



## Chong Vue Vang

*Chong Vue Vang was a soldier in Laos.  
Some of his family still lives in Laos today.*

***How did you get involved in the war?***

The war was in our country; that is why we had to go to war. The French were there and asked for our help, so we helped them. The war lasted until 1940, then the French went back. After that the Lao started. Then we fought with the Lao until 1960 when the Americans came and wanted our help. That is why we became soldiers.

***Where did you live?***

I lived in Sam Neua province.

***Was it very small?***

Yes.

***Can you describe for us what an average day was like during the war?***

It was very hard. There was a lot of fighting and running from place to place. We made the forest our home.

***What do you think was the hardest part about being in the war?***

The hardest part was in the village where we stayed because the Vietnamese had come there.

***Are there any particular experiences that stick out in your mind today?***

The one experience I have said before. 1960 is when the war started and we came to Long Cheng. We moved to Long Cheng and the Vietnamese bombed it a lot. Long Cheng got hit three times.

***Did the Vietnamese 'get' Long Cheng then?***

No, they did not. They bombed it three times, but they never got it. In 1968, we moved from Sam Thong to Long Cheng and everything started there.

***Many who were in the war have nightmares at night. Do you have those same problems?***

Yes. Everyday I'm not in America, I'm in Laos fighting in the forest. Tell your family members that we are all like that, too.

***Were you worried about the safety of your family when you were fighting?***

Yes. At the time of the war, I was worried about my kids and my family.

***Do you feel that the Americans helped your village, or did the Americans create problems for your village?***

The Americans came to help the Hmong; that is why we helped them fight the communists.

***Why were you in the war?***

When the Americans came to ask for our help, they said that if we lost the country, they would let our soldiers come to the United States. That is why we are here. The American soldiers signed it.

***Were you aware that the United States was pulling out of the country, and how did you feel when General Vang Pao left the country?***

Yes! We did think about that. When we lost, they left us, and they let us stay in the forest for about one or two years before we decided to run away to Laos. Some people were sent back and they still have a very poor life right now.

***Did you feel betrayed?***

Yes.

***Did you feel angry?***

When they left us, we still had their guns, so we fought with the communists for two more years.

*"When the Americans came to ask for our help, they said that if we lost the country, they would let our soldiers come to the United States."*

***How did you feel when General Vang Pao left your country?***

When he left and we were left behind, we stayed in the forest. I thought we would never get to come to the United States because we were living in the forest.

***Do you feel that most Americans understand the relationship between the Hmong and the United States CIA?***

Yes, I think they should know since we helped them for a long time. We thought we helped them and they would help us. We came to this country because we helped them and we lost the war. That is why we had to run away. We ran to survive. We had to hide for two years before we could reach Thailand.

***When you got to Thailand, was it very hard for you to start a new life?***

When we got to Thailand, they put us in Ban Vinai camp. We were very poor. Because we have some cousins in the United States, they sent a little money to help us and that is how we survived. My sister, two of my older brothers, one younger brother, my two sons and I made up our group in the camp. They had to sign to accept us, and that is how we got here too.

***How long were you in the refugee camp?***

Two years.

***Then, from the refugee camp, where were you relocated?***

We moved to Ban Napho for one year. Then, we moved to Phanat Nikhom, stayed there for six months and then came here.

***You were in refugee camps for almost three years?***

Yes, three years.

***What was life like in the refugee camps?***

We couldn't do anything. We were surrounded so we couldn't do anything.

***Were you forced to work?***

No, not the old people, but some of our younger men did work.

***Do you have an estimate of how many people were in the refugee camp with you?***

No. I don't know, but there were many.

***Are there any particular experiences that you remember from the refugee camps?***

When we stayed there, we did nothing. We just stayed and waited for the time to come to the United States. They told us we needed to stay and wait for our forms to come. We already registered while we were staying in Ban Vinai. That was all they told us. We stayed there for one year, and finally my name appeared. That is why we are here.

***Do you know how the list of names was made? Who got to come first and why?***

The people who got to come first started for Thailand right after General Vang Pao left. Those who weren't with General Vang Pao didn't get to come as early.

***Did you have any problems with food and supplies while living in the refugee camps?***

When we stayed there, we didn't get to go anywhere. We had to wait for the government to send us some food.