



Newsletter

Burmese American Association of Texas

<http://www.baatx.org>

May 2005

BAAT CELEBRATES THINGYAN WATER FESTIVAL AND BURMESE NEW YEAR OF 1367

Message from the President

Dear Members and Friends:

On behalf of BAAT, I sincerely wish you all the felicity, longevity and prosperity throughout the Burmese New Year of 1367. The word "Thingyan" is derived from a Sanskrit word "Thin Ka Rari" which means change. So Thingyan connotes change from the old season to a new season or old year to New Year. Thingyan is a festive occasion and the time to make amends, meet new friends and pay homage to elders. The Thingyan picnic should be a starting point for us to make it a change for the better.

Last few months have been a tough period for BAAT to lose such two long-time BAAT members: Ma Naw Tha Mi and U Stanley Tin Thein. BAAT was equally saddened with the families in grief because they were the supportive and active members of BAAT in its early existence in Houston. No mistake about it, the loss has touched the community. Likewise to me, it has deepened my grips and reflection on the meaning of human lives from the standpoints of the Laws of Nature or Natural Laws (as philosophized by St. Thomas Aquinas) and Utilitarianism (by John Stewart Mills). The strength is in the people; and the bigger results come out from the groups acting in tandem in a natural way. BAAT's duty is to fulfill one of its simple community group services of informing its members and bringing them together on their own accord (naturally) to comfort one another in times of hardship. BAAT as a community laughs together and toughens out the hard times together by sharing our happiness, memories, stories, and glories of life in general or specific. These are the main objectives and goals, and what BAAT community is all about. Socrates once said, "Human beings are social and political beings." No doubt, I couldn't imagine living a life without having such a wonderful social friends like you and great social-cultural civic association like BAAT. Anyway, I am glad to hear many people express their appreciation toward the necessity and importance of BAAT and its expanding roles as our community grows. Again, we need more volunteers like you to keep this community spirit alive.

Anyway, windy talks aside, let us have a fabulous time at the picnic meeting with friends – old and new, far and near, high and low – to strengthen our friendship, understanding, and social bonds among our Burmese families with the diverse ethnic backgrounds in which we take pride. Again, welcome aboard and buckle up your seat belt – the BAAT fun rides are yours to enjoy and remember!

With Metta Cetana,
Stephen Yoe, CPA
President 2005

BAAT Officers (2005)

Stephen Yoe

President

832-452-5757

Robert Chan

VP Executive

281-242-8915

Daw San San Myint (Aunty San)

VP Social

281-530-1898

Keith Kyaw (Ko Htwe)

Secretary

832-766-0517

Sylvia Hom

Treasurer

832-818-2986

Htin Aung Win (Ko Maw Si)

VP Dallas

817-292-3969

Please contact any officers above if you have any inquiries or business communication concerning the Burmese community.



Invitation

Please celebrate the Burmese Thingyan with BAAT by joining us for a day of fun, great food, music, games, fellowship and of course, splashes! Bring your family and friends along to share the fun and connect with our culture. Everyone is cordially invited!

When: Sunday, June 5, 2005 (11:00 AM to 5:30 PM)

Where: Bear Creek Park, Pavilion #6. Please see map for location. If you need further assistance, please call Stephen Yoe (832-452-5757), Ko Myo Aye Thane (281-565-0364), or Ko Htwe (832-766-0517).

Directions: From Belt Way 8, exit Clay Rd and go west (towards High-way 6) for about 4 to 5 miles. Pass Eldridge Road and War Memorial Drive. Turn left on Bear Creek Drive into Bear Creek Park. From High-way 6, if you are coming

from south, turn right; if you are coming from the north, turn left onto Clay Rd. Go east on Clay Rd (towards Belt Way 8). Turn right at Bear Creek Drive into Bear Creek Park. Please see the map for further clarification.

BALLOONS will be allowed. (2) Please do not throw water at people who stay inside the pavilion or anyone earnestly requesting not to do so. Please understand and respect the needs of one another at the picnic. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Schedule of Events:

Member/guest arrival & registration	11:00 AM
Potluck lunch	12:00 – 1:00 PM
Thingyan Music and Yein Dance	1:00 – 1:30 PM
Auction	1:30 - 2:15 PM
Picnic Games (Egg Toss, 3-Leg Race, Piñata, Htoat-Si, Chinlone, etc...)	2:30 - 3:30 PM
Afternoon tea break	3:30 PM
Water festival	3:30 - 5:00 PM
Clean-up time	5:30 PM

Auction: Auction will be held after the lunch break. If you would like to participate in the auction, please bring your items to the picnic. Participants have a choice of getting the cost reimbursement from BAAT or donating the proceeds to the BAAT. U Norman Wong, U Than Shwe and Rev. Thong will be organizing the auction.

Books and Tapes Sale: A variety of Burmese magazines, novels and tapes will be on sale with reasonable prices. (These books and tapes are compliments of our active member, Kathleen Sebecke (Ma Nwe) and Bruce. BAAT thanks Ma Nwe and Ko Bruce for donating books to BAAT for a number of years.)

Lunch: The lunch will be a **potluck lunch**. Please bring your favorite dish for **10 to 15 servings** to share your excellent cooking with friends. BAAT will provide steamed white rice, drinks, afternoon tea, snacks, cups and plastic ware. If you need idea on what to bring, please contact Daw Thet Win (281) 277-0433, Daw San San Myint (281) 530-1898 or Daw Kyu Kyu (281) 835-4786. **Friends of BAAT members and those who cannot bring food can enjoy lunch with us for \$5.00 per person.**

BAAT Membership Dues: Annual Membership Dues will be collected at the picnic. For those who have not paid membership dues for 2005, you will have the opportunity to pay them to reinstate your membership. Members are not required to pay past dues for the years before 2005. Dues may also be sent directly to our VP – Finance, Ko Robert Chan by making **check payable to BAAT.**

Robert Chan
165 N. Hall Drive
Sugar Land, TX 77478

Family - \$25.00 Singles - \$10.00

Official Announcements:

At the picnic, please stop by at the registration desk first to pick up your **nametags** and review your **contact information** for accuracy while paying your membership dues. If you moved recently, please update your mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. Having your current contact information enables BAAT to keep you informed with the latest developments in our association. BAAT encourages the members to wear its BAAT T-shirts or dress up in a traditional Burmese manner.

Ad Space for Business Operators:

BAAT is in the process of printing "Member-Address Book". Please contact Ko Myo Aye Thane, Ko Robert Chan or Stephen Yoe if you would like to advertise your business, products or services toward 250 families. The fee will be just \$20 for a space the size of business card.

Suggestions on Water Throwing: (1) Please maintain and show the highest level of courtesy and consideration for others in throwing water. Considering a potential liability for injury, NO WATER

Ma Zin/Angel Tin Mar Lwin Writes to Tha-Gyar-Min via Satellite-mail.

Your Reverence,

Since you are no Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny, I'm not asking for toys or candy. If you would only accept my plea that you inscribe our names in your legendary gilded portfolio, news would have arrived in your exalted abode about our Thingyan festivities. Why in June, you might well question. There's this excuse about forgetting your cherished pipe and they are on sale at Neiman-Marcus. Jokes aside, ours is evidently a well-planned event with everyone investing their time and efforts to devise an authenticity. Just not another picnic in the park! We are engaged in preserving our culture, adhering to traditions and strengthening the bonds within our Burmese community. In short, creating to the best of our ability, a microcosm witness within which true Burmese camaraderie as well as Burmese food, music, and dances. Thingyan is in our hearts and in our minds be it celebrated in April, May, or June (as circumstances would allow us). Even the papier-mache padauk blossoms look quite real. Allow us, Your Reverence, to keep the Thingyan spirit alive and our wish to conserve our culture and begin the New Year with renewed hopes. Your divine presence will surmount to an occasion truly celestial.

**Your humble earth-girl,
Ma Zin**

In Memoriam

BAAT was saddened to learn the recent passing of the loved ones of some of our members. All of us here at BAAT extend our most heartfelt condolences to those who have experienced such a profound loss. Please remember that our hearts, prayers and thoughts are with you at this most difficult time.

- Ma Naw Tha Mi (age 47, passed away in Houston on April 3, 2005) – The long-time, fun-loving, humor-packed Houstonian for two decades and active BAAT members.
- U Stanley Tin Thein (age 68, passed away in Houston on April 30, 2005) - the beloved husband of Miss Burma Daw Margaret Aye.



Community News



- ❖ BAAT participated in the Asia With Love Presentation at the Inter-Continental Airport of Houston and Miller Theater. Dancer Ma Yin Yin Khine performed at the 10th Annual APAHA Parade and Festival. In return for BAAT participation, BAAT was awarded a check in the amount of \$200 by APAHA and the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County. In order to expand its network and partnership alliance and promote Burmese cultures, BAAT will continue working closely with leaders of the International communities in Houston.
- ❖ BAAT attended the Grand opening ceremony of the Asian International Center at the Southern Chinese News Group upon kind invitation of Burma-born Mr. Lee (the owner of the Southern Chinese News Group). This historic event made headline news in the Houston Chronicle and the Chinese Newspapers.

\$\$\$ CENTS OF HUMOR \$\$\$

I've got what no millionaire's got. That is, I've got no money.

Don't worry; you are financially doing better than Mr. Donald Trump who had been in \$2-billion debt.

Suzie Orman said, "Money cannot buy you happiness, but money can make your life less miserable." But I would say, "Money brings only misery, but with money you can afford it. Money isn't everything because you get the same results with a checkbook or charge card."

Be nice to people until you make a million; after that, people will then be nice to you. Similarly, be advised to speak good English to make your colleagues understand you. Once you become their boss, then people need to listen to you even though you speak broken English.

Two homeless were seated on a park bench stealing food from the pigeons. "Hey dude, say, if you suddenly won a jackpot, would you lend me \$1,000?" said one. The other hesitantly retorted, "It depends,.. but what kind of collateral security you've got?" "Come on, I am a bum," vented the former.

Ko Kyaw Gyi from Austin boasted to me, "My brother (Ko Paul) bought a mansion in Japan." "What? Mansion?," I exclaimed, considering hyper costs of living in Japan. Then Ko Kyaw explained, "If you are filthy rich, you can afford to buy a room with a kitchenette and bath – that is called a mansion in Japan." If you are filthy broke, then you stink -- living with 7 roommates sharing alternate bunk beds in an efficiency studio with no bathroom and taking a shower twice a month at max at a Public Bath-House. Get it, Stevie???" "Gotcha," I chortled.

Stephen Yoe, CPA

BAAT appreciates the efforts of all volunteers for its Union Day event and generous contributions. Special thanks go to the following:

- Dr. Melvin Thane Kyaw and Aunty San, Ko Sammy & Ma Mi-Lay Nwe Thane, Ko Myo Aye Thane, Ma Wai Wai Oo and Ko Michael Teoh, U Ko Lay; U Pe Win & Aunty Julie, U Than Shwe & Aunty Rodica, Dr. Hla Aung & Aunty Kyu, Daw Sein, Ma Aye Aye Kyi, Ko Soe Chit Han, Ko Kie Lynn Aung, Dr Moe Oo Zaw & Dr. Khaing Khaing Oo, Daw Khin Thein Yi, Ko Myint Thu, Ko Henry Mah, Ko Bo Bo, Ma Thant Zin, Ko Shwe Tun Aung, Ko Ko Naing, Ko Tuang, Ko Mon Ngo, Ma Zin Mar, and many others for your assistance and participation in the Union Day entertainment program.
- U Eddie & Daw Khin Thein Yi, U Norman, Aunty San, Ko Htwe, Saya Thong and Sayama Mang, U David, U Than Shwe & Aunty Rodica, Ko Robert Chan & Aunty Marina, Ko Myo Gyi, Ko Shwe Tun Aung, Ma Nyunt Nyunt Wai, Ma Theingi Thway, Ko Myint Thu, Dr. Mg Mg Oo, Dr Tin Aung Hla and Dr. Win Wa Kyu, and many others for helping with Tsunami Relief efforts.
- U Thane Kyaw, Aunty San and Ko Htwe for providing popular Mohinkhar and video footage on Union Day and Myanmar cultures.
- Dr. Molly Mang, Daw Thet Thet Win, Ma Molly Win, etc for assisting with raffle ticket sales.
- U David & Daw Helen Teoh; U Than Shwe & Aunty Rodica; Ma Aye Aye Kyi; Ma Charlotte, Ko Shwe Tun Aung; and many others for helping with the resettlement of the new Burmese refugee families.
- Chris Colenari for keeping BAAT posted with news on other Houston community events and APAHA events.
- Ko Hla Aung, Aunty Kyu, and Daw Sein (Sein Ya Thar Son) for providing Coconut Noodle Soup.
- Ko Soe Chit Han for donating fried chicken and vegetable vermicelli.
- Ko Mee Htoo Bhai for providing a place for BAAT meeting and over 200 samosa for every BAAT event.
- Mr. Imtiaz Bangee of Kwik Kopy for assisting BAAT with its printing needs as usual.
- Rev. Thong Kho Lun and Rev. Mang Tiak for assisting with food transportation.
- U Pe Win and U Maung Aye for providing Indian tea.
- Dr. Caesar Tin-U and Ma Sally for donating beef curry.
- Ma Yin Yin Khine for donating curry chicken and pilau rice.

BAAT strives to acknowledge the names of all volunteers who brought in other delicious food items and assisted with the setup and cleanup before and after the event. If a name has been inadvertently omitted, please accept our sincere apologies. We will be happy to include the corrections in the next newsletter. BAAT wishes to thank all of you such as members, board members and EC members in advance and beseech you for your collaborative efforts for the future events. Thank you all for your contributions, large or small.

Time is Running out for Property Tax Protests

Benjamin Franklin once put it, "Nothing is certain in this world but death and taxes." Now we feel his statement a lot closer to home because the Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD), the second largest appraisal district in the country, conducts a complete reappraisal of property in every odd-numbered year. Thus, all properties (over 1.6 million properties) in Harris County will be reappraised and certified in 2005 for their market value as of January 1. If you disagree with HCAD's determinations of the appraised value with applicable 'YES' answers to the following questions, then you should consider filing a "Notice of Protest" before the May 31 deadline with the 75-member Harris County Appraisal Review Board (ARB). Your chances of success would be higher if you have many applicable 'YES' answers concerning your property in relation to these questions: Do you have strong evidence to prove the market value is lower than the "10% Appreciation Capped" appraised values?; Is your property valued unequally compared with other properties in the appraisal district?; Do the appraisal records show incorrect records, incorrect owner or incorrect square feet? Did the chief appraiser deny you an exemption for your primary residence that you own and live as of January 1-- homestead exemption (~ 20% discount), over-65 senior exemption, disability exemption, survivor exemption, etc? Is your property being taxed by the wrong taxing units?; Does your property have any value-reducing physical conditions such as flood damage, cracked foundation slabs, cracked walls, storm damage, etc, other than normal wear and tear?

The spirit and letter of the law allows you to protest any action by the appraisal district that applies to you and adversely affects you. If you protest on time, you have a right to have your case heard and decided by the ARB. Upon filing your protest, you will receive a protest hearing appointment date within 2 or 3 months depending on the

nature of your concerns and the value of your property. The protest hearing could proceed in three formats in the following order: (1) informal meeting with appraiser, (2) formal hearing before a three-member ARB panel, and (3) if you are dissatisfied with the ARB's findings you have the right to appeal its decision to the state district court within forty-five days of receiving the written order. Upon resolution, pay your tax before Jan 31 of the following year in order to avoid penalty charges which may be as high as 12 percent (approximately 1% per month), depending on how long the tax remains unpaid.

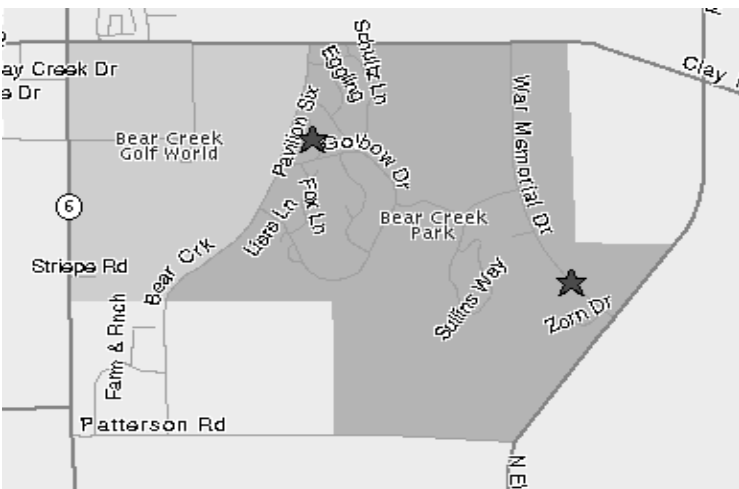
During the peak summer months (June through September), the appraisal review board typically handles well over 120,000 protests. Thus, most hearings are allotted 15 minutes. It is advisable to know how the system works and prepare a simple but well-organized presentation. Generally, the **burden of proof** is on the taxing authority; however, the party filing the protest also has the **burden of providing proof** or evidence. To support your case, it is wise to bring at least 5 copies of all supporting documents and evidence such as sales comparables near to January 1 of the year in question with similar characteristics in the same neighborhood designated by the Appraisal District Information Center; inspector's report on the major defects and estimated repair costs; proof of quality grade factors from E (lowest), C (average) to AA (highest); type of construction; neighborhood economic factors or market adjustment factors; etc. Also, be on time and prepared for your protest hearing. The chances favor the prepared minds. Act fast. Good luck.

Norman Wong/Stephen Yoe



Burmese American Association of Texas

C/O
12826 Stancliff Oaks St.
Sugar Land, TX. 77478



*****DISCLAIMER*****

BAAT was incorporated with the mission to promote friendship, cooperation, and entertainment among Burmese Nationals, people of Burmese descent, and friends of Burma. BAAT's activities are conducted primarily for the benefit of its members. BAAT and its officers and members take no responsibility and will not be held responsible for any injuries or any liability that may occur during its events, howsoever caused. All participants should exercise utmost care and participate in its events at your own risk.