

Interview with Yong Kay Moua  
November 16, 1992

TELL US HOW THE HMONG ASSOCIATION GOT STARTED AND WHY IT GOT STARTED?

We have to go back a little bit further than 1982. By the end of 1980, we had a meeting all the Hmong in Wisconsin and we met at Sheboygan and we started a Hmong Association in Sheboygan in early 1981. And after 1981, we can see that it's kind of too far apart for the services to the community. And I am one of the Board with that, but we cannot provide all the information what we did at the Hmong Association in Sheboygan to all the people.

In 1982, the Hmong population in Eau Claire is growing up to about 600 people and we need lots of services for the Hmong in this community so we decide that maybe we will form a Hmong Mutual Assistance Association in Eau Claire. And we discussed about that around Summer 1982. But actually we got all the proposal and the by-laws done by November 1982. But we don't get the approval until the Summer of 1983, In July, 1983, we start to open the office up at the Park and Recreation and with the Department of Recreation. So they provide us a room and we have a room to serve our people at that time. But at that time, we just had the Project Director and one of the Caucasian lady to be the Secretary and we don't have that many people as now.

WHO WAS THE DIRECTOR AT THAT TIME?

At that time it was Yee Xiong. And they officially open in August 15, 1983.

I would like to go back a little about why we started one up. I think by that time, the large group of the Hmong refugees that coming from Thailand to the United States. They're kind move up and down like where they have some services, because this group of people, many of them they don't know how to speak English and find their way, find their services, and they kind of moving to the area that some people are already here. I mean some Hmong people are already came first and know English and can help them with their services. So at that time, they move from the Twin City, from Chicago, and from many of the big city from the south to Wisconsin. So Eau Claire is one of the area that the Hmong they pick up Eau Claire because they feel this is not very big and they can get the services better and they think that it is not so big so they can get their way around. So they pick Eau Claire. That is why we have the whole group and then we started the Association.

SO WHEN THE PEOPLE STARTED MIGRATING TO WISCONSIN, THAT IS WHEN YOU STARTED THE HMONG ASSOCIATION?

Yes. Because at that time, the Hmong Association already started in Sheboygan but the services is kind of too far and we cannot get a service.

HOW DID THAT MEETING COME ABOUT?

The meeting in Sheboygan? At that time we all cannot spread it out from Sheboygan and Sheboygan Association at that time serve as umbrella, or as mother of the Association. So at that time not just Eau Claire formed the Association but other community like Green Bay, La Crosse, Wausau and Appleton. With all those city that many of the Hmong coming to the area, so we kind of get a new start at the same time, in 1982. But I think Eau Claire is one of the group that get later because some of the by-law have to going through and other things.

WERE THE OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WISCONSIN A LOT LARGER THAN?

At the time, yes. At that time, I think La Crosse and Wausau and Appleton each community they had about 1,000 people but Eau Claire. Yes, at the it is the same number. Which not mean that Sheboygan is the largest but I think at first we look up to Colonel...., I forgot his name, but he there and everyone can go out over there. So he call out a meeting and he concerned that many of the people that come into America need some services, need some help, and he think that it will be good for us to organize together and see which idea, which way will be good for us to help our own people at that time. So that is why we got started up over there first.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DID THEY THINK THEY WERE GOING TO DO WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED THE OFFICE IN EAU CLAIRE?

Okay. At first I think language is very important that we can get the interpreter or the services through the language to other service agency. And that is the first thing that we do. Just to refer to other agency that they need some services. For example, when the newcomer come into Eau Claire and they will like to know who they would like to see at the school, at technical school or at human services or to other services that will provide some service for the community. The Hmong Association is the central place that will refer those people to get their service. And I think at the first time they try just to help with the language barrier.

WOULD THEY KEEP A LIST OF PEOPLE AND TRY TO MATCH PEOPLE?

At first. Before we come to that part, we know that by the end of 1979, we already had about 400 Hmong people here in community and we need some service for this group of people,

so we already form a group called the Hmong Community Advisory Group. So we start that group. After we start that group, then we come up with the idea that maybe we should now volunteer, asking people for volunteer to be interpreter. So we got a whole list, like seven or eight people, and if the people need some service to go to the Health Department, then we know who is referring to. And we already working on voluntary like that since the end of 1979 until 1981/1982, so we know how to do that. But is kind of very difficult, it just like a ball and you just kicked from there and one to the other and finally maybe you come back to the same people. So we know that it is very difficult to do that. And so we think that if we form an organization like that, at least we got one place to refer to, you know, so we don't duplicate or we don't kind of overlap of those services. That is why when we think that organization or place where to go, how to refer, where to refer to is very important to us at that time.

AND THEN, THE ADVISORY GROUP, THAT WAS MADE UP OF SOME HMONG PEOPLE AND SOME NON-HMONG PEOPLE?

Yes. Jack O'Connell is one of them, Barbara and Al Rolland, there are Dr. Zongdag, Maureen Holmstad, Bob Novotny from the Lutheran Social Services and Yer Vang, myself, my wife and I think a couple of more people.

DID ANY OF THE AGENCIES HAVE HMONG EMPLOYEES AT THE TIME?

At the time that we started that Advisory up, there is no one working at the Health Department and other places, just one person that work with the Lutheran Social Services. It's only one person, but after we start the group up and we found out that it is very difficult for the newcomer to get some services, then 1980, I think 1980, then we got Der Moua Xiong, that work kind of part-time at the Lutheran Social Services and part-time in Job Services and we don't need some people at the Health so at that time they hire lady called You Xiong to work with the Health Department in 1980. You Xiong and she is See Moua's wife. And my wife work part-time as seamstress to do some tailoring, to do some tailoring jobs. But we still need some people to help with, interpretation with the Health Department and with the school. So she cannot quit her job and then working with the Health Department. And also at the time, she is working part-time at the North High School because the school also need some services, you know.

FOR THOSE PEOPLE THAT ARE IN THE SCHOOL?

That is why we cannot put people there and if we cannot get another help, then we will put other people with the other agency and like that.

SO THEN YOU STARTED UP THE HMAA TO COORDINATE SERVICES, BUT IT BECAME MORE THAN THAT?

As the community getting larger, it getting more than that. Because when we start, we had about 600 people and that in 1983. And by 1986 we had double, we had about 1300 by 1986. And many of those newcomer they don't speak English at all so it kind of getting more difficult on the services. The more people come in, the more difficult for them to get a service. That is why we kind of increasing some people at the Hmong Association and to get through the services to the people.

WHEN YOU SAY IT DOUBLED TO 1300 BY 1986, I KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW THE EXACT NUMBERS, BUT ABOUT HOW MANY OF THOSE PEOPLE WERE REFUGEES COMING OVER FROM THAILAND AND HOW MANY OF THEM WERE PEOPLE COMING FROM OTHER AREAS?

By June, 1987, when I come into the Hmong Association and I do a survey. I do a survey all the people who come to Eau Claire and we get 64% of the 1300 came from other places because secondary migration to the Eau Claire community and the rest we get from, directly from Thailand.

AND THEN YOU PROBABLY LOST A FEW FAMILIES THAT WENT TO OTHER PLACES?

Oh yes. At the time we have some people that coming to Eau Claire but they had to move to other places because their family. Because some people come to Eau Claire for a couple of year and if they cannot get a job, they had to move to where they can get a job to. It's kind of, that is changing, some new coming, some old moving out and like that.

THE PEOPLE HAVING THE HARDEST TIME ADJUSTING, DO THEY COME STRAIGHT FROM THAILAND?

They come straight from Thailand here,

WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR FUNDING?

At the time, 1979 to 1980, the U.S. government know that they allow for many people coming in and they provide some funding through the federal office. You call it the [Office of Refugee Resettlement], well the federal offices and they helping through the refugee assistance and coming through the state to the Association.

AND THAT TRANSFERRED OVER INTO 1982?

Yes, right.

DID YOU GET OTHER SOURCES ALSO?

At that time, we don't get any other source from the community, we just get some funding from the federal coming through the state.

BY 1986, WERE THERE A LOT MORE POSITIONS ADDED TO THE HMONG ASSOCIATION?

By 1986, yes. We have the Project Director and we have the Secretary and we have one other position kind of helping to find some jobs for the people at that time. So after, I think after 1983/1984, in 1985, we kind of moving toward helping to move the people into job and helping them to find job and to, you know, kind of consult them to get them job.

IT STARTED OUT AS BEING LANGUAGE AND THEN YOU WENT TO HELPING THEM GETTING SERVICES AND THEN YOU WENT TO HELPING THEM FIND JOBS?

Purchasing? Not really, purchasing. It is not really a purchasing, but I think what the transition that we try to help them into is some services and going to education. After they going through education, then we help them to get a job. But for the transition time, we try to help them how to buy anything at a store, you know, kind of orientation, kind of orientation every day life in the community.

I SEEM TO REMEMBER THAT HMONG ASSOCIATION PROVIDED NEW FAMILIES WITH RICE?

That after 1987. After 1987, I think in the Summer of 1987, we have like many people coming in. Some people when they come they don't have sponsorship so their anchor family can sponsor them. And when they come here, at the first couple of months, they cannot moving out to stay with them in the house or in apartment for themselves, they had to have to stay with their anchor family. Well, we have some difficulty to help them at the time so we applied for the money they call FEMA people (Federal Emergency Management Administration) some kind of money that coming from the federal too. FEMA or whatever they call it, they kind of shorten it into FEMA. But the FEMA people agency. So we applied through them and we got some funding from them and help us to buy some food and we call the food pantry. So that time we get some food and when we get a new comer from Thailand or moving from other places to the community, we will help them for the first month or two to see depend on their income, depend on their services that they can get. Because usually at that time, the first month or the first couple of weeks that they come, they don't get any food stamp or any assistance right away. They have to depend on their anchor family to help them at first until first month through then they can get some food stamp and some

assistance. That is why we start the food pantry up so we can help those people right away.

BY THEN YOU WERE MOVED OVER TO THE OFFICE ON BELLINGER STREET?

Yes. By October, 1987, we know that our services getting larger and we get more people to coming in and we have little room at the Park Recreation. So we think that it is so crowded we cannot serve our people as well so we ask for some funding from the state and at that time, they start a new program called the KSI, the Key State Initiative Program. That funding kind of really focusing on job, helping people to get job, to be self-sufficient and like that. So we get some funding from them and we start to move to a bigger location in October, 1987, Bellinger Street.

BY THEN YOU HAD A PERSON TRYING TO PLACE PEOPLE IN JOBS?

Yes. By October, 1987. At that time I was the Executive Director of the Association. I start in June, 1987. But right after I come to the office and we figure out that we need more than what we used to have. We need to help people to get job, we need to help with some services at the same time because we had some people graduate from technical school or some that were going into the training and some that ready just to get to work because they think that is very difficult for them to go through the school or through training. So at that time, we need to do some service and helping job and do other things. So by October, 1987, we create the job, the local position, we create the Case Management position and we need one position for the Secretary that we had. The Secretary and Case Manager we have the Job Developer and we have the Project Director including myself. So we have six or seven people who work at the office at that time. Which is the program is focusing to help people to get jobs and help with some services, too.

WHEN YOU SAY THE JOB DEVELOPER IS TRYING TO FIND JOBS FOR PEOPLE, DO THEY HAVE COMPANIES WHICH THEY WERE USING OR LET KNOW? DID THEY WORK WITH JOB SERVICE, ETC.?

Yes. That person is working very close with the Job Service and with other agency in the community. In early 1987, we start a group called the Interagency Coalition. The Interagency Coalition, we start that group because we call all, not all, but many of the employer in the community and to meeting with the Hmong Association and to discuss to find some way to help the Hmong to get job in this community. So we start that group called the Interagency Coalition and every month we call that group together and talk and to find out which company, which agency that will be hire people or be able to train our people to work with them. But not just only to hire our people to work, but we ask them some idea

to gather to see what kind of jobs that we should created and to help our people in the community. And it is a good thing that we have that Interagency Coalition meeting every other month and by one year, 1988, so we got some recommendations and we got some good idea.

In 1987, we got the first idea that maybe we will start a car wash or cleaning just to help our people to get some job and, you know, to get some experience on the job. So we start that one in 1987, in July, 1987. But that is just a little bit and only one little percent of the idea of that group coming up. So we still had some idea that maybe we can continue to meet together and see what will be a good idea for us to help the people.

By 1988, that group, well, it kind of digging for nothing. And we kind of go around for one year and we come up with some idea that go out because this group is, first they are short of language, second they are short of job experience, or work experience. And those two things make it very difficult for the person, he or himself, and also for the employer. That it look like by the end of the group meeting because that kind of put a block to the hope of the people in Eau Claire community.

But with this idea, when I come in 1988, I think that this is we don't have a way to get out so I joined with the Chamber of Commerce because Leadership Eau Claire in the Fall of 1988. So I brought the idea that we come up with the Interagency Coalition to the Leadership Eau Claire that now our Hmong people are in Eau Claire, and we got some problems. The person or the Hmong people, they got stuck. They find some job in the area and they find out that they have some problem with language. They have some problem with the experience so they don't have any job experience in this country and they have some problem with the language. So they get stuck, they cannot go anywhere. And also on the employer's side, they also mentioned the same thing. They also mentioned that the Hmong have some problem with the language and some problem with the work experience. They need some people to work because they would like to make some money, they don't want to lose money. So we get stuck here. And any way that we can get out from this idea or where we should go from here.

Okay with the Leadership Eau Claire group, because we have 36 people on the group and one group is kind of dealing with the Hmong issue. So Jim Ryder at the Health Department is in the group that I belonged to and he think that well, there got to be a way, it is just put a block right there and put a sign there to stop and maybe it will be good for us to go and talk to the City Manager and see if they have any idea to help the Hmong people in Eau Claire. At that time I don't know the City Manager. I have been going up to high

officer and talk about some little thing or some problem of the City. He said let's make an appointment to meet him, to have lunch with him and to talk to him a little bit about this problem, so we did. Jim Ryder set up a meeting with the City Manager and, Eric Anderson is the City Manager at that time. So we went to see him and talk to him for the first time. Just introduce myself to him that I am working with the Hmong Association and we have such number of Hmong living in Eau Claire and so little bit. That's it, we have maybe seven or eight minutes when we see him that day. The second, I think we set a time to have lunch with him and talk to him a little bit further about some services that we got here and some other things that the people like to stay in Eau Claire and some of the problem that we have here. So in the second time that we met with him, he said yes, I recognize that many Hmong in Eau Claire, but I just don't hear and I don't know any problem about the Hmong. He said I know that could be something that you needed from us to help out some way that we need to discovered you, but it look like our picture is not so clear, it just in black and white. Would you go back and talk to your leader and talk to your group and call me for a meeting so I can see what is the need from the Hmong community, and which is ideas.

So I come back and I call all the Board member to meet and mention about the problem that we looking for job and the problem that we get stopped from the agency and we recommend to see the City Manager and see what we can go from here. So after we meet together and we set out a time, we call the City Manager and we call Jackie Lahn, we call Dave Zien and couple of the American friends who working with the Hmong Association. So we met together and we discuss about finding some way out. I mean finding some way out, that mean getting some job and so they can help themselves and they can survive in the community. So after we call him to a meeting and we brought up a couple of things that we need some help from the City. And the City Manager is not promise us anything at that time, he said we will take a look and see what we can help with the Hmong community here in Eau Claire. And I kind of setting some time up with him and kind of him since August, 1988 until 1989, I think about March, 1989.

Because I cannot pull off every month or every three week or so and see what he planning to help the Hmong Community so at that time he called the agency in the Eau Claire area together and he meet with them and he talk to them. How can we help this people to get out and to break through, you know, this experience. And he come up with idea that maybe we will start up a program called Intern Program. And we hire Hmong people to work two years to get some experience and so they can get some job after the two year term or maybe they can get a job with the company where he or she get started. So the City Manager brought this idea with the



agency in the Eau Claire area, so they agree and they help him with this one.

WAS THE CITY TAKING PART ...

No. This is kind of very good idea that the City bring up. The City itself, he applied for block grant just to hire some people working with the City. The City is considered only one agency. But the other agencies like the bank, NSP, CVTC, University or other, Community State Bank and other agency, they willing to contribute their own money to training the person. That they are willing to hire a person, a Hmong person, to work with their company and train with them, and so which they did. So they agreed that they are going to cooperate with the City and so by March, 1989, then the City Manager call me up for a meeting again so he give me the answer that yes, maybe many thing, many kind of services, many kind of problems, but we're going to start a program called Intern Program and will help your people to get some experience on the job, which train on the job.

And that program, which I was the Coordinator at this time. So by that time, we start that program up and he, well he had to go through many steps, he had to go through the agency, he had to go through the City Council and they approve to do this and then he had to open the Coordinator position up for many people to apply. And I am one of them and we had about 22 to 23 people that applied for the position so I am one of them. And by late in May, 1989, that they decide to hire me as the Coordinator, so we got the program started in June, 1989. And this is just one program that I talk about just to help these people to get out there and get some experience, some job and so on. But this is only one part of the City doing this but other thing like technical school, Job Service and the Hmong Association, they also helping other people to get job too.

SO THAT IS WHAT YOU DO NOW?

Yes, that is what I am doing now.

WHERE HAVE YOU HAD THE MOST SUCCESS?

For the program that I did, well, we consider that is very successful because the City Manager himself, he think that it is better for us to start small and then getting bigger. So the first year we started we had 17 people on the program and by the end of two year, the 17 people, 16 people on the job. Only one people that withdraw the unemployment after the two years. So we consider that is very good and we expanded the program again so on the second term we have only five people, only five people coming into the term and at this time we still on the second term of the program. So I think we're looking for the first two-year term and by the

end of the first two year term and see how many people get into the job. And that will be some experiment for us to continue this program. And we think that this program is very, very good. And this is the first program in Wisconsin. I don't know any where else, but in Wisconsin, this is the first one that we try to train the people on the job and to gain some experience and to get on.

SO YOU LEFT THE HMONG ASSOCIATION WHEN?

I left the Hmong Association on June 12, 1989.

IS THAT WHEY THEY HIRED CHOU LEE?

Yes. After that I think they hire Chou sometime in July, 1989 to take the position.

WHEN WERE THE SURVEYS DONE THAT YOU MENTIONED?

1987-1988.

DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW THE RESULTS OF THEM? ARE THEY STILL AROUND?

I think probably yes. The result of that probably the Hmong Association still keep that file because right now we still have that group meeting. And we called the Interagency [Coalition] and we still meet every other month.

IS THAT THE ONES DOING THE SURVEY?

Yes.

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS DID YOU ASK ON THE SURVEY?

Not very many questions. I think we just ask why, we ask pretty much the same question for the people looking for the job and for the employer who doing the hiring, you know. So what we get from the person who looking for the job is the employer said we have some problem understanding about the language. Language would be the first thing. Secondly they said we don't have the experience working in this country. And those are the two things that we collect together. And then we ask the employer the same thing so the employer has mentioned that we have this group of people short of language barrier and they don't have some experience in the United States. I think that's the same thing.

IS THAT THE SAME SURVEY? THE ONE THAT YOU ASK THAT 54% OF THE PEOPLE WERE MIGRATING?

Oh no. That is different survey.

THAT'S THE ONE I AM TALKING ABOUT.

Oh that is the one. Okay. I think the Hmong Association still have that survey.

THAT WAS DONE IN JUNE OF 1987?

No, about September, 1987. June we just started. September we got everything going.

WHAT QUESTIONS DID YOU ASK WITH THAT?

Okay. We ask that why you move to Eau Claire, like that. Why you move to Eau Claire or we ask about five or six questions. Why people pick Eau Claire and why you move to Eau Claire.

YOU DID THE WHOLE COMMUNITY?

Well, we just survey all the people who coming to that area just the new people that we take from Case Manager at that time. And not every single family but I think we do the most, the most group that they coming to the community. All the new people that come here. That's a lot of people.

WHO HAS THE SURVEY?

Chou Lee. If Chou Lee will look at on the file of the Hmong Association or the history of the HMAA, then he will know. I don't know that he still keep the file or not, but at that time we had that survey because we had a Case Manager and ask some

THE CASE MANAGER DO ALL THE NEW PEOPLE?

Yes, all the new people. All the primary from Thailand and also the secondary.

WHO WAS THE PROJECT DIRECTOR?

Yee Xiong was the original Project Director from August, 1983 to February, 1987. And by February, 1987, to May, 1987, the position was vacant because Yee Xiong got a different job. So I took the position as Director, June, 1987 to June, 1989, and Chou Lee took the position as Director in July, 1989 until now.

WHO IS THE JOB DEVELOPER?

Job Developer in 1987 was Jim Tout.

ARE THERE A LOT OF SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS RELATED TO HOUSING?

Sure. Okay. Yes, we do have some housing. A couple of the area that we have problem with that because the refugee or

the Hmong people that coming in they have some large family and they cannot find a house for their number of a family for the nine to ten people or twelve people and they cannot find a house that they can pay and they will allow them to live in, you know. So we have problem with the sizes of the house because the size and because the cost of the house and that is one problem. The other problem is the Hmong because the income that we have we cannot live in the better house, or the house that would cost little more. So we live in the area that the low cost or the older house and it cheaper.

Well, when you go into an old house and you tend to have some problem with the, problem their taking care of the house, like cleaning and take care of the house and like that. And the Hmong used to cook so in the winter time we have some problem that we have some moisture in the house. In boiling, yes, and we had some moisture in the house. So the landlord they kind of complain that if the Hmong were doing that, their house going to be, you know, going to be destroyed and, you know. They have some mold and some kind of dirty on the corner on where the heat is not warm enough. So we had two problem. The one with the family size, the other one with the way of cooking and doing thing. So the people have to, I think they have to find a house that they can pay, but it is not good condition enough. So those kind of house have some problem too. Because the window, because the window, the insulation or so on and get some very cold to the people and if you get very cold, you don't want to live there and you would like to move and so on.

That is problem that you don't know how to sign the lease with them or just live month-by-month or so. And when they move out they get some problem that the landlord didn't return the deposit them and something like this. This is some kind of problem that I recall that have some problem in. On the other side, if you know that house is not that good and you call for the Health Department and they send some inspector to check on the house and if they have find out, if they found out that the house is not suitable for people to live there because very cold, because need to be fix some like toilet, window and like that, then maybe the Health Department report to the landlord that they had to fix it. So at that time we got some problem because the landlord said because of you, your report to the Health Department and now they ask me to either fix it or either close it and I don't have money for that to fix it so you have to move out. So if we got some problem like this we afraid to report to the Health Department because one way or the other you got some problem. Or something like this where you need some people to deal with this kind of problem and this is what a couple of problem about the housing.

THE BIGGEST CONCERN REGARDING HEALTH CARE IS BLOOD  
TRANSFUSION? IS IT A PROBLEM CULTURALLY

Which is true. I think the health services, which it's true that we have some problem. But the problem is because this group of people they are not used to the western or the western medical term you use all those medication or the way the services. And this group of people they live in their own town, their own village for many years and they believe very strongly for their body that even if you got your hand cut happen accidentally cut, you had to keep the piece until the day you die and you had to bury with you and something like this they believe very strongly.

YOU HAD TO WRAP IT?

No, just put it somewhere that they can keep it safe and, you know, for many years until you die and they can bury with you. Something like this is very strong belief. And when they come to this country, because the Hmong people is not just coming from one area, they coming from all the area in northern part of Laos and when they come to this country and many of the people is new to the city and they still afraid for the, what you call it blood transfusion. They are afraid that when you draw some blood out the body, you will loose those blood, you will loose those blood and they don't know that how many week or how long it will gain some back to the normal so they kind of afraid that. That is one thing that they afraid because they think that back in Laos if someone has some accident or so, and had been bleeding for a while, that person will die, you know, that person will die. So when they come to this country and they see that you draw some 1,000 cc or 500 cc out of their body, they think that person going to die. So that is what they are afraid.

On the surgery, that is one thing that they believe very strong to. If they cut something in your hand, they think that maybe the spirit of your hand will be moving out, you know. You cut something from your body, they think that spirit going to be moving out and you supposed to be with the body completely like when you were born, you know. You were born with because you are mandated to live the life like that and they don't allow for cutting some piece off or open some part of your body up. I think this is what some of them believe.

HOW DO THEY DEAL WITH THAT?

Well, for some people. I think we try to explain for the provider to just go and just take some very sensitive way. If they don't want to do that now, let them think about that for the next month or so, for the next week or so. Give

them some time for them to talk about or to ask for some advice like that. At first we try to do that until the people understand. Because they'd rather die because of their belief, you know. So we better kind of give them some time to think about or to talk to other people and to ask other people about that.

IS SOMEONE CUTS THEIR HAND AND THEY LOST THAT PIECE OF THEIR HAND, WOULD THAT BE WORSE THAN IF THEY DIED?

Something that accidently cut it off or something like that, well the good way for them to console that person is to talk to him and tell him that maybe you are mandated, you are mandating to live without your hand. That is why is have some accident to cut off the hand, you know. So you had to go with that person belief and tell him that maybe you are sin for the first generation so when you come to live in this generation, that is why something happen to cut your hand off. So you had to go the way that they believe it.

FIRST THEY TRIED TO GET PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT IT FOR A FEW MONTHS? DOES THAT WORK?

It would. It's kind work. Because when we coming to the war in 1960 to 1975, many people had been cut their leg, their hand, their arm or like that or have some surgery, open up their body, some part like that, and many die, but many still alive and we kind of bring back to that person and bring them, for example, that if you still have a chance to live, you will not die because of this happen, because that happen. But here in the United States they have better services, better technology and they will do good, they will do fine. If you don't trust this doctor, just consult with other doctor or like that. So we try to work out like that.

IS THERE A REAL WIDE DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE THAT LIVE IN THE CITY AND PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS? DO THEY HAVE A HARDER TIME ADJUSTING?

Yes. You say why is different. Okay.

Yes, it is a wide difference. Well, you know that the Hmong move from China to Laos for century and they never went down to the city. Well, at first they just kind of moving up to the mountain and stay high, kind of separate from other group of people and they don't go down to see the Lao officer or in the city. Sometime they went down. They used to live up high. When they moving out to the south or down to the valley, they get sick because, they got sick and they die or like that. Yes, like Malaria and die like that. They afraid, they afraid that maybe the Hmong cannot live down there. So they usually live in the high mountain and many of the villages or the people who live far away from the city, they never go down to the city and they never get some service through the government, you know. And after

the war is coming through, people moving to Thailand and they just move with the people because their husband, their family in serving with the army and so on so they had to move to Thailand. So this people never get used down to the city at all. So these are the people that have some difficulty understanding about the services.

CAN YOU GIVE ME A PERCENTAGE OF THE PEOPLE IN EAU CLAIRE - HOW MANY ROUGHLY HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE WITH THE CITY?

I will said, for many of the men who will be down to the city. But when you talk about then they live their life in the city and the country in Laos. I will say maybe 30% of this group are coming from the area that I will call seedy area, out of bigger city. And the other 70% they lived on the high. That is what I consider that there are a lot. But when you consider for the individual people, I will say most of the men, over 60 to 70% of the men, they will travel to the city and going to the city, but not the women or the lady or the older people, you know.

AT THE MEETING WE HAD AT THE MUSEUM, WE TALKED A LITTLE ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP. COULD YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THAT?

At that day, I said the leader. We have different leaders. Well, when we talking about a leader back in Laos and before the war is coming and that kind of leader is different.

We look up for the person who can help the community solve some problem between husband and wife, or parent and children, and kind of help to get the same family together or the community together. And those kind of leader we consider for those people who are older and have the ability to help the people together, to live with their life and their belief. Okay, those we consider different leaders.

When they come during the war, we had some leaders from the army, you know. The Army leader is little bit different. Well, they know how to do their job and they have the power to do their job and that why we look up for different leader or for them like the General Vang Pao, like that. He has different role. He has different ability to do his job or to be the leader of all the people to do his job.

But when we come to America and we have different leaders. The different is one of the leader here maybe all choose them to be, to help with the language, to help to communicate with other people, other agency.

YOU WERE SAYING ABOUT WHEN THEY COME TO THIS COUNTRY ...

Yes. And the leader in this country. I think we look up to for the people that can help us to move our life here to a

different direction, you know, helping us with the job, with the services and with, what you call transition into the new society. And that we have one leader to do that.

The other leader that we look up in the community is the clan leader that they're helping their clan or with the community, with the family conflict, with the parent and children conflict and this kind of leader we still look up for the older people, for the person who have the ability to, you know, kind of helping this family to stay together.

That is why I said we have too many leaders here in and which kind of leader that we talk about, you know. If we talk about the leader that will lead us into education, job or communication, that will be different one. But if we are looking for the leader who help to put the community together, the family together, parent and children together, that we have to look up to the older people and the people who have some experience, you know, in helping them.

#### WHAT HAPPENS IF TWO PEOPLE DISAGREE?

We kind of flexible for some thing but is very difficult for some. For example, for something that related to this society, for the job, the community, services or resettlement thing here, then we go with the clan leader who working with the Hmong Association. We go with the new direction.

But when we come to something that we believe in, for example, New Year, the older people's that give the will celebrate New Year in August, that is not right. We have to celebrate our New Year according to our year end, you know. Will be November 17-18, during that time. Because at that time we the lunar year and we have the, what kind of other one, yes the [Gregorian] calendar year. And we had to consider that, okay. That is what the older people believe that we had to go by that if we consider New Year. Or we had to go by the calendar year of the America or the western. Consider that one year is ending and the other year is coming up so we consider that it is New Year. That is the elder people they consider.

But a young leader they say, well, by that time will be very cold and we cannot find a location, a place to celebrate at that time. But the elderly said, well if you going to do that, you going to call New Year not appropriate. So you had to name something, you know, like a summer festival or something. So the name New Year is really a celebration for the new coming year and this is something that I think we have some conflict with. It is kind of compromise at this time a little bit. But for those people who they still believe their own way, you know, the old tradition; they



still believe in the lunar year. Yes, they still practice it.

WHAT OTHER THINGS ARE DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW YEAR? THE WAY THINGS ARE CELEBRATED, ETC.?

One other thing that we celebrate here is really something that we really celebrating, but like graduation party. Graduation party is coming from some idea of the, from the elderly or from the parent that I think they kind of motivating the young people to go on to education. They know there's nothing there's they can teach and nothing they can help the kids, but if doing a party it considered that very important. When you appreciate it, you contribute some money, something to do a party for them that mean you really want to help them go for further. And that is something that the elderly still consider that doing this will help the kid to promote education. And that is one thing that we celebrate here and kind of promoting and motivating.

WHEN YOU CELEBRATE NEW YEAR IN THIS COUNTRY, HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

The activity, it's kind of different. It depend on the year, it depend on the location, on the weather or the climate that you can do. And here usually, when we talking about in Laos and here, it is a lot of different. Because in Laos, you had your climate, you had your time, it is kind of appropriate for you to have it everything from the farm and, you know, you really prepare for that. But here you don't have anything to prepare, to get out a thing. You just prepare for getting some clothes and something for the kids. Well, New Year is something like a door that you close this one and you go out the other one like that and it kind of open for a new day and new year. They have some kind of belief that when you have two brother or sister and you get married in the same year, it is not considered as good. If you get married this year, maybe next year your brother or your sister can get married. And then one of the year is kind of something that separation in some of the good thing and some of the bad thing.

IN THE NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION, IS PART OF IT STILL KIND OF GATHERING PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE A NEW BEGINNING OR A NEW COMING?

Yes. New Year is kind of long story to talk about a New Year. But I think in our country and back in Laos, we believe that each month is start with one animal, you know, one kind of animal. Maybe the fist month is chicken and the second will be dog and will be some buffalo or like that and so on. So in one year for twelve different animal. You consider it a circle, you now. It coming to a circle. And you had to start over again, start over again for a new

circle. Everything you start with, the first day of the month is different, you consider a different day, different for different animal. And for the Hmong is also considered the same thing. In a year you had to start over again and before you start for the new cycle or for the new round, you had to consider that new, you know. Yes, you had to mark that. Everything that you cannot accomplish that year is considered a bad thing or consider that is not appropriate thing. So you had to emphasize for a new thing for the new coming year like that. It kind of, how you say that, it kind of promoting your life and so you have hope all the time. You had the hope that this year is not so good year, but maybe next year will be a good year for me, you now be a lucky year for me, okay. So people cannot consider like that and when they come to a circle like that. They consider that you have to change and consider for a new year all the time.

DO THE PEOPLE FEEL THAT IF YOU DON'T CELEBRATE A NEW YEAR IN THE RIGHT WAY, IT WILL NOT BE A GOOD YEAR FOR YOU?

That won't be a good year? Yes, they consider that too.  
(END OF TAPE)