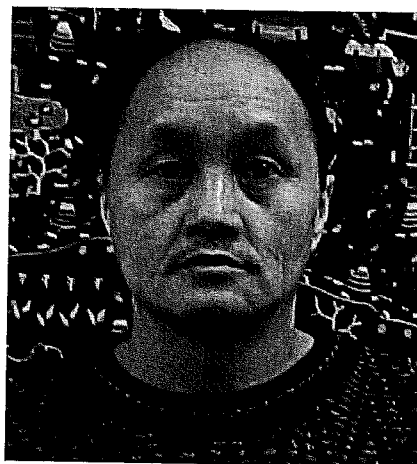


## Nao Soua Her

*Nao Soua Her joined the army when he was fifteen years old. Nao worked directly with an American advisor and later transferred to the army of General Vang Pao. He came to the United States in 1987.*



I will now explain the war as it happened in Vietnam. I have been a soldier since I was fifteen years old. I was with the soldiers from 1963 to 1975. There are three types of soldiers in the army.

The first kind is just like the soldiers in the city and forest. They look after the forest and city. The second kind of soldier was known as Red Soldiers. If there was a major war somewhere they had to go there as soon as possible. The third type of soldier is known as Tin Soldiers. If there was a war somewhere then they have to go there. I was a soldier in all three. In 1963 to 1967 I served in the Tin Soldiers. The leader of the Tin Soldiers at the time was an American. His name was Mike. Mike at the time was twenty years old. During the war in Vietnam, Mike had fallen from an aircraft and shattered one side of his leg that caused him to limp. I served with Mike until 1968. Because of our loss in the war, the others and I moved into General Vang Pao's army. From 1970 to 1975, I went into the Red Soldiers unit. In 1971, 1972 and 1973, a lot of soldiers died from that army. In 1973, General Vang Pao sent his army into Xieng Khouang, a city in Asia. I was part of that army. We fought in a battle there for seven days and nights and we lost. The soldiers in that army didn't know if they were going to surrender. In March of 1975 word finally got out that the war was going to end. The American army was going back to the U.S. Many people didn't know the Americans were going to withdraw their support and leave. So, when no aircraft showed up they were shocked. What happened to the aircraft and airplanes? The Vietnamese were invading their territory and they were told not to shoot the Vietnamese. So we lost the war. They heard that General Vang Pao had left the country and we used whatever weapons we had left to back up the Red Soldiers. The Vietnamese said that they would change the government and nothing else. They told all the Lao and Hmong soldiers that they will live together in peace again. That was what we believed, so we lived with the new government. Later in the year the Vietnamese government took away our old guns, the ones General Vang Pao had given them, and replaced them with the new guns that the Vietnamese had given them. The Vietnamese also took away the old paper money and replaced it with the new ones. On pay day those that went to claim their money were caught and put in jail. Those that didn't go learned about the government feelings and plans. They knew that those that were in the army before with General Vang Pao were going to be captured and put in jail. They moved to live in the country. They held on to their old weapons. All the leaders on our side left the country with General Vang Pao and our old government was destroyed. With our leaders gone, we didn't know where to go or what to do. I moved to the forest. Along the way we had to fight some Vietnamese soldiers who got in our way. We lived in the forest until 1979 when we could no longer survive there. All we ate was anything that we find in the forests such as

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leaves, twigs, or berries grown on plants. I decided to leave the forest behind and go to Thailand. Along the way there were dead bodies lying on the roads and in the Mekong River. There was fighting in the forests between the Vietnamese and the Hmong who tried to get to the Mekong River. I crossed the river with my wife and children into Thailand. All of my weapons were left for the Thai to look after. After that my family and I went to live in Vientiane until 1987. In 1987 I decided to come to America with my family. My friends, mother and father, and relatives all died in the war. I was lucky enough to stay alive and come to live in the United States. Because I don't know English or have any education, I knew very little when I came to America. During the war there was no time to waste on education. That is why at my age I don't know English nor have a good education. Because of the war, my vision and hearing is not good. For kids around the world, war isn't easy, your friends and family will be killed. On the way to Thailand, people died of hunger or in the Mekong River. War is very hard. Those CIA men who survived the war and are now old and crying about the war should know that the Hmong veterans also are crying with them because we were fighting on their side. The Hmong's own people died as much as America's people in the war.

***How was the food at the refugee camp given out to each family?***

They food were given out by weight to each family every one to two weeks. Each family was given an amount of food according to the number people in their family.

***How was it like when you first come to America?***

It was very different from Asia. The climate in America was not just hot and mild but cold and freezing. In Asia the climate was just hot and mild. There was no cold weather there. It is just like living in California. There is also a difference in houses, foods, forests, peoples, and languages.

***How old were you when you first join soldiers?***

I was only fifteen years old. For all you kids, you should keep studying hard in school and get a good education so you don't end up as we did, not knowing any skills.

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