

Thia Her

Thia Her was a soldier who fought in Laos and eventually came to the United States.

Long ago I lived in Laos. Then in 1950, we were interfered with by other forces. We tried to block the Vietnamese so they couldn't get to us. The French and the Vietnamese fought with the Laotians. They kept fighting. If the French won, they would get all of the land of Laos. If the French lost, they would have to go away. As the arguing continued, they continued to fight in Laos. They asked for our help and we gave it. As the battles continued the French lost. With their loss, we left the army and returned to farming. We were farmers when the Americans came. General Vang Pao ordered all of us to recruit as many men as we could for the army. Age didn't matter. He wanted young and old men to serve in the army. We all received guns. After we were armed with weapons, we fought with the Americans against the Vietnamese. We killed many Vietnamese and they became mad at us for helping the Americans. We would sit around and wait for the call. When word came, we would go out and attack the Vietnamese. If we couldn't defeat the Vietnamese soldiers, we would call for reinforcements. When the reinforcements came we would defeat the Vietnamese soldiers and force them to go away. When that happened, we would go back to farming. While we were farming, the Vietnamese would return and we would send word for the reinforcements and the Vietnamese soldiers would retreat. Then we returned to our farming. We cooked for the Americans and they gave us money in return. We were able to buy more food and we could eat too. They paid us in Laotian money and it was a lot. They wanted to pay us in American money but we had them switch it to the money of the country so we could use it. After a while they stopped giving us money and they just gave us food. They would give us food that we were familiar with like rice and vegetables. When we left and came to the United States, the government has continued to give me money. When my wife died, they gave me less money and now I live with my son and I have to pay for the house. My son and his family pay for the rest.

When the Americans came, what was your first impression?

I didn't think anything. I was happy that they came over to help because of the French. After the French left we did not know who would help us. General Vang Pao said that they had come over to help and they had guns. We were happy that they had brought guns and money.

What kind of fighting did you do?

When the Americans came we took care of the guns. We also got food for the Americans to eat. They gave us money for food. When the Vietnamese came we fought and killed them until they ran away. We were told where to be and whenever the Vietnamese came we would attack them. We would fight to kill. We were organized into different units and placed in different places where they thought the Vietnamese would come. After the attacks, we would chase the enemy soldiers in the forest.

Were you afraid of dying?

I wasn't scared, but I was worried about my family. I didn't want anything to happen to them. I was happy to be fighting for my country.