



## John Vue

*John Vue served as a soldier for seventeen years. After the collapse, he crossed the Mekong and came to Wisconsin.*

***When you were moving from place to place, did your family suffer any casualties?***

When I was a soldier, I had two brothers and five sisters. Both of my brothers were soldiers and they died.

***When you were a soldier, did you worry about your family or children?***

I was not married at the time, but I was worried about my brothers and sisters-in-laws at home. I was worried because I didn't know if I was going to live or die in the jungle.

***How did you feel when General Vang Pao left your village? Were you angry?***

When he was leaving, yes, I was mad. I was mad and angry because I was a soldier for him and he had us fighting in a heavy battle in Xieng Khouang. When the place was in very bad shape, they all left us behind. We were all worried and angry because the Vietnamese might find and torture us.

***What did you do as a soldier?***

When I was a soldier, I fought against the enemy in many battles; I fought for my side.

***When there was fighting, how many were in each group?***

We went in groups; there were about 40 to 50 soldiers together. When we went into the hills to fight, there were only 12 or 13 people fighting because we let others stay behind.

***What was it like after General Vang Pao left?***

After he left, the Vietnamese were guarding Laos. We lived there hopelessly because everything was destroyed and there was no reason for the people to live there anymore.

***Do you think any Americans know the CIA's role in these events?***

Right now, I don't know where any of the Americans are that helped us but I know that Jerry was one of them and another one named 2-Pack. He was helping with food. Other Americans came and helped.

***How did you get out of Laos?***

I didn't think I could ever leave after General Vang Pao did. There were a lot of Vietnamese soldiers in Laos but somehow I managed to get out by moving from village to village. After that, I got people to help me get out of Laos.

***Did you cross the Mekong River?***

Yes, when we came from Laos, I crossed with friends. They now live in Milwaukee.

***How did you get across?***

There were no inner tubes to float across. We used bamboo to cross.

***After crossing, did you stay in the refugee camps?***

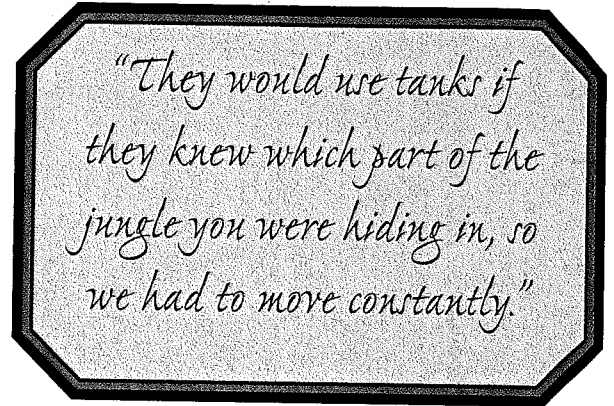
We lived there for one week.

***What was it like when you were there?***

When I arrived, the first thing I thought was that it was in poor condition. When we got there they just pulled plastic sheets down and everyone slept on the ground.

***How did you get food when you were fighting?***

When we were fighting, they dropped supplies to us.

***What was the hardest part of being a soldier?***

The hardest part was being shot at by the Vietnamese. They would use heavy guns and tanks and often they were shooting at us when we were on hills.

***Did the fighting change after General Vang Pao and the Americans left?***

We were still fighting after they left because we didn't have a ruler or a nation. They (the Vietnamese) were looking for us, too! We had to hide or else they might find us. But if we didn't go anywhere, we wouldn't have any food and we were hungry. We would steal food from different gardens. We would go at night when there weren't any soldiers guarding.

***After they left, did the fighting change or was it the same?***

Yes, it was the same. They were still using their big and small guns. They would use tanks if they knew which part of the jungle we were hiding in, so we had to move constantly.

***Do you think the Americans helped at all?***

At that time, they were helping us a lot. During the war they gave us supplies, and also during the time that General Vang Pao was there.

***Was it hard to fight after they left?***

It was harder. There wasn't any food either. The Vietnamese soldiers found the airplanes and they had all the good guns to help their side. We didn't have anything so it was harder for us.

***How long were you a soldier?***

I was a soldier from 1968 to 1975.

***Were you ever shot at during the war?***

I was shot at once.

***Do you remember when they dropped "yellow rain" on you?***

At that time, I remember the Vietnamese dropping it.

***What does it look like?***

When they drop it, we couldn't see or tell what it was. We would see it dropping off the leaves- it had a yellow color. Many times we would touch it.

***Did you leave with General Vang Pao?***

No, we didn't know about it until after he left due to the fact that he didn't tell anyone he was leaving. Only four or five others left with him.

***What was your first impression of America when you got off the plane?***

When I got off the plane, I didn't think of anything except that I didn't have any relatives or friends and I was all alone. Plus, I didn't speak the language and didn't know how I was going to live here.

***Do you have anything to say to the teenagers today?***

I would like to say a few words. We didn't know English when we came to this country. It doesn't matter who you are, we now live in America and have to learn to educate ourselves and help one another. We are one of a kind. Our mothers and fathers took us from Laos and they were poor. Now we can see that this is a better place and we can see how things were back then. Teenagers have to be patient and good and learn a lot to help the old. Study hard and stay in school. No matter if your parents are good at education or not and it doesn't matter if you're poor; the only thing that matters is you are here. Learn education because the future is yours. I want to tell you to study hard and stay in school. Help your parents and don't leave them alone. I want everyone to love one another and help each other for the future.