

Interviewee: Paw Wah
(also uses Hope Paw Wah as her name)
Interviewer: Regina M. Edmonds
Date of Interview: May 24, 2017
Location: Paw Wah's residence, Worcester, MA
Transcriber: Regina M. Edmonds



Abstract: In this interview Paw Wah, Burmese Refugee, Worcester Hometown Hero, and Board Member of Worcester Refugee Assistance Project, describes three phases of her life's journey. She first describes her experiences in Burma, now called Myanmar, then her years in a refugee camp in Thailand, and finally her new life in Worcester. She comments that she sometimes calls herself Hope Paw Wah, as the words paw wah, translated as "bloom like the white flower," signify hope in her native language. The interview shows Paw Wah's remarkable resilience and courage along with her dedication to her family, her generosity toward others, and her love for America. This devotion is shown when she exuberantly states in the interview, "You know, this America and Massachusetts, America, Worcester, Worcester, Massachusetts, America, the best in the world!"

Born in 1967, Paw Wah experienced nearly constant war and violence in her home country and finally fled to Thailand in 2000 with her husband, her foster son, and her first born son after witnessing the torture and death of her younger brother at the hands of the Burmese military. In her own words she says, "Oh, you know, when I was born in Burma, every time, everyday, we have, we suffering the fear when the war will be close to our village ... and the Burmese soldier and the Karen soldier when they meet each other, meet each other in ... close to my village, all the villages would get trouble ... the Burmese soldier they torture people and many men what they saw then, this sight of torture."

Throughout the interview Paw Wah demonstrates the deep significance her Christian faith has for her and how it has given her the strength to continue moving forward despite hardship, fear, loss, and dislocation. Her sense of humor also shines brightly throughout the interview as does her ability to create safety and warmth for others striving, as she has done, to make new lives for themselves in the entirely unfamiliar environment of the USA. When asked what it was like when she and her family finally arrived in America, she captures the enormity of the transition by humorously saying, "Oooh, you know, like cave, caveman came to America." Paw Wah and her family arrived in Worcester on September 9, 2008 and faced significant challenges in

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

adjusting to a way of life so different from what they had previously known, but with time she and her family have flourished and have given enormous gifts back to the community which welcomed them on that September day.

Interview Transcript

Note: Listening first to almost all of side A on the larger format tape and then moving to side B of the smaller format tape provides the complete audio of this interview. There is some overlap between the end of side A on the large format tape and side B of the smaller format tape.

RE: OK, so this is an interview ...

PW: Um hum

RE: with Hope Pah Wah

PW: Um hum

RE: And we know your address and phone. We already talked about that. Do you have any children?

PW: Yes

RE: Yes, I remember, so you have

PW: Three, three boys.

RE: So you have three boys, ok. How old are they?

PW: 17

RE: 17

PW: 15

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: 15

PW: 13

RE: Wow, wonderful. You don't have any grandchildren yet?

PW: No

RE: No, ok. Are you married?

PW: Yes

RE: Yes, ok. Have you used any other name besides Hope Paw Wah?

PW: Only that.

RE: Only that. Ok. And what is your husband's name?

PW: Putaku

RE: How do I spell that?

PW: *[spells the name out for RE]* P U T A K U. Putaku

RE: Putaku

PW: Um hum

RE: And that's his whole name?

PW: Yeah, whole name

RE: Whole name, great, and what is your mother's name?

PW: Pawla

RE: Paula, like this? P A U L A? *[spells name]*

PW: P A W *[spells part of name]*

RE: P A W *[spells]*

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: and then La, yeah

RE: And did she have a last name or another name?

PW: No

RE: No?

PW: In my country we don't have last name ever.

RE: Oh, just one name.

PW: Yeah

RE: Wow, and your mother was born ... Where was she born?

PW: In Burma

RE: In Burma

PW: ... [*unclear*] [laughs] but I don't ...

RE: In the countryside? [laughs along]

PW: [laughs] In the countryside – yeah.

RE: Countryside ...

PW: Um hum

RE: Countryside of Burma

PW: Um hum

RE: And your father's name?

PW: Panumaung, (*spells*) P A N

RE: (*spells*) P A M

PW: N

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Oh, (*spells*) P A N

PW: (*spells*) P A N

PW: Another one, no, no, no, not ...

RE: You can do it better than I can (*writes the name of her father for RE on the Bio Sheet*). Um hum, beautiful, ok, and he is in countryside ...

PW: Countryside, Burma

RE: OK. And did you have any brothers and sisters?

PW: Um hum

RE: Yeah

PW: I had three brother and four sister

RE: Three brothers ...

PW: Um hum

RE: ... and four sisters

PW: We were then eight

RE: Eight all together. Were you the oldest or ...

PW: I younger one in the girl...sister

RE: The youngest girl

PW: As sister, but I had two younger brother

RE: Um hum, you are kind of in the middle there ... youngest girl

PW: Um hum

RE: ... but two younger brothers

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Um hum

RE: Now this is a hard one. What is your ... sort of your ethnic background?

PW: We from Burma, but we are not Burmese. We are the Karen people – K A R E N, (*spells this out for RE*) Karen people and we also speak Karen language.

RE: OK ... great. I have a friend from Burma.

PW: Oooh

RE: I don't know which group though.

PW: Um hum, relig (reads the next question on the Bio Sheet) Christian

RE: You're a Christian, Ok. And do you ... do you have a job or did you have a job?

PW: No, I got SSI

RE: Ok, ok, great

PW: ...because my, my finger here, were born with it

RE: Oh what oh, you were born with that

PW: Um hum. Last Monday I had surgery

RE: Ah

PW: ... plastic surgery

RE: ...plastic surgery

PW: ... the doctor ...

RE: Yes and look at this silly finger (*RE shows her problematic finger*)

PW: ... and then I hurt, I get hurt every joint

RE: Oh, all the joints hurt, oh

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Um hum, that's when I got SSI

RE: Ok, that's good, that's good. So we know you were not born here.

PW: Um hum

RE: You were born in Burma.

PW: Um hum

RE: When did you grow ... when did you come to here? When did you come to Worcester?

PW: 2008

RE: In 2008.

PW: September 9th

RE: Wow, you remember the exact date!

PW: Yeah

RE: Yeah

PW: ...what a wonderful day

RE: Was it a wonderful day ...

PW: ... all my life ...

RE: Oh good. Do you, did you go to school here?

PW: Yeah, I go to this ... there is a class in the Lutheran – now I study in home, at home

RE: OK so you took classes

PW: Um hum

RE: ... classes at Lutheran Social Service

PW: Um hum

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: ... and you're taking classes at WRAP, right? [Worcester Refugee Assistance Project]

PW: Yeah, WRAP

RE: Classes at WRAP and you also study at home

PW: Um hum

RE: Ok, wonderful, excellent. So that's all the papers

PW: Um hum

RE: ... but I thought I just ask you some questions

PW: Um hum

RE: ... and you can tell me. Do you want to tell me anything about Burma?

PW: Um hum

RE: Tell me about it and it will be on the tape.

PW: Oh, ah, what do you like to know? What do you like to know? [*son arrives home from school*]

RE: Hi there, (to son) how are you? Oh, anything you like to tell me.

PW: Um hum

RE: Um, how, were there good times in Burma?

PW: Oh, you know, when I was born in Burma, every time, everyday, we have, we suffering the fear when the war will be close to our village ...

RE: Um hum

PW: ... and the Burmese soldier and the Karen soldier when they meet each other, meet each other in ... close to my village, all the villages would get trouble, those, the village leader [*unclear, voice becomes quiet*] ...the Burmese soldier they torture people and many men what they saw then, this sight of torture ...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Yes, yes

PW: ... and then we have to hide in hole, every time and most of the thing like ... in the rainy season finished ... the time of winter, the war would start again

RE: Ah, ah

PW: ... but when the rainy season, better.

RE: Um, um hum

PW: You know when the start of winter we had to fear, always we have to stay back, to run

RE: To run, right

PW: ... like that. You know, when I came here, like they had firework

RE: Um hum

PW: Oh, they so scared for me

RE: Yes, yes

PW: ... and yes, last, actually a few years ago, I heard that like ... I think at 2 AM the morning and all this, they played the firework

RE: Umm

PW: I called my husband, "The war will get your kid." My husband said, "No, you in America, don't worry."

RE: Don't worry, yeah

PW: You know, like that ...

RE: But the sound was the same

PW: Yeah, the sound was the same *[laughs]*

RE: The same lights, very scary, very scary. So was this true even when you were a little girl?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: All of my life I think, before I came to refugee camp

RE: And so how old were you when you went to the refugee camp?

PW: Stayed here when I was 2000 2000, how, how old are you?... *[laughs]*

RE: Ok

PW: *[laughs]* I forget

RE: Sure, sure.

PW: ... um hum, maybe ...

RE: Did you have to stay in the refugee camp for a long time?

PW: Yes, now outside, long time, many people in my camp, 50,000 people

RE: Wow

PW: ... and the second camp in Thailand, we had Karen refugee camp.

RE: I see

PW: And my mother said how grandma told her when they were enslaved by the Burmese, and then, ooh, every day they cried, they prayed, but before when my great-grandmother ... they didn't know Jesus, but they know the God who created the heaven and earth, they call like that... *(unclear)*... because we have been—they have been slaves, Burmese slaves that's when, ooh, they cried and they calling to God and then the missionary, the missionary named Adoniram Judson, from Malden city.

RE: Ok

PW: Malden city in Massachusetts

RE: Oh, what city? Tell me again.

PW: Malden city

RE: Oh, Malden city, so Malden city in Massachusetts.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: His name is Adoniram Judson.

RE: How do you spell that? Do you know?

PW: [laughs] (*says name again while searching in her files to find his name, but RE still can't hear it well*)

RE: That's ok, it doesn't matter (*the search is taking some time*).

PW: (*finds what she was looking for*) OK, name is Adoniram Judson, gave Bible to Burmese

RE: He gave the Bible to the Burmese people, Burmese

PW: And then my mother said, "What did God, Jesus," after they had hope. That's why they call my name, Hope. Paw Wah, you know, my name like, we holy bloom like the white flower.

RE: Bloom like the white flower, isn't that beautiful!

PW: [laughs] Yeah, yeah. Paw Wah meaning hope.

RE: Beautiful. So did your whole family go to the camp?

PW: No. Only my family. Only my family.

RE: Everyone in your family?

PW: Um hum

RE: Your brothers and sisters

PW: Um hum

RE: ... and mother and father?

PW: When my mother, father die after because you know, my younger brother, he (*unclear*) and drools, (*unclear phrase*) you know, the face similar, everybody ...

RE: Everyone's face looks similar?

PW: Yes, similar ... yes the (*same unclear phrase*). Do you know the (*unclear phrase*)?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: No

PW: (*same unclear phrase*) They call like ... I pronounce... (*son interjects from other room – "Down's Syndrome"*)

PW: Ah ...

RE: Oh, Down's Syndrome

PW: Oh, Down's Syndrome

RE: So, your brother had Down's Syndrome.

PW: And he no speak Engl ... Burmese

RE: Um hum

PW: ...that's when Burmese soldier came to our village, but he not speak Burmese. And then he said like, "My brother don't pay attention to him." And then they beating him, my brother said ... with a gun here [gestures]

RE: Oh, oh

PW: ... then they kicked him to the river

RE: They kicked him in the river ...

PW: ... and torture him like and then someone he drove the, the, he drove the motor, motor ... you call that

RE: The motor car?

PW: No, no ... motor car, motor car ... the boat

RE: The boat

PW: ... and then they said, "Do you see the kid, he not normal? Why you torture him?" The boat, [*unclear*] the boat, every man in the boat jumping into the river, but they didn't –and then

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

when he came back we had—nobody said—and my mother give some leaf and the root for the...
but he coughing too much, coughing and fever

RE: Coughing and fever, so ...

PW: ... and then one month after he brings in a lot of blood

RE: Oh, oh

PW: ... he die on my hand ... blood and the you know, because I think he learned ...
crushed

RE: Crushed her (*RE confuses pronoun*) back?

PW: ... yeah, lung, coughing, coughing, coughing and then moments and then die

RE: Oh, and he died

PW: and after my brother died, two months my mother die

RE: Two ...

PW: ... and after my mother eight months, my father

RE: Wow

PW: ... and then I don't want to stay there anymore, but my sister, they like to stay there because
my sister, they are teacher, better than villager.

RE: Um hum

PW: When I was in 9th grade and we had a war, that's why I cannot study anymore because I had
to go to the (*unclear*), very far from my village and then my auntie said, the danger ... you don't
go to there... and I finish only 9th grade.

RE: Ninth grade.

PW: You know, in my village only to four grade

RE: Um hum

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Then and then we have to go to the walk three hours

RE: Three hours!!!

PW: Yeah, and then home. My land, I saw many, many of my villagers, the Burmese soldier took them and ...many orphans in our refugee camp.

RE: Many orphans

PW: Yeah, many orphans they stay in the bordering but they—and this one thing, my foster kid stay with me when he a year old, and he lost the mother, father and I took him to refugee camp, but when we got UN [United Nation] ... UN's register and I apply, I don't know, they said you can apply America or Sweden, Norway, Canada, and England, but my friend they applied to the Australia. They said the Australia government take care of refugee very well and many people want to go there, but we had to pay for the war and the picture and we had no money for that.

RE: No money right, right ...

PW: And, and, but I pray to God and then when I, when I have my married seven days, seven months—seven months, seven year, seven day, that day, answer me to what country

RE: So, in seven days?

PW: Yeah

RE: In seven days, God answered you?

PW: Seven year

RE: Seven years ...

PW: ... my marry

RE: You were married seven years ...

PW: Seven years, seven days, seven month, seven day ... That day exactly ...

RE: Wow

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: When I went to the section leader [*unclear phrase*] they said, "You can apply to America because America will take people, no matter what," only you only to have picture, only take to UN picture of your family and go to section leader.

RE: Section leader

PW: Only that, and then 2006 I applied to come to America

RE: Aww

PW: Oh, my auntie from California, "No, don't come to America, without America you can apply any country." [laughs] Because you have to work very hard.

RE: Yes, [laughs] you do have to work hard in America.

PW: And then ... but my cousin they went to Australia.

RE: To Australia ...

PW: But I trust my God and I came to America. But when the UN, we go medical check, and they call the interview, I applied to America but they ask you, "What state you want to go, do you want to go?"

RE: What state ...

PW: ... but I [said], "Doesn't matter, any state ...

RE: Any state ...

PW: ...any state you send me, I would go, people receive me." And then when I, but before we came here, we pray, we have prayer that my (*unclear*) and the pastor came to my house, what state you want to go? But I not apply to state, and if somebody want (*unclear*), I would go, but in my heart I want to go to Adoniram Judson place [laughs].

RE: Yeah (laughs along)

PW: Adoniram Judson place because he gave a Bible

RE: He gave a Bible

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: He gave hope and that's when I want to go there, the place. And I get, receive from Lutheran Social Office, Josephina ... I have to go New England, Worcester, M A [*speaks M and A individually*]

RE: [laughs] Right.

PW: Why, and then my husband and me we apply to America. Why we go to New England? [laughs]

RE: [laughs] What is New England....

PW: What is New England? [laughs] ... and then I never know that

RE: [laughs] confusing ...

PW: ... and then I didn't know, they say, "Worcester, M A." (*speaks the M and A individually*) What a ... repeat, M A Worcester, you know, ooh, this Worcester M A mean Massachusetts

RE: Massachusetts

PW: Massachusetts ... I so glad!!!! [laughs with excitement]

RE: [laughs] Yay!!!

PW: Best, so much, because, ooh, Massachusetts I heard all my life because we have celebrate second week July, Adoniram Judson came to Burma, 1918, July 13.

RE: Ok, so in 1918 ...

PW: Um hum, July 13

RE: July 13

PW: Um hum, July 13

RE: Say this guy's name again ...

PW: Adoniram Judson

RE: Adon – a -ro (*RE speaks each letter out slowly while writing it down*)

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Adonira – ra (*PW corrects RE*)

RE: Can you spell it? (they laugh together) I'll look it up later, we'll look it up – Jayson

PW: Judson

RE: Jesson? [the name is Adoniram Judson, a missionary to Burma]

PW: Adoniram Judson – (*unclear*)

RE: came to Burma

PW: Yeah ...

RE: ... and he brought

PW: Bible

RE: Bible, wonderful

PW: In my ... that time ... in my country ... they had no White people

RE: No White people?

PW: ... and then when the Judson brought the Bible ...

RE: Um hum ...

PW: ... and then Karen people, they saw—until now the Burmese called the, Christian, they call White people

RE: They call White people, so they thought all White people were Christian

PW: Um hum [laughs]

RE: ... but they were not

PW: [laughs] (*starts searching for materials*)

RE: We can look it up later. We'll look it up when we're done talking.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Ok

RE: So you were saying that one picture is your foster son ...

PW: Yeah, my foster son ...

RE: ... and he was with you in the refugee camp

PW: Yeah

RE: ... and then he went to Australia?

PW: No, here ...

RE: Oh, he came here too ...

PW: Yeah, 2008 applying to come with him

RE: ... with him

PW: ... but you answer no, because not your real son

RE: Ah, ah ...

PW: You need to have permit, how to get permit? The mother, father die, nobody take care of [him]. And the army, "You gonna send him to America? No. And then you can leave him with the boardering." ... the orphan boardering ... and then ...

RE: *(RE misunderstands, tries to clarify)* You can leave him with the orphan ...?

PW: ... boardering, boardering

RE: *(RE still misunderstanding)* Bedouin?

PW: ... boardering

RE: *(RE attempts to pronounce word)* Borderoun? I don't know ...

PW: ... you know, the house for the

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: ... the home for orphans, ok, ok

PW: ... boarding center, I don't know

RE: [laughs] That's ok ...

PW: ... and then they attached two year because when I live in the Worcester, Worcester ...
[laughs] my refugee camp called Mea La Camp and I work for the Home Vista hospital, we call Home Vista.

RE: So you what was the name of the camp?

PW: Mea La – M E A (*spells*)

RE: M E A (*spells*)

PW: L A (*spells*) Mea La Camp

RE: Mea La Camp, in Thailand, right?

PW: Yeah, in Thailand ...

RE: ... and you worked for the hospital

PW: They call Home Vista

RE: Home Vista?

PW: Um hum.

RE: Ok, so you were working there

PW: Um hum

RE: And then you found your son, your

PW: No, in my village

RE: In your village ...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: My son, my foster son in my village and took him to refugee camp with me.

RE: He came with you, yeah ...

PW: He came with me and then, UN said I cannot take him and then he cry, I cry also because I cannot leave him.

RE: No ...

PW: And then UN (*unclear*) tell me and my husband—my husband work for security ...

RE: He worked for security, ok ...

PW: ... and also he worked for the, you know the judge, soccer and the volley ball judge and also they host like a ...

RE: So he was in the refugee camp

PW: Um hum,

RE: ... and you were there

PW: Um hum ..

RE: and your foster son was there

PW: Um hum, yeah.

RE: Were you, had you had any babies of your own yet?

PW: I had only three

RE: You have three now, but did they ...

PW: No, no

RE: ... but not in the refugee camp

PW: Um hum

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: When were they born?

PW: Yeah, um hum, they born ... one in Burma

RE: One was born in Burma and two in the US?

PW: No, in refugee camp

RE: In the refugee camp ...

PW: ... and when I came, I want a daughter ([RE and PW laugh together]) but my teacher said, "Ooh, you have three boys ... enough for you. Because you now very happy. " And then I ...

RE: Yeah, yeah

PW: And then I ...

RE: So you really have four if you count your foster son

PW: Um, hum, yeah, yeah

RE: Ok

PW: *[walks over with RE to wall to look at photos – some exchanges unclear as RE admires photos]*

RE: Ah...

PW: 4, 6, 8 *[points to each son and gives the ages of each]*

RE: Beautiful

PW: 4, 6, 8 *[shows additional photos]*

RE: And this is your foster son

PW: Um hum

RE: Great

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Ah this my house, my house in the refugee camp

RE: Your house in the refugee camp

PW: Bamboo holiday

RE: Um hum

PW: And this is ...

RE: And your husband lived there

PW: Um hum ..

RE: ... and you lived there and your foster son

PW: Um hum

RE: ... and your two boys

PW: Um hum, and also many ... my nephew, my niece

RE: Oh, I see ...

PW: ...and they came to stay with me and for school

RE: Um hum

PW: In Burma very expensive to school

RE: Yeah, yeah

PW: ... they came and stay with me. This is my nephew and my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law, all 17 people [laughs]

RE: Wow

PW: [still laughing] 17 people in the house, in the house ...

RE: Seventeen people, amazing. That's beautiful.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: But then, you know, I work for Home Vista I have to make sure the (*unclear*) and I take care of, for the immunization and for malnutrition and also new arrival ... new arrival ... when they came, no rations like that (*unclear*) I have get rations like that ...

RE: So some of them were Russians? (*RE has misunderstood the word rations*)

PW: Yeah, and also we have the refugee, for the pregnant mother and the child who give, who give like the saltine

RE: Um hum, um hum

PW: ... saltine

RE: Um hum, um hum

PW: ... because, you know, no meat

RE: No meat ...

PW: ... only bean, yellow bean and fish paste

RE: Right, right ... so they needed other nutrients

PW: Yeah, um hum

RE: So these are your own beautiful pictures of your family

PW: All these ... my mother-in-law and then my brother-in-law ...

RE: Ah, I see

PW: Um hum, um hum [laughs]

RE: Yeah, yeah. Now you were telling me so the government said no, you can't bring your foster son ... how did you make sure he came with you, how did he get here?

PW: Yes, yes the (*unclear*) ... we had to wait two year for him

RE: Ah, wow

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Apply, apply 2006. Somebody they apply [and] five months, four months after they came to America, but my family we had to wait two year for him.

RE: For him, ah, ah, so you came in 2008 and you had to wait 'til 2010 ...

PW: No, no, 2006 we apply

RE: You applied ...

PW: ... and in 2008 to America

RE: ... to America

PW: ... two year after

RE: And how long 'til your foster son came?

PW: The same ... together

RE: So you finally did come together, great, great, great. So when you got here ...

PW: Um, hum

RE: ...what was it like. Was it

PW: Oooh, you know, like cave, caveman came to America

RE: Like a caveman came to America [both laugh]. Interesting or a surprise

PW: Yes, right, because in my village, no electricity, no gas, we put the firewood, we make fire and put there, no electricity, no car ...

RE: No car, of course ...

PW: ... no rent [laughs]

RE: No rent [laughs] ... that's good ... that's the only good thing, right

PW: [laughs] ... No rent! Finally we came in September.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: You came in September...

PW: What happened ... came to Lutheran Social Office and then the, our case worker was Minh Nguyen [*RE believes this is what Paw Wah is saying here as this is the name of the original case worker assigned to the family according to those at Ascentria Care Alliance, formerly Lutheran Social Services*] and then he took me, he took me to the store, the grocery store ...

RE: Grocery store ...

PW: And then he said, "Pick out the food for three day," but I, you know, in refugee camp we—I worried ... one car lot ... I take only ... a little bit.

RE: Right ... one day at a time

PW: Um, hum

RE: Yeah, yeah ...

PW: And then my case worker took me many things and then I came back and then three day after he came back and then he said, "This time buy for five day."

RE: Five days, wow ...

PW: Three at a time and then after for five day, five day, and then ... ooh ... he put for me a lot of food but then after five days, my case worker, he, he doesn't come.

RE: He doesn't come

PW: Right ... ten day, he doesn't come

RE: Oh no, no food ...

PW: ... then 15 day

RE: Oh ...

PW: Then, then I cry so much 15 day, I cry so much ..

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Yeah, everyone was hungry ...

PW: And I want cry so much, because my kids, they no clothing. The cold start—September—because my country, too hot.

RE: Yeah

PW: No clothing, no furniture, no, we eat on the floor...

RE: Right ...

PW: ... we put the portion small, small, not enough for the one time and then in my refugee camp we have only the broke... habit, you know, habit ... we cut a little bit in a week, ... we each [*unclear – describes what they ate, sounds like Pad Thai*] like one chicken [*unclear*] and with rice, white rice ... we still had rice and then my, my friend from another state ... they said, "Don't stay then, we are gonna pick you up." But I was ... and then I was crying to God, "I came with you to America, how do you do that to me?" [laughs].

RE: Yeah, why ...

PW: Why do you do that to me...

RE: Why, why?

PW: Why, and then I was crying, and my husband want to move to another state, but no, I said no, He will do for us, He wouldn't leave us like that. And then I prayed to God and cried because my husband, every night we hold hand each other and pray on the problem. And then, and then I cry so many ... fall asleep, and one thing when we came to America, in Burma the day and here night and then we in the night we cannot sleep [laughs] and my kids play, play and in the daytime we sleep, [laughs]

RE: [laughs]

PW: And then ooh, we heard ... and then I have to ... the people knock the door and open and ooh, I saw the Public Health, Public Health (*unclear to RE*) from the law

RE: Public? ...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Public Health

RE: Public Health?

PW: Um hum

RE: Public Health , Public Health, yeah...

PW: ... and then the interpreter, his local name is James, he Burma ... he from Burma and he speak to me in Burmese, ooh, I so glad [laughs with excitement] and then I told him that with the Minh Nguyen, the lady ... from Public Health, I think they supervisor, like that, and then, "How many days you come here?" they said, they ask me. And my case worker said, "Buy food for five day." Five day after he not come, ten day, nobody, fifteen days ... go to open my refrigerator. Waah ... nothing

RE: Nothing ...

PW: ... and then I so sad, I want cry so much, I want cry ... and the Public Health, they took me to the Lutheran Social Office and then they said, "No Paw Wah," ... we showed the letter, they say, "No." ... looked in the file, not here, not here and I showed them the paperwork

RE: The paperwork

PW: ... um, hum I showed them and then they said, "No, they cannot find it" and then they checked in the computer and then they saw our name... Ahhh

RE: At first they couldn't find you and then they had to check in the computer ...

PW: Um hum, yeah, and then they said, they changed the office

RE: Ah

PW: ... they changed the office, this one, and... my family (*unclear phrase*) and then you know ooh and then the Minh Nguyen lady ... Mary Boole, I call, I call an angel, because ...

RE: ... you call her an angel

PW: ... Mary Boole ... (*unclear*)

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Mary Boole, how do you spell that?

PW: [laughs] B U (*spells*), maybe, I cannot spell

RE: Mary B U L L? (*spells*)

PW: Um hum ... no, Boole, Mary Boole

RE: ... O O? (*spells*)

PW: ... yeah , Mary Boole, maybe

RE: ... she helped you

PW: ... yeah, she help me, and then and we had nothing

RE: Um, hum

PW: ... and no food stamps, no cash and then Mary Boole take me to the Catholic Charities and then ooooh, and then, they ... the Catholic Charities, they give me money, I think they give me money 100 or 40 or something like that and then ooh, we bought tissue paper [laughs] and then towel, and then Mary Boole buy for me the shampoo, and then the tissue paper and toilet paper ... like that [laughs]

RE: Well, thank heavens for her, right

PW: Um hum, and then I was so glad and ooh, Mary Boole ... we had no pot to put in ... bought everything we need, (*unclear*) and then somebody more donate and then the Catholic Charities they bought for me the chicken, big chicken and ...

RE: But not as good as your chicken, your chicken, your chicken is the best (both laugh)

PW: Um hum... and then ooh, and you know why we happy and then my son (*unclear phrase*) and my case worker (*unclear*) the poem on the ... on the street (*unclear phrase*) and I don't want to hear it (*unclear phrase*)...and my friend they said, "When you come to America, don't bring too much clothes, only the traditional clothes"

RE: Traditional clothes

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: ... many clothes, many clothes, [*unclear section of tape, I think she is saying her children had no warm clothes*]... but I wouldn't know ...

RE: Nothing

PW:... and the people, "Oh many clothes," they said, but I trust in my God and then I pray and cry and then the pastor, Pastor Sarah, (*RE misunderstands this name, the correct name is Sarai Rivera*) he ... she ... City Councilor

RE: Ok

PW: ... pastor, Sar Riveras (*name not clear, I think Sarai Rivera*)

RE: Ok, how do you say that name?

PW: Riveras, Riveras, Pastor Sarai

RE: Can you spell it for me?

PW: No ... [laughs], I ...

RE: Oh well, we'll figure it out ... I'll figure it out ...

PW: ... and now he City Councilor ...

RE: City Councilor... so he was a pastor

PW: Pastor and now ...

RE: ... and now he is a City Councilor.

PW: Um hum, she brought for me the blanket

RE: Blanket ...

PW: ... and many toys

RE: Toys?

PW: ...the big, big ones [laughs]

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Oh good [laughs]

PW: And then, oh, you know our people, our people ... they all the time ... you know our people (unclear) when I eat the food because in ... in ... very difficult before they gave the food. Now in America many, many Karen people, all Christian at belief (*unclear phrase*) ... the country (*unclear phrase*) and I told them my church, you know, this America and Massachusetts, America, Worcester, Worcester, Massachusetts, America, the best in the world!!! The country, the country [laughs] ...

RE: Oh, that's a great feeling

PW: Yeah, yeah ...

RE: And when you first came

PW: Um hum ...

RE: ... it was very hard

PW: ... very hard

RE: ... and were you frightened?

PW: Yeah, yeah , crying ... [laughs]

RE: Crying, yeah,

PW: Um hum ...

RE: ...but now, it feels good.

PW: Feels good. And also, when, when 2013, I moved to this house ...

RE: ... in 2013, ok, when you came to live, this house on Douglas Street in 2013

PW: Um hum, this house 2013 and I have my Burmese friend ... they speak Burmese, they are Burmese, you know, the husband hitting her...

RE: He was hitting her?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: ... hitting her and then the daughter call to, call to somebody, and they call 911, (*unclear phrase*) with me and then they call 911, the husband get arrested

RE: ... arrested, um hum

PW: ... um hum, and we went to the (*police? unclear*) office ooh, when I went with the girl, ooh, when I hug her I went to the office I thank God so much because ooh, the girl, they said "Don't worry, we will not let him hit you again."

RE: He will not hit you again

PW: Um hum, ooh, and then many days, ooh I think in our country, the woman is like hopeless, in America the law—and then they provide, they take care of the woman, but like, I so proud of the woman in here.

RE: Yes, yes ...

PW: Woman have value; in Burma, no value. I saw them, many people, they hitting the wife, slapping the wife but nobody care ...

RE: Nobody cares ...

PW: ... ah, but here, I so glad to ... and then I thank, I thank God to become American citizen.

RE: And you are a citizen?

PW: Yes, yeah, um hum

RE: ... you studied, you studied all the questions?

PW: Yeah

RE: Wonderful!

PW: I have been nine year, when seven year, I got the citizen.

RE: In seven years ... good for you, wonderful

PW: Um hum

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Now, do your sons have citizenship?

PW: Yeah, they also ...

RE: They also ... wonderful, so you all studied together?

PW: But only my husband and me we have to, were to test, my kids, and when I passed, my kids also ...

RE: Oh, I see ..

PW: ... they already did.

RE: So when you and your husband ...

PW: Um, hum ...

RE: ... gain citizenship ...

PW: Um hum ...

RE: ... your sons do too

PW: Yeah

RE: Oh, excellent

PW: But we to try, to try ... they say, we can, we can get ... go to the Post Office for the passport

RE: ... passport

PW: ... all of [us] we get passport

RE: Oh, so you could travel to Canada

PW: Um hum, um hum ...

RE: ... or some other place

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Yep, last year my son [*I think she means husband here*] went to the Burma visit the mother

RE: Oh, he went back to Burma to visit his mother ...

PW: ... three weeks

RE: Wow, that must have been very ... did he feel good or sad or happy?

PW: Then my husband village, he from my village, because what I live in, the site of people Karen state, the Burmese call the black area

RE: The black area ...

PW: ... because the area (*unclear*) all World War II

RE: ... so much war

PW: ... so much war and then one, one Burmese soldier he ... you know, he went to the refugee camp because the government said surrender

RE: To surrender...

PW: ... and then he said (*unclear*) area, that's when the, the government, said anything, anything they can do – kill, rape ...

RE: Oh...

PW: Everything, everything ...

RE: Everything, ... I know ...

PW: My family in danger

RE: So much is so difficult in Burma, still

PW: Yes, still now, still now, the Rohingya, they bury

RE: Oh, I know ...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: ...they don't like the Christians, Muslims, only the ones who made the Buddha land in Burma

RE: All Buddha. Now, did you meet your husband in the refugee camp?

PW: No, in Burma

RE: In Burma.

PW: Um hum, um hum ...

RE: Now I was told by Lesa ...

PW: Um hum

RE: ...that you are a Worcester hero, Hometown Hero

PW: [laughs in agreement]

RE: That's fabulous, that's beautiful

PW: Um hum ...

RE: Can you tell me a little about that?

PW: They say Hometown Hero because I came to America with my husband, in Burma, in Burma to Thailand and to America because the kid, um hum, and I ... I foster parent in here and I take care of all the Burmese refugee, Burmese, my nephew and also last year, last year I have the Congo refugee, two kids ...

RE: Oh, did you?

PW: Um hum

RE: And do they come and live in your house?

PW: Yeah and we went to the airport and pick them up

RE: Did you

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Um, but, you know, they have problem, real problem – the boy go outside without telling me, come back at one hour, no calling, like that, and that's when I said very danger for here and then the caseworker moved him and went to the younger sister, younger sister, I loved her so much ... but no, you don't, she doesn't want to, but caseworker take all and I broken heart.
[laughs]

RE: Ah, so the caseworker took the boy because they were not ... he would go outside without telling you and now he stays with his sister

PW: Yeah, ... another sister, one hour farther

RE: One hour farther, yeah. So you received the award because you had been so helpful

PW: Um hum ... and also here ... when the tornado, tornado was in Springfield ...

RE: Oh yeah, the tornado ... yeah

PW: And then I had my friend, nurse, she was nurse in Worcester and then she moved to the Springfield and then he get supervisor, like that, and for the Public Health, and he told me, ooh many people they lost power and without power and then the people have bring the food, but no rice, only bread

RE: ... right, right

PW and then, and then, they said one thing – they want to eat rice [laughs]

RE: (laughs along) ... they want to eat rice

PW: How many people there? ... eighty-five people ...

RE: Oh ...

PW: ... then I say, “Ooh, it's ok,” then I pour a little bit rice (unclear), tomato ...

RE: ... in this pot

PW: ... and also the chicken and the spices and then the vegetable and ooh they enjoy that, they enjoy them, but when I went to the (*unclear*) Hall, she said the mayor want to see you. And then

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

I went to the (*unclear* – *perhaps "rock"*) ooh, and then the mayor said "Springfield mayor called to here to thank you for the food," and like that ...

RE: Ahh ... isn't that wonderful .. ah

PW: Um hum ... and then they said that ... oh and they give the certificate ... award [laughs]

RE: (*unclear*) ... ah, this is beautiful ...

PW: ... and my kid also

RE: Yeah, yeah

PW: My kid, they pack the band aids and like that

RE: Um hum, um hum

PW: ... and everything

RE: So your kids went with and you made... they got the food and they helped bandage, bring bandages. Well, that's wonderful ...

PW: [laughs]

RE: What a good person you are! And your sons are beautiful too.

PW: My two older ones at Worcester Tech

RE: Oh, they are at Worcester Tech ... wonderful, wonderful

PW: And then ... yeah

RE: What are they studying?

PW: Oh ...

RE: ... to be engineers?

PW: Oh, yeah to be—only one sister is electrical and the little one, carpentry. Last year she go ..

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: Did the tape stop? I don't know ... turn it over ..

NOTE: Stop large format tape and begin listening to side B of smaller format tape to hear the rest of this interview

PW: Um hum, and last year my son, he got outstanding student of the year for carpentry.
[laughs]

RE: My goodness, you must be so proud! Huh, student of the year!

PW: And then last month they went to some place they said for representative of school and my son in tenth grade, ninth grade, nobody represent, and tenth grade, then two kids for eleventh in the carpentry side of the school and three, three of them they went to the ... they call SCALE, USA, SCALE, USA ..

RE: SCALE, USA?

PW: Um hum

RE: So they went there because they had done so well in school.

PW: Ah, yeah ...

RE: ... it was to honor them, to honor them ...

PW: Only, yeah, they had test, but he teacher said, "Only you go and learning, but when you senior or junior you need to make sure."

RE: Ok, excellent. Well, is there one more thing you want to tell me about your life in Worcester?

PW: Oh, my life in Worcester, you know, when I came here six months, very, very difficult time and after then I saw the Michael Forhan, you call ...

RE: Michael Forhan, I do know Michael Forhan

PW: Michael Forhan, she, when I stayed the first house Dorchester Street

RE: Dorchester Street, ok

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: ... and they have problem water pipe, water pipe broken, all over the house, water

RE: Oh, no!

PW: ... and then we stayed only six month and then we move to the Wall Street

RE: Wall Street

PW: Then some time afterwards I met with Michael Forhan

RE: You met Michael Forhan

PW: ... and my husband said he met the one, one, one man in the Lutheran Social Office and then he said he would come visit to us, and that day when he came to my apartment, oh we had nothing, like that, no TV, you know, and then he brought TV and then he paid for me two months for TV.

RE: Wow

PW: And then we started ... what we need he brought for me and also my foster son, my foster son, when he came with me here and he had ear infection

RE: Yeah ...

PW: ... and we went to the hospital

RE: Um hum

PW: but he, ah, he no get the medical care

RE: Right

PW: ... because they said he is not my son. My caseworker, they didn't apply for him, things like that and then, you know, Mary Boole applied for him and also (*unclear*) the refugee minor, the Lutheran refugee minor, and then he become my foster kid and then, and then, we get another caseworker from Burma!

RE: Oh, oh

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: And then he told to people he brought many clothing but ... and then I just care the new arrival because when I new arrival, very difficult. When new arrival from Burma came I give them what they need, what they ... everything and we, I, together Michael Forhan, and my Burmese, the Burmese caseworker

RE: ... caseworker ...

PW: ... and another from Public Health, caseworker also having the clothing, everything we need, and then, you know ... we starting, I starting then and also the Michael Forhan, Michael Forhan also and ... Michael Forhan, I think I know Michael Forhan six months after, Michael Forhan and Lesa and Deborah and Steve, you know ... and then Michael Forhan said, "The lady he know from the Thailand he will come here," for Stu or Meredith. Oh, wonderful ...

RE: Meredith, yeah

PW: Oh, Meredith, wonderful

RE: ... she is wonderful

PW: Yes she wonderful and then what the people came to my house, "What you need, What you need?" But I need because my kids, everyday they went to school, my younger son and my middle son, she first time, first time in school she said, they know ... no English, and then he would cry all day. [laughs]

RE: Yeah, yeah

PW: And then also me, for me hard, very hard time. I get so upset. Draw your kid here, they show me here number, the number will come. They give me the number, but when come with the number—different.

RE: ... oh, the number was different

PW: And then ooh, I so, so worried for my kid. You know, why they going take my kid [laughs]. Something like that.

RE: Oh, you thought they might take your kid?

PW: What if they took my kid? And then school, I never know the school [laughs]

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

RE: [*referring to the tape recorder*] Oops, this one stopped now too. We're having a hard time here, let's ... turn this one over also

PW: Um hum

RE: But now, your kids are so good at school.

PW: Yeah, you know and then, when the evening time, I went to the bus stop to, to put down my kid, ooh the busser (*bus driver is meant here I think*) come back, when the same, the same student ... when will my kid come back? No my kid ain't there, ooh. [laughs]

RE: [laughs]

PW: Ooh, I so worry, I call to my caseworker, "My kid not coming, why?" And then they call to the school, "I will call you back when I get answer" and then ooh, the one hour, two hour, my kid not come back.

RE: Oh, my goodness ...

PW: And then they said, somebody bring me a kid—my caseworker, principal—because my kid, the teacher they said, "What number he have to drive? Why he not understand?"

RE: Right, right

PW: He not understand ... [laughs]

RE: ... he didn't understand

PW: And then they said, "He cannot go." And then he cried, he cried so much, two older, my younger one he cannot and then, you know I worry. I told my friend, not hard for the kid only, mothers also, hard time.

RE: That's right, that's right, that's right ... hard for the mothers as well as the children.

PW: And then my kid, they come, "Mommy, mommy, when at school somebody have homework." I don't understand, I cannot ...

RE: No

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: ...and then one people came to my house, "What do you need, tell me." And "Michael, I need, I need for my kid, homework."

RE: Yes...

PW: I need homework ..

RE: I need help with my kids' homework ... yeah

PW: And then, and then when we starting the WRAP, [Worcester Refugee Assistance Project] the WRAP and they asked me, like oh, one thing for homework, and also the letter come. We don't know what read. I have problem with the bank, but I don't understand there, many, many problem with the mail.

RE: That's right

PW: And then, oh, my husband, they told my husband, seven [unclear], checking account, only seven, long time

RE: Oh, oh

PW: ... we didn't understand that's why I told Michael we need, we need help with the letter.

RE: That's right

PW: And the first day also, [unclear] reply again, it would not reply, it was first day, no come, we go to eat probably [laughs] and also the electric and heat ... ooh, I thought we didn't owe that. The money no come, the boarder cash them and then I cannot pay the rent.

RE: Right, right

PW: Then the landlord came ... whole problem and also we got the electric bill

RE: Um hum

PW: Oh we don't ... no, no money, how we pay that?

RE: How to pay

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: How we pay that electric? And then we had the warning for they gonna off my electric because we don't pay the electric. [laughs]

RE: Oh, no

PW: And I told Michael, and somebody told me that you can apply for (*unclear*) help for poor friend, but you can apply the heat for the ... your lower account

RE: You can ...?

PW: ... we applying the fuel assistance

RE: ... for the fuel assistance, you should apply for fuel assistance ...

PW: Um hum, and then we apply for fuel assistance, ooh, we can ...this better

RE: Yeah, now this is better

PW: Yes, [laughs] You know, very, very difficult and I told Michael we need help with the (*unclear*) and there for her, and the fill the phone and yep, we told that, and then, Michael, you know started Meredith ... Meredith, wonderful lady, she had ... you must student and also one Burmese girl, you must student, you very clever

RE: Very smart ...

PW: ... very smart and then my oldest son, ooh, every day homework, you know, some Kareni kid they don't, they don't do the homework

RE: They don't do the homework ...

PW: ... but my kid, very, very serious, the homework.

RE: Yes, your kids do their homework all the time

PW: And then they do homework every day and you know my kids they now better. Some people when they came, nothing had they in their kitchen and I told them when somebody can donate like the tissue paper and the, the sock ...

RE: ... socks and shoes

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: ... shoes ... my kid, when somebody bring the shoe when he wanted to go to school, I didn't know I give him the pink shoe [laughs] and then (*unclear*) my friend said, "Is it for girl?"

RE: [laughs] Oh no, for girl, shoes for a girl

PW: (continues laughing) In Burma we never have sock and shoe, we have only flip flops, like that ...

RE: Yeah, yeah ...

PW: ... and no pants

RE: No pants ...

PW: ... and then

RE: ... more like a wrap, a skirt that you wrap ...

PW: ... and then they wear only short pants, like that ...

RE: Yeah, yeah

PW: ... and then, and then my (*unclear*) you need to buy for your kids sock, the issue ... they don't want sock and somebody said, "You don't take care of your kid, go ..." and then they had to ... but they don't want to wear sock

RE: They didn't want to wear socks

PW: [laughs] ... socks and also underwear [laughs]

RE: [laughs]

PW: [laughs] ... we don't have underwear

RE: Nobody had underwear in Burma

PW: We wear only this way ...

RE: Yeah, the wrap, the wrap

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Um hum

RE: Wonderful ...

PW: ... so funny, so funny

RE: So you have learned so much

PW: [I] learned so much and the one thing, one thing—my husband fry the, fry the egg ...ooh, alert the ...

RE: Smoke alarm [laughs]

PW: The smoke [laughs]... whole house, whole house! We at home. My caseworker, "What happened? Fire?" And then they came, they came and also they call, (*unclear*) ... they call to the 911 and we were like ...

RE: ... they called 911

PW: ... they so funny [laughs]

RE: Yes, it's, it's so different

PW: Yeah, it's so different ... why happen and then she, he, my case manager tell me to, "When you fry something, cover!"

RE: Yeah

PW: Yeah ...

RE: Very good, very good, now I think it was Meredith

PW: Um hum

RE: ... who told me you do lots of sewing?

PW: Um, hum

RE: Tell me about your sewing?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: Yes, oh, I sewing like that, you know, the pant, the panty you know ...

RE: ... you sew pants ...

PW: the panty too, too long for her ... you know like that

RE: Um hum, um hum

PW: You see [*PW goes to other room to get sewing*] and some, the body pillow, I have ...

RE: Oh, you made those, beautiful

PW: ... (*unclear*) and then, you know, for the new one, the bolster I don't know how to do
[laughs]

RE: Yeah [laughs]

PW: ... but I try for (*unclear*) ... you know ...

RE: ... to make them so that they fit better, yeah, beautiful. Well, I am very happy that you were happy to speak with me and I thank you for this beautiful home, you are very generous. I thank you.

PW: Um hum

RE: And we are very happy you're here in our country

PW: Yeah

RE: And, um, I don't know if I got everything but

PW: [laughs]

RE: I'm not so good with machines, but I think we got most of it.

PW: Um hum

RE: And I will try to write what, what I understand that you said and then you can read it to be sure it's ok. It will take me awhile.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

PW: You know, when I come here, one year, after one year, I call to Josephina, I said, "Thank you" ...

RE: Josephina, your caseworker

PW: ... she the supervisor

RE: Supervisor

PW: Supervisor in the Lutheran

RE: Lutheran Social Service ...

PW: I call her. I say, "Thank you so much for your sponsor me, my family and also Mary Boole."

RE: Um hum, Mary Boole

PW: But then, Mary Boole, I never forget her.

RE: That's right. I love how you said ...

PW: Um hum

RE: ... you think of her as an angel ...

PW: Um hum

RE: Isn't that ... that's beautiful,

PW: Angel, yeah.

RE: Yeah, well, I'm very happy to meet you. I met you just for one minute at the ... at the festival. I'm gonna turn this off and then we can find ... we can look at a few more things. Ok?

PW: Um hum

RE: Ok, let me see if I can figure this out. Ah, there's stop.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org