

Pa Houa Thao Transcription

This picture takes me back to that day I immigrated to the United States. There is my mom, my youngest sister, my three month old son and me. My parents were also immigrants.

My family immigrated from Laos to Thailand in 1979 during the Vietnam War. I was born in Thailand in the refugee camp. We lived in a refugee camp in Thailand, but the Thai government didn't want Hmong people to stay in their country anymore. We had no place to stay so that's why we immigrated to this country.

We came here with a program call IOM. IOM stands for International Organization for Migration. IOM found our sponsor for us. My sponsor took this picture of us at the Wisconsin airport on November 1, 2004. My sponsor passed away in 2013. Nevertheless, I thank him. For 8 years, he helped us with paperwork to get a green card and welfare. He drove us to buy food, do laundry, and many other things.

I stayed in Wisconsin only three days and moved to Minnesota and lived with my uncle Lee, who believed Saint Paul had better education and more jobs. My first memory of Minnesota was a lot of pumpkins at almost every house. Now I know that's how they celebrate Halloween.

I will retain this picture because it is full of memories back to that period for a scary trip to a new land. When I look at this picture, I think about my son now and how he has grown up.

Raising a child in a new country isn't easy. I had to take my son with me every day to school because it had child care and there was no one watch him at home. I had to wake up early to get him ready before school bus arrived. If we were late, nobody took us to school. When he

was sick I had to stay with him all night and hugged him tight in my arms. I often was absent from school. I was very tired and didn't worry about my homework. We stayed home on the weekends and I never went out with any friends.

I felt and knew that raising a child was a very difficult job and a lot of responsibility for every mother.

My son now 10 years old, and he speaks English and Hmong, but he is more American than Hmong. Consequently, I hope he will see all of the hardships his mom had do for him and hope he will retain our Hmong culture.