

2014 Holiday Greetings from MACA

from Sanj Altan

Greetings for the holidays and the new year 2015. I wish you and your loved ones the happiest of holidays and hope that your year went well, in good health, that you had a productive, successful and joyful 2014 and are looking forward to a good new year.

2014 was a special year for the Mongol-American Cultural Association (MACA). We had a number of successful events and initiatives. In bringing those to your attention, I earnestly hope that you will continue to support us in our efforts to promote the mission of MACA, as we pursue important humanitarian and cultural goals.

We begin by highlighting the important collaborations we had with the Mongolian Heritage Foundation under the leadership of Byambakhuu Darinchuluun and David Ali. We began with a co-sponsorship of the Tsagaan Sar celebration on February 8, where more than 100 guests came to celebrate and bring in the new year of the wood horse. MACA also worked together with the MHF on the annual Naadam celebration held on July 5 at the Bethesda fountain area of Central Park in New York attended by more than a 100 area residents. An exceptional concert was given that evening by a 4-person performance group including Namgar. In October, MACA and the MHF again worked together along with the Mongolia Society in co-sponsoring the special conference in commemoration of the 130th anniversary of the late Dilowa Khutugtu in New York City. A number of the speakers came from Mongolia to attend the conference.

MACA sponsored two events to mark the 25th anniversary of the passing of our late founder, Professor Gombojab Hangin. On March 30, a special lecture by Professor Ch. Dagvadorj was given at the annual Mongolia Society meeting held in Philadelphia. Professor Dagvadorj spoke on the poem he composed in honor of Gombojab. The poem and an English translation will be placed on the MACA website soon in the eTolbo. Those of you who have memories of Gombojab are encouraged to share your reminiscences with us through the MACA website. Then in May, MACA sponsored a special memorial session for Gombojab at the annual Mongolian Cultural Center's symposium at the Embassy of Mongolia in Washington DC. I spoke on the life and times of Gombojab and his role in promoting US-Mongolia diplomatic relations. Dr. Alicia Campi, Dr. M. Saruul-Erdene and Professor Ch. Dagvadorj also spoke and shared their perspectives on the influence of Gombojab on Mongolian scholarship.

On May 25, MACA co-sponsored under the leadership of board member Palgi Gyamcho the 50th annual memorial service to the late Dilowa Khutugtu. Nearly 100 people attended the special memorial service at the Nitsan Temple, Howell NJ. We report with great sadness the passing of Yondon Gyatso Lama, Abbott of the Nitsan Temple on December 6, at the age of 95, who had long led the memorial prayers to both the Dilowa Khutugtu and Tsorj Lama. We will miss his spiritual strength but his presence will be felt for many years to come.

MACA co-sponsored the All United States Mongolian 9th Soccer Championship tournament, held May 23-25 at Rider University, where more than 350 soccer athletes competed representing players from all over the United States.

MACA co-sponsored the Washington Area Mongol Children's Festival and Competition in Washington DC held on June 1, at the Rosslyn Spectrum Theatre and

continued support to the Mongolian School in Washington DC in recognition of their work in providing Mongolian language and culture class to children.

MACA co-sponsored Sas Carey's Nomadicare project in June to supply vitamins to the Dukha children of northern Mongolia.

MACA provided a grant in September to Nikolai Burlakoff to support the publication of his book "Dzhomba: Kalmyk Tea Poetry Legend, History and Recipes".

MACA contributed to the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center to support the work of the Ajia Gegeen Rinpoche and his followers' charitable work in Mongolia.

MACA co-sponsored the Buryat community's special service and exhibition dedicated to the Buddhist miracle Erdene Munkhe Bay or "Phenomenon of the XII Khambo Itigilov Lama" held on September 28 at the Niitsan Temple in Howell NJ.

On November 8, MACA celebrated the 27th annual Chinggis Khan memorial ceremony at the Princeton Marriott where we began with a moment of silence in memory of our MACA founders, Prof. Gombojab Hangin, Tsorj Lama and Lopsang Khiyod. This most important of days gives each of us an opportunity to remember and reflect on the greatest Mongol of history, someone whose profound influence on each of us continues to this day, more than 8 centuries after his founding of the Mongol nation. Special thanks go to Chinggeltu and Belig Borjiged for leading the logistical plans for the ritual. The nine Yamutan were Chagaan Baatar as Jinong with Paladins Ayusha Sanzhiev, Andrey Khushuget, Cholmon, Sibtain Yousafi, Chuluu Ujyediin, Darjay Gyamcho, Bembe Atschinow and Bayaar Borjiged. Mr. Byambakhuu served as master of ceremonies and event planner. There were over 200 people in attendance with attendees from the Hazara, Buriyat, Kalmyk, Tuvan, Uvur and Aru Mongol communities. Professor Nicholas Gier delivered the keynote address, speaking on the topic of The Hazaras of Afghanistan. Dr. Manduhai Buyandelger spoke on her recently published book "Exchanging History for Sheep: What's credible in the incredible rituals of shamanism". The 2014 Cultural Humanitarian awardee was Dr. Alicia Campi, President of the Mongolia Society, in recognition of extraordinary contributions to Mongolia and Mongolian culture in her long career as a diplomat and scholar. The cultural segment consisted of performances by Buryat, Tuvan, Kalmyk and Mongolian music and dance groups. A special thanks to the MACA board members Enghe Chimood, Palgi Gyamcho, Chagaan Baatar, Tony Ettinger and Chinggeltu Borjiged and their families for their continued support of the annual ceremony as well as our ongoing cultural and humanitarian projects. Special thanks to the organizing committee volunteers Chuluu Ujyediin, Byambakhuu Darinchuluun, Darima Sokttin, Elena Churyumova, Bembe Atschinow and David Ali for their time and energy in making possible the 27th annual ceremony. Other volunteers who helped in many ways are Edna Chharing, Samantha and Glen Tucker, Mukali and Marina Kuldinow and Saran and Erdene Kuldinow. We also express deepest thanks to the artist D. Tsogtbayar for his amazing Chinggis Khaan designs, which were printed specially for the ceremony by Liquat Ali and Madad Ali of Sign, Inc. One of the highlights of the day was the auction for the Mongolian Children's Aid and Development Fund led by Tony Ettinger, Enghe Chimood and Bembe Atschinow, which raised over \$6000 for the fund. I am compelled to acknowledge David Sodbinow for his generous contributions to the purchase of auction items. Many thanks also to Sasha Nadbitov for capturing the day's events on film. An edited film story of the day's highlights will be available on DVD very shortly.

We are also delighted that Toya Bao will produce a documentary book of the 27th annual ceremony, based on her photographs, film footage from Sasha, as well as her research and collections of materials from attendees and MACA board members. We are excited to see this project moving forward. We will provide further information as the publication date nears. Look for it on the MACA website (www.MACA-USA.org).

On December 26, MACA held the 23rd annual memorial ceremony at the Nitsan Temple for the late Tsorj Lama, Gegeen and former Abbot of the Khorgho Sume in Western Sunid. Tsorj Lama was the second president of MACA. In attendance were the 3 monks of the Nitsan Temple, as well as 8 monks from the Gomang monastery.

Tony Ettinger had established a relationship with the Wildlife Conservation Society in 2010, to support the Nomadic Nature Trunks program in Mongolia. This program provides critically needed natural science and conservation education to communities near protected areas in Mongolia. This initiative represented the beginnings of a shift in MACA's focus away from health and welfare to environmental protection. Check our website to see how this program evolves as we move into 2015.

The Mongolian Arts Council, chaired by Mr. Jantsannorov, was again the recipient of scholarships provided by MACA. The funds were generated through an interest bearing account established in Ulaanbaatar.

The MACA web page (www.maca-usa.org) continued to be managed by our able web administrator, Belig Borjigid. She also edited the eTolbo version of our newsletter.

I close wishing you a joyful holiday season and much good health and success of every kind in the coming new year.

