

# Choua Koua Chang

*Choua Koua Chang, from the province of Sam Neua, served as a soldier and was wounded twice. He left for the United States in 1975.*



## **What is your name?**

My name is Choua Koua. I am a Cha. When we came to Thailand, we were filling out forms and the people messed up my last name to Yang, but I changed it back to a Cha name. I went to take a test so I could change my name back to a Cha.

## **How old are you?**

I am 60 years old right now. I lived in the land of Sam Neua, which was a land in Laos. Xieng Khouang was nearby and Sam Neua was farther back. I was born in Sam Neua. Then, when I was just a baby we ran to Xieng Khouang. I was raised in Xieng Khouang. Then my dad came to Xieng Khouang. Then my dad died when I was just a baby. So we just stayed in Xieng Khouang. We stayed there for a while, then followed people to that land. It was time for people to be soldiers and fight with the French. My dad died when the Japanese were fighting against the French or a little bit before that. Then I grew up and Vang Pao became the leader of this land. We stayed until Vang Pao came, then we moved away to the land next to Xieng Khouang. When we came to the United States, we went to Thailand first. I stayed there until April 9<sup>th</sup>. Then I came to this area. I am happy that the Americans came to help us. Our governor and people came here so if you didn't come you could not stay there long. I want to thank the Americans. Since our governor and people came here, the Americans took us here so we could come and live here. Because we are so dumb, when we were living in Thailand, all I did was go to the garden and raise crops to feed myself. I never went to school. I don't really know anything. We came here because of the Americans and Vang Pao so that's how we had some way of coming here. Even though I don't know how to write any letters, I am glad that the Americans allowed me to come here. I am so old, I can't learn anything.

## **When you were living in Laos did you help them fight?**

When I was in Laos, Vang Pao became the leader of the soldiers and took hold of our land. If we weren't going to be a soldier, we would have to be one anyway. I was a soldier for 6 years.

## **Can you tell us about your job when you were a soldier?**

I was just dumb and didn't know the letters or anything. I didn't even know the letters, "Laos," or "Thailand." So I just became a soldier. When we were fighting there, I got hit two times. I was very young and had just gotten married. At that time we didn't kill the other men but the Laos people traded with us to go fight with the other people. We did eventually fought against the other people.

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***When you were fighting, where were you fighting?***

It was in Xieng Khouang.

***Did you help Vang Pao fight?***

Yes. I helped Vang Pao. The Americans came to our land then Vang Pao came to be a soldier. The Americans were with us there.

***When you became a soldier, can you tell us about what kind of food you ate and the guns that you used?***

We used the same guns. I don't know how it came over, but the Americans sent money for us to buy the guns. I do not know if the food was from Thailand or Japan, but I know they brought us rice for us to cook and eat. I don't know if it came from Laos, Thailand, Japanese, or if the Americans sent it to us. I really don't know. The Americans came to where we were and I don't know if the food came from them or not. They took it to a place near by them and they would boil it, then they would send it to us.

***When did you leave Laos?***

I left in April of 1975.

***When Vang Pao went to Thailand were you still in the jungle running?***

Yes. Since Vang Pao went to Thailand, we couldn't do anything so we stayed in the jungle. All we wore was the Hmong's clothes. We would go out and people would see us and think that we are just some Hmong people going to the garden. When we saw people with guns we would just run to the jungle again.

***Did you ever experience yellow rain in Laos when the soldiers came?***

Yes. At that time we all were trying to find a way to come to Thailand. We couldn't find a way to Thailand, so we couldn't really survive because we needed food and everything to survive. We hid our guns in the forest and then we came out to go to the garden and got ready to leave out of Laos to Thailand. Then we filled out forms to come here. If you ran out of the forest and there were people watching, you would die. You would wait and fill out forms to Thailand. At that time some people put some medicine in the airplanes. The airplanes would smell. Then a lot of people started getting sick because of the smell. That year was '70.

***When the soldiers sprayed the yellow rain at you, did you have a brother, uncle, or somebody that got hit with the yellow rain and died?***

Yes I did. I don't really know, but when they sprayed the yellow rain, there were many people staying in this house. We would come out and try to run but the guards would catch us, and make us stay in this room so that they could watch us, so we wouldn't run away. They would spray the yellow rain on us if we tried to run away. They sprayed it on some of my people, and they died. Our people died, there were at least 60 people that died. With all the children too, there were 60 people.