


NEXUS

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INSIDE: Min Zidell's Gift | Garden Grand Opening | Commencement 2011

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Letters to the Editor and Editorial Submissions:
mconsidine@ncnm.edu

Address Changes: Maya Charvat at
mcharvat@ncnm.edu or 503.552.1519.

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*On the cover: Min Zidell on garden
grand opening day*



National College of Natural Medicine
049 SW Porter St., Portland, Oregon 97201
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A GIFT TO ONE IS A GIFT FOR ALL Healing Garden Celebrates Benefactor

As Min Zidell's 85th birthday approached, her family planned a festive surprise party. The celebrant's son, Jay, president of the Portland-based Zidell Companies, was ready to host a "This Is Your Life" presentation. Pilot and plane were engaged to fly banners reading "Happy Birthday, Min!" Everything was in place—except a gift.

It seems Mrs. Zidell—prominent philanthropist, matriarch of one of Portland's leading families—is hard to buy for.

"My nephew, Matt, and I were trying to come up with something," recalled her daughter, Charlene Zidell. "At the time, Mom was on the cemetery committee (at the family's synagogue). So I said, gee, maybe she'd like a bench in the cemetery. And Matt was horrified!"

Looking back three years later, mother and daughter collapsed in laughter before resuming the story of how NCNM came to plant the Min Zidell Healing Garden, now in bloom just west of the Ross Island Bridge.

"As a family," Charlene said, "we've done a lot of brick-and-mortar projects in the community. This time we thought, let's do something with some life to it!" Turning to her mother, she added: "We wanted your spirit to live on forever!"

When the garden idea emerged, "all the stars aligned," Charlene said. Her sister Vicki French Lippman, who initiated the family's relationship with NCNM (via 1995 alumna Kristin Stiles Greene, ND) when her young son suffered from allergies and asthma, quickly contacted the college. Within days, three distinct plans were produced.

"It was the right idea, in the right place, at the right time," Charlene said, and Min, a longtime advocate of natural and classical Chinese medicine, agreed.

"I find naturopathic doctors to be more caring, show more concern, and take a lot more time," she said. "They're working with the whole patient," which means plenty to a woman who once was greeted—while confined to a wheelchair—by an M.D. who told her she was in great shape.

Now often out of the chair and feeling better, thanks to cooperation between her natural and biomedical physicians, Mrs. Zidell is clearly pleased at the interplay of interests the garden serves.

"It's lovely to have a place like that, open to everyone, without charge—a place where you can go and think, where you can take a visitor," she said. "And it is, I think, going to open up a lot of interest in NCNM," especially the new program in botanical medicine.

Charlene noted that this hard-working garden provides the materials of medicine along with a tranquil atmosphere. "Even at hospitals where they have a 'healing garden,' it's for people to enjoy," she said. But NCNM's "is a healing garden that's truly therapeutic. I think it's just unique in its concept."

Indeed, the Min Zidell Healing Garden mingles its missions as beautifully as the botanicals planted over its 12,000 square feet

For NCNM's students, the garden provides an outdoor classroom to study plants that form the medicinal basis of natural and classical Chinese medicine—both types, will be cultivated together here. Statuary and a labyrinth designed from the feng shui mystic knot deepen the garden's appeal.

With its myriad of delights free and open to all, the garden caps off a lifetime of giving. While Min "married the boss's son," Emery

Zidell, after going to work at his family's company, she was a child of the Great Depression whose father died before she was born. But her family was no different from any other back then, she said; "we didn't know we were poor." So foreign was the notion that, in a moment burnished into family legend, young Min was the first to volunteer when her grade-school teacher asked who could take in a student unable to go home daily for lunch.

"How come you thought it was OK to bring someone home when all you had was scrambled eggs and toast?"

Charlene asked, 70-plus years later.

"Well," Min replied, "I saw no reason, if I had scrambled eggs and toast, why someone who didn't have anything shouldn't share what I had. I saw a need and I followed it."

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-Charlene Zidell

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A SEED ONCE SOWN

The day had been planned for well over two years. NCNM's Min Zidell Healing Garden grand opening, held one day before the 2011 Commencement Ceremony, brought reporters, guests, dignitaries, the campus community, neighbors and visitors elbow-to-elbow to honor the Garden's namesake and celebrate the Garden's launch.

Transforming the former site of a condemned building was a labor of love. Dedicated volunteers spent long hours in the new garden planting seedlings and small shrubs, which arrived from far and wide. The statue of ancient physician and herbalist Sun Simiao arrived and was placed in a location of prominence, and local craftsmen helped construct the Sokenbicha tea house. The elusive Portland sun, banished by record rainfall for months on end, suddenly appeared the day of the ceremony, as if on cue.

Sokenbicha treated attendees to its unsweetened botanical teas while Min Zidell took her place of honor. The percussive rhythms of the NCNM Drummers, resounding throughout the campus, served notice that the ceremony would begin. One by one, speakers extolled the Garden's significance to NCNM, and shared their appreciation to be part of the campus history.

The day could best be summed up by Min herself. When asked if she enjoyed the celebration, she replied without hesitation: "How could one not enjoy it?"

NCNM thanks grand opening speakers Patrick Quinton (Portland Development Commission); Drake Snodgrass (Drake's Seven Dees Landscape and Garden Centers); Vanessa Gardner Nagel, APLD (Seasons Garden Design, LLC); Shannon Watkins (Sokenbicha) and Dr. Glen Nagel (NCNM Botanical Medicine chair)—and our generous donors: the Zidell family; Huo Bao Zhu; Sokenbicha; Dr. Nagel and Dr. Paul Kalnins; and other friends who helped sow the seeds of the Min Zidell Healing Garden. ■

NCNM Drummers celebrate the Garden's grand opening. ►





A GRAND FINALE

What a difference a day makes. NCNM's 2011 commencement ceremony in late June was *the* day the 100 graduates had dreamt about for years. Finally, they could put aside their books and laptops, and march confidently toward a future of their own creation. Processing to the Symphonic Brass Quintet's rendition of "Pomp and Circumstance," the new graduates were cheered on by 1,300 proud families, relieved partners, and excited friends and others, flashbulbs lighting their way down the aisle.

The Portland Art Museum's Mark Building was the setting for the grand finale of the 2011 academic year. The elegant hall was graced by flags representing 35 states and two countries, and a capacity crowd decked out in their finest summer attire.

Dr. Cara Orscheln, a newly minted 2011 alumna who graduated with honors, thought the event was the perfect climax to her years of study.

"I've been to three NCNM commencement ceremonies before my own, and I honestly feel that this was the best one by far," she said. "So many aspects of the ceremony were so heartfelt and touching. And I was fully engaged the entire time." Referring to Dr. Deborah Frances' Lakota invocation, she added, "The energy in the hall felt alive!"

NCNM alumnus (1984) Dr. Don Warren, past president of Canadian College of Natural Medicine, was presented a Presidential Medallion for his outstanding leadership and contribution to the profession of natural medicine. Warren exhorted the graduates, whom he referred to as the "third wave of (professional) integration," to step into their future by holding fast to the "deep roots" of the profession that make it unique.

Orscheln was also moved by the keynote address given by Dr. Wade Davis, the National Geographic Society's celebrated ethnobotanist, who received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from NCNM for his literary and anthropological achievements investigating botanical medicine throughout the world. His stirring speech brought the entire auditorium to its feet with thunderous applause.

When Davis took the stage, he promised to share remarks that "veered from the conventional." He then deftly took the entire audience on a virtual journey across the far reaches of the earth, bringing them back again to their seats in the hall as he summarized: "Orthodoxy is the enemy of invention, despair an insult to the imagination."

"People achieve greatness by seizing opportunity," Davis said. "Creativity is the consequence of action, not its motivation." But the new practitioners were also encouraged to take their time as they officially launch their new health care careers. "The greatest creative challenge is the struggle to be the architect of your own life," he said. "So be patient. Do not compromise. And give your full destiny time to find you." ■

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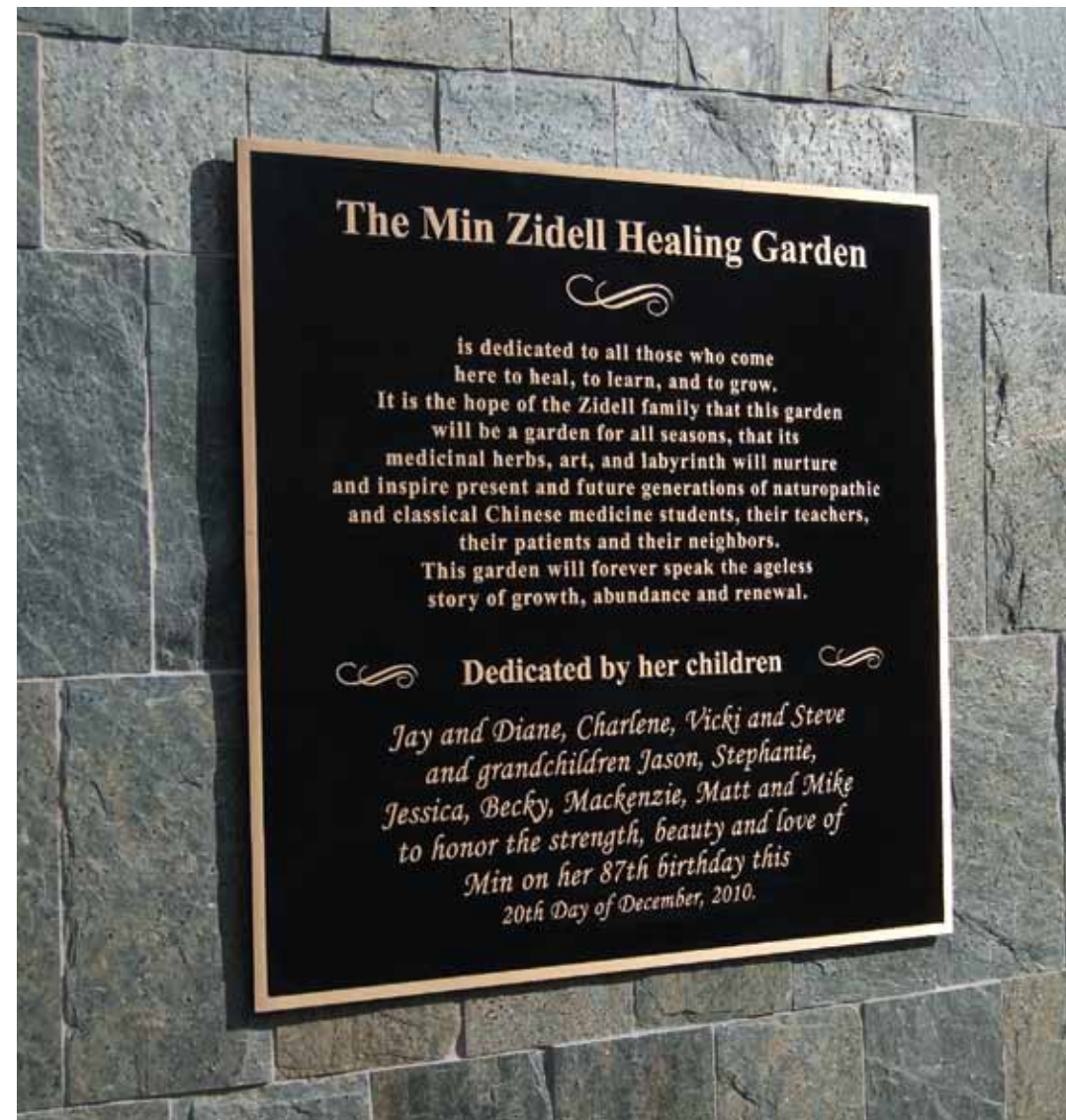
That simple principle guided her decades of roll-up-your-sleeves support for institutions including Providence St. Vincent's Medical Center and Congregation Neveh Shalom. "From the time the kids started Sunday school, I was over there," Min said. "I was Sisterhood president, ran the gift shop—and all along, Charlene was with me."

"We were shown this as a way of life," Charlene agreed. After her father's death, responsibility for charitable work passed from the business to the family, "and we've tried to keep the Zidell family together as contributors," she said.

Keeping the family together is a high value for the Zidells, over whom Min's Garden has cast its gentle spell. "It's really brought us all together, especially the grandkids—there are seven, ages 17 to 43," Charlene said. "The garden has such vibrancy to it!"

"You know how sometimes you plan and plan, and other times, things just come together?" her sister, Vicki, said. "Well, this garden came out of nowhere—really, a pretty random idea for us." Yet its magic was such that "it didn't take long before everyone was on board," including her son, Matt.

"It's such a win-win, with the medicinal aspect, the community aspect—it's a very meaningful gift," Vicki said. "The garden is far-reaching, and it is fabulous." ■



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