



Leng Lee

*Leng Lee arrived in America in 2003.
He now resides in Wausau.*

What is your name?

Leng Lee.

How old are you?

Eleven years old.

Where were you born?

Wat Tham Krabok, Thailand.

What are you brothers' and sisters' names and ages?

My sisters are Xiong Mee, 16; Mao, 15; Chia, 8; Pa, 7; Sheng, 3; and Mai Ger, 2. My brothers are Damrong, 13; me, 11; Lar, 6; and Chong Kong, 1.

What are you parents' names?

My dad is Xiong Pao Lee. My mom is Joua Vang.

How many years have you lived here?

Four years.

In what year did you arrive in America?

2003.

When you came, were there any other people with you?

Yes.

Were there a lot of other Hmong families?

Yes, there were.

Did you all come to Wisconsin or did you go in different ways?

They went, but we stayed here.

What did you think when you got here? Was it different from Thailand?

It was different because they had different rules to follow.

Do you feel comfortable living in America?

Yes, it is comfortable.

Do you like living in America better than Thailand?

Yes.

You've lived here for four years. If they let you go back, would you go?

Yes.

Why would you want to go back?

I've always lived in Thailand and I like it there.

When you lived in Thailand, did you go to school?

Yes.

Who in your family went to school?

One of my brothers and me. He was ten and I was seven. My two older sisters were twelve or thirteen and they were good.

Were you good at school?

I didn't know much Thai yet.

How long did you go to school in Thailand?

I didn't go long because we were coming to America.

When you lived in Thailand, how did you parents make money?

They did gardening and picked green vegetables.

Was the garden far?

No.

What did you eat in Thailand?

Meat was too expensive so we only ate rice and green vegetables.

Were the younger children born in the United States when you arrived?

Sheng was born in Thailand. Chang Kong and Mai Ger were born in the United States.

When you went to school in Thailand, did you know any Thai?

I know a little because a Thai kid liked to play with me.

You spoke Thai with each other?

Yes.

Did you meet this kid at school?

Yes.

Was your school far away from your house?

Yes.

Did you walk or ride a car?

We walked.

You said you know how to speak a little Thai and Hmong, so is it hard to learn English?

Not really.

Why?

It's a lot easier.

Do your older brothers and sisters help you?

Yes, they do help.

Does anything happen at the end of the school day?

When we come home our teacher gives us a carton of milk. If they don't have any white milk, they give us chocolate.

In Thailand, what did you learn?

We learned to speak English from a Hmong teacher.

What else did you learn?

We learned a little more of English and she told us stories.

Do you remember one of the stories?

One of them was about the rabbit and turtle race.

Do you remember how many kids were in your class?

There were 15 kids.

Were they the same age as you?

They were six.

Did you help your parents at the garden?

Yes.

You all did?

We gardened near the grave sites.

You weren't scared?

No.

Did you sleep overnight at the garden?

There was no place to sleep.



How did you register to come to the U.S.?

We registered by getting shots.

How many times did you get shots?

Once. One per person.

Why did your parents decide to come to the U.S.?

We had an aunt that sponsored us to come over here.

What was her name?

Her name is Mai.

Did she live in Wisconsin?

Yes, she lives on Seventh Street.

Do you remember the places that your plane landed?

It went through China and then to America.

Do you like riding on a plane?

It is too loud. It hurts my ears.

What is different from America compared to Thailand?

In Thailand they let you butcher animals. In this country, if you want to butcher animals, you got to go tell the authorities.

Were there a lot of stores in Thailand?

Not really.

Have you been to the bigger towns?

No, I haven't.

Have you visited any other cities than just in town?

In third grade we went to Green Bay. When I was in fourth grade he took me to visit my relatives, but I don't remember the name of the town.

Did you drive or take an airplane?

We drove.

How long did it take?

Four hours.

Do you like eating American food?

I like it a little bit.

What do you like to eat?

I like eating hamburgers.

What are your future plans?

I want to be a nurse.

Why do you want to be a nurse?

It is good for our family.

Do you have anything else to say about living in Thailand or here?

In Thailand, when my friend and I were done with school, he liked to go out play with me. In this country there are not a lot of Hmong friends, but there are a lot of American people.

Do you have lot of American friends?

I had some in fifth grade.

Right now, what grade are you going into?

I'll be going into sixth grade.

There are a lot of American teachers. What are your thoughts about that?

It's hard.

Do you have a Hmong translator?

Yes, there is.

Are you happy there are other Hmong in school with you?

Yes.

Is it easier to learn with a lot of Hmong kids?

Yes, because they can help you.

Do you know if the students from your class are from Wat Tham Krabok?

There are some I don't know, and some are my friends from Thailand.