

ANNOUNCING

Essay Contest

Lao-American Historical Heritage

The Elgin-Rockford Lao Oral History Archives Project

Five Prizes of \$100 each will be awarded for the best essays submitted by students of Lao heritage narrating in text (and images, if desired) the story of how their families fled Laos and arrived as refugees in the Elgin-Rockford area and struggled to make a new life here.

Four levels of awards will be made:

1-college, 2-high school, 1-middle school, 1-elementary school.

Requirements: Essays should be at least five pages in length. They may include photos or art work. They should be based on interviews or conversations with family members who fled Laos after 1975 and eventually settled in the Elgin-Rockford area. The essays do not necessarily need to identify family members by name, but details of age, place of birth, education, means of making a living, reasons for leaving and difficulties encountered in fleeing and starting a new life in the U.S. will help the reader understand your family's history.

Deadline, Judging and Awards Ceremony: The essays will be judged by an independent panel of professors from Northern Illinois University Center for Southeast Asian Studies. The deadline for submission is November 1, 2013. Awards will be made on November 10, 2013 at the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin as part of "The Big Read" project.

Please use the cover page form on the following page when submitting your essay and send it by e-mail or regular mail on or before November 1, 2013 to

Dr. John Hartmann
Distinguished Teaching Professor & Board of Trustees Professor
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115
tel: 815-753-6462 (office); 815-758-5030 (residence)

e-mail: hartmann.jf@gmail.com
www.seasite.niu.edu/lao



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Name: _____

Contact information: _____

Age: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

Family origins in Laos: _____

Dates of departure from Laos and arrival in the Elgin-Rockford area: _____ ; _____

Title of your essay: _____

Please use this as the cover page for your essay. Your name and contact information will not be seen by the panel of judges.

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References

Contest participants will find it helpful to check out the following for inspiration.

Joanna Catherine Scott, a poet and prolific writer, has published interviews she made with Lao refugees in *Indochina's Refugees: Oral Histories from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam*. She has been invited to talk about her experience at the "Big Read" event on November 10 at the Elgin City Library and at NIU on November 8. www.joannacatherinescott.com

Colin Cotterill, a famous mystery writer has written a series of entertaining and educational stories about Laos in the 1970s. You can check out his mystery series and work as a writer and cartoonist on his website: www.colincotterill.com. He has been interviewed twice on NPR.

Film: The film *The Betrayal (Nerakoon)*, is a documentary film co-directed by Thavisouk Phrasavath made over a period of 23 years about his family's escape from Laos and their struggles to make a new life in America. The film was nominated for an Oscar and shown on PBS. He has been invited to a showing of his film on Saturday, Nov. 9 at the Elgin City Library.