



PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT April 2023

Phase II plans are progressing nicely. Parks & Rec of St. Paul City initiated a community engagement process for the design of the 7 features of Phase II in late 2021. Design of the Hmong Plaza has moved through a community engagement process to yield a lovely space for many kinds of performances and events. The space is cleverly softened and shaded by plant material and undulating hills that will make it a harmonious part of the classical China garden art form. The construction documents are out for bid for the Plaza. See planning photos [HERE](#). More information included in President's Letter on the next page.

PLANTING THE XIANG JIANG PAVILION GARDEN

There will be a planting event this Spring – late May/early June at the pavilion garden. This year we are focusing on grasses and azaleas. Volunteers will be needed. If you are interested in participating in planting the garden go mnchinagarden.org and click on the volunteer link.

SUMMER NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE

Submissions for the Summer 2023 Newsletter are due by 6/15/2023. Please email any articles, stories, or event information to Tiffany Tieche at: tifmcfgs@gmail.com.

WHAT'S INSIDE

PAGE 1

Project Progress Report
Planting at Xiang Jiang Pavilion
Summer Newsletter Deadline

PAGE 2

President's Letter

PAGE 3-5

Part Two of Three Part Series
My Story: Gaoly Yang

PAGE 6

Cultural Insights: Board Retreat

PAGE 7

Donor Spotlight: Shen Pei

PAGE 8-9

Poetry Corner

PAGE 10

Upcoming Events



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Bill Zajicek

CONSTRUCTION ON PHASE II OF "LIU MING YUAN" BEGINS THIS SPRING.

Previous Legacy and Bonding bills have provided the funding for design of the 7 Phase II features and for initial construction of the Hmong Plaza. The funding on hand is insufficient to complete the Plaza, so we are learning how to lobby. There are two bills in front of our legislature right now seeking \$3.6 Million for the design, project management, and construction of 7 new features of Phase II ~\$2.4M in Bonding and \$1.2M in Legacy bills: Senate [SF2874-0](#) and [SF2875-0](#) and House [HF2977](#) and [HF2978](#)

Every voice will count! Please write an email and call your MN State Senator and House Representative. Click link to [FIND MY LEGISLATORS](#)

Click [HERE](#) to see the 7 new features included in Phase II.



Present at the Senate Legacy Hearing March 23, 2023: Left to Right: Bill Zajicek (Testified for Caroline Van) , President; Jeff Vang, Honorary Advisor Testified) ; Donglin Liang, Board Member; Donglin's Son; Romi Slowiak, Board Member; Gaoly Yang, Board Member (Testified).

It is very optimistic that the MN taxpayers will finance the whole of Phase II and also optimistic that the amount listed above will be sufficient to fund all the features. Once construction estimates are available for the various features, the MCFGS will be organizing a capital campaign to fund the remaining features. This will be a multi-year project. But check out the link to the features! This will be an amazing addition to Minnesota's only sister city China garden. More info click [HERE](#).

Your support is invaluable,

Bill Zajicek, President

MY STORY (Part II of III)

By Gaoly Yang

Gaoly Yang joined our Board in 2022. She grew up during the war in Laos. Despite frequent displacements, she was enriched by diverse cultures, language and religions encountered along the way. She led and co-founded a women's organization after 2 years of being resettled in Minnesota to address issues facing Hmong refugee families such as domestic violence, truancies, mental health and other health concerns; starting her lifelong career in human services. She learned the importance of community engagement and support for a successful transformation and acceptance of new elements in the environment, confirming that good outcomes can be born out of conflict.

Part II: In Laos, a Grandfather Funds First Schools in Hmong Villages. Mother Primary Breadwinner of Family as 2nd Wife

My grandfather, Xia Fong Ly, was from the 2nd wife (Thao clan). He was 15 when his father passed away. He was taught Chinese by his father and self-taught the Lao language and alphabet. He was also very proficient in using the abacus (Chinese bead calculator). He was both a farmer and a tradesman who often traveled to Vietnam so he also spoke Vietnamese. He had 4 wives (from the Yang, Lo, Kue and Vang clans) and 12 children. He began trading with Chinese, Lao and Vietnamese people by selling his crop surplus and then traveled to Vietnam to trade buffalo skins, antlers, tiger and monkey bones and then bought salt, cloth, thread, needles etc. to sell back at his village. He was a quick learner so when the French authorities recruited villagers to build a new road

near his village, he went to work for them and quickly picked up the French language. He was assigned supervisor of the coolies and later was given authority to finish Road 7 construction connecting Muang Sen village, Laos to Vietnam.

With his thriving business and contract works, he was able to hire a teacher to come and stay in the village to teach his sons. He recognized that education would be the key out of poverty and wanted his sons to have a life as good as the French and Vietnamese that he saw in the city during his business trips.

In 1924, my grandfather gathered the villagers and built the first school (a covered shelter) for Hmong children in De Chua village, Laos and it was attended by 8 children. A second school was built in 1927 in Phakhe village and the 3rd one was opened in Nong Het village. My grandfather used his own money to pay for the teachers because there was no government

Continued on Page 4



FOUNG LY FAMILY PICTURE

Back row: Nao Chao Ly, Tong Xeng Yang, Pa Ge Lyfoung, Nao Chao first wife (Thao clan), Va Yang (Foung Ly first wife), Choua Kue (Foung Ly 3rd wife) holding Lysao Lyfoung, and Zoua Lyfoung.

Front row: Touby Lyfoung, TouGeu Lyfoung, TouLia Lyfoung, Foung Ly, Maonao Lyfoung, Maosong Lyfoung.

(My Story by Gaoly Yang Part II of III:

Continued from Page 3)

interest nor funding. It was not until 1940 that under the leadership of his son, Touby Lyfoung, the French finally agreed to send a licensed Lao teacher to one of the Hmong schools.

My mother, Maosong, was from the 2nd wife of the Lo clan and she was the middle daughter. As a girl, she was not given the opportunity to attend schooling like her brothers. In the evening, she often rushed to finish her house chores so she could sit nearby the fire and listen to her brothers recite their lessons of the day to their father. Not knowing any French language, she could still recite some of these words even in her 80s when she passed away. She often asked me what they meant

after she recited these words “deux fois deux font quatre, deux fois sept font quatorze, allez vite vite, coupez, combien, beaucoup, c’est bien” and so on.

As the middle daughter of a prominent figure and large family, she was charged with managing all the household chores. This included supervising the help who lived in her father’s house either as orphans, servants, relatives or long-term guests etc. to make sure grains, hays, wild greens were collected to feed the animals, enough rice grains were threshed, water collected from the well, and meals were cooked. My mother said they normally had about 25-30 people to feed each day. She had expressed her desire to join her brothers in studying but her father told her “I need and trust you to run everything in my house now.

Continued on Page 5

*(My Story by Gaoly Yang Part II of III:
Continued from Page 4)*

Do not worry about an education because your brothers will be there for you when you need help". Which was a promise that her brother Touby kept throughout his lifetime.

My mother was then married to her first husband, Chong Gee Vang, when she was 17 years old. She had 2 children when he passed away. He was a traveling tradesman and needed a very strong horse to carry heavy loads and endure long distance travel. Upon returning from one of his trips, he was fatally stomped by the horse while trying to tie it down.

According to our custom, a younger relative has to step in and marry the widow and help raise the children and manage the family and assets of the deceased. My father, Vang Gage, was already married and had 2 children of his own but his elders appointed him and ordered him to step in. My mother never thought she would become someone's second wife because she had seen enough problems in her dad's life with multiple wives. She protested and begged to be returned to her family but the elders only gave her one choice "stay and marry your brother-in-law and get to keep your children and all your belongings or leave with nothing but your clothes". My mother chose to stay because she did not want her children to be treated like orphans or servants.

With her strong belief that education is key to a better life, she worked hard to put all her children in school. Although married to my father, my

mother was the primary breadwinner for her family. My father primary obligation was to his first wife and her children.

(Part III will conclude in the Summer 2023 Newsletter.)



GAOLY FAMILY PICTURE

Back: Chong Neng Vang (Charles Vannier), Maoying Vang Lyfoung

Middle: Gaoyou Vang Ly

Front: Gaosong Vang, Gaoly Vang Yang, Maosong Lyfoung Vang,

Gaoyoua Vang Lyfoung, Gaosay Vang Vu

Foung Ly, Maonao Lyfoung, Maosong Lyfoung.

CULTURAL INSIGHTS: BOARD RETREAT February 4, 2023

By Romi Slowiak



We spent a full day at the historic and comfortable Minnesota Humanities Center discussing our future. 16 board and committee members and Alice Messer from Parks & Rec joined leaders Renae Oswald-Anderson and Brianne Carmichael in through discussions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threads, producing a series of visions for the future. A full report two weeks later specified goals and action items which the board is now considering. One of the more interesting discussions was a valuable insight into older wealthy Hmong business owners and implications for how we appear to the public in general. It was explained by a board member that many of these successes have only a high school education. They are humble and are much more likely to be interested in you, your project, your needs, if you do not act superior. Why should they help if you do not appear to need it? This led to a discussion of our member bio's on the website. How perhaps we should be telling stories here about our passion, motivation for and interest in the garden, and reference credentials elsewhere.

Practical Vision			What do we want to see in place in 3-5 years, as a result of our actions?				
Community Engagement	Outreach	Garden Experience	Events at the Garden	Organizational Structure	Youth	Funding	Finish Phase I
More people to volunteer	We'll run outreach branch	Cultural Roofing	Interactive Map of Garden	I paid staff	Young Board members needed	Dedicated Fundraising Group	Time Sensitivity
Strengthen relationship w/ community	Community/Organizational partners IE: Youth groups	Promote Cultural acceptance through arts	Dedicated Event Organization	Paid Executive Director	Newer generations to the board	Strong Funding Committee is needed	China Garden Complete
MCFGs on going site in community	Reaching Out for more publicity: TV, Newspaper, MPR, etc.	A symbol for a cultural shrine and a public space for enjoyment	Pollinators: April-November Bees, wasps, butterflies	MCFGs has a paid Ex Director, Marketing Manager, and Volunteer Coordinator	More social media activities & engagement in younger generation	We need money	To Finish the project before it gets bill
MCFGs On Going Place in Community		A touch stone for varied cultures	Horticulturalists come to the garden to learn about plants & how people can grow together	Inclusive Board & Advisory Groups (w/ youth involvement)		Steady reliable source of operating funds	Phase II is completed & Focus is on Arts culture programming
(People) Community Grounded, with purpose/vision		"The Garden" A highly developed spiritual art form		MCFGs is led by Chinese & Hmong partners, an example of leading & cooperative vision	Liu Ming Yuen supplies curricular material that meets state art standards for Elementary education	Robust donor database (technology)	
More friendship activities between groups & cities / or Not		Regular resident artist to create poetry book				Strong Automated fundraising system	
Be an organization everyone wants to be part of		Cultural showcase		Each Board member & Advisor actively engaged in monthly activities (Planning & carrying out)		Financially Independent	
Specific contacts/ outreach to immersion schools		A place for celebration medication renewal		Mutual Respect		Endowment	
Easy access to teaching material		"Elemental" aesthetic/cultural significance & appreciation				I hope we can raise enough money + funding making the garden like the real public art.	
National International Resilience		Creation, maintenance & appreciation Toward significant elements of Garden					

DONOR PROFILE - SHEN PEI

By Romi Slowiak

Choreography is just one of Master Shen Pei's talents. We were honored to help produce her world premiere of Encounter at Liu Ming Yuan last summer. But we now know she is also an accomplished painter. She had her first gallery showing at ArT@Payne, 967 Payne Avenue (not far from our Chinese garden) this winter. The connection to the gallery owner was made through society board members. She sold many paintings and was so thrilled with the response she chose to donate one of her works to our Garden Society. Look for it at our next silent auction!



Master Shen Pei donating a painting honoring her father's role as a bridge building train engineer to our board members, President Bill Zajicek, and Outreach and Poetic Inspiration Committee Chair, Romi Slowiak. Master Pei holds up the original vision for the garden, explaining its beauty to the audience at ArT@ Payne.

POETRY CORNER | APRIL IS POETRY MONTH!

By Romi Slowiak. Chair - Poetic Inspiration Committee

Our own poetry contest in 4 languages for all ages is now open. Awards will be at the Mid-Autumn Festival on Sept 23, 2023. Please spread the word!



Three Friends and a Hundred Birds
by Bian Wenjin, Ming dynasty. Public Domain.
Pine: Long Life, Resilience
Plum: Grace, Resilience
Bamboo: Integrity, Resilience

Awards at Liu Ming Yuan
Garden of Whispering Willows & Flowing Waters
Phalen Park, St. Paul, Minnesota

September 23 Mid-Autumn Festival
A 35th Anniversary of sister-cities
St. Paul, Minnesota & Changsha, China

April is Poetry Month
**POETRY
CONTEST!**

Theme: Friendship

- start writing now!
- due: Sept. 2023
- prizes for all ages
- no entry fee
- one entry only
- blind judging
- details to come!
- 4 languages:
Dakota, Chinese,
Hmong, English



Twin Cities Harvest Moon · China Garden Abiding Love
月圆双子城 情满柳明园
CELEBRATING THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

More information & entries, contest curator Romi Slowiak: romislowiak@gmail.com

Continued on Page 9

POETRY CORNER | A NOVEL REVIEW

By Romi Slowiak. Chair - Poetic Inspiration Committee

The Poetry, Drama and History of China in Detective Novels. Oh, to whom can I speak of this ever enchanting landscape?...

For those of you new to poetry and interested in Chinese history, I recommend the Inspector Chen detective series: twelve novels, written from 2000 to 2021 and set in Shanghai of the 1990's when the Cultural Revolution and its iron rice bowl jobs were being replaced with entrepreneurs, corrupt government officials, and Chinese gangs known as Triads. The acclaimed author, Qiu Xiaolong, was born in Shanghai, and now lives with his family in St. Louis, MO where he earned a Master and PhD. in comparative literature.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qiu_Xiaolong)

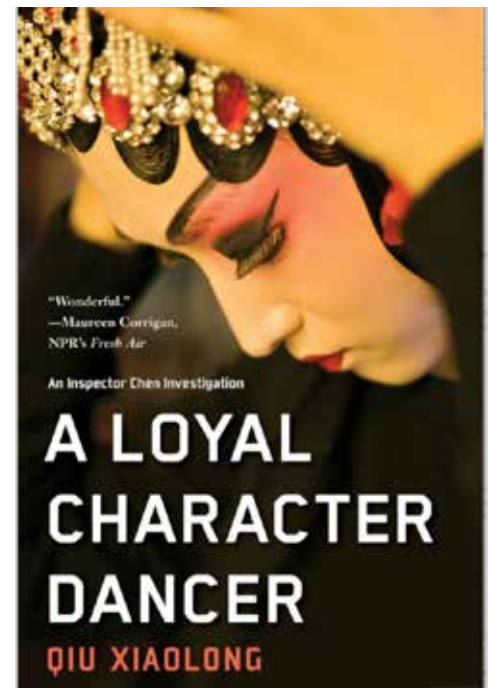
In this novel, a US Marshall's Service Inspector Rohn has been sent to help reunite a wife in China with her husband being held captive in America to serve as a witness against Triad members who have been smuggling Chinese to the US. Rohn has been told that Inspector Chen is an accomplished, knowledgeable poet. She decides to test him:

"Last night looking out at the Bund, I thought of a classical Chinese poem. I studied an English version several years ago. About a poet's regret at being unable to share a transcendent scene with his friend. I cannot remember the exact lines. By any chance do you know the poem?"

"Um –" He eyed her in surprise. "I think it is a poem by Liu Yong, a Song dynasty poet. The second stanza reads like this:"

Where shall I find myself
Tonight, waking from a hangover –
The riverbank lined with weeping willows,
The moon sinking, the dawn rising on a breeze.
Year after year, I will be far,
Far away from you.
All the beautiful scenes are unfolding,
But to no avail:
Oh, to whom can I speak
of this ever enchanting landscape?

This would have made an excellent entry into our contest about Friendship.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Phalen Park Clean Up on Sunday, April 23rd. We are sponsors! Show up at the Phalen Picnic Pavilion. Lasts from 9am - 11:30am

SATURDAY MAY 6: May Forum – Heritage, Engagement and Innovation for API Month, at MIA, 10am to 12:pm (<https://mayforum.org>)

SATURDAY JUNE 3: WaterFest & Art in the Hollow. Activities up and down the watershed from Phalen to Swede Hollow.

LIU MING YUAN PLANTING EVENT: Late May or early June we will have a Xiang Jiang Pavilion Garden Planting Event; date to be determined. Volunteer by going to mnchinagarden.org and clicking on the Volunteer Link. The focus is on grasses and azaleas and will represent a substantial expansion of the garden.

THE MCFGs WILL HAVE THEIR ANNUAL ELECTION IN JUNE. Anyone interested in being on the board or being an advisor should notify us by emailing mcfgs@mnchinagarden.org. We are always looking for volunteers to participate in our various activities.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 23: Mid-Autumn Festival and 35th Anniversary of Sister-City Relationship

The China Garden presently can only be reserved on a limited basis but is open to the public so if want to use the site you maybe sharing it with others.

VOLUNTEER FOR MCFGs PROJECTS OR EVENTS!

If you would like more information on how to volunteer for future projects or events, please visit our website at: mnchinagarden.org or contact William Zajicek at: mcfgs@mnchinagarden.org.