

LEE VU

Interviewer: Charles Numrich
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1. *Lee, how old are you?*

I am eighteen.

2. *When did you come to the United States?*

1989

3. *Where did you live before this?*

Thailand, maybe a village there.

4. *Who came with you, when you came to the United States?*

My family. My brother and my mother, and sister-in-laws. All together, twenty six.

5. *Who helped you when you first came, who sponsored you?*

My brother. He has been here six years. He is married and has one child.

6. *Who are you living with now?*

I live with my mom and my brother, in a house in Minneapolis.

7. *What school do you go to?*

I go to Addison school and am in the ninth grade.

Edison High School

8. *Did you go to school in Thailand?*

No.

9. *Did you speak English before you came here?*

No.

10. *Do you like school? What is it that you like most about school?*

Yes. I like the classes and studying. The friends. I mostly like art, especially painting. I just paint at school not at home.

11. *Do you think about what you will do when you graduate from high school?*

Not yet. I think I would like to go to college.

12. *Are your friends mostly Hmong or American?*

I have mostly Hmong friends and know some Americans. I also see them outside the school. I like to play volleyball with them.

13. *What was the hardest thing about first going to school?*

Well, it was very hard for me, because I'm shy and couldn't speak English. I don't know where the bathroom is!

14. *Did you take E.S.L. classes?*

Yes, for three years and I am still taking them. It helps me a lot.

15. *At home do you mostly speak Hmong?*

Yes. My mother doesn't speak English. My brothers do. They are 40, 35, 30 and 26 years old. My middle brother lives at home with us. One of my brothers goes to college at Menominee.

16. *What is the greatest difference between living in Thailand and in the United States?*

Having to go to school here. In Thailand I had to farm, and make pan dau. I still make it here. We just make it for ourselves. I make animals and people, for wall hangings.

17. *How long have you been taking lessons on the geej from Xeng Sue?*

About three months. I enjoy it. I didn't study it in my country. I was asked if I would do it. I only knew a couple of the girls. Xeng Sue teaches us new things about my culture, the stories, the dancing, the singing.

18. *Do you think it's important for Hmong people to learn about their culture?*

Yes, because if we don't learn we lose the culture. If you have child they won't know. To hang on to our culture.

19. *Do you want to have a family of your own one day?*

Yes.

20. *Did you have friends in Laos who were already married?*

No.

21. *How old were you when you left?*

I was fourteen. Some of my friends here who are thirteen are already married. They have children.

22. *In the United States it is very different as to when we marry. Which way do you think is better?*

I think it is better to wait, because you cannot go to school. If you have children you cannot study. Going to school is important. Trying to learn, to study English and to work. Maybe one day I'll be a nurse. I would maybe marry when I'm twenty. I don't know yet what kind of boy I like. I like the way they look and if they talk to me nice. Some of the boys are mean to you. I haven't found one that I like yet.

23. *Are your brothers married?*

Yes, I would maybe have a different family than they do. I would like to have four children. Two boys and two girls. We (Hmong) usually would have around ten.

24. *Do you think people your age feel it is important to respect your elders?*

Some do and some don't.

25. *How do you make choices between Hmong and American ways?*

I don't know. I eat Hmong food. I like it better. I only have hamburgers at school. My mother and sister-in-laws do the cooking, all Hmong.

26. *In your family, who speaks English the best?*

My brothers and my sister-in-laws.

27. *What do you wish for in your future?*

I don't know. Maybe a good job. I would like to stay here.

28. *Who do you talk to when you have a problem?*

My mom. Sometimes friends.

29. *Where is your father?*

He is dead. I don't know when he died. I wasn't born yet. He was a soldier in Laos and he got sick. My mother never remarried.

30. *Who took care of your family after your father died?*

Nobody. Just my mother.

31. *Are other members of your family still in Thailand?*

No, they are all here.

32. *What is the hardest thing for your mom here?*

She cannot drive and she stay here and babysit for my sister-in-laws all day. She never goes much. But, she does sometimes visit Hmong neighbors or my brothers will drive her.

33. *Do you talk to your mom about the things you do in school?*

No. She doesn't know what I am studying. She is 65 years old. She knows how to say yes and no. She never studied English. I help her buy things. She will stay with my brother when I get married.

34. *Are your brothers American citizens? Are you?*

Yes, they are. I am not yet, but I want to be.

35. *Do you ever think about going back to Thailand?*

No, because I don't want to have to farm.

36. *If you could talk to Hmong families in Thailand about the United States, what would you tell them?*

I would tell them in America you go to school and you learn English. It's better.

Hmong Oral History Project
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