

Ger Yang

Interviewer; Linda Rossi

The following interview took place at 1588 Vincent Street, St. Paul, Minnesota on April 3, 1992.

1. When did you come to the United States?

In 1979, and I was approximately six years old.

2. Where did you come from?

I was born in Laos and then moved to Thailand for three years.

3. Who sponsored your emigration?

It was my dad's relative, who was already here.

4. How many of your family members came with you?

My whole family came, there were five of us. Since we arrived here, I have three younger brothers and two younger sisters who were born here.

5. Have you studied English? Where? For how long?

Yes I studied in school in St. Paul, from kindergarten through high school.

6. Who in your family speaks English best?

It's hard to say, but I guess it would be me, and my sister.

7. What is your occupation now?

I am a full time student. This is my first year at St. Paul Technical school. I am twenty years old.

8. What did you think life would be like here, compared to what your parents even anticipated?

I guess what I really feel about my parents, what they talk about when coming here, is they feel like relief, running away. Running for peace. For their children to go to school. For them to have a goal in mind for their children to pursue. If they don't make it they know their children make it. (My feeling is I don't have any feeling about coming, I was too young.) Now I feel a lot of freedom. There's a lot of opportunity to do all sorts of things. Many things I would like to accomplish, such as; go to college, get a career, study, and settle down somewhere in the U.S. that I would like to. There are many opportunities to help your friends, where they cannot help themselves. Translate and speak the language for them. My parents still feel the same way, but they're having a lot of conflicts with the law here. Everything is so different, everything has to go through the American system. Sometimes my parents need help to be able to see and really understand it. With my parents I always feel I'm the child even though I'm giving them new information.

9. Have there been any difficulties to your adjustment here?

No, none at all.

10. What do you wish most for your future here?

Go through college, and doing the best that I can. Pursue my goal which is medical lab, somewhere in the field of health. Helping people, helping everyone to get better, better health, to work. Someday buy a house for my own family and save some money for my own children to go to school, to college. I right now see staying here, as all of my family is here.

11. Who do you talk to when you need advice?

I usually look up to my elders such as my mom and my dad, other relatives that are in the Twin Cities, here. Also my brothers and my younger sisters, my wife and Grandma Elizabeth and Grandpa Sheldon. (This is the American family Ger and his wife are living with.) I talk to my other friends.

12. Have you had any problems with the laws in this country? Specifically, marriage, welfare regulations, divorce.

No, since we arrive here, we have not had a problem with that. Unless, maybe, as we grow older we'll see more stuff. My parents do not like the law, as there are so many ways of doing things, of judging things, especially because of the English.

13. Have you made any changes in the food that you eat?

At home I stick to the Hmong traditional way. (Now, more and more I eat more healthful foods like vegetables rather than meat.) Usually at every lunch and dinner there would be meat and rice.

14. Has your family had any problems relating to teenage marriage?

No, not at all.

15. To you, what would make a good wife?

To me, someone who cares about you a lot no matter what condition you're in. She would have unconditional love for me. I want somebody who would tell me, this is wrong, and put me back on the right track. Someone who would share my love. I think marriage should be equal, my mom would say this and this and my dad would do the same. But, as far as discipline, my dad would be dominant.

16. How do you feel about the changes regarding respect for parents/elders and responsibilities for young people?

There are sometimes... it's... well, I always respect my parents no matter what the situation is. I always look up to them, knowing they are my parents. If they would do something wrong, I would just go up to them and tell them this is wrong, but I would still respect them.

17. What, if any experiences have you had with discrimination?

I don't think I have any of those in my life yet. I'm still growing, and in school it's pretty open to me.

18. Do you have anything you would like to add to this history?

One thing is I would like to comment a little more on my goal, my career, my future. I said earlier that I am focusing on the medical lab technician. The future is still there, but we don't know for sure what the future holds. I work with a lot of lab work and research, finding out what kind of illness the person has. We're there beside the doctor, they are usually too busy to do the lab work so I help with this. I had biology in High school and studied human genetics and was really interested, so I decided to go into the medical field.

Was this career choice influenced by your parent's work?

My dad had a couple of occupations. He was a nice father to me, he was a farmer, and a blacksmith. My mom was also a farmer and a good mother. It wasn't a direct influence, but it just came together.

Hmong Oral History Project
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