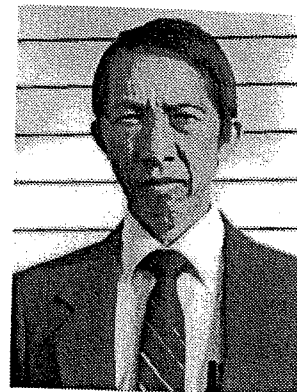


## Zang Dang Thao

*Zang Dang Thao lived in Na Kouang, Vientiane in Laos. He was involved in the secret war and was also a farmer and blacksmith. Zang has lived in the area for fourteen years. He is married and has three sons and five daughters.*



My name is Zang Pang Thao.

*Zang Pang Thao. Okay, how old are you?*

I'm 57.

*What do you as a job?*

Cleaning.

*Janitor?*

*Where?*

Wausau Insurance on First Avenue.

*What was your educational background?*

In Laos?

*Yes, in Laos , and when you come over here. When you came over here and when you were living over there.*

When I came to here?

Yes.

April of 1980.

*Did you go to school , high school?*

No. ESL.

*Where were you born?*

In Laos.

*In what year?*

August 18 . . . 40.

1940?

Yes.

*What was your homeland like when you were living there?*

In Laos?

Yes.

Farmer, the first soldier, [Soldier? ] CIA soldier, second farmer.

*How old were you when you left Laos?*

Forty-five.

*Why did you leave?*

Because the communists take over Laos country.

*Was it difficult to move to the United States? Why?*

Oh, because American CIA, we had a soldier. CIA, American CIA soldier. Americans say that when we [word not discernible] the country, American will bring, take to United States.

*How did you come over here? By boat or walking?*

By plane.

*Did you come straight to the United States? Was it hard when you came over here? Were there difficulties?*

Yes. Difficult for the English language and children not obey the parent. Difficult like that.

*What did you think when you first came here?*

California.

*What was it like?*

I like that California better, but no job.

*No job?*

Yes.

*Where in California did you go?*

Oh, [a word sounding much like Taylor said twice] California.

*Did you like it there?*

Yes. The weather is better there, but no job. No plant.

*Did you have any problems like discrimination, people that didn't treat you right?*

Not much.

*Did you know a lot of people when you came here to Central Wisconsin?*

Yes.

*How about in California?*

California, no.

*Was California the first state you went to?*

Yes, first state. Second state Utah.

*Utah? And then here?*

Third state Arkansas. Then Wisconsin fourth state for me now.

*Who did you come with?*

My parent, my family, my wife, my children.

*How did you learn how to ride the bus and go to stores ?*

Oh, a sponsor. I learn from my sponsor to my bus.

*What were some of the greatest challenges for you when you first came to Central Wisconsin?*

The greatest challenges?

Yes, the problems .

I still don't understand.

*How about a new question? In what ways did your family change after arriving in the United States?*

Change clothes, change language, change to write, change to read [brief laughter from both parties], change my job.

*What customs do you still retain from your culture? Like are your clothes still the same, or are they different now?*

Hmong clothes?

*Are most of your friends in the same background? Are all your friends Hmong?*

Yes, they are.

*How do others view your ethnic group?*

What are our lives are like now, or before?

Now and then.

Before, we had gardens. We raised all kinds of animals like pigs, cows, oxen, and chickens. When we lived there, we didn't have to pay a rent, so we built our own homes. When we got to this land, we don't have any of that anymore, so we have to work and live on welfare and go to school.

*What language do you speak with your family or friends?*

Hmong.

*Was it hard to learn English?*

Yes, very hard.

*What was it like when you were in the refugee camps?*

Oh, I don't like the refugee camp, because it was too poor and in poverty. Yes, so hard.

*How long did you stay there?*

One year three months.

*What are parts of your culture that you would like to see preserved for the future?*

Change the old religion to the new one. We change from believing in the devil into believing in God.

*What do you think Central Wisconsin will be like in twenty years from now in regards to your ethnic group?*

What Wausau will be like?

*Yes, for the Hmongs.*

Twenty years from now, most of the Hmongs will have to work , and most of them will own homes.

*What do you think it means to be an American?*

What do we think it means to be an American? Well, just to become a citizen.

*What do you think of becoming one of those? Is it good?*

I think it will be good because you are on their land, and you must follow their rules.

*Let's go back to when you came here, what was the hardest part?*

The hardest was when we crossed the Mekong. That was the hardest part. We crossed the Mekong, and that was the hardest part.

*Did you go on a boat?*

Some went on boats. Some just swam.

*Did a lot of people die?*

Yes.

*Do you know how many?*

Four people, one family. They drowned and died.

*Oh, a family died?*

Yes.

*What were their names?*

Xia Cha Vang.

*What Hmong group do you belong to?*

What Hmong group?

*What clan?*

What clan? I don't understand, but if you mean what last name then, we're Thaos.