

## STOCKTONSpeaks!

### **CHUE LO**

At 55, Chue Lo is the elder of his family. Thinking back over his life, he recalls many things, some good, some not so good. Chue was born in Laos, the second of six children. While his parents might have known a time of peace and stability in Laos, Chue and his siblings grew up with difficult and unstable conditions caused by the ongoing wars in South-east Asia.

During the period of political unrest, Chue's parents insisted he attend school. There he learned to speak several languages including French, Lao, and Thai, in addition to his native Hmong. Chue feels it's important to be multi-lingual adding, "The more you know, the more enabled or empowered you will be."

According to Chue, there are no specific rituals to signify coming of age among the Hmong people. His family recognized him as an adult when he had completed his education and returned home from school. For Chue himself, he thought he had become an adult only once he was earning his own money.

Chue and his siblings learned by following the example of his mother and father. However, they were rarely offered direct advice by their parents. Religion and education also provided a sound foundation while he was growing up, as it still does today.

Chue brought his family to Stockton in 1981. He maintains close ties with other Hmong families and is considered a leader in Stockton's Hmong community. In this leadership role, he often travels to Fresno to meet with other leaders to discuss issues relating to the Hmong community.

Chue feels his children and grandchildren have it easier than he did. He, like his parents, tells young people that a good education is the path to a fulfilling life. Simply put, "education is the key to self-empowerment."

As a community elder, he works to insure that future generations learn about their past. Chue firmly believes that even as the young pursues their personal ambitions, they must remember the struggles of earlier generations and give something back to their Hmong community. Never forget, he urges, "that the Hmong people have had a difficult history and difficult life."

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Ethnic Group: Hmong American

Generation: Elder