

Soua X. Her discusses funeral plans for Pa Kao Her (pictured behind him), president of the Democratic Chao Fa Party of Laos, Tuesday afternoon.

A HERO'S RITES IN FRESNO

Pa Kao Her, a freedom fighter, was assassinated while striving for political stability in Laos.

BY DONALD E. COLEMAN
THE FRESNO BEE

Freedom fighter Pa Kao Her visited Fresno on only one occasion, but through the tenacity of some supporters, his funeral will be held here this weekend.

Mr. Her, president of the Democratic Chao Fa Party of Laos, was assassinated in October on the Laos-Thailand border, said Soua X. Her, president of the United Hmong Foundation Inc. of Fresno. The organization, which helps people in Laos, brought Mr. Her's body thousands of miles to prevent desecration.

"They said they would destroy his body," Soua Her said of the Laotian communist government. "We talked to friends and the [U.S.] embassy in Thailand, and they authorized his body to be transferred here."

No arrests have been made in Mr. Her's killing.

He was born Feb. 2, 1933, in Xiengkhouang, Laos, and spent most of his life trying to organize the more than 100 ethnic groups in Laos to fight for freedom and democracy through the Chao Fa.

Chao Fa members live in the upland parts of Laos. Some of them fought on the side of the United States during the Vietnam War. A communist government remains in power in Laos.

Sam Her, also of the United Hmong Foundation, said the Chao Fa freedom fighters and Mr. Her believed it was time for peace. He said the Chao Fa wants freedom and democracy, and members do not want to leave their country because they have shed so much blood to protect their rights and their land from the Vietnamese communists.



DIANA BALDRICA — THE FRESNO BEE

Tha Phothisan enjoys flute music Wednesday during the Lao Cultural Awareness Workshop at Orchid Hall in the Asian Village Shopping Center. Phothisan performed with Lao Elder Hope Dancers of Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries.

Common Woes

Though from 68 different tribes, Laotian refugees living in the Valley suffer from similar afflictions.

BY JIM STEINBERG
THE FRESNO BEE

Thousands of Lao refugees from war in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s live in Fresno County, many feeling left behind as their adopted country moves its attentions from Southeast Asia and communism to the Middle East, Afghanistan and worldwide terror.

That was the background Wednesday to the Lao Cultural Awareness Workshop in Fresno, sponsored by the Federation of Lao American Community Inc.

social ills discussed by about 80 people Wednesday.

Kossadary Phimmasone, chairman of the Lao Nhay Republican Society in Fresno and a one-time Cabinet minister of Laos, said common difficulties afflict Laotian refugees no matter which of the 68 tribes they belonged to in their homeland. One example is incorrect interpretation of their language in hospitals, doctors' offices and the state Department of Motor Vehicles.

Many immigrants suffer culture shock decades after arriving in the Valley.

They found they had to "start from scratch, zero."

Lao: Refugees suffer common woes

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black danced to the sounds of the *khaen*, a musical instrument of bamboo tubes with fingertip holes. The women performed a fishing dance, wearing woven hats and carrying woven baskets.

Houmphanh Jack Boungnasiri, a one-time Special Forces battalion commander, now serves as chairman for the Lao Buddhist Temple in San Jose and on the Lao Lane-Xang Association of California.

He recalled military training in the United States, followed by years of helping U.S. forces against the communists during the Vietnam War, severing supply lines from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

Laos eventually formed a coalition government, but Boungnasiri was taken to a communist "re-education camp," which he calls a euphemism for prison. He got

out in five years and six months, went to a refugee camp in Thailand then to the United States, "sponsored by my dear wife."

Today, Boungnasiri told the workshop, "I am part of our American society."

He compared Lao-Americans to the front and back sides of the workshop program. The front featured photos and printed words. The back was blank.

Boungnasiri said the front is analogous to older immigrants, filled with their memories, language, culture and habits that fade slowly if at all. The blank side calls to mind the young.

"My concern is the new generation born here," he said later. "We need to guide them."

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