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Ed 129

ID # 040467

CO 084

WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

8127865

- O - OUTGOING
- H - INTERNAL
- I - INCOMING

Date Correspondence Received (YY/MM/DD) 8/1/08/05

Name of Correspondent: Jerome E. De Bruin

MI Mail Report User Codes: (A) _____ (B) _____ (C) _____

Subject: Brother, Eugene Henry De Bruin, has been a prisoner of the Pathet Lao since September 1963. Requesting efforts to get him released -- especially in view of the ~~poor~~ parents' 50th Wedding anniversary on October 17th.

ROUTE TO:		ACTION	DISPOSITION		
Office/Agency	(Staff Name)	Action Code	Tracking Date YY/MM/DD	Type of Response Code	Completion Date YY/MM/DD
	<u>Co Kell</u>	ORIGINATOR	<u>8/1/09/25</u> ^{TR}	<u>C</u>	<u>8/1/10/09</u>
	<u>DOS</u>	Referral Note: <u>R</u>	<u>8/1/09/25</u> ^{TR}	<u>A</u>	<u>8/1/10/09</u>
	<u>CO HIGG</u>	Referral Note: <u>S</u>	<u>8/1/09/21</u> ^{TR}	<u>AH</u>	<u>8/1/09/21</u> ^{TR}
		Referral Note: _____	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
		Referral Note: _____	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
		Referral Note: _____	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

ACTION CODES:

- A - Appropriate Action
- C - Comment/Recommendation
- D - Draft Response
- F - Furnish Fact Sheet to be used as Enclosure
- I - Info Copy Only/No Action Necessary
- R - Direct Reply w/Copy
- S - For Signature
- X - Interim Reply

DISPOSITION CODES:

- A - Answered
- B - Non-Special Referral
- C - Completed
- S - Suspended

FOR OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE:

- Type of Response = Initials of Signer
- Code = "A"
- Completion Date = Date of Outgoing

Comments: _____

Keep this worksheet attached to the original incoming letter.
Send all routing updates to Central Reference (Room 75, OEOP).
Always return completed correspondence record to Central Files.
Refer questions about the correspondence tracking system to Central Reference, ext. 2590.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT ONLY

CLASSIFICATION SECTION

No. of Additional Correspondents: _____ Media: L Individual Codes: 4000 _____

Prime Subject Code: CO 084 Secondary Subject Codes: _____

PRESIDENTIAL REPLY

Code	Date	Comment	Form
C	_____	Time: _____	P-
DSP	_____	Time: _____	Media: _____

SIGNATURE CODES:

- CPn - Presidential Correspondence**
- n - 0 - Unknown
- n - 1 - Ronald Wilson Reagan
- n - 2 - Ronald Reagan
- n - 3 - Ron
- n - 4 - Dutch
- n - 5 - Ron Reagan
- n - 6 - Ronald
- n - 7 - Ronnie

- CLn - First Lady's Correspondence**
- n - 1 - Nancy Reagan
- n - 2 - Nancy
- n - 3 - Mrs. Ronald Reagan

- CBn - Presidential & First Lady's Correspondence**
- n - 1 - Ronald Reagan - Nancy Reagan
- n - 2 - Ron - Nancy

MEDIA CODES:

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- H - Handcarried
- L - Letter
- M - Mailgram
- O - Memo
- P - Photo
- R - Report
- S - Sealed
- T - Telegram
- V - Telephone
- X - Miscellaneous
- Y - Study

8TSS802

S/S # 8127865

Date October 13, 1981

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
TRANSMITTAL FORM

FOR: Mr. Richard V. Allen
National Security Council
The White House

REFERENCE:

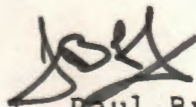
TO: The President FROM: Jerome E. DeBruin
DATE: August 3, 1981 SUBJECT: Re brother has been a
prisoner of the Pathet Lao since Sept. 63; request efforts
to get him released for parents 50th wedding anniversary on 10/17
WHITE HOUSE REFERRAL DATED: _____ NSC # _____
(if any)

THE ATTACHED ITEM WAS SENT DIRECTLY
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ACTION TAKEN:

- _____ A draft reply is attached.
- _____ A draft reply will be forwarded.
- _____ A translation is attached.
- xx An information copy of a direct reply is attached.
- _____ We believe no response is necessary for the reason cited below.
- _____ Other.

REMARKS:

for 
L. Paul Bremer, III
Executive Secretary



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

October 9, 1981

Mr. Jerome E. DeBruin
7321 Gwenn Court
Sylvania, Ohio 43560

Dear Mr. DeBruin:

Ms. Anne Higgins, of the President's office, has asked me to reply to your recent letter to the President concerning your brother, Eugene DeBruin.

We are, of course, aware of the circumstances of your brother's capture on September 5, 1963, imprisonment by Pathet Lao forces, and escape in early July 1966. We have obtained no information on Eugene DeBruin's fate since that escape attempt. At that time, two of the people in the group, who did successfully escape, reported that Eugene DeBruin was last seen trying to reach high ground near the prison. One later report, which indicated that Eugene DeBruin had been seen in 1967-68, was determined to be a fabrication.

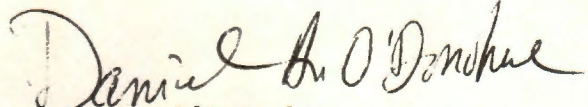
We understand how painful your brother's disappearance has been to you and your parents. We have repeatedly attempted to obtain from the Lao Government information on Eugene DeBruin's fate. We have given the Lao Government all the information available to us on his capture and subsequent escape (in Lao as well as English), a photograph of Eugene De Bruin in captivity, and a map showing his last known location. As you are no doubt aware, Senator Hayakawa made the most recent attempt to gain information from the Lao on Eugene DeBruin during the Senator's visit to Vientiane in August.

You mentioned in your letter to the President increasing reports of sightings of live prisoners in Southeast Asia. These reports are all very carefully investigated. A number, distressingly, turn out to be fraudulent. About half refer to persons who returned from Southeast Asia in the 1973-76 period. The remainder are still under investigation. However, none of the reports that Americans may be held against their will in Laos or Vietnam has been substantiated. Nor can any of the reports still under investigation be equated with Eugene DeBruin.

Unfortunately, all our efforts to obtain information on Eugene DeBruin's fate have been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, we will continue to press the Lao Government for an accounting for Mr. DeBruin, as well as for all Americans lost in Laos. We will continue to investigate carefully and fully all reports of sightings of live Americans in Laos and Vietnam. We will hold the Lao and Vietnamese governments to their humanitarian obligation to account as fully as possible for Americans missing as a consequence of the Vietnam War.

I regret that I am unable to provide you with the "good news" you have sought on your brother as an anniversary present to your parents. We sympathize with the sorrow and frustration felt by the families of those still missing and unaccounted for. We have done and will continue to do all that is possible to resolve this painful humanitarian issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel A. O'Donohue". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Daniel A. O'Donohue
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of East Asian and
Pacific Affairs

THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

8127865

REFERRAL

SEPTEMBER 25, 1981

TO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ACTION REQUESTED:

DIRECT REPLY, FURNISH INFO COPY

DESCRIPTION OF INCOMING:

ID: 040467

MEDIA: LETTER, DATED AUGUST 3, 1981

TO: PRESIDENT REAGAN

FROM: MR. JEROME E. DEBRUIN
7321 GWENN COURT
SYLVANIA OH 43560

SUBJECT: BROTHER, EUGENE HENRY DEBRUIN, HAS BEEN A
PRISONER OF THE PATHET LAO SINCE SEP 63;
REQUESTING EFFORTS TO GET HIM RELEASED —
ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE PARENTS 50TH
WEDDING ANNIVERSARY ON OCT 17 81

PROMPT ACTION IS ESSENTIAL — IF REQUIRED ACTION HAS NOT BEEN
TAKEN WITHIN 9 WORKING DAYS OF RECEIPT, PLEASE TELEPHONE THE
UNDERSIGNED AT 456-7486.

RETURN BASIC CORRESPONDENCE, CONTROL SHEET AND COPY OF RESPONSE
(OR DRAFT) TO:
AGENCY LIAISON, ROOM 33, THE WHITE HOUSE

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT:
LESLIE SORG
DIRECTOR OF AGENCY LIAISON
PRESIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE

8127865

September 21, 1981

Dear Mr. DeBruin:

Thank you for your message to President Reagan regarding the 50th wedding anniversary of your parents. I know you will understand that because of the heavy official demands on the President's time, it is not possible for him to comply with your request for a recorded message. However, I have enclosed a card which we thought your parents might enjoy having.

040467

In regard to the other matter you discussed, I have forwarded your letter to the appropriate government officials for their consideration.

With President Reagan's best wishes,

Sincerely,

Anne Higgins
Director of Correspondence

Mr. Jerome E. DeBruin
7321 Gwenn Court
Sylvania, OH 43560

✓ Enclosures: R-2; return casset tape
cc: Office of Agency Liaison with incoming for
special referral
AVH:MAK:SEV:kdb-V-6

max
Dad
7321 Gwenn Court
Sylvania, Ohio 43560
August 3, 1980

8127865

Honorable Ronald Reagan
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

040467

Dear President Reagan:

I write to enlist your assistance in the case of my brother, Eugene Henry DeBruin, an American civilian prisoner of the Pathet Lao in Laos since September 5, 1963. Next month, Eugene will begin his 19th year in captivity in Southeast Asia. The following month, on October 17, 1981, Eugene's parents will "celebrate" their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Incredible as it may seem, nearly 40% of my parents' married life has been spent in limbo in attempts to prod officials of the U.S. Government to obtain Eugene's release. Thus far, we have been unsuccessful in our efforts. The 18 years since Eugene's disappearance and the 15 years since his escape from Houei Het Prison in Southern Laos have been scattered like dry leaves, and covered with a heavy snow. Our hopes have been dashed, lifted and dashed again. But still there is hope as reports of live Americans being held prisoner in Southeast Asia continue to mount. Perhaps you can help before time runs out. Mom struggles with cancer, Dad's health continues to fail and Eugene languishes in a prison in far away Laos. Won't you help bring Eugene home again to be reunited with his family on his parents' 50th Wedding Anniversary? Admittedly, this is no easy task, but for you, as President of the United States, the task is not an insurmountable one.

What can you do to help our family? First, our family wants you to directly intercede with Prince Souphanouvong, a Pathet Lao leader in Laos, who has visited Eugene several times in prison. Won't you establish direct contact with the Prince and ask him for Eugene's immediate release? If Eugene's release cannot be gained at the present time (I don't see any real reason why it cannot), please encourage the Prince to permit Eugene to write to us and supply information on his current whereabouts. This vital information could be given to Mom and Dad at the time of their Anniversary and before they die not knowing the fate and whereabouts of their son. Eugene's release or a letter or tape from him would be the single most significant event in my parents' 50 years of wedded life and an answer to a dream, the American Dream of freedom, including Eugene. You can make this dream become a reality.

Second, I realize that this request is extraordinary and will take some of your valuable time. I also realize, as do you, that there are three American lives at stake, Mom, Dad and Eugene. Won't you dictate

Honorable Ronald Reagan

August 3, 1981

Page 2

a few sentences on the enclosed tape and return it to me for playback at their Anniversary? Perhaps a phone call that relates your efforts to obtain Eugene's release would do much the same. Your words would lend a great deal of emotional support. Mom and Dad would then know that their President truly wants to fulfill the dream of having Eugene released.

As previously mentioned, our family believes in the American Dream of freedom for all and the ideal for which it stands. The DeBruin family has helped America protect the integrity of this ideal by sending four sons to military service for a combined total of 32 years of dedicated service to their country. In return, we ask you to seek Eugene's immediate release. We earnestly hope that you will have good news for Mom and Dad on October 17, 1981, their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Time is running out.

Respectfully yours,

Jerome E. DeBruin

Jerome E. DeBruin

JED/th

Enc.



THA PA CHON VILLAGE, LAOS 1964

Left to Right: American, Eugene Henry DeBruin;
Thais, Pisidhi Indradat, Prasit Promsuwan,
Prasit Thane; Hong Kong Chinese, To Yick Chiu



Eugene Henry DeBruin,
1960



Eugene Henry DeBruin,
1960

ໃນເດືອນກັນຍາ ປີ 1963 ພວກວຽດນາມເໜືອແລະຄະນະປະເທດລາວໄດ້ຍິງເຕືອນຍິນໄປຖິ້ມເຂົ້າໃຫ້ພວກປະຊາຊົນລາວ ໃນເຂດ
ເຊໂປນຕິກນຶ່ງເຄື່ອງ ໃນເຄື່ອງຍິນທີ່ຖືກຍິງຕົກນັ້ນໄດ້ມີນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຄົນນຶ່ງຢູ່ໃນເຄື່ອງຍິນລ່າມັນ

ສ່ວນນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້ານັ້ນໄດ້ໂດດຮົ່ມລົງມາກ່ອນເຄື່ອງຍິນຈະເຖິງພື້ນດິນ ແລະນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້ານັ້ນໄດ້ຖືກພວກ
ວຽດນາມເໜືອແລະຄະນະປະເທດລາວຈັບໄວ້ເປັນສເລີຍ ນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າບໍ່ໄດ້ເປັນທະຫານຫລືຂ້າຮາຊການແຕ່ຢ່າງໃດ ນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງ
ຂ້າພະເຈົ້ານັ້ນເປັນປະຊາຊົນຫມໍ້ມະດາເໝືອນກັນກັບທ່ານ

ຊື່ນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້ານັ້ນຄື *ອູຊິນ ດີບູນ* ລັກສະນະແລະໜ້າຕາດັ່ງຮູບພາບຕິດຢູ່ດ້ານຫລັງນີ້

ໃນຣະຫວ່າງປີ 1963 ເຖິງປີ 1964 ນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ຢູ່ຮ່ວມກັນກັບສເລີຍອີກຫລາຍຄົນ ໃນບໍຣິເວນເມືອງ
ເຊໂປນ ຄັ້ງສຸດທ້າຍທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຮູ້ຂ່າວນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຢູ່ທີ່ເມືອງນອງ ໃນຣະຫວ່າງເດືອນມັງກອນປີ 1968 ໄດ້ຖືກພວກວຽດ
ນາມເໜືອຄົນນຶ່ງຊື່ວ່າ *ອອງລູຢ* ໄດ້ຍ້າຍນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າພ້ອມດ້ວຍສເລີຍອະເນຣິກັນອີກ 7 ຄົນໄປຈາກເມືອງນອງ ຖ້າຫາກວ່າພວກ
ທ່ານຊາບວ່າ *ອອງລູຢ* ເອົານ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າພ້ອມດ້ວຍສເລີຍອີກ 7 ຄົນນັ້ນໄປໄວ້ບ່ອນໃດ ຊ່ວຍກະຮຸນາບອກກັບຜູ້ຖືຈິດໝາຍນີ້ດ້ວຍ
ຮວມເວລາທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າພ້ອມພໍ້ແນ່ບໍ່ໄດ້ພົບນ້ອງຊາຍເປັນເວລາ 8 ປີ

ພໍ້ແລະແນ່ຂອງພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າກໍແກ່ມາກແລ້ວ ແລະຢາກຈະພົບໜ້າລູກກ່ອນທີ່ທ່ານຈະຕາຍຈາກໄປ ພໍ້ແລະແນ່ຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້
ແຕ່ກາຍໄຫວ້ອ້ອມວອນຕໍ່ສິ່ງສັກສິດໃນສາກົລໂລກນີ້ ຈຶ່ງຊ່ວຍຍັນດາມໃຫ້ພວກທ່ານຄັນຫນ້ອງຊາຍຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໃຫ້ພົບດ້ວຍເຕັມ

ເຊຣົນ ດີບູນ (ຜູ້ເປັນອ້າຍ)

9

1981



at
ID # 152625
C0084

WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

- O - OUTGOING
- H - INTERNAL
- I - INCOMING

Date Correspondence Received (YY/MM/DD) 83, 06, 15

Name of Correspondent: Phat Sinvongsa

MI Mail Report User Codes: (A) _____ (B) _____ (C) _____

Subject: Action asking for consideration of the problems of his countrymen with assistance to resolve them

ROUTE TO:

ACTION

DISPOSITION

Office/Agency (Staff Name)	Action Code	Tracking Date YY/MM/DD	Type of Response	Code	Completion Date YY/MM/DD
<u>✓ SCRAWL</u>	ORIGINATOR	<u>830601</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>830729 ER</u>
<u>✓ DOS</u>	Referral Note: <u>R</u>	<u>830706</u>		<u>A</u>	<u>830726</u>
	Referral Note:				
	Referral Note:				
	Referral Note:				
	Referral Note:				

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- Type of Response = Initials of Signer
- Code = "A"
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Comments: _____

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No. of Additional Correspondents: _____ Media: L Individual Codes: 3500 _____

Prime Subject Code: C0024 Secondary Subject Codes: EA _____

PRESIDENTIAL REPLY

Code	Date	Comment	Form
C	_____	Time: _____	P- _____
DSP	_____	Time: _____	Media: _____

SIGNATURE CODES:

- CPn - Presidential Correspondence
 - n - 0 - Unknown
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 - n - 3 - Ron
 - n - 4 - Dutch
 - n - 5 - Ron Reagan
 - n - 6 - Ronald
 - n - 7 - Ronnie

- CLn - First Lady's Correspondence
 - n - 0 - Unknown
 - n - 1 - Nancy Reagan
 - n - 2 - Nancy
 - n - 3 - Mrs. Ronald Reagan

- CBn - Presidential & First Lady's Correspondence
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 - n - 2 - Ron - Nancy

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- P - Photo
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- S - Sealed
- T - Telegram
- V - Telephone
- X - Miscellaneous
- Y - Study



✓ SCRAWL

UNCLASSIFIED
(Classification)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
TRANSMITTAL FORM

S/S 8320619

Date July 27, 1983

For: Mr. William P. Clark
National Security Council
The White House

Reference:

To: President Reagan From: Mr. Nhot K. Sinvongsa

Date: June 10, 1983 Subject: Assistance for Laos

WH Referral Dated: _____ NSC ID# _____
(if any)

_____ The attached item was sent directly to the
Department of State.

Action Taken:

_____ A draft reply is attached.

_____ A draft reply will be forwarded.

_____ A translation is attached.

x _____ An information copy of a direct reply is attached.

_____ We believe no response is necessary for the reason
cited below.

_____ The Department of State has no objection to the
proposed travel.

_____ Other.

Remarks:

Walter S. Plummer
Charles Hill
Executive Secretary

UNCLASSIFIED
(Classification)



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 26, 1983

Mr. Nhot K. Sinvongsa
Ivan Bruner Construction
555 Odana Road
Madison, Wisconsin 53729

Dear Mr. Nhot Sinvongsa:

The President's office has asked me to reply directly to your letter of June 10 to President Reagan.

I assure you that the United States Government and the American people continue to be concerned about Laos and the Lao people. As you know, the United States has provided sanctuary to more than 133,000 Lao refugees and we continue efforts to assist Lao refugees in Thailand.

The keystone of American policy in Indochina is our support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The United States and most ASEAN countries as well as many other nations have diplomatic relations with the current government in Vientiane. We sympathize with your desire to end the Vietnamese military presence in Laos and restore Laos' neutrality, and we are aware of human rights violations in Laos. We have particularly deplored the detention of persons in "re-education" camps without trial some eight years after the war. The United States, however, is not trying to overthrow the government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic by force; nor do we provide assistance to groups seeking its forceful overthrow. Our objective is to support ASEAN in achieving a peaceful solution to the problem in Kampuchea. We believe that this course offers not only the best opportunity for restoring stability and security in Southeast Asia but also for reducing external interference in Laos.

The United States shares your concern at the threat to the security of the region posed by aggressive Vietnamese military operations. The Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea seriously destabilizes the region and threatens the security of Thailand.

You have mentioned the use by the Vietnamese and Soviets of poison gases in Laos. The use of chemical weapons which are prohibited by both conventions and international law is of paramount concern to the United States. We have been active in efforts to investigate the use of these inhumane weapons and to publicize information on Soviet and Vietnamese involvement. The United States Government will continue to play a major role in efforts to resolve this issue and to halt the use of chemical weapons against the people of Afghanistan and Southeast Asia.

-2-

Thank you for writing to express your views on the situation in Laos. Should you be in Washington on other business, I would be happy to meet you to further discuss Laos and United States policy in Indochina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David Halsted", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David C. Halsted
Acting Director
Office of Vietnam, Laos
and Kampuchea Affairs

T H E W H I T E H O U S E O F F I C E

REFERRAL

JULY 6, 1983

TO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ACTION REQUESTED:

DIRECT REPLY, FURNISH INFO COPY

DESCRIPTION OF INCOMING:

ID: 152625

MEDIA: LETTER, DATED JUNE 10, 1983

TO: PRESIDENT REAGAN

FROM: MR. NHOT K. SINVONGSA
IVAN BRUNER CONSTRUCTION
5555 ODANA ROAD
MADISON WI 53719SUBJECT: LAOTIAN ASKING FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE
PROBLEMS OF HIS COUNTRYMEN WITH ASSISTANCE
TO RESOLVE THEMPROMPT ACTION IS ESSENTIAL -- IF REQUIRED ACTION HAS NOT BEEN
TAKEN WITHIN 9 WORKING DAYS OF RECEIPT, PLEASE TELEPHONE THE
UNDERSIGNED AT 456-7486.RETURN CORRESPONDENCE, WORKSHEET AND COPY OF RESPONSE
(OR DRAFT) TO:
AGENCY LIAISON, ROOM 91, THE WHITE HOUSESALLY KELLEY
DIRECTOR OF AGENCY LIAISON
PRESIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE



ivan bruner construction

5555 ODANA ROAD • MADISON • WI 53719 • TEL 608/271-3131

8320619

(COB)

~~Refugee State Dept.~~
~~Response~~
~~State Dept.~~
Refugee State Dept.
Response

scheduling

June 10, 1983

The Honorable Ronald R. Reagan
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Reagan:

152625

I am the leader of the S.B.G. organization and am writing on behalf of the Lao refugees here in the United States. The purpose of this letter is to explain our situation that we might enlist the help of the American government. All of the Lao people of this world are grateful for the aid of the American government, because without your aid we would be living under Communism in Laos, and that situation is intolerable.

The letters S.B.G. in Laotian stand for Sor Bor Gor which means Laotian helping Laotian. S.B.G. presently have approximately 5800 members in the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. We have not expanded beyond these states even though there is keen interest nationwide. The primary reason for lack of expansion is shortage of money and time. The goal of this organization is to enlist many more Lao to help our people in their struggle for freedom.

We the Lao people now in your country give ourselves into the charge of the American government. We would do that which the government would have us do in order to return to our country - a free country as it was before.

February 21, 1975 there was an agreement among the people (the old government and the communist faction), to work together. But the old government lost its political and its military powers. The Communists took over the country completely. Therefore many of the Lao people were forced to leave their country.

Although there is still a country of Lao on the map of the world as before, it is not the country of Laos we knew. The country we knew was a country of freedom and religion with a king and a system of law and order. The flag of this country was a three headed elephant and was recognized by the United Nations for forty years.

There has been much political and military turmoil in Indochina since 1962 until the day the American government signed an agreement to end the war in Vietnam in 1970. The government and the people of America know that North Vietnam was disloyal to this agreement and the war continued. As the American military was withdrawn from South Vietnam the South Vietnamese were frightened and felt unable to fight the North Vietnamese on their own.

The three countries of Indochina were all taken over by the Communists. After the Communist takeover there were still many people being killed daily in these countries. About five million (Indochinese) people have died in Indochina due to this war.

After the Communist takeover of Laos many thousands of Soviet and Vietnamese came to assist the Lao Communists in the complete takeover of the country. The Lao people who had worked with the old government or worked with the American government (people who had fought in the war) and many other people were arrested and sent to reeducation camps. Many of these people were killed. Whole families were arrested, whole families killed regardless of age or sex.

Throughout the country, the Soviets sprayed poison gasses from planes (chemical warfare) killing many more people. This then left the area free for them to enter unnoticed. Tractors were used to conduct mass burials that these murders might be kept secret. After this killing the Soviets and Vietnamese entered the areas and secretly mined diamonds, gold and silver from the mountains of Laos and sent them to their own countries. The forests of Laos were stripped, they logged many varieties of trees and sent the wood to their own countries.

Many Lao people were killed but to cover this fact (to keep the census up) Vietnamese families were moved into Laos that the world might see that the population of Laos is still the same. This practice further covered up the killing which has taken place.

Mr. Gysone, the present President of Laos and his cabinet are set up for looks only, the workings of the government are actually controlled by the Soviet and Vietnamese military. Now that the country of Laos is well under control some of the Soviet and Vietnamese soldiers are now fighting with the country of Thailand. In every office, school and business the Soviet or Vietnamese are sent to work as the supervisors of the Lao people working there. The customs, rules, regulations and religion of the old Laos are no longer in use. The young Lao men and women are forced to marry Vietnamese. The children of these marriages always use the Vietnamese last names, that they might be Vietnamese citizens. This process would slowly eradicate the Lao people. The present government says if two Lao people marry, these people do not love their country. These couples are separated and sent to different parts of the country, neither knowing the whereabouts of the other and then new Vietnamese spouses are found for them. If these Vietnamese spouses are not accepted the Lao are killed.

Sweet rice was the major crop planted. This rice is the staple of the Lao people. The government of Gysone now takes 95% of the harvest and the people themselves are left with only 5% of their harvest. This percentage taken by the government is used to feed the Soviet and Vietnamese soldiers. The people are not to say that the government took 95% of their harvest but that they wished to give it to the government. The people do this under the fear of death. People of all ages are sent to study Russian and Vietnamese, although Laotian is still studied it is not given much time. The people also study how bad America and other free countries of the world are. They curse America and the American way of life daily. The young Lao people are taught only these languages and the cursing of the free world. They are not allowed to study trades or anything else that they may be kept from having the knowledge to think and care for themselves.

The Buddhist religion which used to be highly respected and an everyday part of life in Laos is no longer allowed. There are no longer any practicing monks. The large temples are now used for military camps. Any statues of Buddah and other artifacts of the temple were removed from the country. The Lao people have been greatly saddened by these things but are unable to do anything to stop it.

Every daily aspect of life is now made difficult for the Lao people in their own country. Families are separated and sent to different parts of the country. The Lao people are now very poor, they do not have enough clothes to wear or food to eat. The work is hard and food is not enough and the medical problems of the people increase but there is no medicine or medical help for them. Travel from city to city is very difficult since the roads between them are in great disrepair.

The government of Gysone has taken many thousands of Lao women to be prostitutes for the Soviet and Vietnamese armies. If a woman becomes pregnant she is sent back to her home and a new woman is taken to be a prostitute. This is all done discreetly so the foreign embassies have no knowledge of it.

Sometimes young Lao people are sent to study in Vietnam. When the young people return they all have Vietnamese spouses.

Since the Communist takeover of Laos the Lao people now see that they do not like the Communists in their country. They have seen and heard and worked with communists and are tired of their ways. It is not as they were told it would be. The people were forced to do work they didn't know how to do and had never done before. We the Lao people were therefore forced to leave everything we owned and the country we loved and escape from the Vietnamese and the Communist rulers. The escape to Thailand is filled with danger yet Lao people attempt it every day. Out of every 100 people that attempt to escape, twenty-five are killed on the way. The most dangerous part of the escape is crossing the Mekong River. Many people are shot in the river - women, children, old people and pregnant women. Even knowing of this great danger the Lao peoples still attempt to escape for they cannot live with the Communist rule.

Once reaching Thailand, the Lao people enter refugee camps run by the United Nations. There they are provided with food, shelter, clothing and medical attention. From these camps in Thailand the Lao people are resettled in a third country. They are accepted by many countries; Canada, France, Japan, Australia and many more. America has resettled the largest number of Lao refugees. The Lao people are very happy to have been resettled here in America (better than other countries). They have found so much help in every aspect of their resettlement.

The Laotians are amazed by the prosperity here in America, so different from Laos. Even though they are helped in every aspect of life here and enjoy the prosperity of America, the Lao people still miss their own country. They still want to return home to Laos.

The Lao people still in Laos are not able to escape anymore because the Soviet and Vietnamese military has sealed off the paths of escape. The people in Laos are waiting to see if those that were able to escape will help them to gain back their country.

Before the Communist took over Laos they told the Lao people how wonderful things would be under Communist rule. All people would be equal - there would be no rich and no poor. But having taken over the country things are not as they said it would be. It was all a lie.

This brings us the Lao people, to the point of writing this letter to the American government that the government might consider the problems of the people and the country of Laos and then help us to resolve them.

The Lao people who have been resettled here in a third country would like to return to their own country of Laos. As long as Laos is under Communist rule, we are unable to return. We would like a democratic government in Laos as there is in America.

We, the people of S.B.G. organization (in America, Laos and other countries) have come together in one mind. We have come to despise the Communists and are ready to do anything to rid our country of them. The Laotians still in Laos are going to fight the Communists and they ask our help. There are 9,000 men in Laos ready to fight from within if they have weapons. They are not properly armed but are willing to fight with anything and anyway they can, so much is their hate for the Communist rule of their country. There is no one helping these Lao people in their fight against Communism. We as Lao refugees in America come to ask the Americans for help. All of the Lao people are ready to fight to the death, there is no turning back. If all the Lao must die, we are still willing to fight. If there are still Lao people left they will fight the Communists. Only if all of the Lao people have died would the Communists then have the country of Laos without a fight. If all the Laotians were to be killed then God is left to judge.

The old government of Laos lost their will to fight the Communists. The Communists entered Laos and the old government turned over the country to the Communists, the people of the old government then escaped to other countries. Now, we the people of Laos still wish to fight and will not turn back or give up as the old government did.

The Lao people now request the help of the people and government of America that we might be advised as to what must be done to regain our country. We are willing to do whatever the government advises. Does the American government want to see the extinction of the Lao people? (Or, will you help us before it is too late?)

The people of the S.B.G. organization have written this letter to the American government that the government might know of our plight, in order that the government might consider helping us in our fight against communism in our country.

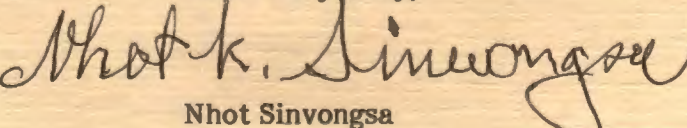
The fears, concerns and willingness of men to fight have been communicated to us from the Lao people still in our country. We cannot emphasize strongly enough the desire of the Lao people in this country to help our brothers and sisters in Lao.

After reading this letter if the American government feels compelled to assist us, the S.B.G. organization will then continue our fight against the Communist rule in our country. We are willing to do whatever the American government would have us do. (Without the government's assistance we are unable to continue this fight.)

The people of the S.B.G. organization hope that war may never touch the shores of America and that this country may have continued good fortune and prosperity.

We would like a meeting with you personally either in your office in Washington, D.C. or at any location of your choice. Will you please respond by letter or telephone to Mr. Ivan Bruner, 5555 Odana Road, Madison, Wisconsin 53719, telephone (608) 271-3131 and he will complete the arrangements on our behalf. Thank you for your time and consideration. We trust we have conveyed our serious concern and urgency to act.

Yours very truly,


Nhot Sinvongsa

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the humidity. It was a relief after the dry, crisp air of the mountains. The humidity was a little bit of a shock, but it was a good one. It was a sign of a new beginning.

The humidity was a little bit of a shock, but it was a good one. It was a sign of a new beginning. The humidity was a little bit of a shock, but it was a good one. It was a sign of a new beginning. The humidity was a little bit of a shock, but it was a good one. It was a sign of a new beginning.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

0084

INCOMING

DATE RECEIVED: APRIL 18, 1986

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: THE HONORABLE THOMAS E. PETRI

SUBJECT: ENCLOSES LETTER FROM TEACHER BARBARA SPELLMAN
SOUTH PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL, OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN
WHO FORWARDS 3 STORIES BY LAOTIAN STUDENTS
AND REQUESTS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ROUTE TO: OFFICE/AGENCY (STAFF NAME)	ACTION		DISPOSITION	
	ACT CODE	DATE YY/MM/DD	TYPE RESP	C COMPLETED D YY/MM/DD
WILLIAM BALL	ORG	86/04/18	UB A 860424	R
<i>CO Sign</i>		<i>86/04/28</i>	<i>CPA 860527</i>	AB
<i>Conrad</i>				

COMMENTS: *President's message sent to Mao Yang*
Pao Yang & Maiya Lor c/o Long Petri

ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENTS: MEDIA:L INDIVIDUAL CODES: 1240
MAIL USER CODES: (A) (B) (C)

- *****
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| *ACTION CODES: | *DISPOSITION | *OUTGOING | * |
| * | * | *CORRESPONDENCE: | * |
| *A-APPROPRIATE ACTION | *A-ANSWERED | *TYPE RESP=INITIALS | * |
| *C-COMMENT/RECOM | *B-NON-SPEC-REFERRAL | * OF SIGNER | * |
| *D-DRAFT RESPONSE | *C-COMPLETED | * CODE = A | * |
| *F-FURNISH FACT SHEET | *S-SUSPENDED | *COMPLETED = DATE OF | * |
| *I-INFO COPY/NO ACT NEC* | | * OUTGOING | * |
| *R-DIRECT REPLY W/COPY * | | | * |
| *S-FOR-SIGNATURE | | | * |
| *X-INTERIM REPLY | | | * |
- *****

REFER QUESTIONS AND ROUTING UPDATES TO CENTRAL REFERENCE
(ROOM 75, OEOB) EXT-2590
KEEP THIS WORKSHEET ATTACHED TO THE ORIGINAL INCOMING
LETTER AT ALL TIMES AND SEND COMPLETED RECORD TO RECORDS
MANAGEMENT.

May 27, 1986

Dear Mao:

Your teacher, Mrs. Spellman, was kind enough to share with me and Congressman Petri the essay you wrote about your family's flight from Laos. I read your story with great interest and even greater admiration. You are a very brave young person and deserve to be acknowledged for the courage you and your family have shown.

Mrs. Reagan and I are glad that your difficult journey is over and that you are safe here in America. We agree with the thought that America is "just like a mother" to those who have come to her shores fleeing the scourges of discrimination, war, or oppression. Despite the many unique aspects of your suffering, the Hmong people have much in common with the refugees of many other lands -- Greek or Jew, Hungarian or Pole, Cuban or Chinese -- who have found in this Nation a new home and a new hope.

We are proud to have you with us. Let me add, however, that our dream remains not only that America will always be the blessed land of freedom that God has made her, but that the people of every Nation on Earth will someday know the joy of liberty that is their birthright.

You have great spirit, Mao, and you are a wonderful example to all of us. Mrs. Reagan joins me in sending you and your family our thanks, and our best wishes for every future happiness.

God bless you.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

Mao Yang
South Park Middle School
1551 Delaware Street
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

whcc: Congressman Thomas E. Petri
cc: William Ball
Enclosure: color photo-horse & dog
RR/CGM/CAD/AVH/ckb (5PMNC)

860528

May 27, 1986

Dear Pao:

Your teacher, Mrs. Spellman, was kind enough to share with me and Congressman Petri the essay you wrote about your family's flight from Laos. I read your story with great interest and even greater admiration. You are a very brave young person and deserve to be acknowledged for the courage you and your family have shown.

Mrs. Reagan and I are glad that your difficult journey is over and that you are safe here in America. We agree with the thought that America is "just like a mother" to those who have come to her shores fleeing the scourges of discrimination, war, or oppression. Despite the many unique aspects of your suffering, the Hmong people have much in common with the refugees of many other lands -- Greek or Jew, Hungarian or Pole, Cuban or Chinese -- who have found in this Nation a new home and a new hope.

We are proud to have you with us. Let me add, however, that our dream remains not only that America will always be the blessed land of freedom that God has made her, but that the people of every Nation on Earth will someday know the joy of liberty that is their birthright.

You have great spirit, Pao, and you are a wonderful example to all of us. Mrs. Reagan joins me in sending you and your family our thanks, and our best wishes for every future happiness.

God bless you.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

Pao Yang
South Park Middle School
1551 Delaware Street
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

whcc: Congressman Thomas E. Petri
cc: William Ball

Enclosure: color photo-horse & dog
RR/CGM/CAD/AVH/ckb (5PMNC)

860528

May 27, 1986

Dear Maiya:

Your teacher, Mrs. Spellman, was kind enough to share with me and Congressman Petri the essay you wrote about your family's flight from Laos. I read your story with great interest and even greater admiration. You are a very brave young person and deserve to be acknowledged for the courage you and your family have shown.

Mrs. Reagan and I are glad that your difficult journey is over and that you are safe here in America. We agree with the thought that America is "just like a mother" to those who have come to her shores fleeing the scourges of discrimination, war, or oppression. Despite the many unique aspects of your suffering, the Hmong people have much in common with the refugees of many other lands -- Greek or Jew, Hungarian or Pole, Cuban or Chinese -- who have found in this Nation a new home and a new hope.

We are proud to have you with us. Let me add, however, that our dream remains not only that America will always be the blessed land of freedom that God has made her, but that the people of every Nation on Earth will someday know the joy of liberty that is their birthright.

You have great spirit, Maiya, and you are a wonderful example to all of us. Mrs. Reagan joins me in sending you and your family our thanks, and our best wishes for every future happiness.

God bless you.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

A

Maiya Lor
South Park Middle School
1881 Delaware Street
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

whcc: Congressman Thomas E. Petri
cc: William Ball
Enclosure: color photo-horse & dog
RR/CGM/CAD/AVH/ckb (5PMNC)

860528

April 24, 1986

Dear Mr. Petri:

Thank you for your April 11 letter forwarding three stories to the President written by Laotian students.

We appreciate your bringing these inspiring accounts to our attention, and you may be assured that they have been shared with the appropriate White House officials in order that an acknowledgement may be sent on the President's behalf.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

William L. Ball, III
Assistant to the President

The Honorable Thomas E. Petri
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

WLB:KRJ:MDB:mdb

cc: w/copy of inc to Anne Higgins - for DIRECT response
WH RECORDS MANAGEMENT HAS RETAINED ORIGINAL INCOMING

3
WB

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 1986

M. B. Oglesby, Jr.
Assistant to the President
for Legislative Affairs
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear B,

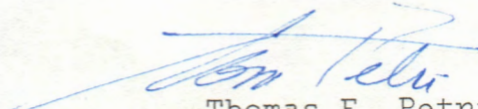
The purpose of this letter is to forward to the President three very moving stories. They were written as a class assignment. When they were read to the students of the class they inspired awe. The stories are of the escape of three families from Laos.

Barbara Spellman, a teacher at South Park Middle School in Oshkosh, Wisconsin is the person who brought the stories to my office with the request that they be sent to the President. She believed that the President might be moved by the stories of these immigrants who are now trying to make their way in the United States. It is Mrs. Spellman's hope, and mine too that the President would acknowledge the receipt of these stories with a personal letter to the students who wrote them.

Enclosed, please find the original stories and typed transcripts that make more clear the stories. Also there is a letter from Mrs. Spellman enclosed.

Again, a letter from the President would be most appreciated. These students and their families are working to become a part of Oshkosh. They believe in America.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Petri
Member of Congress

TEP:gu
cc: Barbara Spellman
Enclosure

South Park School
1551 Delaware Street
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Dear Sir:

Enclosed are the three true-life narratives that we spoke about over the phone last February. The stories were written by Hmong students that I teach English to at South Park Middle School. The students describe their uprooting from their homeland of Laos, the hardships and heartaches they endured to reach safety, and their reaction to the United States. The Hmong students I teach have not yet found friends among the other students. After reading these narratives I realized it was the perfect opportunity for my American students to learn more about why they find themselves sitting next to students from such a different culture. I believe that learning-about is the first step to understanding, understanding leads to acceptance, acceptance leads to love, so I chose Valentine's Day to read these narratives because it is the day we Americans set aside to show the importance of love.

I told the students, "There are many kinds of love. Today we Americans take time out to reflect upon its importance and to improve our love relationships. The narratives I'm going to read to you today are about love - love of a people for each other and a country." After listening to the narratives a spontaneous round of applause broke out from the students. Understanding and compassion showed on their faces, and

the Among students literally glowed with pride.
I hope that you can get these stories to the
President of the United States because he too
is a man of love and compassion, and I think
he would genuinely be interested in reading
them. Any response from his office would be
greatly appreciated by these dear students.

Sincerely,
Barbara Spellman

The Forgotten War

by: Pao Yang

In 1975, the Hmong people started to plant their own crops. They don't worry about anything neither did we. We started to build new houses and make a new living. We didn't know when the enemies were going to attack. Until the 13th of July at midnight. We're still sleeping, but not my father because he was very sick, he couldn't sleep. A moment later my father heard a strange sound. It sound like the sound of an airplane. He knew that the sound was from an airplane because my father was once a pilot in Laos. He was trained by the American pilots. Then he woke us up and then we started to run to the cave where we always did when the airplane came. We stayed there for a moment we saw the Vietnamese bomb our house and destroy our farm. We were really afraid that the Vietnamese soldiers might come and kill us all. But they didn't. They thought that ^{we} were dead. Then for a moment the noise was gone my father came out of the cave to see if there were any airplanes left, but they were all gone. My father said that there were no airplanes left so we came out of the cave. Our garden, our pig and chicken were all dead. They were lying around everywhere. Everything that we had were all destroy. We only have a little food left. We had a lot but when the Vietnamese came they destroyed it all.

On the next day we were afraid that the Vietnamese were going to come back again. So my family and I and some of the Hmong people started to move. We walked with our bare feet because at that time we didn't have any shoes. We walked all day and all night without stopping anywhere until we reached the Vietnamese farm. My father told my uncle and my cousin to go see if anybody still guarded the gate that were going to cross. But my cousin and my uncle didn't go because they were scared. They just went down near the gate. Then they came back and told us that there were no guards left. They didn't look for the guards

that my father told them to look for. So we didn't know that there were still guards left on the gate. Then my father (told) us to wait there for a moment until it gets dark. We waited and waited and waited. Until it was about nine o'clock. Then we started to walk slowly through the farm. We stopped for a minute because we're going to cross the gate. It was quiet. No one made any sound. We saw a Vietnamese car go by, but the driver did (not) see us, because it was very dark. Mom took my hand and told me not to worry we were going to make it.

Then in a moment my father said now we can go. So we started to climb the gate. My father pushed me up and then he told me to jump to the ground my father was still climbing the gate. Then when my father got up the Vietnamese saw us and started (+o) fire. My father told me to go by myself. I was crying and hoping that someday I would be safe and still be with my family again. Then suddenly my father disappeared, I didn't know where to go. I just stood there until the Vietnamese soldier saw me. They took me to their camp. When I got to the Vietnamese camp they give me some food. But I didn't eat because I was scared that they may put some poison in the food. They took me to one of their camp houses and they told me to lie there when I got tired.

On the next day I saw an old man. He was one of our people. They captured him from crossing the gate. They took me to see him and asked me if I knew him or not. I said I really didn't know him because I had never seen him before. The Vietnamese soldier asked him if he was one of the Hmong soldier or not. He really didn't know what they were going to do with him if he tell them the truth. So he said that he was one of the captain. Then they started to beat him and kick him in the face. They told me not to be scared. They only wanted to beat the old man because he had sent a lot of Hmong soldiers to destroy their car that was working around with them. Some Vietnamese soldiers were really bad, but some were really good. They beat the old man everyday. Sometimes they tied him up and let two Vietnamese soldier's open the old man's mouth and started to spit in his mouth.

He was crying and I was really scared that they were going to do that to me too, but they didn't.

On the next morning they took the old man to stay with me. They told me not to feed him anything. So I didn't feed him anything because I was afraid that if I feed him they may kill me. But some come and said please give him some water. So I gave him some water. They beat him so bad that his eyes were all bloody. He asked me what I was doing there. I told him that I was being captured. He asked me where's my mom and dad went.

"I really didn't know where they went when my father told me to (go) by myself", I replied. Then he told me not to worry at all. I would get to see my family soon he wispered.

I questioned, "What about you?"

He said don't worried about me because I'm going to die.

On the fourth day, the old man died. They took him to the lake and threw him in the water. Then suddenly I saw a truck come. There were all kinds of peoples in the truck, but none of them that I knew. Then they told to get in, so I get in. They took us to one of the cities in Laos. But at that time the Vietnamese had already taken over Laos. All the people of Laos were all with the Vietnamese. When I got to that city, they told me to get out of the car, so I got out of the car and saw my aunt waiting there for me. I saw her and jumped on her and she hugged me and she was crying and I was crying. She took me to her house and she asked me to stay with her so I agreed to stay. I lived with her about one and a half year. Then I heard from my aunt that my mom and dad were both safe. When my father told me to go by myself he and my mom jumped back and ran back to hide in the forest. They stayed there for two days. Then they saw some footprints. They followed those footprints and they knew that the footprints were from our people because the Vietnamese wear shoes, but we don't. My father and my mother followed their footprints until they met one of my father's friends.

He asked what my father and my mother were doing there. My father said that they got lost. So my father's friends told my mom and dad to go with them. When they cross the gate nothing happen. Everybody was saved. Then they came to a city (called) Too Kai. My father and my mother stayed there. They didn't even know where I was. They thought I was dead.

The next year which was 1979. I was 8 years old then. My aunt sent a letter to my mom and dad that I was saved. She had taken me to live with her and they shouldn't worry. When my father and my mom received the letter they both were very happy that I was saved. So they paid about 2,000 (Laotian) dollars to one of our cousins to come and get me. We lived 400 miles from the city that my mom and dad lived in. When he arrived to the city where we lived he came to my aunt's house and said that he was going to take me to my mom and dad. He told my aunt not to say a word to me, because if she did then I would tell all my friends that I was going to go away. Then everyone would know and they would capture my cousin. At that time I was fishing with my friends so I didn't (know) that my cousin had come. When I got home my aunt didn't said anything. All she did was cry. I asked her what happened. She said that I was going to go away.

"Why," I asked. She said that one of my cousin's came and my mom and dad paid him to take me to them.

Where is he? I asked.

My aunt said, "He's right there." I look in the closet and there he was. He asked my aunt not to worry. Someday she would see us again. Then he took me to the station and two days later we got to my mom and dad. When I met them I didn't know who my father was and who my mom was, because we were separated for a long time. But my mom and dad knew me. They hugged me, and we were all crying. We lived there for about 6 months.

Almost seven months later we started to Thailand so we could get to the

United States. We started at twelve o'clock midnight. We didn't let anyone know that we were coming. Everybody was quiet. They all were sleeping except us. We walked softly without making any sound to the forest. When we got to the forest, my little brother was crying. We were really afraid that the people in the city would hear us. My father put his hand over my brother's mouth. Then suddenly, my brother was quiet. So we started to walk to the Mekong River. We lived far away from the Mekong River. We started in July and we get there in October. When we got to the Mekong River, we saw a boat coming.

Suddenly he stopped and asked "What are we doing there?" My father told him that we wanted to get to Thailand. He said get in. We all get in the boat and he says it will be \$5,000 (Laotian) dollar to get there. So my father gave him the \$5,000 dollar. It was ten o'clock at that time. The man took us to an Island near Thailand. He told us to stay there and tomorrow the Thai people will come and get us. It was one o'clock in the morning. We were very tired. So were all asleep on the sand. We didn't have any blankets to sleep on. We didn't have anything to build a tent.

It was about six o'clock in the morning when we got up. We saw a bus go by because the island that we live on is just down behind the road. Then suddenly the bus stopped and a lot of people got out of the bus. We watched all the that came out of the bus to see if there was anyone that we knew. Some came out of the bus and then went shopping. We watched until all the people had come out of the bus. We didn't see anyone that we knew, so we turned back and went to lie down on the sand. It was about ten P.M. when the thieves came. We were all asleep, no one knew that the thieves were going to come until they fired up in the sky. We woke up and one of the thieves kicked my uncle's face. They were really bad. We knew that they wanted something from us, but we don't know what they wanted, because they didn't tell us what they wanted. Then my father give them all of out necklaces and

the money that we have. He asked them that if he gave all of the necklaces and all of our money to them, would they help us get to the other side of the road.

"Yes", said the thieves. They told us to pick up our things and start moving. One of the thieves captain told another thief to go get the boat.

About ten minutes later, he brought back their boat. They parked their boat far away from us because they didn't want anybody to know where they would go. It was 1:A.M. in the morning. They told us to get in the boat. So we get in the boat. It was very dark. We couldn't see anything except the water.

It was about 12:00 midnight when we got to Thailand. Everyone was still sleeping. It was quiet. Then the thieves told us to stay there while they tied up the boat. It was 12:30 and they never came back. So my father followed them to the boat and they were gone. The boat was gone too. We stayed there until it was 7:00 A.M.. Then a fisherman came and saw us. He took us to his house and gave us some food. Then he said that there was a camp call Vinai. That was the place where all the Hmong people lived. So he took us with him in his car to Vinai. There were a lot of Hmong people living in Vinai. Then suddenly my Grandmother came. She took to her tent. She asked us to live with her until we came to the United States.

On june 1980, we came to the United States. We started to walk down the road to wait for the bus. We stayed there until the bus came. The bus driver called all the names that were going to the United States. Suddenly he called our names. Then we started to get in. My mom and my grandmother started crying. She said that she may never see us. But my mom said that someday we'll be together again.

About two minutes later, the bus was ready to go. My grandmother shook my mother's hands and held them tight, until the bus started to move.

They took us to Bangkok (Thailands Capital). We stayed there about

two days. Then on the third day, came an airplane. That's the United States airplane.

It was about 6:00 P.M. when we get to the airplane. I didn't know when the airplane started to take off. Suddenly I saw some blue sky. Then I knew that we were in the sky already.

About two days later we got to Chicago. We lived there for two and a half years, then we came to Oshkosh. Now I still miss my grandmother. I know she returned to Laos, but I don't know if she is still alive.

Now we have came to the United States. A country of peace and happiness. It is one of the most beautiful country in the world I had every seen and a free country where I have nothing to worried about. I would like to thank the United States for letting our people came to their country. We came here because our country had been lost in war. If there were no country like this one, all of our people would have been killed. This country is just like a mother to our people. It makes everyone of our people very happy. We hope the United States is very happy for us too.

Escaping From The Country We Love

by: Maiya Lor

It was around 1975 when the war began, but we didn't leave with other people. We stayed in our little village and farmed everyday just to get enough food around the year. Around that time I was still very little and I didn't do much, but I remember that I had to help babysitting. Mom and Dad were at the feilds everyday and didn't get home until dark.

(Vietnamese)
A year later, the Vinamies were attacking our village. But we knew ahead of time so we moved away to another village. We left all our food, animals and other things behind. We only carried enough food to eat by our way to the new village. I didn't get to carry anything because I was still little, but I had to walk all by myself. We walked about two or three days to that new village. I was really tired, but if I didn't move, they would left me behind.

When we got to that new village, there was a lot of people from all over and it was really crowded. We settled there about a month ot two then we started another trip which was longer than the one before. We traveled by feet about two weeks or so. This time, I had to carry my baby brother. Sometimes I started to cry aloud because my brother was heavy. At that time, it was really hot and that made me even more tired. I cried and cried, but instead of getting help, I got into trouble. I was so mad and wished my brother was never born.

We traveled and traveled, then we finally found a place to settled and built our new home and start our new crop fields. We started our crop field a week later because we needed some food so Mom and Dad had to go work for some other people and they payed Mom and Dad with rice. When we got enough food, we started our house. We only built our house with straws because we thought we weren't going to live there long. But a year later we repaired our house with bamboo and wood. And that was the time the Vinamies started another war.

So we only got to live in our brand new house for a week and then started to pack things up again. At that time, there was no place to hide so we went to a big cave and hid there. We hid there about a week but nothing happened to our village. We were going to go back, but then ^(missiles) misa and bullets were crying on top of our heads. We went back to the cave until it was ^(quiet) quite again. Then we packed things up and started our trip. I was wondering if we will ever settle somewhere forever so I don't have to walk so much.

We walked so far off to the other side of the mountains and stayed there and rest there about two or three months. But our biggest problems were food. We ran out of food and had nothing to eat. Sometimes we went to other people's farm and searched for plants to eat. But since there were so many people, everything was gone. We only ate what we found each day and sometimes it wasn't enough for all of us.

We were going to live there for several more days, but those enemies seemed to follow us everywhere so we packed up and started another trip. We traveled and traveled, but this time, it never seemed to end.

We traveled for so long and was so tired, so we built a little shelter in the woods to stay for several days. There were several other families with us too.

Sometimes, we were so afraid to cook because if we built a fire, they will see us and they will drop bombs at us. Everything was so difficult at those days.

We only stayed there for about a month then my dad went to a place where there were more people. He went there and talked with some men. They said they knew the way to Thailand. My dad begged them to accept us. They did accept us. So we went to the place they lived in. We stayed there about a week then started packing again. And this time it's more difficult because we traveled in the jungles. We threw everything away except our clothings and foods. But no matter how much we packed, we knew we wouldn't make it. And at that

time, I was a little bigger so I got to carry ten cans of rice. My oldest sister carried 25 cans, my other older sister carried 15, my mom carried around 10 plus my younger brother on top, and my dad carried about 25 plus my other younger brother. I carried the least, but it was so heavy and we traveled everyday and mostly night too. When I was tired, I started to cry, but that was no help; I only found myself in trouble.

We traveled in the jungle with other 30 families. We were not lucky so we were one of the families at the end. We cannot pass the people in front of us because that was the order we came in.

We traveled and traveled in the jungle for so many days. My feet were so sore because we didn't have shoes. I got some scratches on my legs and arms because we wore only skirts at those days. Everything was so horrible and miserable. We're running out of food, our clothes were torn, everything was so bad!

We traveled for a half month in the jungle than we ran out of food. But we were close to a small village in the jungle which was the Vinamies's village. We decided to stay over-night there, but we had to keep ^(quiet) quit. Then about 10:00 P.M. my dad including some other men went to the village and robbed the village. If they didn't rob the village, we would starve and die sooner or later. So we had no other choice. They robbed the village and brought some food. But it only lasted about a week because we had a big family. We never stop traveling. We kept on traveling all day and almost all night. We only got a short time to sleep and I didn't even want to get up in the morning.

Some part of the jungle was so dried and we didn't have water to drink. Being thirsty and hungry at the same time! But sometimes we traveled in water and have plenty of water to drink. Sometimes we traveled in the stream and when we found a place to sleep, there wasn't any small streams around so we drank the dirty water that we had traveled in. But that was better than nothing.

We traveled for another week, then our food was running short. We ate anything that we knew it would be safe. We ate some strange plants that we haven't seen before. We opened the banana trees and cooked the middle part and ate it. There weren't bamboos around at all so we didn't have any bamboo shoots to eat. Some people were lucky so they got to eat monkey meat. They were first so they scared all the monkeys before we even got there. And sometimes we saw elephant's tracks, but never really saw an elephant. We wished there was an elephant so the men could kill it for our food.

One time in the middle of the jungle, my mom cut my foot by accident. It hurt so much that I cry almost everyday. But no luck at all, I still had to walk by myself. Sometimes it hurt so much. I thought I was going to die or get left behind. But I was lucky that Mom and Dad didn't leave without me. When my foot was hurt, we had to travel in water, so my foot got swelled and it killed me even more. My foot drove me crazy when I sat for awhile and then got up and started walking again.

Speaking of left behind, there was an old woman and an old man that got left behind. But they weren't couples. The woman was old and tired of walking so one day we were resting and ate our lunch, she went to a place about a block away and hung herself. She died there. The man, he was also old and he was also sick. Some of his son-in-law carried him sometimes, but they got tired and they left him behind. And there was one little girl who didn't have mom or dad. She lived with her uncle and ~~uncle~~ but they didn't love her very much. She was still little and they had to carry her sometimes. But they were so mean to her. They beat her up. They slapped her face and everything like that. Sometimes her uncle hit her with his gun. They didn't take very good care of her so she was really sick. Her eyes were hurt and they still beat her up. Later on, she was getting worse so she died.

One day, the leaders and my dad went to find the river between Laos and

Thailand. They wanted to know how far we had to traveled. But some stupid people went to the Vinamies farm and stold the Vinamies's crop seeds. And when the leaders got back, they said it was us. My dad told them that he was *not* with them, but they wouldn't listened. They didn't want us to go with them so one of the leaders pointed his gun toward my dad. I thought he was going to shoot my dad, but lucky he didn't.

My dad was mad so he told us to followed him. There was a Lee family that wanted to join us. We let them because we known them since the war began. There was also another Lee family that wanted to follow us too. Dad wouldn't let them because he didn't know the way either. No matter how much we told him to go on his own, he wouldn't. He and his family followed us like sad dogs so Dad decided they could come along with us. I wished he didn't because that man stold some of our salt and I was the person who carried the salt and when it dissappeared, I got into trouble. And there was a family that begged my dad with money to accept them. My dad said if they want to come along, they can but he couldn't take the money because he didn't know the way. We got around five families in our group. But two days later, we were lost somewhere in the jungle. We went three time around in a circle.

Two days later we got capture by the Vinamies. When we were hiding, my dad went out and then they saw my dad. Some people started running and the Vinamies started shooting. But my dad was standing in the field with my brother on his back. We thought they were going to shoot my dad, but they didn't. The leader yelled at his soldeirs and they stopped shooting. My dad told us to get out of our hiding place. Some people ran away, but we didn't. We got out of the tall grass and started to cry outloud. My dad was also crying too. But the Vinamies told my dad not to worry because they're not going to harm us. So they took us to their house and cooked for us. We were hungry, but we couldn't eat much at all. Things tasted so good, but we couldn't eat much because we were

over hungry.

In the morning, they sent us to a town called "Pa Xa". We stayed there about a week then we saw that the Vinamies had captured the people that kicked us out of their group. Some of their babies dissappear because they gave posion to the baby to keep them ^(quiet) quite. But they gave too much and the babies died. My mom also gave my brother some, but she only have him a little, plus she cooked it before giving it to him.

We stayed in Pa Xa about a week and then they sent us to another village called "Na Xue". It was really poor there. They didn't have food there at all. They only gave us a little amount of food each week. And it was never enough.

When we were there, my mom, dad, and sister were sick. They were all sick except my oldest sister and me. I was too, but I wasn't that sick.

My mom, dad, and sister had to go to the hospital so only my oldest sister, my step brother and I left. And it was really miserable there. That place was the ugliest place in the whole entire world. It was poor it was ugly and evil. It caused a lot of people's lives. And we thought we were going to die there, but we didn't.

When my mom, dad, and my sister came back from the hospital, there was two men came from a town far away called "Town 52". They came to rescue their cousins so my dad asked them to accept us too. My dad begged them to accept us. They did accept us so we started our trip to the new town. It was so far away. I walked everyday until 9:00 P.M. and the morning, we start about 5:30 or 6:00 A.M.

We walked about one and a half week then we finally got to that new town. That town was clean and pretty. But our trouble was, we didn't have a place to stay.....

My dad knew a men and he was rich. My dad asked him if he could find a house for us. He did gave us a house to live in. But we were so poor and didn't have

anything to eat. They had to go work for either money or rice. But they chose rice because money was not so good at those days. A thousand only worth a dollar or two if I compare.

My mom, dad, and sisters were off to the fields everyday and sometimes night too. I was to stay home and took care of my younger brothers and cooked for them. We didn't have anything to eat at all. All we ever eat was rice. But that's better than nothing.

We lived in that house about a year then there was three men came from Thailand. They contact my dad and was willing to help us to get to Thailand. My dad agreed so there it goes again.

When we were going to leave, we can not tell anyone because if we did, they'll put us in jail. Some people tried to escape, but the Vinamies captured them back and put them in Jail.

Anyway, we packed our things up and just carry enough food for our trip. We traveled nine days in the jungle and then we finally reached the river between Laos and Thailand.

When we got to the river, the three men told us to wait and they'll return with the boat. We waited and waited, but nothing happened. We thought they would never come back. We were so scared. And my dad was mad. But later the three men sent a Thai guy over instead. He make three or four trips back and fourth. And we were the last to get on the boat. It was so scary waiting on the other side. I had a feeling and it kept on blocking my mind. I kept on thinking, what if they don't come back, what if the enemies come after us.....

I was so scared, but later on, they came back and none of my family was lost.

When we got to Thailand, we were tired, so we slept on the sand until morning. But before we got a chance to go to sleep, the three men told us to go to the camp where they put new strangers first.

In the morning, we went to find that place. We walked and walked and when

we got there, we didn't see it so we passed it. But luckily there was a man and a woman walked passed us. They were Hmoong too, so we asked them. They told us that we passed it, so we went back and stayed there.

A couple days later, one of our cousin came. He didn't know that we were there though. He saw us by accident. He talked to my dad for about an hour, then he had to leave. I asked Dad if I could go with him. Dad said yes, so I went with him.

When we got to his house, he told his wife to take me to my aunt's house. She took me to my aunt's house an hour later.

When I got to my aunt's house and when I saw her, I ran into her arms and began to cry once again for my "victory". She was also crying too.

Then the next day we went back to where my parents were. She told us that when they allowed us to get out, she will come and pick us up.

A week later the Thais allowed us to out of the camp, so we went and live with my aunt.

Mom and Dad worked so hard to get enough money to pay the three men, so we could come to the United States. They worked and worked and finally it was done because the help of my aunt too.

We only lived in Thailand half year and then we came to the United Staes. We got to Decorah Iowa in 1979.

When we got to Decorah, we lived in the country where there was no other families around. It was really lonely, but we went to school everyday and it didn't seemed boring after all. But in the weekends, we just stayed home and chaced squerrals around. Sometimes we went to town and visit our cousins, but only if they come and pick us up. We haven't have cars and Dad doesn't know how to drive yet.

We lived in the country for two years then we moved to town. We lived in town for a year and a half then we moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Now, I'm living in America and I'm really proud of the country I'm in because

I got most of the things I want. I'm having a lot of fun with all my friends.

Sometimes I felt bad that it's not my country, because sometimes people made fun of me; they even spit at me, but I didn't care anymore, I got used to it. And I'm living in the country where I really don't belong. Anyway, I just want all the teachers and the president to know that I'm proud of their country. And someday, I like to go back to the country where I was born; if there's a chance.....and if there's no more war.....

Thank you America, for what you have done to us, and for helping us to get our educations!!

Just Like A Dream

by: Mao Yang

I was born and raised in a small Village named (Noy) it means small in English, which is true. It's very small. There were only 20 houses or less. It was a very peaceful time. We hardly heard or understand the word of (War) until that day. The day I would not forget and will never understand.

It was a very quiet Sunday morning during 1975. Suddenly I woke up in the middle of my dream and found my parent and everybody all packed up as we were going to move and leave. Just when I cleared myself from the bed I heard many adults pass words softly to each other in a strange way, because they did not want anyone else to find out where they were going. Moving away from the village could cause the entire families lives if the government found out.

It bacame the new government just after the United States with drew from (Saigon), also from Loas and Cambodia. Anybody who served the last government or official had to face the serious thought, either to go away alone, or with the entire family. As (Hmong) we are totally dependable and we respect each other. It does not matter that it was a very risky attempt like this journey to (Thailand).

We were told by the adults not to speak or answer anyone else if they happened to ask, and act usual as much as possible. I had a very small baseket on my back. It was made out of bamboo and crafted by my father, it's for carring fruits or vegetables if we come from rice farm, but this time I carried only clothes, salt in a small plastic bag, some dried potatoes along with sugar, couple small bags of rice and some other tiny tools. Because we never know if we could make it or not. I could use my belonging to feed or save my life. Many families had (been) disappointed before, (They thought they

would get to freedom and Thailand but they had been) killed along their journey, some became the Victims of crime by those country near by, but most of them died because starving after weeks and weeks in the jungle, Rocky Mountain, and dangerous Rivers. You can not travel in the day light. Everybody have to stay quiet and sleep in the day time does not matter, you feeling like it or not.

There will be some adults leader who will guide the entire 40 or 50 people. They are the only one will know where to go, hide, and when to eat until they really sure everyone are in the right and save place specially the Refugee Camp which located nearly 300 miles away from most of our home land, but we managed it okay because we did not have that many trageties during the journey. The only serious was we approached a river at night it's not that deep but its one of the killer river. My father had to put me up on his shoulders because it's too deep for kids I couldn't even see a yard away from me. All I remember is my father told me to held him tight and while I struggling for myself. I heard some kids screaming and yelling as they drowning and swept away from their mothers. Some time I even see some elderly injured very bad and died in front of my eyes. We had to use all our energy we got and all the food we packed also the countless roots, leaves, bamboo shoats, and every single drops of water to keep our bodies going and most all is our believes. I still remember my father had mentioned before that there is a save place some where out there. I just found out not long after we've got to Thailand, that's my father really meant was the Camp, it's the refugee's.

Temporary settlement with the supporting of the United States and it's allie Thailand we were settled there for 3 years untill we were sponsoned to the United States. It's just like a dream because you just fly away from your most ^(horrible) horronable life to the best Country on the entire Earth where you

can eat when you feel like it, and have fun instead fear and wondering what will happening to you next approachting.

I believed my family is one of the very locky. We came to South Dakota lived there for 3 months, we moved to Chicago lived there for 3 years, and then we came to Oshkosh.

I and all my sisters and brothers got a chance to enrolled in school we live and having fun just like anyother kids in the city and that makes me very appreciated what I really fought for from the very small village to this beautiful Country.

Pao Yang
English
8-7

Dec. 20, 1985



The Forgotten War

In 1975, the Khmer people started to plant their own crops. They don't worry about anything neither did we. We started to build new houses and make a new living. We didn't know when the enemies were going to attack. Until the 13th of July at midnight. We're still sleeping, but not my father because he was very sick, he couldn't sleep. A moment later my father heard a strange sound. It sound like the sound of an airplane. He knew that the sound was from an airplane because my father was once a pilot in Laos. He was trained by the American pilots. Then he woke us up and then we started to run to the cave where we always did when the airplane came. We stayed there for a moment we saw the Vietnamese bomb our house and destroy our farm. We were really afraid that the Vietnamese soldiers might come and kill us all. But they didn't. They thought that were dead. Then for a moment the noise was gone my father came out of the cave to see if there were any airplanes left, but they were all gone. My father ~~said~~ said that there were no ~~airplanes~~ ^{airplanes} left so we came out of the cave. Our garden, our pig and chickens were all dead. They were lying around everywhere. Everything that we had were all destroy. We only have a little food left. We had a lot but when the Vietnamese came

they destroyed it all.

On the next day we were afraid that the Vietnamese were going to come back again. So my family and I and some of the Khmer people started to move. We walked with our bare feet because at that time we didn't have ~~any shoes~~ ^{any shoes}. We walked all day and all night without stopping anywhere until we reached the Vietnamese farm. My father told my uncle and my cousin to go see if anybody still guarded the gate that were going to cross. But my cousin and my uncle didn't go because they were scared. They just went down near the gate. Then they came back and told us that there were no guards left. They didn't look for the guards that my father told them to look for. So we didn't know that there were still guards left on the gate. Then my father ^(said) to us to wait there for a moment until it gets dark. We waited and waited and waited. Until it was about nine o'clock. Then we started to walk slowly through the farm. We stopped for a minute because we're going to cross the gate. It was quiet. No one made any sound. We saw a Vietnamese car go by, but the driver ^{did} (not) see us, because it was very dark. Mom took my hand and told me not to worry we were going to make it.

Then in a moment my father said now we can go. So ~~we~~ ^{we} started to climb the gate. My father

pushed me up and then he told me to jump to the ground. I started to jump and when I got to the ground my father was still climbing the gate. Then when my father got up the Vietnamese saw us and started fire. My father told me to go by myself. I was crying and hoping that ~~something~~ ^{someday} I would be safe and still be with my family again. Then suddenly my father disappeared, I didn't know where my father was and I didn't know where to go. I just stood there until the Vietnamese soldier saw me. They took me to their camp. When I got to the Vietnamese camp they give me some food. But I didn't eat because I was scared that they may put some poison in the food. They took me to one of their camp houses and they ^{told} me to lie there when I get tired.

On the next day I saw an old man. He was one of our people. They captured him from crossing the gate. They took me to see him and asked me if I knew him or not. I said I really didn't know him because I had never seen him before. The Vietnamese soldier asked him if he was one of the Khmer soldier or not. He really didn't know what they were going to do with him if he tell them the truth. So he said that he was one of the captain. Then they started to beat him and kick him in the face. They told me not to be scared. They only wanted to beat the old man because he had

sent a lot of Khmer soldiers to destroy their car that was working around with them. Some Vietnamese soldiers were really bad, but some were ~~not~~ ^{really} good. They beat the old man everyday. Sometimes they tied him up and let two Vietnamese soldiers open the old man's mouth and started to spit in his mouth. He was crying and I was really scared that they were going to do that to me too, but they didn't.

On the next morning they took the old man to stay with me. They told me not to feed him anything. So I didn't feed him anything because I was afraid that if I feed him they may kill me. But some came and said please give him some water. So I gave him some water. They beat him so bad that his eyes were all bloody. He asked me what ~~is~~ was doing there. I told him that I was being captured. He asked me where's my mom and dad went.

"I really didn't know where they went when my father told me to ^(go) by myself," I replied. Then he told me not to worry at all. I would get to see my family soon he whispered.

I questioned, "What about you?"

He said don't worried about me because I'm going to die.

On the fourth day, the old man died. They took him to the lake and threw him in the water. Then suddenly I saw a truck come. There were all kinds of people in the truck, but

none of them that I knew. Then they told to get in, so I get in. They took us to one of the cities in Laos. But at that time the Vietnamese had already taken over Laos. All the people of Laos were all with the Vietnamese. When I got to that city, they told me to get out of the car, so I got out of the car and saw my aunt waiting there for me. I saw her and jumped on her and she hugged me and she was crying and I was crying. She took me to her house and she asked me to stay with her so I agreed to stay. I lived with her about one and a half year. Then I heard from my aunt that my mom and dad were both safe. When my father told me to go by myself he and my mom jumped back and ran back to hide in the forest. They stayed there for two days. Then they saw some footprints. They followed those footprints and they knew that the footprints were from our people because the Vietnamese wear shoes, but we don't. My father and my mother followed their footprints until they met one of my father's friends. He asked what my father and my mother were doing there. My father said that they got lost. So my father's friends told my mom and dad to go with them. When they cross the gates nothing happen. Everybody was saved. Then they came to a city ^{called} too Kai. My father and my mother stayed there. They didn't even know where I was. They thought I was dead.

The next year which was 1979. I was 8 years old then. My aunt sent a letter to my mom and dad that I was saved. She had taken me to live with her and they shouldn't worry. When my father and my mom received the letter they both were very happy that I was saved. So they paid about 2,000 ^(dollar) dollars to one of our cousins to come and get me. We lived 400 miles from the city that my mom and dad lived in. When he arrived to the city where we lived he came to my aunt's house and said that he was going to take me to my mom and dad. He told my aunt not to say a word to me, because if she did then I would tell all my friends that I was going to go away. Then everyone would know and they would capture my cousin. At that time I was fishing with my friends so I didn't (know) that my cousin had come. When I got home my aunt didn't said anything. All she did was cry. I asked her what happened. She said that I was going to go away.

"Why," I asked. She said that one of my cousin's came and my mom and dad paid him to take me to them.

Where is he? I asked.

My aunt said, "He's right there." I look in the closet and there he was. He asked my aunt not to worry. Someday she would see us again. Then he took me to the station and two days later we got to my mom and dad. When I met them I didn't know ^{who} my father

was and who my mom was, because we were separated for a long time. But my mom and dad knew me. They hugged me, and we were all crying. We lived there for about 6 months.

Almost seven months later we started to Thailand so we could get to the United States. We started at twelve o'clock midnight. We didn't let anyone know that we were coming. Everybody was quiet. They all were sleeping except us. We walked softly without making any sound to the forest. When we got to the forest, my little brother was crying. We were really afraid that the people in the city would hear us. My father put his hand over my brother's mouth. Then suddenly, my brother was quiet. So we started to walk to the Mekong River. We ~~lived~~ ^{lived} far away from the Mekong River. We started in July and we get there in October. When we got to the Mekong River, we saw a boat coming.

Suddenly he stopped ~~and~~ ^{and} asked "What are we doing there?" My father told him that we wanted to get to Thailand. He said get in. We all get in the boat and he says it will be \$5,000 ^(Kustion) dollar to get there. So my father gave him the \$5,000 dollar. It was ten o'clock at that time. The man took us to an island near Thailand. He told us to stay there and tomorrow the Thai people will come and get us. It was one o'clock in the morning. We were very tired. So we were all asleep on the sand. We didn't have any blankets to sleep on. We didn't have anything to build a tent.

It was about six o'clock in the morning when we got up. We saw a bus go by because ~~the~~ ^{the} island that we live on is just down behind the road. Then suddenly the bus stopped and a lot of people got out of the bus. We watched all the that came out of the bus to see if there was anyone that we knew. Some came out of the bus and then went shopping. We watched until all the people had come out of the bus. We didn't see anyone that we knew, so we turned back and went to lie down on the sand. It was about ten P.M. when the thieves came. We were all asleep, no one knew that that the thieves were going to come until they fired up in the sky. We woke up and one of the thieves kicked my uncle's face. They were really bad. We knew that they wanted something from us, but we don't know what they wanted, because they didn't tell us what they wanted. Then my father give them all of our necklaces and the money that we have. He asked them that if he gave all of the necklaces and all of our money to them, would they help us get to the other side of the road. "Yes", said the thieves. They told us to pick up our things and start moving. One of the thieves captain told another thief to go get the boat.

About ten minutes later, he brought back their boat. They parked their boat far away from us because they didn't want anybody

to know where they would go. It was 1: A. M. in the morning. They told us to get in the boat. So we get in the boat. It was very dark. We couldn't see anything except the water.

It was about 12:00 midnight when we got to Thailand. Everyone was still sleeping. It was quiet. Then the thieves told us to stay there while they tied up the boat. It was 12:30 and they never came back. So my father followed them to the boat and they were gone. The boat was gone too. We stayed there until it was 7:00 A. M.. Then a fisherman came and saw us. He took us to his house and gave us some food. Then he said that there was a camp call Urai. That was the place where all the Hmong people lived. So he took us with him in his car to Urai. There were a lot of Hmong people living in Urai. Then suddenly my Grandmother came. She took to her tent. She asked us to live with her until we came to the United States.

On June 1980, we came to the United States. We started to walk down the road to wait for the bus. We stayed there until the bus came. The bus driver called all the names that were going to the United States. Suddenly he called our names. Then we started to get in. My mom and my grandmother started crying. She said that she may never see us. But my mom said that someday we'll be together again.

About two minutes later, the bus was ready

to go. My grandmother shook my mother's hands and held them tight, until the bus started to move.

They took us to Bangkok (Thailand's capital). We stayed there about two ^{days} ~~days~~. Then ^{on} ~~the~~ the third day, came an airplane. That's the United States airplane.

It was about 6:00 P.M. when we got to the airplane. I didn't know when the airplane started to take off. Suddenly I saw some blue sky. Then I knew that we were in the sky already.

About two days later we got to Chicago. We lived there for two and a half years, then we came to Oshkosh. Now I still miss my grandmother. I know she returned to Laos, but I don't know if she is still alive.

Now we have ^{come} to the United States. A country of peace and happiness. It is one of the most beautiful country in the world I had ever seen and a free country where I have nothing to worried about.

C/A 20

"Escaping From The Country We Love"

It was around 1975 when the war began, but we didn't leave with other people. We stayed in our little village and farmed everyday just to get enough food around the year. Around that time I was still very little and I didn't do much, but I remember that I had to help babysitting. Mom and Dad were at the fields everyday and didn't get home until dark.

A year later, the Vietnamies were attacking our village. But we knew ahead of time so we moved away to another village. We left all our food, animals and other things behind. We only carried enough food to eat by our way to the new village. I didn't get to carry anything because I was still little, but I had to walk all by myself. We walked about two or three days to that new village. I was really tired, but if I didn't move, they would left me behind.

When we got to that new village, there was a lot of people from all over and it was really crowded. We settled there about a month or two then we start another trip which was longer than the one before.

We traveled by feet about two weeks or so. This time, I had to carry my baby brother. Sometimes I started to cry aloud because my brother was heavy. At that time, it was really hot and that made me even more tired. I cried and cried, but instead of getting help, I got into trouble. I was so mad and wished my brother was never born.

We traveled and traveled, then we finally found a place to settled and built our new home and start our new crop fields. We started our crop field a week later because we needed some food so. Mom and Dad had to go work for some other people and they payed Mom and Dad with rice. When we got enough food, we started our house. We only built our house with straws because we thought we weren't going to live there long. But a year later we repaired our house with bamboo and wood. And that was the time the Vietnamis started another war. So we only got to live in our brand new house for a week and then started to packed things up again. At that time, there was no place to hide so we went

to a big cave and hid there. We hid there about a week but nothing happened to our villages. We were going to go back, but then misaus and bullets were crying on top of our heads. We went back to the cave until it was quite again. Then we packed things up and started our trip. I was wondering if we will ever settle somewhere forever so I don't have to walk so much.

We walked so far off to the other side of the mountains and stayed there and rest there about two or three months. But our biggest problems were food. We ran out of food and had nothing to eat. Sometimes we went to other people's farm and searched for plants to eat. But since there were so many people, everything ^{was} gone. We only ate what we found each day and sometimes it wasn't enough for all of us.

We were going to live there for several more days, but those enemies seemed to follow us everywhere so we packed up and started another trip. We traveled and traveled, but this time, it never seemed to end.

We traveled for so long and was so tired, so we built a little shelter in the woods to stay for several days. There were several other families with us too.

Sometimes, we were so afraid to cook because if we built a fire, there will be smoke in the air and the enemies will see us and they will drop bombs at us. Everything was so difficult at those day.

We only stayed there for about a month then my dad went to a place where there were more people. He went there and talked with some men. They said they knew the way to Thailand. My dad begged them to accept us. They did accept us so we went to the place they lived in. We stayed there about a week then started packing again. And this time it's more difficult because we traveled in the jungles. We threw everything away except our clothings, and foods. But no matter how much we packed, we knew we wouldn't make it. And at that time, I was

a little bigger so I got to carry ten cans of rice. My oldest sister carried 25 cans, my other older sister carried 15, my mom carried around 10 plus my younger brother on top, and my dad carried about 25 plus my other younger brother. I carried the least, but it was so heavy and we traveled everyday and mostly night too. When I was tired, I started to cry, but that was no help; only found myself in trouble.

We traveled in the jungle with other 30 families. We were not lucky so we were one of the families at the end. We cannot pass the people in front of us because that was the order we came in.

We traveled and traveled in the jungle for so many days. My feet was so sore because we didn't have shoes. I got some scratches on my legs and arms because we wore only skirts at those days. Everything was so horriable and miserable. We're running out of foods, our clothes was torn,

everything was so bad!

We traveled for a half month in the jungle than we ran out of food. But we were close to a small village in the jungle which was the Vinamias's village. We decided to stay over-night there, but we had to keep quiet. Then about 10:00 P.M., my dad including some other men went to the village and robbed the village. If they didn't rob the village, we would starve and die sooner or later. So we had no other choice. They robbed the village and brought some food. But it only lasted about a week because we had a big family. We never stop traveling. We kept on traveling all day and almost all night. We only got a short time to sleep and I didn't even want to get up in the morning.

Some part of the jungle was so dried and we didn't have water to drink. Being thirsty and hungry at the same time! But sometimes we traveled in water and have plenty of water to drink. Sometimes we traveled in the stream

and when we found a place to sleep, there wasn't any small streams around so we drank the dirty water that we had traveled in. But that was better than nothing.

We traveled for another week, then our food was running short. We ate anything that we knew it would be safe. We ate some strange plants that we haven't seen before. We opened the banana trees and cooked the middle part and ate it. There weren't bamboos around at all so we didn't have any bamboo shoots to eat. Some people were lucky so they got to eat monkey meat. They were first so they scared all the monkeys before we even got there. And sometimes we saw elephant's tracks, but never really saw an elephant. We wished there was an elephant so the men could kill it for our food.

One time in the middle of the jungle, my mom cut my foot by accident. It hurt so much that I cry almost everyday. But no luck at all, I still had to walk by myself. Sometimes it hurt so much. I thought

I was going to die or get left behind. But I was lucky that Mom and Dad didn't leave without me. When my foot was hurt, we had to travel in water, so my foot got swelled and it killed me even more. My foot drove me crazy when I sat for awhile and then got up and started walking again.

Speaking of left behind, there was an old woman and an old man that got left behind. But they weren't couples. The woman was old and tired of walking so one day we were resting and ate our lunch, she went to a place about a block away and hung herself. She died there. The man, he was also old and he was also sick. Some of his son-in-law carried him sometimes, but they got tired and they left him behind. And there was one little girl who didn't have mom or dad. She lived with her uncle and aunt but they didn't love her very much. She was still little and they had to carry her sometimes. But they were so mean to her.

They beat her up. They slapped her face and everything like that. Sometimes her uncle hit her with his gun. They didn't take very good care of her so she was really sick. Her eyes were hurt and they still beat her up. Later on, she was getting worse so she died.

One day, the leaders and my dad went to find the river between Laos and Thailand. They wanted to know how far we had to travel. But some stupid people went to the Vinamies farm and stole the Vinamies's crop seeds. And when the leaders got back, they said it was us. My dad told them that he was off with them, but they wouldn't listen. They didn't want us to go with them so one of the leaders pointed his gun toward my dad. I thought he was going to shoot my dad, but lucky he didn't.

My dad was mad so he told us to follow him. There was a Lee family that wanted to join us. We let them because we know them since the

war began. There was also another Lee family that wanted to follow us too. Dad wouldn't let them because he didn't know the way either. No matter how much we told him to go on his own, he wouldn't. He and his family followed us like sad dogs so Dad decided they could come along with us. I wished he didn't because that man stole some of our salt and I was the person who carried the salt and when it disappeared, I got into trouble. And there was a family that begged my dad with money to accept them. My dad said if they want to come along, they can but he couldn't take the money because he didn't know the way. We got around five families in our group. But two days later, we were lost somewhere in the jungle. We went three times around in a circle.

Two days later we got captured by the Vinamies. When we were hiding, my dad went out and then they saw my dad. Some people started running and the Vinamies started shouting. But my dad was standing in the field with my brother on his back.

We thought they were going to shoot my dad, but they didn't. The leader yelled at his soldiers and they stopped shooting. My dad told us to get out of our hiding place. Some people ran away, but we didn't. We got out of the tall grass and started to cry out loud. My dad was also crying too. But the Vinamies told my dad not to worry because they're not going to harm us. So they took us to their house and cooked for us. We were hungry, but we couldn't eat much at all. Things tasted so good, but we couldn't eat much because we were over hungry.

In the morning, they sent us to a town called "Pa Xa." We stayed there about a week and then we saw that the Vinamies had captured the people that kicked us out of their group. Some of their babies disappear because they gave poison to the baby to keep them quiet. But they gave too much and the babies died. My mom also gave my brother some, but she only gave him a little, plus she cooked it before giving it to him.

We stayed in Pa Xa about a week and then they sent us to another village called "Na Xuei". It was really poor there. They didn't have food there at all. They only gave us a little amount of food each week. And it was never enough.

When we were there, my mom, dad, and sister were sick. They were all sick except my oldest sister and me. I was too, but I wasn't that sick.

My mom, dad, and sister had to go to the hospital so only my oldest sister, my step brother and I left. And it was really miserable there. That place was the ugliest place in the whole entire world. It was poor it was ugly and evil. It caused a lot of people's lives. And we thought we were going to die there, but we didn't.

When my mom, dad, and my sister came back from the hospital, there was two men came from a town far away called "Town 52". They came to rescue their cousins so my dad asked them to accept us too. My dad begged them to accept us.

They did accept us so we started our trip to the new town. It was so far away. I walked everyday until 9:00 P.M. and the morning, we start about 5:30 or 6:00 A.M.

We walked about one and a half week then we finally got to that new town. That town was clean and pretty. But our trouble was, we didn't have a place to stay.....

My dad knew a man and he was rich. My dad asked him if he could find a house for us. He did give us a house to live in. But we were so poor and didn't have anything to eat. They had to go work for either money or rice. But they chose rice because money was not so good at those days. A thousand only worth a dollar or two if I compare.

My mom, dad, and sisters were off to the fields everyday and sometimes night too. I was to stay home and took care of my younger brothers and cooked for them. We didn't have anything to eat at all. All we ever eat was rice. But that's better.

than nothing.

We lived in that house about a year then there was three men came from Thailand. They contact my dad and was willing to help us to get to Thailand. My dad agreed so there it goes again.

When we were going to leave, we can not tell anyone because if we did, they'll put us in jail. Some people tried to escape, but the Vietnamese captured them back and put them in jail.

Anyway, we packed our things up and just carry enough food for our trip. We traveled nine days in the jungle and then we finally reached the river between Laos and Thailand.

When we got to the river, the three men told us to wait and they'll return with the boat. We waited and waited, but nothing happened. We thought they would never come back. We were so scared. And my dad was mad. But later the three men sent a Thai guy over instead. He made three or four trips back and fourth. And we were the last to get on the boat. It was so scary waiting on the other

side. I had a feeling and it kept on blocking my mind. I kept on thinking, what if they don't come back, what if the enemies come after us.....

I was so scared, but later on, they came back and none of my family was lost.

When we got to Thailand, we were tired, so we slept on the sand until morning. But before we got a chance to go to sleep, the three men told us to go to the camp where they put new strangers first.

On the morning, we went to find that place. We walked and walked and when we got there, we didn't see it so we passed it. But luckily there was a man and a woman walked passed us. They were Khmer, so we asked them. They told us that we passed it, so we went back and stayed there.

A couple days later, one of our cousin came. He didn't know that we were there though. He saw us by accident. He talked to my dad for about an hour,

then he had to leave. I asked Dad if I could go with him. Dad said yes, so I went with him.

When we got to his house, he told his wife to take me to my aunt's house. She took me to my aunt's house an hour later.

When I got to my aunt's house and when I saw her, I ran into her arms and began to cry once again for my "victory." She was also crying too.

Then the next day we went back to where my parents were. She told us that when they allowed us to get out, she will come and pick us up.

A week later the Thais allowed us to get out of the camp, so we went and live with my aunt.

Mom and Dad worked so hard to get enough money to pay the three men, so we could come to the United States. They worked and worked and finally it was done because the help of my aunt too.

We only lived in Thailand half year and then we came to the United States. We got to Decorah Iowa in 1979.

When we got to Decorah, we lived in the country where there was no other families around. It was really lonely, but we went to school everyday and it didn't seem boring after all. But in the weekends, we just stayed home and chased squirrels around. Sometimes we went to town and visit our cousins, but only if they come and pick us up. We haven't have cars and Dad doesn't know how to drive yet.

We lived in the country for two years then we moved to town. We lived in town for a year and a half then we moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Now, I'm living in America and I'm really proud of the country I'm in because I got most of the things I want. I'm having my education and I'm having a lot of fun with all my friends.

Sometimes I felt bad that it's

not my country, because sometimes
people made fun of me; they
even spit at me, but I ~~don't~~ ^{didn't}
care anymore, I ~~was~~ ^{got} used to it.

And I'm living in the country
where I really don't belong.

Anyway, I just want all the teachers
and the president to know
that I'm proud of their country.
And someday, I like to go back to
the country where I was born;
if there's a chance..... and
if there's no more war.....

Thank you America, for
what you have done to us,
and ^{for} helping us to get our education! ^{♡♡}

Maopng

Just Like a Dream

I was born and raised in a small village named (Noy) it means small in English, which is true. It's very small. There were only 30 houses or less. It was a very peaceful time. We hardly heard or understand the word of (War) until that day. The day I would not forget and will never understand.

It was a very quiet Sunday morning during 1975. Suddenly I woke up in the middle of my dream and found my parents and everybody all packed up as we were going to move and leave. Just when I cleared myself from the bed I heard many adults pass words softly to each other in a strange way, because they did not want anyone else to find out where they were going. Moving away from the village could cause the entire families lives if the government found out.

It became the new government just after the United States with drew from (Saigon), also from Laos and Cambodia. Anybody who

served the last government or official had to face the serious thought, either to go away alone, or with the entire family. As (Hmong) we are totally dependable and we respect each other. It does not matter that it was a very risky attempt like this journey to (Thailand).

We were told by the adults not to speak or answer anyone else if they happened to ask, and act usual as much as possible. I had a very small basket on my back. It was made out of bamboo and crafted by my father, it's for carrying fruits or vegetables if we come from rice farm, but this time I carried only clothes, salt in a small plastic bag, some dried potatoes along with sugar, couple small bags of rice and some other tiny tools. Because we never know if we could make it or not. I could use my belonging to feed or

7,
save my life. Many families had ^{been} disappointed before, ⁽¹⁹⁴³⁾ some families had been killed along their journey, some became the victims of crime by those country nearby, but most of them died because ^{starving} ~~stomach~~ after weeks and weeks in the jungle, Rocky Mountains, and dangerous Rivers. You can not travel in the day light. Everybody have to stay quiet and sleep in the day time does not matter you feeling like it or not.

There will be some adults leader who will guide the entire 40 or 50 people. They are the only one with know where to go, hide, and when to eat until they really sure everyone are in the right and save place specially the Refuge Camp which located nearly 300 miles away from most of our home land, but we managed it okay because we did not have that many tragedies during the journey. The only serious was we approached a river

5

at night it's not that deep
but it's one of the killer
river. My father had to
put me up on his shoulder
because it's too deep for kids
I couldn't even see a yard
away from me. All I remember
is my father told me to hold
him tight and while I
struggling for myself.

I ~~to~~ heard some kids
screaming and yelling as they
drowning and swept away
from their mothers. Some
times I even see some elderly
injured very bad and died
in front of my eyes. We had
to use all our ~~energy~~ energy we
got and all the food we
packed also the countless
roots, leaves, bamboo shoots,
and every single drops of
water to keep our bodies
going and most all is our
beliefs. I still remember
my father had mentioned
before that there is a safe
place some where out there.
I just found out not
long after we've got to
Thailand, that's my father

Mao yang
Ergo 8-4
Jan. 4, 1986

really meant was the Camp,
it's the refugees.

Temporary settlement
with the supporting of
the United States and
it's allie Thailand we
were settled there for 3
years until we were
sponsored to the United
States. It's just like a
dream because you just
fly away from your most
horrorable life to the
best Country on the entire
Earth where you can eat
when you feel like it,
and have fun instead
fear and wondering what
will happening to you
next approaching.

I believed my family
is one of the very lucky.
We came to South Dakota
lived there for 3 months,
we moved to Chicago lived
there for 3 years, then
we came to Oshkosh.

I and all my sisters
and brothers got a chance
to enrolled in school
we live and having

fun just like any other kids
in the city and that
makes me very appreciate
what I really fought for
from the very small
village to this beautiful
Country

The End

A beautiful story, Mao. It's sad to
think about the war and what it did to
so many people.

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B
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C