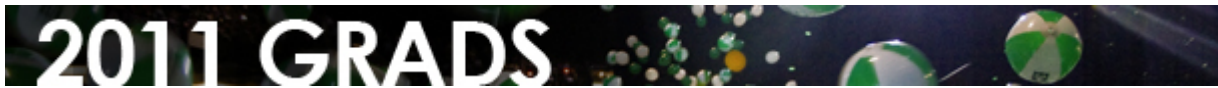


Students' Marriage Caps Parents' Odyssey

May 09, 2011 1:30 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin
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The serendipitous reunion of two families would lead to wedding bells for Tulane medical school students Tuan Nguyen and Anh-Van Mai. Nguyen and Mai's parents were Vietnamese citizens who fled the country's communist regime in the 1990s. Independent of the other, each family travelled to Southeast Louisiana, where, as fate would have it, they would join the same church. It was there the children met and fell in love.



It's a fairy-tale ending for Tulane medical school students Anh-Van Mai, left, and Tuan Nguyen, who will graduate on Thursday (May 12) and marry on May 21. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

"His parents joined St. Agnes Le Thi Thanh parish, which was already my family's church," says Mai. "That's where his mom and my mom saw each other and remembered that they were high school classmates back in Vietnam in the mid-'60s."

As with many Vietnamese expatriates, says Nguyen, their families had little reason to believe they would ever see a familiar face from their homeland.

“Because of the Vietnam War, a lot of the Vietnamese people were terrorized by the communists, and they would go anywhere that would take them ? the United States, Germany or anywhere else in the world,” says Nguyen. “It had to be destiny or fate that our mothers met one another in New Orleans and recognized each other after 40 years.”

Both Nguyen, 26, and Mai, 25, were born in Vietnam and arrived in Louisiana at ages 7 and 10, respectively. While both are receiving their medical degrees from Tulane this week, Nguyen also will receive two other degrees. He has earned a master's degree in public health as well as a master's degree in business administration.

Wedding and post-wedding plans are also finalized, the duo says. The two will marry on May 21 at the Vietnamese Catholic church where they first met.

Mai has accepted a four-year obstetrics/gynecology residency in Houston, and Nguyen, who anticipates a three-year primary care residency, is delaying his start to pursue a business venture and work with an orphanage in Vietnam.