

LMC 61-62 10th REUNION, April 4, 2014

RESTAURANT KIM SON, HOUSTON, TEXAS

By Thanh Thuy

As soon as we returned home from our annual reunion, I was again “volunteered” by my elder sister Ai to write a “trip report”, so that the friends who could not attend the gala had some idea of the enjoyable time that we had, and hope that this will convince them to join us for sun and fun next year...

The tenth LMC 61-62 reunion took place in Houston, Texas. Although several venues had been presented, Houston was the place of choice for this year, thanks to the enthusiastic offer from our local friends, Huy Van, Phuong Lan and Anh Dat to host the event. The banquet hall, Kim Son Restaurant was suggested, as this place is well known for its location, huge banquet facilities, and most important of all, excellent menu. Huy Van took the time to search for hotel accommodations close to Kim Son for some of us. After months of planning, communications back and forth between Texas and California, finally everything was in place. From sea to shining sea, from the mountains to the prairies, the beautiful people of LMC started to arrive in Houston, in the Lone Star State. It was another occasion for us to renew this precious friendship that has survived time, and distance. This year the number of attendees reached 105, thanks to the efforts of Hue Sanh, Ai, and Chi Phuong Lan who had extended the invitations to the friends and relatives of the LMC alumni.

Pre-Gala Activities

On the eve of the gala, we were invited to dinner at the beautiful house of Anh Dat and Chi Phuong Lan, and to practice some of the songs for the entertainment program. I was amazed at Anh Hieu’s driving skills on the crisscrossing freeways and expressways of Houston. It was as if he had a GPS implanted in his head. All he had was a hand drawn map, not even a MapQuest map! I would have been so utterly lost there, even with a GPS, particularly during the rush hour.

There were about twenty of us that evening, enjoying the songs, the food and the extra time spent with friends. Personally, I was so happy to see some friends I had not seen in more than 50 years. Although some of us were tired after a long flight and long ride from the airport, we

felt really re-energized that evening, as if it was a prelude to the actual gala. We sang to our heart content, and it didn't matter that we were not prepared, that we sang off key or off tune; we just had fun practicing, under the leadership of Anh Dat. Chi Phuong Lan went out of her way to provide a table full of typical Vietnamese dishes. It was unfortunate that some of our friends got lost on their way and missed all the fun we had that evening. On behalf of the hungry and tired travelers, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Anh Chi Dat for their wonderful hospitality.

The next day, some of us had the opportunity to sample the Vietnamese luncheon buffet at Kim Son restaurant and we spent a couple of hours treating ourselves to the delicious Hue dishes, ignoring the fact that the gala and another banquet would follow in a few hours at the same location. There were a few emotional moments when Kieu Nga walked in, particularly for those of us who had not seen her since last year.

The Gala evening

This year the gala was held on a Friday because some of our LMC alumni and friends were going on a cruise out of Houston or Galveston the next day. We had a very full program and had hoped to start early, but we did not count on the heavy rush hour traffic in Houston. Again, we had to thank Huy Van for suggesting the hotel Hilton near Kim Son Restaurant, which allowed us to get to Kim Son early enough to help Chi Phuong Lan, Bich Sinh and other organizers oversee the set up and make necessary changes. We had to wait for a while before we could start the program, one hour later than scheduled.

Hue Sanh, as the MC of the gala, opened the festivities and was followed by Ai who delivered the welcome address. Bich Sinh presented a beautiful bouquet of flowers to Anh Dat and Chi Phuong Lan, as a token of our appreciation. We still remember their help with the entertainment program at the 5th reunion in 2009 in California. After that, a group of us then marched up to the stage and under the direction of Anh Dat gave a lively rendition of the song "Xuan Hop Mat", which was so appropriate for this reunion. This marked the beginning of the seven-course banquet and the entertainment program.

Ngoc Van delighted us with the first solo song of the evening "Quand Le Soleil Etait La". Mai Hoa followed Ngoc Van with "Cho Em Quen Tuoi Ngoc". Then Nguyet Anh gave us a sweet rendition of the romantic song "Thu Hat Cho Nguoi".

As previously arranged, Bich Sinh stepped up to the microphone to say a few words in memory of Anh Chung. Yes Anh Chung is still very alive in our memory, the MC with an abundant dose of energy at the gala last year, the beloved brother who patiently taught us how to sing “Va Con Tim Da Vui Tro Lai” (And Our Heart is Joyful Again). In his memory, instead of sadness, our heart should feel joy. In his memory, a group of us, led by Anh Hien, stepped up to sing Anh Chung’s song, to dedicate the song to him, and to honor Kieu Nga whom we all love and admire. We were very touched and happy that Kieu Nga had finally decided to come to the reunion to be with us. There was not a dry eye in the audience when the song ended.

The program continued with And Dat and Anh Hai doing a duet, decked in the traditional blue brocade “ao dai and khan dong”. It was followed by our home-grown AVT trio comprised of Anh Dat, Anh Hai, and Anh Tin. We all laughed so hard at the excellent and funny rendition of the old AVT’s songs, accompanied to the sounds of our traditional repercussion instruments. After that, we listened to the melodious voice of Le Trang, Georgette Le Tuyet’s sister, in “Ha Noi Mua Vang Nhung Con Mua” and to the powerful delivery of “Giot nang ben them” by Anh Hien. Anh Bay brought back some nostalgic moments of our life back home, in the delta of South Viet Nam, with the Vong Co “Tinh Nguoi Vien Khach”. Next, Van Phuong entertained us with “Tu Giong Hat Em”.

As a change to the singing, Hue Sanh gave us a brief report on the charitable cause endorsed by our LMC group, notably the Viet Hope program which has been helping some needy students back in Viet Nam. Again she reminded us that a donation of \$30, the equivalence of 3 bowls of “pho” would help one student for the whole year. Our warmest thanks to our CFFO!

A “Name That Tune” game was led by Ngoc Van. Not only did we have to guess the title of the song but we also had to name the composer. We had winners for all songs but one. And no one was surprised that Anh Dat won a couple of them. Georgette Ai followed Ngoc Anh and switched to her Vietnamese poetry game. Each winner received a lottery ticket as a price in a red envelope. Anh Thien was the big winner of the evening, naming and describing the role of all the male characters in the epic poem Kim Van Kieu.

As it was getting a little bit late we had to skip a few songs and items of the program. Unlike past years, the possible venues for next reunion were not presented this time. They will be suggested, presented, and voted on by the group in the near future. Next, we had a cake cutting session with lots of group pictures taken by Anh Hieu, Anh My, and other friends. The evening

went on with the ballroom dancing. At one point, several ladies went out to the dancing floor and did a lively disco number, with Kieu Nga joining us.

Alas, because of the early cruise next day, people started to leave and the gala ended earlier than expected, to the notes of Ce N'est Qu'un Au Revoir.

Once again, it was a very enjoyable and successful Gala Soiree, as the Organization Committee had planned for the LMC 61-62 Alumni. We all thank the members of the committee: Ai, Bich Van, Hue Sanh, Bich Sinh, Huy Van, Phuong Lan, for their efforts, dedication and patience, and their spouses for the support and participation.

Until the next time dear friends, God Bless and stay in Good Health.

Catherine Chau Thanh Thuy, Promotion '61