

這是 Giahoa Ryan 的 50 年夢想成真了!11 月 3 日,早上 11 點多, 我在開往克利夫蘭洛克菲勒公園的路上被堵車了,上午 10:00 點鐘 Giahoa Ryan 從越南海運到美國 2 噸多的雕塑要在越南公園安置,這是一個感人的時刻,五輛大型貨車自然也就讓交通阻塞了……

我們人來到這個世界,通常都為自己活着,而有的人為自己活,也為他人活,Giahoa Ryan 就是這樣一個人。在越南,她出生在一個有經濟有文化的家庭,父親對她的教育影響很深,家里兄弟姊妹 12 人,她是老大,在那個年代的越南,女孩子是不需要接受文化教育的,但父親的引導和教育讓她人生有了意想不到的未來:只要自己有能力,人生可以有無限的可能。

Giahoa Ryan 不到 20 歲在越南就在政府做翻譯,她勤勞聰明智慧,到了美國以後,她把她的兄弟姊妹 10 人都帶到了美國,各家各戶都生活安逸,她自己有二段婚姻,每一段婚姻給她帶一個孩子,子女成家立業,家庭美滿,生活中的甜酸苦辣讓 Giahoa Ryan 活得豐富多彩。

美麗高大的純白色大理石雕像“越南媽媽”要在越南文化花園安裝。為了這個日子,Giahoa Ryan 等了 8 年,而 Giahoa Ryan 50 年夢想今天就要圓夢了,其中的日夜兼程,Giahoa Ryan 他們付出了多少代價,只有她自己知道了。Giahoa Ryan 表示:雕塑“越南媽媽”是所有人的媽媽,她的潔白無瑕冥冥之中給人帶來平靜的感覺。



越南公園里金黃色的楓葉映照着玉白色的“越南媽媽”別有一道風景,雖然那一刻,我們不能感受到 Giahoa Ryan 一樣的心情,但在座的所有人心情一樣興奮澎湃,Kenneth 動情地給了雕塑長吻。安置完畢,Giahoa Ryan 雙手抱着雕塑,把頭親吻着雕塑,她哭了,在場的人眼睛里都有了溫度,Giahoa Ryan 五十年的美國夢想成真了,她是一個有使命的人。

Giahoa Ryan 成長和成功一起發展,她在 1993 年,創立了美越友誼基金會,以幫助從越南來美國定居的人們,並通過該基金會的人道主義工作幫助越南的窮人和殘疾人。

Giahoa Ryan 說:我們的目標是在兩國人民之間建立友誼的橋樑。還有為了幫助吸毒者及其家人,我在洛雷恩縣的藥物濫用和酗酒委員會任職,我在 1995 年年度洛蘭節上監督了越南裔美國人社區的慶祝活動,這是涉及協調社區為期一周的活動,包括遊行、演講、展覽,提供所有的食物和表演。10,000 名當地人參加了活動。他們學到了很多關於我們的傳統和民族的知識。由於我們的慈善工作,我們的組織被選入洛蘭名人堂。

一步一個腳印朝前走,她先後在越南建了 9 所學校,讓無家可歸低收入的人有條件去上學。她還與克利夫蘭市合作過。她被四位不同的市長選中,並被克利夫蘭市議會批准為市長社區關係委員會成員 24 年,她特別關注少數民族社區的問題,特別是亞裔美國人。

The date is Thursday, November 2023. It is early on this beautiful sun-filled day. Tomorrow will be a very happy day for Director Gia Hoa Ryan of the Friendship Foundation and the Vietnamese community and all their friends.

Tomorrow is the day when the beautiful tall pure white marble statue of the lady from Vietnam will be installed in the Vietnamese Cultural Garden. We have all been waiting eight years for this date. For the past six months we have been emailing everyone about our plans. We had to get special city permission to block off Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard. We have had to get the Cleveland police involved to oversee the traffic on that crowded street.

We have selected the slow traffic hours for starting at 10:00AM and hopefully proceeding until 3:00at the latest when the installation will be completed.

But suddenly the oddest email pops up on our office computer screens. It is someone from an office located in City Hall. The message is quite clear and damning. Here's a summary. To Friendship Foundation You do not have the right permit for this installation. It is illegal for you to go ahead. If you do, you will be

arrested and charged and jailed The statue will betorn down. All expense for this will be charged to you.”

What is this insanity? Some kind of joke? All the workers have been scheduled and hired. A special very costly crane has been rented and will be transported to the site on Dr King Boulevard. The marble lady herself has to be cautiously and gingerly transported along with other forklifts and machinery on Cleveland's pot-holed roads.

This is very costly. All these expenses will have to be paid, even if this project is completely cancelled. Furthermore, we will have nothing to show after all this scheduling. Our entire mission is to add some beauty to our city. And here is our city thwarting our efforts.

What to do? Director Ryan often has her guardian angel with her. Now is the time for some blessings. Two great people show up, besides strong support from the Vietnamese community and supporters. They rush into action which involves multiple stops by teams of people at City Hall agencies as well as more dollars to pay for permits. There is also thence to schedule a great Cleveland architect to help whose heart and brain are equally up to the task.

We all show up Friday morning at the garden site with our Ethiopian Knight Aklilu Demessie as the leader. Our two human angels are still working hard at city hall to insure we have the necessary permits. Some people even volunteered to go to jail to insure that Gia Hoa's plans for installation are carried out.

So the workers begin their very careful and planned work to move the 6-ton base block from the huge truck to the center of the garden. All of us watch this great feat. I half-expect that the six-ton block may cause all the precise earlier work on reinforcing the concrete base to cave in and six tons of solid marble will disappear into a sink hole all the way to China. But the cement holds. Then these very skillful workers tenderly bind up the straps onto the lady, her body and chest. Director Ryan and all of us hold our breath. It would be terrible if the lady after all the sculptors' work and then a long voyage across the Pacific and next all the moving around and arriving at Milano Monument should now come to naught as our lady collapses into a heap of craggy marble rocks. We stop the camera

here. Let us go back to the beginning. Gia Hoa is six-years-old when she observes her next-door neighbor carefully rolling tiny dough containers into whose centers various fillings can be poured. Her neighbor would then run off to the train station to sell her modest creations.

Gia Hoa as a six-year-old wanted to open her own small bakery store and join her neighbor in selling the tasty items. That was just the beginning of this little entrepreneur who would continue her entrepreneurial efforts for a life time. At an early age Gia Hoa has to give up her beloved school classes so she could make money for the family of two adults and 12 children in which she was the oldest. She had to assist with rearing all the other children while also helping her oldest brother with his school lessons. "I had to help him," she remembers, "with his homework and I managed to learn all that he was required to learn in our local school although I was never in a single classroom."

Later the Vietnamese war grew more intense and American soldiers came to her country. "I still remember seeing them and thinking they are just children like me. In fact, I remember so many of them crying for their long-away homes and even asking for their mothers."

Gia Hoa wanted to find employment and sought a position in the US officers club and mess hall. "They did not want to hire me at first," she remembers, "you are too young, baby-san," they called me. But I persisted and was hired to work in the mess club and a few days later they hired me to oversee and supervise the house maids and staff who kept the barracks so spotlessly clean, and kept the soldiers' boots sparkling in a spit shine."

For several years Gia Hoa worked for Americans while all the



# 五十年 夢想成真

## 50 YEARS MAKE A DREAM COME TRUE

越南裔美國人  
建成  
大理石雕塑  
“越南媽媽”

Giahoa Ryan  
在美國五十年, 半個世紀的  
人生, 活得非常精彩。

time, improving and perfecting her English speaking and reading abilities. "I was next hired as an interpreter working for the US government," she recalled and then as the Office Administrator for the 54th Signal group.

Meanwhile her father was continuing his military career including working for the UN Mission and overseeing the security force safeguarding an important bridge over the Nha Trang River.

"In 1971 I fell in love as young Vietnamese girls did with a wonderful American soldier. He was the father of my first baby, Lynnda. I would then marry another American who worked for the FAA. He was an air traffic controller. When he was re-stationed on Guam Island, I went with him and worked in a duty-free shop when I learned all about merchandising and jewelry buying and selling."

Gia Hoa would eventually wind up in America with her husband and her little girl in Lorain, Ohio. All the time she remained in contact with her brothers and sisters and their families as the war never seemed to end. "In America from when I first arrived I worked constantly to support my brothers and sisters in Viet Nam sending home money every month. I researched what could be done to help them come to the US."

"When the war ended in 1975, my family was completely cut off from me. Once in a while a telephone call might come thru or a crumpled-up letter. In the United States I had to learn how to do business the American way/. Not only did I start selling spring rolls which I could roll at 300 an hour and sell from a food truck. .

"I also specialized in teaching food, culture, and cooking at the local college. I also opened a restaurant in Lorain and enjoyed meeting many good people and city officials who loved my cooking Asian and Vietnamese foods.

"I owned and operated the Moonlight Restaurant for 8 years in the City of Lorain. I taught at Lorain Community College for two years. In 1993, my sister and I finally could return to Viet Nam and renew our family ties. I was devastated by what I saw. People were so thin and emaciated. How could they even survive as their bones were just naked sticks?"

"I was resolved I had to do something. In 1993 I founded the Friendship Foundation of American-Vietnamese to help people resettling from Viet Nam to United States and also to help the poor and disabled in Viet Nam through the Foundation's humanitarian work. Our goal was to build bridges of friendship between both peoples." (See more below.)

"To help addicts and their families, I served on the Drug Abuse & Alcoholism Board of Lorain County

"For the Vietnamese, I oversaw the celebration of The Vietnamese American Community in the 1995 Annual Lorain Festival. This involved coordination of the Community for a week-long event, including Parade, speakers, exhibits, all our foods, and performances. 10,000 local people participated. They learned much about our traditions and people.

"For our charitable work, our organization was voted into the Lorain Hall of Fame.

"Since 1975, I have served the community as a translator and interpreter. This includes City, County, State and Federal Courts. I have served for various court hearings as well as for jury trials. I have also assisted especially in immigration matters before INS agencies.

"I have worked with the City of Cleveland. I was selected by Four different Mayors and approved by Cleveland City Council for 24 years as a member on the Mayor's Community Relations Board. My particular focus has been on the concerns and issues of minority communities, especially the Asian-American.

"I have worked with many small businesses in Northern Ohio, including beauty shops, grocery stores, and restaurants, aiding them in building their businesses. I have also owned three food businesses, served as Beverage and Food Director at a major hotel, and provided employment for some one hundred people over twenty years of operations.

"I established and operated a Low-Income Tax Clinic for fifteen years operating under the auspices of the Internal Revenue Service. We provided tax services, advice, and filing of tax forms for some three hundred needy people annually. Most of these were

immigrants and they needed much help with the English language.

"I initiated the Asian Community Mental Health Program under the auspices of the West Side Community Mental Health Services under the wonderful leadership of Director Ralph Fee. We had a staff of seven people including three psychiatrists particularly focusing on providing mental health services and counseling to people of Asian background. For many Asian families, they often try to hide the mental health problems of their families. They are many times ashamed and do not want the community to know. So we tried to assist them to understand mental health needs and how assistance was available for an ill brother or sister.

"We served 400 people and families annually.

"In a competition involving three hundred different mental health programs, we were awarded first place as the most outstanding service program of the year.

For 19 years I managed the Saigon Plaza, a huge community and party center on Detroit Avenue where we held many events for both the Vietnamese Community and other neighborhood groups.

My greatest achievement (beside my family) happened in 1993 when I along with thirty Vietnam veterans and Vietnamese people established the Friendship Foundation of American-Vietnamese, a charitable organization.

Since 1993 we have sponsored over 1,100 volunteers who have journeyed to Vietnam and provided at least a month of their time and efforts to charitable work there. This has included teaching in the schools (for example, English to college students); distributing educational supplies to children; and assisting in orphanages, senior citizen places, and hospitals. Our volunteers have included doctors and nurses who have provided pro bono operations and other medical assistance to patients as well as teaching classes on medical topics.

In our twenty-five years of returning to Vietnam on these humanitarian missions, we have provided over \$31 million dollars of funds, scholarship help, construction of schools, food and clothing, books and school materials, housing, and other support including in-kind help to the poor and disabled in Vietnam. We have sponsored eleven educational construction projects.

Our Foundation has worked on establishing a Vietnamese Cultural Garden as one of forty Cultural gardens sponsored by the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federation along Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard near the Cleveland Art Museum. We have participated in the yearly One World Day event celebrating the many cultural and ethnic groups.

Our garden is over half completed and we have received seven pieces carved by sculpturers in Viet Nam from Vietnamese white marble. These were transported over the Pacific ocean for a month. Earlier we related the obstacles we faced from some officials who almost stopped us from installing the first and main statue in the

center of our garden, featuring a woman who represents all women of Vietnam, and indeed all women of the world.

This garden also is our thank-you to all the men and women of all the Allies who fought and even died to make Vietnam a better country. We pay tribute to them and the families of all the veterans. If it was not for them, we would not be living in the freedom of America.

Finally, in my family I am most so proud of my son Thomas Joseph and daughter Lynnda and of our three grandchildren.

