Hi. My name is Jesse and my story is about my dad, Cha Toua Her, and when he came to the United States. When he came, he brought with him his dentist equipment, his barber kits, but most importantly, his scars and his stories about the Secret War.

I remember him telling me stories of when he first met my mother. When he went over to her house he saw that there was a machine gun just sitting outside of her house. When he told me this we both laughed, but it was serious because back then there was always this sense of danger from the Vietcong that they could attack at any second. They were always a constant threat to the Laos and the Miao, or the Hmong, people.

When he first enlisted to the Secret Army in 1967, he was only 13. He was put into the Special Guerilla Unit, a.k.a. the SGU. Finishing basic training from the Americans in about fifty-two weeks, he was taking field medic and dentistry classes. The reason that he got picked to do that was because he scored the second highest among his peers, along with a Thai soldier who took first.

He remembers the camp he was at and that camp was called Ban Vinai. He remembers digging a trench about four feet deep and three feet wide. And as he was digging, his best friend was next to him. He got shot in the neck and fell to my dad’s lap. From that, my dad was never the same. He remembers, that same year, his base got attacked again by Vietcongs, but this time it was at night. He remembers he was on scout duty. and he saw roughly 300 to 350 Vietcongs at a nearby valley. He told his camp right away and they reacted. They fought back using hand-me-down weapons from the U.S., which was mortars, bazookas, and rifles.
The Vietcongs had attacked head on and from both the sides. Though his camp was in a really bad situation, they managed to win the fight. But from this, my dad suffered from three shrapnel wounds to his upper left shoulder onto his neck and a frag grenade that happened to explode nearby which burned his stomach onto his upper chest.

My dad didn't remember much from the concussive blow from the grenade. He only remembers seeing bright white lights, Americans in bloodied cloths. Then he knocked out again. When he told me this story, his voice trembled.

Later on he became a Lieutenant in the Secret Army and was given rights to come to the United States in 1988. He came with my mother, Kia Xiong (Maiden Name) Her, and seven kids. They started their life together in Appleton, Wisconsin. He had relatives here already. His uncle wanted my dad to go to school to become a dentist but later declined. I don't know why, but now when my dad looks back to it, he regrets everything.

My dad lived off working at a nearby pizza store and also by farming. The tragic of coming to the United States, it draws upon him because he did so much for our country and his country, but in a little, got pretty much nothing in return. From his stories and hardships, it always haunts him, and me, in ways that I will never want to experience.