



New Chinese conspicuous consumption by the lake?



Not quite, but this new pavilion is going up by the lake. Which lake? Whose pavilion? Details are on page 2.



Groundbreaking ceremony for St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden at Dragon Festival

By Greg Hugh



Groundbreaking of the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows and Flowing Waters

While the seeds for a Chinese garden were planted back in the year 2000 by the U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association -MN Chapter, resulting in the formation of The Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society (MCFGS), much cultivating has taken place over the years. The actual groundbreaking ceremony took place during the annual Dragon Festival at Saint Paul's Lake Phalen Park in July. For a more complete chronology of the garden's evolution, visit www.mnchinagarden.org.

Foreign Countries, and the Changsha Yin-yu Wetland Park (Phalen Park's sister park) in China. Changsha has been the sister-city to the City of St. Paul since 1988.

As part of the gift exchange between the sister cities a replica of Changsha's Aiwun Pavilion has been donated by Changsha. Saint Paul sent five statues of Panshan characters created by St. Paul's famous son, Charles Schulz. In addition to the pavilion, other elements included are a West Entrance Arch, an East Entrance Moongate Donor Wall, a Hmong Heritage Wall representing the historical connection between the Hmong in Minnesota and the Hmong in the Changsha area. Changsha also sent a team of 13 artisans, part of the construction team, to put all these elements together.



St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter speaks at the groundbreaking of the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden



Groundbreaking of the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden

During the groundbreaking ceremony, the official name of the Garden, The St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows and Flowing Waters, was announced. Built on a 1.2-acre site at Phalen Park, this sister-city collaboration was initiated by MCFGS with the City of St. Paul and its Parks & Rec Department, St. Paul's District 5 Planning Council, the City of Changsha, Hunan Province, the Changsha People's Association for Friendship with



Dr. Chen Qiong Lin & the Changsha Artisans

Minnesota State Senator Foung Many spoke at the ceremony, which was attended by current and former St. Paul Mayors Melvin Carter and George Laitner respectively, and other government officials. Officials unable to attend sent congratulatory letters that were read during the program. It was also an honor to have Master Lei Yin travel from Changsha to attend -- he carved the "Meditation" sculpture that has been erected at Phalen Park since 2006. He also carved the Martin Luther King, Jr. Stone of Hope Memorial in Washington, D.C.



Changsha sculptor (Master Lei Yin) stands with his wife Rocky next to his sculpture "Meditation" in Phalen Park



Construction on the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows and Flowing Waters at Phalen Park

The groundbreaking ceremony concluded with a celebration of Chinese and Hmong cultures that included a Hmong Qeej solo by Neuwang Faj, a performance by CAAM-CDT dancers, a Chinese instrumental performance by Zhang Ying and a Qeej and dance performance by Hmong community members.

The artisans from Changsha have been busy assembling the structures that were built in Changsha, disassembled and now being put together by them. To show appreciation for their efforts, a number of organizations hosted luncheons for them. The first group to do so was the Chinese American Association of Minnesota (CAAM). According to Corinne Mei Ledford, CAAM president, a number of Chinese restaurants provided the food. Bingxin Yun, president of the Alliance of Minnesota Chinese Organizations, provided a "home-cooked" meal



Changsha artisans at a luncheon hosted by CAAM

provided by Grand Szechuan Restaurant in Bloomington, Minnesota. The Hunan Field Association also hosted a luncheon.

Recently on a steamy Friday in August, the Chinese artisans took a break from climbing 25 feet high to supervise the assembly of timbers on a replica of Changsha's Aiwun Pavilion. According to Romi Stolewiak, MCFGS board member, they came down for a lunch hosted by the project's Hmong Cultural Plaza Advisory Group. Group Chair Ying Chayangthou addressed the crowd of artisans, City construction project partners, China Garden Society board members, and park visitors, welcoming the artisans and thanking them for their work. Translated expertly into Mandarin by a

young lady from Hmong TV, Chayangthou said, "We are sorry. We would have liked to host this in a home and offer you a cow and some chickens." The leader of the artisans spontaneously responded in Mandarin, "But we ARE in your home. This park is your home!"

How is the all-Chinese group who speaks little English managing through a translator to direct city construction workers in collaborative work? The RAK Construction Supervisor, Jason Krzyan, said, "Actually, it is working out better than we thought!"

Soyan Marqho, St. Paul Parks & Rec Project Manager, observed, "This is a very sincere event. It is really heartwarming to see the Chinese artisans, the Hmong community, our construction workers, Garden Society board members and neighbors enjoying each other and sharing food together."



Artisans meet their goal of getting roof completed before they return to China.

Chayangthou's wife, Yang.

It is only fitting that the MCFGS held one last official dinner just days before the artisans returned to China. Besides providing a sumptuous get lucky meal, board members Linda Mealy-Lohman, Romi Stolewiak, Weiming Lu and Mary Waples bestowed personal thanks and gifts as a sign of their appreciation for the great work they did. This in itself may warrant a completely separate follow up article but in the meantime, you can continue to check the garden's progress at www.MNChinaGarden.org.



A final get together dinner with the artisans from Changsha



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