

NORTHERN VIEW

Rise of Suni Lee is story of America

When I arrived in the Twin Cities for a new job in September 1987, I found an apartment on St. Paul's East Side overlooking Swede Hollow, once the crowded, unsanitary home to thousands of Scandinavian immigrants. They knew little English and held few resources

beyond children and dreams, but after a generation or two they had risen to claim places in the offices, professions, society and government of Minnesota.

In 1987, my St. Paul neighbors included immigrant families from the highlands of Laos and refugee camps in Thailand: thousands of Hmong people, including many who had fought alongside U.S. military forces during the Vietnam War. They had started arriving in Minnesota in the mid-1970s, settling mostly together, by extended family and clan, in St. Paul.

By the time I arrived a decade later, they – like the Swedes and other European immigrants before them – had begun to climb out of the hollows. Starting with self-help organizations, aided by public assistance and marked by determination, they began to take their places among us.

Today, they number about 66,000 in Minnesota, the majority living in St. Paul. They have bought homes and started businesses. They have become lawyers, police officers, nurses, teachers, state legislators.

And now an Olympic gold medalist. Gymnast Suni Lee's paternal grandfather fought alongside U.S. troops. Her parents were children when they fled Laos and took refuge in Thailand, then came to the United States. Through the trauma of war and flight they learned resilience.

Sia Lo, a St. Paul attorney and a member of Suni Lee's extended family, told the Star Tribune last week why her Olympic achievements were so meaningful to the Hmong community. "The Hmong here are very proud to be American," he said. "We hope all of America is proud of Suni. What she's achieved showcases what is possible here in the United States."

Suni Lee's story has me recalling Hmong people I met and wrote about during the 20 years I lived and worked among them, including Mai Neng Moua. She was 21 when I talked with her in 1995. Her kidneys had been failing, and she was struggling to persuade her family that traditional Hmong remedies would not save her. The idea of dialysis horrified her mother, who offered boiled roots instead.

With her daughter translating, Yer Moua told me why she was opposed to modern medical treatment. "I don't really know if she's sick. I think the doctors make her sick." She said surgery would make her a different person, something less than daughter. Mai teared up as she translated. "This is new to me," she said.

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Reinbold has first court hearing

By Ann Bailey
Grand Forks Herald

THIEF RIVER FALLS – Minnesota Ninth Judicial District Court Judge Tamara Yon ordered at Eric Reinbold's first court hearing on Friday that Reinbold be held in Pen-

nington County Jail on a non-financial condition of no contact with the family of the victim he is charged with murdering.

No bail was set. Reinbold, of Oklee, Minn., faces two charges of murder in the second

degree in the death of his wife, Lissette. She was found dead on July 9 at the farm near Oklee where Eric Reinbold disappeared after his wife's death, and federal and state authorities searched for him for nearly a month in Penning-

ton and Red Lake counties. Reinbold also was being sought for violating the terms of his release from federal prison, and there was a \$10,000 reward for his capture.

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Reinbold

RRVM'S FUNDRAISING EFFORTS HIT \$600,000



Pamela Knudson / Grand Forks Herald

Leaders of the Red River Valley Motorcyclists pose for a photo at the Veterans Memorial Park, one of the many projects the organization supports with fundraising, primarily through an annual raffle and a bike and car show. Pictured, from left, are: Tim Gowan, Larry Gaddie, Don Roberts and Mike Hagen.

Club supports organizations that enhance quality of life in city, region

By Pamela Knudson
Grand Forks Herald

The Red River Valley Motorcyclists organization has raised about \$600,000 for area nonprofit organizations and projects since it attained nonprofit, federal tax-exempt status and started raising funds in earnest in 2001.

The club has made an impact on many fronts and improved the quality of life in the Valley, because of its unwavering commitment

to supporting worthwhile causes – especially dedicated to veterans, peace officers, first-responders and children – in the region.

"It makes us feel good, real good, to give organizations \$20,000 or \$30,000," said Larry Gaddie, RRVM president, who's been an active member for 20 years.

The RRVM, founded in the early 1990s, has stayed true to its razor-sharp focus on raising funds for worthwhile projects, Gaddie said.

"It's all about fundraising for us," said Mike Hagen, RRVM board member. "And it's all done with heart."

The efforts of the club have benefitted organizations on both sides of the Red River, he said. "The river has never divided us."

Most of the funds are raised through the annual spring Red River Valley Motorcyclists show and raffle. Proceeds from the club's earliest shows, held at the Gambucci-Purpur arena, were given

to Abate of North Dakota for motorcycle safety education. The show was moved to the Alerus Center about 14 years ago.

For the first time, this past May cars were added to the usual display of motorcycles in the Alerus Center's 120,000-square-foot arena. It was also the first time the event was branded as the "Spirit of America Bike and Car Show," a name change proposed by Lance Solberg.

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Hagerty celebrated at UND event

By Adam Kurtz
Grand Forks Herald

Marilyn Hagerty, the Grand Forks Herald's decades-long voice of the community and columnist, was feted at a dinner on Thursday, Aug. 5, to celebrate her honorary doctorate from UND.

The celebratory dinner was held at the Gorecki Alumni Center and attended by Hagerty, UND administrators and several friends and well-wishers. The honorary degree was announced in March, but because of the coronavirus pandemic, UND did not hold an in-person graduation ceremony following the announcement.

Guests filtered in, enjoyed drinks and chatted before settling down for dinner. After Hagerty was presented with a commemorative UND frame, with which she can display her honorary degree, she warmly thanked people for attending the celebration.



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Marilyn Hagerty is presented with a frame for her honorary degree by UND Alumni Association and Foundation Director DeAnna Carlson Zink and UND president Andrew Armacost during a dinner in Hagerty's honor Thursday at the Gorecki Alumni Center.

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REINBOLD

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Reinbold was granted a “compassionate care” release on March 18, 2021, after arguing that his medical issues and the need to take care of his family warranted a reduction in the sentence.

The Aug. 6 court hearing for Reinbold was held via a Zoom meeting and included Yon; Reinbold; his attorney, Bruce Rivers; and attorneys for the state: Seamus Duffy, Pennington County State’s Attorney, Max LaCoursiere, assistant county attorney and John Gross, assistant attorney general.

Rivers told Reinbold that he would not request bail at the hearing. Reinbold will have both a federal and state “hold” to remain in Pennington County

Jail, Rivers said.

“We’ll defer setting monetary or financial conditions at this time, and in terms of conditions, just order that Mr. Reinbold be held, and we’ll reserve the discussion for financial conditions for a later hearing, but I will impose at this time that Mr. Reinbold have no contact of any sort with the alleged victim’s family,” Yon said.

Reinbold was apprehended at about 12:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 4, at an abandoned farmstead in rural Red Lake County near County Road 1. Federal marshals found him in a wooded area behind a building, and sheriff’s from Red Lake County and Pennington county set up a cordon around the property.

Reinbold previously had several encounters with law enforcement.

In 2016, Reinbold pleaded guilty to a June 2015 incident in

which he repeatedly rammed his pickup into a vehicle occupied by his wife and children. In July 2018, a jury found him guilty, after a three-day trial, of possessing unregistered destructive devices.

Besides the pipe bombs, a 32-page notebook on Reinbold’s desk titled “How one person can make a difference: Instruction booklet at the HCU (homemade commando university),” was found, according to court documents. The book, which had Reinbold’s name on it, had one objective: “to start the second American Revolution and win.”

“Media will label you a serial killer, but real folk will call you a hero,” the notebook said. “Make them disappear one by one.”

Reinbold’s second court hearing will be at 8:30 a.m., Friday, Sept. 3. The hearing, like the Aug. 6 hearing, will be held via Zoom.

HAGA

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Mai was an aspiring writer, a poet, and her college writing teacher said she showed great promise. “You realize after reading her work that a lot is going on with this young woman,” he said.

She survived, learned to straddle the two cultures and became a celebrated writer, founder of a Hmong literary journal. In 2017, she spoke at a high school mentorship day, explaining to a Minnesota Public Radio reporter why Hmong girls need to reach beyond traditional family roles.

“I want them to give themselves the opportunity to go to college, to explore who they really are, and to grow outside of their family, to expand their horizons ... to see the world as a big place.”

Like earlier waves of immigrants, Hmong adults found themselves an unsettled generation, I wrote in 1988.

“Suspended between two cultures, missing much of the old and baffled but changed by the new, they feel rootless, diminished, often forced to rely on their children as go-betweens. Ole and Lena would know the feeling.”

I’ve watched as something similar has happened here in Grand Forks, first

with refugees from Southeastern Europe, then with the Bhutanese and more recently with refugees from Somalia. No Olympic medalists yet, but they have bought homes, started businesses, become lawyers and accountants and medical professionals and teachers – and U.S. citizens, adding the beauty and experience of their backgrounds to the mosaic that is America.

One of our newest citizens, Warren Sai, this week celebrated taking the oath of allegiance with a U.S. flag draped over his shoulders – as they do in the Olympics – and declared, “I’m a French Black man” born to “a beautiful strong spiritual mother from the Caribbean islands” and a father descended from Central African warriors.

You may have enjoyed one of Warren’s special gifts to us, a sweet or savory crepe hot off the grill at the Farmers Market or at another of several local spots where he sets up.

“With passion, hard work and determination, anything is possible to achieve here,” he wrote on Facebook this week.

“I love and miss my mother who is in France ... but I’m also happy to wake up every day and live a blessing with all my people. Much love for this country, and God bless America.”

Chuck Haga had a long career at the Grand Forks Herald and the Minneapolis Star Tribune before retiring in 2013. He can be contacted at crhaga@gmail.com.

HAGERTY

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She said she is happy to be honored in such a manner, and noted that she got her start in journalism, at the Capital Journal in Pierre, S.D., “to make money to pay the bills on the weekends.”

“Thank you for being my friends. ... Just, thank you,” she said.

DeAnna Carlson Zink, CEO of the UND Alumni Association and emcee of the celebration, reciprocated.

“We thank you for being our friends and for all you do for our community, our university and our state,” Carlson Zink said.

UND President Andrew Armacost said he and his wife, Kathy, had read Hagerty’s work before moving to Grand Forks last year, and they anticipated meeting her when they arrived. Hagerty profiled Kathy Armacost, shortly after the presidential couple settled at the campus. Hagerty, Armacost said, exemplified his core values of kindness, respect and dignity to others, and that he was proud Hagerty was the first person to whom he could bestow an honorary degree.

“You epitomize each and every one of (those core values), your sense of hard work (and) your contributions to so many others,” Armacost

said. “What I’ve learned about you since moving to town has been your pioneering work within the city of Grand Forks, in the world of journalism, and you’re a real exemplar to so many people.”

Hagerty, raised in South Dakota, is a graduate of the University of South Dakota. She has long been a supporter of UND’s students and sports teams, regularly attending basketball games and events. Carlson Zink noted Hagerty frequently opened her home to students who were unable to return to their homes for holidays.

She has published three collections of her stories and columns throughout her

decades-long career at the Herald: “Grand Forks: A History of American Dining in 128 Reviews,” “Echoes; a Selection of Stories and Columns by Marilyn Hagerty” and “The Best of The Eatbeat with Marilyn Hagerty.” She has written nearly 2,000 Eatbeat columns since beginning the series in 1976.

In 2017, Hagerty was presented with the the UND Alumni Association and Foundation’s Spirit Award, given to outstanding alumni or friends of the university. At that same ceremony, she received an honorary master’s degree in community engagement, from the late UND Provost Tom DiLorenzo.

RRVM

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This year, most of the \$86,000 raised was donated to three projects: \$20,000 for the Veterans Memorial Park; \$30,000 to the Northern Valley Law Enforcement Memorial; and \$20,000 to the Minnesota/North Dakota Veterans Honor Flight, which flies veterans to Washington, D.C., for an expense-free weekend trip to visit military and other historic landmarks.

Gaddie, a Vietnam veteran, is urging every WWII and Korean War vet to apply for a place on the Honor Flight. Older vets are given top priority.

First to commit

The RRVM was the first to step up and provide funds for some of the most pressing causes in the area, including the Sunshine Hospitality Home, where families or spouses from out of town can stay while their loved one is hospitalized at Altru, and the Veterans Memorial Park, which honors those who have served or are serving in the U.S. military.

“We were on the ground floor with both of (those projects),” said Tim Gowan, RRVM sergeant-at-arms and

gaming chairman.

“And when we start something, we generally like to finish it,” Gowan said, noting that his group devoted two to three years of effort to the Sunshine Hospitality Home and three to four years to the VMP.

Honoring veterans

Over the past several years, the RRVM has donated more than \$100,000 for the development of the Veterans Memorial Park, at 34th Street South and 24th Avenue, which “is really dear to our hearts,” Hagen said.

The RRVM has also donated \$59,000 to the Red River Valley Fire and Rescue team, which serves an area from Mayville to Pembina, N.D.

In 2020, though the pandemic forced the cancellation of the show, but not the raffle, the club still gave \$26,000 to charitable organizations.

It takes numerous volunteers, led by a core group of about a dozen leaders, to put on the annual RRVM bike and car show, Gaddie said.

“There’s a lot of work leading up the show, and it can be hectic at times,” he said, but “we have fun.” He credits Al Vien and Lanny Moore for taking care of the cars at the show, and Rydell’s for the care of the

motorcycles.

The show also features live entertainment and vendors, and closes with a VFW color guard ceremony and announcement of numerous raffle winners.

The annual event enjoys the loyal and continuing backing of an estimated 150 to 200 sponsors throughout the region.

The support of the show’s sponsors “is huge,” Hagen said. “They must believe in what we do. We couldn’t put on the show without them.”

The participation of visitors and vendors is also crucial to the club’s success, Gaddie added.

A regional draw

This past May, about 180 bikes and cars were displayed at the event which draws people from throughout the Dakotas, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

“A lot of it is word-of-mouth,” Gaddie said.

While admission to the show is kept low – \$5 per person and free for veterans and kids – selling raffle tickets, at \$50 each for extraordinary prizes, is a major component of the fund-raising effort.

Last spring, grand prizes included a 2021 North Star Edition XP 1000 Polaris Ranger with a 12-foot Mission aluminum trailer, and a Vietnam War

Commemorative M-16 Rifle. Most of the prizes are purchased locally, said Don Roberts, RRVM board member and Honor Flight organizer.

“That’s our gig,” said Gaddie, who’s usually on hand, with other club members, selling raffle tickets at booths at other shows, such as the local men’s show and camping, home improvement and Prime Steel shows around the region.

The value of next year’s raffle prizes will total about \$80,000, Gaddie said.

The raffle and show are successful because people “know where the money is going,” he said, “and they have a soft spot for veterans, peace officers and kids.”

It may be difficult to find a good cause that hasn’t been supported by the RRVM. Among the beneficiaries are Hospice of the Red River Valley, Salvation Army, Northlands Rescue Mission, the Back-Pack Program, Sanford Children’s Hospital, fire departments in Manvel and Park River, N.D., and Oslo, Minn.; and the Beltrami, Minn., Fire and Rescue team, to name a few.

When an RRVM member presented a \$10,000 check for the Altru Cancer Center’s Filling the Gap fund, the two nurses accepting it cried,

Gaddie said.

When the RRVM was approached by Bob Rost and Andy Schneider, retired and current Grand Forks county sheriffs, respectively, to help support the Northern Valley Law Enforcement Memorial, “we told them hopefully we’ll be able to give you \$10,000,” Gaddie said. “We gave them \$30,000.”

The RRVM members have set a big goal for next year’s show, set for Mothers Day weekend.

“We’re going to print 5,000 raffle tickets and our goal is to sell out,” Gaddie said. For more information about next spring’s show and raffle, visit www.RRVMND.org.

“We want to make the show bigger and better, so we can give away more money,” Gowan said.

Knudson is a features reporter at the Herald. Call her at (701) 780-1107, (800) 477-6572 ext.1107 or email pknudson@gfherald.com.

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