

U.S. Couple Honors Parents with Traditional Hmong Wedding

Written by Administrator

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Bao Vang, producer and anchor of WSAW News Channel 7 Sunrise program, recently wed her fiancée of a year. Both Bao Vang and Noah were born in the United States and are a traditional couple. Honoring their families, Noah and Bao Vang chose a traditional Hmong wedding with heritage spanning generations.

In the Hmong wedding tradition, the families must approve of the marriage along with a dowry. If this does happen, and there are no guarantees, then the marriage cannot take place.

A tradition is that if the bride does not live with her mother, she must be available to meet the groom and his family and his wedding party. This took place at the bride's mother's 1,600 square foot house with 50 to 60 people guests.

At 5 o'clock the groom arrives with his party. The party includes the best man and two negotiators. It is a tradition that the groom asks Bao Vang's family if her family, "is refraining from having guests." Noah's family is granted permission to enter the home of Bao Vang's mother and everything begins.

It is tradition that Noah and his family bring along the following to make the wedding official. Items are included in a basket carried on the best man's back:

- Boiled whole chicken
- Uncooked rice
- Salt
- Oil

Noah carried a blanket on his back which is included in the items to make the wedding official. In addition to food items, cigarettes to be smoked during negotiations, and a black umbrella are also included. Smoking would not be permitted in Bao Vang's mother's house. The cigarettes are considered a missing item and missing items can call off the ceremony.

As a tradition, the groom and the best man bow to each of Bao Vang's family in just the correct

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manner. After a dinner of boiled chicken, chicken stir fry and broiled fish, negotiations begin.

Both families are meshing and learning about each other and Noah and Bao Vang's relationship. The main goal with questioning Bao Vang is to make sure that she truly loves and is committed to Noah, and is not being duped into marrying him. Bao Vang is asked to leave and the families get assurance from Bao Vang's mom that Bao Vang is truly committed to Noah.

Three hours later, all family members are convinced that the marriage should go to the next step which is setting the dowry (money).

Now the important Hmong tradition of dowry negotiation is with the two negotiators from each family and can take days or hours. The groom's parents pay the bride's mom (father had passed away) for taking good care of the bride. The dowry can range from hundreds of dollars to a few thousand dollars. The dowry is traditionally wrapped in cigarettes.

After Bao Vang's mom accepts the gift, Bao Vang is part of Noah's family. Bao Vang's bridesmaid, chosen by Noah's family as well as Noah's best man. The bridesmaid is Noah's sister and she is instructed to make sure Bao Vang is happy. Everyone raises a glass for a toast.

The dowry is counted thrice by family members. The in-laws decide where the couple will spend their honeymoon and as it turns out it is in Wasau, home of the mother-in-law. Bao Vang and Noah are leaving as she is reminded to look forward and not backward to begin Bao Vang's and Noah's tradition as husband and wife.

This is a wonderful positive wedding story. Good luck to Bao Vang and Noah as they continue the tradition of husband and wife.

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