

Both Hmong (Hmoob) and English transcripts are included in this document.

Hmong (Hmoob)

Nyob rau pem roob tim Nplog Teb uas yog kuv txiv qhov keeb kwm pib. Peb yog Hmoob, txhais tau tias “neeg tsis muaj nom tswv kav.” Lub neej nyob lub caij ntawd txawv deb peb lub neej peb qhia txog tam sim no.

Nrog txhua koob uas ua tib zoo chob, Ntsuab Npis daim paj ntaub, qhia txog thaum nws tseem yau rau lub caij ua tsov ua rog, tuaj txog ntua rau ntawm Eau Claire, Wisconsin, uas nws tuaj nyob ywj pheej thiab tsis muaj kev txhawj.

Ntawd yog kuv txiv lub neej thaum tseem yog ib tug me nyuam tub.

Tsis yog, tus ntawd yog tus twm. NTAWD yog kuv txiv, Ntsuab Npis Xyooj.

Lub caij no, cov me nyuam muaj hnuv nyoog li nws nyob Tebchaws Asmeska niaj hnuv kawm twm ntawv, sau ntawv, thiab kawm lej, cov me nyuam Hmoob, li Npis, kawm ua zaub mov noj, nuv ntsees, thiab nrog cov laus ua teb .

Tej yam uas ntshai rwg kuj nyob rawv rau hauv lawv nruab siab.

Thaum yug Npis, yeej muaj tsov rog nyob rau Nyab Laj teb lawm. Lub caij no tab tom muaj kev ntshai nyab laj liab yuav nce teb chaws thiab nrov thoob rau Nplog teb tib si.

Nplog teb nyob deb ntawm cov teb chaws sib ntaus sib tua, tabsis ib co Hmoob xav pab thaiv kom txhob muaj nyab laj liab nce lawv teb chaws. Teb chaws Asmeskas kuj xav kom Hmoob thaiv lub teb chaws Nplog tib yam, thiab. Tsis pub leej twg paub, Asmeskas thiaj qhia cov txiv neej thiab me nyuam tub Hmoob ua tub rog thiab muab riam phom rau.

Cia li muaj ntau yam ceev li ceev rau kuv txiv. Nws nyuam qhuav muaj li 12 xyoos xwb thaum nws pib koom ua tsov rog mus txiav kev nyab laj xa khoom rau cov tub rog tom hauv ntej thiab mus nrhiav Asmeskas cov tsav dav hlau nyab laj txais poob.

Thaum Asmeska khiav rov qab xyoo 1975, nyab laj liab nce teb chaws kub thiab ceev heev. Txhua tus Hmoob uas pab Asmeskas tua nyab laj liab tsis muaj riam phom tiv thaiv lawv li. Yog ntes tau leej twg, lawv raug xa mus kawm kev cai / ua qhev (dag ntxias) los raug tua pov tseg. Lawv thiaj yuav tsum tau khiav tawm teb chaws!

Npis thiab lwm tus thiaj tau coj li 1000 tus cov neeg zej zog nce roob nce hav, tsoo hav zoo, thiab lug tej qhov nyab laj zov tuaj ko taw li 240 kis los mev (150 miles) rau nram dej Naj Khoom. Kev nyab xeeb rau hauv Thaib teb nyob sab ntug dej sab tim lawm xwb.

Npis thiab lwm tus thawj coj, hla dej mus xyuas kev, tab sis Thaib cov tub ceev xwm tsis pub lawv rov qab mus tos cov neeg sab tim nplog lawm. Cov neeg tseem nyob rau sab tim Nplog teb tsis paub ua li cas. Thaum nplog liab caum tuaj tua lawv, lawv tawg khiav nkaum thiab nyias nrhiav nyias kev hla dej. Muaj ib txhia hla tsis dhau.

Muaj hmoo kuv tsev neeg tsis tag sim neej rau ntawm ntug dej. Lawv txhua tus tuaj txog Thaib Teb.

Hauv Thaib teb, lawv nyob hauv xum (refugee camp) tau tsis muaj kev ntshai nrog lwm cov neeg Hmoob tawg rog. Thaum li 16 xyoos, Npis mus kawm ntawv Askiv thaum nws thiab nws tsev neeg nyob tos yuav tuaj mus txawv teb chaws.

Nws lub neej uas nrog twm nyob hauv liaj yog yav tas los lawm xwb. Nws xav tias lawv yuav mus lawm qhov twg ... teb chaws Asmeskas? Auv tas lias? Fab kis? Lub caij nyoog thiaj yuav qhia tau nkaus xwb.

Tom qab tos tau 8 lub hli, thiaj paub tias nws tsev neeg yuav tuaj mus rau teb chaws Asmeskas uas caij dav hlau ploj rau saum qaum huab lawm. Li ntawd... yog qhov lawv ntseeg rau lub sij hawm ntawd, pom cov dav hlau ya thiab ploj rau saum ntuj lawm xwb.

Tseem nco, muaj ntau ntau yam tshiab rau Npis! Rab qeej nyuab npaum nws twb txawj tshuab, tabsis kawm saib pheem thib teb chaws.... tsis yog ib yam nws nyiam. Nws kuj kawm tau me me tias saib li cas, thaum lawv tuaj txog rau Philadelphia li ib tug neeg tawg rog.

Teb chaws Asmeskas yog lub teb chaws tshiab rau Npis, thiab Npis yog ib tug neeg tshiab rau teb chaws Asmeska. Tu siab kawg, txhua tus tsis to taub kuv tsev neeg yam lus los vim li cas Hmoob ho tuaj teb chaws no.

Nws kuj tsis nyiam lub zos, tab sis nyob rau hauv lub Zos Kuv Tij Sib Hlub, nws nyiam tus yuav yog nws poj niam rau yav tom ntej, Tab Muas!

Lawv nyob tsis ntev hauv Philly. Lawv khiav los mus rau qhov muaj neeg txheeb ze nyob coob hauv Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Tib yam li thaum nws tseem me nyob Nplog teb, nws tau rov los nyob ua ke nrog nws tsev neeg hauv Eau Claire. Npis kuj pom yam puav uas nws tau pom los lawm.

Nws yog nyob hauv Wisconsin uas nws thiab nws tsev neeg tsis muaj kev nyuaj siab. Nws tuav kev coj noj coj ua thiab kab lig kev cai Hmoob uas zoo heev. Nws mus kawm nws daim high school degree thaum muaj 21 xyoos thiab mus kawm ntxiv tau peb daim ntawv pov thawj kawm tag qib siab (degrees)! Tiag, cov ntawd yog nkawv yim tus me nyuam. Kuv twb qhia rau nej tias nws nyiam ib tse neeg!

Tom qab koj muaj poj niam thiab muaj me nyuam lawm, koj yog ib tug neeg laus hauv Hmoob ib tsev neeg lawm. Li ntawd, raws txoj kab li kev cai, Tab niam thiab txiv thiaj tuaj muab nws hu plig thiab tis npe laus ... hu ua Ntsuab Npis tsis yog Npis lawm. Kom hais tau yooj yim rau lus Askiv, hauv ntaub ntawv nws siv Joe Bee.

Kev pab kwv tij neej tsa nyob rawv hauv Ntsuab Npis nruab siab. "Kuv xav ntsoov tias kuv muaj peev xwm kho tau thiab pab cov neeg kom lawv lub suab muaj lwm tus hnov."

Qhov no yog ib qho nws twb pib nyob rau Nplog teb thaum nws pab coj nws cov neeg zej zog khiav Nplog liab thiab rov pab dua nyob hauv Wisconsin, thaum nws yog ib tug tub ceev xwm tiv thaiv thiab pab zej zog, yog ib tug social worker, thiab nws yog tus coj lub Hmong Mutual Assistance Association hauv zos.

Kuv txiv yog thawj tug Hmoob Asmeskas xaiv tau rau hauv Eau Claire City Council, los tiag yog thawj tug nyob rau hauv lub xeev.

Kom tuav tau peb kev poj ua cia yawm ua tseg, kuv niam thiab kuv txiv nkawv qhia peb cov me nyuam hais lus Hmoob thiab kab lig kev cai dab qhuas, peb qhov kev ntseeg. Ntsuab Npis kuj qhia kuv cov nus tshuab qeej.

Koj puas hnav tsoos siv tes xaws, thiab ntoo kaus mom mus koom tej lub caij ua kev zoo siab? Peb hnav thiab ntoo. Rau peb lub Hmoob Xyoo Tshiab peb ua kev zoo siab hauv tsev ua ntej thiab mam mus koom lwm tus hauv zos. Peb caw txhua tus neeg nyob hauv Eau Claire tuaj koom!

Ntsuab Npis tej thaum rov mus xyuas Nplog teb uas tseem tshuav Hmoob coob nyob ntshai rawv thiab nrhiav kev tawm tas li mus nyob qhov kom txhob muaj kev txhawj. Muaj ib zaug, tu siab kuv txiv cia li tas sim neej ntsiag to. Nws tus ntsuj plig rov mus rau saum ntuj lawm.

Peb ua ib lub ntees kev cai Hmoob qhib 3 hnuv peb hmos rau nws nyob hauv Eau Claire. Coob leej ntau tus tu siab nws tau tag sim neej, tab sis peb muaj kev zoo siab uas nws ua tau ntau yam.

Ntsuab Npis Xyooj hais ib zaug tias, "Tsis muaj dab tsi zoo tshaj ua ib tug piv txwv," thiab nws yog ib tug ua piv txwv rau coob leej ntau tus.

Li nws xaws nws qhov dab neeg khiav tsov khiav rog tawm Nplog teb mus nrhiav kev ywj pheej rau lub tebchaw tshiab, Ntsuab Npis siv daim pam ua piv txwv npog, qhia peb saib yuav pab lwm tus li cas thiab tsim xaws lub neej zoo nkauj heev.

English

In the mountains of Laos is where my father's story began. We are Hmong, which means "free people." Life was much different than the stories we tell of our lives today.

With each careful stitch and decision, Joe Bee Xiong's story cloth, or paj ntaub, remembers his childhood surrounded by war, all the way to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where he later lived in freedom & peace.

That is my father as a boy.

No, that is a water buffalo. THAT is my father, Joe Bee Xiong.

While kids his age in the United States were learning reading, writing, and arithmetic, Hmong kids, like Bee, were learning cooking, fishing, and farming from their elders.

Something more treacherous also lingered in the back of their minds.

When Bee was born, war had already broken out in the neighboring country of Vietnam. The threat of communism was spreading and shaking up Laos as well.

Laos was technically out of bounds for the fighting countries, but some Hmong wanted to help prevent the communists from taking over their country. The United States wanted this, too. So secretly, Hmong men and boys were trained to be soldiers and given weapons.

Things quickly got real for my father. He was about 12 years old when he started blocking supply lines and helping rescue American pilots who had been shot down.

When America left the war in 1975, communism was still spreading hot and fast. All the Hmong who fought against the communists were now left defenseless. If caught, they would be sent to re-education camps or killed. They had to get out of there!

Bee and several others led about 1000 villagers 150 miles over mountains, through jungles, and past enemy ambushes to the Mekong River. Safety in Thailand was just on the other side.

Bee and the other leaders crossed the river to clear the way, but the Thai authorities stopped them from going back for the others. The rest of the villagers, with their backs to the river, were once again left vulnerable. With an attack from the communists, the villagers dispersed to hide or find their own way across the river. Not everyone made it.

Thankfully my family's story doesn't end there. They all made it to Thailand.

There, they were safe at a refugee camp with other Hmong refugees. At about age 16, Bee studied English while he and his family waited to move to another country.

His water buffalo life in the rice fields was now in his past. He wondered where they would go ... the United States? Australia? France? Only time would tell.

After eight months of waiting, his family was headed to the United States up in the clouds. Well ... that's what they believed all this time, seeing airplanes take off and disappear above. Remember, so much was new to Bee! He could play a mean qeej, but geography ... not his best subject. He'd gain some understanding, though, as they arrived in Philadelphia as a refugee.

America was new to Bee, and Bee was new to America. Sadly, not everyone understood my father's language or why the Hmong were there.

He didn't fall in love with the place, but in the City of Brotherly Love, he did fall for his future wife, Ta Moua!

Their stay in Philly wasn't long. They moved to be with more relatives who had settled in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Just like when he was growing up in Laos, he got to be with family in Eau Claire. Bee found a few other familiar things, as well.

It was here in Wisconsin that he and his family could finally pursue happiness. He remained true to his Hmong traditions and beautiful culture. He worked to earn his high school degree at age 21 and then went on to get three college degrees! Yep, those are their eight kids. I told you that my father liked family!

After you get married and have kids, you are considered an elder in a Hmong family. So, according to tradition, Ta's parents gave him a feast and added a new first name — Joua Bee instead of just Bee. To make it easier to say in English, he went by Joe Bee.

Joe Bee was civic minded. "I always felt that I could make a difference and help people have their voices heard."

He did just that beginning in Laos when he aided his fellow villagers in escaping communist control and then again here in Wisconsin, protecting and serving as a police officer, a social worker, and the director at the city's Hmong Mutual Assistance Association.

My father was also the first Hmong American elected to the Eau Claire City Council, or actually to any elected office in the entire state.

To help keep our ancestors' heritage alive, my parents taught all of us children the Hmong language and Shamanism, our traditional beliefs. Joe Bee even taught my brothers how to play the qeej.

Do you wear hand-embroidered festival garments and hats to your celebrations? We do! For our Hmong New Year, we first celebrate at our home and then with others in the area. We invite all of Eau Claire!

Joe Bee sometimes traveled back to Laos where many Hmong still live in fear and try to escape to find peace. On one trip, my father sadly passed away. His spirit returned to the sky.

We held a traditional Hmong funeral for him in Eau Claire that lasted three days. Many mourned his death, but we celebrated his many accomplishments.

Joe Bee Xiong once said, “There is nothing better than a role model,” and he was this for so many.

As he stitched his story: from escaping war-torn Laos, to finding peace in a new country, Joe Bee cloaked us in a blanket of examples, showing us how to help others and design a beautiful life.