

Pang Chong Xiong

Pang Xiong Xiong came from Boua Mou in the Vientiane Province of Laos. In Laos, he was a farmer and also served for the military for the secret war for Laos. He left Laos in 1979. He is married and has eight sons and one daughter.



When you came to America, what did you have to leave behind?

I left my mother and them in Thailand. When I came, I was crying and you couldn't see.

You and who came?

Me and my wife and the children came. My mother and them still in Thailand.

Are they all here in American or still in Thailand?

They all have come.

Are you sad with the fact that you had to leave them behind?

The fact that everyone is on a different side of the world and will never see again for rest of life and never see another again. Miss a lot. Sad too.

How old were you when you came to America?

When I came to America, 18 years.

When you were in the army, how old were you?

In the army I was fifteen about.

Then, when you were fighting, was it hard?

Oh, hard (Couldn't hear) guns, (Couldn't hear) gun shoot Hmong (Couldn't hear).

Have you been shot by them or anything?

Haven't been hit.

Why did you leave Laos?

We left Laos because Vietnamese came and took over our land and we didn't like their customs.

What were their customs like that you didn't like?

Their customs were different from ours. We couldn't live. They wanted us to do what they did. They came and could sleep with your women, and you could sleep with their women all right, but we don't like that.

You didn't like their customs?

We didn't like their customs.

Then you left Thailand, why did you leave Thailand?

We left Thailand because they didn't let us farm like our heart desire. They locked us, fence around

us. Then they didn't let us go cut and slash trees and farm outside. Then we were broken hearted and couldn't eat until they deliver food. They don't bring the food. Then we starve like that. We finally decide to come here.

When you are in America, do you do what you want?

This land you can do what you like to, but . . . only if you couldn't do it (laughter).

How do you like America? A little better than Thailand?

Like America better than the land of Thais. Thais are mean. When you go outside, they beat you. Your women go outside, they do bad stuff too. The men go outside, they get beaten and killed too. Then you have to go as a couple or with other people. You go and they beat you and . . . Then you can't tell the people at home that.

The difference between Thais and Vietnamese is what?

They talk the same, but Thais talk a little different. Thai are more open heart than Vietnamese.

When you ran the place you lived in Vietnam, did you go live in the jungle?

When we were living in Vietnam, we were living in the jungles only.

Were there people, Hmongs nearby?

There were Hmongs, a lot of Hmongs around.

Did you live there when Thais came? Did you have to go to another place first?

No, we didn't.

Was it hard?

Hard. Very hard. If we didn't come to Thailand, it would have been very hard. When I came to that, thought that if stayed there, the life would end soon. But if came, life would be longer then. Then Hmong all came to Thailand. The ones with good fate came pass too. But the ones with bad luck that came were shot by Vietnamese along the way. Others came and were lost and killed in the Mekong River too.

Who did you follow to get to Thailand?

There were people who led the way, but you didn't know them.

Then you just follow them?

We took our children and carefully followed them, not knowing who they were. People spoke Hmong, so we went and didn't know them.

Then in America, what kinds of paperwork did you do to come? How long did you have to wait to be able to come?

Oh, we waited for a year, two. We were family 7393. It was the 80's when we came to this land.

How did you do it?

They ask you what your age was, how many kids you have, what's your name, how many brothers did you have, how many sisters, and what your parents were call. That's all.
Then did you all have to go at once, or how many times?

We went two times.

Two times, then you could come?

Was it hard?

Hard because they don't let you tell. If you do, you fail and don't get to come then. The ones before us, they failed then. Because they said the wrong thing. Then we were scared too. But we had said the right thing, and we didn't fail. Then the ones that failed, they changed to a whole new different name too and the last name too. Me, I came with my real name then.

Then you have to, to go only once?

Only once. One time. Then the second time, then go raise your hand. They take you to raise your hand, do a checkup. They do a nude checkup to see if your body is good. After that, wait until your name comes out to go. When they call name, then be ready to come.

Did you have to get shots or anything?

Yes, we got two. The medicine to not get sick.

When you came to America, did they check you or anything?

They check too. We came, they check too. But they use the medicine too.

Did you all have to do that? All of the whole family?

The whole family too.

When you came to American, were there other relatives that came ahead of you?

We didn't have any at all. There were only visitors that came. Our close relatives, ever in life, no one came. I had a cousin who had a younger sister and the brother-in-law came to this land too. I had two who wrote to back to us, giving us their address. So then we came following the two of them. That's it. That's how we could come, to follow the two.

When living over here, where do you live?

We were lost in this land, in Seattle, Washington. We live there for three years. We then move here in 1993. We have lived here still today. Not going anywhere.

Why did you want to come live here in Wausau?

We were coming to go to school to know the language, to find jobs to do too.

What kind of schooling did you have?

Then school a couple of years. Then couldn't learn any more. I finally decided to get a job, in the year 1991. Then I went to work and not go to school.

Working, was it hard or anything?

Working, oh, I don't know the language. It's really hard.

Then you did that, what kind of work did you do?

I work washing dishes only. Today work at 4:00.

Is it hard, working with Americans or Hmong's too?

Hard as possible. Don't know the language. If they were to use words, they wouldn't be able to work. But they don't use words like you go working. So, you do the same thing everyday. Don't use words, so you'll be able to work.

The work here, is it harder than farming in Vietnam, Thailand?

Over there, you don't get money. But over there, you don't have many problems and no rent to be paid. Over here, they pay you, but you have many problems of many kinds.

Then, besides the language, and the money, is there any other problems?

There are a lot. If put together, there would be a lot too. Problems like I have said to you are there a lot of things to be paid, then you pay. Get a check, then you pay. Then you don't have any money to put away. Then it's heartbroken.

When you were riding the airplanes to come here, you live in Hong Kong. What was it like?

Hong Kong? When we came it was dark. We couldn't see any where.

What did you do there? When you were there, in Hong Kong?

In Hong Kong, they, when we came, it was dark, and they capture us. Then they drove us to sleep in a hotel then, and didn't see anyone then.

When you came over on the plane, where did you land?

We land in Hong Kong, then a Tongile (phonetically spelled).

Tongile? What was it like?

Tongile. It was like the land over here too.

What did you do there?

They let us live in the airport only.

How long did you stay there?

We stayed about three, four hours. Wow.

That's long (little laughter). When riding the airplanes, was there food?

No food at all. They give coffee for us to drink and cookies for us to eat only.

Did you like it?

Back then we didn't like it at all. Eat those things, and it's not good.

When you were packing, what did you pack?

We couldn't bring anything. They said don't bring anything. We threw everything away and couldn't bring anything then. The pots and pan, we threw away in Thailand.

Your houses in Thailand. You left and other Hmong live in it?

Other groups come and live there then.

Over here, how are the houses different?

Over here, the houses are changed a lot. Your house you could see the window. You see the holes on the wall. People come, go, you see it all. But over in this land, the houses are dark and there are windows. If there weren't any windows, you wouldn't be able to see outside. It's heartbroken. The elders, don't know how to drive too. They look at the window too much. They are sad in this land. They go on foot, but they can't go anywhere. They stay home and look at the windows. Then they are heartbroken.

Were you sad when you first came over here?

When I first came, I was very heartbroken, okay. It's like a new bride that's just going to . . . Be a new bride for a couple of days that don't want to live with them. The heart wants to go back home to live over there, but can't come back. Soon you forget then.

Are you still heartbroken?

It's not as hard as when you first came.

Then, if you guys get the land back, would you go back?

Oh, if we got the land, then yes, go then. If we got the land back, and they say that to live in peace and nothing more, then just go back.

Will you be sad that you had, left America back still in this land?

No, not heartbroken.

Oh, okay, thank you.

Thank you.