tug neeg hais tau ua tau thiab nws hais lus leej heev li. Cov laus hais tias nws yog ntuj tso los ces ntuj tsom kwm saib xyuas nws txhua yam. Peb cov hluas hais tias nws yog ib tug neeg







all photos courtesy of Tua Vang

Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tau hais tias nws txoj sia ces nws muab cog kiag rau Hmoob. Ob peb lub xyoo kuv tau nrog Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ua ke kuv kuj pom ntau yam ntawm Nais Phoo Vaj Pov uas qhia tau hais tias ua ib tug thawj coj nws coj li cas thiaj haum sawvdaws. Nais Phoo Vaj Pov yog ib tug neeg uas siab ceev tabsis coj lus tog thiab yuav hais dabtsi thiab ua dabtsi los kuj xyuam xim.

Raws li kuv paub thiab pom kiag ntawm qhov muag, Hmoob hlub thiab hwm Nais Phoo Vaj Pov los yeeb vim yog nws hlub Hmoob heev li thiab. Nais Phoo Vaj Pov lub neej nws yeej tsis tau nyob hlo li. Nws yeej tsis tshua tau nyob hauv tsev li, heev kawg los ib ob hnub xwb. Txawm nws twb muaj hnub nyug laus nkoos lawm los nws txoj kev khiav pab txhawb, koom thiab saib xyuas Hmoob rau sab qab teb mus rau qaum teb thiab mus rau sab hnub tuaj rau hnub poob nyob rau tebchaws Asmeslikas no yeej tsis tu ncua li.

Thaum xyoo 2005, kuv thiaj tau hais thiab qhuas rau nws hais tias nws twb muaj 74 xyoo lawm los nws tseem khiav txoj kev saib xyuas Hmoob tsis tu ncua. Li kuv, yog mus dav hlau rau Minnesota rov los xwb mas kuv yuav tau los so ob rau peb hnub thiaj li mam rov tuaj zog. Hos Nais Phoo Vaj Pov nws mus Minnesota rov los txog tsev kiag xwb hnub tom qab twb ho caij tsheb tuaj li plaub

siab dawb thiab hais lus qhib siab lug. Kuv nrog rau coob leej ntau tus twb pom Nais Phoo Vaj Pov thov lub ntuj lub teb pov puag thiab hlub nws tsev neeg Hmoob nyob rau hauv lub nroog Merced thiab Fresno lub tsiab peb caug ob peb zaug lawm.

Kuv nco tau, xyoo 2004, hmo Thursday hauv Merced los nag heev li. Hmo ntawd Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tau hlawv xyab thov lub ntuj lub teb kom txhob los nag rau hnub qhib lub tsiab peb caug. Tom qab ntawd peb kuj los pw rau tom chaw so. Saib xov xwm cov tub ntsuas huab cua yeej tau hais tias tag kis mas yuav los nag ib hnub li. Tabsis thaum sawv ntxov lub ntuj kuj kaj zuj zus, pom ntuj xiav tshwm zuj zus tuaj. Thaum Nais Phoo Vaj Pov mus qhib lub tsiab peb caug kuj tshav ntuj nrig. Thaum tav su uas Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tawm ntawm tshav pob mus lawm lub ntuj thiaj li mam pib poob nag tshauv me ntsis xwb.

Xyoo 2005 thiab 2006 nyob rau Fresno lub tsiab peb caug los kuj tib yam nkaus tabsis cia kuv tham txog xyoo 2006. Hnub tim 25 mas los nag ib hnub li. Thaum tsaus ntuj los ntuj kuj tseem los nag kawg li. Hauv xov xwm lawv kuj hais tias yuav los nag ib hmo thiab tag kis mas yuav los nag ib hnub thiab. Yog li, Thaum thaj tsam li cuaj teev tsau ntuj hnub tim 25 Nais Phoo Vaj Pov kuj

(Continues to page 26)

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tawm rau sab nraum zoov nws kuj tau thov lub ntuj lub teb kom tsis txhob los nag es nws tsev neeg Hmoob thiaj qhib tau lub tsiab peb caug noj.

Hmo ntawd peb pw thaum ib tag hmo dua xwb ntuj los nag loj heev li. Txog thaum rau moo kaj ntug xwb nag tu nrho lawm. Thaum txog lub caij mus qhib tsiab peb caug ntuj qhuav qhawv tsis los nag hlo li. Qhov no yog ib yam uas ua rau peb coob leej ntau tus pom kiag ntawm qhov muag hais tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov thov lub ntuj lub teb leej heev li.

Nais Phoo Vaj Pov yog ib tug zoo thawj coj ntawm peb tsev neeg Hmoob. Raws li kuv pom ntau zaus, peb Hmoob ib txhia thawj coj mas nws tsuas tuav cov laus thiab neeg muaj meej mom tes xwb, dua li ces nws coj hwj chim kom luag hwm nws xwb. Kuj ho muaj qee tus mas tsuas tuav sawvdaws tes ua yuav ntsej muag xwb. Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tsis coj li ntawd. Kuv pom ntau zaus lawm, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov saib txhua txhia tus muaj vaj huam sib luag thiab hwm sawvdaws tib yam nkaus tsis hais tus laus tus hluas mus rau tus menyuam yaus los yog pojniam thiab txiv neej. Yog Nais Phoo Vaj Pov paub koj lawm nws yeej hu tuav kiag koj npe xwb.

Kuv tham txog ib qho uas tshwm sim nyob rau xyoo 2004 hauv lub nroog Sacramento. Hnub ntawd, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ya davhlaus nram tsev tuaj rau hauv Sacramento. Muaj cov tub saib kev ruaj ntseg txog li ntawm 5 leeg nrog nws, tag nrho peb muaj 13 leeg. Peb tau mus noj sus hauv lub chaw noj mov Saigon ze rau ntawm Stockton thiab Fruitridge sib tshuam. Peb kuj coob thiab yog li peb thiaj mus zaum rau ob lub rooj loj. Peb ob peb tug zaum koom nrog Nais Phoo Vaj Pov hos cov tub saib kev ruaj ntseg nrog ob peb tug zaum rau lwm lub rooj. Kuv saib ntsoov muaj ib tug ntxhais xeem Lis muaj hnub nyug 19 xyoo nyob hauv Stockton kuj tuaj noj sus hauv thiab.



Thaum nws pom tias peb mus zaum rau hauv lawm nws kuj tau los rau ntawm cov tub saib kev ruaj ntseg lub rooj los thov lawv hais tias nws zoo siab heev li uas hnub no nws tau pom Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tim ntsej tim muag. Nws qhia nws niam thiab txiv npe thiab hais tias nws loj hlob luaj li ntawm nws tsuas pom Nais Phoo Vaj Pov hauv TV thiab daim duab xwb. Hnub no yog ib hnub uas hmoov zoo kawg nkaus rau nws uas nws tau pom Nais Phoov Vaj Pov. Nws thov cov tub saib kev ruaj ntseg seb puas tso cai nws los tuav Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tes ib zaug. Thaum ntawd kuv saib thiab mloog ntsoov uas tus ntxhais no ua rau cov tub saib kev ruaj ntseg tsis pom qab teb li cas. Yog li kuv thiaj mam sawv mus hais rau lawv hais tias "tej no tsis muaj npas ham. Cia kuv mam li coj nws mus ntsib hlob."

Thaum kuv coj tus ntxhais no los txog rau ntawm Nais Phoo Vaj Pov lawm, kuv thiaj hais rau Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ces nws thiaj sawv tsees ntawm nws lub rooj cev kiag nws txhais tes los tuav tus ntxhais xeem Lis no tes. Tus ntxhais rov muab nws cov lus hais rau Nais Phoo Vaj Pov dua ces Nais Phoo Vaj Pov kuj teb rau nws hais tias, "zoo siab uas tau ntsib koj. Kuv yug los yog ib tug menyuam Hmoob tib yam nkaus li koj mam loj hlob los coj Hmoob li niaj hnub niam no." Tus ntxhais ntawd kuj zoo siab heev thaum nws tau ntsib thiab tuav kiag Nais Phoo Vaj Pov txhais tes. Nws kuj ua rau kuv nco txog thaum kuv tseem yau thiab thawj zaug uas kuv tau tuav Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tes thiab.

Kev kawm ntaub kawm ntawv yog ib qho tseem ceeb ntawm Nais Phoo Vaj Pov txoj kev ntshaw. Lub neej nyob Lostsuas los nws ntaus thawj hlo nrhiav kev pab cuam thiab muab cov tub rog uas paub ntawv coj mus qhia ntawv rau menyuam Hmoob kom sawvdaws muaj txoj kev kawm thiab kom paub ntaub paub ntawv. Tuaj nyob rau lub tebchaws Asmeslikas no los nws kuj tseem qhuab ntuas thiab txhawb kom menyuam Hmoob rau siab ntso rau txoj kev kawm ntaub kawm ntawv thiab ua laj kam. Nyob rau hmo tim 4 lub 3 hli ntuj xyoo 2007 yog ib qho ua rau kuv pom hais tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov mob siab rau cov hluas lub neej dua nws tus kheej.

Nyob rau hmo ntawd ntshe muaj los yuav tsawg tus tib neeg heev uas thiaj ua tau li Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ua. Qhov xwm txheej no muab piv ces muaj ntsis xws nkaus li thaum cov neeg phem tuaj tsav davhlaus tsoo lub Twin Towers nyob New York thiab Pentagon nyob Washington DC es Asmeslikas tus nom, President George W. Bush, tseem tab tom mus saib xyuas thiab hais lus txhawb cov menyuam yaus kawm ntawv nyob rau Florida. Hmo tim 4 lub 3 hli ntuj xyoo 2007 ntawd Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tau teem tseg tuaj hais lus txhawb siab rau cov tub ntxhais kawm ntawv, nrog rau cov niam txiv thiab cov sib fwb qhia ntawv nyob rau hauv Fresno State. Nyob rau hnub ntawd nws tus niam loj los yog tus niam hmoob Thoj uas nyob rau Phenix, Arizona tseem tab tom mob hnyav heev tabsis nws hais tias nws twb teem tau rau hauv Fresno State lawm nws yuav tsum mus muab lus txhawb siab rau cov tub ntxhais kawm ntawv nrog rau lawv niam thiab txiv thiab cov xib fwb qhia ntawv tso nws mam li mus rau tom Arizona.

Thaum nws tseem tab tom koom lub koob tsheej nyob rau hauv Fresno State, nws tus niam loj txoj sia tau tu nrho ncaim lub ntiaj teb no lawm los Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tswj nws lub siab tus yees koom lub koob tsheej yam tsis pub nws txoj kev nyuaj siab tawm rau leej twg paub thiab tsis pub nws lub kua muag poob. Thaum lawv caw nws los hais lus rau sawvdaws los Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tswj nws lub siab tus yees ua zoo los hais ib co lus nyiaj lus kub txhawb siab pub rau cov tub ntxhais kawm ntawv thiab cov niam cov txiv sawvdaws.

Thaum Nais Phoo Vaj Pov hais nws cov lus tag lawm, nws thiaj xaus lus hais tias nws tus niam loj tau tso sawvdaws tseg lawm es nws yuav tsis nrog sawvdaws nyob koom lub koob tsheej kom xaus vim nws yuav tau mus rau Phoenix, Arizona tam sim ntawd mus saib nws tus niam loj. Qhov no ua rau sawvdaws zoo siab rau nws cov lus nyiaj lus kub tabsis ceeb thiab nrog nws tu siab txog qhov tus niam loj tau ncaim















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lub ntiaj teb no mus lawm. Yog li ntawd, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov thiaj nqis saum lub sam thiaj los tuav sawvdaws tes tas ces nws thiaj tawm los nce ntsheb mus tsev lawm. Thaum no twb ze li 8 teev tsaus ntuj lawm los nws tseem yuav maub rov mus nram tsev ho li mam mus tsheb ntawm nws tsev hauv Westminster mus rau Phoenix, Arizona uas tseem yuav mus li 6 teev kev thiaj txog thiab.

Qhov no yog ib qho uas kuv pom tau hais tias ntshe yuav tsis muaj ib leej twg yuav ua tau li Nais Phoo Vaj Pov lawm. Yeeb vim nws lees tau thiab npaj siab tuaj txhawb siab rau cov tub ntxhais, cov niam txiv thiab cov xib fwb txawm nws tsev neeg raug kev txom nyem los nws tseem tswj nws lub siab khov kho txhawb kom tau cov tub ntxhais tso nws li mam mus. No yog ib yam ntawm qhov kuv tau hais tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov hais tau ua tau.

Nais Phoo Vaj Pov lub neej uas los ua neeg nyob hauv lub ntiaj teb no tau 81 xyoo ces nws tau muab 67 xyoo coj los txhawb thiab tho txoj hau kev rau lub neej Hmoob los txog ntua hnub kawg nkaus uas nws tuaj qhib lub tsiab peb caug rau nws tsev neeg Hmong nyob rau hauv Fresno, CA.

Sawvdaws feem coob tsuas paub hais tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov laus lawm xwb tabsis twb tsis paub hais tias nws ho muaj mob npaum cas. Kuv yeej tsis tau pom yuav muaj ib tug Hmoob twg es muaj mob thiab laus nkoos li Nais Phoo Vaj Pov los nws txoj sia tseem muab cog rau nws tsev neeg Hmoob. Kuv hais li vim tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov twb mob stroke ob zaug, phais kho nws lub nplawv ob zaug thiab tsis tas li los nws kuj muaj mob ntshav siab, mob ntshav qab zib thiab kuj mob taw vwm. Tabsis txawm npaum ntawd los nws pheej tseem ua tiag nyiaj nws tus mob es tawm rooj plaws ua tus neeg cus plias mus koom thiab txhawb nws tsev neeg Hmoob kom sawvdaws muaj kev sib hlub thiab kev sov siab thiab tso siab hais tias Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tseem nyob khov kho ua sawvdaws niam sawvdaws txiv rau ntawd.

Txawm nws twb muaj mob ntsuav thiab noj tshuaj tas li pab nws lub cev xwb los yog nws tsev neeg Hmoob hu txog nws lawm ces nws yeej mus koom kom tau. Yog tau khaub thuas me ntsis xwb los nws tseem ua tiag nyiaj mus.

Nyob li muaj ib zaug muaj ib lub ntees tuag nyob Fresno. Hnub ntawd Nais Phoo Vaj Pov twb npaj siab tuaj mus koom lub ntees ces nws twb tuaj rau hauv Fresno ib hnub ua ntej lawm. Thaum sawv kev nram tsev tuaj nws tau nqa nws lub hnab khaub ncaws kuj tau sav nws lub duav thiab mob nws sab ceg me ntsis lawm. Tuaj pw ib hmos hauv Fresno hnub tom qab ua rau nws lub duav thiab sab ceg mob heev li. Lawv teem rau nws mus koom lub ntees thaum kaum teev sawv ntxov. Txog yim teev los nws lub duav thiab sab ceg tseem mob heev twb sawv tsis taus saum txaj.

Kuv thiaj tau mus rau hauv nws chav mus zuaj nws lub duav thiab sab ceg yuav luag muaj ib teev nws thiaj li maj mam sawv los npaj ces thiaj li ua tiag nyiaj mus koom lub nteev lawm.

Tsuas yog tias ntshe mob mus tsis tau hlo li lawm xwb no ces nws thiaj li thov zam txim es mus tsis tau xwb. Tabsis txawm nws mus tsis tau los nws yeej tso ib tug sawv cev nws mus koom kom tau rau nws tsev neeg Hmoob.

Hnub tim 26 lub 12 hli ntuj xyoo 2010 yog hnub kawg nkaus thiab yog ib hnub uas tseem ceeb rau Nais Phoo Vaj Pov. Txawm nws twb muaj mob heev lawm, hais twb tsis taus lus lawm los lub tsiab peb caug yog ib qho tseem ceeb ntawm Hmoob lub neej yog li nws thiaj ua tiag nyiaj tuaj qhib lub tsiab peb caug rau nws tsev neeg Hmoob.

Zaum no yog zaum kawg nkaus uas tsev neeg Hmoob pom Nais Phoo Vaj Pov. Qhib lub tsiab peb caug tas xwb Nais Phoo Vaj Pov tus mob tsis tso nws yog li nws thiaj li tau mus pw rau hauv



photo courtesy of Tua Vang

tsev kho mob. Thaum kawg nkaus, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov paub hais tias nws tus mob yuav tsis tso nws tseg lawm nws thiaj tau faj ib co lus tseg rau nws tsev neeg Hmoob kom sawvdaws nyob sawvdaws sib hlub thiab sib haum xeeb. Yog li, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov thiaj tau tso sawvdaws tseg nyob rau hnub tim 6 lub 1 hli ntuj xyoo 2011.

Thaum xov xwm tawm thoob ntiaj teb tias peb txiv Vaj Hmoob, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov, tau ncaim lub ntiaj teb no mus lawm, peb tsev neeg Hmoob nyob thoob ntuj rau txhua lub tebchaws lub kua muag poob khuv xim thiab tshua txog nws heev. Sawvdaws mob siab ntso tuaj thooj siab koom ntsws sib pab kom tau lub ntees zoo rau nws lub cawv xeeb cawv hlav.

Sawvdaws ua lub siab dawb paug tuaj sib txhawb kom ua tau lub ntees zoo, tsis yog zoo rau Nais Phoo Vaj Pov xwb tabsis kom zoo pub rau peb tsev neeg Hmoob thiab lub neej Hmoob mus rau lawm yav tom ntej.

Yog li no, Nais Phoo Vaj Pov lub ntees yog ib lub ntees uas loj tshaj plaws thiab ua tau raug ntsej raug muaj tshaj plawm nyob hauv keeb kwm Hmoob uas peb ceev tau cia. Cov neeg tuaj ntau lub tebchaws tuaj saib Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ua zaum kawg. Huab Tais Nplog tsev neeg los kuj puav leej tuaj thiab Nais Phoo Vaj Pov cov qub phoojywg xws li cov Thaib thiab Asmeslikas los puav leej tuaj huv tib si.

Txawm nws mus lawm los nws tsev neeg Hmoob yeej yuav khaws ntsoov nws txoj kev coj, nws cov lus qhuab ntuas thiab nws txoj kev npau suav ua lub neej Hmoob mus lawm yav tom ntej. Yam Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ntshaw tshaj plaws yog kom nws tsev neeg Hmoob muaj kev sib haum xeeb sib hlub ua ib haiv.

Nws tau muab Nplog ib lo lus los hais tseg tias, “Khus tais dis kuam xaj tais”, txhais hais tias “yuv ib leeg tuag zoo tshaj yus haiv neeg tuag”.

Yog li no, txawm Nais Phoo Vaj Pov ho ncaim peb sawvdaws mus lawm los thov kom peb tsev neeg Hmoob nyob txawj sib hlub, sib kho sib yoog kom peb sib haum xeeb es kom peb ua lub neej “vam nkaus li xub ntab nroos ntws li xub muv” es tib neeg hauv lub ntiaj teb no thiab luag lwm haiv neeg nyob lub tebchaws no thiaj hwm thiab saib taus peb tsev neeg Hmoob.

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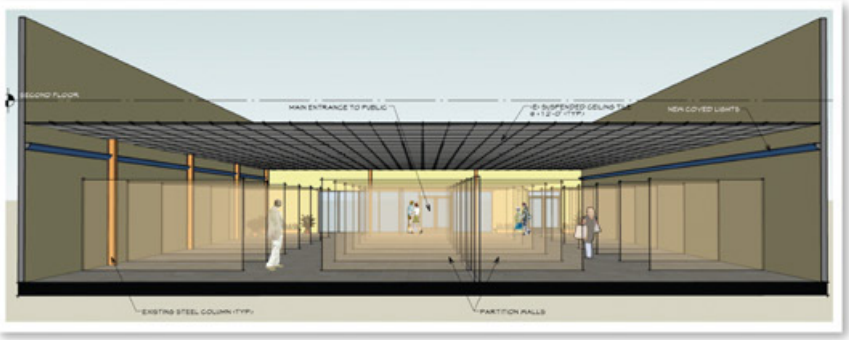
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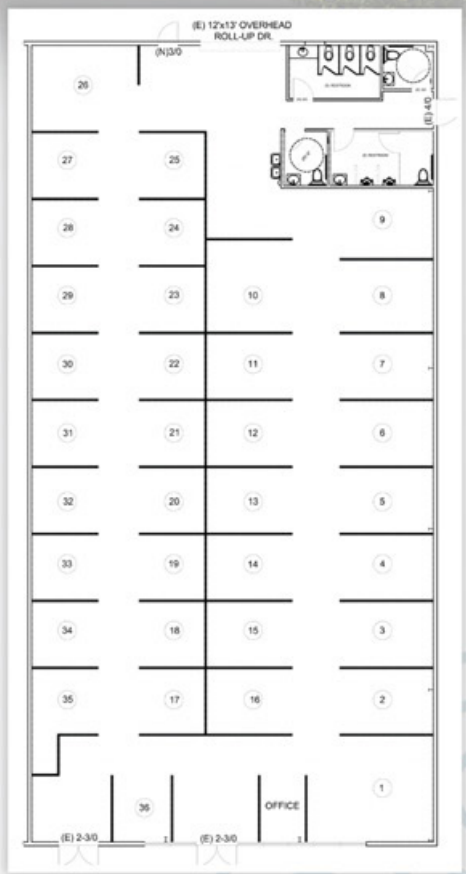
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REMEMBERING
GENERAL
VANG PAO



NOAH LOR

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How Should General Vang Pao be Remembered?

This is one question that can be answered in many ways.
What has this one man done that has left a legacy so extraordinary?
My answer for this question comes to me in three accounts.

1) I had the opportunity to see GVP in action when my father took me to Long Cheng, a U.S. CIA air base, in 1971. Each morning he would wake up and fly to the war zone. Although his responsibilities as a general were different from that of his soldiers, he would humble himself and go to the front line every day to work with them towards an advancing goal. He inspired confidence in others and drew out their best efforts towards the war. He was truly a leader that led by example.

2) My second encounter with GVP came at the Namphone refugee camp in 1975. Thousands of us, soldiers, parents, and children, had lost our homeland and sought refuge. Everyone was afraid, lost and uncertain of the future. GVP was able to hold himself well and function in an orderly manner. He showed a strong spirit, portraying himself with a calm and confident demeanor. In our time of darkness, he was able to stand and shine, as a true leader should.

3) Third, when my family and I made it to Missoula, Montana, in 1979, GVP continued to lead us. As he did in Long Cheng and Namphone, he remained positive and helped establish a cornerstone for the Hmong people. During the Secret War in Laos, he helped recruit teachers and build schools for the poor Hmong students in remote locations. He recruited nurses and paraprofessionals and built hospitals for the Hmong seniors in rural areas. He built air strips so that Hmong people would have better access to governmental services. When the Hmong first came to the U.S., many men were not able to adjust to the life here and died during sleep. GVP established many non-profit organizations to help these people transition. He displayed empathy and concern for the feelings, values, interests, and well-being of Hmong people everywhere. With his help, look at how far we have gotten.

I remember as a child in Long Cheng 1971, I witnessed a barefooted Hmong woman carrying a basket behind her back, walked so close to the propellers of a T-28, not knowing it was getting ready to take off. She did not know of the powerful and dangerous machine and how close to death she was. Now, in America, I see Hmong women driving and operating powerful machinery with ease. Not only that, before the Secret War, close to 99% of Hmong women had never attended school. Now, Hmong women are going to college and obtaining their Masters and Doctorate degrees. I know a family here in Merced that has four daughters with M.D. degrees. This is truly a remarkable achievement. It was due to GVP's leadership that we have transformed from unknown mountain dwellers to a globally known peoplehood.

GVP was a great leader. With his incomparable heroic courage and insight, Hmong in Laos and in America have achieved success. Many people believe that God gave him the charisma to lead. They also believe that charisma is a spiritual power or personal quality that gives an individual influence or authority over large numbers of people. No matter what others say, I will remember him as one of the strongest Hmong leaders. He "walked the talk" and is the type of leader who remains forever in people's hearts.

GENERAL VANG PAO, YOU WILL BE MISSED DEARLY, AND YOUR LEGACY AND GREAT DEEDS WILL LIVE ON FOREVER.

Noah Lor

As an Elected Council Member for the City of Fresno,

I would like to express that we as a City took great pride in hosting General Vang Pao's funeral. We believe the City of Fresno was an appropriate location, due to the large Hmong population in Fresno, and what is probably considered a "second" home to the General.

I would like to thank and acknowledge all the people who helped make this funeral a success. It demonstrated to the world, we as a people can come and work together. The eyes of the International world were upon the City of Fresno, and the Hmong people in the United States but more succinctly, the Hmong in California. It took the entire Hmong community to make this event a success.

With the passing of General Vang Pao, I believe 2011 will be remembered as a year of transition and remembrance for the Hmong people. His passing brings many closures but also opens many questions for us as a people.

The first significant closure is the tie to the Vietnam era. While alive, the General's presence, whether either good or bad, connected our people to the Vietnam conflict. When we talk about the Vietnam War, when it comes to the Hmong community, the first person we think of is General Vang Pao. With his passing, the Hmong people and the Vietnam conflict will no longer be identified with a single person, but an entire people.

The other closure is within our Hmong community. The lines between the generational gaps are less clear and define. The General was identified by the younger generations as the tie between the "old", in terms of traditional Hmong cultures and values. We as a Hmong people are identified by our traditions set forth by our leaders/elders/clans. Symbolically with his passing, the Hmong people have lost another key connection to its past and the fear that we will also begin to lose our Hmong values and culture.

With the General's passing, the Hmong people face uncertainty and trepidation for the future…I also believe this is an opportunity for our community to come together. It is inherit in our Hmong character to persevere, as we did living in the Mountains of Southeast Asia, and still flourish, to fight against overwhelming odds in the Vietnam conflict, and to survive, and to be relocated to different parts of the world, and become contributors to our new home land. It is with this same determination we as a Hmong people will face our uncertain future head on and become a better and stronger community.

As we heed our General's last request to come together, and as we are stronger when we come together as Hmong people and not as the 18 Clans, we now must move ahead as one people.

Blong Xiong

REMEMBERING

GENERAL VANG PAO



BLONG XIONG

COUNCILMEN

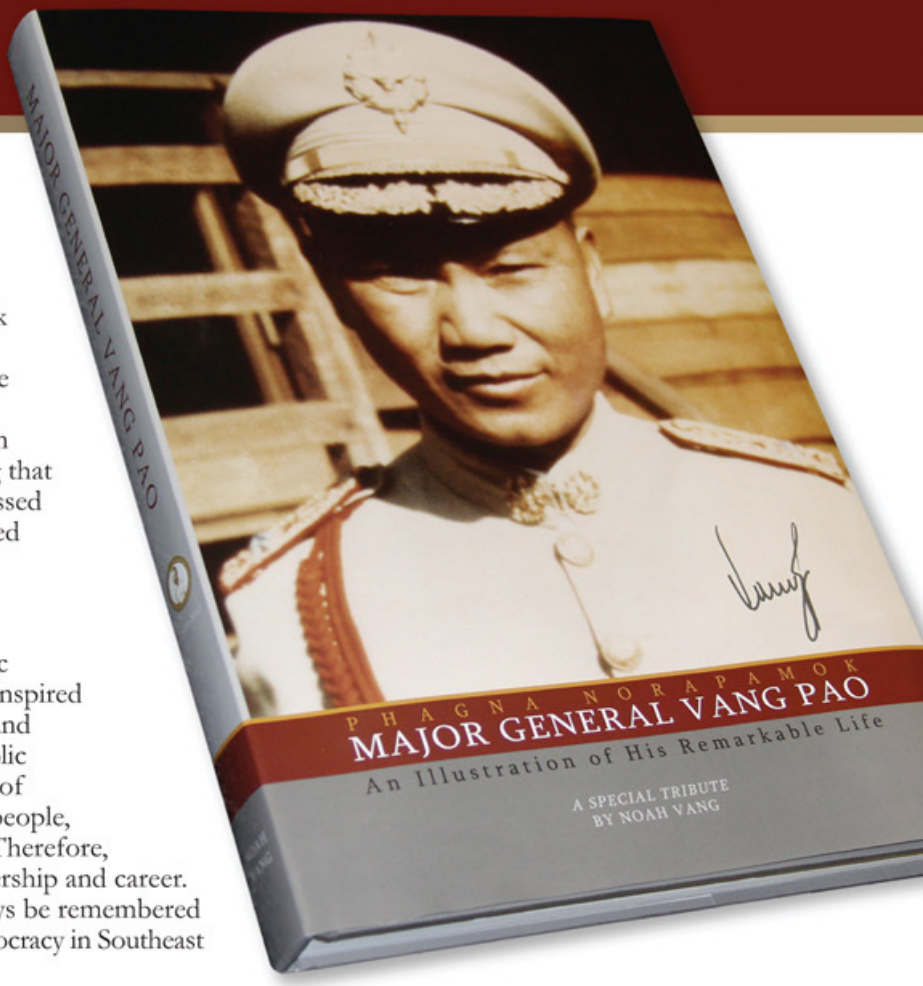
DISTRICT 1

City of FRESNO

MAJOR GENERAL VANG PAO

An Illustration of His Remarkable Life

By Noah Vang | DECEMBER 2011



I began compiling information about the Hmong experience in 2005

I was amazed by the richness of our history. In 2006, I wrote a brief chronology of the late General Vang Pao's life. This idea turned into a book I wanted to compose for the General. This did not materialized until late 2010. My goal was to complete it by 2011. In November 2010, he signed a consent letter authorizing me to write this illustrated book on his behalf. I wanted to finish this manuscript hoping that he would see the final work. I was a year late. He passed away in January 2011 while majority of the researched information was being organized for publication.

This 290-page, hard-cover book

contains a brief biography, quotes, and photographic illustration of the General Vang Pao's legacy. What inspired me to write this book was to understand, preserve, and educate the general public about his 67 years of public service. This commitment distinguished him as one of world's longest public servants who had served his people, his country, and the lives of those he had touched. Therefore, this is a special tribute dedicated to his lifelong leadership and career. I fervently believe that within this work he will always be remembered as a great hero, and a contributor to freedom and democracy in Southeast Asia and to the Hmong people worldwide.



While designing this book

I cried so many times because we have loss a great person and leader in the Hmong community. And I missed him. He was dear. He was genuine. He loved and cared for everyone.

And this book is a part of my tribute to remind us of the larger-than-life legacy he had left behind. We thanked many people for making this book possible, especially the GVP family members and sponsors.

For inquiries about this book, please visit
www.discoverhmong.org
or email me at: sendhmong@gmail.com

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Great Hmong Leaders from History



Kiatong Lo Bliayao
Unknown - 1935

One of the most renowned Hmong historical figures in Laos was Kiatong Lo Bliayao. Although it is believed that there were the Moua and Yang clans who had held the title Kiatong prior to Bliayao, however, Bliayao was the first Hmong to have an administrative role and was recognized as an authority figure by the French from the beginning of the 19th Century.

The French commissioned Bliayao to build part of the Colonial Route that connected Laos to Vietnam in the Nong Het area in Xieng Khouang Province.

During the Madman's War from 1919-1921, led by Pachay Vue, he also helped the French sabotaged the rebellion from spreading to other regions: and those who were involved in the rebellion that opposed the French were killed.

Bliayao was the first Hmong to have fame and wealth. His promising career ended when he passed away in 1935. Since the mid-1940s, with his sons sided with the Communist Pathet Lao Party, they rose in the political ranks and played key roles in the regime that came into power of the country after the Laos fell in 1975.

Photo courtesy of Lt. Colonel Nenglo Yang
via Noah Vang Collection.



Phagna Touby Lyfoung
1917 - 1979

Touby Lyfoung, born in 1917, was a true pioneer. After he finished school from Paris and Hanoi, his education let him to numerous opportunities in Laos.

He was the first Hmong selected as a mayor, or Chaomouang, representing his Hmong people throughout the country. Not only was he a leading political figure to the Hmong in the mid-1940s, he also built schools for the Hmong and Lao children in Xieng Khouang Province. Touby Lyfoung and his brothers became the ideal role models to their people. This led many Hmong children to attend school and seek public offices.

His devotion to public service earned him a Ministry post in the Royal Lao Government in the early 1960s. Later on, King Sisavang Vatthana appointed Touby Lyfoung as an advisor to his council and awarded him a Phagna, the highest honorary title given to individuals for distinguished services in the Kingdom of Laos.

Touby Lyfoung gave his life to his country. After the Communist Pathet Lao had taken over the country, he had the chance to escape to Thailand. He refused. Soon, he was among many of the top Royal Lao Government officials, including members of the King's family, who were taken to re-education camp in Sam Neua Province. He died in 1979.

Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Nenglo Yang
from Noah Vang Collection.

Great Hmong Leaders from History



Lt. Colonel Xai Nou Vang
1935-1992

Born in Nah Bouh, Xieng Khouang Province, Laos, Xai Nou Vang was the fifth son in the family. His parents passed away when he was 5 years old. He attended a French/Laotian School in Mouang Mo, Xieng Khouang Province from 1946 to 1956. After he graduated in 1958, Xai Nou Vang became a private school teacher in the village of Nah Bouh.

In 1960, he was enlisted into the Royal Laotian Army. During his military career, he participated the Intensive Military Training in Udon Thani Province, Thailand ran by the CIA/Thai PARU.

As a Lt. Colonel, Xai Nou Vang was selected as one of the top military commanders and led multiple missions to attack the enemies in the Plain of Jars.

Xai Nou Vang escaped from Laos to Nang Phong Camp, Thailand in 1975. He was transferred to Banvinai Camp, Thailand and lived there from 1976-1980. Recognized as a special Comando Officer for the USA CIA Goverment and as a Royal Laotian Army High Ranking Military Officer, he immigrated to the USA in 1980. He passed away on 1992 and was burried in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

Written by Mai Ker Vang. Photo courtesy of Mai Ker Vang via Noah Vang Collection.



Colonel Yang Chao
1938 - 2011

In Yang Chao's early years, he completed his education from a police academy in Vientiane; and once served as a secretary to the Governor of Xieng Khouang Province, Prince Saykham Sobsaysana.

During the Secret War, Colonel Yang Chao was the Chief of Police in Military Region II. He managed about 300 police officers and 500 civilian officers.

Their roles were to provide protection and security measures at the military base and throughout areas needed.

In the United States, he unselfishly contributed his time and knowledge to help strengthen the Hmong community.

Photo courtesy Colonel Yang Chao via Noah Vang Collection.

Great Hmong Leaders from History



Lt. Colonel Hang Sao
1939-2004

Born in Pah Leong, Xieng Khouang Province, Laos, Hang Sao became a prominent Hmong leader during his time.

Since the Secret War from 1961 to 1975, Hang Sao played a key role and latter served as the Commander of Second Office of the JOC in MR II.

His primary duties dealt with intelligence, tactical planning, and enemy movements throughout the military region. He was also a close advisor to General Vang Pao.

In 1969, Hang Sao was promoted to a Lieutenant Colonel. While living in exile in the US, Hang Sao received his BA in political science and continued to serve his community until he passed away in the US in 2004.

Photo from Yeeleng Hang
via Noah Vang Collection.



Nurse Choua Thao
1943 -

Choua Thao spent her childhood being educated from a Lao and French school in Laos. Since 1956, she began learning English, and, perhaps, was one of the first few Hmong to learn the language.

Her passion to help those in need led her to a nursing career. She was trained and primary worked with the US International Voluntary Service team in the medical center in Sam Thong during the Secret War.

"I love helping people," Choua Thao said in an interview in 2005. At the peak of the war with hundreds of soldiers and civilians seeking medical attention, she was one of those who worked tirelessly to ensure each of them were cared for.

Throughout her life's work, she has held both government and community posts. In 1985, she was invited by President Ronald Reagan on a 3-day trip to the White House "to advocate for the poor in America."

Today she is revered as pioneer for her commitment in her career and public service.

Photo courtesy of Choua Thao
via Noah Vang Collection

Great Hmong Leaders from History

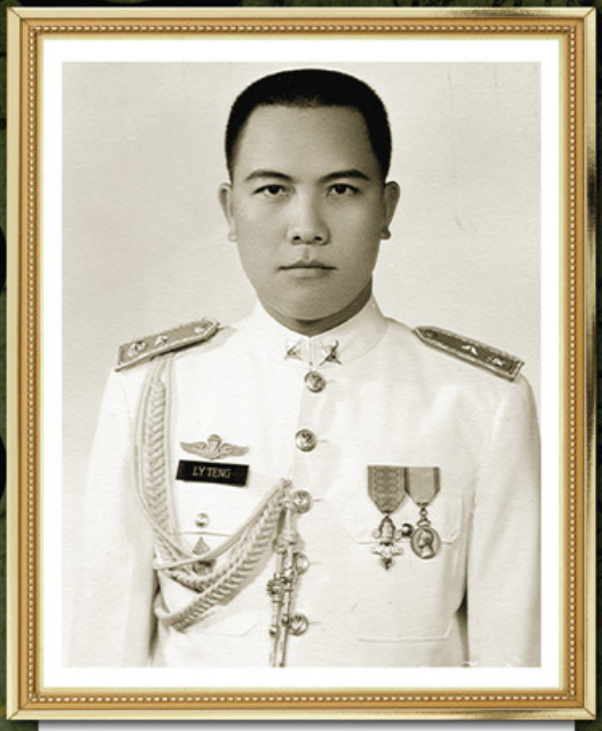


Nai Kong Zongkai Pha
1910 - 1991

Zongkai Waleng Pha started his political career in 1945 where he was appointed a Naiban, or a village chief, in his town in Laos. Realizing that Zongkai was a diligent public servant, Hmong leader Touby Lyfoung selected him to be a Tasseng, or sub-district chief, in 1947.

Since then, he continued to serve the people and his country passionately. In 1968, he was appointed as a Nai Kong, or a representative, to the Mayor. For more than 20 years, Zong Kay bravely fought to keep the communist at bay and from taking over his district.

When Laos fell in 1975 to the Communist Pathet Lao, he fled to Thailand along with his family. Then Zongkai and his family migrated to the United States. He died in November 1991 in Banning, California.



Colonel Ly Teng
1942 -

Ly Teng finished 6th grade in Phonsavan, Laos, before joining the military. In his military career, he had led many battles and was in charge of several vital departments in MR II. Ly Teng was the Assistant Chief of Staff of Logistics.

He oversaw five departments in Long Cheng: Department of Personnel; Department of Logistics Supplies, and Medications; Department of Transportation; Department of Ordinance such as weapons, ammunitions, tanks, cars, trucks, artilleries; and Department of Finances and Nutrition.

He also assigned code names to specific military personnel so their real names would not be detected by the enemy. Ly Teng was among about two dozen Hmong men who earned the rank of colonel in Laos.

When he came to the US after the Secret War in 1975, he served on several non-profit organizations and was a senior adviser to the late General Vang Pao.

Photo courtesy of Colonel Ly Teng
via Noah Vang Collection.

Great Hmong Leaders from History



Mayor Lee Xiong
1917 - 2003

Mayor Lee Xiong was among a handful of Hmong Mayors, or Chao Mouangs, in Laos. Lee was his surname. Born in the town called Khouang Keng, Laos, Lee Xiong knew that getting an education was important. By 1942, with his sharp thinking skills he was appointed by the Tasseng to assume a leadership role in his town.

In 1944, he was sent to study political and social issues in Xieng Khouangville. Since then, he had participated in all aspects of the country's civilian and military affairs. In 1953, he was sent to guard the country's Colonel Route 7 and gathered enemy movements between the towns of Mouang Soui and Phong Xu.

Upon his tenure as the Mayor of the Mouang Ngat from 1966 to 1975, he also served as a military advisor to the late General Vang Pao in Military Region II. Lee Xiong and his family resettled in the US after their country fell in 1975. In the US, he devoted his time and knowledge to help better the Hmong community.

Photo courtesy of Mayor Lee Xiong's family
via Noah Vang Collection.



Lt. Colonel Chong Kua Vue
1930-1974

As a military and civil government official with the title of Province Commissioner, Chong Kua Vue had accomplished several milestones in his life to advance the Hmong.

In the 1950s, he created public schools for students. He established shelter for victims and children of domestic violence. This program also extended to help the Lao, Thai Dam, Yao, Mien, and other minority communities. During the Secret War,

Lt. Colonel Chong Kua Vue was the commander of the Groupe Mobile 23 in the southeast portion of Military Region II. He led many battles against the North Vietnamese Army and Pathet Lao forces since the war began.

In 1974, he was assassinated and died from friendly fire in Long Cheng, Laos. Chong Kua Vue's body was returned and buried in his hometown in Mouang Mo, Xieng Khouang Province, Laos.

Photo courtesy of Neng Mai Vue
via Noah Vang Collection







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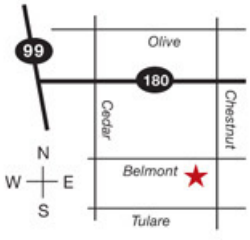
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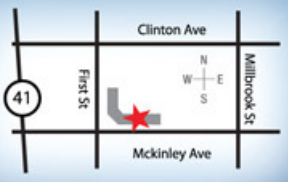
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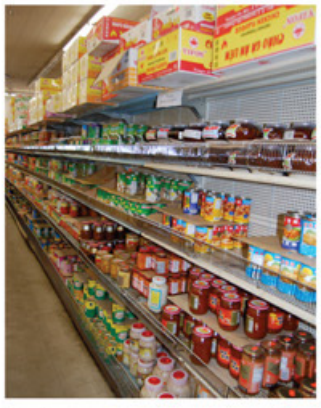
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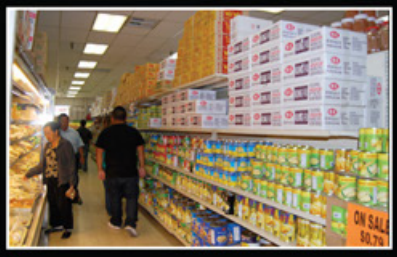


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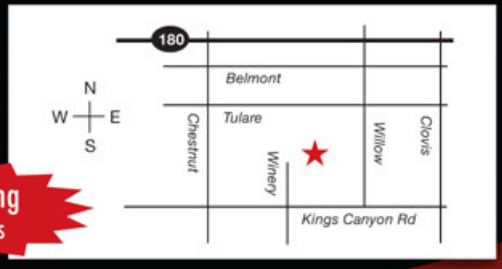




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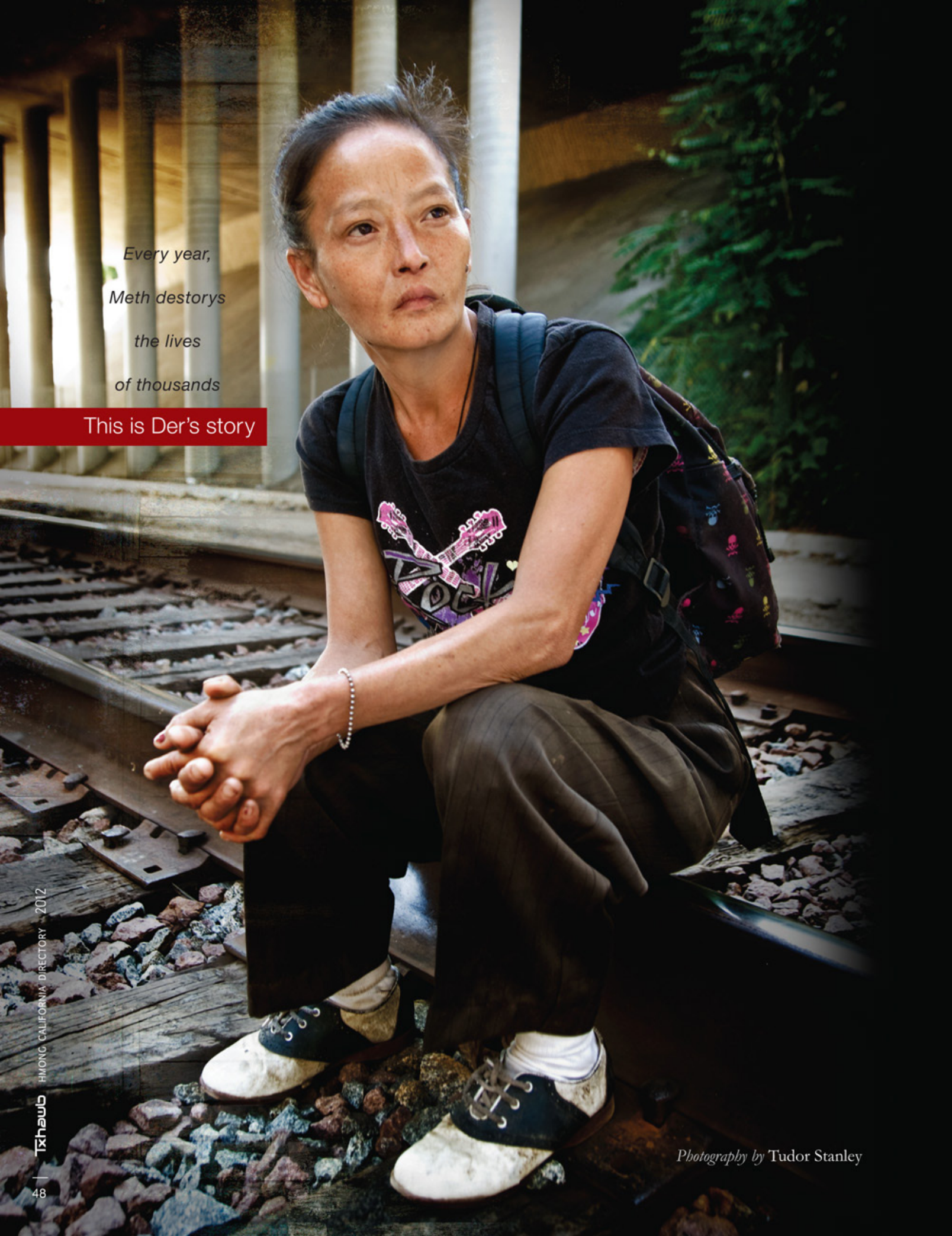
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METH

Written by Michelle Xiong

"Yas Mab", "Yeem Dawb", "Thsuasj Nees"; these hmong words may sound and look foreign to the naked eye, but don't be fooled. If you've ever heard of meth, crystal, ice, tina or crank, or methamphetamine, these familiar words are simply their synonyms and are used more widely in mainstream society.

For Der, meth isn't just a word... it's all that she's known for the last four years of her life. The first time I met Der, I would have never guessed that this fragile, 39-year-old woman of just four feet and eleven inches, (though surprisingly boyish in her strides as she swung a backpack over one side of her shoulder), had fourteen children. Although she lost three children earlier in life, she currently has no custody of the other eleven children, ages ranging eighteen to one and a half years old.

The loss of custody didn't just happen overnight. Using meth comes with its repercussions. Ultimately it was the use of meth that led to the sacrifice of her children, even though that's not what she bargained for. Before the meth, Der's children were everything she had ever known in her life. You can hear it in her voice when she speaks about her children that she truly loves them. The pain and longing in her voice can make any mother's heart ache. Sadly meth fears no love. Not even a mother's love.

The use of meth is like a bad story that keeps getting worse. Der first tried smoking meth after seeing her husband use it many times with neighbors and friends in the apartment complex that they lived in. She takes full responsibility for having made the decision to smoke. When I asked her why she smoked meth that first time, she simply said, "I wanted to smoke, so I smoked."

I could've gone on trying to explain to her how all the environmental and social factors surrounding her could have played a large part in her decision to use meth. I wanted to tell her that I understood why anyone living in her environment would be tempted to try meth. Instead of listening to her, I was imposing my own reasoning before even hearing what she had to say. As soon as I realized this, I started to listen. *This is her story.*

Living in Laos, Der had never smoked meth before. When she came to the United States in 1994, she raised her children and went about her life for years before her she took her first hit. Not too long after she started using meth, she and her husband got into an argument that resulted in a big gash to her arm from the knife in his hand. Although her inclination was not to go see a doctor, her children and neighbors called 911 for help.

The doctor patched her up, but she didn't go home right away. Instead she was escorted to jail. Der was incarcerated for three days, but it would be a total of eight days before she finally found herself at the doorsteps of her apartment. She thought she'd return home to her children waiting for her. To her disbelief, she found her home in a state of eerie silence. "In all my life I'd never seen my home so dark and empty," she recalled somberly.

Unable to determine whether she was dreaming or not, she walked into her children's room. Reality set back in as she saw her children's things stuffed into plastic bags, but she couldn't understand why they would leave them behind. They'd obviously intended to take what they could pack into those little plastic shopping bags. Whoever took them must have not let them take their things with them, she thought. What hit her hardest was seeing her baby's little bedspread, which looked exactly as she had made it just a few days ago. At that point she knew her children were gone.

Heartache and depression quickly set in, and she could hardly live with herself for the next eight days until she learned that Child Protective Services had taken them, separated them and placed them into different foster homes. Although that was not much consolation to her, she at least

(Continues to page 52)

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However, there was one thing that kept her company: meth





got an understanding of what had happened to them. With her children gone, she could barely eat. She thought she had cried herself to the point that she had gone blind.

With no children or husband in her home, she became exhausted with loneliness. However, there was one thing that kept her company: meth, the only thing left that she could find solace in. She had lost everything, but somehow meth always managed to stick around. Life seemed tolerable, if not robotic, with meth.

There were days that Der did live for and those were when her children would come to visit. Like any mother who hasn't seen her children for days or weeks, her eyes lit up every chance she got to see them and her heart filled up with happiness again, that is, until they left.

It's troubling to think that Der's children now had something in common with meth. She couldn't get enough of either; but it is meth that remains.

As life continued to spiral out of her control, her worst fears became clear as she began to lose touch with her children and her reality. On several occasions, her uncles had asked for her to allow them custody of her children instead of the putting them in foster homes. She absolutely refused to give them permission to do so. To her fear, one of her uncles arrived with her children during a routine visit. Der doesn't know how they did it, but she felt she couldn't do anything about it. The anger of relinquishing custody to her uncles consumed her mind as the use of meth persisted. She called her uncles, but they ignored her. She went to their houses, but they wouldn't open the door for her. As her anger lingered, so did her fears. "One night [an uncle] came over and he brought a bunch of children, but my door wasn't open. How did they get in? Those were ghost-like children. Then he became like a snake," she recounted, and even emphasized the vulgar names that he called her, and that he was going to eat her.

At this point I realized that what she had just said was real to her. These thoughts tormenting her were as real to her as her love for her children. In all its cruelty, meth had forced her to succumb to some of her most fearful thoughts. As haunting as these fears were, however, the love for her children never waned. I heard the passion in her voice as she answered my next question. Without meaning to insult her, I asked her if she would be able to take care of her children if she ever got them back. She was offended by that question, which I immediately regretted, but before I could explain or apologize, she fired back. "Why couldn't I take care of them? I used to carry one on my arm and have one tugging on my side while pregnant. Why couldn't I take care of them? I raised them. My child, I can take care of my child."

No one can disprove her love for her children, but she also added, "You can't quit [meth]."

I had gone into this interview thinking that I would be talking to someone who could articulate to me the horrible effects and impacts meth can have on a person's life, or someone who was getting sober and could reflect on how meth ruined his/her life. So I thought for days and tried to think how

(Continues to page 56)

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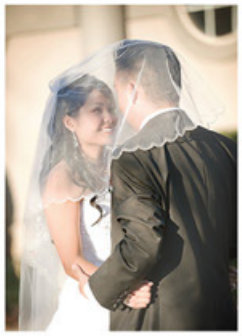


















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I could put this all together. I asked myself why do I need to tell this story? Who would read it? What is the point? Why should I take up someone's time reading this?

Then it hit me that not everyone can recover from meth, or be fortunate enough to get sober and understand how dangerous this drug is and how it can take a life, whether you're dead or alive. In a culture that is prone to judgment, it wouldn't be surprising if Der's addiction to meth did not invoke any public sympathy. What kind of person, let alone a mother, would choose to use meth? It wouldn't be unconventional to think that Der's current situation is a result of her own personal life decisions. The question begs, who would choose to live a life like this?



Der's story is unique in many aspects, but it certainly isn't unheard of. Unfortunately many in the Hmong community are experiencing a loved one who is going through this and they don't know how to help. It's a serious problem. And in a community that often times experiences language barriers and cultural clashes, it isn't unusual to sweep the shame under the rug. Although these are valid reasons for hesitation to ask for help, meth continues to take people's lives in all communities and cultures. It doesn't wait for the world to get its act together to make its move. It's here and it does not discriminate against anyone.

Meth needs to be talked about in the home, the doctor's office, in support groups or campfire gatherings. Whatever the venue, it needs to be acknowledged and addressed, if there is any hope of combating its horrors. In the Hmong community, meth users create a stigma that reflects negatively to the family, so many families, though they are at their wits end, simply do not know how or are afraid to seek help for themselves and their loved one addicted to meth. It is a sensitive matter, but the shame and guilt can only be lifted if we start talking about it. The best way to fight it, is to talk about it, try to understand it and warn those you love about the dangers associated with it.

At the end of our interview, I asked Der if she would ever stop using meth. She answered, "Maybe one day when I have my children again, I would like to stop. When my children come back to me, maybe I won't long for meth anymore." Deeply concerned about her life story and uncertain future, I asked her where she saw her life going. Her response was, "Only as far as my feet will take me." With or without her children, the meth controls her life.

If you would like to learn more about getting help, whether it is for family and/or friends of someone using meth, or if you're using meth and would like to get help, please check our website for a downloadable list of treatment facilities. If you have services and treatment options that can help those in need, please email us your comments and information via the form on our website, so we can share the information with our community. info@txhawb.com



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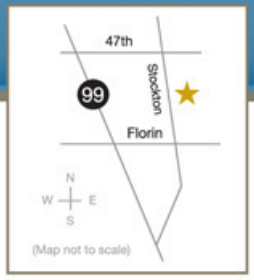
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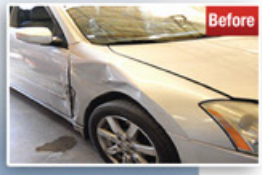
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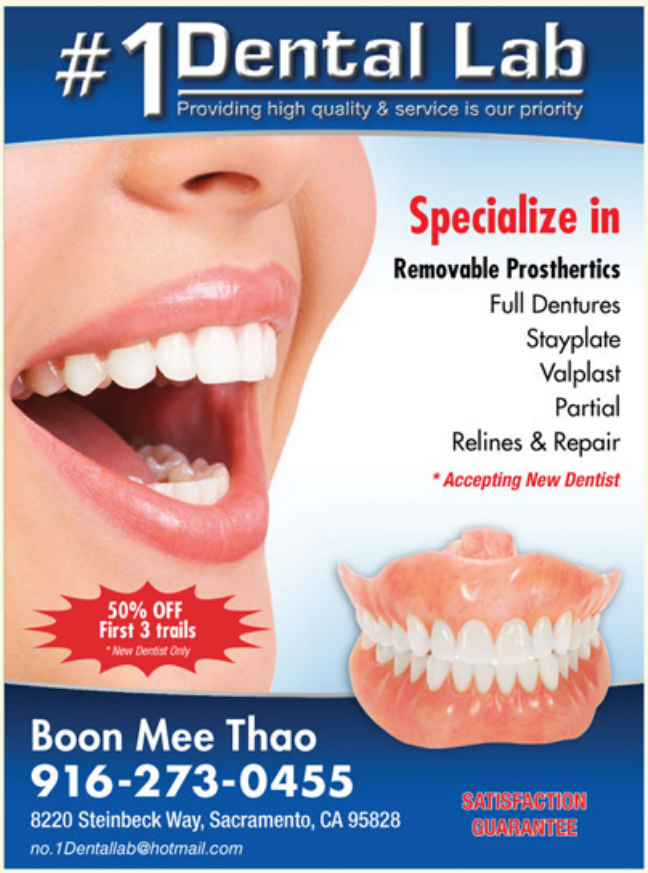
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Fresno, CA 93703
(559) 443-1377

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Sacramento, CA 95832
Cherpov Yang (916) 868-1393
Sai Xiong (559) 790-6860
Nhia Leng Vue (559) 803-5062

Central California Alliance for Health
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Merced, CA 95340
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Central Valley Cleaning
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Clovis, CA 93612
(559) 298-0701

Center for Multi-Cultural Cooperation
Hmong Voices
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Springville, CA 93265
(559) 361-6499



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Fresno, CA 93720
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Fresno, CA 93703
(559) 273-3918

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Fresno, CA 93703
(559) 255-2345

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Fresno, CA 93702
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Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 294-2199

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Fresno, CA 93720
(559) 439-6667

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Visalia, CA 93277
(559) 735-9680

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Fresno, CA 93703
(559)497-9261

Pho 99
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(559) 485-1233

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Fresno, CA 93726
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Fresno, CA 93728
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Fresno, CA 93726
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Clovis, CA 93612
(559) 292-3474

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(559) 375-0116

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(559) 497-8889

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Fresno, CA 93701
(559) 237-4732

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Fresno, CA 93702
(559) 892-1789

NON-PROFITS

EDUCATION

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Sacramento, CA
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(530) 990-2582

Hmong American Association, Inc.
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Olivehurst, CA 95961
(530) 415-8616

Hmong International New Year, Inc.
1558 North 9th St
Fresno, CA 93703
(559) 487-1012
info@hmongnewyear.us

Lao Family Community of Fresno, Inc.
Water Festival - SEA Games USA
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Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 453-9775

Lao Family Community of Stockton, Inc
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Stockton, CA 95210
(209) 466-0721

Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc.
July 4th Tournament & New Year
320 University Ave
St. Paul, MN 55103
O: (651) 221-0069
C: (651) 216-5790

Lao Hmong Family Association of San Diego
2757 Ulric St
San Diego, CA 92111

Lao Veterans of America Institute
Veterans Memorial Services
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Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 252-3561

Merced Lao Family Community, Inc
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Sacramento, CA 95823
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Asian Advancement Association, Inc
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Sacramento, CA 95823
(916) 424-8784

Asian Business Institute & Resource Center (ABIRC)
7035 N Fruit Ave
Fresno, CA 93711
(559) 438-9680

Center for Asian-American Media
145 Ninth St Ste 350
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 863-0814

Center for Multi-Cultural Cooperation
Hmong Voices
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Central Valley Asian-American Chamber of Commerce
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Stockton, CA 95204
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(559) 291-7587

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(559) 487-1500

Fresno Center for New Americans
4879 E Kings Canyon Rd
Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 255-8395

Greater Health Organization, Inc
Dr. Tou Xa Lyfoung, Administrator
4929 E Kings Canyon Rd
Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 255-6476



STOCKTON
Lao Family Community, Inc.
Non-Profit Organization

Lao Family Community of Stockton
has been providing direct and advocacy services for refugee, immigrant families and low-income families of all ethnicities in San Joaquin County for more than 25 years. We have expanded our services to Sacramento County since January 2010. The mission of Lao Family Community of Stockton is to assist and empower families and individuals through advocacy, social support services, economic development, and learning opportunities.

With the language and cultural competency of our staff, we offer the following services:



- Child Wellness Program
- BRIGHT Project
- Growing Connections
- Mental Health Outreach and Case Management Service
- Job Placement and Case Management Services
- Empowering and Engaging Parents of English Learners
- Stockton Hmong New Year

Stockton Office
Office: (209) 466-0721
Fax: 209-466-6567
8338 West lane, Suite 101
Stockton, CA 95210

Sacramento Office
Office: (916) 921-8247
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Marysville, CA 95901
(530) 749-1580

Hmong American Community, Inc.
Pheng Lee
1044 Fulton Mall Ste 207
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 237-4914

Hmong Association of Washington
P.O. Box 14492
Seattle, WA 98114
(253) 218-7585
hello@hmongofwa.org

Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County
Mr. Sor Lor -Executive Director
1640 Lincoln St
Oroville, CA 95965
(530) 534-7474

Hmong Family Heritage
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Fresno, CA 93702
(559) 456-4626

Hmong Health Collaborative
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Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 288-8395

Hmong New Life Health Center
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Sacramento, CA 95823
(916) 427-1227

Hmong Org. for Parents, Educators & Students, Inc.
Mr. Tsia Xiong, President
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Sacramento, CA 95818
(916) 951-5931

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Lao Veteran Inst. Of America
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Laotian Cultural & Research Center
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Fresno, CA 93711
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Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce
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Sacramento, CA 95811
(916) 446-7883

Sacramento Hmong Mediation Council, Inc
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Rancho, Cordova, CA 95670
(916) 635-6815

Southeast Asian Assistance Center
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Sacramento, CA 95822
(916) 421-1036

Southeast Asian Community Center
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Southeast Asian Community Center
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San Jose, CA 95112
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Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 224-7613

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(612) 724-3066

Center for Hmong Arts & Talent
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995 University Ave, Ste 220
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 603-6971

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Merced
Lao Family Community, Inc.

Merced Lao Family Community Inc. (MLFC) is a non-profit, community-based organization with over 29 years of experience serving the Southeast Asian refugee and immigrant community as well as other monolingual community members of Merced County. MLFC's mission is to:

- encourage self-respect and self-sufficiency for all Merced County community members
- to maintain pride in cultural histories
- to offer positive support and hope for the future

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- Early childhood educational services
- Child abuse prevention
- counseling services
- After school cultural art activities

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- Out-patient clinical care
- Peer support groups

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- Policy engagement
- Child obesity prevention & nutrition education



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(608) 661-4098

Hmong American Center
Thao Phia Xaykao
1032 W. Pioneer Parkway Ste 100
Arlington, TX 76013

Hmong American Community Association, Inc.
1421 N Broadway Ste 116
Monomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-9350

Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association
1718 Washington Ave North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 374-2694

Hmong American Association of South Carolina
Harry Moua
507 Foster Grove Rd
Chesnee, SC 29323
(864) 599-0457

Hmong American Association of Portage County
Mai Khou Yang
101 Division St, N Ste E
Stevens Point, WI 54481
(715) 341-3703
hmong_am_assoc@sbcglobal.net

Hmong American Partnership (Main Branch)
1075 Arcade St
St. Paul, MN 55106
(651) 495-9160

Hmong American Partnership - Fox Valley
2198 S. Memorial Dr
Appleton, WI 54915
(920) 739-3192

Hmong American Partnership - Minneapolis
1121 Glenwood Ave, North
Minneapolis, MN 55405
(612) 377-6482

Hmong American Partnership - St. Paul
430 Dale St
St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 291-1811

Hmong American Women's Association
Christa Xiong
2414 West Vliet St
Milwaukee, WI 53205
(414) 342-0858

Hmong/American Friendship Association, Inc.
Lo Neng Kiatoukaysy
3824 West Vliet St
Milwaukee, WI 53208
(414) 344-6575

NON-PROFIT LISTING

Hmong Association of Green Bay, Inc.
200 S. Ashland Ave
Green Bay, WI 54303
(920) 437-4550

Hmong Association of Wood County, Inc.
Xou Khang
1430 2nd St North
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
(715) 424-4981

Hmong Community of Metro-Detroit, Inc.
P.O. Box 3810
Centerline, MI 48015
(586) 945-0868

Hmong Cultural Center
995 University Ave Ste 214
Saint Paul, MN 55104
(651) 917-9937

Hmong Educational Advancement, Inc.
2414 W. Vliet St
Milwaukee, WI 53205
Ge Xiong
(414) 931-8834

Hmong-Lao American Association, Inc.
Za Teng Thao
316 Court St
Oshkosh, WI 54901-5032
(920) 235-5133

Hmong-Lao Assistance Association, Inc.
Catherine Hodges
124 Logan Drive
Mount Gilead, NC 27306
(910) 439-9533

Hmong Minnesota Pacific Association
925 Payne Ave Ste B
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 778-8937

Hmong Mutual Assistance Association of Sheboygan, Inc.
Chasong Yang
2304 Superior Ave
Sheboygan, WI 53081
(920) 458-0808
hmaas@powercom.net

Hmong National Development
1628 Sixteenth St NW Ste 203
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 797-9105

Hmong National Organization, Inc.
501 Dale St North Ste 106
St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 290-2343

Hmong United Association of Rhode Island
340 Lockwood St
Providence, RI 02907
(401) 455-0847

IRCO - Asian Family Center
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(503) 235-9396

La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc.
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La Crosse, WI 54603
(608) 781-5744

Lao-Hmong American Coalition
Yang Chee
7051 Beacon Way
Westminster, CO 80030
(303) 429-8724

Lao Family Community of Minnesota – Minneapolis
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Saint Paul, MN 55103
(651) 221-0069

Lao Family Community of Minnesota – St. Paul
1433 E Franklin Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612)870-1719

Lao Family of Milwaukee
2331 W. Vieau Pl
Milwaukee, WI 53204
(414) 385-3380

Lauj Youth Society
Sonja Mee Lor
995 University Ave, Suite 213
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 644-2446

Southeast Asian Community Council
Cha Lee
555 Girard Terrace North
Minneapolis, MN 55405
(612) 342-1530

Southeast Asian Resource Center
1628 16th St. NW 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20009
(202)667-4690

United Hmong Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 9683
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(828) 465-6288

CHURCHES

United Hmong Comm. Center
401 9th St
Green Bay, WI 54304
(920) 432-8900

CALIFORNIA

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3200 East Walnut St
Hanford, CA 93291
(559) 909-2379

Central Pacific Coast Hmong Alliance Church
1000 West Ocean Ave
Lompoc, CA 93436
(805) 737-5577

College Church of Christ
1284 E Bullard Ave
Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 439-6530

Emmanuel Hmong Baptist Church
1147 West 6th St
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 722-7995

Eureka Hmong Baptist Mission
Chong Na Chang
1357 Mc Farlan
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 267-5443

First Hmong EvaN Church
5314 Ardelle Ave
Stockton, CA 95215
(209) 547-1921_

First Hmong Alliance Church
Santa Ana, CA 92799
(951) 294-0674

Hmong Alliance Church
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(951) 849-9608

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Hmong Alliance Church
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(530) 826-3495

Hmong Alliance Church
Merced, CA 95341
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Hmong Alliance Church
Oroville, CA 95965
(530) 532-1979

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HMONG QHENG (RAB QEEJ)

written by Va Her

In the Hmong culture, the origin of the Hmong instrument Qheng, or Qeej [Qh-ang] (Rab Qeej), remains unknown. However, there many theories about how the Qeej came about.

According to one Hmong folktale, the Qeej originated from a folk story involving seven daughters. "When their mother passed away, the youngest built the wind chest of the Qeej. The rest of the older six married daughters each contributed one bamboo reed to represent the six notes. With all these pieces, they were able to assemble this instrument, "Qeej" to play in honoring their deceased mother," said Qeej Master Teng Her.

"This was the reason the Hmong people called it Young Mother Qheng (Niam Nkauj Qeej)," Teng Her added.

Another story tells us, the Qeej was used for entertainment. When an elder passes away, the Qeej was played to entertain the guests. Over generations, this practice was incorporated as an essential part of traditional Hmong funeral services. Here in the United States, the Qeej is primarily used for funerals. At times it is used for other entertainment purposes such as New Year celebration, cultural events, or other public exhibitions or events.

"A unique feature of the Qeej is that the sounds represent spoken words," said Teng Her. "Some main components of the Qeej are: The body of the Qeej instrument is made of hollow wood or carved out wood to create a long, bottle-like shape neck, similar to a squash. The other component of the Qeej instrument is made of six bamboo reeds (Ntiv) {th-ee}.

Each Ntiv is measured to individual length," described Teng Her. The shortest Ntiv is also the largest one and contains three copper blades (Nplaim) [bl-ie]. Each of the five smaller and longer reeds contains its separate Nplaim. Musical sound/notes can be produced by inhaling and exhaling into the instrument and using the finger to cover holes on the reeds for combination sounds.

A popular way of showing skills among Qeej Master and students is "Xyuas Xau", which translates to seek or greet outsider. Xyuas Xau is mainly conducted in a celebration such as Hmong New Year celebration.

Another popular practice is dueling events during funeral service on the day when all the honorary guests come to view the decease. These examples are the fundimental occasions the Qeej are utilized.

The art of Hmong Qeej ritual "Xyuas Xau", which is a traditional ceremony conducted by Qeej Apprentice and Master in respecting the deceased after the first day of funeral. The Apprentice and Master also show their acknowledgement and respect for one another skills and talents of the Qeej. During a dual, the guest must outperform the host.

Artistic skill, fitness ability, and creativity will be put to the test. For example, if the host conducts 3 rounds, the guest must do more than 3, but to not overdo it either. As a guest, the performer wants to be able to outdo the host, but remain humble as to not show off.



TRADITIONAL HMONG DRUMS (LUB NRUAS) *written by* Va Her

There are two basic types of Hmong Drums, or Lub Nruas: the temporary drum (Nruas Zoj) and the traditional (raised) drum (Nruas Yug).

According to Hmong cultural expert Chris Vang (Vaj Ncuab Lauj Vaj), of Fresno, he cited that "the unique aspect about the traditional drum is that it has its own soul that lives within the drum."

Most traditional drums require the offering of a cover chicken (Qaib Npog Ruas). Each time the drum is used or borrowed for its purpose, the traditional drum requires an offering.

This blessing is conducted to rid of all illness and misfortune that have occured. During the time that the drum is not in its master's possession, it cannot be set on the floor... it must be carefully put away and prevented from touching the ground. When the drum is returned to its master, it must be carry above the shoulder to represent that the drum is flying back home. Once it is returned, the drum must be hung on top a door or near the ceiling so that it never touches the floor. It is always treated as a living object with a soul.

"The traditional Hmong Drum is made of a single tree stomp large enough to be hollowed out. Both sides are covered by the skin of a cow that must be sacrificed as an offering. In some Hmong clans, the offering is an annually event at the end of every year. The hook that holds the drum is forged from contribution of metallic items from each clan in the Hmong Community. Ideally a small bit of brass is contributed from each clan. This contribution will indicate that every Hmong family is able to borrow the help of the drum," said Hmong shaman and cultural expert Vaj Ncuab Lauj Vaj.

The keeper of the drum is chosen by the ancestral spirits, similar to the Hmong shaman. One indication that a person has been selected to be a keeper of the drum will come in the form of a dream. The dream will give clues to the person on how the drum will be discovered. In most cases, the spirit will cause the potential person to become sick, and in order to recover, that person must seek out the drum. The drum and its spiritual counterpart also have a life span that needs to be fulfill-life span of the drum varies based on the clan. For Vaj Ncuab's clan, his family drum's life span is 9 generations. He is the 3rd generation to be their family's drum keeper.

The purpose of the traditional Hmong Drum is strictly only for Hmong funeral service, soul release (tso plig), or cow spiritual offering (nyuj dab) ceremony.

In the Hmong culture this is the only instrument that is not allow to be used for other cultural purposes. There are several versions of forbidden practice. According to Teng Her, one of the reasons why the drum cannot be beaten randomly play for fun is because of the belief that, like a tiger, it will go out and hunt for food. Teng Her reiterated that taking the drum out to play for other purposes this could bring sickness and death to the family or towns people. Generally, the drum is used for the funeral ceremony and it will get offering from what the funeral have to offer.



photo by StudioVue

TWO-STRING VIOLIN / FIDDLE (XEM XAUS) *written by* Va Her

The two string violin/fiddle known as the "Ncas Nkauj Nog" in the Hmong culture, which its literal translation for Ncas Nkauj Nog {jaa gao n-o-} is Flute of Orphan Girl, or Xim Xaus {see sao}.

According to Master Txawj Yig Lauj (Cher Yee Lor) the Xim Xaus is not a Hmong term. The Hmong term is Ncas Nkauj Nog. It is played upright and is usually used as a main or leading role; if ever played in a group of musicians. This instrument is typically played solo and each song usually tells a story of life in the homeland.

The Ncas Nkauj Nog resembles a two-string violin that is made from wood, metallic wire, string, and horsehair. "The instrument composes of a long neck, main body, and is made of wood," said musician Gna Kong.

The body has a drum-like chamber that helps suspend two strings to be played like a violin with a bow. The head of the Xim Xaus that is connected to the neck is the highest point of the instrument which holds the tuning pegs which the strings are wrapped around, and the bridge of the instrument which is a small thread that holds the strings default note.

The Xim Xaus consists of a body that resembles a cup, the neck that is attached to the head of the instrument, and the head which holds the tuning pegs. The body is hollowed out with the flat surface touching the nut of the instrument; this allows the vibrations of the string to amplify through the hollow cup-shape body by the strings' vibration. The neck of the Xim Xaus is for hand and finger placement so that when holding down a string to create a note it allows the musician to press on for leverage. The other piece along with the Xim Xaus is the bow for stroking notes and swiping back and forth for faster play. The bow is made with horsehair and bamboo, however most bows are now usually made of wood.

When traditionally playing the Xim Xaus, it is not only played for its music, but a way to communicate with spoken words. Often narrating a story.

" The tones that are created emphasis the Hmong language's vowels and pitchy tones which adapted Hmong speakers will probably understand," said Txooj Yig Lauj.

The Xim Xaus traces its original roots back to China. In China is more known as the Erhu. Kong Gna added that the instrument is played similar as if words are expressed through the instrument rather than playing as a backup instrument. This instrument is uniquely strange as it is beautiful that it can speak.



THE HMONG FLUTE (RAJ NPLAIM) *written by* Va Her

The Hmong flute, or Raj Nplaim, is an instrument played similar to the Xim Xaus. The contrast between the two is the Raj Nplaim uses words rather than music to communicate with others. There is no record of its origin, but it has been a part of the Hmong culture since ancient times.

In the days of our mothers and fathers, the flute is used as a way of secret courtship. The Raj Nplaim is a popular instrument. The messages conveyed by the Raj Nplaim are mainly about love or loneliness.

The Raj Nplaim is a long, single bamboo with a brass blade built in at the end part of the mouth piece. "Like most flutes, the reed is to the side and is not blown on, but is kissed and worked with your lips in a more of a massaging pattern," Nga Kong explained.

The Hmong flute holds different notes compared to common flutes because it is not blown the same way. The body structure is similar, but its speeches do not really sing nor follows; and is also usually played by itself and makes similar sound like the Qheng.

The Raj Npaim is long free reed flute that creates a vibrant tone quality. It varies in length and can have from five to seven holes. This instrument can be played by pressing the lips around the open reed and blowing to make the different pitches and notes by covering or releasing the holes.

The Hmong culture is a very conservative culture; therefore, speaking out loud and expressing ones feeling in public may be deemed inappropriate. These instruments are used as spoken words to exchange the feelings between lovers or friendships. Playing the flute is similar to the singing Hmong folksong, "Kwv Txhiaj," where each person expresses him or herself in an artistic way.

As for the Raj Nplaim, not many Hmong play it today, because many of the younger generations no longer understand or can recognized the spoken words that the instrument tries to convey.

For the older Hmong individuals, they can listen and easily identify the messages based on tones played. Most of these musical messages played are either about loneliness or love, but also expresses the musicians' way of life here in America.

THANK YOU CONTRIBUTORS

The people who contributed to this article are active Hmong musicians or cultural experts.

Txooj Yig Lauj, 79, is an expert in Hmong instruments and is currently residing in Stockton.

Teng Her is a 21-year-old Qeej Master from Fresno.

Gna Kong, 27, is a Hmong musician and artist from Merced.

Vaj Ncuab Lauj Vaj, 27, is a Hmong shaman and cultural expert from Fresno.

CONGRATULATIONS

Burlee and Able Vang

2011 Nicholl Fellowship Winners Academy of Arts and Sciences



The Vang Brothers with parents: Naoshoua Vang and Mee Yang-Vang right before the awards dinner in Beverly Hills.

As fellow artists, Txhawb and the Hmong American Writers' Circle (HAWC) would like to honor the achievement of brothers Burlee and Abel Vang of Fresno, CA, who were awarded a 2011 Nicholl Fellowship from the Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The $30,000 fellowship was awarded for their original screenplay "The Tigers Child", which chronicles the story of two brothers, orphaned after losing their father serving in the CIA's Secret War, and their journey through the jungles of Laos.

We first heard the news through a quietly forwarded email from Burlee, titled "Nicholl Update". In a hazy euphoria, we read and re-read the email, taking in the momentous magnitude of "The Oscars" selecting the brothers' screenplay from among the 6,700 submissions.

The breakthrough instantly brought us back to a conversation we had with Abel over a year ago. Sitting together at a reception and reading to honor Burlee and the publication of his poetry chapbook, The Dead I Know (Swan Scythe Press, 2010), we begin talking about Abel's experience as a graduate film student at the University of Southern California. In his final year of study, Abel spoke of how proud he was for his brother, and how these achievements are important in telling the stories and experiences of the Hmong by Hmong.

We asked about his own prospects in finding success in film, and the opportunity to one day share stories with an even larger audience. Leaning forward and in a serious tone, he tells us what his professors have shared with him, that due to the poor economy, only 2 or 3 original screenplays had been purchased by major Hollywood studios in the last year. "In the past," he adds, "the number was close to 100." After sitting quietly for a moment, he acknowledged the difficulty ahead, "the stories however, need to be told."

There is reason to celebrate in knowing that, for the next year, Burlee and Abel, who have been inventing and filming stories since their childhood, will have the opportunity and freedom to focus on writing. Rarely are artists able to find funding to devote time to their craft or be recognized among their peers on a national or global stage. This fellowship; however, provides for both and for the brothers to do so in tandem to support one another. And, when "The Tiger's Child" comes to a movie theater near each of us, their success transforms into the stories we share.

Capturing the magnitude of being awarded the fellowship is the first paragraph of HAWC's introduction in How Do I Begin?: A Hmong American Literary Anthology, which begins;

For any serious artist, it is a terrible feeling of surrender when you realize there is no place in the world for your voice, when all that you express seems marginalized or in vain. I have felt this way for years. But this isn't a story about defeat. This is about survival. (Heyday, 2011)

Fittingly, this was written by Burlee himself, published during a year in which he co-edited this historic literary accomplishment with HAWC, and ended with the opportunity for the brothers to take their vision to film or television. Txhawb and HAWC recognizes their work is critical to document the Hmong experience and enhance our creative community, and would like to thank Burlee and Abel Vang as their achievement and voices inspire others, allowing us to not only survive, but also heard.

To see photographs of Burlee and Abel as they are awarded their fellowship in Hollywood, CA, as well as their acceptance speech, please visit:

www.oscars.org/awards/nicholl/index.html

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(Story Source: Healthy House Within a MATCH Coalition)

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As a result, I have no choice but to avoid going to the doctor even when I am sick because I know I cannot afford to pay the medical bills. In the past five years, I have not been to the doctor's office once-missing regular check-ups, eye examinations, and dentist appointments. I am acutely aware that here in America if you do not have health insurance, doctors do not want to see you or take good care of you, and medical bills would be very expensive.

Now I am getting older, I worry about my health condition more because I cannot predict when I will be sick, and I still do not have health insurance to this day.

How does the Affordable Care Act help Mr. Lee and you if you are currently UNINSURED?

IMMEDIATE HELP

If you have a pre-existing condition and have been uninsured at least six months, you will be eligible to buy coverage through a temporary high-risk program - which limits what you will be charged for out-of-pocket costs.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Starting immediately, children cannot be denied insurance coverage because of a pre-existing condition. Starting in 2014, insurance plans can no longer deny you coverage nor can they make you pay more for insurance because of your health, past medical problems, or gender.

MORE PEOPLE COVERED

Under the new law, you may now qualify for basic health insurance. The ACA expands Medicaid, a public health plan for low-income residents, to include individuals without children and families (or individuals) under a certain income level - $14,403 for a single person, $29,326 for a family of four. To see if you qualify for Medicaid, please contact your local community organization. (To see a listing, please refer to HHC's ad on page 117).

MORE AFFORDABLE PRIVATE INSURANCE CHOICES

Buying your own insurance can be very confusing and difficult. The ACA creates "Health Insurance Exchanges" that will create a simple marketplace for you to choose a health insurance plan that is right for you and your family. Every insurance plan on the Exchange will include basic, comprehensive medical coverage and prescription drug benefits.

HELPS TO PAY FOR PRIVATE INSURANCE

If you're having trouble paying for health insurance, the new law will provide subsidies and tax credits to help you and your family. Starting in 2014, if you buy private health insurance on the Exchange, you and your family will get tax credits depending on your income level. For example, your family of four would receive tax credits if your annual income is between $29,326 and $88,200.

LIMITS OUT OF POCKET COSTS

The new law places limits on how much you have to spend on deductibles and co-pays for health insurance plans under the Exchange. Furthermore, insurance plans will be required to cover preventative services such as screening, regular check-ups, and vaccinations without additional out of pocket costs.

The new law expands health insurance for many more people, but there are still people who are left out. The law prevents any coverage for undocumented immigrants and excludes recent immigrants (their first five years) from the Medicaid program.



This information is brought to you by the Hmong Health Collaborative

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act presents an enormous opportunity for the Hmong American community to participate and support the development of more socially just, accountable, and responsive health policies that will ensure that all communities have greater access to quality health care.

Hmong Health Collaborative (HHC) is dedicated to empowering California's Hmong American communities with the tools and information to make informed decisions about their health care. In joint efforts with Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) and its national Ensuring Our Healthy Future (EOHF) Campaign, HHC works with non-profit organizations, community leaders, federal agencies and lawmakers to ensure that community members have a seat at the decision-making table during the implementation of the ACA in the state of California.

For more on information on HHC, please visit: **www.hmonghc.org**

To browse community guides, fact sheets and other resources that describe the benefits of the ACA/Health Care Reform, please visit: **http://www.searac.org/content/ ensuring-our-healthy-future-campaign**

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Thomas FaiDac Her

txhawb profile

"I believed I was able to deliver superior customer experience," says Thomas Her, "Throughout many people's careers, they have never decided to be great at what they do. But for me, I decided early on in my career that I would be great at delivering a superior customer experience at any place and all times." It is no surprise that when his supervisor at his job at the Sheraton Hotel was let go and began working with Western Southern Life (WSL), that the supervisor would come back specifically to seek out Thomas and asked him to join in this new endeavor.

Making this occupational shift, however, was not easy. WSL only grants a salary for new employees for their first 52 weeks, and when Thomas' 52 weeks expired, Thomas had just recently graduated from college and was a newlywed, he feared failure. With the thoughts of whether or not to stay with WSL tossing in his mind, he also conceptualized ways in which he could utilize his company's products to help the Hmong community. He began helping the Hmong community learn how his company's products could help them prepare for funeral costs, replace a family member's income if a premature death occurs, or prepare a plan for their retirement. As he found more ways to help the people of the Hmong community understand and appreciate his company's products, success also came his way.

His impeccable attendance also aided in this success, "I made it to almost every WSL Sales Meeting in the last eleven years." This contributed to his being #1 Sales Manager in 2008, and being among the top 5 income earners in his company every year after his first year. "To me, success is when a person is able to achieve his or her goals under the circumstance he is in."

Even as he was being recognized for his work at WSL, this did not stop Thomas from his work with the community. From 2004 to 2008, Thomas co-founded and served as a member on the Board of Directors of the Sacramento Hmong New Year Inc., and is currently an advisor to the organization. He also served as a member of the Board of Directors for NAIFA (National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors-California). Since 2009, Thomas has been an active Board member of the Sacramento Hmong Alliance church. He has hosted a radio show on KJAY 1340 AM for the past 10 years and is a member of Am-Phi Lions Club of Stockton. Thomas Her understands that the Hmong community is close-knit, that the Hmong business community is growing, and that in order to keep a well-maintained reputation and continue to develop business networks, one must be "good, clean, and ethical all the time."

writer
Andre Yang

photography
Lue Vang

Thomas FaiDac Her

Western & Southern Life

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txhawb profile

Xengxue Yang, Pang X. Yang, PharmD

writer
Anthony Cody

photography
Tudor Stanley

Pillbox Pharmacy

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At first glance, the story of husband and wife, Dr. Xengxue Yang and Dr. Pang Xiong Yang, pharmacists and owners of Pillbox Pharmacy in both Fresno, CA and Visalia, CA would appear to embody the classic American Dream. High school sweethearts, the two married young and went on to pursue their dreams through higher education and within the last few years transitioned from retail pharmaceutical careers into owning their own pharmacy in Visalia, CA and, since June 2011, expanding their business into Fresno, California. Their personal achievements, however, were not without great challenges, as Dr. Pang Yang notes, "one of the many struggles we went through growing up here in America is the cultural clash."

While still in high school, Pang recalls "going to the garden with my parents, picking strawberries, raspberries, and cucumbers," which she describes as, "back breaking jobs and I knew that I had to go to college if I wanted a better life." Xengxue remembers that just after high school, to help support his wife and young child, he "worked as a stockboy for a warehouse and found myself working ginseng fields, planting, weeding, picking berries and harvesting the roots."

After high school, the couple chose to attend the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, both majoring in Biology and then eventually graduated from the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Pharmacy in 2005, where both achieved the Dean's List throughout their coursework. Pursuing education, surviving economic hardship and marrying young, Dr. Xengxue Yang and Dr. Pang X. Yang have been able to achieve balance and choose to serve their community in their career path.

Pang says that she and her husband believe that, "by owning your own pharmacy you have more say in the quality of service, growth and types of services you can offer. Being able to give instructions regarding medications in Hmong to members of our community where language barriers exist is very important and rewarding at the same time. It is our mission to be able to serve our community to this capacity. Pillbox Pharmacy is family owned and our clients are our family as well. We make it our primary goal to know and greet each patron by their first name."

Both hope their stores can help the community stay healthy, as well as be a resource and guide for our Hmong youth and those wanting to learn more. Despite having limited free time, both pharmacists provide students the opportunity to job shadow, as well as being, Dr. Xiong Yang describes, "pretty flexible and open to our Hmong community interested in the field." Dr. Yang is honored to serve the community through Pillbox Pharmacy, and understands, "that if not for my struggles financially, working in the fields, and my family being apart, I would not have studied so hard and would not be here today."



Bobby Vang

txhawb profile

Bobby Vang, Owner-Manager of Asian Village Shopping Center (Bliatout LLC), immigrated as an infant to Chicago in 1975 with his parents. One of Vang's earliest memories was watching his parents' (Col. Toufu Vang and GaoHhi Lyfoung, and step father Dr. Sam Bliatout) sacrifice. "By working many hours and commuting long distances to provide" for my brothers and me. Learning from his parents' dedication and commitment, Vang made the difficult decision while in college at CSU-Fresno to change his career path and help his family develop their business.

Today, Bobby looks out over the shopping center and business complex, the bustling Asian Village Shopping Center in southeast Fresno, and reflects on how his parents' vision grew. "20 years ago," Bobby remembers, "when my step-father and mother opened the laundromat, the center was completely vacant." Through his parent's hard work and Bobby's continued support and vision, the shopping center is committed to expanding the business in "providing the community with a sense of comfort and pride when they shop." "I feel the community sees a real sense of comfort and pride when they come shop here, where most of the businesses are either owned or operated by Hmong people. Occasionally, you will also notice that we have events in our parking lot specifically supporting our community. Over the years, Asian Village has gained recognition as the place to reach out to the Hmong and Southeast Asian community." Looking toward the future, Bobby is currently developing Orchid Hall into a mini-mall where 15 to 25 shops and services will be opening, as well as recruiting local professionals to expand their services at Asian Village, in an effort, "to make the center a more complete shopping experience."

More than a businessman, Bobby has remained engaged in the community through donating to local community events, nonprofit organizations and students; as well as serving on various boards and commissions. Bobby believes, "It is important for the growth and enrichment of our community to be engaged in Fresno, to share one's experience and resources" to help others succeed. Bobby has served on Fresno Chamber of Commerce Board, Fresno Workforce Investment Board, Roosevelt Implementation Committee, and City of Fresno, Fresno Citizens for Good Government.

Bobby finds inspiration through the collective success of the community, noting, "being present at the swearing in of City of Fresno Council Member, Blong Xiong and Dr. Tony Vang to the Fresno County School Board" are moments that "filled my core with pride." Ultimately, Bobby defines success beyond the financial, commenting, "I'm lucking to have a supportive and professional wife, and success to me is to be happy and content."

writer
Anthony Cody

photography
Tudor Stanley

Bobby Vang

Asian Village
Shopping Center

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txhawb profile

writer
Andre Yang

photography
Lu Vang

Tou Vue, N.D.

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Because none of Dr. Tou Vue's siblings ever attended or graduated from college, his family had always expected him to go to medical school and become a doctor. He did, but he chose to take his own path. Dr. Vue dedicated several years to his self-discovery and eventually decided he would best serve the community as a Naturopathic Physician, which focuses on the treatment of disease that avoids drugs and surgery and emphasizes the use of natural agents (as diet, nutrition, and herbs) and physical means (as tissue manipulation and electrotherapy).

Dr. Vue graduated salutatorian from Lindhurst High School in Marysville, CA, spent his undergraduate years majoring in Biological Sciences at UC Davis, and eventually attended Jacksonville State University in Alabama for graduate school. For medical school, he went to the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon and acquired his Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine. Although residencies are not required for Naturopathic Physicians, Dr. Vue did a one-year post-graduate residency focusing on Environmental Medicine.

As a Naturopathic Physician, Dr Vue says, "we try to address all aspects of patient's health, including physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual health. I have so much passion for Naturopathic Medicine because it allows me to think outside of the box and to try to identify what the cause of each patient's problem is and to treat it rather than to simply treat the symptoms." He continues, "The philosophy in Naturopathic Medicine is to understand that the human body is a sophisticated network of interacting organ systems and any imbalances in these organs systems can result in disease to the body. The ultimate goal is to try to restore balance to the body by giving it what it needs or by removing outside interferences so that the body can heal naturally."

Dr. Vue has given numerous lectures, workshops, and talks providing health education to both Hmong and mainstream communities. He is currently a member with the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, California Naturopathic Doctors Association, and The American Botanical Council. He also serves as a board member for the Vue National Association, Inc and the Southeast Asian American Minortiy Inc, and is a member of the Hmong Amateur Golf Association (HAGA), which was formed by a group of lifelong friends to promote and introduce the game of golf to Hmong youths. He adds, "I believe that each and every one of us have something to give back to our community," and that, "the ultimate success is to know that I have made a positive impact on another person's life because of the life I have lived."



Michael Vang, PharmD

txhawb profile

Dr. Michael Vang's parents understood education was an essential ingredient for success and a better future so they always encouraged his daily attendance of school. "I believe it was the discipline to attend school and have near perfect attendance that enabled me to achieve my success." Neither of his parents had much formal education before coming to the United States, and therefore could only offer him their insistence on his obtaining an education. During his last 2 years of high school, he worked part-time at Pizza Hut, where he thought he would eventually become the manager. With no one to guide him through his education, he almost committed himself into the workforce right after high school. Fortunately, a good friend convinced him to apply to UC Davis. The university accepted him and he attended, but even then Dr. Vang realized at the time that he would have to help himself if he wanted to succeed in life, so he surrounded himself with school-minded friends majoring in either engineering or the sciences.

While studying at UC Davis, Dr. Vang explored his possible career interests by volunteering his summers to work externships (8 hours every week for 3 months). He spent his first summer at the UC Davis Medical Center's Emergency Room, his second at the Pediatrics Clinic, and his third alongside an optometrist. Despite the vast differences in these externships, Dr. Vang's interest still had yet to be sparked, so he took on a fourth externship at a pharmacy during the fall quarter of his senior year at UC Davis. Finally, this pharmacy experience turned out to be the career path that called out to him. He continued his education at the Chicago College of Pharmacy, and while there he worked as a pharmacy intern for Walgreens. Upon obtaining his Pharmacy Doctorate, he returned to Sacramento and continued working for Walgreens from 2000 to 2011. During the spring of 2011, an opportunity presented itself and he felt he could do more to serve the Hmong community by opening his own pharmacy. He named his pharmacy "Vangs Pharmacy" so that the "Hmong community can identify it as one of their own." Today, Dr. Vang offers consultations in Hmong because he understands the desire of the older Hmong community members to be able to speak directly with an actual pharmacist without needing a translator. This generosity is a product of learning and witnessing the habits of his father. "Whenever someone asked for his help, he would drop whatever he was doing and go help them. He never thought that he was better than the next person. Instead, he was always ready to serve."

Dr. Vang finds inspiration and strength from his wife and children, and always looks forward to the glowing smiles and outstretched arms of his family when he returns home after a long time spent away from them. He also draws strength from the Hmong community, to which he has given back much of his money and time. Although he admits, "I honestly don't think I have the answers to solve all the challenges the community faces." There is an admirable humility in his words and his striving to better serve the Hmong community. From very early on, Dr. Vang surrounded himself with positive, ambitious people who he learned much from, and so his one bit of advice to the community is: "You are who you surround yourself with. By surrounding yourself with ambitious and successful individuals, you too will have a chance to be successful."

writer
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photography
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txhawb profile

Dr. Yeng Eric Xiong

writer
Anthony Cody

photography
Xeng Xai Xiong

Yeng E. Xiong, D.C.

Xiong Effective Chiropractic Care, Inc.

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With the weight of being the only son of seven children, and parental expectations of becoming a doctor looming above his shoulders, a young Yeng EricXiong excelled through primary and secondary school, then entered Fresno City College with the dreams of becoming a pharmacist. While studying, he attended a lecture being given by a chiropractor that changed his life. The words of the lecturer were so profound and inspirational that a new dream emerged. Yeng Eric Xiong decided that day he would become a chiropractor. He went on to attend Life Chiropractic College West and received his Doctorate of Chiropractic degree in 3 and 1/2 years. During those years, however, he had to make the difficult decision of moving away from home, from his parents, wife, and children, to be closer to school. He took solace in the advice his father had always given him, "you have to give something in order to get something," and stayed connected to his loved ones via telephone calls and occasional commutes home.

Dr. Yeng Eric Xiong attributes his strength and foundation to his wife, his "better half." Her positive words of encouragement helped remind him throughout his studies at chiropractor school that success was achievable, that it was his to own. The most inspiring and defining moment of his life is tied to the birth of his first child. As much as his wife's support nudged Dr. Xiong along, he also stayed inspired keeping his children: "2 beautiful daughters and 2 handsome sons" and the futures he would be able to provide for them in mind.

"I define my own success in terms of enjoying my work, and having the opportunity to spend time with my family." Taking this career path has led Dr. Xiong to achieve these things and more. In 2009, he received the honor of being selected as one of the top American Chiropractors by the Consumers' Research Council of America. He has given back to the community by donating time and money to a local elementary school in support of future leaders of America, as well as to many other nonprofit organizations. "There is no better success than to befriend and serve your community. Behind a great man is an even greater community."

Believing in leading by example, and only preaching what he has first done himself, Dr. Yeng Eric Xiong offers to his community that "education is the core to success in America," and that he "would encourage everyone of all ages to go to school and obtain their goals and dreams." "I believe that there is no better way to be a role model than to lend a helping hand, whether financially or simply volunteering to inspire others to follow. How does one follow without the leaders leaving their footprints?"



Lee's Merced Community Food Market

txhawb profile

Lee's Merced Community Food Market first opened its doors for business in April of 1994 and after 17 years of outstanding customer service to the Hmong community of Merced, it has become an important cornerstone of the Hmong business community in Merced. Originally started by Mr. Lee Lee and his wife Shoua Lo Lee, today Khoua Yang and Susan Lee manage the store. They continued to build a thriving and successful market and is quick to point out that, "it takes the whole family to run the market and everyone helps out when they can."

Khoua considers the keys to a successful business are providing excellent customer service, making your products and services as convenient as possible and staying connected to your customers. "Customer needs always change and you have to always adjust and provide what they need." He adds, that those who come into the market are more than customers, because, "over the years you build unique relationships with each customer and you become good friends." Khoua credits these relationships with helping him overcome obstacles in running the business, since "we have had to make many sacrifices for our store - such as free time for ourselves, our family and our friends and having to work through holidays. We work long hours." However, when you can make the connection and "the customer becomes our friends and we can help them," it makes the sacrifices meaningful and worthwhile.

Throughout the years, Lee's Community Food Market has faced some major obstacles, "but it has always been our strength to pull together as a family," Susan recalls, as the inspiring force that has allowed them to overcome their hardships.

Committed to community service, Lee's Community Food Market believes, "It is very important to give back to the community from where everything was given to you." As a result of this community-centered focus, the business donates merchandise and monetary contributions to Merced Lao Family, Miss Hmong Pageant contestants, Hmong sports teams, many local non-profit organizations and various public events.

Khoua hopes to share with the Hmong community that, " we must continue to truthfully communicate with one another, learn to work together, help and support each other in order to build a prosperous future for the next generation of our young Hmong-Americans. We must learn to put aside our differences and learn to come together for the most important thing we Hmong have in common - our children and their future."

writer
Anthony Cody

photography
Tudor Stanley

Lee's Merced Community Food Market

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Merced, CA 95340

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txhawb profile

Pao Mike Vang

"Having a goal and hard work are the main components of success," says Mike Vang, Associate Broker at Golden Key Realty and Mortgage. "When I arrived in Fresno in the Late 80's from the refugee camp of Banvinai, Thailand, I always wanted to play an important role in my community. My real dream has always to help members of my Hmong community realize, pursue and achieve their own dreams of business ownership because I believed that was the best way to improve our community."

writer
Burlee Vang

photography
Kao Lee

Pao Mike Vang
Golden Key Realty
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Mike has been in the real estate and mortgage industry for over 10 years now. In 2002, he joined R.E. Source as a Mortgage consultant. "I'm always looking for business opportunities," he says, recalling how he made the move to Elite Real Estate Associates which, at its peak, not only had top recruit agents but received an award for topping out in real estate and mortgage sales in the year 2004. Currently Mike is an Associate Broker at Golden Key Realty and Mortgage where he supervises and trains new agents to meet the real estate code of conduct. "My goal has always been to become self-employed and to be a resource and serve our Hmong community. That's my priority as both a businessman and Hmong person. Now I provide the best service to my clients with the highest level of integrity. I work hard to build relationships with each and every person I am privileged to service. Everyone knows that a good relationship takes work. I take pride in working hard to ensure that all my transactions are met professionally, promptly, and most of all, personally. From beginning to the end, I'm with my client every step of the way."

In addition to his realty and mortgage profession, Mike is the public relations director for HmongTV network where he serves as news anchor and performs public outreach. Our HmongTV station, he says, is a pioneering new media and is a universal outlet for Hmong expression, which he believes can bridge the gap between generational differences and language barriers. "As a professional, I would like to lead by giving back to the community this way. It is important that successful Hmong business owners and leaders contribute back with loyalty and honesty."

Mike Vang is one of Txhawb's biggest contributors. He helped enormously in the shaping of Txhawb since its debut issue through his efforts in sales, story ideas, and leveraging relations to make impossible things happen and describes it now as a tool that has changed the Hmong business environment by allowing Hmong professionals to connect with one another and with the community at large in an effort to better serve it. "I believe Txhawb will further educate us about who we are, and how we can be involved together to build a different and better society."



A Parent's Gift

Mouage and Herdou Mouanoutoua Story

Written by Nu Vang

What is the greatest gift a parent can bestow on a child?

This is a question that could rally many different responses depending on whom you ask. In American society, the answers may vary from 'knowledge on how to make ethically sound decisions' to 'support' or 'love.' Some may even venture to say 'money.' To the Hmong, a parent's role has multiple meanings and goes beyond just his or her own children. As a Hmong parent, you nurture your young children, then as an elder you watch over your grandchildren and when you are much older, your efforts are rewarded and you spend your golden years in the care of your children. Your parents will always be your mother and father. And no matter how far you progress in life, you still revere your parents and elders for their wisdom and guidance. Though this cycle of family life is common to many groups of people, the Hmong still hold strongly to it. Being part of a Hmong family is a lifelong commitment and if properly practiced, shapes a rich life full of meaning and purpose.



Although this model exists, not everyone practices it and as generations of Hmong become ever more assimilated into different societies, this model is not seen as much. But there are still individuals like Mouage and Herdou Mounanoutoua who are living examples of the great things that can be achieved when Hmong values of family are practiced. Their greatest gifts to their children are evident in their own children's successes in life. Besides the overwhelming feat of inspiring all 10 of their children to finish advanced college degrees, the elderly Mounanoutouas are still committing their golden years to the care of their 17 grandchildren. Txhawb was given the opportunity to interview these two remarkable individuals.

Background noise filled the house as Mouage and Herdou Mouanoutoua sat down to talk with us. There was the laughter of children and the ring of the doorbell as family members returned from work. As common on a daily basis, their house is full of many voices, young or old.

The couple's journey began in the deep mountains of Laos, in a small Hmong village. Mouage is from a family with 7 sons, and his father Nou Toua Moua had a vision for his sons to be educated to further help themselves and the family. Mouage was sent to school and fulfilled his father's vision. With this, he was able to travel to different places and spent much time in Vientiane. At the same time, Herdou worked in the rice fields, among the sounds of wild birds and the lush brushes of jungle plants. She too was able to complete some schooling, which in those days was a rare opportunity since not many girls were allowed such time away to spend on their studies.

After the Vietnam War ended, their world turned upside down. Word traveled around that the Communist soldiers were hunting down the Hmong people and killing them. Mouage moved his family from the mountains to settle down in Vientiane, Laos. The wisdom of Mouage's father would serve him well, as Mouage's education secured him a job as Clerk for the Superior Court in the Laotian government. As the Court Clerk, he checked the verdicts of the judgments made in the courts. The Mouanoutouas were among some of the few Hmong who were educated during that time.

In 1976, Mouage and Herdou took their children and left Vientiane. They would board an airplane and travel across the vast Pacific Ocean to settle down in California, a foreign place compared to their former homeland. "The day where we first step onto American soil, which was in San Francisco, was on the 15th of November, 1976," Mouage said. They then traveled to Los Angles and then to Orange County where their first home would be.

English was the toughest obstacle for the family. Fortunately, their nephew, Dr. Naochou Mouanoutoua, who received a Bachelor's Degree from the Philippines while still in Laos, was there to assist in the language barrier. On top of trying to understand their surroundings, Mouage and Herdou also had to be the guiding light for their children who looked up to them. Mouage and Herdou may have been parents but they believed in befriending their children and offered that at a young age.

"Children are very impressionable when they are young; you have to be their friends early on so they will listen to you when they are older. Many people may see children as just children, little people who need to be guided, but they are always watching and learning what is around them," Mouage stated.



"**Education** was the only hope for their kids to have a **better and brighter future.**"

They listened to their children and guided them as best they could. "As a result, the friendship between our children and us has remained to this day," Mouage said. "This friendship has been what has kept our children close to home." With this sort of relationship based on trust and love, the couple built a firm foundation with their kids. As a result, their children listened to their wisdom and followed their advice. One of the things the Mouage and Herdou were strong advocates for was getting a better education. Although they did not know how to speak English, the couple knew from their past experience that education was the only hope for their kids to have a better and brighter future.

As a young child, Mouage attended his classes and sought after knowledge. He was thirsty for more, and yet there was a limit to how far he could go. Entering into a college education was an option that he did not have. So, when he came to America, Mouage saw that his children had a shot at getting an education and he wanted them to grab it. "When I was going to school, I always wanted to learn more, but there just wasn't enough opportunity," Mouage said. "So, when we arrived in a prosperous country like America, the opportunity presented itself. You must take the time to push and improve yourself, while instilling this work ethic in your children as well." He wished that his search for more knowledge would transform and inspire all his children to pursue higher education.

His wish would be granted, as Mouage and Herdou's energy and efforts have proven successful. All their children hold either doctorates or advanced college degrees. They now have a Jurist Doctorate, a Master in Business Administration, a Physical Therapist, a Master of Social Work, an occupational therapist, accountants, teachers, a Master in Electrical Engineering, a Civil Engineer, a Computer Scientist, an Industrial Engineer, and many others still to celebrate. Their children are active members of the Hmong and Fresno community.

Although the couple may not have been educated in the American educational system, they were experts in learning. As living examples, Mouage and Herdou also taught their children to live within a simple financial budget and the value of using money wisely.

"For this month if you were to provide for the daughters, then you would take them out and buy for them only," Mouage said. "The next month would be for the sons, and you would take them out. As a result of this, my children never complained of money or of wanting things. More importantly, we spent the time with them to teach them the difference between wants and needs. If you don't take the time to address their needs and just give them money, they will misuse the money." We provided for them as best we can.

The couple lived their lives as what they hoped their children would strive to be. With this structure, Mouage provided for his children, but the most important lesson was that they learned to behave and be responsible about their finances.

As they lived their new life in America, the couple did not forget who they were, and where they came from. Mouage and Herdou taught their children the rich history and traditions of their

(Continues to page 116)

THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

HMONG HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

**"Peb ntau pab ntau pawg koom ua ib txoos,
peb thiaj sawv tau ntseg los ua ib koos.
Deb npaum twg los yuav mus kom txog,
hnyav npaum cas los yuav tsis pub qaug zog."**

– Hmong Proverb








CREATING AND ENSURING SYSTEMS CHANGE

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family and the Hmong culture. Mouage and Herdou believed that culture was a parent's responsibility to pass on to their children. It is like the family heirloom that is passed down from generation to generation. Mouage said that there are three things that help one define and retain the Hmong culture. "The important thing that will help your kids to not lose their Hmong identity is firstly the name," Mouage said. "What will you do to keep and not lose that name? Secondly, it is your spoken and written language. Thirdly, it is our Hmong practices and customs." Mouage and Herdou have passed on their traditions through the very food they eat, the clothes they adorn their children with, and even the life teachings they instilled. But even with their teachings, nothing more is as important as their family.

Mouage and Herdou prepared their children for the outside world with many life lessons, but love would be their greatest gift they could offer. Herdou said she was happy to love. "The greatest thing I would give to my children would be my love," Herdou said. "I may not have money, but with my love I am more than happy to give it."

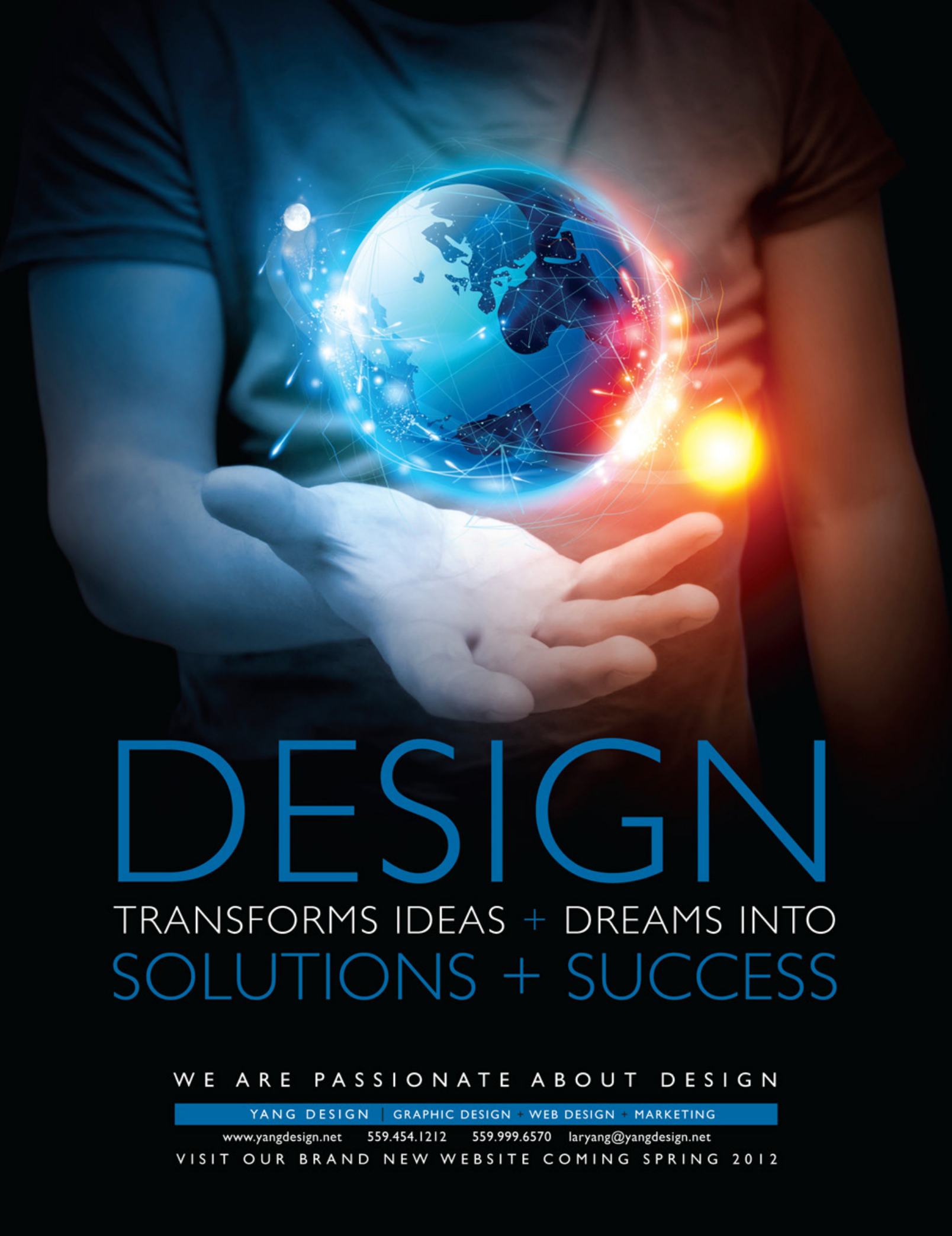
Now as grandparents, Mouage and Herdou continue to spend their days watching and teaching their grandkids. Sharing what they taught their children and making sure the grandkids grow up with the same love and support.

With so many grandkids running around, the couple has a very busy schedule, and it was quite a surprise when Mouage and Herdou heard that they were the recipients of the First 5 Fresno County's Hands-on-Hero Award. They were awarded this honor for their tireless continual work on improving the lives of their children and grandchildren. Although there are many grandkids, you best bet that Mouage and Herdou are keeping up with them with smiles on their faces.

> "But **love** would be their **greatest gift** they could offer"

But at the end of the day, when the couple looks back at their lifelong journey, there are several things that they feel most blessed about. Mouage spoke for them both, saying he was very happy that he and Herdou have been married together for such a long time, living the life that they desired. Looking around and seeing the many accomplishments of his children, Mouage said he felt proud in having raised such fine kids and that his children were able to pass the values he had taught them to their children. He was also pleased that there was peace and harmony between the children and in-laws that have become their family. With this strong family bond and the support that surround the two, Mouage and Herdou are more than happy to say that they enjoy their lives very much.

So then, what is the best gift a parent can give their children? Is it a road map to success, a complete blueprint or a list of instructions on how to properly raise kids and inspire them to follow their own dreams? The lessons we learn we don't really know how to articulate into words, but what we do know is that we end up passing to the next generation the same things we learn from our parents and elders. Mouage and Herdou Mouanoutoua's greatest gift to their children are themselves. Standing as parents that are involved, nurturing, and giving. Leading by example. Defining what is most precious and important in life. That in the end, family is really the only thing that matters.


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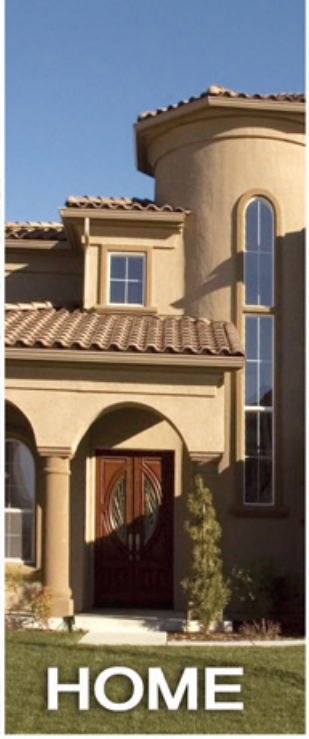
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