**HMONG KEEB KWM**

**Timmy Xiong- Interviewee**

**Houa Yang- Catawba County Library, Interviewer**

**Timmy Xiong- TX**

**Houa Yang- HY**

**This is an oral history recorded on May 19, 2018 at True Life Alliance Church in Hickory, North Carolina as part of Hmong Keeb Kwm, a grant project awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in partnership between the Catawba County Library, the Historical Society of Catawba County, and North Carolina Digital Heritage Center for the purposes of collecting and preserving the history of the Hmong in Catawba County and the surrounding area.**

**Total length of interview: 12 minutes and 01 seconds**

**Available format(s): Audio recorded on Audacity® available as a .WAV file, and video available as a .MOV file**

**Transcription and translation by: Houa Yang- Catawba County Library**

**HY:** Tom ntej no, thov hais koj lub npe nrog rau lub xeem. *(Please say your name, including your last name.)*

**TX:** Kuv lub npe yog Timmy, xeem Xyooj.*(My name is Timmy and my last name is Xiong.)*

**HY:** Koj prefer kom kuv nug hais lus Miskas los hais lus Hmoob os? *(Do you prefer for me to interview you in English or Hmong?)*

**TX:** Hais lus Hmoob os. *(Speak in Hmong.)*

**HY:** OK. Koj nyob lub zos twg los sis koj yug qhov twg? *(OK. Where do you live or where were you born?)*

**TX:** Kuv nyob lub zos Minnesota, St. Paul. *(I live [am from] St. Paul, Minnesota.)*

**HY:** Koj yug rau qhov twg? *(Where were you born?)*

**TX:** Kuv yug rau St. Paul. *(I was born in St. Paul.)*

**HY:** Thov qhia mi ntsis txog koj tus kheej. *(Can you tell a little about yourself?)*

**TX:** Kuv yog ib tug student uas kawm pem CVCC [Catawba Valley Community College]. Kuv kawm txog photography. Kuv kawm tiav photography program xyoo no... That’s about it.

*(I am a student at CVCC [Catawba Valley Community College]. I studied photography and I am graduating this year... That’s about it.)*

**HY:** Koj loj hlob qhov twg thiab piav qhia tias lub sij hawm ntawv zoo li cas rau koj? *(Where did you grow up and can you tell about how it was for you during that time?)*

**TX:** Kuv loj hlob rau teb chaws Miskas no ces thaum ntawv peb nyob nyuaj kawg li thiab. Kuv niam lawv nim qhuav tuaj nyob rau tebchaws Miskas no ces ntaub ntawv Miskas los tsis txawj ces peb kawv ntawv yeej nyuaj kawg li. Peb tsis nkag siab lub Miskas thiab ces peb tsuas nyob ib tug twj ywm xwb. Lawv hais lus los peb yeej tsis nkag siab ces peb ua peb cov homework los peb yeej ua tsis tau li. Ces yeej nyuaj kawg li.

*(I grew up here in America but it was difficult for me. My parents just arrived in America and they didn’t know how to read or speak English so that made school very difficult for us. We didn’t understand English so we just sat still in class and didn’t participate. We didn’t understand what was taught so we didn’t know how to do our homework. It was pretty difficult.)*

**HY:** Koj qhia mi ntsis ntxiv yom? Specifically, like what was your school experience like? Puas muaj tej yam uas that sticks out to you? *(Can you elaborate? Specifically, like what was your school experience like? Is there anything that sticks out to you?)*

**TX:** Koj hais txog tam sim no lod? *(You mean right now?)*

**HY:** You talked about how you had difficulty in school because cov teacher hais lus los koj tsis tshua tau taub. Can you explain what that experience was like for you?

*(You talked about how you had difficulty in school because whenever the teachers spoke, you didn’t really understand what they were saying. Can you explain how that experience was like for you?)*

**TX:**  Qhov experience ntawv mas nws nyuaj kawg li. Lawv yeej qhia yus ob peb lwm li od. Lawv yeej qhia tias peb mean li no, li no, es kom nej nkag siab. Yus lam sau zoo ib yam li nay-khru [Lao word- “teacher”] hais xwb tam sis mas yus kuj raug nay-khru qhia kuj sab kawg thiab. Vim rau qhov tias yus yeej yog born rau tebchaws Miskas no tam sis mas yus niam yus txiv tsis qhia yus...lawv tsis paub lus Miskas thiab ces lawv tsis qhia yus. Ces yus cia mus kawm lawv teb lus xwb ces nws nyuab kawg li.

*(That experience was really difficult. They would reteach the material several times. They would try to explain what things meant and try their best to help you understand. You tried to copy and do what the teacher said but it was difficult so the teachers just had to keep teaching. I was born in this country but my parents didn’t teach me...they didn’t know English so they didn’t teach me that. I had to learn a different language so it was definitely hard.)*

**HY:** So obviously now, koj twg mus rau tom *(you went to)* college, rau *(to)* CVCC lawm, so how did you overcome that?

**TX:** How did I overcome?

**HY:** How did you overcome that? You obviously went to college but you said you had difficulties so how did you overcome those difficulties?

**TX:** To...qhia nej tias ua li cas kuv thiab li mus txog rau CVCC? *(To...tell about how I got to CVCC?)*

**HY:** Yeah, you can tell a little bit about your journey.

**TX:** Qhov ntawv ces... yus yeej tsis nkag siab ces yus nyob ib tug twj ywm xwb ces lawv cia li hais li cas ces yus ua li ntawv xwb. Ces yus nyob nyob ces yus mus txog tsev ces yus xav xav thiab yus pib sau lawv cov ntawv ces yus cia li pib nkag siab lawm xwb. That’s how I got to where I am today.

*(About that...I didn’t understand so I just kept quiet and didn’t participate but whatever I was told to do, I did it. After I went home, I would study hard and do my work and so then eventually I just started to understand. That’s how I got to where I am today.)*

**HY:** Thov piav qhia tias koj pab txhawb koj lub zej zog li cas, xws li koj puas nyob rau tej lub koom hoom los sis church, los sis muaj nyiaj pab rau lawm tus- charity, or anything like that?

*(How do you participate or help in the community, for example, are you a part of an organization or a church, do you donate to a charity, or anything like that?)*

**TX:** Kuv txiv, nws yog ib tug coj ntawm...nws yog ib tug neeg nyob hauv Xyooj Family Union. Nws yog ib lub koom hoom Hmoob. Peb pab txhawb nyiaj scholarship rau cov uas kawm ntawv tiav thiab peb pab txhawb nqa lawv kom lawv pais kom saib tshaj lawv lub goal.

*(My dad is a leader in the Xiong Family Union. That’s a Hmong organization. We help award scholarship money to students who have graduated which encourages them to achieve success beyond their goals.)*

**HY:** Koj piav mi ntsis tias lub Xiong organization yog dab tsi yom? Peb thiaj tau taub for the video. *(Can you explain a bit more about the Xiong organization? To give greater clarity for the video?)*

**TX:** Lub Xyooj organization no mas yog ib qho uas yog, mi nyuam kawm ntawv tiav ces peb xav muab nyiaj txhawb nqa lawv. Peb xav kom lawv mus siab tshaj no thiab kom lawv tsis txhob hais tias lawv kawm ntawv tas es lawv cia li mus ua hauj lwm xwb. Peb xav kom lawv mus kom saib li saib tau. Kom lawv mus es lawv graduate tau lawv qhov Master Degree, kom lawv tsis txhob quit school thiab kom lawv muaj siab tsoo tiag. Txawm nyuab npaum cas los tsoo tiag. Yog tias lawv need pab los peb yeem txhawb scholarship rau lawv kom lawv mus kom dhau.

*(The Xiong organization helps those students who have graduated with financial aid. We want them to pursue higher education instead of just giving up on learning and entering the workforce. We want to push them to go higher and higher so they graduate with their Masters Degree, so they don’t quit school, so they will persist. No matter how difficult, they must keep going. We help to take care of some of their financial needs through the scholarship so that they can achieve and surpass their goals.)*

**HY:**  Dab tsi yog qhov uas koj txaus siab rau thiab qhuas tshaj plaws nyob rau hauv koj lub neej? *(What are you happiest or most proud of in your life?)*

**TX:** Koj rephrase kom kuv tau taub mi ntsis? *(Can you rephrase your question so I can understand a bit?)*

**HY:** Dab tsi yog qhov koj txaus siab rau...as in proud of...what are you proudest of?

**TX:** Qhov uas kuv muaj kev zoo saib tshaj plaws, qhov uas kuv achieve tau mas yog...I was able to go to school and come this far and graduate...getting close to lav ntawv, graduate. *(The thing I am proudest of or my greatest achievement is that I was able to go to school and come this far and graduate.)*

**HY:** So you mentioned that nej nyob *(you lived in)* Minnesota, tabsis nej tsiv rau *(but you moved to)* North Carolina. Can you explain why you guy moved and little bit about the transition?

**TX:** Peb yeej nyob Minnesota. Peb moved to North Carolina [in] 2009 because cov kwv tij nyob hauv nov tag lawm. Ces kuv txiv peb yog cov only ones nyob sauv xwb ces cov kwv tij nyob hauv no ces kuv txiv txiav xim siab tias, yog tias cov kwv tij twb nyob hauv lawm ces peb ua ib siab move mus rau hauv. Ces, that’s why peb nyob rau North Carolina no.

*(We did live in Minnesota but we moved to North Carolina in 2009 because all of our cousins were here. My dad and our family were the only ones still up there, while all of our cousins were down here so my dad decided that since everyone is here we should move here as well. That’s why we moved to North Carolina.)*

**HY:** So, I know you brought your portfolio today. Koj puas kam muab show rau peb thiab piav mi ntsis txog koj cov photo ua koj nqa hnub no? *(Can you show it to us and tell us a bit about your photos that you brought today?)*

**TX:** Tau mas. *(Sure.)*

[TX takes out photos to show.]

**TX:** Ntawm no kuv lub hom phiaj yog kuv xav qhia rau tib neeg paub hais tias...tib neeg uas yog hom neeg uas yog Miskas, paub hais tias thaum peb hnav khaub ncaws Miskas thiab peb hnav khaub ncaws Hmoob, peb sib txawv li cas. Ib yam li kuv hais, nws yog ib qho comparison hais tias tus tib neeg nws txawv li cas. [Shows the first photo in the album.] Daim thawj thawj no ces yog kuv txiv. Ces kuv pib kuv txiv hnav khaub ncaws Hmoob...daim kawg ces yog kuv txiv hnav khaub ncaws Hmoob, ces daim no ces yog kuv txiv hnav khaub ncaws Miskas.

*(With this, my intent is to show people that...people, being Americans, the difference between us when we are wearing our American clothes and our Hmong clothes. It’s a comparison to highlight those differences. [Shows the first photo in the album.] This first one is of my father. I begin with my father wearing Hmong clothes… the last one is my father wearing Hmong clothes, in this one [the first photo], he is wearing American clothes.)*

[Turns the page.]

Ces tus no yog kuv tus muam yua. Sab tim no yog khaub ncaws Miskas ces sab tim no yog khaub ncaws Hmoob. *(This is my younger sister. On this side she is wearing American clothes and on this side, she is wearing Hmong clothes.)*

[Turns the page.]

Ces tus no yog kuv tus nus yau. *(This is my younger brother.)*

[Turns the page.]

Ces tus no, also, yog kuv tus little brother thiab. Nws yog tus yau tas nrho peb sawv daws. *(This is also my younger brother, the one that is the youngest of us all.)*

[Turns the page.]

Tus no yog kuv tus muam hlob. *(This is my older sister.)*

[Turns the pages until the last page of the portfolio.]

Daim no yog kuv txiv hnav khaub ncaws Hmoob. *(This is my father in Hmong clothes.)*

[Closes the portfolio.]

**HY:** Yam tom ntej no koj xav kom neeg paub dab tsi txog Hmoob, Hmoob lub neej, thiab Hmoob kab lig kev cai? *(In the future, what do you want people to know about the Hmong, their history, and their traditions?)*

**TX:** Yam tom ntej no, kuv xav kom lawv paub txog tej khoom siv, tej khoom uas peb parents siv. Lawm hnub tsis muaj lawv lawm ces peb thiaj tau nyeem qhov description hais tias, yam khoom no yuav siv li cas thiab peb thiaj paub yuav sib rau yav tom ntej.

*(In the future, I want people to know about Hmong tools that were used in daily life, like the tools that our parents used. When they are gone, I want to be able to read about it and find descriptions that tell what was used and how it was used so that we perhaps we could use them in the future too.)*

**HY:** Puas muaj lwm yam uas kuv tsis tau nug koj uas koj xav qhia thiab piav? *(Is there anything else I haven’t asked that you would like to talk or tell about?)*

**TX:** Tsis muaj. *(No, there’s not.)*

**HY:** Ua tsaug. *(Thank you.)* Thank you for your time.

**[End Recording]**