

Ketmanee Mary Tychsen - Immigrant Stories Transcription

October 2, 2014

My name is Ketmanee Mary Tychsen. I was born in Bangkok, Thailand, but I grew up in northeastern village in Thailand called Ban Nong Phai. There wasn't a lot to do in the village, I rode my tricycle, I played badminton. My grandmother always tried teaching me things, like random things. I remember she gave me a broom one time and told me to strum it. I'm gonna have to thank her for my love of music and guitars after that. My mother, as well as my grandmother, really emphasized the importance of education. She herself was only able to study up to fourth grade, and then she had to quit school to help out the family. She wanted my sister and me to get a better education and have more opportunities. So, we moved to America.

I went to a really small school here with a class of about sixty students. There was definitely not a lot of diversity, and in elementary I was always, like, in the shadows because I looked a little different than everyone else. I was really focused on this goal of learning, of education, to make my family proud, so I basically avoided people's, I don't know, ignorance, I guess. I ended up graduating high school with high honors, and now I'm here at the University of Minnesota pursuing a degree and furthering my education more.

This bracelet that I'm wearing, to me, represents family and perseverance. It is called a Sai Sin bracelet. It's associated with the Thai tradition of the string tying ceremony. Every time we go back to Thailand to visit, my family always has a celebration and we have this ceremony. The string is blessed by monks over holy water. You tie it on someone's wrist while wishing them good luck, future, or fortune. My mother tied this one on me when she came back from Thailand last year. It's her blessing, and I wear it all the time. I like to think of it as my good luck bracelet and it reminds me of my heritage and why I'm here in the United States. I'm here to get a great education and to not only further myself, but my family as well. And, to always stay true to the meaning: "Mai-kuan-luem-barn-gerd, mai-wa-ja-yu-tee-nhai."

[Thai translated: "No matter where you are now, never forget where you came from."]