



St Paul Police Commander Sheila Larson placed flowers on six Kong children at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Maplewood in 2018. The children were strangled by their mother, Khoua Her in St Paul twenty years ago, which was the worst murder case in the city's history. Picture by Scott Takushi.

September 13, 2009. Speaking through Xiong, Tou Kong called the tombstones “the most valuable thing in his life.”

Two of the planning committee members, Cindy Xiong, a community corrections aide from Ramsey County, and her older sister, Ong Xiong, a St. Paul charter school teacher, met with the mother, Khoua Mayli Ker at the prison in Shakopee. The committee agreed to include the mother in the ceremony.

Ong Xiong read the prepared statement:

“I love you,” Khoua Mayli Ker wrote. “Thank you for giving me a chance to be a mother. It had been a great gift to share the experience with you. Thank you for being a blessing to me. You are my strengths, my hope and motivation. You are my everything and all that I have and treasure. I am truly sorry you had to pay the price in which you didn’t deserve.”

“They will be marked forever, and we will never forget,” said Pat Hogan, the cemetery’s superintendent.

The family, friends, and community members placed 66 white roses—to mark the 11 years since the six deaths—on the headstones.

Then a bell tolled six times—once for each child.



A memorial plaque is seen outside the McDonough Community Center in St. Paul on Friday, Aug. 31, 2011 planted after six children were killed by their mother in a unit at the McDonough Homes on Sept. 3, 1998 referred to by the last name of Hang initially, but tombstones dedicated in 2009 list their last name as Kor Gottfried / Pioneer Press)



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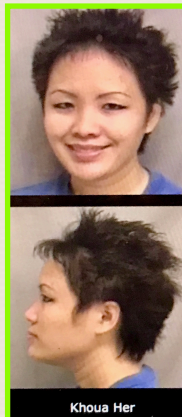
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Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2022

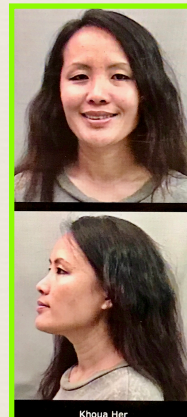


Khoua Mayli Her

and the Minnesota Correctional
Facility-Shakopee 1998



Khoua Her



Khoua Her

On left are pictures of Khoua Ker from the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Shakopee. On the right is a picture of Tou Kong, the father of six children who were killed by their mother on September 3, 1998. Stone markers were added to mark the site at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Maplewood in 2009.



It was September 3, 1998 when a 911 call came in. First it was a hangup, but after a call back a dispatcher updated it to a possible suicide of Khoua Her. It was located as on the 1500 Timberlake Road.

The officers got no response at the front door. After forcing open a screen door, they found the grisly scene: Two kids strangled on the main floor, two more in the basement and two on the second level.

Larson, who had been a patrol officer for about three years at the time, said it was the hardest call she has been on.

“Being a police officer, you’re supposed to be tough,” Larson said before the ceremony, at which she spoke. “But nothing could prepare someone when you see six little kids.”

According to court records, Khoua Her told investigators she separated the children by getting them to play hide-and-seek with her. She said that with the children hiding throughout the apartment, she went to each separately and, wrapping a strip of cloth around their necks, strangled them. She said none of the children resisted.

Khoua Her then tried to strangle herself with an electrical cord. She was found semiconscious.

Khoua Her was 12 years old, a Hmong girl living in a refugee camp in Thailand, when her relatives married her to a 19-year-old man, Tou Hang. Starting at age 13, almost every year she had a child, six in all: Koua Eat Hang Kong (1987-1998), Samson Hang Kong (1988-1998), Nali Hang Kong (1989-1998), Tang Lung Hang Kong (1991-1998), A-ee Hang Kong (1992-1998), and TungKee Kang Kong (1993-1998.)

The murders brought mental health to the forefront—particularly in the Hmong community—and ushered in changes. “When I was working on the issue before, people didn’t want to talk about it, but then they had to talk about it because it was such a huge tragedy,” said Ilean Her, who was executive director o the Council of Asian-Pacific Minnesotas. MayKao Hang, from Wilder Foundation, felt the killings showed the important to serve refugees scarred by the traumas of war, resettlement camps, and making their way in a new land.



Khoua Her

Khoua Mayli Her felt alone in her marriage, and powerless. Court and police records painted a picture of a family in turmoil, including two orders for protection against her husband, alleging that he pushed her and threatened to kill her or commit suicide and blame her, according to Ferraro’s article in the *Pioneer Press*.

Bruce Wenger felt that Khoua Mayli Her didn’t have an evil intent. She had decided to commit suicide because she did not want to leave her children without being properly care for. “She strangled her children to put them in heaven because she believed as a Christian that they were going to go straight to heaven...in her deranged mind, she thought putting them in heaven would be a responsible thing to do, a loving thing to do as a mother.”

Khoua Mayli Her plead guilty to the murders, and has been serving 50-years sentence in prison at the Minnesota Correctional Facility—Shakopee.

In Forest Lawn Cemetery in Maplewood, the six children were buried. Eleven years later, tombstones were added, thanks to a donation from Schoenrock Monument in St. Paul.

Billy Leepoa Xiong, a family friend, said financial hardship of the father, Tou Kong, was the reason the grave markers were never bought, according to Nick Ferraro on the *Pioneer Press*,