



## Tom Rathanaphonh

July 5, 2016

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Tom Rathanaphonh, 72, of Cleveland, Oklahoma passed from this life on Wednesday, June 15th, 2016. Born in Laos, a son to Keo and Poungh Rathanaphonh, Tom has two brothers, Luaeng and Thoung; four sisters, Tong, Bua Tong, Kai and Lai. Tom entered the Laotian Army at the age of 14 and was still serving in the military when communist overran the Laotian Government in 1975. After being captured he was sent to a P.O.W. camp and was forced to learn the communist doctrine. He later escaped and fled on foot for over three months Tom would travel at night crossing mountainous country until he reached his home over 60 miles away. Tom married Kim Rathanaphonh and began a family having two children, daughter Chira and son, TuTu. Tom moved his family to Thailand, there he found the U.S. troops and brave soldiers of the Thailand, Laos and Hmong troops were defending the land from the communist regime from overtaking South East Asia. Tom and Kim left their four year old daughter Chiara in Thailand with Kim's parents so they would have someone to care for them in their old age as is customary in most Asia culture. Tom and his family crossed the Mekong River and lived in a refugee camp until March 16, 1980 Tom and his family arrived in the United States to begin their new life. Their U.S. sponsors were Bob and Roberta Diehnel, they became like parents to Tom and Kim and to this day TuTu still calls Roberta, Grandma. With the help Tom received from the Diehnel's and First United Methodist Church, Tom and his family became U.S.

Citizens. Tom's bravery and kindness will never be forgotten and lives on through his family. Left behind to cherish his memories are his wife, Kim Rathanaphonh; daughter Chira; son Set (TuTu) along with other family in the U.S. Laos, Switzerland and other countries across the world. A funeral service to honor the life of Tom Rathanaphonh will take place on Saturday June 18, 2016 from 10 am until 2 pm