

Nor Neng Vang

*Nor Neng Vang is from Sam Neua in Laos.
He served as a soldier and finally left Laos in 1989.*

This is about my brother-in-law. When we lived over there and were sick, we had to take care of ourselves. When we were over there, we had to work very hard in our gardens. We worked very hard until it was time to harvest the crops from the garden. We harvested all the corn. When we were in Thailand, we had to work very hard with our bare hands. We had to come over to America because living in Thailand was not good. I am very old now. When I was in Laos, I was a soldier from 1961 to 1975. We could not stay, so we ran to Thailand to fill out the forms to come here. We came in 1989 or 1991, I do not really know. We have been living here for ten years now but I am old. When I was a soldier, I was very deaf. Right now, I cannot hear anything and cannot do anything. I just sit around my house asking and waiting for welfare money to pay for my house. When I was young, I was a soldier. Now I am old and do not know what to do. I just stay home. When I want to go somewhere, I ask the kids to take me there. I do not know what to do. I want to say that my grandsons are teenagers and go to school. They have to work very hard. When you go to school, do not play a lot, work on your schoolwork. Be serious about school. I was 20 when I married my wife. I have four girls. They are all married and living in Milwaukee. When we lived in Laos, we were soldiers. The others came, that is why we could not stay there. When we came from Laos, we had to cross a river with a boat.

When you were still a soldier, do you remember the Americans?

It has been a long time. The year the Americans came was 1962. When the people came to fight we did not defeat them, so the Americans came to help us fight them.

When you came here, what did you think?

I didn't think anything when I came here. We did not think of anything, but when we were soldiers, we did not fight very well when the people came to kill us, The Americans came and fought, then went away. We were soldiers until 1975, then Vang Pao came to America. The villagers stayed until the Vietnamese soldiers came, then they made it hard for us. The Vietnamese captured and killed them, so we couldn't stay there anymore. We ran to Thailand and the Americans helped us come here. We couldn't stay, so we just came here to be safe.

What year do you think General Vang Pao and the Americans left?

Vang Pao went in 1975, but I don't really know what year the Americans left.

What did you think when Vang Pao left?

When Vang Pao ran, I was still a soldier in that country and we didn't defeat them. We couldn't stay because of the soldiers, so we came here.

Do you think that Americans in this area know about your relationship with the United States government?

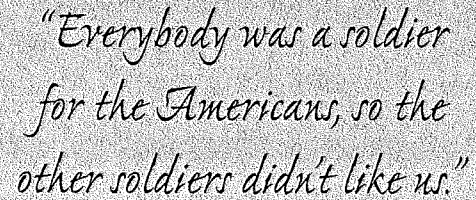
When soldiers came over there, the Americans came to do things to our area. They came over there so we ran over here. The other soldiers came and said we were soldiers with the Americans, so we had to leave to live here. When we were over in Thailand, we would be sick.

Is there anything else you want to say?

That is all I have to say. I already talked about having the kids go to school and having good grades.

How do you feel about having the soldiers fighting against each other?

Nobody liked it. I was 20 years old. The soldiers came to fight us. Everybody was a soldier for the Americans, so the other soldiers didn't like us. We couldn't stay, so we left with Vang Pao and came here.



"Everybody was a soldier for the Americans, so the other soldiers didn't like us."

Who told you to be a soldier?

That year the elders told me to be one, so I had to be one.

When you were a soldier, did you like it?

Whether I liked or did not like it, I had to do it. The Governor told me to be one, then I had to be one.

When you were a soldier, were you paid?

If they had money, they would pay me. We did get some money every month.

When you ran away from Laos, where did you run?

We ran to America. We came from Thailand, but we couldn't stay, so we came here. We went into the forest to get our stuff. Then we came to Thailand. stayed there for a while, then went to Phanat Nikhom. We stayed there for seven months and then we came to America.

Do you have anything else to add?

That's all. That's how we came here in 1989.

Would you go back to Thailand if you could?

We can't go back. Now that we came to this area, we can't go back. If I could go back there, I would.