



Soukanh Kouanchao

February 3, 1937 - October 4, 2025

Soukanh Kouanchao, beloved husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and friend, passed away peacefully surrounded by family on Saturday, October 4, 2025 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was 88 years old.

Soukanh was born in Banh Lamthene, Laos, where access to formal schooling was limited. At the age of ten, his parents enrolled him as a monastic student at a Buddhist temple in another town - a journey that required at least a full day's walk each way. There, he lived and studied under the guidance of monks, developing the discipline, humility, and perseverance that would define his life.

At eighteen, Soukanh enlisted in the Royal Lao Army, where he rose through the ranks to become a captain. During this time, he met and married Chomsy, his lifelong partner of 62 years. Their marriage was a true journey - a bond forged through poverty, war, displacement, and trauma, yet grounded in love, endurance, and shared determination to build a better life for their family.

Recognized for his intelligence and leadership, Soukanh was selected for specialized training in the United States, traveling twice to study English and serve as an interpreter for U.S. military operations in Laos. After the fall of the Royal Lao government in 1975, he was imprisoned in a communist re-education camp. His good conduct occasionally earned him brief but

comforting and inspiring visits with his family. During this time, he and Chomsky quietly planned their escape from communist Laos. After several failed attempts, they successfully crossed the Mekong River in 1978. Upon entering Thailand, the family was briefly detained before being transferred to Ubon Refugee Camp. Soukanh continued to help others as an interpreter for USAID, assisting fellow refugees in communicating with aid workers and finding a path forward. His quiet strength and compassion sustained those around him during one of the hardest times of his life.

After roughly twelve months in Thailand, Soukanh secured resettlement paperwork for his family, and they immigrated to the United States on July 18, 1979, settling in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Within a year, he earned a Certificate of Accounting from Minneapolis Vocational and Technical College and began working to support others through H.I.R.E.D., a nonprofit that provided employment assistance to refugees. After an 8 hour day at H.I.R.E.D., he would continue working at a cafe downstairs. He later joined General Mills as a Rebates and Promotions Analyst, where he worked for sixteen years before NAFTA ended his position. His career continued at Coloplast where he was a Production Technician, from which he eventually retired.

Education, stability, and home were central to Soukanh's values. Four years after arriving in America, he and Chomsky purchased their first home - a lasting symbol of perseverance and possibility. Together, they raised five children and supported each one through college. His dedication to family, even after a life marked by war and loss, remains his greatest legacy.

Soukanh is survived by his wife, Chomsky Kouanchao; his children, Chanda Kouanchao (wife Souvanna, and their children Donovan, Vanida (her son Oaklee), and Alena), Malaysi Kouanchao (and her daughters Amalie Pearson and Sophie Pearson), Ketmani Kouanchao (Doctor of Education), Soukthavi

Kouanchao (husband Dr. Adisack Nhouyvanisvong, and their daughters Adisouk, Ananda, and Anaka), and Malichansouk Kouanchao (husband Michael Davis). He is also survived by his sister, pah Somsy Kouanchao (older sister), of Luang Prabang, Laos, as well as close friends and community members who became family.

He was preceded in death by his infant daughter Tare Kouanchao, his parents Chommani and Bout Kouanchao, bah Cham Kouanchao (older sister), loung Laam Kouanchao (older brother), ah Chan Kouanchao (younger sister), ah Vanh Kouanchao (younger sister), and ai Chai Kouanchao (oldest nephew).

Soukanh will be remembered for his quiet strength, steadfast will, and deep devotion to his family. His journey - from a small Lao village to building a life of purpose and dignity in America - stands as a powerful reminder of resilience, faith, and love. His spirit lives on through the family he and Chomsy built together, and through the countless lives he touched with his kindness and integrity.

Those wishing to pay tribute to Soukanh's life and legacy may do so by planting a memorial tree in a national forest in his honor at thetreesremember.com.

Funeral services will be held at Washburn-McReavy Crystal Lake Funeral Chapel and Cemetery (3816 N Penn Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55412) on Sunday, October 12, 2025 (12-3pm). The family extends heartfelt gratitude to all who have shared their memories, condolences, and prayers in honor of Soukanh's life.

Previous Events

Chapel Service

OCT **12**. 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Crystal Lake Chapel
3816 Penn Avenue N.
Minneapolis, MN 55412