



Context:

Southeast Asians in California

Volume 12, Number 94, January, 1992

Folsom Cordova Unified School District
2460 Cordova Lane,
Rancho Cordova CA 95670
(916) 635-6815
Judy Lewis, Editor

Ta' one an' pass de res' bag

The Sacramento Bee (1/18/92) reported that for the first time the federal government has charged a company with discriminating against an employee because he speaks English with an accent.

The suit, filed in US District Court in Los Angeles Friday by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission against Eiki International, Inc., charged that the company violated the civil rights of an Indian-born employee by dismissing him because of his accented English. Rambhai Patel worked as credit manager for Eiki International, and the company maintained that his accent was not good for the company's image.

Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin, and the commission said that to deny a person a job or a promotion because of a foreign accent would be a violation of that statute.

The EEOC said that such lawsuits will be increasing because of the changing demographics in the United States.

What happens when a bilingual teacher—speaking accented English—applies for a job in a school district? The personnel department directors are understandably concerned about the kind of language model a teacher will provide for students.

"What will happen when the teacher dictates spelling sentences?"

"How can young children learn to sound out words when the teacher pronounces the sounds incorrectly?"

"Will the children learn to speak with the

teacher's accent?"

On the other hand, why should foreign-born persons be encouraged to enter credential programs if they are judged unsuitable because of the way in which they speak English? Is it even possible for an immigrant who arrives as a teen-ager or adult to learn to speak English "accent-free"—or with a California or New York or Alabama or Kansas accent? On the other hand, is a person who speaks unaccented English fully fluent in the other language?

What about the parents of newcomers whose children are assigned to classes taught by bilingual teachers who have distinctive accents of other language backgrounds? More than once I have had (non-Hispanic) parents say to me, "My child is learning to speak English with a Spanish accent." How much of this is a case of "us vs. them" and how much is a justifiable concern?

Recently my college son phoned to tell me about his new classes. His math teacher is Chinese, and speaks with a strong accent. On the first day of class, a girl sitting next to him leaned over and whispered, "What did he say?!"

My son replied, "He said, 'Take one and pass the rest back.'"

A second grade Chinese student wrote:

I have ten bugs.

The teacher asked, "Oh, do you keep your bugs in a jar?"

The student explained: "No, **bugs**! Like I go to the store and buy something with ten bugs!"

Why *bugs* and not *bucks*? Do you know why this error occurs? Do you know how to help?

Read on.

I chuckled and said that he was lucky that he had had so much practice understanding my Asian friends. Children entering a global, cosmopolitan world are helped—rather than hindered—by an opportunity to listen *through* accents to understand what the other person intends to communicate. It establishes a listener's equal responsibility for understanding.

Non-native speakers are desperate to have direct teaching in reducing accent. We glibly tell them that language acquisition is natural, or not to worry about it, that they'll probably always speak with an accent. How comforting to those who understand that accent closes doors of opportunity!

Is accent learnable? It must be, otherwise Meryl Streep would not be able to so convincingly play a Dutch woman, an Australian woman, and a southerner. The techniques she uses to learn accent could be part of a teacher's bag of tricks.

Recent research on infants' language acquisition (Kuhl, University of Washington, *Science*, February, 1992) suggests that by the age of six months humans have already begun to develop sound prototypes that are characteristic of their own language. Sounds of other languages are squeezed to fit into these prototypes. For example, Japanese has a sound prototype that is neither 'l' nor 'r' but something midway between. The English 'lake' and 'rake' are not heard as different—the two consonant sounds are interpreted as fitting into the same l-r prototype.

Faced with the current theoretical emphasis on natural language approaches, a person who suggests direct instruction or deliberate learning of language production invites charges of heresy and idiocy. Yet research suggests that after a very young age, the human brain does not form new prototypes without some very specific compare-and-contrast input, along with explanations of where to put the tongue and teeth, etc.

Teachers are not taught how to present material in such a way that learners can compare and contrast similar sounding words or phrases, perceive the differences between similar sounds, learn to distinguish unfamiliar sounds, and produce the critical differences. Current training programs for teachers don't provide teachers with practice in hearing the sounds we take for granted in our own speech—recognizing our own prototypes.

Consider how we teach students to differentiate 'can' and 'can't': "say those *end* sounds clearly!" Actually, it's not the end sounds that are critical; it's the vowel, which is quite different in sound and duration when saying "I can go" vs. "I can't go." It is actually the vowel—*k* n not *kæn*—that differentiates the two, not the final consonant. How confusing it must be to a non-native speaker to carefully pronounce the final 't', just to have the listener look confused. Wouldn't it be effective to have him listen to pairs of sentences, listening for the shortened reduced vowel in "I c'n go" vs. the clear, slightly lengthened vowel in "I can't go"? To know that when 'can' appears in the middle of sentences this happens makes sense. To understand that 'can't' never has the change in vowel also helps the non-native speaker produce unambiguous messages. An explanation might be appropriate for older learners, whereas simply presenting plenty of examples—carefully paired for target sounds—makes input more comprehensible for younger learners.

Speech therapists are the school personnel who receive the kind of training that is crucial to presenting language input in a way that confident, communicating non-native speakers can move towards native accents. However, speech therapists are allowed to work only with students who have language problems in their native languages.

Problem sounds

What follows are groups of target sounds, along with language groups in which native speakers are most likely to have prototypes that put both sounds into one category:

[iy] beat	vs.	[i] bit
bead		bid
lead		lid
reed		rid
eel		ill
we'll		will
eat		it

Feel this bag. Fill this bag.
Don't sleep on deck. Don't slip on deck.
(Chinese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese)

[ey] bait	vs.	[e] bet
raced		rest
aid		Ed
rake		wreck
late		let

Can you taste it? Can you test it?

Put it in the shade. Put it in the shed.

(Arabic, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese)

[e] bet	vs.	[æ] bat
bed		bad
said		sad
Beth		bath
better		batter
left		laughed
X		axe

Send it carefully. Sand it carefully.

The pen leaks. The pan leaks.

(Chinese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese)

[æ] cat	vs.	[ɑ] cot
cab		cob
add		odd
axe		ox
hag		hog
rack		rock
cap		cop
hat		hot
racket		rocket

My sack is torn. My sock is torn.

Too many cats. Too many cots.

(almost all ESL students)

[ɑ] cot	vs.	[ɔ] caught
clod		clawed
hock		hawk
tock		talk
nod		gnawed
Don		dawn
tot		taught

Is it Don? Is it dawn?

I see the collar. I see the caller.

(Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Californians)

Generic Exercises

Pick two sounds. Find or draw pictures to illustrate two example words. Call one "sound 1" and the other "sound 2."

Put the pictures on the board. Say the words in a random sequence. Students say "1" or "2" to indicate which sound they hear. After the example words are "burned in," try other word and sentence pairs that differ *only* in the target sound. (Try not to change the

tone—Chinese, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, Mien speakers will hear this as a difference.)

Keep the pace brisk and let the students receive immediate feedback on correct answers.

Same and different

T: Sheep. Ship.
S: Different
T: Seat. Seat.
S: Same

Right or wrong

T: (points to picture of cot): Cat.
S: Wrong.
T: (points to picture of hat): Hat.
S: Right.

Pick the different one

T: 1-cot 2-cot 3-caught
S: 3
T: 1-odd 2-awed 3-odd
S: 2

Which one?

T: point to the X
S: (point to the picture of the X)
T: point to the axe
S: (point to the picture of the axe)
T: (continues, mixing them up)

T: The pan leaks.
S: (point to picture of leaky pan)
T: The pen leaks.
S: (point to picture of the leaky pen)
T: (continues, mixing them up)

Obviously, for these to be fast-paced, the teacher needs lists of minimal pairs close at hand. The speech therapist is probably a gold mine of resources. Two books are useful:

Pronunciation Contrasts in English (Nilsen, Regents Publishing Co.)

Pronunciation Pairs (Baker & Goldstein, Cambridge University Press, 1990). Comes with a cassette.

The problem sounds listed above are only a few of the vowel contrasts; the language lists are not complete, either.

I wonder if a speech therapist could go into each classroom for 10 minutes a day to conduct targeted input—a routine of "a sound pair a day"? They'd be training teachers in the techniques at the same time.

Amy Catlin

Ethnomusicologist, author, Cambodian dance project director, expert witness

From Angkor to America

The director of the Cambodian Dance and Music Project of Van Nuys, California, 1984-1990, will show portions of the 37-minute video and answer questions about the project, as well as discussing her work as Expert Witness for the LA County Office of the Public Defender for Southeast Asian refugee-related cases.

Representing the Hmong in Fiction

The Hmong have been extensively represented in documentary media and anthropological literature. However, they also appear in fictional works in Laos and the US. Two videotaped examples will be given, one from a theatrical production seen in Vientiane, Laos, in 1989, and a second from a recent episode of *Dougie Howser, M.D.*, for which the speaker served as an anthropological consultant. Both feature a Hmong shaman healer. These representations will be interpreted and compared. Hmong village New Year footage will also be compared with the theatrical representation.

Jennie Cerullo

*Multicultural Consultant,
Covina Valley USD*

Cross-Cultural Communication: Skills for a Multicultural Society

This session presents a study of communication problems in cross cultural settings. Particular focus will be given to the examination of one's personal cultural perspective and world view and its impact on communication with individuals/students of a different culture. The emphasis will be on understanding Asian heritage.

Barbara Condon

Buckeye Elementary School District

Crossing the River: 1991 Southeast Asian Summer Video Project

Overview of a Title VII project that involved the production of Lao, Mien, and Hmong folktales on videotape—with adults telling the stories in their own languages and the children dramatizing the stories in English. Other video material collected includes children's games,

Southeast EDUCATION

• Saturday, March 21, 1992 • 8:00 to

cooking, dances, and a Mien blacksmith. The project included a language development strand for the second through eighth graders, focused on the translation and dramatization of the stories, creation of books and art work. The project provides one example of community involvement in the children's school experiences.

Joan Criddle

Author and Lecturer

Turning Refugee Experiences into Literature

Well-told stories broaden our perspective and help us view the world and ourselves through another's eyes. Most newcomers (refugees especially) have experiences and philosophies that are unique, traumatic, and/or dramatic—the stuff from which good stories are made. Often, however, newcomers need help organizing this information and expressing it as a unified story with a beginning, middle and end, and makes a point (an American cultural expectation). Examples of effective stories by and about newcomers will be shared and tips given for eliciting and developing these stories.

Eric Crystal

*Center for Southeast Asian Studies,
UC Berkeley*

Religion, Culture and Curriculum: The Religious Traditions of Southeast Asia and California Public Education

Muslim Cham, Buddhist Vietnamese (Mahayana sect) and Buddhist Khmer, Lao and Thai (Theravada sect) students are found in many California classrooms. The highland shamanic ritual of the Hmong and mountain Taoism of the Mien also constitute new religions in California. This presentation will portray Southeast Asian religion and culture and explore ways of recognizing, sharing, and discussing such relatively unknown religions in the classroom.

Julia Elliott

*Graduate Student in Linguistics,
UC Berkeley*

The Lua' (T'in)—A Little-Known Highland Lao Refugee Community

The presenter will discuss her experiences working with the Lua' community as a linguist and community activist. The focus of the presentation will be on the social meaning of language and issues of cross-cultural communication.

Michele Hobza

Sacramento City USD

Meeting the Educational Goals of Southeast Asian Teen Parents

This workshop will present the reality of adolescent pregnancy among Southeast Asian populations in California. It will look at the successful intervention strategies of Sacramento City USD's Off Campus Alternative Class to incorporate cultural sensitivity in its attempts to reduce the cycle of pregnancy/illiteracy/poverty while maintaining academic integrity. Teen marriage among the Hmong and Mien will be discussed.

Ann Hughes

Stockton USD

Helping with Schoolwork: The Impact of Limited English Development Among Laotian Parents

Research conducted as part of a paper included ethnographies of Laotian parents. The researcher and one of those interviewed will share information, facts and findings from the research areas, as well as suggestions for building and fostering parent involvement with the child, and adult involvement in the schools.

Asia'92 FAIRE 92

4:00 • Sacramento City College •

Annie Jaisser

*Graduate Student, Dept of Linguistics,
UC Berkeley*

Introduction to the Hmong Language

In what ways is the Hmong language both different from and similar to English on the one hand, and to other Southeast Asian languages on the other? In this presentation, I will attempt to answer this question by giving the audience an overview of:

- the basic sounds of Hmong & RPA;
- the basic grammatical features of Hmong with illustrative examples;
- the hallmarks of Hmong speaking and writing style.

By way of practice, the audience will be invited to pronounce common clan and given names. Bring along some of your favorite names, and leave pronouncing them *à la Hmong!*

Candace Kelly

*Bilingual Resource Specialist, Thermalito
Union School District*

Hmong Biliteracy Project

This presentation will provide an overview of the components of the Hmong Biliteracy Project (funded by Migrant Child Education) underway in Oroville; a summary of the similarities and differences between Hmong, Mien, and Orovillians; and a look at the relevant research.

Jean Longmire

School of Education, UOP

Projecting a Cambodian Social Identity

Knowing the English language is not enough to be successful in social situations—such as a job interview in which an American interviews a Cambodian applicant. I will discuss the results of a project in which Cambodian junior college and university students played the roles of interviewer and applicant as it might be conducted in appropriate Cambodian style (a “good interview”).

A group of Cambodian adults who worked as teachers in Cambodia and the students watched the videotapes of the interviews, and chose the best one. Then they analyzed why it was the best. The results illustrate what might go wrong in an interaction such as an interview when an American holds different assumptions about social identity. Teachers and others will be able to bring an “insider’s view” to interactions with Cambodians and others who share similar ideas about social identity.

Halinka Luangpraseut

Images from Southeast Asia

Halinka demonstrates classroom activities using illustrations drawn from scenes familiar to Southeast Asian students.

Deborah Tran

California Refugee & Immigrant Programs

Mary Kay Tirrell

Professor, CSU Fullerton

Education in Vietnam, 1991

Dr. Tirrell and Ms. Tran were members of a training delegation in Vietnam during July and August, 1991. This delegation presented intensive training on current ESL methodologies to the English faculty from the Universities of Saigon and Hanoi. The presenters will use slides and personal experiences to provide an overview of the current system of education in Vietnam; the learning style of the Vietnamese students; the status of language teaching in Vietnam; the potential for Vietnamese students studying in the US; the status of Amerasians in Vietnam; the life-styles, living conditions, and attitudes of Vietnamese in Saigon and Hanoi.

James Matisoff

*Dept of Linguistics, UC Berkeley
Common Features of South-
east Asian Languages*

Are some of those pesky writing errors due to the way ideas are expressed in Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Khmu, Lahu....? Find out the ways in which Southeast Asian languages are similar, and in the process, learn to predict trouble spots for learners of English.

Sue Meinyer-Rocha

Grant Joint Union High School District

Recipe for Sheltered English Lessons

Every teacher sooner or later will have to alter the ongoing program to make the content of lessons accessible to limited English speakers. Find out how to alter any lesson—science, history, economics...

Pauline Nguyen

*Bilingual Education Office, Stockton USD
World View Through Socio-
Cultural Classroom Activities*

Knowing the world through songs and music: a Vietnamese children’s song will lead participants across oceans and continents (Asia, Europe, and America) and it will expose them to multinational characteristics. The language arts unit will cover academic and sociocultural objectives including geography, counting and writing the numerals in several languages, making flags and costumes, and peoples’ traditions.

Hongthong Niravanh

*Staff Training Program Specialist, Indochi-
nese Education Program, San Diego USD
Reaching Southeast Asian
Parents*

The presenter will share techniques and strategies for involving Southeast Asian parents in the education of their children. The presenter will also share educational, linguistic, and cultural background information of the Southeast Asians to help staff communicate and work effectively with parents.

Mory Ouk

*PALMS, Long Beach USD
Cambodian Folk Traditions
Participate and learn!*

Gilbert Simon, M.D.

Sacramento Pediatrician

Soviet Health Issues

Dr. Simon has worked with Soviet refugees since they first arrived in Sacramento in 1989. He recently attended a national Soviet health conference in Chicago. Find out about the major issues—Chernobyl effects? Immunization history? Medical, dental problems?

Senyint Sith Chim

*Staff Development Trainer,
San Diego City Schools*

Strategies for Keeping Cambodian Students in School

This session will detail the causes of the dropout, gang, and drug activities among the Cambodian students in San Diego. Audiences will learn how to get parents, community, and teachers involved in keeping Cambodians in school.

Hach Yasumura

*Sacramento County Dept of Social Services
Soviet Refugees:*

Resettlement and Resources

People involved in the initial resettlement and adjustment of Soviet refugees will provide a picture of the immediate past, present, and future trends and will provide information on the various resources available. Hach Yasumura, a social worker with the Welfare Department and liaison with the Asian communities, has spearheaded a community networking group for Soviet refugees.

Ellen Yin

Program Coordinator, Child Abuse Prevention, Lutheran Social Services

Southeast Asian Parenting—Discipline or Abuse?

This workshop focuses on parenting practices and issues concerning Southeast Asian families. Family roles, discipline methods, intervention strategies, and interpretation issues will be addressed. Participants are encouraged to bring case examples for discussion.

Song Hahn

Valley High School, Elk Grove Unified School District

Schooling Korean Immigrant Students in America

This presentation will focus on teaching Korean immigrant students in American classrooms. This overview will generally explain the students' educational background, the linguistic features of the Korean language, and some socio-cultural features related to their adaptation to a new environment.

More on these next issue:

Chue Chang

*Staff Development Trainer,
San Diego City Schools*

Glenn Fisher

Professor-Diplomat, Monterey Institute of International Studies

Mindsets

Detectives Trang To &

Darrell Fong

Sacramento County Sheriff's Office

Lt. Mary Savage

Sacramento Police Dept

Chuong Hoang Chung

Dept of Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University

Paula Gillett

Voices of Liberty

Khamchong

Luangpraseut

Santa Ana Unified School District

Kaota Saephan

Oakland USD

Khatharya Um

Dept of Political Science, UC Berkeley

Tickets are available for \$35 from Refugee Educators' Network, 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova CA 95670. Phone 916 635-6815. Fax 916 635-0174. Includes morning snack, Vietnamese lunch, packet, and \$3-off coupon for original poster. Deadline for purchasing tickets is March 13.

Refugee Statistics

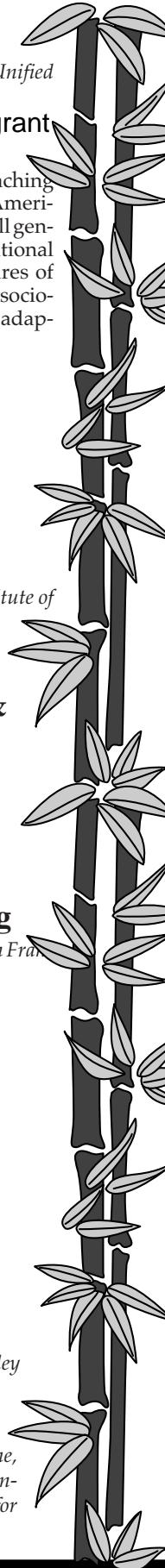
Refugee Reports, volume XII, number 12 (December 1991) has comprehensive charts and tables of both fiscal year and cumulative figures for refugees, camp populations and movement, and rates of approval for asylum cases.

The total number of refugees for the past year was nearly 113,000, slightly lower than for the year before. This next year's ceiling is up from 131,000 to 142,000, with 52,000 slots going to Southeast Asia and 61,000 to the Soviet Union. This is the highest ceiling since 1980, but some 10,000 are privately financed. Eastern Europe's numbers are down, while Africa's number have increased. Haitians' situation is yet to be decided.

At the end of September, 1991, there were nearly 17,000 Amerasians and their relatives already in the reprocessing centers, preparing to come to the U.S. In addition, some 13,000 refugees were processing through centers in the Philippines and Thailand. These 30,000 should be arriving in the U.S. between October and March.

Some 700,000 displaced Iraqis are awaiting resolution of their lives. Resettlement abroad is not taking place.

The US has sent emergency relief to Yugoslavian victims.



Hmong at the Turning Point

By Dr. Yang Dao; edited by Jeanne Blake
Brooklyn Center, MN: WorldBridge Associates, 1992

Dr. Yang Dao offers an insider's analysis of the political and social development of the Hmong during the period 1935-1972. His work focuses on the traditional and emerging economies of the time, the development of economic and social strategies in the midst of rapid wartime change, and a plan for the peaceful economic development of northern Laos should war eventually turn to peace. Twenty years have passed since the original manuscript was written in French, but the analyses and bold plans for an equitable future for the ethnic minorities in northern Laos remain timely and relevant.

Order from WorldBridge Associates, PO Box 29204, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429: \$29.99 (\$24.99 before March 1), plus tax and \$2.50 shipping.

Indochinese Refugee Families and Academic Achievement

By Nathan Caplan, Marcella H. Choy and John K. Whittemore, *Scientific American*, February 1992: 36-42

This article is based on the study of 6,750 Lao, Vietnamese, and Chinese-Vietnamese persons who fled Indochina between 1976 and 1979. The research team documented the remarkable academic achievements of these students, and found that the family played the pivotal role in the children's success.

Grade point averages (GPAs) were calculated; in math, students averaged 3.05, while in language-related subjects GPAs was 2.64. Since grades are often the product of compliance with rules rather than objective measures of knowledge, they looked at national percentiles on the California Achievement Test and other similar measures. Students' average overall score placed them at the 54th percentile, just above the national average. In math, half the students scored in the top quartile, and an amazing 27% scored above the 90th percentile. These scores confirmed their high performance in math.

The researchers analyzed the data, looking for factors correlated with high achievement. Large family size showed positive

correlation with the high scores. This surprised the team, in that most studies showed the opposite relationship: the more children in a family, the lower the achievement.

The team hypothesized that something in the cultural values brought along from their homelands, maintained in this country, were important. Parents and children tended to rank the importance of values in a similar way. Chief among these were that both children and adults honored mutual, collective obligation to one another and their relatives.

The amount of time spent on homework was another strongly correlated factor. Elementary school students averaged over two hours a day working on studies, while high school students averaged over three hours. American high school students average about half that.

The children paired off during study time, the older siblings helping and being held responsible for the learning of the younger.

Half the parents also reported reading aloud to children, in their home language or in English. English literacy, then, was not crucial to the school achievement of children, but literacy in some language was.

Both children and parents rated "love of learning" as the factor that accounted for school success. Effort was seen as more important than luck or fate (and, most likely, ability). Parents who rated higher in terms of having control over their own lives had students who achieved at higher levels.

Education was seen as the key to survival and success in a new society. For many, education was an elusive dream in Indochina, and its availability in this country was seen as an opportunity not to be missed or wasted.

Both Indochinese and middle-class American values emphasize education, achievement, hard work, autonomy, perseverance, and pride. The difference lies in the orientation to achievement: Americans encourage individual achievement while Indochinese foster interdependence and family-oriented achievement.

The results of this Indochinese study indicate that the schools are teaching, and that their nearly unmanageable social service agenda must be separated from the academic purposes before the crisis in education can be addressed.

It is the family that is the key to success.



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#S8802 *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* Ouk, Huffman, Lewis, 1988. \$5.50 (carton discount for lots of 40: \$4.50)

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#S8904 *Introduction to the Indochinese and their Cultures* Chhim, Luangpraseut, Te, 1989. \$9.00 (carton discount for lots of 32: \$8.00)

#S8805 *English-Hmong Bilingual Dictionary of School Terminology* Cov Lus Mis Kuj Txhais ua Lus Hmoob Huynh D Te, translated by Lue Vang, 1988 \$2.00 (no carton price)

#S9006 *Vietnamese Language Materials Sourcebook* Huynh Dinh Te, 1990 \$2.00 (no carton discount)

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*Grandmother's Path,
Grandfather's Way* (Vang & Lewis, revised printing 1990)



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February 20, 1992
May 21, 1992

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